



## Beck, Asia and second modernity

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### Abstract

The work of Ulrich Beck has been important in bringing sociological attention to the ways issues of risk are embedded in contemporary globalization, in developing a theory of 'reflexive modernization', and in calling for social science to transcend 'methodological nationalism'. In recent studies, he and his colleagues help to correct for the Western bias of many accounts of cosmopolitanism and reflexive modernization, and seek to distinguish normative goals from empirical analysis. In this paper I argue that further clarification of this latter distinction is needed but hard to reach within a framework that still embeds the normative account in the idea that empirical change has a clear direction. Similar issues beset the presentation of diverse patterns in recent history as all variants of 'second modernity'. Lastly, I note that ironically, given the declared 'methodological cosmopolitanism' of the authors, the empirical studies here all focus on national cases.

**Keywords:** Beck; cosmopolitanism; nationalism; reflexive modernization; globalization

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It is an oddity that discussions of cosmopolitanism are overwhelmingly Euro-American. They are about globalization, and about shared risks, rights, and responsibilities in an interconnected world, but they reflect disproportionately views from the old 'core' of the modern world system (and Western-educated elites from formerly colonial outposts). This is the source of at least four biases.

First, though an effort is made to include consideration of poor, developing, or emerging economies, cosmopolitan theories reflect the perspective of the rich. Second, though an effort is made to be multicultural, cosmopolitan theories are rooted in the West. Third, the way in which most cosmopolitan theories try to escape cultural bias is by imagining an escape from culture into a realm of the universal (as though those who travel aren't still shaped by their previous cultural contexts and as though the global circuits themselves don't

provide new cultural contexts). Fourth, despite attention to social problems, because cosmopolitan theories are rooted in the (declining) core of the modern world system, they tend to imagine the world as more systematically and uniformly interconnected than it is.

Ulrich Beck and his collaborators in this collection of essays (BJS 2010) are to be congratulated for a major effort to overcome at least some of these biases. In the present response, I begin with appreciation for Beck's recent leadership in efforts to improve cosmopolitan theory, and for his and his colleagues' efforts to adapt and advance this theory in application to several East Asian countries. I then offer two arguments about ambiguities in the theory of 'reflexive modernization' on which this project is based and about the attempt to distinguish empirical cosmopolitization from normative cosmopolitanism. I conclude by returning to an ironic observation I can state up front: these analyses elaborate a theory that holds that nation-states are being transcended, yet it is organized almost entirely in terms of nation-states.

### **Appreciation**

As a leading cosmopolitan theorist, Beck has been both innovative and influential. Though I refer to him as an individual, it is worth noting and appreciating that Beck's work has often been collaborative, that he has nurtured a number of younger colleagues, and that he has built a collective research enterprise based in Munich. This is a model, among other things, for combining the development of theory and the improvement of empirical knowledge with attention to major public issues. Most clearly in work on risk, Beck's group demonstrates that public sociology is not simply a matter of making existing scholarly work more easily accessible, but of harnessing serious theory and research to the task of understanding pressing collective concerns. We should appreciate Beck's contributions as specific advances in understanding the many themes he has addressed, and for their central role in advancing what he calls 'the cosmopolitan turn in social and political theory'.

I think we should understand 'the cosmopolitan turn' as referring both empirically to the growing number of theoretical publications that explicitly label themselves 'cosmopolitan', and normatively to the project of making social and political theory generally more attentive to global interconnection and less limited to the presumption of nation-states. Beck's project is thus one of replacing 'methodological nationalism' with 'methodological cosmopolitanism'. Theories using the concept of cosmopolitanism are perhaps in its vanguard, but Beck wishes also to claim other work that tries to transcend the inscription of nationalist categories into much social science. And in his own work he has advanced both the theoretical project of understanding cosmopolitanism, and the project of integrating a more cosmopolitan

perspective into social and political theory generally. Two valuable innovations in Beck's work are specific foci of the current collection.

First, Beck has recognized and worked to try to compensate for the embeddedness of cosmopolitan theory (and sociological research on cosmopolitanization) in the perspectives of the developed, Western core countries of the capitalist world system. Beck recognizes that his own earlier work, like most other work developing a theory of reflexive modernization (e.g. Beck, Giddens and Lash 1994) is rooted in a largely implicit understanding of Western history. He rightly sees the need to reach beyond this, not only for an understanding of other histories but also for a different perspective on European history (see also Chakrabarty 2000). Beck faults this work also for relying on a notion of 'society' in general that obscures from attention the differences among societies in their present structures, cultures, and historical trajectories.<sup>1</sup> This collection is a partial response, emphasizing distinctive experiences of 'modernization' in one world region and using these to try to make the general theory more attentive to diverse patterns. We should be grateful.

Second, during the last five years or so, Beck (with Edgar Grande, Natan Sznaider and other collaborators) has worked to resolve an ambiguity that is widespread in discussions of cosmopolitanism, including even in sophisticated theoretical and empirical works (and here too Beck self-critically recognizes that this includes some of his own earlier works). This ambiguity is reflected in the tendency to use the same terms to refer to (a) a normative account of what would make the world a better place, and (b) an empirical argument that the world is in fact changing. Here accounts of cosmopolitanism share much with accounts of 'progress' as they flourished in the nineteenth century, and indeed with the 'modernization theory' of the middle-twentieth century. The issue is not just the difference between an abstract ideal and very partial empirical achievement of that ideal. It is also that the actual changes observed in the empirical world may not ever issue in the full achievement of the ideal; they may become part of historical processes leading to other denouements.

### **Are diverse histories just varieties of second modernity?**

How wide is the variation, how common the path? Beck and Grande begin by insisting that social theory needs to give up universalization in favour of greater attention to historical, geographic, and cultural specifics. I agree. For Beck and Grande and most participants in this special issue, this is compatible with speaking of varieties (in the plural) of second modernity (in the singular). While Han and Shim (2010) reject other attempts to conceptualize different trajectories as alternative or multiple modernities, Beck and Grande (2010) seem more inclined to incorporate the approaches of Eisenstadt, Therborn and others as more or less steps in the same direction. They conceptualize second

modernity in terms of an epochal break with the institutional structures developed to deal with first modernity (states, parties, unions, business enterprises, etc) while the core principles of modernity (mainly market economy) continue.

