

THE 21st CENTURY AS WHOSE CENTURY?

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ABSTRACT

Macro-analysis and East-West encounter are shown through consideration of objective yet subjective constructed concepts for the international system and international economy in the 21st century. Three paradigms are considered, namely the 21st century as the 'Pacific Century', as 'China's Century' and as the 'Asian Century'. Overlaps are shown between these three paradigms, as also developments in time, and gradually shift in geographical location. The 'Pacific Century', and its associated Rimspeak, was the paradigm emerging in the late 1970s, knitting together America's West Coast and the Japanese economy. By the late 1980s this was already shifting to talk of the 21st century likely to be an 'Asian Century' model, mark-1, based on the Pacific Asia dynamism shown by the 'Asian Tigers' and Japan. However, the Asian financial crash of 1997-8, and the economic downturn in Japan, meant that such an 'Asian Century' seemed premature as the 21st century arrived. Instead, it was China's economic growth that seemed most evident, and with it the concept of the 21st century as 'China's Century'. However, in turn that has already been modified during the first decade of the century by India's arrival as a rapidly growing economy. Consequently the 21st century as 'China's Century' and as 'India's Century' has been combined into talk of an 'Asian Century', mark-2.

INTRODUCTION: 'PACIFIC', 'CHINA' AND 'ASIA' PARADIGMS FOR THE INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM

Macro-analysis and East-West encounter is back in international relations, as the furore over Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations* (1997) showed. This is also an "age of new paradigms" (Wang Gungwu 2004) for the international system. Here, three such paradigms can be seen for the 21st century, namely talk it being *The Pacific Century*, *The China Century* and *The Asian Century* - the subject of this study. These paradigms reflect geopolitical and geoeconomic changes, and with it talk of 'power transitions' in the international system. These three frameworks are 'objective' enough descriptions of structural trends and patterns, each of them reflect 'long cycles' (Modelski 1987), 'long term trends' (Modelski 2006), Braudel's *la longue duree*, 'long waves' (Freeman 1983; Neumann 1997; Dark 1998) of change in the global economy and international system. In different ways all three 'century' paradigms illustrate the key role of economics - after all the underpinning theme of Paul Kennedy's *Rise and Fall of Great Powers*. In one sense they all pose substantive challenges to "the idea of a [Western-centred] core/periphery hierarchy composed of 'advanced,' economically developed, and powerful states dominating and exploiting 'less developed,' peripheral regions, [which] has been a central concept in the world-systems perspective" (Chase-Dunn and Jorgenson 2001).

Yet such frameworks, such centuries, are also 'subjective' images in states' strategic vision, their hopes and fears. This may seem irrelevant sophistry yet, as Wallerstein cautions, "we

seldom, if ever, take into account the social construction of time and space, and almost never the social construction of their combination” (1997b). Paradoxically, despite their long term horizons these three paradigms based on the Pacific/China/Asian framework have been subject to shifting short term tides of relevance and topicality which reflect their own contextual vagaries. Regions like the ‘Pacific’ and ‘Asia’ (and thus their attached centuries), are indeed “conceptual boundaries” that are “blurred and changing” and “porous” (Katzenstein 2005:12-13). Area Studies are in themselves problematic, in terms of definition, coherence and role (Lewis and Wigen 1999). Insights from regionalism and Regional Studies are relevant, for as Katzenstein noted “definitions of collective regional identity do not exist to be discovered. They are political constructs that actors contest and which evolve over time” (Katzenstein 2005:10). They are also philosophical concepts, “what Wittgenstein argues about [language] games holds also for geography” (Katzenstein 2005:13) when one is trying to define regions and regionalism. There are overlaps here with Lydia Liu’s recent work elsewhere on “the semiotics of international relations” (2004:5-30), and IR’s *constructivism* concerns with the role of image and perception. As such each paradigm reflect the immediate political context of its immediate times, “regions are the creation of political power and purpose” (Katzenstein 2005: 21). Subjective ‘discursive politics’ and ‘critical geography’ converge, “regions have both material and ideational dimensions” (Katzenstein 2005:10). Let us now turn to these three century-paradigms surrounding the ‘Pacific’, ‘China’, and ‘Asia’.

THE PACIFIC CENTURY

In “imaging the Pacific” (Smith 1992), the ‘Pacific Century’ has been frequently evoked and envisaged for over 150 years, and has given rise to memorable and evocative assertions (Korhonen 1996). It had already arisen around the middle of the 19th century, and was then renewed around the end of the 19th century for the coming 20th century. It finally re-emerged in the latter part of the 20th century for the coming 21st century, where Kishore Mahbubani, then Permanent Secretary at the Singapore Ministry of Foreign Affairs, was feeling *The Pacific Impulse*, “the future flow of history” (1995), and the Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer was sensing “we are about to enter what will surely be the Asia Pacific century” (1997a).

Despite its straightforward physical manifestation, the ‘Pacific’ has its particular uncertainties. Segal did not deny the economic growth and importance of Japan, nor the military strength of the United States across the Pacific. What he questioned was how far the ‘Pacific’ was a significant focus for identity, priorities and structures. He considered regional ‘Pacific’ frameworks were both too small and too big, ignoring “the twin pressures of globalization and local national styles,” so that “there is no important cultural, ideological, political, economic, or even military sense in which it is particularly useful to talk of the ‘Pacific’” (Segal 1990: 377). Indeed, given “the growing incoherence of the Pacific” (377) and the “many false dawns, of a genuine Pacific community” (378), Segal considered that “thinking Pacific is an anachronism.” (382). Palat’s sense was that “there is considerable ambiguity and confusion in conceptualizing the nature, constitution, and future directions of an impending Pacific Century” (1993:3). Thus, for Palat, “on the one hand, the very ease with which we can locate booming economies and plot the complex economic and political networks on maps endows the concept with an aura of obviousness” (3). On the other hand, the very unity of lands along the shores of the Pacific, which “appears concrete with reference to the region’s physical delineation on maps, is revealed as an abstraction when viewed in terms of human activity’ [citing Dirlik]” (Palat 1993: 4). Certainly Palat was right to pick up on how “by collapsing the enormous social heterogeneity within it, the [‘Pacific’] concept is emptied of analytical coherence” (1993:4) but one could argue that booming economic activities and the transnational networks are human activity of a tangible kind. The

very contextual nature makes it something needing clearer definition and clarification. As Dirlik rightly points out “to begin to confront the question, What is the Pacific?, it is necessary to define our terms by specifying whose Pacific - and when” (1998b:15).¹ One can also ask ‘where’ and ‘why’.

