

[happy third]

Superpower Showdown

America needs a new strategy for dealing with China, a country we can't contain and can't afford to fight

By James P. Pinkerton

THE HISTORY of the United States is the history of confrontation, even conflict, with the other great powers of the earth.

At the dawn of the 19th century, the young Republic found itself confronted with the two great powers of that world, Britain and France. We fought them both. Everyone knows about the War of 1812, but perhaps we've forgotten the quasi-war with France from 1798 to 1800; during those years the U.S. Navy seized some 80 French vessels.

By the beginning of the 20th century, America had made its peace with Britain and France—although many in London, as late as the 1860s, would have been delighted to see Washington lose the Civil War—but the U.S. soon found itself in wars hot and cold, against Germany, then Japan, then Russia.

Now, in the 21st century, the looming great powers are China and India. So if history is our guide—and it should be—we can expect forthcoming collisions with those countries as well. Of course, most Americans today are preoccupied with the Muslim Middle East, but our fight with Islam does not alter the challenges posed by the “twin pillars” of Asia—nations that might well possess economic outputs equivalent or even superior to the U.S. by mid-century. Yet at the same time, those two pillars will no doubt contend with each other, as

well as with secondary nuclear powers such as Pakistan.

So America's grand strategy for the next century should be twofold. First, we must recognize that rising powers inherently bring rising threats. Second, such rising powers should be balanced, played off each other, and not directly confronted. Why? Because the cost of American participation in nuclear-era world war, for any reason less than national survival, is simply too great. America would be wise to accept a reduced role in Asia in exchange for a reduced responsibility for participating in the inevitable future regional conflicts.

We should remember the Latin term *tertium gaudens*—the happy third. That is, there's no law saying we have to be in the middle of every fight; it's better sometimes to hold the coats of those who do. Yet our current policy presumes that we should be involved in all potential combats—although, for America's national interest, a better Asia would be one in which China, India, Japan, and possibly another “tiger” or two contend with each other for power while we enjoy the happy luxury of third-party by-standing.

Today, U.S. policy has put the nation in perilously close proximity to two separate flashpoints with China: North Korea and Taiwan. And China is surely

the angriest rising power in Asia today; Americans should understand that if we want a war with the People's Republic, Beijing will happily give us one. Yet if we continue to drain away resources fighting in the Middle East—thus revealing our overall weaknesses, as well as our military tactics—it is no sure bet that we will win. For all the errors China has made, it wouldn't have earned its status as the oldest continuous civilization on earth unless it had been able to learn from its mistakes.

The U.S., by contrast, acts more like a teenager, convinced of its own immortality—although in this particular instance, the older China is not necessarily wiser. Yes, the Chinese are proud of their ancient and patient civilization; yet at the same time, most observers agree that they burn with resentment over the colonial exploitation they suffered during their long half-millennium slide that began in the 15th century, a slide that reversed itself only in the last three decades. And the U.S.—as the leader against North Korean nukes, as the chief defender of Taiwan, as Japan's best friend in Asia—has now assumed the role of “heavy” in the minds of the Chinese, a role held formerly by the British and other colonizers.

Meanwhile, it's understandable that Americans, sitting on top of the world

but nevertheless feeling insecure, would resent the Chinese for resenting them. And in the game of world politics, resentment is a prelude to war plans, and war plans are often a prelude to war.

Indeed, the Asia war drums are thumping in the U.S. even as we have our hands full with Iraq and perhaps Iran. The Clinton administration once labeled China a “strategic partner”—a label that in retrospect seems naïve—but the Bush administration has called China a “strategic competitor.” Is it really wise to get into such a diplomatic name game? Is it smart geopolitics to downgrade a country publicly from friend to foe? Surely it would be better just to say, simply, that China is a large and powerful country across the Pacific.

Beginning with the Hainan Island plane-crash incident in 2001, radical American neoconservatives have made common cause with more conventional militarists, agreeing that China is to be seen as an enemy. And the day after 9/11, Bill Bennett told CNN that the U.S. was in “a struggle between good and evil,”

against China. The goal, he crowed, waving the reddest possible flag, was to “Taiwanize” the People’s Republic. Some might be tempted to minimize the political weight of a mere scribbler, but after Operation Iraqi Freedom, is there any doubt that noisy neocons have the capacity to translate their warlike op-eds into war itself?

