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**Abstract**

One can find in any airport kiosk books that proclaim ours to be 'the Chinese century.' We have titles such as 'The Dragon Awakes,' 'China's Rise,' 'The Rise of China,' and 'China's Ascent,' to name but a few. But to rise is not necessarily to lead. What constitutes leadership? In higher education, China is building the fastest growing system?in quality as well as in quantity?in the world. The foremost global powers of the past four centuries all offered models in the realms of culture, ideas, and education. This may be said of seventeenth-century France under Louis XIV; of the Qing during the Qianlong reign of the eighteenth century; of Britain and Germany in the nineteenth century; and of the United States in the twentieth. China now aspires to educate global elites. For the twenty-first century, then, are Chinese universities poised for global leadership? (HRK / Abstract übernommen)