The ‘Pacific Century’ was a variable concept in terms of its spread. In reality the Pacific basin, those micro-state islands like Fiji, Tonga, Tuvalu, Kiribati and so forth were not particularly in mind when the ‘Pacific Century’ was evoked. Ultimately they were geographically insignificant in terms of size, sprinkled around the “earth’s empty quarter” (Ward 1989). Ronald Reagan may have reckoned that “when we look toward that great and grand Pacific Basin, there’s a promising future there” (1984). Yet the Pacific Basin, whilst geographically at the heart of the Pacific, was politically, economically and conceptually irrelevant to the ‘Pacific Century’ theme being shaped. Instead it was the Pacific Rim that was seen as proving the engine for the ‘Pacific Century.’ *Rimspeak* (Cumings 1998) was a noticeable feature of this development, a politically nuanced discourse that ran alongside the geographical existence. In part, the ‘Pacific Rim’ discourse was an attempt to create a future, a “mobilization myth” (Woodside 1998) for political, economic and academic elites. In part the ‘Pacific Rim’, and the ‘Pacific Century’ concept, was “imaginative geography” (Palat 1997) as well as actual spatial geography, subjective as well as objective, affecting and reflecting ‘reality,’ there to be shaped and taken in various directions. Another ambiguity was that not all parts of the Rim were involved in ‘Pacific Century’ dynamics. The Soviet Union may have evoked the ‘Pacific Century’ (Gorbachev 1987; also Segal 1987; Atkinson 1990), but instead the USSR collapsed. Russia may have joined APEC, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation organization in 1998, but she remained limping along as the ‘Sick Man of the East’ (Menon 2003).

In reality the Pacific Century was a theme that was most strongly discernible in certain countries. Japan enjoyed something of a “romance” with the Pacific Age/Pacific Century concept, a “beautiful slogan that Japanese politicians could pick from in times of need” (Korhonen 1998: 105). Prime Minister (1978-80) Ohira Masayoshi had already pushed a ‘Pacific Vision,’ Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone (1984) thought “the Pacific era is now an historical inevitability” (cited McCord 1991: 1). Japanese commentators were similarly enthused. Tokuyama Jiro had already talked of the coming ‘Pacific Century’ (1977: 24), Yoshi Tsurumi welcomed *The Challenges of the Pacific Age* (1985) and Yoichi Funabashi was similarly eloquent with his geo-cultural ruminations in *Asia Pacific Fusion* (1995; also Edstrom 2001). Pacific sentiments were also evident in Australia, as “negotiating the Pacific Century” (Bell et al. 1996) become an imperative for her politicians (Whitlam 1981) and business leaders (Palat 1998). Her Foreign Minister, Alexander Downer told Parliament that felt able to give an “upbeat assessment...of the sense of opportunity...that Australia sees in its region as we enter the Asia Pacific century” (1997a).

Across the Ocean “as road maps for the future, the Pacific Century...constructs...stirred powerful emotions in the United States” (De Santis 1996:21). The *Science* editor told his readers, “our Pacific Century has begun...as far as the United States is concerned, the 21st Century is its Pacific Century” (Gardner 1987). The Pacific was in vogue on American bookstands during the 1990s. Thus, Elegant’s *Pacific Destiny* (1990) was followed by Winchester’s *Pacific Rising* (1991), Gibney’s *The Pacific Century* (1992) was complemented by PBS’ ten-part, ten-hour television series *The Pacific Century*; whilst 1993 saw Viviano’s *Dispatches from the Pacific Century*. American Presidents across both main parties were swept up in general evocations of a coming ‘Pacific Century’, from Reagan (1983b) to George Bush (1991) and William Clinton

¹ Dirlik saw “contradictions” (1998a:3-14) surrounding the ‘Pacific’, between (1) area and region, (2) EuroAmerican invention & its Asian content, (3) fantasy & actuality, (4) Asia-Pacific & the world system, (5) region/sub-region & nation, (6) capital & class/genders, (7) different cultural formations.

(1996). Such sensitivity to the Pacific was found not only in Presidents, but across the political spectrum; for example from Senator Jesse Helms (1996) the long-time chairman of the US Senate Foreign Affairs Committee, from Mike Mansfield (1996) ambassador to Japan 1979-89, from Washington's Governor Gary Locke (1997) the first Chinese-American elected to such a position, and from Admiral Joseph Prueher (1997) Commander-in-Chief U.S. Pacific.

The concept was loaded with contextual assumptions and expectations in American circles. Cuming's critiques remains valid. At the academic level there is his argument that "in the late 1970s, a hue and cry suddenly arose about the dawning era of the Pacific, especially up and down the West Coast of the United States among academics trying to find some way to interest donors in funding Asian or international studies" (1993:21). Moreover, at a wider level, "'Pacific Rim' was the post-1975 artistry, an era of forward movement and backward occlusion, as Americans sought to 'put Vietnam behind us.' 'Pacific Rim' thus heralded a forgetting, a hoped for amnesia in which the decades-long but ultimately failed U.S. effort to obliterate the Vietnamese revolution would enter the realm of Korea, 'the forgotten war'" (22). Amidst the rhetoric, the US saw possibilities and the need for the US to extend itself in the region and through the concept. For Reagan "if the next century is the Pacific century, as some have suggested, America will be leading the way" (1986) in it. For Clinton's NSC adviser "American leadership in the Asia-Pacific region is essential," i.e. "how well we respond to the challenges of what some call the Pacific Century will determine whether it will be an American Century as well" (Lake 1996). In effect, this was unwitting testimony to Katzenstein's sense of the "American imperium" (2005:2-5,79-80; also Wilson 2000) at play in the region and in its conceptualization. Conversely, whilst America could expect to lead this emerging regionalism, Europe could fear being left behind as "the orphan at the feast" (Tanzer 1996). Indeed, Dosch noted "many in Bonn, Paris, Rome and other capitals worried that a 'Pacific century' could leave Europe as the odd man out in the new international order" (2001: 62).

Economic patterns were prominent in this renewed emphasis on the Pacific, for Segal "the still growing Pacific economy that so captivates the minds of futurologists" (1987:185; also Linder 1986; Clark and Chan 1992; Bergsten and Noland 1993). By 1980 trans-Pacific commerce had overtaken trans-Atlantic commerce in volume of trade, and continued to accelerate. 1980 also saw the setting up of PECC, the Pacific Economic Cooperation Council, in its own words "formed when the glimmerings of a Pacific Age could just be seen by those blessed by a clear vision" (PECC 1994). In South Korea, Nam Duck-woo enthused about how "the prospects of the Pacific economies...the pattern of interdependency now taking shape among the nations of the Pacific Rim" meant that "the twenty-first century is indeed to be the 'Age of the Pacific'" (1986). The PECC *Kuala Lumpur Concord on Regionalism* was replete with Pacific rhetoric, waxing about "the primacy of the Pacific...The Pacific shift has been more rapid than most could have imagined. The Pacific Age has indeed begun," given "the primacy of the Pacific as the centre of economic gravity of the world" (PECC 1994) - a frequently coined metaphor. Palat recognized that by 1996 the growth of commodity flows across the Pacific had been "nothing short of spectacular" (2004: 324).

