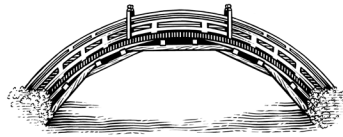


BOOK REVIEW ESSAY

China's Grand Strategy

Oriana Skylar Mastro



A book review of

Rush Doshi's

The Long Game:

China's Grand Strategy to Displace American Order

New York: Oxford University Press, 2021

ISBN: 9780197527917

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Despite the mild diplomatic adages like “win-win cooperation” and “common sense guardrails”¹ repeated at the first virtual summit between President Joe Biden and President Xi Jinping in November 2021, there is no denying that the current U.S.-China relationship can be described as frosty at best. Before Biden’s election, his predecessor, President Donald Trump, oversaw a move toward a competitive strategic approach to the People’s Republic of China (PRC) that his administration claimed was based on a “clear-eyed assessment” of the rising power’s actions and intentions.² Long before Trump’s election, President Barack Obama promised allies that the United States was “all in”³ on the Asia-Pacific, beginning a “pivot” to the region that made Beijing worry this was a U.S. containment effort.⁴

How should we understand China’s grand strategy and intentions? The ascendance of Xi Jinping and the beginning of a slew of economic projects like the Belt and Road Initiative, interpreted by many as a tool in the framework of strategic competition with the United States, caused many to see Beijing as increasingly expansionist.⁵ Some more alarmist analysts, such as Department of Defense policy adviser Michael Pillsbury, have

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¹ “Remarks by President Biden and President Xi of the People’s Republic of China before Virtual Meeting,” White House, November 15, 2021 ~ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/11/15/remarks-by-president-biden-and-president-xi-of-the-peoples-republic-of-china-before-virtual-meeting>.

² White House, *United States Strategic Approach to the People’s Republic of China* (Washington, D.C., May 5, 2020), 1.

³ “Remarks by President Obama to the Australian Parliament,” White House, November 17, 2011 ~ <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2011/11/17/remarks-president-obama-australian-parliament>.

⁴ Kenneth G. Lieberthal, “The American Pivot to Asia,” Brookings Institution, December 21, 2011 ~ <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-american-pivot-to-asia>.

⁵ On the Belt and Road Initiative, see Theresa Fallon, “The New Silk Road: Xi Jinping’s Grand Strategy for Eurasia,” *American Foreign Policy Interests* 37, no. 3 (2015): 140–47 ~ <https://doi.org/10.1080/10803920.2015.1056682>. On Chinese expansionism, see Robert D. Blackwill and Ashley J. Tellis, “Revising U.S. Grand Strategy toward China,” Council on Foreign Relations, Council Special Report, no. 72, March 2015 ~ https://carnegieendowment.org/files/Tellis_Blackwill.pdf.

characterized China as having a grand scheme to supplant the United States as the sole global superpower.⁶ Others see strategic folly in overestimating the threat, focusing instead on the strong fundamentals of U.S. power⁷ or emphasizing China's weaknesses and domestic challenges.⁸ Indeed, the range of academic inquiry and conflicting viewpoints is a testament to the complexity of understanding China and its role on the global stage.

Enter *The Long Game: China's Grand Strategy to Displace American Order*, one of the most recent and significant attempts to understand what China wants. Written by Rush Doshi, a former Brookings fellow turned National Security Council staffer in the Biden administration, the book encapsulates rigorous social-scientific research approaches, clear argumentation, and policy relevance as well as is accessible to the average reader.

THE LONG GAME'S ARGUMENT AND PRC STRATEGIES

In *The Long Game*, Doshi makes the argument that, since the end of the Cold War, China has sought to displace the U.S.-led order, first regionally, and as it became successful in that effort, globally too. Intentions are notoriously difficult to assess, so to illuminate those intentions, Doshi looks for evidence of a grand strategy in authoritative texts, national security institutions, and state behavior. Doshi offers a notable emphasis on primary Chinese sources, and he supplements these with detailed case studies, each involving hypothesis testing and consideration of alternative explanations for PRC behavior. Doshi argues that two variables—the power gap between a rising power and established hegemon and the threat that the rising power perceives from the hegemon—intersect to determine the rising power's strategy. He argues that rising powers' grand strategies generally, though not exclusively, evolve “sequentially from accommodation to blunting to building and then to dominance” (p. 24). According to the book, China fits this bill: after the normalization of relations, China accommodated the United States; after the fall of the Soviet Union, Beijing perceived a greater threat from Washington and thus moved to a blunting strategy; and after the

⁶ Michael Pillsbury, *The Hundred-Year Marathon: China's Secret Strategy to Replace America as the Global Superpower* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2015).