But Beck, Grande and others in this collection also distinguish first modernity from second by several ‘process variables’: action logic, duration, and result. Each points to something meaningful, but each is problematic. (a) There is great variation in how much self-conscious intention is involved in historical transformations, including those summed up by the idea of modernization. But it is misleading to suggest that in the West modernization was ‘unintended, temporally stretched and (more or less) successful’ (Beck and Grande 2010: 416). From early in the history of capitalism, for example, there were debates about how much governments should regulate trade. One has only to think of the eighteenth century controversies over mercantilism and the important role of intellectual arguments and the rise of the field of economics in the nineteenth century spread of free-trade ideology and practices – just as market fundamentalism or ‘neoliberalism’ flourished in the late twentieth century partly on the basis of a long campaign led by followers of Hayek and Friedman among others. Neither the building of market institutions nor the disassembly of regulatory institutions took place unintended in the West though many consequences were unintended. It may be that East Asian countries developing both markets and regulatory regimes today have the benefit of more history from which to learn; it is still the case that history’s lessons are filtered through ideology, argument, and self-interest. There is also great variation in who exercises whatever choice circumstances allow. It is problematic to speak in an unqualified way of societies taking intentional action. Such language tends to equate the decisions of governments or governing elites with societal choices – replicating some of the rhetoric of nation=state otherwise held problematic. More generally, the capacity to make effective choices about strategies of development or responses to risk is distributed unevenly and through a variety of different organizations and power structures.

More briefly, (b) we should also question the notion of ‘stretched’ vs ‘compressed’ processes of reflexive modernization. There is no doubt that at different points from Japan’s Meiji restoration through the self-strengthening movement of late-Imperial China and on through the last hundred years many in East Asian societies have felt pressed to ‘catch up’ with global economic leaders and/or the West. European countries also tried to speed up social change in the nineteenth century. But it is not clear that one can speak of ‘stretched’ vs ‘compressed’ processes of modernization without some benchmark of ‘normal’ duration, and I don’t think any such plausibly exists. What is relevant is not the stretching or compression of some normal period of time, but the way in which felt pressures translate into different experiences, strategies, institutions, or outcomes.<sup>2</sup>

Likewise, (c) projects of state-building, economic development, or democratization may succeed or fail. These are projects that may be evaluated in the agents' own terms. But to say that modernization as such can fail requires clarification. Is it a project to be judged according to the particular aspirations of agents in every case (and what counts as a case – the history of a potential nation-state)? Or is it a more general process that distributes risks and challenges and differential resources for meeting them? If it is the latter, agents might fail in their efforts to manage risks or to build stronger institutions but it is hard to see why that should be called failed modernization (as distinct from, say, being crushed or crippled by the actions of others or disadvantaged by geography, demography, or natural resource endowments). We need to understand whether success or failure is a label placed on relative standing in an unequally structured world system or an evaluation of more or less autonomous projects in their own terms. The issue isn't trivial or merely terminological. It is a basic question about the extent to which the theory addresses action, impersonal historical processes, or teleology.

Take the gloss offered by Beck and Grande (2010: 416) on the idea of failed modernization: 'the establishment of institutions of First modernity (like the nation-state) or the transformation into Second modernity fails'. What is the unit that 'fails' to develop a nation-state? Is it a people, assumed already to exist as a nation that doesn't succeed in gaining an autonomous state – say, Palestine? Is it a region brought under the governance of another state within which its people(s) are national minorities – say, Central Asia under the USSR? In each case, this seems less a matter of 'failure' than of external imposition.<sup>3</sup> Chang (2010: 453) says that in East Asia 'modernity initially *happened* as an international political incident' – that is to say, East Asian countries were coerced to open themselves to Western imperialist forces, capitalist markets, and an 'alien civilization'. They broke away from their pasts to become modern in a way that meant Western. And even on 'liberation' from formal colonialism many of these Third World nations remained dominated.

Or again, Second Modernity is defined by the incapacity of the institutions of First Modernity to handle new risks and the consequent effort to develop new institutions or approaches. But where the incapacity of the older institutions is due partly to their destruction by neoliberal policies, should we judge this a successful transition to Second Modernity? Conversely, would effective reform of older institutions so that they provided better protection against risk constitute a 'failure' to make the transition to Second Modernity? This would imply that Norway has failed because its state institutions work better than those of, say, Greece.

Or take this to an East Asian context. Aside from such paradoxes, this conceptualization makes it harder, not easier, to understand the various contending and sometimes contradictory projects by which Chinese people try to prosper, strengthen the country, and cope with challenges. It is meaningful and

coherent to say that the self-strengthening movement of the 1890s, the Republic Revolution of 1911, the May 4<sup>th</sup> Movement of 1919, the Communist Revolution of 1949, the Great Leap Forward, the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, Deng Xiaoping's reforms, and the expansion of credit, markets, private enterprise, and cooperation with foreign capital from the early 1990s were all efforts to modernize. As conscious efforts they were reflexive. But the actors reflecting on China's circumstances did not have entirely the same agendas. Is the project of modernity the lowest common denominator? Is it the encompassing whole? Is it to be judged by some external, objective or universal measures? Or is it a term that only derives meaning from competition with other countries or regions?