America was particularly sensitive to the economic promises beckoning from a Pacific Century. Economic movement from its traditional Atlantic/East Coast to the Pacific/West Coast was already apparent, epitomised in Microsoft's 'Silicon Valley' ensconced in California. Gordon saw emerging economic *Pacific Futures for the USA* (1988). Talk of the 'Pacific Century' "looked forward: suddenly the rim became the locus of a new dynamism, bringing pressure on the mainland of Asia. [Pacific] Rimspeak, like modernization theory, continued to look with curiosity if not disdain upon anyone who did not privilege the market" (Cumings 1997). Within this the 'market' was seen as the field for America to enter and win. For Stern, there was a self-evident need for *A U.S. Trade Policy for the Pacific Century* where "the dawn of the Pacific Century beckons the United States" (1993); in which "the sheer volume of Asia-Pacific commerce animates U.S. dreams of a Pacific" (Manning and Stern 1994: 82). Politicians evoked the

economic promise of the Pacific throughout the 1980s. Reagan set a Presidential lead, pointing Alaskans to “an economic community on the Pacific rim which will be ever more important to our way of life in the years ahead...as the potential of the Pacific unfolds” (1983a). His future expectations were high, that “the strong economic growth that is expected through the next century will give the Pacific region increasing significance and influence” (1987). Such assumptions of continued economic growth were to be tested in the following decade.

Whilst Reagan had mused on the coming of a Pacific community, such a wider Pacific state setting had been brokered by Australia and Japan, with American support, whose suggestions led to formation in 1989 of the 12-nation *Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation* APEC group, i.e. the six ASEAN countries together with Australia and New Zealand, Canada and the USA, South Korea and Japan. Further countries joined, like China in 1991, Russia in 1998 and various Latin American states. At the diplomatic level, Pacific rhetoric continued to work its charm, with APEC Heads of Government annual meetings inaugurated by Clinton “the Godfather of the Pacific Era” (Apple 1993) at Seattle in 1993. Nevertheless, APEC remained skewed as an economic community during the 1990s, in many ways a series of bilateral flows with Japan, rather than widespread diffused trade between and across the Pacific generally. Moreover, APEC remains far from any European style integration in terms of institutional strength, legal frameworks, or indeed cultural underpinnings (Manning and Stern 1994). As the 21st century came, uncertainties over APEC’s role and relevance had already arisen, reflected in Aggarwal’s *Withering APEC?* (2000).

In one light the whole Pacific project could be seen as furthering the American cause, increasing dependency on the USA, with Japan acting as a bridgehead and junior partner. Yet there remained underlying “competing interests” (Gereffi 1993:67) between the Asian and American wings of the Pacific. Japan’s role in retrospect was not merely as a spoke of the American network. Indeed marked trade friction between Japan and America was one aspect of this cross-Pacific boom, a clash between “two competing capitalisms” (Lafeber 1997: 373-9; also Powell 1990; Aho 1993). Bhagwati saw the US as suffering from “the diminished giant syndrome” in which “today it is Japan that has emerged, threatening to open a Pacific Century” (1993:22). Yet, such frictions were overlaid with close US-Japanese security partnership, with both states using pacifying Pacific rhetoric to smooth their paths, suggesting win-win situations. Thus the Clinton-Hashimoto *Joint Security Declaration*, subtitled ‘Alliance for the 21st Century,’ highlighted “the future” beckoning where “the Asia-Pacific region has become the most [economically] dynamic area of the globe” (Japan-USA 1996).

However, in terms of common discourse and emerging trends, even as the 21st century finally came along, the ‘Pacific Century’ had lost some of its glittering allure. As Korhonen put it, “the Pacific Age is essentially a candy. It tastes good” (1995:140), but did not necessarily have much lasting substance. The Japanese economy slowed down in the 1990s, its ‘lost decade.’ The dramatic Asian financial crash of 1997-98 took the shine off the ‘Asian Tigers’ within the Pacific. Foot and Walker could well ask “whatever happened to the Pacific Century?,” as “the [Asian financial] crisis, in turn, is seen as marking the end of that shift in the economic and political centres of gravity” (1999:245). The Asian miracle had become “the miracle of the day before” (Palat 1999). Such economic downturn led Emerson to talk of “the premature end of the Pacific Century” (1998; also Gershman 2000). Ambassador Richard Fisher, Deputy U.S. Trade Representative, called for *Charting a Course for a Renewed Pacific Age* (1999), but his calling for renewal was in effect a tacit admission that the APEC-led Pacific Age dream had already faltered. A telling insider voice was Soemadi Brotodiningrat recalling, “I served as the Indonesian Senior Official for APEC. I did it for four years [1994-1998], and throughout that period the expression most frequently heard was ‘the 21st Century is a Pacific Century.’ This was by no means an empty expression,” given “the spectacular rates of growth in the Asia-Pacific region” (2004). However, “it is thus ironical that, when we actually entered the 21st Century, the expression that I mentioned, ‘the 21st Century is a Pacific Century,’ has almost completely lost

its echo" (ibid.). In the meantime, another paradigm had become prominent, the 21st century as 'China's Century'.

THE CHINA CENTURY

In retrospect, some of the dynamics propelling the 'Pacific Century' concept were as much, or even more, to do with the regional and global rise of the People's Republic of China, the PRC, as she finally stood up (Scott 2007: 130-41) within the international system. In 1990, her leader Deng Xiaoping had reckoned that "China's prospects for the next century are excellent...the so-called Asia-Pacific century will make no sense unless China develops" (1984-94:3.345). This was precisely what happened during the 1990s, where the PRC's ascent became clear cut, striking and evident during the 1990s, in and across the Asia-Pacific. McCord set the tone as he mused "the fate of the 1,100 million people of the Chinese mainland may well determine the course of the Pacific Century" (1991:75); and though he allocated China a modest "4th tier" position behind Japan, the '4 Tigers' and the ASEAN NICs, there was a sense for the future that "China seemed poised to join in the Asia renaissance" (14). Other commentators sensed this coming shift, Chase-Dunn and Podobnik from their World-Systems perspective that "in the coming decades, China is even more of a wildcard. With its tremendous human and natural resources, plus what is presently held to be the world's fastest growing economy, China will continue to increase its geopolitical and economic influence" (1995). James Sasser, on taking up his ambassadorial post in Beijing acknowledged that it was "engagement with China which will help usher in the coming Pacific Century" (1997). Borthwick considered "it is China's resurgence...that poses the central questions for the coming Pacific Century" (1998:547). Jim Walker noted that "China forms the pivot for that new momentum and for the real 'Pacific Century'" (Walker 2003:84).

