

## Book Review

*When China Rules the World: The End of the Western World and the Birth of a New Global Order.* By Martin Jacques.  
(New York: Penguin Press. pp. 550. ISBN 9781594201851.  
\$29.95.)

Since the end of WWII, the United States has been the preeminent cultural, economic, and military power in the international system. Even at the height of the Cold War, the United States maintained its supremacy over the Soviet Union, and would continue to do so well into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. However, since the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, a new power has risen, the People's Republic of China, driven by annual economic growth rates of over 10% in the last three decades. China currently has the second largest economy and the fastest growing economy in the world. It is projected to overtake the U.S economy by 2020. Unlike the Soviet Union, China has emphasized a peaceful approach in its rise. However, questions remain as to what impact China's ascent will have on the international system, once exclusively dominated by the U.S. but increasingly multi-polar.

In *When China Rules the World: the End of the Western World and the Birth of a New Global Order*, Martin Jacques advances the argument that China's rise as an economic superpower will alter the cultural, political, and ethnic balance of global power in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. To demonstrate how this will occur, Jacques provides a detailed account of China's past and how it has shaped China's rise to global preeminence. The book is divided into two parts: the first is mostly historical while the second focuses on current issues. In Chapter One, Jacques very briefly discusses the "End of the Western World" with the objective of highlighting the process of modernity and industrialization that paved the way for the affluence that epitomized Western civilization from the late 18<sup>th</sup> Century to the early 21<sup>st</sup> Century. He also acknowledges the modernization and industrialization that many Asian countries underwent in the late-20<sup>th</sup> century, inspired by the Western models which suddenly brought many Asian countries to positions of affluence.

Chapter Two explores the “Rise of the West,” with emphasis on the “European miracle’ of industrialization” that enabled the West to emerge commercially while most of Asia lagged behind. Jacques notes that, although Western Europe was once in a similar position as China, the West was able to rapidly surpass China and the rest of Asia through its “European miracle’ of industrialization that would not have been possible without African slave labor and the European colonization legacy.

Chapter Three examines “Japan-Modern but Hardly Western,” and sheds light on the historical factors that shaped Japan’s modernization and Westernization. Jacques focuses on the disgrace felt by the Japanese as a result of their threatened subjugation and their realist response in the Meiji Restoration, in which Japan learned the Western way in an effort to economically and militarily reclaim perceived honor in the face of Western humiliation. Interestingly, as Jacques discusses, Japan’s “Restoration” practically led to its “Westernization” as it too pursued colonial interests in East Asia in an effort to emulate the West.

Chapter Four covers the subject of “China’s Ignominy,” beginning with China’s first major encounter with the Western world. In 1792, King George III ordered and financed a Western delegation led by Macartney to be sent to Emperor Qianlong in 1792. The intention was to coerce China to open up its markets to Western trade. Jacques continues this chapter with a detailed look into China’s history, examining the Qin Dynasty, Song Dynasty, the Ming Dynasty, and ending with the Qing Dynasty that essentially paved the way for the creation of the Chinese state. In exploring China’s history, Jacques hopes to retrace the cultural norms and values that have come to define modern China; most notably, China’s identity as Confucian nation-state acting under the Mandate of Heaven. His intent is also to show that the dynamics of state-creation in China and Europe were profoundly different in almost every major respect. These differences accounted for implosions such as the 1900 Boxer Uprising that was brought about by the Western presence. Jacques concludes the chapter by touching on the attenuated sovereignty that China suffered for over a century as a result of Western conquest and dominance, which officially ended with the establishment of the People’s Republic of China under Mao Zedong in 1949.

Chapter Five focuses on the notion of “Contested Modernity,” in which attention is given to the impact that the rise of the Asian Tigers has had on redefining traditional understandings of modernity. Jacques’ main point is that the past is one aspect of Asia’s modernization, but that another aspect is the embrace of the future and a powerful orientation towards change. This change, as he explains it, is the redefining of modernity to fit the Asian cultural and regional experiences. One of the most formidable challenges to this change is the role of English as the global *lingua franca*. Jacques recognizes that whereas the dominance of English is slowly being eroded and replaced with a greater variety of languages, Asian apparel continues to be dominated by Western culture. Nevertheless, Asian food, particularly Chinese food, remains resilient in the face of Western cultural hegemony as symbolized by the spread of Western fast food chains all across Asia. Jacques wraps up the chapter by highlighting that in East Asia, especially China, politics is rooted in culture, and that power and politics are to be understood in normative contexts as opposed to the legalist contexts prevalent in the West. Also, Chinese culture has been resilient against Westernization in many aspects, a reality that partly defines China’s successful contesting of Western modernity.

Chapter Six focuses on “China as An Economic Superpower.” This chapter documents the familiar tale of China’s path to economic superpower status from the period of Deng Xiaoping to Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao. Jacques draws attention to the various elements of China’s economic boom opening up to outside investments. He also brings to light the negative social, political, and environmental implications of China’s economic rise, while touching on the technological innovations that are likely to guide China into the next stage of its development.

