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## Interpreting China's Grand Strategy: Past, Present, and Future,

Carmel Davis

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Swaine, Michael D., and Ashley J. Tellis. *Interpreting China's Grand Strategy: Past, Present, and Future*. Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, 2000. 283pp. \$20

Michael Swaine, author of the outstanding *The Military & Political Succession in China* (1992), and his fellow RAND analyst Ashley Tellis have written a very good book about Chinese security in both historical and future perspective. It will certainly be of interest to the policy community, as it should be to all who work on Asian security.

Swaine and Tellis define grand strategy as a country's "basic approach to political-military security." China's grand strategy seeks to preserve domestic order, defend against external threats, and eventually attain "geopolitical influence as a major, and perhaps, primary state." These bland objectives become vibrant when viewed in historical context—many centuries ago, with strong leadership and domestic order, China dominated the region not only, or even primarily, militarily but also in cultural, political, and economic ways that elicited deference and reduced the need for military capability. Subsequent periodic weak leadership and domestic disorder reduced China's ability to resist persistent threats from beyond its long, vulnerable border and diminished its political strength, so China has been united as a single entity under Chinese rule for only about half of the last 1,800 years. Today, China is pursuing a pragmatic strategy that emphasizes "the primacy of internal economic growth and stability, the nurturing of amicable international relations, the relative restraint in the use of force combined with increasing efforts to create a more modern military, and the continued search for asymmetric gains internationally" (e.g., entrance into the World Trade

Organization as a developing, rather than developed, economy). Assuming that no catastrophic revisions of this strategy are forced on China, Swaine and Tellis expect it to continue through 2015–2020, which they identify as the minimal time frame in which the Chinese economy and military might develop sufficiently to allow China to become globally preeminent. If this strategy is not derailed (and that is a major if), Swaine and Tellis argue, there are three plausible long-term scenarios: that China becomes domestically chaotic, internationally cooperative, or internationally assertive, perhaps to the point of global preeminence. Where the United States is the hegemon today and for the foreseeable future, China may seek to be the hegemon some decades hence.

Swaine and Tellis focus on hegemony based on economic and military power. However, as China may know from its earlier experience as a hegemon in East Asia, there is more to it than economic and military power. The United States became hegemonic in the West after World War II, when it possessed both economic and military power, and an attractive liberal ideology that provided profound economic and social benefits. It led a coalition against a militarily powerful, ideologically expansionist Soviet Union; when the Soviet Union collapsed, in part because its ideology was not functional in practice and its empire was held together by force, the United States found itself with a global stature of nearly hegemonic scope. Since 1991, U.S. ideology has reduced the opposition by other countries against the United States that might have been expected had the order it represents relied on military and economic power alone. While many voices, some in Mandarin, complain about U.S. hegemony, it provides a robust and

functional order in which states like China can develop in reasonable peace. Though it may not want to acknowledge the fact, China benefits from the hegemony of U.S. order, and from its enforcement by American naval and air power.

Unlike the United States after World War II, China does not appear to offer a globally compelling ideology; in the absence of such an ideology, increasing Chinese power and assertiveness may frighten countries to resist China by generating power internally or externally. Internal power might take the form of developing nuclear weapons. Most likely, external balancing would take the form of intensified ties with the United States, though Taiwan, Vietnam, and India all might have reasons to become better acquainted with each other; even a weak Russia might contribute to a China-constraining coalition. Increases in Chinese power—if only for defensive purposes, like looking after China’s energy interests abroad—might lead to resistance, because no country could be sure that Chinese intentions would not change. Counterbalancing would likely become more intense if China were to seek to move from regional hegemony to “geopolitical preeminence on a global scale.” The absence of an adequate consideration of such “balancing” may be the most significant weakness in this book. However, this is an impressive study of China’s grand strategy, and it is worthy of serious examination.

CARMEL DAVIS  
University of Pennsylvania



Woolley, Peter J. *Japan’s Navy: Politics and Paradox, 1971–2000*. Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 1999. 166pp. \$49.95

In 1971 James Auer published *The Post-war Rearmament of Japanese Maritime Forces, 1945–1971*, “a book that [was] meant to challenge certain assumptions surrounding post–World War II Japan and its military, in particular its maritime forces.” Thirty years later, in post–Cold War Japan, some of those same suppositions persist. Of particular note, beliefs that Japanese rearmament is an American initiative, that Japan seeks only to provide for its own internal security while the United States is responsible for all external threats, and that militarism is returning to Japan, result in conflicts within Japan and among its Asian neighbors.

To many, the U.S.-Japan alliance both protects Japanese security interests and provides the cork that keeps Japanese militarism in the bottle. To students of Asia, the alliance follows a natural evolution resulting from the congruence of interests of two maritime nations as Japan reasserts its regional influence. To the prescient, the U.S.-Japan alliance is the bedrock for stability in a region rife with competing interests, developing conflicts, and unresolved animosities.

Peter Woolley, a professor of comparative politics at Fairleigh Dickinson University, has studied and written extensively on Japanese maritime development. He has written the next volume in this continuing story of Japan’s defense-system evolution, masterfully picking up where Auer left off. Woolley provides a concise analysis of the Japanese Defense Forces’ role in a world awakening to the transitional peace of the post–Cold War era.