As the new 21st century finally dawned, it was China rather than the Pacific that was catching the attention. The "future" (Zakaria 2005) was pointing to China, a "global power shift" (Hodge 2004; also Hale and Hale 2003) was apparent. Wallerstein's overview at the start of the century was that "China is looming ever larger on the world scene" and in which "China, it seems, is on everyone's mind," in part since "China (virtually alone) seems to be on the rise" (2001). Consequently for Rorty, given "the sheer size and potential power of China - the fact that the twenty-first century is likely to be the Chinese century in the same sense that the twentieth was the American Century" (2000:90-1). The Western media was more than ready to use the phrase 'China's/Chinese Century' (I. Campbell 2004; Fishman 2004; Gee 2004; Rees-Mogg 2005; McKay 2005; Newsweek 2005). In short, Skidelsky talked of *The Chinese Shadow* in which "China has suddenly become the all-absorbing topic for those professionally concerned with the future of the planet. Will the twenty-first century be the Chinese century, and, if so, in what sense?" (2005). In short, China's current rise poses a fundamental "challenge to global order" (Scott 2008b) of the first magnitude, to the very fabric of the international system emerging for the century.

Economics was behind much of the world's perception of China's rise. Initially Asia-Pacific dynamics had been focussed on other actors; Japan, the '4 Tigers' and the ASEAN NICs. However, the economic modernisation programme initiated by Deng Xiaoping in 1978 achieved sustained growth rates of 9-10% throughout the 1980s and 1990s, as China engaged with Western entrepreneurial and financial expertise. Deng's economic programme was seen by Cox as not only "impressive," but as "one of those critical 'turning-points' of the twentieth century" where "China, the new 'Orient Express' of the East - is *the* future and will dominate the international system of the twenty-first century in much the same way as Britain before the First World War and the United States after 1945" (1998:226). By 1990 Deng Xiaoping was reckoning that "China's prospects for the next century are excellent...it will not be long before the Republic of

China, which is already a political power, becomes an economic power as well.” (1984-94:3.345). Economics became a vital buttress for China’s emerging presence in the 1990s.

At times, this ‘China’ presence spilled over into the ‘Network’ power of the Chinese communities outside the PRC (Weidenbaum and Hughes 1996). At times, a ‘Greater China’ (Harding 1993; Shambaugh 1995) framework was used which included the other Chinese political units of Hong Kong, Taiwan and Singapore, all combined in Weidenbaum and Hughes’ *Greater China: The Next Economic Superpower* (1993). The PRC remained the central focus though. Past as well as future was arising, Arrighi’s sense of “a recentering of the regional and world economies on China as they were in pre-modern times” (1997; also Gilpin 1997:24) of its Middle Kingdom pre-eminence.

China’s prospects were heightened by Japan’s economic slowdown in the mid-1990s, and the Asian financial crash of 1997-98 from which the PRC was pretty unaffected. As the first waves of Pacific Asia leaders (Japan, the ‘4 Tigers’ and the ASEAN NICs) fell back, China moved forward in absolute and relative terms, emerging as the economic powerhouse of the region and moving confidently into the 21st century. Admittedly, some voices were less convinced. Gordon Chang’s dramatic *The Coming Collapse of China* (2002) painted a picture of regime breakdown. However, despite his criticisms on the internal ability of the PRC regime to handle economic and political reforms, Chang was nevertheless (2003) still certain that “one thing we do know: the People’s Republic will profoundly affect the shape of tomorrow...an economic powerhouse...this is ‘China’s Century’” (2003). Typical of this economics-driven perception was Brahm’s *China’s Century. The Awakening of the Next Economic Powerhouse* (2001) and Shenkar’s *The Chinese Century. The Rising Chinese Economy and Its Impact on the Global Economy, the Balance of Power, and Your Job* (2005). Her growth rate remained impressive, double digit official GDP growth rate figures continuing to be posted; 10.1% in 2004, 10.5% in 2005, 11.2% in 2006 and 11.4% in 2007.

Voices from China were well aware of China’s growing economic presence for the 21st century. Zeng Peiyan, Minister at the State Development Planning Commission, asserted with some pride that “at this point in time as the human race enters the 21st century, China is increasingly becoming the focus of world attention...people can see with increasing clarity China’s bright prospects in the new century” (2001:11). Lii Haibo in the *Beijing Review* reckoned the view that “the 21st will be the century of China” was “a reflection of the fact that China’s economic expansion has seen the nation take an increasingly important role in global affairs, particularly in the economic field” (2004:32). Zheng Bijian, Hu Jintao’s foreign policy *éminence grise*, considered that China’s “contribution to the world as an engine of growth will be unprecedented” (2005:18) in the 21st century.

Opinion was divided in the West over whether China’s economic development was a threat or an opportunity (Cable and Ferdinand 1996; Agarwala 2002). Some voices stressed the positive aspects of China’s economic trends. George Gu argued in *How Should We Understand the Chinese Century?* that “China’s development is creating a new engine of growth...a developing China offers opportunities for the world” (2004). William Rees-Mogg’s *This is the Chinese Century* emphasised “the economic maturity of the new China...for the future of what is beginning to look like the Chinese century” (2005). However, for others, a ‘China Century’ was a more evident economic threat. Fears of mass swamping by Chinese textile exports erupted in Europe and the USA in 2005. As posted by Chinese Customs, the PRC’s overall trade surplus with the world has risen from 23 \$billion in 2001, 30 \$billion in 2002, 26 \$billion in 2003, 102 \$billion in 2005, 177 \$billion in 2006, and 262 \$billion in 2007. China’s foreign exchange reserves, mostly gold and US dollars, also soared in the first decade of the century; reaching over \$711 billion by 2005, overtaking Japan in February 2006 as the world’s largest holder of foreign exchange reserves, crossing the \$1 trillion threshold by autumn 2006, and reaching around \$1.5 trillion by the end of 2007.

