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Review Essay

America's Debate over the Rise of China

The U.S.—China Military Scorecard: Forces, Geography, and the Evolving Balance of Power 1996–2017

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Santa Monica: RAND, 2015

377 pp. \$66.00

ISBN 978-083308219-0

The Hundred-Year Marathon: China's Secret Strategy to Replace America as the Global Superpower

MICHAEL PILLSBURY

New York: Henry Holt, 2015

319 pp. £18.99

ISBN 978-162779-010-9

Meeting China Halfway: How to Defuse the Emerging US-China Rivalry

LYLE J. GOLDSTEIN

Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2015

382 pp. \$29.95

ISBN 978-162616160-3

The China Challenge: Shaping the Choices of a Rising Power

THOMAS J. CHRISTENSEN

New York: WW Norton, 2015

371 pp. \$27.95

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The rapid growth of China's power combined with the intensification of rivalry between the United States and China over the past several years has triggered a re-thinking of US policy toward the rise of China. America's traditional policy of supporting China's rise as a rich, strong and peaceful country in hopes of building a cooperative and generally friendly relation with China over the long term, is being called into question. Critics charge that that traditional policy is backfiring, playing into Beijing's wiles and producing a China so powerful it could well become the greatest challenge to the United States in its history. Other analysts offer a less jaundiced view of China, but all manifest apprehension over whether China will use its growing power to challenge the US. Earlier iterations of a similar debate have come and gone, but the closing distance between US and Chinese military, economic and technological power has brought this debate much closer to the US mainstream. Indeed, one or two of these books may represent the mainstream of US thinking. Together, the four books lay out the topography of the US debate.

45 All four books were written before the sharp downturn in China's economy in 2015
46 and while the US economy muddled along with its post-financial crisis "new normal"
47 of two per cent annual economic growth. A much narrower gap between long term US
48 and Chinese economic growth rates – if that is what China's slow-down produces –
49 might affect judgments regarding some of these works, especially Goldstein's which
50 argues that China's power will soon equal or surpass the US's. Yet three of the four
51 works emphasize the growing influence of nationalist passions in China and worry
52 that those passions, in the midst of mounting domestic difficulties, might incline
53 China's leaders toward harder policies toward the United States.

54 The RAND study provides a base line for the debate. With 355 pages of text
55 and tables, the study compares Chinese and US weapons systems in ten different
56 areas, implicitly involving a clash between the PLA's anti-access/area denial and
57 the US Navy's AirSea Battle doctrine. The study's ten "score cards" of capability
58 are: the ability of China's ballistic and cruise missiles to attack in a presumed
59 opening pre-emptive surprise attack US air bases in the Western Pacific; the
60 PLA's ability to win a contest for air superiority over the Taiwan Strait (air
61 superiority is presumed to be vital precursor to successful invasion); China's abil-
62 ity to defend its airspace against deep penetration US attack; the US ability to
63 attack Chinese air bases in response to China's presumed initial attack on US
64 bases and in the context of struggle for air superiority and attempted invasion;
65 China's ability to attack US surface warships including aircraft carriers and air-
66 defence cruisers; US ability to attack Chinese submarines and surface ships to
67 devastate a Chinese invasion fleet headed for Taiwan; the capabilities of both
68 sides in space and counter-space warfare (essential for modern "information war-
69 fare"); cyber warfare capabilities; and prospects that conventional war might
70 escalate to the nuclear level. US and Chinese capabilities in each of these areas
71 are weighed in the context of hypothetical short-duration but intense war involv-
72 ing either a Chinese attempt to seize Taiwan or to defend disputed islands in the
73 South China Sea against a US attempt to re-take an island after China seized it
74 from the Philippines. The starkness of this hard analysis of the military balance in
75 the Western Pacific poses, the RAND study suggests, the first major naval chal-
76 lenge the United States has faced in the Western Pacific since 1941–1942.

77 Geographic proximity figures prominently in the RAND study. The proximity
78 of Taiwan to China plus the great distances of that potential battlefield from US
79 bases in the Western Pacific – let alone the continental United States – confers
80 great advantages on the PLA in terms of intensity of operations, according to
81 the RAND study. So too does the paltry number of US air bases in the
82 Western Pacific – only two in Japan and one in Guam – compared to the 39
83 PLA air bases within the un-refueled distance of Taiwan. The physical parking
84 space for aircraft on those three US bases would limit the number of planes
85 the US could shift rapidly from other regions to the West Pacific area of opera-
86 tions. The RAND study demonstrates that both sides have the capability of pre-
87 cision strikes on enemy runways, landed aircraft, fuel tanks and communications
88 facilities, and both the Taiwan and South China Sea scenarios assume an all-out

89 battle for air superiority. Crippling of the three US air bases by pre-emptive first
 90 strike, while China's potent anti-ship missiles forced US aircraft carriers to keep
 91 distant, could sharply degrade the intensity of US air operations while a PLA
 92 invasion fleet headed for Taiwan. The study assumes that South Korea would
 93 not permit US war planes to operate from Korean territory.