⁷ Michael Beckley, *Unrivaled: Why America Will Remain the World's Sole Superpower* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018); and Ryan Haas, *Stronger: Adapting America's China Strategy in an Age of Competitive Interdependence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2021).

⁸ See Susan L. Shirk, *China: Fragile Superpower: How China's Internal Politics Could Derail Its Peaceful Rise* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); and Thomas Fingar and Jean C. Oi, eds., *Fateful Decisions: Choices That Will Shape China's Future* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2020).

2008 financial crisis demonstrated U.S. weakness, China moved to building its own order and institutions. Now it is beginning to shift to dominance and global expansion.

In depth, the book delves into blunting and building actions through military, political, and economic lenses—essentially the past 30 years of Chinese grand strategy. Blunting begins with the policy of *taoguang yanghui* (hiding and biding) to weaken the U.S. hegemonic influence without exposing its own hegemonic intentions as a rising power. Following the Tiananmen Square protests, the collapse of the Soviet Union, and an increased perception of the United States as a hegemonic threat as a result of the demonstration of U.S. capability in the Gulf War, China transitioned to a blunting strategy. The argument is rooted here in texts and in an analysis of puzzling Chinese behavior. Militarily, Doshi finds authoritative Chinese texts concerned about the striking similarity of China's force structure to that of now defeated Iraq and urging investment in *shashoujian* (assassin's mace) capabilities. These include a strong focus on anti-access/area-denial (A2/AD) capabilities as opposed to power-projection capabilities. Politically, in the wake of the Cold War and Gulf War, China sought to join regional institutions, ensuring it maintained veto power against U.S.-led coalitions, and invested in organizations like the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation that excluded the United States, while at the same time continually emphasizing opposition to hegemonism (p. 100). Economically, blunting involved joining the World Trade Organization and seeking most-favored-nation status from other nations as a means of incentivizing the United States, China's largest trading partner, to re-establish this status with China after the Tiananmen protests weakened support for the PRC in the U.S. Congress.

With the 2008 financial crisis, Doshi notices a shift in the Chinese literature that stresses a rapidly closing power gap between China and the United States—texts began to characterize favorable trends in multipolarity and the international balance of forces. This shift marks the beginning of a policy of “actively accomplishing something,” in which China takes a more active role in the creation of institutions and becomes more assertive in power projection. Militarily, Chinese rhetoric more forcefully defended China's national interests, and to match its words, China invested in military capabilities to protect interests farther afield and project power. In short, Doshi points to increased investment in aircraft carriers; serial production of surface vessels, which could undertake a range of missions; and overseas installations during this period, rather than a narrower focus on mines, missiles, and submarines. Politically, China began to launch or

elevate institutions to set rules and norms in the region to its own benefit and that undercut U.S. alliances, with Xi declaring, “it is for the people of Asia to run the affairs of Asia, solve the problems of Asia, and uphold the security of Asia.”⁹ Economically, China began to build parallel institutions to those of the United States. China attempted to globalize the renminbi as a competitor to the U.S. dollar while also building institutions and programs such as the Belt and Road Initiative to “cultivate economic leverage” over member states (p. 236).

Doshi sees now the beginning of a strategy of global expansion by China, a strategy whose impetus is summed up by Fu Ying: “The Western-centered world order dominated by the U.S. has made great contributions to human progress and economic growth. But those contributions lie in the past.”¹⁰ The West has suffered from increasing political polarization, increasing wealth inequality, and the rise of populism—implicated by its handling of the Covid-19 crisis—and Doshi believes the Chinese perception is that the time for a more global grand strategy has arrived. Chinese interests are further flung, and the means to protect them are stronger by the day. Therefore, the book offers a set of recommendations for the United States to counter China, largely founded on the understanding that the United States must similarly develop asymmetric capabilities, whether that means A2/AD military capabilities or joining Chinese institutions to blunt China from building political power. Doshi does not believe the United States has passed its dominance or best years, but he soberly recognizes that to win the political conflict with China, the United States must leverage its strengths: growth, freedom, and democracy.