China's surging use of industrial resources and their environmental impact, were further significant issues arising for the 21st century. Hale pinpointed "China's growing appetites" for resources which is "likely to be as transforming an event in geopolitics as America's arrival as a world power during the early decades of the 20th century" (2004:137). In this vein, 2004 saw around 40-50% of global cement supplies swallowed up by China, and China overtaking Japan to become the world's biggest importer of iron ore. China imported 275 million tonnes of iron ore, again the world's biggest, in 2005 and 161 million tonnes in the first half of 2006, up 23 per cent year-on-year and more than in all of 2003. She overtook the US as the largest producer of CO2 emissions in 2007, a key factor for global warming. A 'China Century' could be an environmentally disastrous century for the world.

China's rise for the 21st century has also attracted 'structural' concerns for the international system. Luce's 'American Century' announced in 1940 was under threat. Campbell felt that "the American century is over," and instead "the Chinese Century begins;" with China "the country whose advance will enable it to claim this century for its own...this is not a bold prediction. It is an obvious one" (2004). This points to IR *power transition* theory, and with it the likelihood of the 21st century being a dangerous period of transition between a rising China and an established America (Lemke 1997; Kugler et al. 2001; cf. Chan 2007). The stakes were starkly summed up by Garver (1999) as being that "history is replete with confrontations between incumbent paramount powers and rising aspirant powers...one over-arching question we face as the twenty-first century unfolds before us is whether Sino-American relations will repay this bloody, costly drama of confrontation. The future course of Sino-American relation will be one of the most important variables determining the quality of international relations during the first quarter of the twenty-first century" (1999:xi). Mearsheimer's *realism* perspective (2001) thought that China's rise meant "it would be far more powerful and dangerous than any of the potential hegemons that the United States confronted during the twentieth century" (2001:57; also Huntington 1997:312,82-3; Mearsheimer 2005). Such theorizing was matched by the Pentagon's 2006 *Quadrennial Review* with China pinpointed as the only likely state competitor for the United States in the coming decades. A blunt verdict came from the *Beijing Review* that "the United States is today's only superpower and China will be tomorrow's world power" (Wang Wei 2004:23).

Both America and Canada have re-invoked the 'Pacific Century', in part because of concerns about a 'China Century' from their side of the Pacific. Geopolitical concerns over a 'China Century' made President Bush reiterate to the Japanese Parliament the 'alternative' Pacific vision, where "I'm convinced the 21st century will be the Pacific century. Japan and America share a vision for the future of the Asia Pacific region as a fellowship of free Pacific nations" (2002). Politically a 'Pacific Century' shaped by the USA and Japan was to be preferred to a 'China Century' shaped by the PRC. America's SUMMER PULSE exercises in 2004, coupled with RIMPAC naval exercises and re-deployment of troops from Europe to the Asia-Pacific was seen by Kapila as sending a message to China, "that China would not be able to claim the 21st century as a 'Chinese Century' in East Asia in the strategic tussle with USA" (Kapila 2004).

Geo-economic concerns for Canada were similarly evident in her readiness to invoke the Pacific Century umbrella for herself, and for her province British Columbia. Gordon Campbell, the Prime Minister of British Columbia, uses the rhetoric, that "the Pacific Century is upon us" (2006b); but its China slant was evident though, given his opening comments on having been in China, promoting Canada's 'Pacific Gateway'. Campbell may have felt "it's time for us to take full advantage of the Pacific opportunity that is there for Canada as we look at this Pacific century that is on our doorstep," that "it's the Pacific opportunity. It's the opportunity for us to define ourselves as a Pacific nation" (2006a). However, it was basically China-related, for "is there anyone here that doesn't recognize that the world's economies are shifting to the Pacific? People are talking every day about the incredible impact that China is having" (2006a).

For Max Boot, there was a *Project for a New Chinese Century*, where “Beijing plans for national greatness” (2005). However structural and perceptual uncertainties surround China for the coming century. Avery Goldstein considers the relatively low-profile external coupled with internal economic modernization approach taken by China since the late 1990s “finesses questions about the longer term” (2003:60) external path of China. As Goldstein notes this Dengist approach, “a strategy of transition” (2005: 38) operating since the 1980s and still set to run for another 30-50 years, avoids the longer term issue of what happens once China has risen, once it has achieved its target of achieving similar standards of wealth and strength, with a much bigger population base. This is the longer-term perspective, one in which Rennstich’s recent view of shifting hegemonic cycles sees a “China (?)” (2005:222; also Chase-Dunn 2005) setting arising by 2080, replacing the present Atlantic-Pacific locus.

However, keeping a low profile, in order to peacefully rise to national greatness by the mid-21st century, is a reason for China not to bandy about talk of the 21st century being a China Century. As Wang Yiwei admitted in the *Beijing Review*, “right now China is keeping a low profile but preparing to do what it wants to do” (2004:23). In effect Wang acknowledged Goldstein’s transition strategy model for the 21st century, that “this buildup period is expected to last for twenty years” (25), which “will be used by China to serve its grand strategy of peaceful rise...to grasp the 20 year period of opportunity, winning time at the cost of...a degree of [short-term] concession” (25). Such a transition strategy “is compatible with China’s [longer-term] grand strategy and should have more potential in the future” (25) - a future where “China will be tomorrow’s world power” (23). In one sense the PRC can take pride in her achievements and in the respect given to her economic surge. Yet any ‘China Century’ proclamation present dangers. This was perhaps why Lii argued in the *Beijing Review* that “there will be no so-called China century. That term conveys to some extent a chauvinistic tinge...Nor has this country had any desire for a China century or China-era, or something similar. Pursuing that kind of object will result in a state of isolation...crowning itself with the China century or being an aggressive superpower, it [China] would lose its friends and other countries would feel uncomfortable” (2004:32). From an IR *constructivist* point of view, ‘images’ matter, including macro-images of the 21st century. Other safer images could be pursued, that of the ‘Asia Century’.

THE ASIAN CENTURY

This term has gone through two shifts. Originally in the 1980s the ‘Asian Miracle’ by Japan and the ‘Asian Tigers’ Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan and South Korea led commentators to focus on their common Asian character, a so-called Confucian model which would lead to an ‘Asian Century’, even though China was not yet the most prominent Asian member. Such a Pacific Asia (excluding America) was a different geographical-cultural-political Asia-centered alternative to the American assumptions surrounding the ‘Pacific Century’. The rise of the Pacific was to a degree a way of saying the “rise” (Rohwer 1995; Arrighi 1996; also Borthwick 1992) of Pacific Asia/East Asia, such a rise posed “critical visions of the Pacific Century” (Berger and Borer 1997). As McCord put it, in his *The Dawn of the Pacific Century*, “the great Asian colossus has stirred and stretched its limbs with a vigor unknown for centuries...East Asia, allied with Southeast Asia, has a tryst with destiny. Barring nuclear catastrophe, the region will assume a dominant strategic position in the world during the twenty-first century” (1991:15,1; also Oberdorfer 1988).

