

Introduction

China and the East Asian Renaissance, Toward a New World Order

Introduction

As we enter the third decade of the twenty-first century, it is clear that the Western-led liberal international order established after the Second World War is coming to some kind of end. Or, at the very least, it is transitioning into something else yet to be defined but incredibly crucial for the future of the planet. As with all crucial transitions, this one demands all the interpretative resources we can bring to it. Many contributors bring expertise on economic and international relations and power analyses, but in the present case, cultural, religious, ethical, and historical analyses are needed as well. These may play a much more important role in the new era than generally estimated.

China's rise may be the single most transformative event of our times. Many have called attention to the economic impact of China's rise, but it is in itself not unprecedented and must be seen in the larger context of an Asian economic renaissance. Beginning in the late nineteenth century, Japan forged a new consensus that served as an inspiration and model for the non-Western world and demonstrated how Western industrialization and technology could be successfully adapted beyond the Euro-American sphere. This model, under the rubric of "Eastern ethics/morality, Western technical learning" (*tōyō dōtoku, seiyō gakuhei*), a slogan coined by politician, scholar, and Japanese reformer Sakuma Shōzan, proved particularly inspirational throughout Asia. A similar model was attempted in Late Qing dynasty China under the rubric of *ti* and *yong*,

essence and function, whereby China could preserve its spiritual core while adopting Western scientific and technological innovations. It is discussed in more detail below.

In spite of the failure of the Japanese imperial mission that imagined an Asia free of Western colonialisms under the banner of “Asia for Asians,” the rest of Asia was eventually enticed to follow Japan’s lead in adopting a modernity based on Western models. Following the economic success of the “four tigers,” Taiwan, South Korea, Hong Kong, and Singapore, and the rapid economic advancement of Southeast Asia, especially since the end of the cold war, this model became pervasive throughout Asia (with the exception of North Korea) by the end of the twentieth century.

Japan’s method for dealing with Western intrusions was not isolated. Around the same time, the Qing government in China devised a plan known as the Self-Strengthening Movement to acquire and utilize Western methods under the slogan, “Learn barbarian methods to combat barbarian threats.” This initiative followed China’s humiliating defeats in the Opium Wars that exposed China’s military and technological weaknesses. Confronted with superior British forces fortified by developments following the industrial revolution, Chinese weaknesses were exposed. While the Self-Strengthening Movement produced some successful capitalist and military reforms, most of these were locally based and failed to garner national support from the Qing government. Qing leaders adhered to a pattern that would come to characterize many indigenous movements that aspired to military and economic modernization without accompanying social or political reforms. In this, they invoked a pattern with a long history in China and throughout East Asia, the essence/function (*ti/yong*) matrix. This matrix differentiates reality in terms of two aspects, an absolute aspect, the fundamental cause or origin, and a relative aspect, the concrete manifestation of the essence in contemporary realities. The *ti/yong* model was invoked as a way to preserve a hypothetically essential cultural identity in the face of rampant change from external factors. “Learning barbarian methods to combat barbarian threats” was a strategy aimed at acquiring Western technical learning in order to preserve an Eastern moral spirit. Combining Western superiority in science and technology with the East’s superior moral spirit would allegedly result in an unbeatable formula for deterring military intrusions from the West while preserving the East’s cultural autonomy. Key to the model’s success was an ability to remain uncontaminated by perceived Western spiritual deficiencies while acquiring its scientific acumen, guarding

against spiritual pollution from Western ways of thinking while adopting its superior technology.

China (and East Asia) posed little threat while the region was on the defensive, absorbed in acquiring Western technologies while attempting to preserve cultural autonomy. Western leaders flattered themselves with the superiority of Western learning, political, social, and economic institutions. Modernity itself, in this view, was a product of the West, and its manifestations, in whatever garb, were intrinsically predicated on normative assumptions developed in the European enlightenment. This may be likened to a Western version of a *ti/yong* matrix, whereby an essential Western way of thinking, exhibited through the culture of science and technology, functions in various guises according to cultural context.