94 The overall conclusion is that the US still enjoys superiority in most, but not all
 95 areas, but that the margin of US superiority is rapidly diminishing. Given the dif-
 96 fering trajectories of US and Chinese defence spending, force size, and military
 97 modernization efforts, a "tipping point" could be reached within a few years, per-
 98 haps as early as 2017, the end point for the study. Would Chinese leaders – fed up
 99 with US arming of Taiwan and, perhaps, with Tsai Ying-wen's moves in Taipei –
 100 then decide it was time for Taiwan to return to the embrace of the motherland?

101 The RAND study makes clear that China and the United States are planning
 102 and preparing for war with one another. China in the early 1990s gave great
 103 attention to the new style of "informationized warfare" invented and demon-
 104 strated by the US in Iraq and the Balkans, and responded by developing well-
 105 funded and well-designed weapons systems targeting vulnerabilities associated
 106 with the new US high-tech style of war. A premise of the RAND study (and,
 107 for that matter, Pillsbury's and Christensen's studies) is *sic vis paxem para bellum*.
 108 The RAND study's over-riding concern is that the superiority of US military
 109 power that has prevented war over Taiwan for 65 years is evaporating.
 110 According to the RAND report, Chinese victory in an intense but short duration
 111 war over Taiwan would not require that China match the global military power
 112 of the United States, but merely prevail in the Taiwan Strait for perhaps several
 113 weeks during which the PLA would secure control of Taiwan and dig in.

114 Michael Pillsbury's fear in *The Hundred Year Marathon* is not a PRC-US war
 115 in the near run, but three more decades of US-assisted growth of Chinese power
 116 leading to a situation in which China's power over-awes the United States.
 117 Pillsbury held a number of positions at RAND and in US defence and
 118 Congressional agencies in the 1970s and 1980s and his book is, in part, a memoir.
 119 Unlike the RAND study and similar to Christensen, however, Pillsbury warns
 120 (p. 231) against overestimating China's power; China is nowhere near close to
 121 the United States in aggregate national power. During the late Cold War period,
 122 Pillsbury was an advocate of closer military and intelligence cooperation with
 123 China – activity that allows him to describe himself as "a panda lover" who
 124 became a wiser "panda skeptic" via wide reading of Chinese strategic writings.
 125 In 1997 and 2000, Pillsbury authored studies of Chinese military writings on
 126 "future wars." Those studies demonstrated that at least some PLA analysts
 127 believed (even then) that China could win a war with the United States, while
 128 none even mentioned the possibility that China might lose such a war. These
 129 hawks in the PLA have risen in influence since the 1990s, particularly under
 130 Xi Jinping, Pillsbury contends, and they have a strategy.

131 Pillsbury argues that war with the United States would be a disaster for China's
 132 "secret strategy." That strategy seeks to gradually and inconspicuously build

133 China's power over the first five decades of the 21st Century until, finally,
134 China's power surpasses and overawes the US. The centenary in 2049 of the
135 founding of the People's Republic of China is set as the goal line, with China
136 as the indisputable preponderant power in the world. At some point the
137 United States will cede primacy to China – either via defeat in war or by prudent
138 war-avoiding appeasement of China – and China will proceed to reorganize the
139 world on the basis of Chinese values and interests. During the remaining three
140 decades of this century-long marathon, China will draw by hook or by crook
141 on what the West has and what China needs to grow powerful: markets for its
142 exports force fed by mercantilist methods; systematic theft and coerced transfer
143 of advanced technology including cutting-edge systems; scientific knowledge gar-
144 nered by “cooperation” with US corporations and universities. Not scaring the
145 West and endangering access to these vital inputs is central to success of this
146 “marathon” strategy. Building a large and ultra-modern military force too quick-
147 ly, or using China's military power too provocatively, could alert the West and
148 must be avoided. China must deny a desire for “hegemony,” for displacing the
149 United States as Asia and the world's dominant power, while steadily building
150 the conditions for Chinese global hegemony. The West should wake up and be
151 forewarned, Pillsbury writes. Otherwise the West will ultimately live in a world
152 organized around China's interests and values.

