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## **Sinicization and the Rise of China: Civilizational Processes beyond East and West**

Peter J. Katzenstein (ed.)

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This book follows *Civilizations in World Politics: Plural and Pluralist Perspectives* in presenting Peter Katzenstein's framework for interpreting the way civilizations face each other in a period he refers to as 'the era of China's peaceful rise'. Another book in his trilogy is *Anglo-America and Its Discontents: Civilizational Identities beyond West and East*. Although highlighting two civilizations, Katzenstein asserts that 'we need to move beyond sharp distinctions between East and West' (xi). Since China will not cause a rupture, resulting in a dramatic break in world affairs, nor return to the past when it ruled the existing order, Katzenstein offers reassurance that we can expect a future of recombination. Minimizing conflict between civilizations, he notes pluralism within these contexts as a single global civilization eventually takes shape.

The term sinicization refers to China's impact on the outside world. The concept of China's rise calls to mind how its growing power of all types will lead to changes at home and abroad. Civilizational processes presume attention to how a civilization is interpreted at home and then interacts with other civilizations. Distinguishing East and West and going beyond suggests a framework for comparing civilizations while analyzing

the way they interact. If your appetite is whetted by these themes, as mine was, then you may be as disappointed as I was by how out of touch this book is in covering Chinese strategic and identity thinking and the way competition lately has been emerging between a China-centered East and what China regards as the West.

In recent Chinese writings, these topics are treated with increasing consistency. In external writings about China, there is growing consensus on how to treat them too. However, in Katzenstein's analysis, what Chinese have to say and specialists write about China on these issues are of little interest. By calling this 'an exercise in pattern recognition' (xii), he not only eschews theory testing, but also ignores the patterns others are increasingly discerning. Drawing on Allen Carlson's chapter on the 'non-linear and multi-sidedness of Sinicization', he focuses on patterns that defy generalization apart from vague references to pluralism. The result is an exercise in speculation without evidence or interest in whether it conforms to other analysis.

The central conclusions of this book, especially the Katzenstein introductory and concluding chapters, fly in the face of recent scholarship. The citations of this book on the arguments it rebuts show scant interest in recent primary or secondary scholarship. The methods of the book, starting with definitions of critical terms such as sinicization and extending to the way evidence is marshaled, indicate more illustrations of preconceived points than testing of controversial ideas. This mixture of problems spells trouble for readers interested in informed observations about China's rise, ongoing inter-civilizational interactions, and how the divide between East and West appears in national identity discourse and in international relations.

The civilizational impact of China's rise is a subject worthy of extensive discussion. Those who perceive sinicization as the effort of the PRC to get other countries to follow its guidance on matters such as non-interference in internal affairs and rejection of the application of universal values or humanitarian intervention will find no discussion of such themes. Anyone who reads the massive outpouring of Chinese sources on the advance of Eastern civilization and the decline of Western civilization will find no sign of awareness here. Katzenstein expresses his hope 'to illuminate the broad contours of world politics'. However, there is scarcely any mention of politics. Do leaders have an impact on views of sinicization? Even the rise of China is left vague. Does it matter that in recent years as China

has grown more powerful, economically, militarily, and diplomatically, that its rise has taken on new characteristics? It would seem not.

Confucianism is discussed as an 'international brand', not as part of a reconstructed identity in contemporary China. Katzenstein goes so far as to state 'Confucianism offers a pacifist, familial metaphor that reassures' (29). He says that from its values flow 'wisdom, morality, generosity, obligation to respect the interests of others'. He adds that, in its new incarnation, its relevance lies in its humanism (28). This ignores the reality of contemporary China: the enduring critique of the concept of humanism (*rendaozhuyi*) and the often callous, corrupt disregard for the interests of others. In this abstraction called Confucianism, one finds little in common with the way China has appropriated the concept and used it to bolster the legitimacy of communism.

In assessing international relations, Katzenstein states that 'East Asian governments and populations accept rather than fear China's rise' and 'China's rise will occur in the existing security order' (26). He views China as a status quo power, just hedging its bets, as the United States is, adding that with the exception of Taiwan and Tibet 'Chinese strategy prizes international accommodation and accords priority to domestic growth and development over international assertiveness' (26). There is no attempt to reconcile this rosy thinking with the developments of recent years.

Objecting to categories such as 'East' and 'West', Katzenstein sees identities as contested and forever changing (14). He finds China accepting multilateralism (25). He holds out hope for a singular transcendent civilization (211). This perspective cannot be reconciled with either reality or writings from China and about China.

In the final chapter, Katzenstein discusses Sinicization in comparative perspective. He highlights Japanization and Indianization in a manner that rejects simplification and affirms trends toward cross-civilizational bridging (236). As tensions mount in Sino-Japanese and Sino-Indian relations, focusing on identity themes, this pretense at comparative analysis seems beyond the point. There is no framework that others might find useful in the comparisons that are truly needed to advance scholarship.

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