

## References

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***A Contest for Supremacy: China, America, and the Struggle for Mastery in Asia*. New York: W. W. Norton. 360 pages. ISBN 978-0-393-06828-3. Hardcover, \$27.95. Aaron L. Friedberg. 2011.**

Aaron L. Friedberg's book, entitled *A Contest for Supremacy: China, America, and the Struggle for Mastery in Asia*, provides a significant contribution to the existing body of literature on the dynamics behind and the future of China-U.S. relations. The primary purpose of the book is to describe the various images of Sino-U.S. relations amid China's rise as a global power that is increasingly challenging the supremacy and hegemony of the United States both in the Asia Pacific and the world. Friedberg undertakes this task by organizing his book through a series of extensive and balanced discussions. His analysis examines (a) whether China would indeed replace the United States as the next superpower, (b) the future of the ever enigmatic and complicated Sino-U.S. relations, (c) the loci of Sino-U.S. rivalry and competition, (d) the question of whether war is inevitable between China and the United States, and (e) the prescriptive ideas of the author on how America should respond to China's rise to the point of global supremacy—both economically and militarily.

In the first two chapters of the book, Friedberg contextualizes why the current state of Sino-U.S. relations appears to be relatively cordial, where both countries are neither adversaries nor friends. The author details the historical events that explain the current state of relations between China and the United States. Friedberg then argues that despite the existence of many common interests that should act to facilitate improved relations—such as the fight against terrorism, climate change, interdependence in international trade and commerce, and the common advocacy against nuclear proliferation—U.S.-China relations remain problematic. According to Friedberg, the reasons for this are twofold. First, both countries remain hostage to the historical quandaries of mutual distrust and suspicion. Second, both countries harbor deep-seated ideological and political differences. These ideological and political divides between China and the United States are the fundamental *raison d'être* why the existing relationship between the said countries is full of mistrust and is conflict-prone. Friedberg's assessment of this scenario is that as long as these political and ideological differences are not bridged, the possibility of war between the two countries will remain. I find Friedberg's reasoning largely valid and logical.

In Chapters 3 and 4, the author explains that U.S. foreign policy toward China can be characterized as “conengagement” because it embraces a combination of

containment and engagement. However, Chinese responses to “conengagement” have been primarily passive (Chapters 6 and 7) because China, as much as possible, wants to avoid military confrontation. Thus, it has sought to concentrate on building and enhancing its national power through incremental gains in economic development and military modernization.

Friedberg also demonstrates a range of plausible scenarios concerning the possible effects of China’s outstanding and remarkable economic progress (Chapter 5). He argues that as China continues to liberalize its growing economy, there is a significant possibility that this process will generate political reforms toward the consolidation of a liberal democracy. If this happens, Friedberg argues that it could positively redefine the U.S.-Sino relationship in a manner that would generate greater collaboration, cooperation, and trust. According to the author, this would, in turn, demonstrate to the world that the potential for war between two superpowers is no longer foreseeable. Here, he bases his analysis on the Kantian democratic peace theory and an associated argument that “democracies don’t go to war.” However, this component of his analysis is highly problematic. In particular, the idea that a liberal-capitalist economic model will one day transform China into a liberal democracy is not just an oversimplification but also a sweeping generalization and a miscalculation of the uniqueness of China’s contemporary economic development. Why? Because China is not at all following the neoliberal economic model perpetuated by the United States. To the contrary, it is crafting an alternative economic model known as “state capitalism” that has the potential—through performance legitimacy—to strengthen the life span of the current one-party socialist and authoritarian state system. Furthermore, Friedberg’s belief in the applicability of the democratic peace theory to China is a lopsided argument. This is primarily because it is not true that only democracies can avoid war—a fallacy of universalism. It is here that the biggest weakness in the book lies, as there is also very little empirical evidence to suggest that such a transition has started to take place or is likely to take place in the foreseeable future.

Despite some problematic contentions regarding the applicability of democracy in China, some compensation is provided Friedberg’s book through its discussion of various alternative strategies (Chapter 10) that can be employed by the two countries to facilitate a more peaceful, cooperative, and constructive coexistence. Furthermore, in the last chapter (Chapter 11), Friedberg offers some prudent prescriptions for the United States in regard to how to handle the rise of China in a manner that could lead to its becoming a potential ally and strategic global partner. This section of the book is significant for moving away from the stereotypical standpoint that China is a rival and a foe of the United States. For Friedberg, it is more favorable to both countries and to the world if both powers maintain constructive and stable relations, rather than an antagonistic stand against each other.

Overall, the book serves as a good reference for those who would like to develop a thorough understanding of the intricacies of Sino-U.S. relations. It is also a very important source of information for those who would like to have a deeper comprehension of U.S. foreign policies toward China and vice versa. Last, it is good to note that Aaron L. Friedberg admirably articulates a balanced presentation of his ideas and propositions, as well as presenting the sides of both

China and the United States vis-à-vis the issue of supremacy in the Asia Pacific and the world. This is where the strength of the book lies.

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***Ancient Chinese Thought, Modern Chinese Power.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. 300 pages. ISBN 978-0-691-14826-7. \$29.95. Yan Xuetong, Daniel A. Bell and Sun Zhe (Eds.). Edmund Ryden (Trans.). 2011.**

*Ancient Chinese Thought, Modern Chinese Power* offers a sober and essential guide to the art of statecraft together with the perils and opportunities that lie ahead for political leaders and policy makers everywhere. The book comprises three major parts, with the first including three essays by Yan Xuetong on pre-Qin Chinese political philosophy, the second providing three “comments” by some Chinese scholars, and the last featuring Yan’s response to his critics. Three short appendices are also included in the book. The first appendix offers a short description of the warring periods in China, the second contains an interview with Yan regarding his life and academic career, and the last appendix raises the question of why there is no modern Chinese school of international relations (IR).

In this neatly crafted, historically informative, and deeply thoughtful exposé of the political philosophy of pre-Qin thinkers, Yan opens a new *Weltanschauung* and provides some valuable ideas and insights to enrich the contemporary theory of IR. For instance, according to pre-Qin philosophers, to respect and comply with international norms can help countries maintain their hegemonic status; a case in point is “the unilateralist foreign policy of President George W. Bush that weakened the international political mobilizing capacity of the United States” (p. 7). Yan believes that ancient Chinese thinkers can contribute to the contemporary IR theory from a myriad of angles: views on interstate order, conceptions of interstate leadership, and musings on the transfer of hegemonic power (p. 21). However, the philosophical and intellectual pivot that pre-Qin thoughts revolve around is political power (Chapter 3). While some contemporary IR theorists, such as Paul Kennedy (1989), consider the economic factor as the main cause behind the rise and fall of great powers, Yan suggests that pre-Qin thinkers would emphasize changes in political leadership as the primary factor in determining shifts in international power among states—what Niccolò Machiavelli (1995) famously referred to as “the virtue of the Prince.”

For most of the pre-Qin thinkers, Yan believes, political power constitutes the kernel of national power with political leadership as its foundation and the appointment of worthy, competent, and exemplary persons as its guarantee (Chapter 2):

An able person with able chief ministers may be a sage king; . . . someone who is not able and who does not know that he should be fearful and does not seek able persons, but surrounds himself with flatterers, hangers-on, and favorites, is in such danger . . . that the state falls. (pp. 72–73)

Yan simultaneously widens his lens and allows for both economic and political power in his analysis; he neither depreciates the former nor considers the latter as