153 Pillsbury centres his analysis around interviews with China's hawks that his
154 government duties made possible. He translates dozens of these hawks' com-
155 ments about lessons they learned from the practice of state relations in China
156 during the Warring States period (402–221 BCE). While Pillsbury occasionally
157 suggests that his understanding of China's “secret strategy” derives from his con-
158 tacts with Chinese defectors and reading of purloined Chinese classified
159 documents, in fact his understanding is extrapolated from the Chinese hawks
160 seeking lessons today from Machiavellian writings that emerged during that
161 ancient era. From the perspective of this hyper-realist weltanschauung, according
162 to Pillsbury, the hawks see politics among states is a ruthless no-holds-barred
163 struggle for power with the prize sought by each ambitious ruler being hegemony
164 over other states. A key precept of this tradition, according to Pillsbury, is that
165 there cannot be two emperors, or hegemon, and struggle between them will con-
166 tinue until one contender finally prevails and dominates. Deception is vital to
167 success in this contest, and Pillsbury offers scores of examples of how today's
168 hawks advocate ancient stratagems of deception: luring an opponent into a costly
169 quagmire; using double agents to mislead rivals; sowing mistrust in your oppo-
170 nent's alliances, and most of all, using an opponent's strength against him
171 while denying ambition. A clever ruler will deny ambition thus lulling his oppo-
172 nent while conspiring to overthrow him. Pillsbury uses these tropes to elucidate
173 contemporary Chinese policy toward the United States. He also argues that
174 China's study of US strategy during its 19th Century “rise,” as well as study of
175 Soviet strategy during its long but ultimately failed attempted “rise,” validate a
176 strategy of low key avoidance of premature collision with and simultaneous

177 exploitation of the incumbent hegemon until, finally, the rising power completely
 178 overawes the declining power.

179 Pillsbury's framework offers a plausible explanation for the widespread
 180 embrace in China of propositions that US policy seeks to weaken and injure
 181 China, in spite of copious evidence indicating that the US has, in reality, long
 182 supported China's emergence as a rich and strong global partner: that is what
 183 China's Warring States tradition teaches a reigning hegemon should do and, per-
 184 haps, what China itself would do in such a situation. Further, the more powerful
 185 an emerging rival becomes, the greater the threat it poses to a reigning hegemon,
 186 and the more desperate that reigning hegemon's measures to throttle its rival.
 187 This is why, Pillsbury suggests, such far-fetched notions as US-armed interven-
 188 tion in Tibet or Xinjiang, or US instigation of an uprising to overthrow the
 189 CCP, appeal to many hawks in China. This is also why China apparently feels
 190 deeply insecure even though it is stronger and enjoys a more benign international
 191 environment than at any time since the 1820s. This conundrum undermines tradi-
 192 tional US China policy: US assistance to China's successful rise is not, in fact,
 193 making China friendlier and more cooperative with the United States. Instead
 194 and in fact, the stronger China becomes, the more fearful of the United States
 195 it becomes.

196 Pillsbury recommends that the United States start by recognizing clearly that
 197 China aspires to displace it as the world's leading power, and then adopt
 198 China's own Warring States strategy to counter it. One need not be German to
 199 apply Clausewitz's concepts, Pillsbury notes. The US should develop a long-
 200 range strategy for industrial and technological competition with China.
 201 China-like industrial policies should be employed to strengthen US competitive-
 202 ness *via-a-vis* China. The US should give stronger support to dissidents and eco-
 203 nomic reformers in China. It should punish China for its cyber espionage of US
 204 intellectual property and defence technology. The US should build a coalition of
 205 states concerned with China's rise: Japan, India, the Philippines, Mongolia, and
 206 South Korea. In short, the United States should pursue a long-term competition
 207 against China. Pillsbury rejects resort to a full-bore Cold War-like strategy;
 208 "Much of U.S. strategy in the Cold War is not relevant – at least not yet.
 209 Calls for a new Cold War play into the hands of the hawks in China who seek
 210 to exaggerate the threat from the United Statesno need to create an
 211 anti-China alliance akin to the NATO alliance to contain an expanding
 212 empire..." (p. 224). Such caveats notwithstanding, Pillsbury represents one
 213 pole of the US debate.