This Western version of a *ti/yong* model that considers Western thinking as essential and Chinese thought as peripheral has also occurred in the modern Chinese context. Chinese scholar, philosopher, and intellectual historian Li Zehou, for example, emerged as a central figure of the Chinese Enlightenment of the 1980s. In the wake of Deng Xiaoping's reforms and economic opening, Li's search for a new model for China combined elements from Western philosophy—especially Karl Marx's analysis of materialistic and historical realities in the evolution of human societies and Immanuel Kant's view of the intellectual, moral, and aesthetic capacities of the individual—with key components drawn from the Chinese philosophical tradition. His impact on the generation of Chinese emerging from the nightmares of the Cultural Revolution was profound. Yu Ying-shih, a prominent Chinese intellectual historian at Princeton University, commented that Li's books “emancipated a whole generation of young Chinese intellectuals from Communist ideology.”¹ In a famous 1987 essay, Li turned conventional Chinese (and East Asian) thinking on its head, declaring that “the Western is the Substance, and the Chinese is for Application,” with “substance” being an alternate translation for *ti*, and “application” an alternate for *yong*.² According to Li, the technology and conceptual frameworks of the West comprise the root or substance of modernity, including Chinese modernity, and Chinese cultural adaptations can only serve as applications, influencing but not dictating the core. In the wake of the Tiananmen Square protests of 1989, Li was labeled a “thought criminal” and placed under house arrest. He eventually received permission to travel to the United States, where he was granted asylum. Regardless of Li's ultimate impact on the

course of Chinese thinking, his rebuttal to the *ti/yong* hypothesis is a pertinent reminder of the state of flux that modern Chinese thinking has undergone and continues to undergo, pushed between the pillars of Marxism, Western liberal ideas, and traditional Chinese ways of thinking.

What happens when China is no longer on the defensive? We had a prelude, of sorts, to this in the 1980s when Japan reached an economic pinnacle amid assertions like Ezra Vogel's provocative title, *Japan as Number One*,³ and the impending era of Japanese economic dominance. By the late 1980s, before the period of Japan's economic stagnation set in and when a trade war with Japan was threatening to burst into full bloom, it was fashionable in Tokyo to talk of an evolution of the world order in terms of paradigm shifts: *Pax Romana*, *Pax Britannica*, *Pax Americana*, and the imminent *Pax Japonica*. Japan's posturing eventually gave way to the realities of the market, and to a steady realization that Japan was tied to the economic and political world order in ways that threatened to do lasting damage should it decide to go its own way. Decades of tutelage under the United States and the liberal democratic order (e.g., the United Nations, World Bank, etc.) instituted after the Second World War predetermined Japan's integration into this economic and political world order.

There are similarities between China's situation and Japan's in the 1980s, but there are significant differences as well. Most importantly, China did not experience decades of tutelage from the United States and the liberal democratic order following the Second World War. While China has been integrated to some extent into the economic and political world order in recent decades, it remains to be seen if these ties are valuable enough to China to forgo independent initiatives, or whether China is strong enough to go its own way and fashion a new economic and political order. Recent developments, like the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI),⁴ the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB),⁵ and China's important role in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO),⁶ suggest such initiatives. Beyond this, Japan is a country with a population of roughly 125 million people (and falling), while China comprises more than ten times that total, roughly 1.4 billion people. China's 2017 GNP was 23.24 trillion US dollars. Japan's was 5.765 trillion US dollars, and the US GNP was 19.61 trillion dollars for the same period. In comparison, the United States had a 5.923 trillion US dollar GNP in 1990 compared to Japan's at 2.423 trillion. By any measure, Japan's GNP was fractional compared with the United States. China, buoyed by its overwhelming

population, has surpassed the United States in GNP. While GDP per capita figures still overwhelmingly favor the United States (surpassing \$59,000 in 2017; China remained a little under \$9,000), the point is that China with its overwhelming population, production capacity, and foreign reserves, not to mention its decades (centuries if one considers Chinese history as a whole) of experience outside the liberal democratic world order, represents a far bigger challenge to the world order than Japan ever could. Given China's long history and dynastic cycles of prosperity and decline, it is considered a given among Chinese and China watchers that China is destined to rise again and resume its natural status as a leading regional and international force. The dynastic cycle, considered in more detail in chapter 3, offers an indigenous, traditional explanation of the forces that generate political authority, economic prosperity, and social well-being, as well as the factors that lead to decline and ultimate demise. It posits the state as an organic unit functioning symbiotically with political, economic, and social forces through cycles of rise and fall, governed by a concept known as the Mandate of Heaven. According to this process, rule in China is not arbitrary but is a function of Heaven's will, or mandate. Heaven here is a divine force that determines the natural order inscribed in the operation of the universe. Those who rule do so by virtue of Heaven's approval. The rule of a dynasty persists so long as rulers maintain their virtue, signaled by Heaven's approval, exhibited in the prosperity and peace of society. As prosperity and peace decline, Heaven's approval is withdrawn. Social upheaval ensues and political rebellion occurs. The mandate is revoked and passed on to a new ruler, who initiates a new dynasty and social order, ushering in a new regime of peace and prosperity.