Part of the power of Beck's overall theoretical and empirical contributions lies in an account of the crisis – and perhaps failure – of the European welfare state model. An achievement of the twentieth century and especially the post-WWII period, this involved the institutionalization of a variety of centrally organized responses to the contradictions of capitalist development.<sup>4</sup> One might almost call it the attempt to make good on Hegel's (1821 [1952]) account of how the contradictions in civil society demand to be answered by a unifying, integrating, but also welfare-providing state. It was Bismark's project in a very conservative and militarist version. It was a social democratic project in a much more egalitarian version achieved by collective struggles, centrally of trade unions and social movements. But it came unstuck in an era of global competition and new risks. I suspect Beck would not be adverse to recognizing that it had a 'legitimation crisis' (Habermas 1975) even before this, but he very helpfully points to the extent to which the travails of the welfare states have been produced or exacerbated by new kinds of prevailing risks, and especially risks not contained or manageable within nation-state borders. If this is the central, important, and powerful account Beck has offered, it has a nagging limit. This is the extent to which his theoretical work and his attention to the rest of the world starts from this 'problematique'. That is, he takes the welfare state as normal, and studies most everything else as a deviation from or crisis of that normal. We should admire Beck's struggle to transcend this path, but also help him to go further.

Beck's intentions are sound. To some extent they are undercut by an approach that first questions a theorized historical sequence as limited to one case – Western Europe – then reinscribes other histories as variants of that same sequence:

the first insight is that the sequence from Pre-modernity to First Modernity and Second Modernity is *not* universal, cannot be generalized. On the contrary, this sequence is a central feature of the particular *European* path to modernity' (Beck and Grande 2010: 424, original italics)

but then

The question of how varieties of Second Modernity can be reconstructed receives a systematic answer here – in terms of different sequences, combinations and mixtures of Pre-modernity, First Modernity, Second and After-modernity’ (Beck and Grande 2010: 424).

As Maharaj (2010: 570) notes, ‘we are left in the air as to whether the various modernities are chasing the identical dream’.

Beck and colleagues focus here on two ways of adding diversity to the empirical basis of social and political theory. They give accounts of East Asian countries that focus (1) on broad cultural or civilizational patterns and (2) on relatively recent histories of pursuing rapid economic development. This is a start at appreciating diversity, not an attempt to be exhaustive.

Social and political theory today relies heavily on tacit incorporation of Western historical patterns into seemingly universal categories. One problem is that theorists’ understanding of Western history itself is often highly stylized and reliant on a somewhat stereotyped historical synthesis – what the theorists learned as students – and not informed as much as it should be by new historical research. An analogous problem can undermine efforts to incorporate other civilizational histories into the empirical basis of theory. It is important for these to reflect serious historical research not simply tacit incorporation of canonical accounts such as those that inform secondary school teaching. This means recognizing tensions and contradictions in historical patterns, not relying on the kinds of national (or civilizational) histories that achieve synthesis by ironing out such tensions to produce stereotypical, often ideological self-understandings. Social theory needs history, thus, not only a diversity of cultural perspectives.

The history that social theory needs is not simply a history of other places. It is a history of the complex processes by which different units of political power and economic differentiation form and fade, the way these sometimes overlap broad civilizational continuities and sometimes not, the way patterns of cultural integration sometimes match political structures and sometimes not, and the kinds of communication that run along trade-routes and military frontiers. It is a history shaped by both geopolitics and culture.

Beck and Grande rightly appreciate Paul Gilroy’s (1993) account in *The Black Atlantic* and the image of ships in motion as a metaphor for the study of dynamic connections rather than fixed or essentialized nations. Gilroy’s book was part of a trend towards histories of interconnections rather than discrete nations. Bodies of water were often emphasized instead of masses of land, and seen as connectors not always dividers. Lord Acton (1906) anticipated this in the second of his Lectures on Modern History, ‘The Portuguese were the first Europeans to understand that the ocean is not a limit, but the universal waterway that unites mankind’. Bailyn (2005) traces the idea of the Atlantic

world and a specific Atlantic history back to Walter Lippman reflecting on the relations of America and Europe in the era of WWI. But through the middle of the twentieth century, thinking in terms of nation-states and civilizational areas occluded many of these connections. Fernand Braudel's (1949) study of *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II* was perhaps the most famous exploration of civilization to centre on a sea – though as Bailyn points out it addressed disaggregation as much as integration. Braudel was a crucial influence on Immanuel Wallerstein (1974) in the development of sociology's most important theory of global interconnections, capitalism and geopolitics. But it was in the 1990s that the analysis of connections outside and across conventional regions began to take off.

There has been growing recognition that it is not adequate to speak of Europe and Africa, Asia and Latin America. It is important also to speak of the Indian Ocean, the Atlantic, the Pacific – and also the links forged by coastal trade from places like Yemen across all of southern Asia and the Pacific or inland along the famous Silk Road. There have been periods when dominant powers were able to stabilize vast territories and periods when these empires broke up. There have ebbs and flows of trade across regions, civilizations, empires, and indeed seas. In all of this there are patterns of ethnic continuity (stressed by Smith 1986), and there are also peoples, languages, and cultures that disappear (stressed by Gellner 1983). But nation-states are manifestly only a dominant form of collective organization for one relatively brief period of world history (important as this modern era is to us). There are nation-states with a high level of continuity with pre-national organization (China) and those with much less (Sudan). But all nation-states, even those with the strongest ideologies of self-sufficiency, exist in contexts and webs of connections. For each nation-state the context is global – like the diffusion of the nation-state form of cultural-political organization itself; it is regional; it is a matter of immediate neighbours. For most the context includes the vast reach of the world's major religions and the world's major languages. And connections are forged both within such contexts and across long-distances by particular paths of trade or migration, like that extending from Yemen to Indonesia.

This isn't the place to trace the importance of the many different kinds of contexts and connections within which units of political power, economic differentiation or cultural specificity are situated. The point, rather, is simply to recognize that the issue isn't adequately posed by the question 'what is the most appropriate unit of analysis' (Beck and Grande 2010: 426)? There are necessarily many units of different kinds and many sorts of contexts and connections. Indeed, Beck and Grande may not disagree; elsewhere they cite postcolonial theorists approvingly for insisting not just on variation but also on interdependence. In any case, the account would be improved by clarity on this issue. Consider the contrast of the accounts here to the notion of a modern



world system put forward by Wallerstein (1974). This suggests not only a general condition of capitalist globalization since the sixteenth century, but also its internal hierarchy and reliance on states for stabilization. If hegemonic powers stabilize the larger system, lesser states seek to stabilize local conditions of extraction, exploitation, and accumulation. World systems theory has been stronger on enduring structures than structural transformations (though the work of Giovanni Arrighi makes great strides; Arrighi and Silver 1999, Arrighi 2007). The work of Beck and colleagues tells us less than world systems theory about structures of global organization. But it does point up pressures that destabilize and push for change (see esp. Chang 2010).