214 Lyle Goldstein's book stands at the other pole of the US debate. Unlike
 215 Pillsbury's focus on 2049, Goldstein sees China as about to surpass America.
 216 He calls for a voluntary US withdrawal from its current position of hegemony
 217 over the Western Pacific in order to "make way" for the growth of Chinese influ-
 218 ence. But each drawdown of US presence would be matched by roughly equiva-
 219 lent Chinese concessions in areas of US policy interests. Thus the process would
 220 not entail unilateral US withdrawal, but a mutual and balanced effort at

221 accommodation by an incumbent but declining hegemon and an ambitious, ris-
222 ing power determined to grow into portions of the incumbent power's receding
223 sphere of influence. "Spheres of influence" are an "integral and natural organiz-
224 ing principle of world politics that follows from the continual deep relevance of
225 geography," Goldstein asserts. In line with this, the US should "bestow" on
226 China a larger role in the Asia-Pacific region. In many cases this process
227 would require reduction of US military forces in that region. This would allow
228 the US to "draw back from the brink of disaster" and avoid an otherwise looming
229 confrontation – implicitly a big war – with China.

230 Goldstein was the founding director of the China Maritime Studies Institute
231 (CMSI) established in 2006 by the US Naval War College to promote mutual
232 understanding and maritime cooperation with China. Under Goldstein's tutelage
233 the CMSI became a leading centre for study of China's growing naval and mari-
234 time capabilities. Goldstein himself authored insightful CMSI monographs on
235 the PLA-N's submarine development efforts, mine warfare capabilities, and
236 China's maritime enforcement agencies. At first it might seem ironic that some-
237 one with this background would advocate such a dovish approach to an ever
238 more powerful China. But in Goldstein's view, it is precisely China's great and
239 growing power that makes unwise an American confrontation with it. In an
240 email to this reviewer, Dr. Goldstein pointed out that the RAND report did
241 not consider the PLA's extremely potent sea mine capabilities, and that when
242 those capabilities are factored into the equation, the PLA's ability to punish
243 the US Navy in the vicinity of Taiwan is even grimmer than presented by the
244 RAND report.

245 Goldstein's central argument is that China's power is growing so much that the
246 United States will be able to oppose it only at very great cost. It is virtually cer-
247 tain that China's economy will surpass that of the US in the near future, and the
248 instruments of China's national power, military and otherwise, will grow accord-
249 ingly. It is virtually inevitable that a very powerful China will insist on accommo-
250 dation of its interests in the East Asia/ Western Pacific region, and a wise and
251 prudent US policy would take the initiative in accommodating China's rise.

252 "Appeasement" is not a term Goldstein favours. But neither is it a term he
253 eschews. Appeasement may be a sagacious policy in dealing with rising powers
254 not set on over-turning the existing international system. He quotes Winston
255 Churchill to this effect. The United States should follow, Goldstein says, a course
256 similar to that of Britain in the late 19th century when London accommodated
257 the ambitions of a rising United States. Proactive accommodation by a still
258 much stronger United States will not be a sign of weakness, but of good will
259 and sagacity. Moreover, accommodation of China's interests can be achieved
260 without endangering fundamental US security interests. The United States should
261 embrace China's desire for a "peaceful rise" and negotiate with Beijing outcomes
262 that reasonably accommodate both Chinese and US interests. Today's China is
263 vastly different than Germany circa 1938, and it would be foolish to rule out
264 accommodation of an aggrieved China because it failed with Hitler-led

265 Germany. China's territorial demands are long-standing and are not likely to
266 grow when existing claims are satisfied. China has long since abandoned world
267 revolution and does not much care what sort of internal governance countries
268 choose for themselves. Beijing has not built up massive military forces or station-
269 ed them abroad. It supports the United Nations system and its components:
270 the NPT regime, peace-keeping operations and so on. China does not seek to
271 drive the United States out of the Western Pacific; indeed such a development
272 would not correspond to China's own interests. Beijing seeks, rather, to ensure
273 that the US presence there does not trample on China's interests. It has not
274 used military force against its neighbours (with the one exception of Vietnam
275 in 1979). It has demonstrated a willingness to work with and even learn from
276 the US and the West generally. If anything, China esteems and seeks to emulate
277 the United States. If the United States opens the way to a reasonable growth of
278 Chinese influence, reasonably accommodates China's interests and ratchets down
279 US influence, there is a good chance for Sino-American partnership in the 21st
280 century. That is the ambitious goal Goldstein posits.