The long span of Chinese history and the continuity of Chinese cultural motifs offer a perspective on the process of cyclical change that is not easily detectable elsewhere. Within the microanalysis of cyclical dynastic change covering China's traditionally recognized twenty-four dynasties dating back to the second millennium BCE if not before, there are periods recognized not only for their evolution of existing patterns but as groundbreaking paradigm shifts that break with the old and usher in the new. Up until the early twentieth century, two such periods are recognized: the end of the Warring States period and advent of the Qin and Han dynasties in the third century BCE, as well as the fall of the Tang and advent of the Song dynasty in the tenth century CE. The paradigm initiated in the Song lasted through the Qing dynasty, the last

imperial dynasty, when its presuppositions were shattered by Western interventions in the nineteenth century. Since that time, China has been in the throes of seeking a new model for Chinese civilization, a paradigm suitable for China that transcends the limitations of the past and poises China for future greatness. The question of how China reinvents itself—what form or forms China's reassertion of its new paradigm might take—is at the heart of this book.

China has poised itself to forgo its long modern history of being on the defensive and to take an offensive strategy in forging a world order in its image and likeness. As the superiority of China's functional manifestations grow—its industrial capacity, buoyed by a growing scientific, technological, and military confidence—how will China translate this offensive into the cultural arena, to champion the superiority of its indigenous essence, the spirit of China's traditional cultures? As China positions itself as an economic and political leader in world affairs, what role will China's cultural renaissance take? How will this cultural renaissance manifest itself, and what does it bode for the future? As this turn of events unfolds into a new reality, the rise of China (and East Asia generally) forces us to ask questions, many of which are perplexing and challenge some long-held assumptions.

For centuries, since the European Enlightenment, industrialization, and establishment of a world economic order built on European empires and their colonies, the primacy of the West has been assumed. This primacy has been so implicit that it has assumed normative status. Western ideas, institutions, conventions, and standards of behavior and dress have been adopted almost universally around the globe. What happens when this normative status is challenged or revoked? What happens when the primacy of the West—economic, political, and cultural—is questioned? Or are Western ideas so entrenched in notions of modernity that China is unable to alter them? A premise of the current volume is that as solid as the Western bases of modernity are, they are not unalterable and that China is determined to change the model, or at least reassign the pieces that construct it in significant ways.

One of the sacrosanct assumptions of modern capitalism is that market freedoms are inevitably tied to political freedoms. As China attempts to forge its brand of capitalist economic development with the increasing success of a so-called state-sponsored capitalism, what happens to an essential assumption that modern capitalism was built upon?

As a corollary to the above, one of the assumptions of the European version of modernity stemming from the enlightenment is the sanctity of

the individual and the role of individual rights and freedoms. The whole nexus of modernity is predicated on the self-evident truths inherent in the individual, endowed with certain inalienable rights. Creativity and innovation, the wellspring of scientific discovery, are necessitated by the individual's inalienable rights and freedoms. What does it mean to foster creativity and innovation outside these parameters? More pointedly, can it be accomplished outside the protections afforded by individual freedom?

One of the political questions that the rise of China poses for a new world order is the specter of authoritarian rule. The current world order has been predicated on democracy and democratic institutions. How would China, with its apparent distaste for democracy and the rights of individuals, alter institutional arrangements in a future civilization predicated on authoritarian rule?