In fact, planning for a war with China—based on the feeling that it’s inevitable anyway, so why not make sure we win?—has continued moving forward, like so much mission-creeping kudzu. But few were noticing such behind-the-scenes scheming until Sept. 8, when the sober-minded *Wall Street Journal* ran a front-page article hotly headlined “Secret Weapon: Inside Pentagon, A Scholar Shapes Views of China. Beijing, Mr. Pillsbury Says, Sees U.S. as Military Foe; An Optimist Turns Gloomy.” Americans were hardly through subduing Fallujah for the third or fourth time when they were hit full in the face with the prospect of a war a thousand times bigger.

nese officials have threatened to use nuclear weapons against the U.S. over the years: in July, Gen. Zhu Chenghu, dean of China’s National Defense University, told the *Financial Times* and other media outlets that if Uncle Sam interferes with China over Taiwan, “Americans will have to be prepared that hundreds of cities will be destroyed by the Chinese.”

By the same token, there has never been a shortage of Americans who have threatened to nuke China. That’s the point: as in centuries past, great powers threaten each other, and often such threats and counter-threats escalate into war.

Plenty of Americans, to be sure, have spoken out against such escalation, including some hawks. Ralph Peters, a retired U.S. Army colonel, has been a strong supporter of Operation Iraqi Freedom, and his larger worldview is revealed by title of his new book, *New Glory: Expanding America’s Global Supremacy*. Yet even Peters is reluctant to get into a trans-Pacific world war: “While we must always be prepared for a conflict with China, we should stop looking for one.”

Meanwhile, the U.S. conducts war simulations against China on a constant basis, and the Chinese seem to be doing the same thing against us. In recent years, their spies and agents have penetrated not only the FBI but also the military-industrial complex—even enjoying “coffee” at the Clinton White House that seemed to coincide with the passing of American missile secrets to Beijing. Currently the Chinese are launching near-constant hack attacks against U.S. computers; we recently learned that cybersnoops at Shandong University had decrypted Secure Hash Algorithm-1, one of the basic codes of the U.S. military.

So the bleak logic of ineluctable conflict has us all in its thrall. As an American might say of this coming war conun-

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listing Lebanon, Libya, Syria, Iraq, Iran, and China as evildoers worthy of attack. China? Is Osama bin Laden on some Long March of his own? Are Saddam’s weapons of mass destruction cached in the Forbidden City?

In the years since, the neocons have gotten themselves right where they want to be: tangled up in the Middle East. Yet some seem eager to open up a “second front”; the ever-belligerent Max Boot, for example, agitated in the pages of—where else?—*The Weekly Standard* for a policy of “internal subversion”

The “Mr. Pillsbury” in the headline is Michael Pillsbury, a Sinophile turned Sinophobe. He told the *Journal* that China “may become the largest challenge in our nation’s history.” Wow. Bigger than the challenge we faced in 1776? 1861? 1941? 1962? Pillsbury was adamant: “Beijing sees the U.S. as an inevitable foe, and is planning accordingly.”

And of course, who’s to say Pillsbury is wrong? In June, a defecting Chinese diplomat told the *Washington Times* that Beijing sees America as the “largest enemy, the major strategic rival.” Chi-

drum, “We have a wolf by the ears”; that is, we can’t keep doing what we’re doing, but we can’t let go, either. The Chinese have a similar phrase, *Qi hu nan xia*—“riding the tiger and can’t get off.” Moreover, the current cycle of one-upsmanship, on our side of the Pacific, is seen as a matter of honor or credibility. For the Chinese, it’s all about *bao quan mian zi*—keeping face.

Recently, the September-October issue of *Foreign Affairs* brimmed with articles further attesting to a Barbara Tuchman-like inevitability of Sino-U.S. conflict. One need only read between the lines of these articles, written for an elite foreign-policy audience, to hear the future Guns of August. For example, David Zweig and Bi Jianhai, of Hong Kong University, describe China’s “global hunt for energy,” which puts the U.S. and China in direct competition for the same oil supplies. As the writers observe, “Given the White House’s current penchant for unilateral intervention and the loud voices in Congress calling China a military threat, Beijing might reasonably begin to fear that the United States will try to block its purchases of natural resources to destabilize it.” And many Americans seem to agree; an energy specialist at the University of California is quoted as saying that he failed to see any scenario that would not lead to confrontation between the United States and China over energy.