Economics, again, underpinned this Asian-related concept, as with Taiwan’s foreign minister, Lien Chan’s comment that “the Pacific Century will come about” not particularly through the American side of the Pacific, but in Pacific Asia; through the “the well unchallengeable economic and financial might of Japan, clearly the dominant economy in Asia Pacific” and “the mounting prominence of the Asia ‘newly industrialized countries (NICs) and

the ASEAN countries” (1989:9). Commentators could talk of vibrant coastal “network cities in the East Asian Corridor,” running from Japan and South Korea, along the China_s down to Thailand and Singapore, with their changing configuration of economic power” (Gipoulux 2001:36) challenging older models of economic development, state sovereignty and dependency theory. Pacific frameworks were in effect being focussed on its Asian rim, with “the rise of Pacific Asia from poorhouse to powerhouse” (Yeung 1993:4), an East Asia set to become “in the next twenty years the economic center of gravity of the world” (Lee Kuan Yew 1993).

In part this Asian success story was a matter of industrial output, Abegglen’s *Sea Change: Pacific Asia as the New World Industrial Center* (1994). World Bank statistics told a clear story of the impact of noticeably high economic growth rates by Japan and the smaller Asian Tigers, whereby East Asia’s regional share of world GNP went up from 13.0% in 1960 to 25.9% in 1990 at a time when other regions were stagnant or declining, the North American share declining from 35.1% in 1960 to 29.8% in 1999. This strong East Asian performance was even clearer over industrialization; in terms of regional shares of world value added manufacturing East Asia went from 16.4% to 35.2% by 1998, whilst North America declined from 42.2% to 29.9%. Lee Trade patterns showed a similar Asian skew. Prior to the mid-1980s, foreign trade in East Asia was dominated by trans-Pacific trade centered on the USA. However, between 1986 and 1992, whilst the share of Asian exports destined for other Asian countries rose from 32 to 44%, those destined for the U.S. dropped from 37% to 24%. For Pacific Asia, intra-Asian trade overtook trans-Pacific trade. Meanwhile since 1986, the value of U.S. exports to Asia has surpassed that of its exports to Europe. Financial holding were also going Asia-wards, as the soaring American deficit was enabled through Japan’s role as the biggest creditor nation, with the largest foreign exchange holdings. In 1989 Japan became the world’s largest direct investor in terms of its investment flows of \$44.1 billion surpassing the United States’ \$31.7 billion. Arrighi saw all this as the “rise of East Asia to epicenter of world-scale processes of capital accumulation” (1995).

The scales were large, “the resurgence of East Asia” judged by some commentators as “a global shift of economic power with few precedents in history” (Arrighi, Hameshita and Selden 2003:1). History was relevant for past patterns, Frank’s *ReOrient. Global Economy in the Asian Age* (1998) was premised on a recovery of earlier economic preeminence that had been temporarily ‘lost’ to the West in the past three hundred years but was now being recovered. Arrighi and colleagues felt there was a growing sense of “the peculiar trajectory and significance of East Asia for the past and the future of world history” (Arrighi, Hamashita and Selden 1996). Economic strength translated into power. McCord’s “economic resurgence of East Asia,” seemed to be bringing with it a “seismic shift in the world’s distribution of income and power” (1991:5), a “drastic alteration in the economic-political axis of the world” (4). Such a rise was also an example, for Arrighi, of the way in which “history continually messes up the neat conceptual frameworks and the more or less elegant theoretical speculations with which we endeavor to understand the past and forecast the future of the world we live in” (1995), in this case challenging the framework and paradigm of a world economy generated from and centred on the West. It represented a ‘cascade down’ chronological-geographical process, the “snowballing effect in the rise of East Asia” (Arrighi, Hui, Hung and Selden 2003:302), in effect a shift across the Pacific, from the United States to Japan in 1950s/60 onwards, with a ‘flying geese’ Japanese led formation of the ‘Four Tigers’ in the 1970s/mid-1980s and ASEAN countries in the mid-1980s onwards.

All in all, power hierarchies were under challenge here. Arrighi and others talked of “a crisis of western hegemony that has yet to be resolved” in which “economic growth in the East Asian region that has made a re-centering of the global economy on East Asia a distinct possibility” (259). Yet, uncertainties were present. At the time Wallerstein considered that “how large a role a resurgent China will play in this economic centrality of Japan/East Asia is one of the great uncertain factors of this geoeconomic, geopolitical restructuring, the start of a new hegemonic cycle, and of competition...for the new top role” (1998) in the Asia-Pacific. Wallerstein had

asked straightforwardly in 1997 “has there been a rise of East Asia? Undoubtedly. But for how long? a decade? a century? a millennium?” (1997a). He could have added ‘a year’ before his ‘a decade’, as the Asian financial crash of 1998 pulled the rug from under that particular Pacific Asia setting. Nevertheless, Wallerstein saw its impact as relatively modest in the larger scale of things, arguing that “the so-called East Asian financial crisis is a minor, temporary event of limited importance, which will probably change nothing of the underlying rise of Japan or Japan/China or Japan/East Asia” (1998). Schmidt, Hersh and Li argued that this was no meltdown, rather the first major recession that had started in Asia, which thus actually showed the new global centrality of the Pacific Asia economies (2002:30). Most commentators disagreed, feeling that the particular mark-1 ‘Asian Century’ model had proven to be a “false start” (Lingle 1998). Buruam could indeed ask “what happened to the Asian Century?,” holding that “the idea of an Asian century is in itself absurd. ‘Asia’ is too big, too vague and too diverse to serve as a useful concept” (1999). Instead, it was the ‘China Century’ paradigm that caught the incoming wave for the start of the new century, as seen earlier.

Yet even as China, and the associated ‘China Century,’ was hitting the headlines, further development were taking place; a wider “Asian Ascent” (Kugler 2006; also Ferguson 2006), bringing talk of a “New Asian Hemisphere” reflecting “the irresistible shift of global power to the East” (Mahbubani 2008). This was not just coming out from Asian veterans like Mahbubani. American diplomats like Richard Armitage were similarly telling venues like the 2007 International Leadership Conference that “in every measure the strategic center of gravity is shifting to Asia” (Pearsey 2007).