The reputation of Confucianism, long a code word for the Chinese tradition itself, suffered seemingly irreparable damage in the twentieth century for its identification with traditions and customs that inhibited China's ability to modernize. Vilified during the Cultural Revolution as China's nemesis and the font of old and outmoded habits and superstitions, and drawing from themes articulated in the New Cultural movement decades earlier, Confucius has been miraculously revived by the Communist Party as a moral exemplar whose values are compatible with those of the Party itself. What does this cultural counter-revolution bode for the future role of Confucianism in China and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)? The Confucian revival has also coincided with a return of other Chinese religious and intellectual traditions. What of the future roles of the also once-vilified traditions of Buddhism and Daoism, whose temples and institutions have experienced a remarkable resurgence?

The return of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism to a measure of respectability, if not outright prominence, suggests that their teachings and practices are assuming a role among contemporary Chinese people that had hitherto been restricted, often severely, in the communist era. As this measure of respectability grows and as these traditions reassert their roles in the religious and social lives of the people, one must ask about the role of Marxist ideology in China and the future of "socialism with Chinese characteristics" (as Chinese interpretations and adaptations of the Marxist model are referred to)?

The world is now well aware of the threats posed by climate change and growing environmental degradation. China, to be sure, has been identified as a major culprit in this growing threat. What role will China

play in meeting these environmental challenges? Official CCP policy aims at China becoming an Ecological Civilization (*shengtai wenming*). More broadly, as the Chinese embrace new technologies, what role will technology play in their daily lives? How will a future Chinese civilization embrace technology, particularly as a tool of authoritarian control?

Finally, if a new world order is in the offing and China plays a determinative role in formulating this order, it raises the question of what the future will look like. If this future deviates from the past as much as some suggest, it portends a major paradigm shift that will affect many of our habits of thought and what passes for “normative” behavior. The past, including the last few centuries, will be open to reinterpretation in line with a new reality. Whoever controls the future controls the memory of the past as well. Those in the future will write and rewrite the histories of our past to reinforce their contemporary values. The values of individual freedom and expression that were once sacrosanct may be subject to reinterpretation.

It is useful to remember that while China is an old civilization possessing the longest continuous record of any human culture, it is but a young modern nation, dating from 1949. China's attempt at modern reinvention has been a long, often devastating process extending over nearly two hundred years. During this period, characterized as the “century of humiliation,” China suffered repeatedly at the hands of Western imperial powers and Japan, punctuated by defeat in the First Opium War (1839–42) and the victory of the Communist Party (1949). During this long, often dark night, China has gone through a prolonged period of self-questioning. What is China? What does it stand for? The most recent period of reexamination is but the latest in a long history of attempts to come to terms with itself and what it means to be Chinese in terms of both its national integrity and its international stature. These debates in China are not new but have a history that predates the People's Republic. The CCP is one outcome of these debates, but even it is an amorphous political conglomerate subject to conflicting tendencies. The return of Confucianism and Chinese traditions to the public square represent a vivid about-face, of sorts, in China's modern trajectory. This is what makes it so fascinating and perplexing. What it means is open to speculation—only future developments will decide how momentous the return of China's past will be for its future. China itself is learning and experimenting with what it is, what it might be. As we explore the dimensions of future possibilities tied to China's

past traditions, we will do well to keep in mind the fluidity of current discourses. The novelty of our engagement is second only to that facing the Chinese people themselves, to whom dimensions of their traditions remain a mystery that they are still rediscovering.

Aim of this Book

The current book took shape as a result of the questions that China's rise invite and the need to bring these to a larger forum for discussion. For reasons suggested above, it is incumbent on us to take China's rise seriously, a task for which many are woefully unprepared. This book assumes that perspectives involving modern and contemporary geopolitical and intrastate dynamics are insufficient, on their own, for answering questions regarding China's rise. The same holds true for economic analyses, however pertinent. The reinvention of China's contemporary cultural identity will play a determining role in how China approaches its future, which will have effects that determine futures beyond China. Like no time in China's recent history (and certainly unlike any time in the history of the People's Republic), China is being shaped in terms of its past: but which past (or combination of pasts) is being held up as the model—Communism, Confucianism, or Legalism? And what role are religious traditions, Buddhism, and Daoism (Taoism) playing in these models? In the pages that follow, I look at current engagements with models of China's past intending to explore the parameters and possibilities shaping China's future. I introduce traditional lenses of Chinese thought—Confucianism, Legalism, Daoism, and Buddhism—and reflect on their potential relevance for contemporary China. In short, the book is structured around two aims: to identify key aspects of China's traditions and traditional cultures and to look at ways in which these aspects are contributing to contemporary debates in China over future directions.