281 There is a lot of common ground between Goldstein and Christensen. Both
282 reject the notion that China seeks to overturn the existing international order.
283 Why would China want to topple an open global economic order now that it
284 has become a global economic power? Both believe – contrary to Pillsbury –
285 that China's top leaders sincerely desire a long term peaceful relation with the
286 United States and are not merely pretending. Both Goldstein and Christensen
287 recognize a diversity of views among China's foreign policy community.
288 Strident voices see US efforts to contain, encircle and split China to abort its
289 rise and call for more confrontational approaches toward the US. But other moderate
290 voices recognize overlapping interests with the United States, and conclude
291 that cooperation in these areas should be expanded. Both Goldstein and
292 Christensen see moderate voices as dominant among China's top leadership
293 but subject to nationalist pressures. Both Goldstein and Christensen call for
294 active search via dialogue and negotiation for common ground and cooperation
295 on common interests between China and the United States. They identify many
296 of the same areas in which China and the US can work together more: nuclear
297 non-proliferation especially regarding North Korea and Iran; global economic
298 issues; climate change; development assistance to Africa. Both call for
299 American representatives to listen and emphasize more with China's concerns.
300 Both call for the United States to downplay human rights and democratization,
301 and instead deal with China as it is – ruled by the CCP's authoritarian one-party
302 regime. Both stress Beijing's aversion to foreign intervention and regime change
303 and the need for Washington to avoid those landmines in dealing with China.

304 Yet there are major differences between Goldstein and Christensen. One
305 involves contrary estimates of the current state of Sino-US relations. Goldstein
306 views the relationship as deeply fraught, fueled by Chinese anger, and heading
307 for confrontation unless switched soon onto a radically different, more cooperative
308 path. For Christensen, Sino-US relations are sometimes better, sometimes

309 worse depending largely on the quality of US diplomacy and political alignments
310 within China. But overall the relation is not that bad and generally becoming bet-
311 ter, i.e. more cooperative. Per Christensen, China's top leaders understand very
312 well the many ways in which the development of the country they rule benefits
313 from participation in the system set up under tutelage after 1945 and still main-
314 tained by US global power. Nationalist propaganda to the contrary serves to
315 legitimize the CCP regime, but China's moderate leaders understand that con-
316 frontation with the United States could derail China's remarkably successful
317 post-1978 development drive – upon which social stability depends.

318 The most fundamental difference between Goldstein and Christensen has to do
319 with the efficacy of a strong US military position in the Western Pacific. Such a
320 position of US strength still exists, and has been maintained across several US
321 administrations. Goldstein and Christensen differ sharply about the consequences
322 and thus wisdom of continuing that presence. Goldstein views the strong US mili-
323 tary presence as provocative, fostering Chinese anger and perceptions of threat,
324 and leading ultimately and perhaps in the not-too-distant future, to a Chinese
325 effort to end that presence. Christensen, on the other hand, sees US strength as
326 “incentivizing” moderate Chinese behaviour toward China's smaller and weaker
327 neighbours with whom China has territorial conflicts: “Contrary to the common
328 assumption that US toughness in East Asia only breeds Chinese intransigence
329 and spirals of tension in the region, the second half of the 1990s demonstrates
330 that a robust US security presence and commitment to East Asia, in the proper
331 diplomatic context, can incentivize China to behave more moderately toward its
332 neighbors.” (p. 195).

333 Goldstein surveys ten policy areas recently characterized, he avers, by escalat-
334 ing US-PRC tension, and proposes in each area spirals of virtuous cooperative
335 action in which moves by the US (the first actor because of its greater strength
336 and its role in China's “humiliation” in the 19th century) will be met by coopera-
337 tive counter-moves by China. Initial moves will be largely symbolic and designed
338 to build trust. As mutual trust grows, moves will become more substantive, and
339 the two sides move toward mutual accommodation in previously conflict-ridden
340 policy areas. In each policy area Goldstein proposes five hypothetical moves for
341 the US, and five reciprocal moves by China constituting together a “cooperation
342 spiral.” The end result in each policy area will be greatly reduced Sino-American
343 tension achieved by deliberate Sino-American cooperation.

344 Regarding Taiwan, for example, US moves begin by reducing forces on Guam,
345 closing the US military office in Taipei, endorsing and encouraging “final status”
346 negotiations between Beijing and Taipei, and finally, ending US ending arms
347 sales to Taiwan. China's reciprocal moves begin with unconditional military
348 talks with Taipei, withdrawal of missiles and amphibious forces from opposite
349 Taiwan, and culminate in the signature of a “treaty” with Taipei promising
350 not to attack Taiwan or station CCP or PLA personnel on that island. Beijing
351 would agree to a “confederation” with adequate guarantees for genuine
352 Taiwan autonomy and continuing liberal democratic self-government – but

353 within China's rather than a US sphere. Goldstein postulates that Beijing and
354 Taipei would sign a treaty (he does not say with whom; presumably with
355 Taipei) guaranteeing Taiwan's autonomy within the new confederation while
356 promising the Mainland would not use force against Taiwan. China's imperative
357 of "reunification" would thus be reconciled with US concern with survival of
358 Taiwan's liberal democratic polity. Taiwan would thus be transferred, without
359 war, from the US to China's sphere while protecting US interests in the survival
360 of Taiwan's democratic polity.