In other words, a mark-2 ‘Asian Century’ is now being bandied about, but with a different focus to the mark-1 ‘Asian Century’ talked of in the 1980s and 1990s. Ignored in the earlier talk of the ‘Asian Tigers,’ India had been seen as a rather lumbering economy. Deng Xiaoping told Rajiv Gandhi in 1988 that “unless both India and China become well developed, there is no such thing as an Asian Century” (The Hindu 2005). China’s economy had quickly boomed in the 1990s, but it was to be another decade before India’s economy started to also move quickly. At which point, as Sachs put it, “welcome to the Asian Century. By 2050, China and maybe India will overtake the U.S. economy in size.” (2004). This reflected the radical restructuring of India’s economy and her embrace of globalization. Her economic growth had been 5-6% during the 1980s and early 1990s, respectable but not earth shaking. Now in the late 1990s, as advocated by its Finance Minister Manmohan Singh, current Prime Minister, the Indian economy picked up. Indian commentators and politicians started to talk of ‘India’s Century’ as India’s GDP growth hit 9.0% for 2005-06 and 9.4% for 2006-07.

Given China’s own continuing high growth during the first decade of the century, with the PRC GDP growth hitting 11.4% growth in 2007, India and China started to be talked about together; with *Chindia* coined as a term, though with questions on respective leadership within that (Saklia 2006). In this sense, an economics-driven “tripolar century” (Virmani 2005) is coming into view, with China and India rising up towards and eventually past the USA. In effect the concepts of ‘China’s Century’ and ‘India’s Century’ have become combined into a renewed talk of a mark-2 ‘Asian Century’. The mark-1 ‘Asian Century’ promised by Japan and the 4 Asian Tigers had only been “delayed” (MacDonald 2004) ready to recommence under a different thrust, as “India joins the Asian century” (Balakrishnan 2004; also Deccan Herald 2005; Lal 2005) alongside China. The World Economic Forum meetings at Davos and its offshoots have mirrored these economic shifts. Whereas “the talk of the town” (Pfanner 2004) at the 2004 World Economic Forum at Davos was China, and in 2005, at the 2006 Forum the perception was “India and China dominate buzz at Davos. World business leaders see shift to an Asian Century” (Lederer 2006). Davos’ offshoots have been even quicker in picking this China-India ‘Asian’ synergy for the 21st century (World Economic Forum 2003,2005,2006).

Politicians have been ready to embrace this ‘Asia’ theme. India’s Prime Minister Atal Vajpayee welcomed how “the 21st century will be the Asian century. This is not mere rhetoric.

The centre of the gravity of the world is shifting,” for “in one form or the other, Asia is set to dominate the politics and economics of this century” (2002; also 2003). The Congress government of Manmohan Singh has reiterated the same message, with India’s involvement in the East Asia Summit in December 2005, reflecting “the part we are trying to play in making the 21st century an Asian century” (Singh 2006). Economics underpins this Indian sense, that “the dynamics of globalization and the growing economic potential of Asia, justifies the resurrection of that vision of Pan-Asian regionalism...We believe that cooperation between India and East Asian countries in the 21st century is economically logical and will help to make this century the century of Asia...this vision of an Asian century” (Ahluwalia 2005).

In China, the Sino-Indian setting is stressed in public, that the 21st century was turning out to be “the century of China and India” (Zou 2005); that “in the same way that commentators refer to the 1900s as the ‘American Century,’ the 21st century may be seen as a time when Asia, led by China and India, comes into its own...The economic rise of these two Asian giants is set to become the most dramatic story of the 21st century...The two countries have the potential to change the demographic of world politics” (Monarch and Ding 2005). Consequently, talk of an ‘Asian Century’ is heard more often now than any talk of ‘China’s Century’ (Lu 2005; Liu and Hu 2005). Chinese politicians were ready to wave this picture, Prime Minister Wen Jiabao arguing that a strong vital China and India are set to “usher in a new true Asian century” (PRC 2006). China’s readiness to use the term ‘Asia’s/Asian Century’ in preference to ‘China’s/Chinese Century’ is understandable. Given the rise of India it is objectively true enough. In addition, it is a better international political marketing term for China’s image. The term ‘China’s Century’, as already noted, as it singles China out and can thereby make her the target for reactions by others, whereas talk of an ‘Asian Century’ diffuses that.

The final element in the equation is the return of Japan. Originally her ‘miracle’ had sparked the first talk of an Asian century back in the 1980s/early 1990s; whilst her depression similarly pulled the rug from that concept by the time the 21st century actually dawned. However Japan has the world’s second biggest economy and so it was significant that 2005 saw her finally emerging from that cloud, with real growth renewed. The result was that “in 2005, Asia reminded the world whose century this is. A booming China, resurgent Japan and vibrant India helped shift the pendulum of global growth eastward. And investors who shook off bad memories from the 1997 Asian crisis to bet anew on Asia weren’t disappointed” (Pesek 2005b). Wallerstein’s caution can be amended. It remains true that “the combined economic, political, and yes military power of East Asia would become formidable in the coming half-century. In the transition the world-system is undergoing from its present historical structure - that of a capitalist world-economy - to something else, the East Asian bloc would come to play a central role, perhaps the central role” (Wallerstein 2005). His sense that “such an effort would face very vigorous opposition from the United States and, to a lesser extent, western Europe. It might also face opposition from India” (ibid.) is questionable though with regard to India; since opposition from India to such an East Asian rise is transformable if India joins in and helps shape an ‘Asian Century’. Such a future ‘Asian Century’ was one that America was not a part off. American commentators could well wonder, “will the 21st century be another ‘American Century’ or will it be the first ‘Asian Century?’ A peaceful - for now - struggle has been joined” (Pinkerton 2005).

Within that ambiguities arise. China and India may be surging forward in an ‘Asian Century’, but will they remain together? They are after all engaged in a Grand Strategy of rise to global status and presence, within which their “Great Power ‘Great Game’” (Scott 2008a) is being played, part cooperation but also competition. The question then arises, as Hoagland asked “whose Asian Century?”, China’s or India’s, where “the forces that will determine which nations will dominate the 21st century may yet favor India’s emerging reach for global power status more than China’s” (2005; also Pesek 2005a). India’s argument is that its bigger deregulated economy, brings with it a bigger entrepreneurial grassroots potential, so that India will “outdo” (Bajpae 2004; also Mukherjee 2005) China, and that consequently “India will lead in the Asian century”

(Sengupta 2006). Such a prospect, or model, is more reassuring for American policy-makers. Though they have not created this economic rise of India within the 'Rise of Asia' image they are responding to it at the economic, security and strategic levels.