In another article in the same issue of *Foreign Affairs*, Kishore Mahbubani, dean of the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Affairs in Singapore, observes, “The conviction is growing among Chinese policymakers that the United States is bent on curtailing China’s rise.” Mahbubani recalls an incident that most Americans probably never even knew about, the 1999 U.S. bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade. American officials dismissed it as a mistake, and yet many Chinese, reports Mahbubani,

“remain convinced that the bombing was deliberate.” Is that genuine paranoia on the part of the People’s Republic? Or are Beijing propagandists deliberately whipping up anti-American fervor? Mahbubani, speaking for himself, lends a third-party credence to Chinese fears: “The United States is doing more to destabilize China than any other

good-hearted-wonks-gathered-together concept, which even onetime Clinton supporter Michael Mandelbaum derided as “foreign policy as social work.” Moreover, the basic idea of U.S. diplomats plodding their way through interminable multilateral meetings seemed out of keeping with our status as the “Unipower.” No wonder Americans lost

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power,” he avers, adding with a tone of regret, “No one in Washington seems to be proposing, much less pursuing, a comprehensive new strategy for U.S.-China relations.”

So the time has come for a different strategy that is neither hawkish nor dovish—merely realistic. It’s a foreign-policy approach that’s been proven in the past, in the historical crucible of great-power jockeying.

Other than isolationism, the U.S. has generally adopted three foreign-policy strategies over the last two centuries: collective security, containment, and war. All have met with success—and failure.

The first strategy, collective security, was endorsed by Woodrow Wilson during World War I, but the 28th president could never sell the realization of that strategy, the League of Nations, to either senators or citizenry. In recent times, George H.W. Bush revived the idea. And in fact, joint military action worked well enough in Kuwait and later in the Balkans, but once again, Americans never cottoned to the collective-security concept. Voters rejected Bush’s vision of a New World Order, with its scary black helicopter overtones, and they never much liked Bill Clinton’s

patience with joint efforts in regard to the Iranian and North Korean nuclear programs.

The second foreign-policy model has been containment. Back in 1807, President Thomas Jefferson imposed the Embargo Act on the 17-state Republic, through which he attempted, by banning European commerce, to contain Europe economically. The embargo, which crashed American prosperity, proved a disaster for the new nation.

Since then, the U.S. has attempted various embargoes and containments. The one spectacular success was the four-decade effort against the Soviet Union—although other factors, of course, were at work as well. But a more typical result of containment as an overall policy has been the American experience with Cuba—which is, to be sure, a deep disappointment.

As for America’s dual containment policy toward Iraq and Iran, pursued over the last two decades, it, too, has been a failure. We regime-changed Iraq anyway, and the Iranians are becoming more hostile and perhaps more nuclear with each passing year.

The third foreign-policy model has been war, or the threat of war. For most of U.S. history—from the myriad Indian

wars to Afghanistan in 2001—the U.S. has been able simply to vanquish its enemies. Out of this winning streak has come the feeling that the U.S. is supreme.

In 1992, Paul Wolfowitz, then undersecretary of defense, produced a document declaring that the goal of American foreign policy in the post-Soviet era was to maintain an overwhelming global dominance to prevent “potential competitors from even aspiring to a larger regional or global role.” Indeed, Wolfowitz declared, the crushing of any possible rival must be the “dominant consideration,” as the U.S. strives “to prevent any hostile power from dominating a region whose resources would ... be sufficient to generate global power.”

This ambitious document was ahead of its time in 1992, and it was soon withdrawn from public discussion. But a decade later, Wolfowitz, by now promoted to deputy secretary of defense, oversaw the drafting of a similar docu-

The further gist of what might be called the Wolfowitz Doctrine is that the Pentagon would enforce this American order. If this was the Unipolar Moment, as Charles Krauthammer dubbed it, necons in high places saw their chance to make the most of it: “The United States will use this moment of opportunity to extend the benefits of freedom across the globe”; other countries, the document continues, should not even dream of competing with the U.S. military. Instead, nations of the world should sit back as Uncle Sam problem-solves. Yet one obvious reality seems never to have occurred to the doctrine-drafters: if America presumes hegemony over all, it risks becoming the enemy of all.

This Wolfowitz Doctrine—U.S. supremacy ballooned by world-ahistorical optimism about what the 82nd Airborne could achieve—has been met by what might be called the Wellington Reality. As the Iron Duke sagely observed, for a great power, there is no such thing as a

done. The rest of the world—ROW in Pentagon parlance—has been divided into five regional commands: Europe and Africa are one command; the Middle East is a second; North and South America are the third and fourth.