In any case, the issue isn't just units of analysis, it is the organization of collective action. Addressing risks affecting all humanity is crucial, but action is not likely to be organized simply on the scale of humanity as a whole, nor in some sort of 'glocal' connection of the largest and smallest units. It will involve the forging of solidarity of a range of scales from local communities to ethnic groups, cities, countries, social movements, and religions. This is a dimension of the plurality to which Beck and Grande refer. It will require formal organizations operating in a range of structural forms and scales, not as units of solidarity but as mechanisms for achieving specific effects. These will include small organizations with large global missions like the International Criminal Court as well as much larger organizations like the World Bank or UN agencies. But they will also include smaller and less global organizations that still meet transnational needs: supplying condoms or mosquito nets, monitoring potential tsunamis, helping neighbouring countries manage trade. I stress this because cosmopolitan programmes often nurture the illusion that global issues will be addressed mainly by a 'political subject called humanity' (Beck and Grande 2010: 433). There is something attractive to the ideal that more and more people act from a concern for humanity as a whole. But to imagine any near-term shift to this as a primary organization of political subjectivity is implausible, as is the imagining everyone and every organization sitting at the table and achieving balance (Beck and Grande 2010: 432ff.).

The point is not just that nations still matter (Calhoun 2007). It is also that geopolitics still matters, organizational structures of many kinds on many scales matter, larger patterns of cultural affiliation, religion, or civilization still matter. And indeed just as nation-states still matter now, all of these also mattered throughout the era of nation-states. Han and Shim (2010) are right that some transnationally produced risks concentrate in particular countries, but also that many risks are hard to address in one country at a time. Phenomena such as poverty, natural disasters and catastrophic fluctuations of capital markets need to be addressed transnationally. But it would be a mistake to see this as only a new feature of 'second modernity'. While the density and impact

of transnational relations may have grown, they and with them transnational risks are of long standing. So are the limits of national solutions.

The critique of methodological nationalism must include the extent to which thinking only in terms of nation-states was misleading throughout the modern era, not just in a new period.

Moreover, many large-scale structures are literally international, creatures of treaties and less formal cooperation among member countries. Beck and colleagues clearly recognize this even though they occasionally slip into talk of 'replacing the national' (Beck and Grande 2010: 427) rather than complimenting national structures with many others. They also exaggerate how new the development of cosmopolitan political structures is, writing that cosmopolitanism was active in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but had disappeared by twentieth, reappearing only after collapse of the USSR. It is certainly true that nation-state political structures were ascendant between 1789 and 1989. However, we shouldn't slight the League of Nations, the UN, the growth of global NGOs like CARE and OXFAM, the Non-Aligned Movement, international socialism or the 1960s Left. And we should ask whether there was ever a time when nation-state structures were either adequate to manage risks or quite so completely dominant as stereotype implies. Indeed, it is a Eurocentric illusion to think of the two centuries from the French Revolution to the fall of Soviet-style communism as simply an era of nation-states. It was also an era of empire (and imperialism after empire). Every major European nation-state was also the 'homeland' to an empire.

Up through 1848, nationalism was itself the cosmopolitanism of the day – the springtime of peoples. National liberation movements had international supporters; the vision of a world of autonomous nations was precisely a vision of the world as a whole (sometimes echoing Kant's hope for a federation, often including the anticipation of the self-determination of colonized peoples). Not least the idea of nation invoked the solidarity of people living in different regions and towns, under different feudal authorities, governed in different ways; it said that all were citizens of the larger country, and directly so, not indirectly through the mediation of chains of differentiated authority.

But though more care for precision is important, the real point is that the genuinely global challenges to which Beck and colleagues rightly call attention generate a wide range of responses and organizational structures. It is not clear that 'those who play the national card will inevitably lose'. Even if it is true that in aggregate nationalist politics is in decline, and even if nationalism does not offer the basis for solving a variety of large problems like climate change, this does not mean that nationalist strategies may not yield advantages. I do not mean merely that the use of force to take advantage of minorities or neighbours can sadly sometimes pay off. I mean that nationalist protectionist policies can be effective components of overall economic development projects (Chang 2002).

Moreover, the declining power of the nation-state and growing transnational interconnections could lead to chaos and conflict instead of to a world of effective transnational governance – and if transnational governance grows, it might look more like empire than like ‘cosmopolitan democracy’. Or again, universal human rights may become a more urgent ideal in a globally interconnected world; the interconnections (not least through media) may lead more people to pay attention to rights and their violation; but neither of these guarantees that rights will be respected. Or still again, destruction of the environment may be proceeding on a global scale, creating shared risks that put all humanity into a ‘community of fate’, but this does not guarantee that we will find a cosmopolitan solution – or any solution at all.

### **Distinguishing the normative from the empirical**

Beck seeks mainly, he says, to develop ‘analytical–empirical cosmopolitanism’ as a product of ‘value-free’ social science. This will produce a description of the actual conditions of contemporary social life – which Beck sees mainly as a ‘world risk society’ in which people are materially interdependent but inescapably exposed to shared risks. These demand the creation of ‘institutionalized cosmopolitanism’ but in the short run they are axes of conflict: ecological interdependency crises, economic interdependency crises, and terrorist interdependency crises. Beck (2006: 24) seeks to ‘demarcate, though not to neglect, normative and political cosmopolitanism in a world that has become a danger to itself’.<sup>5</sup> But of course cosmopolitan and for that matter modernity are widely used as normative and aspirational terms and it is hard to free accounts of cosmopolitization or modernization from implicit progressivist teleology.