361 Regarding Korea, Goldstein argues that the US should encourage China to
362 play a greater security and economic role in the north, revitalizing a now largely
363 nominal military alliance with the North and providing large-scale economic
364 assistance to it. Chinese protection would eliminate the North's need for nuclear
365 weapons to ensure survival, while economic growth would provide strong incen-
366 tives. For its part, the US would propose a bilateral investigation of the Korean
367 War, draw down US combat forces in South Korea, begin negotiations with and
368 then recognize North Korea. Since these moves would ease Pyongyang's security
369 concerns, they would, Goldstein hypothesizes, provide incentives for the North to
370 give up its nuclear weapons programme, with China supervising and verifying
371 that process. Beijing, after all, has an interest in denuclearizing North Korea
372 and preventing further nuclear proliferation in Northeast Asia. Goldstein's
373 Korea scenario ends with voluntary and China-verified denuclearization,
374 North Korea firmly within China's sphere of influence, and with Beijing relaxed
375 about a residual US-South Korean alliance restructured to present no military
376 threat to China.

377 With Japan, the US would marginally reduce its military presence on Okinawa
378 and nudge Tokyo toward a more sincere demonstration of repentance on "the
379 history issue," a repentance to be enacted during a visit to the Nanjing
380 Massacre museum in that Chinese city. Such moves would induce Beijing to
381 agree to the mid-line principle in the East China Sea, but with Tokyo agreeing
382 to "joint administration" over the disputed Senkaku/ Diaoyu Islands. China
383 would then accept Japan as a "normal country" with normal military capabil-
384 ities, while the US would "restructure" its alliance with Japan to address
385 China security concerns. With China's security concerns over Taiwan, Korea
386 and Japan thus obviated, China would no longer need to push the development
387 of military power so vigorously, or be so suspicious of a residual US military
388 presence in the Western Pacific.

389 It should be noted that Goldstein's approach is largely hypothetical and specu-
390 lative; it is based on speculation about what Washington and Beijing *might* do.
391 While Goldstein's proposed moves are grounded in research in Chinese sources,
392 there remains a strong "what if" quality to them. Valid objections can be raised
393 to almost all moves in the "cooperation spirals" proposed by Goldstein – as he
394 himself recognizes. Would Beijing really accept the mid-line in the East China
395 Sea, give up the nine-dash line in the South China Sea, or recognize Japan as
396 a "normal military power"? But given Goldstein's objective of outlining a path

397 to Sino-American cooperation to avoid collision, it is hard to see how one could
398 avoid speculation. Moreover, Goldstein merely offers his proposed moves as
399 illustrative, and recognizes that these or other such moves would need to be care-
400 fully thought-through and then negotiated by the two sides. Strong domestic
401 opposition would emerge with many of his proposed moves. Goldstein responds
402 to these difficulties with a call for statesmanship and national leadership.

403 Christensen sees two main ways in which China's behaviour as a power rapidly
404 growing in strength might nonetheless destabilize that existing order. First, China
405 might adopt coercive approaches intended to compel Japan, South Korea,
406 Taiwan, the Philippines and Vietnam to submit to Beijing's notions of sovereignty
407 in territorial disputes. (Christensen says very little about the Sino-Indian rela-
408 tionship, an unfortunate omission that keeps him from focusing on the highly
409 significant emerging Japan–India entente, an emerging relationship that fits
410 very nicely into his framework about "incentivizing" non-belligerent Chinese
411 behaviour.) A combination of aggrieved "post-colonial nationalism," growing
412 space for nationalist demands both popular and from within the elite, plus a
413 belief that since the "great recession" of 2008 the balance of power has shifted
414 fundamentally in China's favor, could easily tempt Beijing to resort to attempt
415 to force its neighbours to submit to Beijing's notions of sovereignty. These pres-
416 sures in fact combined to produce belligerent and coercive Chinese policies in
417 maritime disputes in the East and South China Seas in 2010–2014, Christensen
418 maintains. It is in this realm of possible Chinese coercion of its weak neighbours
419 over territorial issues that Christensen sees the relevance of a continuing strong
420 US military presence as "incentivizing" China's non-resort to coercive
421 approaches.