As noted above, the book largely attempts to make this case for the progression in Chinese grand strategy through analysis of Chinese government internal documents and other authoritative Chinese texts. This is an excellent first step in understanding Chinese thinking, and Doshi does the field a service by laying out in an appendix the five types of sources he uses and their levels of authoritativeness. This is part of a larger effort by China experts to make their approaches and analyses more transparent,

⁹ Xi Jinping, “New Asian Security Concept for New Progress in Security Cooperation” (remarks at the Fourth Summit of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia, Shanghai, May 21, 2014) ~ https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjdt_665385/zjyh_665391/201405/t20140527_678163.html, cited on p. 209.

¹⁰ Fu Ying, “The U.S. World Order Is a Suit That No Longer Fits,” *Financial Times*, January 6, 2016, cited on p. 262.

especially to those outside the community.¹¹ The best scholars of China show their work.

Doshi's execution in terms of creating a narrative and holding the reader's attention is flawless. He has the courage to write an academic book that is both scholarly and enjoyable to read. The book is also a great resource for those interested in an overview of Chinese foreign policy over the past 25 to 30 years and an accessible discussion of debates prevalent in Chinese language sources.

AN ANALYSIS OF THE LONG GAME

Although I will be using parts of the book in my courses and in my own research, I was not completely convinced of some aspects of its argument. In general, while the analysis of China's grand strategy in the blunting and building periods (i.e., from 1989 to 2016) is well-argued, the broader argument that China seeks to displace the United States globally nevertheless remains contestable.

First, a key part of Doshi's argument is that China initially tried to blunt U.S. power and then in the Hu era moved into building new institutions and military capabilities to structure the foundations for China's hegemony in Asia. Like Avery Goldstein, Doshi argues that Xi continued many of these policies in his first term until 2017, at which point he began to inaugurate a more global grand strategy focused on expansion. Goldstein posits that Xi has added reforming and resisting aspects of the international system to the traditional Chinese repertoire of reassurance.¹² But arguably there have been aspects of attempting both to reform the international system and to reassure countries of China's peaceful intentions throughout the last three decades, even if the emphasis has shifted. China, for example, is not promoting autocracy, though its behavior does make the world safer for autocracies. Instead, most of Beijing's efforts are currently designed to blunt U.S. democracy promotion and human rights diplomacy.¹³ And while limited, there were aspects of institution-building before Xi, such as the founding of

¹¹ Two other recent works that engage deeply with the methodology of using primary sources are M. Taylor Fravel, *Active Defense: China's Military Strategy since 1949* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019); and Jude Blanchette, "The Devil Is in the Footnotes: On Reading Michael Pillsbury's *The Hundred-Year Marathon*," University of California–San Diego, 21st Century China ≈ <http://www.lewebcafe.com/cambodia/The-Hundred-Year-Marathon.pdf>.

¹² Avery Goldstein, "China's Grand Strategy under Xi Jinping: Reassurance, Reform, and Resistance," *International Security* 54, no. 1 (2020) ≈ <https://direct.mit.edu/isec/article/45/1/164/95252/> China-s-Grand-Strategy-under-Xi-Jinping.

¹³ Jessica Chen Weiss, "A World Safe for Autocracy?" *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2019.

the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (established in 2000), the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (established in 2001), and the China-Arab States Cooperation Forum (established in 2004). Though China is not a member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Beijing has proactively worked to set the agenda and shape outcomes on the South China Sea, pushing for a Code of Conduct with ASEAN with favorable terms that was signed in 2002. Doshi argues that these examples do not generally constitute “building” because Beijing did not institutionalize these bodies the way it did later efforts such as the Asian Infrastructure and Investment Bank. But these cases nonetheless demonstrate that in some aspects PRC efforts represent a messier spectrum of order-building over time.

Additionally, China is not only blunting and building—there are examples in which China is contributing to the international order. Doshi notes that efforts to supply global or public goods are a part of order-building. Even so, it is worth exploring the significance of the fact that China has not been a revolutionary power seeking to undermine all aspects of the existing system. This leads to additional questions about the conditions under which China may try to blunt or build and how Beijing achieves these goals. For example, why not build an institution separate from the United Nations, choosing instead to establish greater control from within?