To clarify the relationship between normative aspirations and empirical transformations, Beck has introduced a distinction between ‘cosmopolitanism’ and ‘cosmopolitization’. Though I appreciate the effort and think Beck is on the right track, I think the distinction is awkward and doesn’t do the work needed. Part of the problem is simply that it is very difficult to read ‘cosmopolitization’ as not entailing progress along the path to ‘cosmopolitanism’. Indeed, the essays in this collection frequently fail to maintain the distinction. Yet that is what we need to do for the reconceptualization to succeed. And here while my appreciation continues – Beck addresses an important issue many cosmopolitan theorists have skirted – it also gives way to argument. As we see in the essays on East Asia in this collection, Beck’s account of ‘second modernity’ invites reproducing many unfortunate tendencies of earlier modernization theories, including thinking in terms of a single more or less necessary pattern of development (albeit with different ‘varieties’). Like Tolstoy who said that happy families are all alike but each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way, the authors here appear to think that there is a single happy

cosmopolitan future made possible by reflexive modernization, though there are innumerable different risks of disaster that could waylay it.

Like its predecessor 'modernization', cosmopolitanization seems to imply a linear increase either in scale or in depth. How many people or countries are cosmopolitan or modern; how cosmopolitan, or how modern has each become? In the case of modernization, this implied linear development elided the relationship between labeling a period of European history and participating in an orientation to the past as an inheritance to be overcome. It turned European (and American) history into a developmental variable to be applied anywhere. In the case of cosmopolitization, the analogous framing connects an assertion of sociological trends (migration, transnational flows of money or media, etc) to an idea of 'citizenship of the world' that has been presented as a matter of ethical universalism (Nussbaum 1996, 2006; Appiah 2006), appreciation for diversity and the unfamiliar (Sennett 1970, 1977; Appadurai 1997; Pollock 2000; Pollock et al. 2000), attention to events beyond the local (Merton 1949; Gouldner 1957–8), or simply sophisticated style (Calhoun 2003).

The echoes of modernization theory with its dangled goal of being truly modern are evident in the essays on East Asia in the present collection. They present important insights into the sense of promise and pressure that motivates many in East Asia and the felt need to 'catch up' to Western modernization that drives 'compressed' cosmopolitization and economic development. But some care is needed before reaching firm conclusions. For example, some of the ills Han and Shim (2010: 671–2) cite as driving twenty-first century reflexive modernization in East Asia are identical to those that drove the building of 'high modern' state institutions in the nineteenth century: 'large-scale accidents, violent crimes, the contamination of foods and tap water, fraudulent constructions' were all prevalent in nineteenth century Europe and America. These are indeed products of greed and a rush to make money; whether that rush is greater in the 'compressed modernization' of East Asia today than in Victorian London or the cities that grew explosively on the American frontier is an empirical question. If we used life-expectancy data as an indicator it is not immediately evident that more fatal shortcuts are being taken in contemporary East Asia (but of course more evidence and more analysis would be needed to be certain).

International competition is a feature of the whole modern era (say, the last 500 years). It has driven the development of nation-state structures themselves and also the use of those structures to attempt to bolster economic development. As Ha-Joon Chang (2002) emphasizes, the free-trade ideology of neoliberals and the 'Washington consensus' of the late twentieth century represented an attempt to deny contemporary developing countries the use of protectionist and other mechanisms on which European and American powers themselves relied in becoming rich. The pressure to catch-up was felt intensely by the British in relation to the Dutch; the Americans and Germans in relation

to the British; and so forth. It propelled not only state interventions but also reluctance to regulate industries that caused harm whether by pollution, or faulty products, or fraudulent business practices – and manifestly this sort of pressure hasn't disappeared from the US or European contexts. This doesn't mean that there aren't intense pressures on East Asian countries; there are. But it is important to sort out what has to do with systemic pressures of capitalist production, trade and accumulation and what with anxieties shaped by national ambitions, the reinforcing belief in previous glory, or the projects of specific leaders. 'We must catch up' can be an ideological proposition justifying a variety of policies, inequalities, and impunities for abuse.

Kyung-Sup Chang analyses this pressure as part of the distinctively 'compressed modernity' of East Asia. Chang (2010: 448) sees compressed modernity as 'a rather universal feature of contemporary national societies' but acute in Korea and East Asia generally. He cites David Harvey's (1990) account of account of time-space condensation as a characteristic of capitalism, and specifically of attempts to overcome accumulation crises. Harvey extended this analysis of capitalism into an analysis of postmodern cultural production and social change and Chang sees similar factors at work in postcolonial contexts and in Asia more generally. This seems right, but we should be clear that a 'dynamic coexistence of mutually disparate historical and social elements' (Chang 2010: 446) is not limited to 'second modernity'. Think of the articulation of different modes of production during Western Europe's transition to industrial capitalism.

Capitalism has recurrently brought reckless bursts of investment far exceeding rational expectations of return (Lamoreaux and Sokoloff 2007). These may have 'irrationally' financed great technological innovations. Certainly they led to the coexistence of production processes and capital accumulation processes rooted in different historical periods and social organizations. To analyse such phenomena it is important to be more specific about capitalism – not just modernization – and about different dimensions of capitalism. Beck and Grande (2010: 411) describe the current consolidation of global economic power as 'the global victory of industrial capitalism'. Yet it may actually be more consistent with the accounts of diverse global conditions to recognize the co-existence of industrial and financial capitalism. Since the 1970s, profits flowed increasingly in the financial sector; much innovation centered on the production of new financial instruments. This was not really the coming of post-industrial society since in some parts of the world industrialization was rapidly proceeding. None the less, the centrality of finance capital has played a key role in shaping booms, bubbles, and the intensification of globalization. It is a crucial condition of both the opportunities some East Asian societies are seizing and the sense of speed-up and pressure they experience.