Oh yes, Asia and the Pacific, that’s the fifth command, abbreviated as PACOM. And these demarcations are no secret; all dwellers of the planet—including those in the People’s Republic of China, all 1.3 billion of them—can visit the Pentagon’s website if they are curious to see where they fit into our world-bestridding scheme.

For those few Americans who pay attention to such military matters, the blithe presumption is that this is the way it always will be; the U.S. command system represents the sweep of America’s seemingly permanent ambition. Just as once upon a time the Romans couldn’t imagine a world without their running it—the Mediterranean was simply called *Mare Nostrum*, our sea—so today Americans across the ideological spectrum assume that every element of life around the world needs our supervision, now and forever. Those living in Washington hear plenty of casual conversations with military personnel who have just returned from some exercise or war game—simulations in which American forces have defended or liberated just about every gulf, strait, and cape in the world. Why? Because all are deemed vital to our national security.

From George Soros on the Left to Bill Clinton in the center to George W. Bush on the Right, it is a given that the U.S. will administer more than six billion people—their politics, their trade zones, their human-rights practices, their baby-whale protections. How could this not be? After all, in the grandiose formulation of Clinton’s secretary of state, Madeleine Albright, the U.S. is the “indispensable nation.” And Bush has

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ment. That opus, signed by President George W. Bush on September 17, 2002, will be remembered by many as a classic bit of solipsistic chest-beating, performed on the planetary proscenium before a bemused world-audience. With Fukuyama-esque assurance, even arrogance, Wolfowitz argued that history had, in fact, ended, and that the world was left with “a single sustainable model for national success: freedom, democracy, and free enterprise.” In other words, the American Way.

small war. And this Wellington Reality, when applied to our time, means that to most nations, the mere presence of U.S. troops is a red flag.

It is remarkable how deeply our hegemonic ambition has been embedded into our routine thinking—so deeply that a historically abnormal circumstance is made to seem surreally normal. It just isn’t normal, for example, to include other people’s countries within one’s own military-administrative commands. But that’s exactly what the Pentagon has



But Moscow and Beijing staged a substantial joint air-land-sea exercise in August. Drawing upon their shared Orwellian war-is-peace newspeak tradition, the two powers named their war game Peace Mission 2005. But as Jin Canrong, professor of international relations at the People's University of China, told Al-Jazeera, "The main target is the United States."

So what sort of war might the Chinese be preparing for? *The Atlantic Monthly's* Robert Kaplan seems confident that China is planning on building a huge navy—

been even more emphatic about America's manifest destiny to make this the "liberty century."

Yet we have, to put it mildly, suffered some disappointments. Not only is the world not happy with the Bush Doctrine, but Americans don't seem to be so fond of it either. Edward Luttwak, of the Center for Strategic and International Studies, has offered one useful piece of explanatory context. Eleven years ago, Luttwak prophesied that America would become "post-heroic." That is, as a nation of small families, we would no longer be willing to spare any of our relatively scarce children for the purpose of war. And falling Iraq War approval poll numbers, as well as falling enlistment rates, are already revealing the impact of this casualty-averse demography.

The profound effects of this Luttwakian reality have not yet fully registered on Washington. The U.S. population is becoming post-heroic, and yet U.S. policy remains heroic, pursuing its planetary ambitions. As evidence of this globe-glomming, we might consider our attempted encirclement of China, requiring the establishment of bases from "the

Stans" to South Korea to Japan. We have military advisers operating in Mongolia; the U.S. Navy has even sent its ships calling on Vietnam, as admirals make no secret of their desire for a base in the one foreign country that defeated us in war. And of course, looming huge in the Pacific is America's "special relationship" with Taiwan. It would indeed be unfortunate if all these hyper-extended commitments led the U.S. into a war that Americans didn't want to fight.

Meanwhile, the Chinese have rallied states the U.S. deems pariahs, such as Sudan and Zimbabwe, into a motley but resource-rich crew of anti-Americanism. Moreover, in June 2001, China spearheaded into being the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, comprising six members: China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. Since then, the SCO has expanded: India, Pakistan, and Iran now enjoy "observer" status. It remains to be seen, of course, whether this ambitious new Eurasian entity possesses much weight; so far, America and its allies have ignored the SCO's resolution that we quit Afghanistan.

which, as he argued in a June 2005 cover story entitled "How We Would Fight China," our Navy would promptly sink in battle. But might the Chinese have a plan up their sleeve that we don't know about? Might all of China's engineers and scientists, many of them moving in and out of the U.S., come up with some wonder weapon? Kaplan may be content to spin for a well-funded U.S. Navy, which perpetually dreams of neo-Nelsonian blue-water combat, but the Chinese might not be as clueless as we wish them to be.