Second, the book's focus is on establishing strategic adjustment and the conditions under which it does not occur. But Doshi does not, however, assess whether China's strategies were effective or disadvantageous. The aircraft carrier program is a good example. Doshi correctly notes that a PRC aircraft carrier would have limited deterrent value against the United States; instead, as Chinese scholars note, it would be more useful for coercing certain “trouble-making countries.”¹⁴ As Doshi stresses, China's desire to avoid a countervailing coalition forming against it is predicated on not projecting a threatening image. Accordingly, China tried internationally to pitch the carrier program as necessary for Beijing to shoulder great-power responsibilities and

¹⁴ For the quoted text, see Xiangqing Meng, deputy director of the Institute for Strategic Studies at the National Defense University, quoted in “Zhongguo hangmu: Cong jintian shi xiang weilai” [China Aircraft Carrier: Sailing from Today to the Future], *Zhongguo gongchandang xinwen wang*, September 26, 2012. <http://theory.people.com.cn/n/2012/0926/c245417-19111346-1.html>. On the role of an aircraft carrier for China, see Zhen Yang and Binwei Du, “Jiyu haiquan shijiao: Hangkongmujian dui Zhongguo haijun zhuanxing de tuidong zuoyong” [On Aircraft Carrier's Promoting Role in the Transformation of China's Naval Forces from the Perspective of Sea Power], *Taipingyang xuebao* 21, no. 3 (2013): 68–78; and “Renmin ribao wu wen Zhongguo hangmu, chen wu hangmu nan baowei linghai zhuquan” [People's Daily Poses Five Questions about China's Aircraft Carriers, Stating that without Aircraft Carriers, It Is Difficult for China to Protect Territorial Sea], *Huashang*, July 28, 2011. <http://news.hsw.cn/system/2011/07/28/051053939.shtml>.

contribute to peace and stability.¹⁵ Numerous official statements and state-sponsored media rhetoric emphasize that China will use aircraft carriers for defensive purposes only, like rescue missions, and its possession of this potentially offensive system will not prompt a more aggressive national defense or naval strategies.¹⁶ Despite this positive spin, no one is buying it. Chinese aircraft carriers were mentioned nineteen times in the Department of Defense's 2020 annual report to Congress on Chinese military and security developments, and they are clearly seen as a tool of dominance.¹⁷ Chinese aircraft carriers are also expensive and not as effective as those of the United States, and they are highly vulnerable.¹⁸ This raises the question—which the book does not really explore—about which aspects of China's power accumulation have been effective, and which have been failures.

The book's arguments are sometimes incomplete in ways that could have been strengthened. For example, Doshi argues that the Chinese military was mainly focused on denial platforms in the initial stages of its military modernization. This observation is correct—China's focus on A2/AD strategies from the mid-1990s until arguably the Hu and Xi eras is well-researched and documented. But Doshi chose three types of capabilities in particular to make his case: missiles, submarines, and mines. China does have the world's most advanced ballistic and cruise missile program, which has been at the heart of its A2/AD, and submarines were indeed seen as a way to counter U.S. aircraft carriers. But there are other capabilities that China seemed even more intent to develop that Doshi does not cover until later in the book when they should have appeared earlier, such as building a surface fleet initially focused on antisurface warfare—the number of destroyers increased between 2000 and 2010 while the number of submarines decreased.¹⁹ Additionally, China prioritized creating an indigenous shipbuilding industry for its surface fleet while it continued to shore up its own submarine advancements with

¹⁵ Guanghui Ni, "Guochan hangmu, kaituo Zhongguo xin lanhai" [Domestic-Made Aircraft Carrier, Expanding China's New Blue Ocean], *Renmin wang*, April 27, 2017 ~ <http://opinion.people.com.cn/n1/2017/0427/c1003-29238768.html>; and Zhen Yang and Liang Cai, "Lun hangkongmujian yu Zhongguo haiquan" [On Aircraft Carriers and China's Seapower], *Dangdai shijie* 8 (2017): 42–45.

¹⁶ Sheng Zhong, "Dui wo fazhan hangmu shuosandaosi zhe mei zige" [No One Has the Rights to Judge Our Development of Aircraft Carriers], *Huanqiu wang*, September 29, 2012 ~ [https://mil.huanqiu.com/article/9CaKrn\]xfDm](https://mil.huanqiu.com/article/9CaKrn]xfDm); and "Zhongguo hangmu: Cong jintian shi xiang weilai"

¹⁷ U.S. Department of Defense, *Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2020* (Washington, D.C., 2020) ~ <https://media.defense.gov/2020/Sep/01/2002488689/-1/-1/2020-dod-china-military-power-report-final.pdf>; and Robbie Gramer, "China Eyes Pacific Supremacy with New Carrier," *Foreign Policy*, July 15, 2021 ~ <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/07/15/china-aircraft-carrier-pacific-security>.



