



The Great Wall and the Empty Fortress: China's Search for Security

By Andrew J. Nathan, Robert S. Ross

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"A strong antidote to the growing sinophobia in the U.S."? *Wall Street Journal*

Many see China and the United States on the path to confrontation. The Chinese leadership violates human rights norms. It maintains a harsh rule in Tibet, spars aggressively with Taiwan, and is clamping down on Hong Kong. A rising power with enormous assets, China increasingly considers American interests an obstacle to its own.

But, the authors argue, the United States is the least of China's problems. Despite its sheer size, economic vitality, and drive to upgrade its military forces, China remains a vulnerable power, crowded on all sides by powerful rivals and potential foes. As it has throughout its history, China faces immense security challenges, and their sources are at and within China's own borders. China's foreign policy is calibrated to defend its territorial integrity against antagonists who are numerous, near, and strong.

The authors trace the implications of this central point for China's relations with the United States and the rest of the world.

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Editorial Review

From Library Journal

Nathan (political science, Columbia Univ.) and Ross (political science, Boston Coll.) aim here to define China's strategic motives in its foreign policy. They assert that China's foreign relations are based on realist principles and that U.S. misperceptions of Chinese behavior stem from ignorance about China's security concerns. The authors first deal with China's historic relations with specific countries and blocs, including Russia, the United States, and Japan. They then tackle such issues as military power, economics, territorial integrity (vis-a-vis Taiwan and Hong Kong), and China's security and the world order. The chapter on territorial integrity focuses mostly on Taiwan and, as a result, the following chapter on the foreign policy of Taiwan is redundant. Nevertheless, this insightful book provides a concise analysis of Chinese foreign policy. As such, it is recommended for all collections. ?Peggy Spitzer Christoff, Oak Park, Ill.
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From [Booklist](#)

There is a tendency in the Western media to depict mainland China as an inscrutable monolith. Political scientists Nathan and Ross, however, put a very different face on China and its leadership. Though at the height of its power and influence, China, the authors argue, sees itself threatened politically, economically, and militarily. It is this fear--and the importance of saving face--that drives Chinese foreign policy, and Nathan and Ross examine how these and related forces have affected China's dealings with nations, from the time of Mao to the present. Particularly enlightening is China's relationship with the former Soviet Union, where the two nations have gone from close allies to antagonistic competitors in under 30 years. The authors' argument that the West fully integrate China into the world community is convincing and pragmatic. A thoughtful examination of what will surely be one of the twenty-first century's great powers. *Brian McCombie*

From Kirkus Reviews

A cool appraisal of China's place in the world, which discounts the more fevered expectations of Chinese aggression. Nathan (Political Science/Columbia Univ.) and Ross (Political Science/Boston Coll.), while noting that China can be very aggressive (it has engaged in conflicts with the US, Russia, Japan, India, Vietnam, South Korea, and Taiwan in this century), believe that it is vulnerable and aware of its vulnerability. Its weaknesses are both military--"by far the weakest of the four great powers in Asia"--and economic, with an economic strategy "that will succeed only through intensified integration into the world economy." China has, in effect, found itself having to catch a ride on the Asian tigers, with all the usual dangers attached to such transportation. Prior to the Nixon visit to Beijing in 1972, Chinese policymakers reckoned that the economy had to grow 6 to 10 percent a year to improve living standards enough to prevent economic and social breakdown. This has meant that China, potentially one of the most self-sufficient countries in the world, has become increasingly dependent not just on world trade but on the attitude of institutions like the IMF and the World Bank. This has led to immense improvements in the nation's living standards but has come at the cost of opening up the country to the very kinds of social and cultural forces that topple repressive regimes. Despite the substantial differences between the US and China--the trade deficit, human rights, Taiwan--Nathan and Ross conclude that the fundamental interests of the two countries "pull them together more than they drive them apart." A thoughtful, dispassionate, and persuasive look at a great power during a time of great challenge and change. -- Copyright ©1997, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.

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