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Will China seek revenge for its century of humiliation at the hands of the West?

AMONG THE gifts brought by Lord Macartney, who came to Beijing in 1793 on a historic embassy intended to open China to British merchants, was a map of the world, which the Emperor Ch'ien-lung found unacceptable because the Middle Kingdom was represented on it as too small and not in the middle. As it happened, Macartney's compatriots had already established their own cartographical supremacy. During the eighteenth century Greenwich was adopted as the prime meridian of longitude, a convention internationally ratified in 1884, and imperial maps using Mercator's projection made Britain seem greater than it really was. Toward the end of the Second World War, American writers such as Nicholas John Spykman and Neil MacNeil urged that their country's dominant geopolitical power should be recognized by redrawing maps of the world to put the United States at the center.

Today, the question arises with increasing urgency: Is China set to occupy pride of place in the global picture as it had famously done in the time of Marco Polo?

China Also Rises

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