¹⁸ "How Does China's First Aircraft Carrier Stack Up?" *China Power*, December 9, 2015, updated August 26, 2020 ~ <https://chinapower.csis.org/aircraft-carrier>.

¹⁹ Bernard D. Cole, *The Great Wall at Sea*, 2nd ed. (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2010), 92–93.


purchases from Russia.²⁰ The PRC also notably improved its integrated air defense systems and counterspace systems (brought to international attention with its 2007 ASAT test). This is not to say Doshi's analysis is incorrect, but only that he presents three capabilities as the central components of Chinese strategy when in fact there were other key ones as well. Moreover, some discussion of why China did not build up its nuclear capabilities (in some ways the ultimate A2/AD capability) would have been useful.

In its final chapters, the book argues that China has moved toward a grand strategy to displace the United States as a global hegemon—what Doshi calls expansion—after 2017. But this conclusion is debatable. First, Doshi does not actually show that his characterization of China's strategy—blunting followed by building followed by expansion—is what the Chinese had planned all along. Doshi notes that China's adherence to “hiding capabilities and biding time” was based on its then assessment of U.S. power, and that Deng, Jiang, and Hu each indicated that as the assessment of U.S. power would change so too would China's strategy. Nonetheless, this does not necessarily mean the strategy would change to “building.” My alternative reading of the situation is that China wanted to build power to create strategic space for itself—the power to decide how it wants to use its power—a concept captured in authoritative Chinese writings like the 2013 edition of the *Science of Military Strategy*.²¹ In this way, I would characterize Chinese grand strategy like the famous maxim popularized by Deng regarding economic reform, “feeling for stones to cross the river” (p. 78).²²

Doshi argues the People's Liberation Army (PLA) is “going global” under Xi, with a focus on global power projection, amphibious capabilities, and overseas installations. Chinese discourse, capabilities, and behavior all demonstrate that the PRC's focus remains on regional contingencies, even those involving the United States. If China's military ambitions are global, they are not defined by plans to fight wars against the United States in the Middle East, Africa, or South America (the United States would easily win those wars). Here, the emphasis on select Chinese sources is problematic.

²⁰ Gabriel Collins and Michael C. Grubb, *A Comprehensive Survey of China's Dynamic Shipbuilding Industry*, CMSI Red Books, no. 1 (Newport: U.S. Naval War College, 2008)  <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://www.google.com/&httpsredir=1&article=1000&context=cmsi-red-books>; and Richard Bitzinger, “Modernising China's Military, 1997–2012,” *China Perspectives*, no. 4 (2011): 7–15  <https://journals.openedition.org/chinaperspectives/5701>.

²¹ People's Liberation Army Academy of Military Science, *Zhanlüe xue* [The Science of Military Strategy] (Beijing, 2013), available at <https://nuke.fas.org/guide/china/sms-2013.pdf>.

²² Zhengfeng Han, “Mozhe shitou guo he' gaijie fangfa de lailong quma” [The Ins and Outs of the Reform Method of “Crossing the River by Feeling the Stones”], *Guangming Daily*, April 9, 2014  https://epaper.gmw.cn/gmrb/html/2014-04/09/nw.D110000gmrb_20140409_3-14.htm.

Some sources do argue for global basing and global military power projection, but my own reading of Chinese behavior and military capabilities development suggests Beijing prefers to rely on nonmilitary means beyond the region to protect its interests.²³ I also see the efforts the PRC is pursuing globally to be manifestations of its regional ambitions. For example, Doshi writes in places about China's desire to outflank the West, build economic and political power around the world, and create an order at the global level (e.g., pp. 278–79). But these activities can still support limited regional goals, and while there are some examples of the PRC “claiming global leadership” (p. 280), there are many examples of China shirking these responsibilities. Doshi notes that the PRC desires “a world-class force with bases around the world that could defend China's interests in most regions and even in new domains like space, the poles and the deep sea” (p. 303). The call to break long-standing aversions to alliances, foreign interventions, and overseas bases became louder after the 2008 financial crisis, as Doshi attests (p. 205). But while the PRC has renounced its opposition to military bases, China's rejection of alliances and overseas interventions has not changed in the intervening thirteen years.