Beck is right to recognize the difference between an abstract normative orientation and an empirical reality – and indeed right to ask what institutions

might help to bring order and improvement to that empirical reality. But his terminology is confusing. Beck seeks to make several points almost at once and proliferates concepts at a rapid rate. I take this to be his argument, in brief outline:

- (1) An earlier phase of modernity was organized primarily in terms of national states, which sought to manage many of the risks people faced, although markets and other phenomena did cross state boundaries.
- (2) Modern social and political theory grew during this growing dominance of nation-states in world affairs and internalized the nation-state as the tacit model for society itself – influenced both by the actual power of nation-states and by the widespread aspiration to organize the world on the basis of nation-states.
- (3) An earlier sort of philosophical cosmopolitanism was also developed in this context, calling on people ethically to transcend narrow nationalist views, though the sociological conditions of their lives did not make adhering to this ethics a felt necessity for most.
- (4) Actually existing and accelerating trends have intensified transnational connections and flows bringing about a new phase of modernity in which there is ‘a growing unreality of the world of nation-states’ (Beck 2006: 21). This is a matter not only of positive connections but also of new shared risks such as environmental disaster.
- (5) This ‘second modernity’ is ‘reflexive’ in several senses including (a) growing efforts to try to guide it, and (b) greater consciousness of the larger patterns on the part of ordinary people – who for example not only mix more across lines of cultural difference but are consciously aware of this and often explicitly affirm the virtues of such mixing, and who recognize the existence of a global community of fate.
- (6) Material globalization (#4 above) subjects people to a ‘deformed cosmopolitanism’ that is ‘passively and unwillingly suffered’. This ‘cosmopolitization’ is to be the object of objective scientific study which requires the social sciences to overcome ‘methodological nationalism’ (that is, the reliance on nation-states as the normal units for all social science research).
- (7) Because people are increasingly aware of their integration into a transnational community of fate (#5 above) they are may choose to counter global threats by ‘partaking in the great human experiment in civilization’ which is actively and consciously trying to create new cosmopolitan institutions. Beck is not altogether explicit about this, but he seems to hold that this is not only good but also increasingly likely and perhaps even necessary in the sense that it is the only outcome that allows civilization to continue.

Beck has multiple purposes in developing this argument.

- (a) He wants to urge social scientists to overcome their ‘methodological nationalism’ in order to do better empirical research on global phenomena.
- (b) He wants to distinguish between mere moral norms and sociological attention to empirical reality in order to argue for cosmopolitanism on the grounds of empirical and practical necessity, free from the implication of arguing for a pure ought (as ‘philosophical cosmopolitans’ might be accused of doing).
- (c) He wants to assert that actual empirical changes make adherence to cosmopolitan moral norms more likely, that while in the ‘first modernity’ cosmopolitan norms were merely intellectual and nationalism captured people’s hearts, in the ‘second modernity’ this is reversed. (Beck 2006: 19)
- (d) He wants to be ‘critical’ in supporting only the versions of cosmopolitanism that favour social justice and not the ‘banal’ or ‘deformed’ versions rampant in the contemporary world.

The confusion in Beck’s usage comes largely from using the same term or nearly the same term to refer to (a) an abstract aspiration, (b) an ostensible existing condition, (c) a possible future trend, and (d) a political or even existential imperative. But though Beck cites Kant as an exemplar of the abstract aspiration he offers little evidence that actually existing cosmopolitanization is producing anything like the just universalism proposed by Kant or other philosophical cosmopolitans. He calls actually existing conditions ‘deformed cosmopolitanism’ which implies that they are simply misshapen versions of what Kant and others sought:

There can be no doubt that a cosmopolitanism that is passively and unwillingly suffered is a *deformed* cosmopolitanism. The fact that really existing cosmopolitanism is not achieved through struggle, that it is not chosen, that it does not come into the world as progress with the reflected moral authority of the Enlightenment, but as something deformed and profane, cloaked in the anonymity of a side effect – this is an essential founding insight of cosmopolitan realism in the social sciences. (Beck 2006: 20–1).

Of course the cosmopolitanism Kant sought was not merely the interconnection of different populations and different parts of the world. But though Beck sharply distinguishes ‘philosophical’ from ‘social science’ cosmopolitanism, he inextricably links them. By using the same word – qualified by ‘deformed’ – Beck suggests that the empirical reality is a version of the normative ideal. Is it?

Put bluntly, are the global AIDS crisis, massive environmental degradation, increasing concentration of capital, human trafficking, the drug trade,

the Internet and Interpol simply deformed versions of the cosmopolitanism that Kant sought? A case can be made that the proliferation of human rights treaties, the International Criminal Court, and efforts to provide humanitarian relief represent steps in the direction of the Kantian ideal (perhaps with some deformations). A case could be made that European Unification is a step in that direction (a step that seems less secure today than it did a decade ago). But to equate internationalization and globalization in general with ‘cosmopolitization’ is at best confusing. It attaches an ideal of universal justice to any reality that is organized in large-scale transnational terms.

It is indeed the case that the actual conditions of globalization create innumerable connections across lines of cultural difference, challenge attempts to maintain insularity at national and other levels, and make the world into a community of fate. In the contemporary world more and more people are compelled to navigate transnational spaces – markets, media, migration flows (whether as migrants or coming into contact with immigrants) – in the course of their daily lives. And experiences of transnational connection do often lead to a growing consciousness of that larger world. This would appear to be what Beck and his associates mean by ‘cosmopolitization’. This sometimes leads to global problem-solving but it would be a challenge – one so far not met – to show a linear correlation. The same global competition and awareness also produces anxiety and reliance on national and other non-global institutions for defense.

Beck’s view is perhaps really more Hegelian than Kantian: ‘Realistic cosmopolitanism should not be understood and developed in opposition to universalism, relativism, nationalism, and ethnicism, but as their summation or synthesis’ (2006: 57). Cosmopolitanism is not mere universalism, which is not only too abstractly normative but too one-dimensional.

Cosmopolitization is a non-linear, dialectical process in which the universal and the particular, the similar and the dissimilar, the global and the local are to be conceived, not as cultural polarities, but as interconnected and reciprocally interpenetrating principles. (Beck 2006: 73)

‘Global cosmopolis’ thus will subsume and recognize national and other differences (see also Held 1995; Levy 2010). And what is to be overcome includes not only territorially organized cultural homogeneity but class and other oppositions. ‘Understood in this way, the normatively oriented cosmopolitan account modulates all dualisms that have divided and separated human beings’ (Beck 2006: 141). This appears to suggest not the strong separation of the normative account but its leading role in the empirical trend.