In August, *Time* reported on a wave of cyber-attacks against U.S. government computers, emanating from China, which the Pentagon dubbed Titan Rain. Said one U.S. defense contractor, "This has been going on so long and it's so well organized that the whole thing is state sponsored, I think." But what do all these hack attacks foretell? Current levels of cyber-intruding are categorized as akin to espionage; they are viewed as annoying but tolerable. But what would happen if the Chinese succeeded at, say, disabling our GPS system? Or if they managed to delete the files of NORAD?

Or, more ominously, in the spirit of *wei ch'i*, their national game—known to us as Go—if they were to take advantage of our near-open borders to pre-position assets, including possibly nuclear weapons, inside the U.S.?

So what's the solution? Two separate camps have their answers, and they dominate the China policy discussion. The first camp is noisy, explicit, and bel-

retreat or else become democratically transformed.

But the Chinese might see the situation differently. A cliché of the era is that China is analogous to Kaiser Wilhelm II's Germany, a rising power looking for its "place in the sun." If so, then it's a question of how the Chinese will be restrained. In the case of Germany, a grand coalition of France, Britain, Russia,

and political power give[s] a nation no commercial advantage." Indeed, Angell concluded, "It is an economic impossibility for one nation to seize or destroy the wealth of another, or for one nation to enrich itself by subjugating another."

In many ways, of course, he was right: it didn't make economic sense for countries to go to war against each other. Nevertheless, they did go to war. The Angellists failed to understand that countries fight over perceptions of slight, as well as regard for status. For all the alleged hardnosedness involved in planning for war, actually going to war is rarely a rational decision.

Still, the commerce-determinist dream dies hard; neo-Angellists are once again in high places. *The New York Times'* Thomas Friedman ranks as the most prominent neo-Angellist today. In his 1999 *Lexus and the Olive Tree*, he put forth his "Golden Arches" test—a test that was immediately flunked. Friedman's self-proclaimed insight was that "no two countries that both had McDonald's had fought a war against each other since each got its McDonald's." Yet in that same year, NATO went to war against Serbia, and during the fighting, McDonald's franchises in Belgrade were severely vandalized. So much for the idea that economics drowns ideology, or nationalism, in the sugary syrup of prosperity.

One reason that the Montesquieu/Angell/Friedman view lives on is that it tells a sizable and powerful constituency what it wants to hear. That is, "neo-Angellist" businesspeople want to believe that what they are doing is good for the world, and failing that, they at least want others to believe that what they are doing is good for the world. And so they summon up a sizable cadre of libertarian and globalist apologists to proclaim that they are making sweet commerce indeed.

Yet there are three worms in the neo-Angellist apple.

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ligerent. The second is quiet, implicit, and ultimately pacifistic. Yet neither can truly succeed, because the first camp would fight a disastrous war with China, while the second would lose its D.C. policy struggle to the first camp—which then would go back to fighting its disastrous war with China.

The first camp might be called the nationalists-militarists. This group includes the neoconservatives, but it also attracts figures from a substantially older tradition, the "Asia First" faction that reaches back deep into the Republican Party in particular, from Sen. Albert Beveridge at the beginning of the last century through Gen. Douglas MacArthur in the middle of the 20th century to Defense Department guru Michael Pillsbury today. And this group is reinforced by various constituencies, including the Taiwan Lobby, advocates for Tibet, the Falun Gong, and the "house church" Christians.

It is hard to imagine that most of these people think that war with China is a good idea. But having stoked themselves up on soaringly millennialist Gersonian rhetoric, they are having a hard time finding a way to back down. They must cling to the hope that China will shrink from collision with the morally clear United States—that it will either

and the United States was required—twice—to bring Berlin to heel. It remains to be seen whether the United States could ever assemble an equivalently large coalition to restrain China.

The second camp draws inspiration from Montesquieu, who held that *doux commerce*—sweet commerce—would inevitably soften social relations. Montesquieu was right about *intranational* issues, noting the sweetening effects, in his day, of embourgeoisment. But *international* issues proved to be a different story; as nations became wealthier, they avidly spent much of their economic surplus on wickedly effective new weapons. Nothing *doux* about that.