422 The second way in which China's rise might challenge the existing global order
423 is by simply refusing to support efforts by other major powers to deal with vari-
424 ous global governance issues: the proliferation of nuclear weapon technologies;
425 improving the quality of development assistance to Africa; dealing with situa-
426 tions of egregious abuse of human rights by rogue governments; maintaining
427 financial and economic stability; or dealing with climate change. China's global
428 footprint in all these areas is simply so large, Christensen argues, that refusal to
429 join in international efforts may render those efforts ineffective. China's insist-
430 ence on continuing "normal" economic relations with North Korea or Iran,
431 for example, undermine efforts by other powers to pressure Pyongyang or
432 Tehran to abandon nuclear weapon programs. China's no-strings-attached aid
433 to African nations may undermine the efforts of other major aid-givers to ensure
434 that development assistance actually goes to development. China's carbon emis-
435 sions are so large that its refusal to accept obligations via the Kyoto accord
436 doomed that accord with the American Congress. China is so big and consequen-
437 tial, and the world today so interconnected, that China simply must cooperate
438 actively if many international problems are to be dealt with effectively. China,
439 however, tends to view itself (not unreasonably per Christensen) as a developing
440 country, and views as unfair American demands that it assume responsibilities

441 equivalent to leading developed countries. Moreover, China's "post-colonial
442 nationalism" tends to view such US demands as a nefarious scheme to hobble
443 China's development and ensnare it in various foreign quagmires.

444 Christensen argues that strong and durable US security presence in the West
445 Pacific produces a Chinese awareness that coercive pressure on its neighbours –
446 again Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, the Philippines and Vietnam – will push
447 those countries closer toward the United States and toward one another in a coalition
448 to counter a belligerent China. Fear of US encirclement is actually an incentive
449 for non-coercive Chinese policies designed to reassure its neighbours, keeping them
450 away from joining in encircling China. Continuing US strength in the Western
451 Pacific is thus essential to the China-restraining option of potential "encirclement"
452 of China. Without a strong US presence, China's small neighbours are unlikely to
453 risk angering China by forming a coalition to balance China. With a strong US presence,
454 however, China's weak neighbours will feel bold enough to draw together and
455 with the United States to counter China. According to Christensen, China demonstrated
456 its understanding of this principle when it drew away from its confrontational
457 approaches of 2010–2014 in the East and South China Sea and moved to reduce
458 tension with Tokyo, Seoul and Hanoi. As Tokyo and Seoul began repairing their
459 previously tense relations under the impetus of Pyongyang's provocative nuclear
460 and missile tests, Beijing became much less tolerant of the North's reckless war-mongering.
461 From Christensen's point of view, Goldstein's prescription of recession of
462 US power would be an invitation to Chinese coercion against its weak neighbours
463 – and all the destabilizing conflict that would ensue.

464 Goldstein warns against the US allowing itself be "played" by calls by those
465 China's small and weak neighbors for the US to "stand up to Beijing's bullying."
466 That would be exactly the wrong approach, according to Goldstein; it would
467 encourage further provocation of China by these small countries and draw the
468 United States into deeper conflict with China. It is only natural that these
469 weak countries might be unnerved by China's astounding rise, and the US
470 might want to demonstrate empathy with those little-country fears, just as a parent
471 might show empathy for the "irrational fears" of a child. But Washington
472 should not found its policy on such "irrational fears" – irrational because
473 China does not intend to invade these small countries. The reality is, Goldstein
474 asserts, that the American people do not want and will not support war with
475 China over "rocks and reefs," and a wise US policy must be founded on this reality.
476 If China were to prepare to invade Japan or the Philippine archipelago, the
477 US would be compelled to intervene and assume the burdens of war with China.
478 But there is no evidence that China intends or is preparing something like that,
479 Goldstein argues. The US should draw red lines against Chinese efforts to overrun
480 its neighbours, and be prepared to stand by those red lines should China
481 someday morph into something like Japan in the 1930s. That is far from being
482 the case today, Goldstein argues.

