

Nevertheless, Russia succeeds in its manipulating strategy only in the gas sector by achieving strategic and commercial concessions from Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan. In the oil sector, Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan rejected Russian ambitions. In the nuclear power sector, Russia's market power was relatively small. However, its control over the sector was coherent, so it could secure commercial, but not strategic, concessions from Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. Therefore, the title of the book, *Well-Oiled Diplomacy* seems ironic since it is gas diplomacy, not oil, that makes Russia's energy statecraft.

The main strength of the book is its conceptual framework which successfully explains the mechanism of altering the energy policies of other countries. The author is scrupulous in methodology and concepts he uses to develop the idea of strategic manipulation. However, while the book elucidates how Russia intervenes in the energy policies of Eurasian states, it does not explain why Russia needs to manipulate within the region. The manipulation concept does not identify whether such political behavior of Russia is a part of its grand strategy or not.

Well-Oiled Diplomacy is a book about decision-making in politics. However, the author neither discusses the roles of political leaders nor explains how and by whom particular political decisions were made. Adding information on the decision-making process of governments and the nature of personal ties between political leaders would bolster the author's argument. These, however, are mostly ideas for further research and theory testing on the issue. This book is already an excellent factual and conceptual work that stands out in the literature on Russia's energy politics. **PEAR**

THE ART OF MARITIME WAR: A "HEADS-UP" FROM SUN TZU ON SINO-AMERICAN MARITIME RELATIONS

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Robert Kaplan, "The Geography of Chinese Power," *Foreign Affairs* 89, no. 3 (2010): 22-41.

Master Sun said:

The art of warfare is this:

Analyze the enemy's battle plan to understand its merits and its weaknesses; provoke him to find out the pattern of his movements; make him show himself to discover the viability of his battle position; skirmish with him to find out where he is strong and where he is vulnerable [...] If your position is formless, the most carefully concealed spies will not be able to get a look at it, and the wisest counselors will not be able to lay plans against it (p. 197).

This classical proverb proffered by one of China's most renowned military generals, Sun Tzu, describes with formidable accuracy the underlying strategy many outside observers believe that China is implementing against its American hegemonic counterpart. Questions concerning China's long-term intentions as it strives for great-power status have increasingly surfaced among US foreign policy makers, who seek to answer the simple yet indelible question: "What to do about rising China?" Indeed, strategists in Washington toss around this question as regularly as Qin warlords did the decapitated heads of inept military generals. In many ways these American counselors are striving to secure their own heads with their China policies just as general Sun Tzu sought

to secure his during China's Warring States Period.

There is certainly no question that China's flourishing economy and colossal military forces have cost US strategists many sleepless nights as they tried but often failed to accurately predicting the next move of their potential hegemonic successor. In particular, despite Robert Ross' conviction that China would remain an inward focused "land power" with marginal offshore interests,¹ Beijing shocked the whole world by disclosing its intent to strengthen its maritime forces by incorporating a new generation of warships and aircraft carriers. This revelation has sent shivers down the spines of American realists, many of whom perceive China's unprecedented efforts to buttress its modern navy as revisionist in nature and a surefire disrupter of the regional balance of power. Since hitherto China had generally conformed to the view of an inland-centered continental power, Beijing's radical decision to augment its offshore power-projection capabilities evoked acute security dilemmas throughout the players in the region. Indeed, China's impending acquisition of naval warships and aircraft carriers will ultimately challenge the region's existing security alignment that has traditionally been managed by American maritime forces. Although China claims that its motives are peaceful and not for combative purposes, the US and many other wary bystanders are still not at ease. Moreover, assuming that China's maritime buildup is inevitable, which seems the likely scenario,² it is imperative for the US to devise a wise strategy that will promote mutual trust and preclude the possibility of a maritime conflict, or worse, war with China.

In a recent article entitled "The Geography of Chinese Power," Robert Kaplan presents the US with a possible course of action that is as uncertain as it is provocative (pp. 22-41). In short, Kaplan argues that the U.S. should respond to China's maritime buildup by dissolving its "outdated" Cold War security arrangements and withdrawing its armed forces back to the outer rings of Oceania (p. 41). Since China's national priorities lie not in spreading an ideology or system of government, Kaplan believes that China's position is based solely on "über-realist" motives; in other words, China is simply seeking to acquire greater energy resources for its immense population. As a consequence, imperatives will compel China to undertake considerable risks to secure its realist interests and to even resort to violence if conditions deem it necessary (p. 24). This makes rising China a very formidable counterpart to the US since an American

move to check China's maritime buildup may provoke fierce backlash.

