

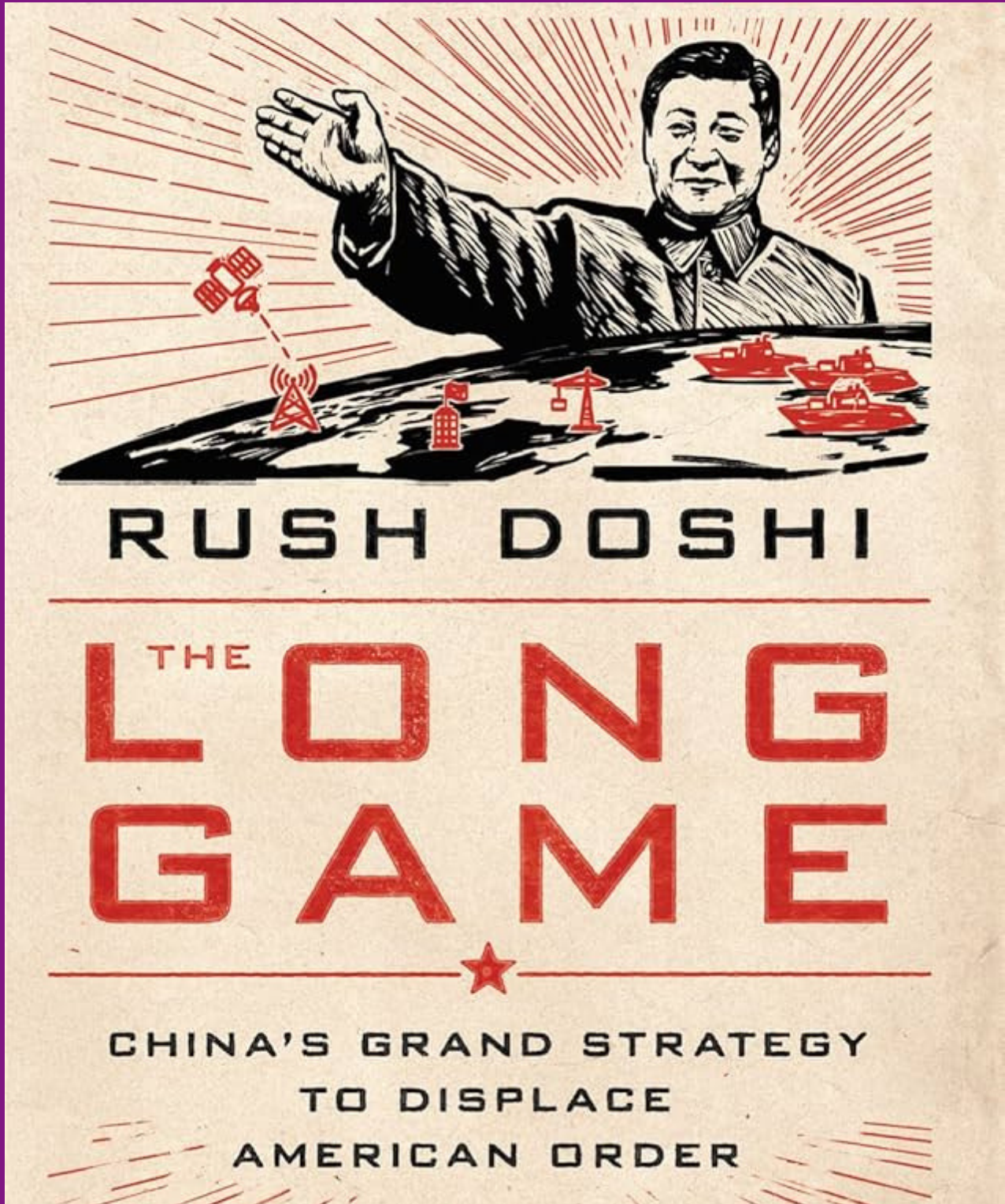


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BOOK REVIEW

The Long Game: China's Grand Strategy to Displace American Order

Authored by Rush Doshi



Rush Doshi, *The Long Game: China's Grand Strategy to Displace American Order* (Oxford University Press, New York, USA, 2021), pp. 336, ISBN: 978-0197527917

China's rise to the global order and its belligerence, has evolved presently as the most discussed and debated agenda amongst researchers and the academia of International Relations and Area Studies. The talk of the century is centred around understanding and comprehending China's strategy or rather as Doshi devices 'a Grand Strategy' inherently to challenge the existing American world order. Rush Doshi in his seminal work, *The Long Game: China's Strategy to Displace American Order* provides a backdoor for readers and entices them through thought provoking and compelling research portraying China's behaviour and patterns leading to where it stands today. The Long Game, Doshi's thesis has provided insights that he has precisely charted out to explain China's rise and how this rise has been spread over a few decades, showcasing a blend of leadership from the erstwhile and present Chinese leadership and the Chinese Communist Party's strong embedded ideological underpinnings.

Rush Doshi was the Founding Director of Brookings's China Strategy Initiative and also a Fellow at the Yale University's Paul Tsai China Centre. At the moment, Doshi holds the position of Adjunct Senior Fellow at the Center for a New American Security and special advisor to the CEO of the Asia Group. Rushi Doshi is the current Director for China at the US National Security Council. *The Long Game: China's Grand Strategy to Displace the American Order* is his first authored book where he has dealt in depth with grappling and critical questions on China's Grand Strategy to achieve its expansive ambitions.