483 One factor underlying Goldstein and Christensen's differing assessments of
484 Beijing's willingness to challenge the US position in the Western Pacific is

485 differing views about the durability of US preeminence. Goldstein maintains that
486 China will soon surpass the United States in national power in terms of GDP and
487 military line up. With the US about to be surpassed by China it makes sense for
488 the United States to abandon hegemony in the Western Pacific and reconcile US
489 positions there with China's own requirements. Christensen, like Pillsbury, views
490 US preeminence, globally and in the Western Pacific, as far more durable.
491 Christensen deconstructs theories of US decline to demonstrate continuing US
492 leadership in economic, military, technological and educational areas. The
493 United States has, to cite one element of continuing US preeminence, some 60
494 allies accounting for 80 per cent of global military spending. China has perhaps
495 two allies: North Korea and Pakistan.

496 But continuing US strength is only part of Christensen's prescription.
497 Reassurance of China is the other, equally important half. The US should
498 make it clear to Beijing that the power of the US and its allies will not be used
499 to support Taiwan independence (that is de jure separation from China),
500 Tibetan or Xinjiang secession, or to undermine and overthrow China's incum-
501 bent CCP government. Christensen lauds the efforts of both the Clinton and
502 the George W. Bush administrations to clearly disassociate the US from the boat-
503 rocking moves of Lee Teng-hui and Chen Sui-bian respectively. The US should
504 not take sides in the maritime disputes of the Western Pacific, and should limit
505 its concern to the peaceful resolution of those disputes. The United States should
506 not begrudge cooperative ties between China and its East Asian neighbours, even
507 US allies. Washington must accept that these countries do not want to choose
508 sides in a Sino-US conflict. Alliance with the United States will remain insurance
509 against a belligerent China even as China's ties with its weak neighbours warm.
510 The US should not view the Sino-US relationship as a zero-sum game; in fact
511 China's moves often serve US interests as well as China's own. The US should
512 use "dialogues" with China to better understand China's views, identify areas
513 in which the US and China have common interests, and discuss how the two
514 countries can best cooperate. The US must make clear – as most US administra-
515 tions have according to Christensen, that it welcomes China's emergence as a
516 great power, seeks to cooperate with a more powerful – and responsible – China.

517 Christensen's method of analyzing this strength + reassurance balance is histor-
518 ical. He reviews the China policies of US administrations since the end of the
519 Cold War, identifying when those administrations got right the requisite balance
520 of strength and reassurance, and when they did not. The first Clinton administra-
521 tion got it wrong, combining US weakness with provocative policies. The second
522 Clinton administration got the balance about right and Sino-US relations prospered.
523 The George W. Bush Administration started with a deaf ear regarding
524 reassurance, but soon got the balance right – assisted by the 9/11 attacks and
525 the war on terror. The early Obama administration blundered by inadvertently
526 signaling US weakness (by agreeing inter alia to respect China's open-ended
527 "core interests") with non-reassuring statements about "pivot to Asia" and
528 "return to Asia" – formulations that China read as "containment." The "great

529 recession” also fed a Chinese conviction that the wind was now in China’s sails.
 530 This led to several years of confrontation (Christensen identifies 2010 the most
 531 belligerent year for Chinese diplomacy in the reform era). But soon China rea-
 532 lized its policies were precipitating the very encirclement it feared, while
 533 Obama restored the proper balance of strength and reassurance.

534 A final difference between Goldstein, Christensen and Pillsbury has to do with
 535 what one might call historical repentance. Goldstein shows strong empathy with
 536 China’s many grievances against foreign powers, including the United States,
 537 inflicted during China’s “century of national humiliation.” Goldstein begins his
 538 study with a walk-through of American villainies inflicted on China prior to
 539 1949 as displayed in the revamped National History Museum in Beijing. He con-
 540 cludes his study with a scene from the 1962 historical novel *Sand Pebbles*. For
 541 Goldstein, the fact that American gunboats patrolled the Yangtze and mucked
 542 around in China’s internal affairs, while Chinese gunboats were absent from
 543 the Mississippi, should inspire in Americans a sense of humility, remorse and gen-
 544 erosity. Christensen has little to say about what China perceives as pre-1949 US
 545 violations of China. Pillsbury stresses how Chinese domestic education grossly
 546 distorts the US role in China’s “century of national humiliation.”

547 Pillsbury, Goldstein and Christensen agree on one paradox of contemporary
 548 Sino-American relations: while US China policy since 1972 has, in fact, consist-
 549 ently sought to facilitate China’s rise as a great power (albeit a rule-abiding and
 550 peaceable one), China’s dominant nationalist political culture sees the US as set
 551 on stifling China’s rise. All three authors link this Chinese misperception to the
 552 legitimacy efforts of the CCP government.

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 561 *History of the Foreign Relations of the People’s Republic of China* (Oxford
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