The China Dream: Great Power Thinking & Strategic Posture in the Post-American Era

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actual identities would be better. Although it is ostensibly devoted to
to military leadership, civilian cases do at
times move into the narrative. There is
also a surprising lack of historical cases.
Were Admiral King, General Patton,
and General LeMay toxic leaders?
Does the answer matter? One of the
more difficult questions involving
toxic leaders is, Do results ever trump
their behavior? Tarnished claims, quite
reasonably, that how leadership is
delivered can be as important as what
it delivers, or even more important. But
is that always true? Another question
that will leave most readers wanting
more is whether, and to what degree,
the culture of the U.S. military and the
nature of the profession of arms rewards
(some would say demands) attributes
from leaders that, if not toxic, may seem
very similar. However, when all is said
and done, Tarnished is a most welcome
addition to the discipline of leader-
ship. It belongs in the handful of books
that should be on the shelves of both
scholars and practitioners of leadership.

RICHARD J. NORTON

The China Dream: Great Power Thinking & Stra-
tegic Posture in the Post-American Era, by Liu
$24.99.

This 2015 publication of the Eng-
lish translation of The China Dream,
originally published in Chinese in 2010,
merits reading by a wider Western
audience wishing to understand a clear
exposition of a conservative, hawkish
view of China’s approach to international
relations. The author, Liu Mingfu, is a
retired People’s Liberation Army colonel.

The book does not necessarily represent
the mainstream view of the Chinese
general public or the official Chinese
government position, but it does ring
more true to the spirit of Chinese
president Xi Jinping’s current thinking
than it did to former Chinese president
Hu Jintao’s approach when the book was
released in Chinese over five years ago.
The fact that the foreword for the book
was written by Liu Yazhou, a princeling
political commissar of the National De-
fense University, gives the work gravity
within the Chinese defense community.

Henry Kissinger spent four paragraphs
in On China (2011) summarizing Liu’s
views regarding China’s grand goal
to become number one in the world,
thereby restoring its historic glory.
According to Liu, this is to be done
through cultivating “martial spirit,” not
through “peaceful rise.” The inherent
conflict in U.S.-Chinese relations is
portrayed as a “marathon contest” or
“duel of the century,” as if world politics
is a sporting event between a champion
and a major contender for the global
championship. Kissinger follows his
discussion of the Liu triumphalist view
of the national destiny debate with a
much longer analysis of State Councilor
Dai Bingguo’s more moderate reaffir-
mation of the peaceful rise strategy.

Liu begins the first chapter by paying
homage, Chinese fashion, to his ances-
tors, laying out his interpretation of the
visions of Sun Yat-sen, Mao Zedong, and
Deng Xiaoping for turning China into
the world’s leading nation. Getting to
the crux of his argument in the second
chapter, “The Fight for the Century,”
Liu clearly blocks out the results of five
centuries of global political competition.
Citing George Modelski’s hegemonic sta-
bility theory that there is an approximate
one-hundred-year life cycle for global hegemons, Liu names the champions: Portugal in the sixteenth century, Holland in the seventeenth century, Britain in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and America in the twentieth century. Maybe China had a fleeting world championship title in the fifteenth century—not through colonial conquest, but through tributary recognition of the center of world power. Liu’s argument is that China is back—to claim the champion’s title in the twenty-first century.

The rest of the book elaborates how China can become the world champion by drawing on lessons from former and current champions, especially the United States. For instance, Liu notes that American strategy included an internal strengthening phase of isolationism under President Washington, a century of regional consolidation under the Monroe Doctrine, and world power generation under FDR’s globalism. He also likes America’s “cheap rise”: in other words, coming late to both world wars, but concluding those wars with the victor’s share of the spoils. Comparing China to America, Liu notes that China underwent domestic consolidation under Mao and Deng, and has its eye on being king of Asia, with the ultimate goal of being king of the world.

The first champion’s goal, toward achievement of which China is well on the way, is to become the wealthiest nation—because all world champions have been the wealthiest nation. All world champions have also been the strongest military power—hence the focus on martial spirit. In terms of strategy, Liu prefers Sun Tzu to Clausewitz, pointing out that China will seek to win without fighting. In what may seem like a non sequitur to Americans and many others, Liu continually repeats the theme that “the first nonhegemonic champion nation in history will appear, and that nation is China.” However, he also refers on multiple occasions to China as king, and the difference between kingly thinking and hegemonic thinking is ironically opaque. Liu refers to the United States as “one country, two systems,” meaning democracy at home and hegemony abroad. Since Liu prefers to see China exercise democracy abroad and hegemony at home, we could also refer to China as “one country, two systems,” but with practices inverted from those of the United States of his characterization.

For those who like the sporting analogy, the book is an entertaining read and an enticement to place one’s bets on the grand sporting event of world politics. On a more sober note, Liu’s worldview rings more true to current Chinese policies than to those of five years ago. President Xi Jinping gave his “China Dream” speech in November 2012, apparently somewhat influenced by Liu Mingfu’s book of the same title published two years earlier. Thus, the recent translation is food for thought that should be chewed on by a wider Western audience now that it is available.

GRANT RHODE


Major General Kenneth Privratsky, USA (Ret.), highlights the importance of the integration of combat operations and logistics in this book about the Falklands War of 1982. *Logistics in the*
Maybe China had a fleeting world championship title in the fifteenth century—not through colonial conquest, but through tributary recognition of the center of world power. Liu's argument is that China is back-to claim the champion's title in the twenty-first century. The rest of the book elaborates how China can become the world champion by drawing on lessons from former and current champions, especially the United States. 

In his 2010 work, The China Dream: Great Power Thinking and Strategic Posture in the Post-American Era, Col. Liu Mingfu laid out a plan for China to replace the United States as the champion nation in the 21st century. One answer to that question is found in the Trump administration's National Security Strategy which provides strategic prescriptions meant to help the United States grapple with the increasingly multipolar world. This essay will focus on the parallels that exist between the ideas articulated under the banner of principled realism in the 2017 National Security Strategy and several of the core foreign policy concepts laid out by Jeane J. Kirkpatrick to guide the Reagan administration's foreign policy in the more bipolar 1980s. Colonel (ret.) Liu Mingfu is a noted Chinese author, public speaker, and hawkish military commentator. As the author of well-known nationalist book China Dream: The Great Power Thinking and Strategic Positioning of China in the Post-American Era, Liu argues that China should displace the United States as world leader. Liu advocates that China's pursuing a "military rise" will allow it to rival and then surpass America's role as a source of global order, in an Olympic-style competition between...