Rush Doshi in his book has drawn heavily from primary sources, especially the CCP's doctrines, documents, speeches, leaked materials and even memoirs. The book is divided into three parts which project Doshi's logical thematic representation. He has charted out three strategic durations i.e. 1989, 2009, and 2017 whereby China rigorously changed its 'strategic guidelines.' He identifies the defined periods-1989, 2009 and 2017 as 'Blunting, Building and Expanding', respectively. These three durations, Doshi highlights are premised on the available party speech and texts rather than his own interpretation of the same. Apart from the three parts which are further divided into various chapters, Doshi also delivers two introductory chapters as a 'coherent body of thought and action' and how certain shifts in the behavioural patterns of China were advocated to displace the American order. China's grand strategy has touched upon all policy domains and has always gone beyond military and security, Doshi argues. He has also spelt out in these introductory chapters about the centrality of the Chinese Communist Party and how it precedes any leadership i.e. the paramount leadership of Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaoping or even the incumbent President, Xi Jinping.

Part I of Doshi's book spanning between chapters 3-6 jumps back to the Cold War era when China was caught up in a tripolar relation between the US and erstwhile USSR. However, Doshi argues that the late 1980s was a benign period with the fall of communism. But it was also when China witnessed the unsettling 'Tiananmen Square' incident. Doshi spelt out "three traumatic trifectas" that compelled Deng Xiaoping to change China's Strategic guidelines and be more cautious in its ways of engaging with the US. The three traumatic trifectas, Doshi identifies were the Tiananmen Square incident, the Gulf War and the collapse of the USSR which challenged the Chinese on ideology, and military capability and further eliminated the binding factor between the US and China, respectively. This 'Blunting' Strategy, for Rush Doshi, was the first Displacement Strategy played by China.

Part II spans between chapters 7-10 and the 2008 Global Financial Crisis forms the foundation for Rush Doshi to build his thesis. The 2008 Global Financial Crisis was the vantage point that provided China with the needed 'confidence' to no longer "hide its capabilities and buy time" but rather challenge US dominance by creating an "active strategy to accomplish" a Sino-centric order within Asia. This was another key proponent in China's Displacement Strategy under Hu Jintao and it marked great policy shifts that projected China's power both domestically and internationally. China started exploring and projecting its military capabilities and reduced dependency on "expensive US technology", economically, it withered away from US-led institutions and created economic institutions like the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), as Doshi narrates. At the political level, there was a transition and China joined regional institutions that could act as a catalyst for it to reshape its narrative in the region. Further, Doshi also explains how China also started creating working on an alternative of the US SWIFT system.

Part III of the book spans between chapters 11-12 and Rush Doshi brilliantly establishes the final part of the book by calling it "great changes unseen in a century", a phrase that was coined by Qing Dynasty General Li Hongzhang in 1872, certainly in a different context. But the final chapters project an ambitious China under Xi Jinping and its vision of creating a balance of power in the world. Doshi highlights how China is working towards its centenary celebrations in 2049 by true rejuvenation as echoed by Xi Jinping to "inaugurate a new phase in China's post-Cold War Grand Strategy" and capturing those unseen changes in a century. China's present assessment of US power projects its decline and a triumphant moment for China to truly achieve the transition from a "Community of Common Destiny" to a "Community of Shared Future for Mankind" through multiple developmental projects, BRI being one of the centrifugal enterprises to achieve them. The book summarizes "asymmetric choices" for US policymakers and leaders.

Rush Doshi has exhibited brilliance by stitching together a meticulously researched book that not only provides thought-provoking facts but also persuasive policy recommendations that are analytically and empirically rigorous. Doshi needs to be complimented for basing the book's premise on primary sources providing readers with the actuality of China's assessment of itself and the US. Yet, Doshi falls short of explaining why some of China's displacement strategies have faced consequential challenges, especially during the pandemic- militarily, economically and politically. Amitav Acharya in 'The End of American World Order' has very well argued how American dominance may never see the light of the day again, projecting how the US has shifted from dominating to sharing power compared to its posture during the Cold War upto early 2000s. This was further witnessed during the Trump administration in 2017 ending with US withdrawal from Afghanistan which culminated into the America First Policy. Therefore, the asymmetric choices listed by Doshi may run counter to the existing US policies. Additionally, the policy recommendations by Doshi remain exclusive to US policymakers and do not extend to countries like India, Japan, and the ASEAN nations that also share similar concerns about China's belligerence in the region. Doshi's book also fails to capture or explain China's behaviour towards Russia during the Crimean Crisis (2014). Additionally, the book does not explain why China chose to attempt military coercion against India in the 2020 Eastern Ladakh Standoff, an action that typically China had not resorted to for decades.

Rush Doshi's *The Long Game: China's Grand Strategy to Displace the American Order* adds to the prevailing narrative for researchers, scholars, policymakers and students to better their understanding of China and further assist in speculating future trajectories based on China's past behavioural patterns and assessment of US power, as compiled thoroughly by Rush Doshi. The book has provided a window for a true assessment of China and therefore shapes additional questions and areas of study to be explored like strategic thinking and security.

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