China and a New World Order?

There is much at stake in the new emerging dispensation. A new order that includes China (or that China leads) will contend with current issues facing our planet and the people inhabiting it. How can the nations of

the world share the Earth justly, sustainably, and peacefully? Will a new order address the problems of wealth distribution, inequality, gender, and biases based on ethnicity and race? Will it propose a new order to address the growing militarization and risks of nuclear war, to promote an era of justice, sustainability, and peace? China's rise does not occur in a vacuum but alongside a number of other inquiries and discourses in the West, in the Islamic world, in the countries of the former Soviet Union and Eastern bloc, in Africa, and in Latin America. Each region of the world is going through some kind of radical reevaluation of its normative cultural traditions and aspirations, thrust between "traditional" imaginings (e.g., How Christian is Europe? How Christian should it be? How Hindu is India? How Hindu should it be? What kind of Christianity is driving American exceptionalism? What are the democratic potentialities in modern Islam? How do the countries of Southeast Asia, given their colonial and Marxist experiences, reimagine themselves in neo-traditional terms?) and modern secular aspirations. How will resident world cultures work with or oppose China's rise? How might they influence it?

No region of the world is more crucial for understanding how this new world order might take shape than Asia and, especially, China. As my chapters attempt to make clear, much is happening within China, with the much-publicized "Confucian revival," its ambiguous relationship to Marxism, the persistence of Daoism and its environmental message, and the reinvigoration of Buddhism. China also continues to deal with internal strife, ongoing human rights and "democratic" protest movements, and the repression of Islam in Xinjiang and Buddhism in Tibet. Few of these developments are visible to or understood by the rest of the world, including the West. It is especially difficult to penetrate what is happening with authentic agency within these ancient and modern cultural streams and what is being manipulated by the government for particular political or economic ends.

The task of this book is to penetrate the veil that is China and try to reveal within necessary limits what kinds of cultural retrieval, reformation, reinvention are happening. It is impossible to predict China's future or the role and consequences that its cultural retrieval, reformation, and reinvention has in influencing the policies China will take. It is likewise impossible to know what effect these will have on the international order. What we do know is the repository from which China will draw. This repository is itself vast and complex, with many dimensions both apparent and obscure. In the current world where China

is playing an important role and is poised to play an even more important one in the future, it behooves us to become familiar with this repository so that we can follow forces as they unfold and even potentially exert pressure to influence their outcomes.

The “China Threat” in Contemporary Discourse

There have been several works in recent years dedicated to China, as a result of China’s rise. Many of these are confrontational in tone, aimed at making us aware of, diffusing, or remedying the “China threat.” These revolve around contemporary political, military or economic dynamics and assume that the current world order (or some version thereof) is the only plausible normative one. A review of these helps to position the current book within this discourse.

William J. Holstein’s *The New Art of War: China’s Deep Strategy Inside the United States* (2019) poses the question: how can America’s fractured democracy and diverse society respond to a centrally orchestrated strategy from China that ultimately may challenge our interests and our values? This book is largely about technology transfer and the alleged theft of American technology based on the experiences of “embedded” Chinese and Chinese Americans at American companies. It also discusses how China attempts to manipulate American opinion and decision-making, all in the service of a slogan by Sun Tzu in *The Art of War*, “The supreme art of war is to subdue the enemy without fighting.”

A more pessimistically framed challenge is Graham Allison’s well-received book, *Destined for War: Can America and China Escape Thucydides’s Trap?* (2018), which contends that China and the United States are heading toward a war neither wants. The reason is Thucydides’s Trap: when a rising power threatens to displace a ruling one, violence is the likeliest result. Today, as an unstoppable China approaches an immovable America, and both Xi Jinping and former US president Donald Trump promise to make their countries “great again,” make the prospects of avoiding the trap, according to Allison, grim.