Kaplan also points out that Beijing is prone to be more nautically aggressive given that investments could be channeled with greater ease towards China's offshore development. Since Kaplan notes that since China has cordial diplomatic relations with its bordering inland countries, China's terrestrial threats are negligible (p. 33). As a result, this allows Beijing to shift its focus from the continent to the seas, enabling China to be more ambitious in regards to the future course of its maritime objectives.

Moreover, Kaplan ultimately advises the US to withdraw its maritime forces from the East Asian seas. Kaplan sees a future clash between the US and the up-and-coming Chinese navy as likely, perhaps even inevitable. By encouraging the US to recall its naval vessels from within and around the Chinese seaboard, Kaplan is ultimately implying that a hostile confrontation between America and China will be best averted by reorienting the region's current security arrangements toward a new alignment where China assumes a lion's share of influence in East Asia. In other words, Kaplan is insinuating that it is in America's best interest to acknowledge China's new super power status and accept the accession of a new Sino-American bipolar world order.

Although many scholars agree that it is imperative for the US to avoid a violent conflict with their Chinese counterpart, Kaplan's proposal to reposition American forces away from its traditional sphere of influence in East Asia is both precarious and premature. Firstly, Kaplan's core assumption that there will be the emergence of a Sino-American maritime clash if the US maintains its current military alignment in East Asia, is overly inclined towards realist-pessimist thinking and underestimates the logic of the realist-optimist school of thought.³ Namely, although the US hegemon is ostensibly declining and preoccupied by its commitments in the Middle East, China as a rational actor will still look to avoid a military showdown with the superior US military. In fact, China's military power-projection capabilities will still be minor in comparison to the US even after the addition of new warships and aircraft carriers. China would have to acquire over 1,800 maritime vessels just for it to match the number of navy ships that America currently holds in its military arsenal. Beijing would also have to spend about \$600 billion more on its national defense budget before it could equal the amount of military spending of Washington. China also trails the US considerably in terms of weapons technology, and America's for-

1 Robert Ross, "China's Naval Nationalism," *International Security* 34, no. 2 (2009): 46-81.

2 "Aircraft Carrier Project," last modified July 11, 2011, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/china/cv.htm>.

3 Aaron Friedberg, "The Future of US-China Relations," *International Security* 30, no. 2 (2005): 7-45.

midable second-strike capabilities and post-9/11 neo-conservative doctrine will keep China's military ambitions modest, lest it become a target of an American preemptive strike.⁴ Thomas Christenson points out that an overly abrupt or militant act by China under the auspices of American supervision would give wary regional bystanders greater incentive to bandwagon with the US.⁵ Since the formation of such an allied opposition force is contrary to China's interests, Beijing's grand strategy will be rooted more in hedging against American forces rather than a straightforward drive for regional hegemony. Moreover, Sun Tzu states, "It is best to keep one's own state intact; to crush the enemy's state is only a second best. It is best to keep one's own army, battalion, company, or five-man squad intact; to crush the enemy's army, battalion, company, or five-man squad is only a second best (p. 79)." Since Beijing is likely to heed Sun Tzu's words and reason that a violent clash with the world hegemon is only "second best", China will look to avoid a violent clash with its powerful US counterpart. This is why Washington should not be fearful about preserving its current security obligations in East Asia.

The weakness of Kaplan's argument is not its realist-pessimist orientation in itself; in fact, realist-pessimism has been and will likely continue to be the predominant form of realist thinking.⁶ Rather, the weakness of Kaplan's argument is its political approach towards engaging with rising China; that it, withdrawing American troops from the hotbed of Chinese maritime buildup would be a mere act of appeasement. For example, Robert Ross and Zhu Peng mention that the outcomes of great power transitions are contingent upon whether other countries adopt policies that focus on either "appeasement" or "containment" towards the rising power.⁷ The "compromise" policy that Kaplan espouses is clearly the former and undiscerning of the latter. Notwithstanding particular conditions, when appeasement is the optimal approach for engaging up-and-coming powers,⁸ the case of rising China does not fall into this category.