Chapter Seven, on “A Civilization-State,” challenges the reader to think of China not as a nation-state in the Westphalia sense, but as a civilization-state based on the uniqueness of China’s linguistic tradition, the ethics and value-based nature of its politics, as well as other civilizational differences with the West. Whatever outside norm or tradition China adopts must be subject to the flexibility and adaptability of its Confucian identity. Moreover, the Chinese Communist Party itself must be cognizant of the domestic social and economic challenges it continually faces, most notably, the widening gap between the rich and the poor, environmental concerns

and corruption. The party must be able to transform and adapt itself to meet these challenges or risk its moral standing and legitimacy being undermined.

Chapter Eight discusses the concept of the “Middle Kingdom Mentality;” that is, the sentiment that China’s civilization history reflects China’s majority Han ethnic group. This mentality claims that China and the Chinese have their own tale of human origin, distinct from the dominant narrative that all human beings originated from Africa. This chapter also covers the sensitive issue of racism, apparently inherent in Chinese culture and a powerful force in modern China. Jacques explains that the majority Han population have a very racist view of their fellow non-Han countrymen, who are sometimes treated badly in Chinese society, such as through officially sanctioned methods of forced assimilation. In a broader light, Jacques argues that racism is pervasive in modern China, as whites are respected and adored while Blacks are depicted as racially inferior.

Chapter Nine documents “China’s Own Backyard,” which brings to attention China’s multilateral approach to engaging its neighbors. China is a major trading partner of Asian countries, especially East Asian countries. In an effort to convince its neighbors of its peaceful intentions, China has settled major border disputes with its neighbors. Taiwan, however, remains a sensitive issue. Japan has become more economically interdependent, but is politically at odds with China. Finally, the “elephant in the room,” the United States, remains a major foreign policy challenge.

Chapter Ten, on “China as a Rising Global Power,” discusses how China has used its leverage as the industrial factory of the world to engage in partnerships aimed at circumnavigating American hegemony. China is also incrementally working towards the creation of a new world order, with the center of affluence shifting from Europe to East Asia. Thus, China has invested heavily in Africa, winning hearts and minds in an effort to secure the raw materials to fuel its economy. In the Middle East, most notably Iran, it has aggressively sought affinities with oil-rich Middle Eastern states in an effort to enhance its influence. China has further strengthened its friendship with Russia although mutual suspicions remain; this is not so different with India. China has expanded its economic activities in South Asia, and enjoyed a rather smooth relationship with European countries apart from issues dealing with the Dalai Lama. All of these points are raised to show the rise of China’s superpower status and

the decline of that of the United States, and the impact the shift in balance of power is already having on the international system.

Chapter Eleven, entitled “When China Rules the World,” makes the final link between China’s past and the impact it has on its future rise as a civilization-state. As Jacques remarks, the potential implications of its rise are numerous; China’s rise may help lead to the eradication of the Westphalia system and the return of the tributary system. China will exercise a gravitational pull as its cities increasingly become the economic hubs of the world. China’s multinational corporations will overtake markets previously dominated by Western firms, and it is showing signs of successfully creating a new political pole, with Beijing at the center, and East Asia as the ring. Chinese values, cultures, and language (Mandarin) are becoming global attractions in addition to the increasing prestige of its universities and colleges. Finally, the chapter provides concluding remarks and lists and discusses eight key characteristics that define China on its journey to give birth to a new global order: (1) China is not a nation-state, but a civilization-state; (2) China is likely to define its relationship with East Asia in terms of a tributary-state; (3) China has a distinct outlook on race and ethnicity; (4) China operates on a continental canvas to other nation-states; (5) the nature of the Chinese polity is very specific; (6) China’s modernity is characterized by the speed of its transformation; (7) China is ruled by a communist regime, and (8) China will be represented by the combined characteristics of both a developed and a developing country. For all of these reasons, Jacques contends, China’s ascent will herald the end of Western dominance and the birth of a new global order.

Martin Jacques’ study is essential reading for all scholars of International Relations and Comparative Politics, not just those specializing in East Asian area studies; it should prove valuable to foreign policy analysis at the individual, state, or system level. Jacques raises many of the foreign policy issues that are now or are likely to be at the forefront of international relations. The book’s contextualization of China’s rise and its impact on the international system provides scholars with historical and cultural perspectives that, if overlooked, might lead to parochial misunderstandings and stereotyping of the complex realities behind China’s rise. Jacques supports his arguments well, while leaving the reader to formulate his or her own opinion on the nature of China’s rise.

With that said, Jacques has a tendency to be repetitive. In his chapter on the “Middle Kingdom Mentality,” Jacques fails to make a much-needed distinction between ethnocentrism and racism as it pertains to the Middle Kingdom Mentality. Jacques seems to have attempted to prove, knowingly or unknowingly, that the severity of what he understood to be racism in Chinese history was no different from the form of racism practiced by the West. If so, one is again forced to note the need for distinction between ethnocentrism and racism because China does not share the legacy of slavery and colonialism that defines the West. Therefore, Jacques’ linking of racism to the Middle Kingdom Mentality as influenced by Han heritage within China would arguably not be a racist legacy, but a legacy of ethnocentrism. This is not to presume, however, that racism does not exist in China. Lastly, there are mentions of xenophobia that may also be a characteristic of the Middle Kingdom Mentality.

*Reviewed by:*

**Miracle Obeta**

Department of Political Science

Miami University, Oxford, OH