Michael Pillsbury, in *Hundred-Year Marathon: China’s Secret Strategy to Replace America as the Global Superpower* (2016), suggests that after forty years under American tutelage to help China build a booming economy, develop its scientific and military capabilities, and take its place on the world stage, the “China Dream” is to replace us, just as America

replaced the British Empire. Based on his contacts with the “hawks” in China’s military and intelligence agencies and his translations of their documents, speeches, and books, Pillsbury shows how the teachings of traditional Chinese statecraft underpin their actions. He offers an inside look at how the Chinese view America and its leaders—as barbarians who will be the architects of their own demise. *The Hundred-Year Marathon* bills itself as a wake-up call as we face the greatest national security challenge of the twenty-first century.

Two works by Peter Navarro, one coauthored with Greg Autry, *Death by China: Confronting the Dragon—A Global Call to Action* (2011), and the other with a foreword by Gordon C. Chang, *Crouching Tiger: What China’s Militarism Means for the World* (2015), give a “catalogue China’s abuses,” “a call to action and a survival guide for a critical juncture in America’s history—and the world’s,” and an “assessment of the probability of conflict between the United States and the rising Asian superpower.” According to Chang, Navarro’s *Crouching Tiger* is the ultimate “geopolitical detective story” on how China is posing the greatest challenge to the United States and to the international order. Chang’s *The Coming Collapse of China* (2001) represents another aspect of the modern dialogue concerning China, that of an impending and inevitable demise resulting from deterioration from within.

Finally, there is *Bully of Asia: Why China’s Dream is the New Threat to World Order* (2017) by Steven Mosher, with a byline “The Once and Future Hegemon.” Mosher believes that China is an enemy that “poses a truly mortal challenge to the United States and the peaceful and prosperous world that America guarantees.” He draws on China’s totalitarian past (i.e., Legalism) to expose the underbelly of a Chinese “dream” intent on world domination. While Mosher’s book correctly identifies Legalism, which I discuss in chapter 3, “Chinese Authoritarianism,” as the historical force behind China’s aggressive policies both domestic and international, it is not the only force animating China’s current quest for cultural identity, as this book shows.

Another work, less confrontational in tone and more circumspect in its treatment of China, is Martin Jacques’s *When China Rules the World: The End of the Western World and the Birth of a New Global Order* (2012). Jacques accepts China’s rise as a given and challenges the inevitable “western drift” in orientation. In some ways, Jacques anticipates many of the assumptions of my work, particularly in suggesting that China’s impact will be as much political and cultural as economic. In this regard it is

complimentary, accepting China's cultural impact in a nonconfrontational tone, but is less reflective about the inherent nature of the traditions forging China's current identity.

Finally, Henry Kissinger, *On China* (2012), is masterful in his description of the inner workings of Chinese diplomacy, providing a historical perspective on Chinese foreign affairs. But the book lacks a cultural analysis of those traditions that are increasingly influencing its domestic discourse.

The current spate of books on contemporary China tends to be aggressively anti-Chinese, viewed through lenses of an assumed American natural dominance—political, economic, and cultural—and China's threat to that dominance. My book shares with Martin Jacques a more sanguine view of China's rise, accepting its inevitability and examining the dimensions into which China's cultural reinvention may be cast. This is not to say that China, like any other country or civilization, is immune to the darker forces that haunt it but to acknowledge that these forces do not exist in isolation and that these are not the only forces at play. My book is a primer for that greater intellectual landscape that is China's intellectual heritage, a heritage that is struggling to break into open modern consciousness. While those of us outside of China may only be observers of this process and the underlying forces shaping it, our awareness of these forces may help us see the shapes emerging in a more familiar light and even to make our preferences known, not in a conceptual language alien to Chinese tradition, but in terms and concepts that reveal sympathetic familiarity with it.

Chapter Summaries

The ensuing chapters tackle one by one the potential relevance of China's premodern traditions—Confucianism, Legalism, Daoism, and Buddhism—for China's contemporary cultural resurgence. The dialogue between these traditions and Chinese Communism's Marxist ideology is also enjoined.