In the 20th century, the greatest updater of Montesquieu's views was Sir Norman Angell, whose 1910 book, *The Great Illusion*, boldly declared that war was obsolete. "The warlike nations do not inherit the earth," he maintained. "They represent the decaying human element." Angell's argument—that nations connected to each other by market economics have no choice but to co-operate with each other on politics—struck a resounding international chord. His book was translated into 25 languages, selling more than two million copies. It even gave rise to "Angellism," a body of thought holding that "military

The first worm is outsourcing, which for most American firms is still the most honeyed part of the U.S.-China relationship. But outsourcing has its problems. For one thing, it creates a substantial backlash in the U.S., as workers understandably fear losing their jobs. And the trend is hardly decreasing. As one executive of a large American multinational company—once a prominent manufacturer in the U.S., now almost entirely making its products overseas—said to me recently, “You show me a company that doesn’t do its manufacturing in China, and I’ll show you a company that can be beaten, competitively.”

Moreover, this outsourcing worm jeopardizes our national security; a totally post-industrial America would be unable to produce the necessary implements of war, should they be needed. Indeed, the Pentagon is struggling to maintain some sort of domestic industrial base for the U.S. Michael Boskin, chairman of President George H.W.

tute economist Irwin Stelzer, who, writing in the Sept. 5 *Weekly Standard* wondered: Is it really the case that “rigid adherence to free trade serves our geopolitical interests”?

Looking back a century, both Lynn and Stelzer might have cited the British Conservative politician Leo Amery, who had regularly argued against Angell, as well as other dogmatic globalists. Amery warned that Germany’s mercantilist neighbor-beggaring economic strategy, the opposite of Britain’s Angellist approach, was giving the Kaiser a dangerous war-production advantage. “The successful powers will be those who have the greatest industrial base,” Amery prophesied, adding that those holding “the industrial power and the power of invention and science will be able to defeat all others.” As Winston Churchill, whom Amery served in Britain’s World War II cabinet, once observed, a country engaged in war needs the tools to finish the job.

summer, all the lobbyists on K Street could not tamp down the wildfire of anti-Chinese feeling that erupted over the failed bid by the China National Overseas Oil Company to buy the U.S. oil company Unocal. The House voted 398 to 15 to block the possible deal, which soon fell through.

The reaction in China was vehement. The headline in the July 6 edition of the government-run *China Daily* declared, “U.S. lawmakers meddle in CNOOC’s Unocal bid.” And while in America the squall of anti-CNOOC feeling passed quickly enough, in China the memory seems to be lasting longer; the chief financial officer of CNOOC, Yang Hua, told the *Financial Times* on Sept. 17 that the Chinese have their own definition of human rights, and it starts with oil. “What is ‘human rights’?” Yang asked rhetorically. “I’ll tell you what it means. It means having guaranteed access to energy.” Many Americans would disagree, but again, that’s the point: if we see things one way, and the Chinese see things another way—and if the stakes are high enough—that’s the way to war.

In other words, when it’s a question of fighting “evil,” the sweetest fruits of commerce taste bitter. As Deputy Secretary of State Robert Zoellick said in September, America today, in a time of peace and unprecedented trans-Pacific trade, is “a cauldron of anxiety” about China. If issues of status and primacy are at stake, it seems as though lizard brains take over, diminishing rational thinking—as nationalism, xenophobia, and more primitive reflexes rise up in a sanguinary primordialism. The outcome is predictable: as with Angell 90 years ago, the neo-Angells will be overwhelmed yet again.

The third and final worm is that China might be simply unappeasable, no matter what we do. A country that has a 500-year-chip on its shoulder, a government that killed millions in the ‘50s and

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Bush’s Council of Economic Advisers, once reportedly declared, “It doesn’t make any difference whether a country makes potato chips or computer chips,” and yet others, at least, know otherwise: all chips are not created equal. Barry Lynn, in his new book, *End of the Line: The Rise and Coming Fall of the Global Corporation*, argues that if present trends continue, the Chinese will soon be able simply to pull the plug on our economy—and so we won’t be able to fight China even if we want to, or have to, which might make war all the more tempting to the Chinese. If they are sure that they can win easily, why not go for it?