I applaud Doshi's efforts at leveraging Chinese sources, yet there is more complexity in some Chinese debates that he could have included. For example, part of the book's argument relies on the assessment that China will build a global basing network, and Doshi provides authoritative Chinese sources discussing how China needs to protect its overseas interests. But he does not dedicate much attention to the internal Chinese debate over how conducting high-intensity combat operations globally is not the best way to do this. In many internal discussions, the overseas bases of other countries, especially the United States, are considered strategic problems for China rather than a model from which to learn.²⁴ Isaac Kardon of the Naval War College has pointed out that while the Chinese will not “replicate the U.S. military's basing posture, the logistics elements supporting U.S. overseas military operations are a subject of deep interest to Chinese analysts.”²⁵ China's avoidance of an

²³ Oriana Skylar Mastro, “The Stealth Superpower: How China Hid Its Global Ambitions,” *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2019 ~ <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/china-plan-rule-asia>.

²⁴ Jian Li, Wenwen Chen, and Jing Jin, “Yindu yang haiquan geju yu Zhongguo haiquan de Yinduyang tazhan” [Indian Ocean Seapower Structure and the Expansion of China's Sea Power into the Indian Ocean], *Pacific Journal* 22, no. 5 (2014); and Andrew Scobell, David Lai, and Roy Kamphausen, eds., *Chinese Lessons from Other People's Wars* (Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute, 2011).

²⁵ Isaac B. Kardon, “China's Overseas Base, Places, and Far Seas Logistics,” in *The PLA Beyond Borders: Chinese Military Operations in Regional and Global Context*, ed. Joel Wuthnow et al. (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, 2021), 76. See also Guifang Xue and Jie Zheng, “Actual Demands and Risk Responses for Building China's 21st-Century Overseas Bases,” *Global Review*, no. 4 (2017): 104–21.

overseas basing network for the past 25 years suggests this is right (p. 206). Doshi does acknowledge that “China is unlikely to adopt the same complex network of far-flung bases and global capabilities that the United States has retained” and that Beijing’s “evolving approach is dramatically lighter than the U.S. alternative” (pp. 292–94). But in general, Doshi’s analysis would benefit from considering whether what China wants, and how it wants to get it, is different from the United States. The means, methods, and strategies China employs to blunt or build are perhaps more interesting than the end goal itself.

Only by understanding how China is competing with the United States can we devise effective strategies to maximize the United States’ competitive advantage. For example, while I agree with the recommendation to build more denial weapons and help partners develop A2/AD capabilities, the former will only enhance deterrence in a Taiwan scenario, given that China relies primarily on gray-zone activities to extend control in the East and South China Seas. Moreover, because China is projecting power close to home from its vast territory, mobile defenses in depth, long-range fires, electronic warfare, and cyberattacks (p. 318) will not have the same impact on the PLA that they do for the U.S. military in Asia. Doshi also argues that we should disrupt China’s efforts to establish overseas bases. As I previously argued, China is not doing this, but even if Beijing did take that direction, it may be beneficial for the United States given how expensive maintaining overseas bases can be politically and financially. Doshi also makes three “military building” recommendations for the United States: (1) build resilience to China’s A2/AD efforts, (2) build a diverse U.S. posture in the Indo-Pacific, and (3) build a resilient information infrastructure (pp. 323–24). I wholeheartedly agree with these recommendations, but they have also been the focus of the U.S. Department of Defense for over a decade. These complex issues are not easily resolved—more specific recommendations from Doshi, who undoubtedly has given these challenges deep thought, would have been valuable.

CONCLUSION

Doshi begins the book by arguing that “understanding Chinese foreign policy requires taking the Party seriously” (p. 44). *The Long Game* does a superb job of laying out select aspects of Chinese thinking over the past 25 to 30 years and how they have manifested in Chinese behavior and capabilities. But there are aspects of the internal PRC strategic debates that *The Long Game* would have benefited from including.

The book's general argument—that China started competing with the United States decades before we realized we were in a great-power competition at all—is well taken. China is an ambitious power, and what Beijing wants is not in line with U.S. and allied interests. Doshi provides an interesting and readable tome in *The Long Game* that encapsulates this sobering view. ♦