Beck seeks ways to achieve unity but without reproducing either the divisiveness or the rigidities of nation states. This is an important project. I share the sense of need. But I am concerned that the reality of global connections is taken to underwrite a much more confident expectation of cosmopolitanism than is warranted, and that a variety of normative ideals inform that



expectation – including that cosmopolitanism will be democratic rather than imperial. Beck rightly stresses the extent to which human beings live in communities of fate – at a planetary scale when considering environmental disasters but also at intermediate scales like Europe (which he sees as integrating not so much because of past common heritage as in order to respond to global pressures and issues).

The situation of Europe is special in spite of everything. Nowhere in the world are transnationalization and cosmopolitanization so far advanced. We must speak in terms of an ‘institutionalized cosmopolitanism’ as exhibited in the EU, for example, by the European Council, European law (the European Court), the single currency of the ‘Euro’ (which has replaced the sacrosanct national currencies), European frontiers (which have taken precedence over national frontiers, the symbols of sovereignty), and so forth. (Beck 2006: 114; see also Beck and Grande 2007).

Here again, I think Beck calls our attention to something important and rightly urges us to be critical of the ‘methodological nationalism’ built into the very categories and analytic habits of social science. But at the same time, we need to recognize that the history of European integration is relatively brief and be cautious about assuming that it will proceed without reversals or successful resistance. And we need to ask whether the transnational integration of Europe is necessarily part of a linear process of global integration – cosmopolitanization – or a regional re-organization resistant to some aspects of global integration (say, migration) and seeking to manage others (say, market competition) for regional benefit. Use of the terms cosmopolitan or cosmopolitanization to name processes taking place on scales much less than global invites misunderstanding and also neglect of some empirical possibilities.

We might ask similar questions about accounts of individualization important to several articles in this collection. The distinction of individualism from individualization is analogous to that between cosmopolitanism and cosmopolitanization, an incomplete attempt to disentangle the empirical from the normative. The notion of individuals finding it necessary to ‘design their biographies’ (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2001) is informative. So is notion of individualization under compulsion – what we might call the forced privatization of risk (Calhoun 2006).

Is either altogether new? Beck and Grande present them as the result of an epochal break between first and second modernities. But surely individualization is characteristic of modernity in general. Migrants from villages to cities during the industrial revolution surely experience disembedding and re-embedding. The rise of the novel in Western Europe is partly a corollary to a new culture of individual biographies. How should we understand the American movement West after the Civil War if not as involving individualization under compulsion. The core distinction between achieved

and ascribed statuses – design and production of one’s own biography vs acceptance of one’s place in an established order – is wider still (Linton 1936). There is historical variation, to be sure, but also cross-cultural, class, and gender variation.

Several of the essays here describe individualization in contemporary and recent East Asia. The transformations are enormous. Changes in gender roles, relations, and aspirations are dramatic as Chang and Song (2010) show in their useful presentation of a rich trove of data on Korean women. Suzuki et al. (2010) show a burgeoning individualization in Japan, though two decades later they think than in the West – partly perhaps because companies rather than national welfare states managed much risk and families continued to be effective risk managers longer. Yan (2010) traces comparably profound individualization process in the communist and especially the post-communist era in China. Yet the limited temporal scope makes it too easy to imagine that before China was simply collective, simply traditional. What of the 1890s, we might ask, or of 1919?

The cultural ferment of these earlier periods was marked by both individualism – like that of the Romantic poet Xu Zhimo and individualization – like the disembedding of thousands of rural villagers to move into rapidly growing cities like Shanghai, possibly to be re-embedded in quasi-traditional organizations like clan societies but also perhaps in organized crime or service to colonial or merchant elites. It is true as Yan says that some Chinese individualism could be traced to Enlightenment Europe and as my mention of Xu Zhimo suggests, more than a little to European Romantics. The gender dimensions were important here too, with the anti-footbinding campaign, protest against patriarchy and arranged marriages, a wave of girls named Nora following the popularity of Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House*. And individualism and individualization came together in the initially small numbers of Chinese women able to make their own careers – like Lin Huiyin, perhaps China’s first female architect and also the great love of Xu Zhimo’s life (though making the story stereotypically Romantic, after he divorced his wife for her she married someone else, in fact the son of Xu’s great teacher Liang Qichao).

Yan (2010: 508) describes three processes he sees as no longer important in Western Europe but now occurring in other parts of the world:

- (1) The legitimation of individual desires and intensification of individual competition by way of the triumph of market economy and global consumerism;
- (2) The surge of social movements promoting individual rights and freedom by means of the global discourse of and political changes toward democracy;
- (3) The shifting balance among three major components of a given society – the individual, social groups, and modern institutions/the state-due to the rise of the individual in social life.

Yan (2010: 495) is right about the importance of processes through which 'individual was liberated or disembedded from the traditional networks of social ties for the sake of modernity' but it would be a mistake to think this was all a new process. Perhaps it is better to suggest that modernization was reflexive from the outset. And it is not clear that the three processes are no longer active in the West.

Still, is 'individualization' simply a linear trend of reflexive modernization, or a recurrent result of some patterns of social change? For example, the late Roman Empire arguably brought strong examples of the four basic features Beck and team identify with individualization: (1) detraditionalization; (2) institutionalized disembedding and re-embedding of the individual; (3) compulsory pursuit for a 'life of one's own' and lack of genuine individuality; (4) the internalization of risks' (Beck and Grande 2010: 420; see also Yan 2010). Isn't this arguably part of the background to the rise of Christianity among Jews and others in the merchant cities of the Empire; among 'seekers' like St. Augustine who also explored Stoic philosophy and Manichaeism; and among the many who struggled to cope first with the disruptions of erratic emperors – fairly frequent, starting with Caligula and Nero – and then eventually with the Barbarian invasions? Or again, wasn't this variable in play as imperial China shifted between periods of increasingly commercial organization accompanied by social 'liberalization' and an emphasis on individual ethics – *junxian* – and more military, centralized, and hierarchical organization – *fengjian* – (see discussion in Schrecker 1995; Duara 1995)? In fact, exploring any of these comparisons in much detail would probably require breaking the compound concept into several more discrete variables and exploring the extent to which they varied together. The very project of disassociating the concept from the specifically modern Western history that gave rise to it would seem to call for an examination of the extent to which the bundling together of different dimensions was or is essential or contingent. And this speaks to the enumeration of a long list of different 'individualizations' by Chang and Song (2010): reconstructive, nomadist, demographic and so forth. The next step of sociological exploration will require going behind the labels to analyse the ways different variables interact.