This is because such an act of appeasement by the US is particularly liable to further encourage China to expand its military ambitions due to the absence of costly resistance.⁹ When considering the fact that China's maritime ambitions primarily derive from fervent Chinese nationalism,¹⁰ Chinese hyper-nationalists will be apt to interpret America's exodus amid Chinese maritime buildup as a coercively-induced Chinese victory. This manner of response is all the more likely in light of the fact that China's influence in East Asia will be considerably greater if the US military adopts an "offshore" strategy away from the Korean peninsula.¹¹ Chinese authorities may also be quick to promulgate America's departure as a Chinese victory in order to boost their political standing, especially if the Party encounters an economic downturn.¹² Although Kaplan would argue that the proposed manner of withdrawal is not an acute form of appeasement because it is self-induced and not prompted by Chinese coercion, it will be difficult for the Chinese populace and other onlookers to recognize the veracity of such a claim. Since threat perceptions are shaped more so by capabilities than by intentions,¹³ third-party viewers will likely overlook the voluntary nature of America's withdrawal and interpret it as an act of acquiescence. Some of China's neighbors may then look to reinforce their own power-projection capabilities due to the new security dilemma while others may even bandwagon with China due to perceived US weakness.¹⁴ Thus, rather than "appeasing" China by withdrawing US troops away from East Asia, a more effective strategy for the US would be to remain in East Asia and maintain a strong, firm stance. This is because an American exodus coupled with an excessively emboldened China would result in a drastic shift in power balance marked by reoriented alliances, increased regional insecurities, and an impending arms race: all of which make violence all the more likely.

Finally, Kaplan's forewarning of a militant maritime China is predicated on the assumption that China's inland security concerns are void; that is, that China no longer has to worry about its terrestrial threats since it currently

4 Robert Jervis, "The Remaking of a Unipolar World," *The Washington Quarterly* 29, no. 3 (2006): 7-19.

5 Thomas Christensen, "Fostering Stability or Creating a Monster?" *International Security* 31, no. 1 (2006): 81-126.

6 Aaron Friedberg, "The Future of US-China Relations," 7-45.

7 Robert Ross and Zhu Peng, "The Rise of China: Theoretical and Policy Perspectives," in *China's Ascent: Power, Security, and the Future of International Politics* 2008, eds. Robert Ross and Zhu Peng (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008), 306.

8 *Ibid.*, 307.

9 A.J.P. Taylor, *The Origins of the Second World War* (New York: Touchstone, 1961), 1-9.

10 Robert Ross, "China's Naval Nationalism," 48.

11 Jonathon D. Pollack, "Transformation of the Asian Security Order," in *Power Shift: China and Asia's New Dynamics*, ed. David Shambaugh (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 339.

12 Robert Ross and Zhu Peng, "The Rise of China: Theoretical and Policy Perspectives," 312.

13 Robert Jervis, "Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma," *World Politics* 30, no. 2 (1978): 167-214.

14 Aaron Friedberg, "Struggle for Mastery in Asia," *Commentary* 110, no. 4 (2000): 17-26.

holds cordial diplomatic relations with its inland neighbors. However, Kaplan neglects the primary reason for China's amicable relations with its inland neighbors derives from mutual security concerns they have about the imposing US hegemon.¹⁵ In other words, Kaplan's argument does not account for the impetus that America's nearby presence has on bringing together China and its neighbors to balance against US muscle. Thus, without America's looming shadow in the region to serve as an impulse for the neighbors to cooperate, a resumption of past rivalries and distrust is apt to ensue if China continues to strengthen its power-projection capabilities in unprecedented ways. As a result, America's continued presence in East Asia would also be in the interest of China since it would help assuage the fears of other regional players and prevent the emergence of a regional arms race. Moreover, since an abrupt US exodus from East Asia would leave the region in a state of muddled multi-polarity,¹⁶ risk perceptions between China and its neighbors will be particularly susceptible to miscalculation. When this is coupled with China's perpetual drive for greater military clout, a violent and entrapping conflict in the region is bound to ensue.

Rather than withdrawing from East Asia as Kaplan suggests, the US should stand firm and allow China to move at its own pace while avoiding a policy that is overly pacifistic. However, this is not to say that the US should adopt an intransigently hard-line policy. Rather, by alternating between policies of "appeasement from strength" and "deterrence with reassurance" the US can secure its own welfare while also reassuring its Chinese counterpart that its interests are being respected. A sensible and resolute US will also demonstrate to its regional allies that America will remain committed to its traditional security in East Asia. In conclusion, Sun Tzu offers a hint to the United States:

When the army of a king or hegemon attacks a large state, it does not allow the enemy to assemble his forces; when it brings its prestige and influence to bear on the enemy, it prevents his allies from joining with him [...] If you pursue your own program, and bring your prestige and influence to bear on the enemy, you can take his walled cities and lay waste to his state (p.118).

Kaplan's proposal for the US hegemon to depart from East Asia is clearly at odds with Sun Tzu. However, Sun Tzu did manage to secure his head-hopefully Kaplan, the US and China will be as fortunate. **PEAR**

15 Thomas Christensen, "Fostering Stability or Creating a Monster?" 81-126.

16 Daniel Twining, "America's Grand Design," *The Washington Quarterly* 30, no. 3 (2007): 79-94.

GUIDELINES

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