Lynn stands on the Left, and yet he echoes the sentiments of Hudson Insti-

There’s a second worm in Angellism: when free trade is practiced in the face of a perceived military threat, the policy simply implodes. It lacks the necessary popular support. Thus, in regard to contemporary China, an ever-deeper Ricardian economic integration across the Pacific will not prove politically acceptable to hawkishly Beijing-bashing Americans. Yes, many big U.S. companies will happily collaborate with PRC totalitarians; Yahoo!, for example, recently ratted out the privacy of one of its customers to the PRC secret police, and Google Maps has listed Taiwan as a province of the PRC. And yes, most of the Fortune 500 will engage lobbyists to keep the trade routes open to the east. Yet this

'60s and thousands as late as 1989 at Tiananmen Square—this is not necessarily a peace-loving nation; a regime that forces abortions on its populace has not been much sweetened by commerce. Indeed, one could just as easily argue that expanded wealth has given the Chinese expanded geopolitical horizons. Pursuing ever more ambitious world interests—notably oil in the Middle East and in Central Asia, inking deals with Iran and Kazakhstan—China is a country striving for full superpower status. Today, as it extends its power, it is acting increasingly like the U.S.; it has sent peacekeepers and hired guns to such far-flung places as Tajikistan, Sudan, Haiti, and the Panama Canal. As a result, Americans worry that the Middle Kingdom is bent on “Finlandizing” the rest of Asia—although, of course, the Chinese say that the U.S. has already sought to “Americanize” the east.

So what is to be done? Are America's only choices militaristic jingoism or naïve Angellism?

The nationalists-militarists might not actually want a war with China, but they act as if they do, and that's probably enough to persuade the Chinese that a war is coming. And in war planning, as in so many other avenues, if you fake something long enough, you will make it happen.

On the other side of the debate—well, there isn't much of an other side to the debate. The business-minded neo-Angellists may think they are pragmatically managing the U.S.-China relationship, but in truth, they will enjoy that illusion only in the absence of some triggering event. The moment Murphy's Law hits or the instant there's the trans-Pacific equivalent of a Sarajevo assassination of an Austrian archduke, the neo-Angellists will be painted as appeasers by the nationalists-militarists and thus blown to the winds, just as the original Angellists were back in 1914.

But there's a better approach. As Michael Lind of the New America Foundation has advocated, a British-style balance-of-power strategy could forestall a head-to-head collision with China. For centuries, Whitehall juggled European rivals against each other, and it worked well for the Empire. So if the British could play off the likes of the Bourbons, Hapsburgs, Hohenzollerns, and Romanovs, perhaps the U.S. can play off the inevitable rivalry of the Asian powers. It's the good fortune of Americans, after all, that we are unchallenged in our own hemisphere and likely to remain so for a long time to come. And by our further good fortune, three enormous powers—China, India, and Japan—are all next to each other, just like Spain, France, Holland, and Germany in times past.

Although the U.S., as indicated, has generally pursued three basic foreign policy strategies other than isolationism—collective security, containment, and war—we must note that for a relatively brief period, our nation followed a fourth strategy, the power-balancing mode, mostly during the presidency of Theodore Roosevelt, from 1901-1909. The 26th president is remembered today as something of an imperialist, and he certainly looked upon a weak Latin America with an imperialist's eye. Yet TR gazed at the strong powers across the Atlantic and the Pacific with a sober respect, as well as a strong desire not to see one power gain control of a whole region. Mindful of America's military limitations, Roosevelt sought to defend the national interest by following, in effect, Britain's long-term strategy—that is, keeping the other great powers in relative balance, preventing the emergence of any threatening hegemon.

In 1905, for example, TR mediated the Russo-Japanese war, for which he won the Nobel Peace Prize. And yet he was

not thinking about the brotherhood of man; rather, he was thinking about the proper correlation of forces in the Pacific.

Perhaps even more significantly, in 1905-6, during the Algeiras crisis in Morocco, when Germany was looking for an excuse to get into a war with France, TR helped settle that dispute, too. He feared that if war erupted, the Germans would crush the French, destroying European equilibrium. And in 1907, he strenuously supported the Second International Peace Conference at The Hague, which aimed at international disarmament. Roosevelt himself was not interested, to be sure, in reducing his arsenal—that same year he sent the Great White Fleet around the world as a show of American strength—but he was happy to see the other countries reduce their arsenals.