Chapter 1, "The Return of the Native: The Fall and Rise of Confucius in Modern China," poses the question: how relevant are Confucius and his teachings to the contemporary world? It raises the perspectives of modern "New Confucians," Mou Zongsan, Tu Wei-ming, and the so-called Boston Confucians and their assertions of Confucian

relevance and indeed need for addressing issues confronting contemporary societies, including Western societies beyond China and the East Asian cultural sphere facing mounting social discord. I introduce a now-classic work championing the relevance of Confucius for the modern world by Hebert Fingarette, *Confucius: The Secular as Sacred*, dating from 1972. This backdrop exposes how Confucius was denigrated and disposed of in China, yet his legacy continued to be celebrated in the Chinese diaspora community and by academics in the West. The remainder of the chapter looks into the turmoil surrounding Confucius in modern China, dating before but continuing through the Communist era. As the symbol of China's traditional culture, there is nothing so poignant as the reappearance of Confucius and his teaching in public discourse.

Chapter 2, "Chinese Authoritarianism: The Role of Legalism and Militarism in the Making of Modern China," exposes how the limitations of Confucian idealism and morality were supplemented by another deeply rooted tradition: Legalism. The Legalist tradition provides the foundations of China's bureaucratic empire and the assumption of a leading role for the use of force, including especially military force, in the exercise of power. I introduce the classic text Sunzi's *Art of War* (now well known in the West) and its contributions to Legalist thinking. I discuss in greater detail the dynastic cycle and the interplay between Confucianism and Legalism as tandem forces in the exercise of power in China. I end with a discussion about the relevance of the dynastic cycle for modern China and how Xi Jinping's promotion of Confucianism may be another instance of dressing up Legalism with a Confucian overlay.

Chapter 3, "The Daoist Cycle of Life and the Way of Returning to the Fundamental: Millenarian Prophecy and the Environmental Movement in Contemporary China," discusses the relevance of Daoism in contemporary Chinese discourse. I begin with a description of the complementary role Daoism played in the "three ways of thought in ancient China" (along with Confucianism and Legalism). I discuss the importance of the concept *dao* rooted in the classic text, the *Daode jing*: "Classic of the Way and Its Virtue/Power." I continue with a description of the relevance of Daoist concepts in contemporary Chinese debates, especially relating to the environmental movement, the so-called green Dao. I end with a different potential application of Daoist concepts for contemporary China, the "other side" of the Dao, the religious dimension of Daoism as a revolutionary force contributing to the completion of the dynastic cycle.

Chapter 4, “The Return of the Nonnative: The Buddhist Revival in Contemporary China,” looks at the remarkable resurgence of Buddhism in contemporary China. In it, I examine the historical clash between Buddhism, as a foreign or nonnative religion, and a Chinese civilization constructed on Confucian morality. Beyond the historical, I look at how anti-Buddhist (and antireligious) attitudes in modern China, framed by Marxist ideology, culminated in policies aimed at suppressing and eliminating its presence. I introduce a pattern in Chinese history of suppression of Buddhism followed by revival and note the parallels with the current renaissance. Much of the chapter is dedicated to describing the modern reconstruction of two Buddhist monuments in Hangzhou, looking at them as parameters between which the contemporary revival is cast and as examples aimed at the Buddhist community of devout worshippers, on the one hand, and the phenomenal growth of leisure and tourist Buddhism, on the other. I close the chapter with reflections on the implications of the Buddhist renaissance in China for the future, especially when half of the world’s Buddhists are now Chinese citizens and considering how Buddhism is situated in the context of evolving Communist Party policy toward legitimate religious expression.

Chapter 5, “Back to the Future? Prospects for Confucianism and Chinese Traditions in Contemporary China,” reviews the challenges facing New Confucianism as it attempts to reformulate itself as a meaningful response to modernity. As the third iteration of Confucianism, I look at it against the backdrop of Neo-Confucianism, the second iteration of Confucianism formulated in the Song dynasty, not in terms of actual proposals, but as a template for how to respond in times of paradigmatic change. I look at two leading trends in the New Confucian movement, Mind Confucianism and Political Confucianism, to review their teachings and address their prospects, before looking at the future of China’s past in terms of the support structure provided by Confucianism, Legalism, Daoism, and Buddhism for rulers in China’s past and its prospects for the present and future.

I end with an afterword, “Concluding Reflections,” bringing the discussion back to some of the concerns raised at the outset and the need to include China’s traditions to assess the contemporary and future prospects for China and its contributions to an emerging world order.