Whether or not India does, or does not, overtake China within any 'Asian Century', the bigger shift presaged is of Asia (i.e. Pacific Asia and India) regaining its leading position within the global economy, something it enjoyed up to 300 years ago. This 'Asian Century' drive was again evident at the 2008 Davos Forum (Greenway 2008). In contextual terms this also means the United States being overtaken. Instead of a 'Pacific Century' that the US was part of, was it now being faced with a resurgent Asia that the US was not part of, and which was set to shape the 21st century and its international system? Here it is significant that Gowan has argued for strong continuing American pre-eminence amongst core countries, but nevertheless acknowledged that "the greatest challenge to a consolidated [American-led] World Empire in the Pacific region would come from the capacity of China and Japan with the ASEAN countries to form a form a stable political-economy bloc, whether involving monetary and financial integration or a so-called Free Trade Area" (2004:496). This is exactly what the US is being faced with in the form the East Asia Summits of 2005, 2006 and 2007, in which the US was absent but where India was present. Singapore's pre-2005 summit sense was clear, "an Asian economic community, which will bring together South Asia, Southeast Asia and Northeast Asia...Such a community will result in a strong and prosperous Asia, with India as one of the key pillars [alongside China and Japan]. The stars are falling into alignment and we have the chance to turn this into Asia's Century" (Goh 2004). The contrast with APEC's foundation is stark, a Pacific framework and 'Pacific Century' underpinned by the United States was being replaced by an East Asia framework and 'Asian Century' underpinned by EAS' leading participants China, India and Japan. As such, commentators argued that the EAS "symbolizes the Asian century, the coming of age, in a sense, because by 2050 Asia will have three of the four largest economies in the world" (Mydans 2005) in the shape of China, India and Japan. As the Japanese Foreign Minister said there, "we share a common dream for the future...Asia is now brimming with optimism. With such unshakable belief here that tomorrow will be even brighter than today" (Aso 2005).

CONCLUSIONS

One conclusion is to beware of sweeping language. Each paradigm has been strongly pushed, yet then receding as other ones have come along. The latest to come along is the mark-2 'Asian Century' paradigm. However, the 21st century has only just begun, and who knows what the century will actually bring, particularly in its latter parts. Wallerstein for one sees "multi-polar anarchy and wild economic fluctuations" (2006) as more likely than any Pacific/Asian/China Century. Asian figures have cautioned against sweeping assumptions, Singapore's Foreign Minister telling the BOAO Forum, "as a huge wave of optimism sweeps over large parts of Asia from China to India, it is not surprising that some Asians should now be talking about the 21st century being an Asian century. This is hubris. With so many problems confronting us, we have to be modest in our self-estimation" (Yeo 2006). Asia's rise is not inevitable, individual drivers could fall back. China's regime could go into political meltdown, the scene for Chang's *The Collapse of China* (2002). India's economy might seize up amidst Naxalite insurgency, communal friction, and caste obstacles. Japan may remain too small with an ageing shrinking population. Moreover, the United States having come into the 1990s with unprecedented uni-polar sway in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union is not going to rapidly vanish. In Paul Kennedy-type terms there may be an element of 'imperial overstretch' at play in America's position, but it will remain as a powerful presence within the international system for the foreseeable decades. Globalization continues to operate as another focus diluting any regional

Pacific/China/Asian Century, 'World System' perspectives may still re-emerge rather than narrower regional (Pacific, Asia) or state (China) paradigm for the 21st century. Kraar asked *What Pacific Century?* and instead suggesting "welcome to the Global Century" (1999:198)

Still though there are certain shifts taking place within the international system. It is not undifferentiated globalization. Relatively speaking, Pacific Asia and India are showing marked advances. They are no longer periphery dependents, they are increasingly shaping the international economic environment. An interesting comparison can be made with one of the first articles appearing in the *Journal of World System Research*. Borrego's argument there was that the stakes were high, as were the barriers, "individual states can and do succeed in crossing the gulf that separates the modest wealth of the semiperiphery from the oligarchic wealth of the core, as Japan has recently done" (1995:90); but in which such "individual successes lead to a tightening of the exclusionary and exploitative tendencies of core states and thereby deepen and widen the gulf between those states and the ones which are left behind. It therefore becomes inherently more and more difficult to move upward" (90). Yet movement upwards is precisely what is happening across much of Pacific Asia, and now India as well. An ominous scenario for core-periphery relations was envisaged by Borrego, "today the geography of the capitalist world economy can no longer expand. Therefore, the geographic reach of the core can no longer expand. If there is to be any significant change in which geographic area becomes more developed, then because this is more than ever a zero-sum game, another must become de-developed. If a new area becomes part of the developed industrial core, an old area must move away from the core and towards the periphery" (90). Consequently, "if in the next 20-30 years China or India were in the true sense to 'catch up,' a significant segment of the world's population elsewhere in this world system would have to decline" (89). A dozen years later and his China and India 'if' is ever more being realized, and is set to have even bigger structural resonance for the twenty-first century.

In a sense, all of the above Pacific/China/Asian paradigms have some truth in them. The American economy did see some shift towards the California West Coast, the Pacific is more important than the Atlantic in trans-oceanic trade, and American security strategy now prioritises the Pacific over the Atlantic fields in terms of deployment of forces with PACOM surveying the scene from Hawaii. The 'China Century' remains true in the sense that China's growth continues to shake the world. Its still accelerating GDP growth of 11.4% in 2007 showed this. However, within the Pacific paradigm there has been a shift. The United States, and its West Coast has lost some of its previous bite. Dirlik's question, that "the issue of an American Pacific versus an Asian Pacific remains to be settled" (1998:b) has to some extent been answered in this economic shift. Yet, though Japan and the 'Asian Tigers' have revived, they are not quite as impressive as they seemed in the first 1980s flush of the Pacific/mark-1 Asian Century models. Instead, the emphasis has shifted partly within the Asia-Pacific away from America towards China, and partly outside the Asia-Pacific to India. This is why the mark-2 'Asian Century' paradigm has become the most accurate match of reality, especially economic reality. This is not to say that the 21st Century will be one of domination by Asia in the sense that the US economically dominated the world at various points in the 20th century. The US and an integrated EU will still stand as important economic actors, with varying degrees of political and military power thereon. American hard power in the military area remains pre-eminent for the present.

However, the 21st century looks set to be shaped by three new factors. At the sub-state level is the eruption of Islamist radicalism, 9/11 jihadist fundamentalism taking on the West. At the state level is the rise of China and India as new Great Powers within the international system. At the regional level is the rise of Pacific-Asia (especially its components of China and Japan) and India as leading economic zones. The global balance of power is shifting towards that particular 'Asia'. The international system is now clearly in a state of impending significant structural change, a 'long cycle' perspective. In that sense the 'Asian Century', mark-2 model, is the most accurate of the paradigms to have emerged for the 21st century.

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