Yet in balance-of-power politics, a nation needs allies. In the case of Taiwan, America won't have many allies if it continues to insist that Taiwan is separate and effectively independent of the mainland. The U.S. cannot succeed at balancing power in Asia if Taipei is reflexively regarded as a “must-have” for our side. Even the pro-American Australians have said they won't support Uncle Sam in this instance. Indeed, nobody but the U.S. seems willing to risk a war over the island, and the Chinese have made it clear that over the long run, they will sacrifice just about anything to get Taiwan back.

So barring a general war—which hardly seems like a good idea for the U.S., as well as for China or even for Taiwan—Beijing will eventually recover Taipei, for the simple reason that it's clearly within its sphere of influence. So China will reunify with Taiwan, just as the American North reunified with the South after the Civil War. The federal government in Washington, D.C. would not have not looked kindly on any for-

eign power that sought to assure the secession of Richmond.

So what should the U.S. do? First, we should have an honest debate. Resolved, Americans will not risk mass annihilation in return for Taiwan's independence. Resolved, no more unlimited-liability checks written to the Taiwanese. Using honest realpolitik, the U.S. should tell Taipei that its optimal course is a peaceful Hong Kong/Macau-like return to the motherland. And we should make this declaration before the Taiwanese "go nuclear," either technologically or psychologically. As great powers have learned to their sorrow, tiny and high-strung dependencies have a way of making life hell for their supposed masters.

Freed from the Taiwan issue, the U.S. would then be able to think seriously about balancing the three great powers of Asia. So if Japan, for instance, marched down the nuclear road, that's another strategic Rubicon the U.S. would have to cross. Obviously other Asian powers would resist such Japanese rearmament, but that should be their problem, not ours. It's better to be the happy third in any such Asian struggle—not an unhappy primary participant.

In the meantime, we should also get smarter about being smarter. If the Indians and the Chinese continue to graduate 10 times as many technologists as the U.S., and if the Japanese continue to create the first post-human robot society, then Americans should keep from kidding themselves that our currently booming domestic real-estate market, for example, will assure our long-term geopolitical primacy. Instead, if we are serious about surviving, we need the 21st-century equivalent of Alexander Hamilton's 18th-century "Report on Manufactures"; that is, we should simply decide what industries we need in order to defend ourselves, and then launch a conscious techno-industrial policy to

make sure that those vital industries remain onshore.

Might this neo-Hamiltonian policy raise the price of t-shirts from China? Might it even raise interest rates, and perhaps lower the stock market? Fine. Slight economic dislocations are a small price to pay for true national security.

To be sure, there's no particular reason to believe that this balance-of-power approach, combined with an equally planned approach to defense production, is anywhere near to being adopted. For now, Americans seem to be bouncing between a nationalist-militarism that borders on suicide and a one-world neo-Angellism that borders on appeasement.

So one can only hope that the dire wake-up call, when it comes, will not be too damaging. Bad policies can be reversed, although, unfortunately, it usu-

ally takes a defeat to get the attention of policymakers and the public.

The history of world great-power conflict is too obvious—and too ominous—to be ignored. We need to see the trouble coming, and we should be ready, and steady, when it arrives. A proper balance-of-power strategy would mean that when conflict erupts, it erupts in other countries first. That's the formula for being the happy third, and it has been—and is—the right formula for dealing with ascendant and perhaps violent countries that we can't contain and don't want to fight. ■

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Bad For You Too?

How the Iraq War disappointed Israel

By Leon Hadar

THERE IS AN OLD JOKE about an Englishman, a Frenchman, a German, and a Jew who are asked to write an essay about an elephant. The Englishman writes about "The Elephant and the British Empire." The Frenchman writes about "The Love Life of the Elephant." The pedantic German writes a large treatise on "The Toenail of the Elephant." And the Jew writes on "The Elephant and the Jewish Problem."

It's a Jewish joke dating back to the time when the fate of the insecure Jewish community in Europe depended very much on political and social changes in the surrounding non-Jewish environ-

ment. It pokes fun at the tendency of anxious Jews at that time to assess the latest news from this or that world capital—the Russian czar has the flu, the price of grain is going up, red shoes are becoming more fashionable—by whether or not it was "good for the Jews." When Jewish survival was at stake and inextricably tied to events beyond the community's control, it was not surprising that Jews would study almost anything—so why not an elephant?—based on its effect upon, and attitude toward, the so-called Jewish Problem. Was the elephant with us—or was it against us?