This is not to say that there is nothing new – in scale and perhaps even in quality. But to see what is new we need more precision and the situation of sociological accounts in stronger historical contexts. Han and Shim (2010: 479) suggest that 'global risks release individuals from dependency on modern collective welfare system and push them to move elsewhere'. They make the point that 'release' is often the 'push' of neoliberal termination of institutional support, not the 'pull' of ideals or aspirations (as earlier institutional crises also generated pressures leading to migration). We need to distinguish, though, between global competition putting pressure on collective systems (as competition to provide low-cost labour leads East Asian countries and many others to minimize investment in safer working conditions) and global risks to which

people and institutions respond (like environmental disaster). Han and Shim (2010: 475ff) draw on survey data to show the coexistence of traditional, modern, and post-modern. The survey seems heavily influenced by factors specific to its immediate context. None the less the larger point stands: ways of living and thinking labeled traditional, modern, and postmodern coexist. But maybe this is less a matter distinctive to East Asia than a problem with categories. As Maharaj (2010) says, 'tradition' may have a bigger role in the most modern societies than 'traditional' dichotomies suggest. As Lyotard (1979) tried to suggest after his famous book on the *Postmodern Condition* was read as an account of historical change, the postmodern was there all along. Or as Latour (1993) puts it, 'we have never been modern'. Put another way, invocation of the categories traditional, modern, and postmodern as though they demarcated historical periods is inherently problematic.

More generally, it isn't really viable to speak of simultaneous and interdependent phenomena as though they are separated by a 'gulf of centuries' (Beck and Grande 2010: 411). This use of evolutionary or pseudo-historical language to speak of contemporaneous phenomena cannot avoid implying a unilinear pattern of development (Faubion 2002). The simultaneous coexistence of old phenomena – say peasant agriculture using relatively primitive techniques – with newer ones – say computers or nuclear weapons – is not well described as a matter of two different time periods. It is a feature of one time period that establishes connections between these; the articulation of different modes of production, for example, is a feature of a socio-economic system in which there are factors limiting change in some areas and channeling benefits to some people rather than others. Or to take an example from contemporary politics, Afghanistan is not in the middle ages. If we wonder why Afghan social life is organized partly in ways that remind us (or at least members of a previous American political administration) of the middle ages the answer has to be given by a causal analysis (whether of geopolitics or the drug trade or Islam or patriarchy) and complemented by recognition of both the many 'reflexively modern' Afghans who have struggled to remake their society and the many ways in which it is nothing like medieval Europe.

## Conclusion

There is much more to the contributions offered here: Levy's account of the globalization of human rights norms, for example, or Chang's account of how neoliberalism exacerbates imbalances between economic and non-economic concerns. I don't pretend to have even touched on all. I hope I have been able to bring out some concerns about the underlying theory. I raise the concerns not in order to undermine the project, with which I am

broadly in sympathy, but to push it to greater precision and rigor. I also want to urge greater consideration of history in efforts to diagnose the present.

But let me close on a small but perhaps not insignificant point. It seems to me noteworthy that all the main empirical essays in this special issue address specific nation-states. This does not prevent them from being informative. They point out ways in which national histories are shaped by international contexts, global challenges that states find it hard to confront. The different national cases bring important counterparts to the usual European histories informing accounts of modernization. But if we seek a more cosmopolitan sociology it will need to include a variety of accounts focused on other analytic objects. However, the very prominence of nation-states in these accounts may also suggest the extent to which they still matter, critiques of methodological nationalism notwithstanding.

(Date accepted: June 2010)

## Notes

1. It is true that much social and political theory has been written in ways that confuse the theory of one of many societies with the theory of society in general. Beck is disarmingly self-critical, listing himself along with many others guilty of this. But a caveat should be entered about Niklas Luhmann, who in his last work conceptualized a global 'society of society' (Luhmann 1997). Though Luhmann is an influence on Beck, he is also a very different kind of theorist. Yet it would be instructive to consider the relationship between Luhmann's conception of the encompassing whole of the society of society and Beck's account of the differentiation of varieties within second modernity.

2. Beck and Grande (drawing on other colleagues writing for this collection (Beck and Grand 2010; BJS 2010)) identify two patterns they see as distinctive to East Asian history: 'the victim-constellation of late developing countries' in which the challenges of Second Modernity come before the institutional resources of First Modernity have been consolidated and 'compressed modernization' in which the development of First Modernity and

transition to Second are speeded up and almost simultaneous. Arguably, however, these patterns run through the last five hundred years (and perhaps earlier histories). This formulation also sounds very much like accounts of 'late modernizers' – notably Germany and Japan – and their propensity for ethnic nationalism (Kohn 1944) or state led development (Gerschenkron 1962).

3. Relatedly, it is no doubt right that the West has produced risks with which the rest of the world must cope. It has been disturbingly proficient at externalizing dangers and damages. Consistent with Beck's emphasis on risk, Beck and Grande speak only of dangers, but I think there are rather clearly damages and injuries that manifest themselves directly, not only probabilistically as risks.

4. Is there something new about modernity threatening its own foundations? Is this specific to the globalization of capital and risks in second modernity, or has it been the case throughout the history of capitalism and the organization of political power through nation-states that modernity

embodied contradictions that threatened its foundations?

5. Beck's argument is presented, sometimes with shifting terminology, in about a

dozen provocative and insightful though not always systematic books starting with his classic *Risk Society* (1992) and continuing unabated.

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