

China's Vision of Victory

By Dr. Jonathan D. T. Ward

China's Vision of Victory is a handbook of primary evidence that illuminates the global grand strategy of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

I wrote this book because, as a scholar, linguist, traveller, and consultant, investigating the rise of China for over a decade, I was concerned that the conversation on China in the United States and in the broader Western world was based not on a clear understanding of the objectives of China's leadership, but rather, on dangerous figments of our own imaginations.

As the United States adjusts at last to competition with China, and away from engagement, it is vital that we and our allies work from a clear understanding of CCP objectives and the world which China's leaders aim to bring about.

Fortunately, China's leaders have made absolutely clear what they wish to achieve. *China's Vision of Victory* lifts the curtain on these objectives – the global grand strategy of the People's Republic of China – drawing upon decades worth of primary documentation, revealing the full scope of these ambitions, and what it means for all of us, in the CCP's own words and deeds.

Here, I unpack four insights from the book:

1. China's leaders envision a world in which China becomes the dominant global superpower – and breaks apart the US-led rules-based order
2. The core of China's global strategy is economic and industrial power
3. If the economic and industrial foundation is laid, global Chinese military power and submission to Chinese interests will follow
4. This is a contest which the US and our Allies can and must win, but we must begin by disempowering the rise of China and winning the competition for economic and industrial power

1. China's leaders envision a world in which China becomes the dominant global superpower – and breaks apart the US-led rules-based order

China's leaders, from Mao Zedong to Xi Jinping, have passed along a vision of "national resurrection". This is known today as "the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation."

This "rejuvenation" is an ideological vision in which China's premodern position as the dominant empire in, for them, the known world, will at last be restored. This will end what China's leaders call "the century of humiliation" at the hands of other imperial powers.

This concept and its variations have been communicated for decades to the Chinese public, and it remains the guiding ideology of the CCP.

The CCP's ambition is not regional, but global: the objective is to create a new global order with China at the center, known as the "Community of Common Destiny for Mankind."

This means breaking apart the US and Allied world order and replacing it with a system in which China's values, power, and restored national glory emerge victorious.

In pursuit of this "historic" vision, China's leaders have assembled a thoroughly modern strategic program that encompasses virtually every aspect of human industry and endeavor – from dominance in quantum computing to diplomatic engagement with Latin America.

Through the mobilization of “the invincible force of 1.3 billion people,” the CCP seeks to bend the arc of history to their advantage.

It wants to set a foundation for global power which no other nation or group of nations can rival or achieve.

2. The core of China’s global strategy is economic and industrial power

China’s strategy is built upon economic and industrial power. China’s leaders have exploited decades of engagement with the advanced industrial economies to harvest technology and make advancements on a grand scale.

The result has been the creation of an industrial base that now holds competitive advantages against the rest of the world economy. China is now the world’s manufacturing base. It has a \$14 trillion GDP that many expect will surpass the US economy in real terms within a decade. And it has already surpassed the US already in terms of total volume of global trade.

China’s economic plan now envisions dominance of key regions and industries:

- **“The Belt and Road Initiative”** envisions the integration of Europe, Africa, Asia, and even Latin America into an economic system with China at its center.
- **“Made in China 2025”** envisions manufacturing dominance in strategic industries from robotics to shipping and aerospace.

And this economic program continues to evolve. China’s creation of national corporate champions – such as Huawei – that are expanding into global markets with the backing of the state marks the next phase of the country’s expanding industrial and economic power.

3. If the economic and industrial foundation is laid, global Chinese military power and submission to Chinese interests will follow

China’s leaders are also busy converting their civilian industrial base into military power.

Both the “Belt and Road Initiative” and “Made in China 2025” intertwine with military endeavors:

- **The “Belt and Road Initiative” is also the geography of an expanding Chinese military:** Chinese naval exercises with Russia and Pakistan take place throughout the geography of the Belt and Road. From the South China Sea to the Mediterranean, China’s expanding military has been tasked with protecting “the ceaseless expansion of national interests.”
- **“Made in China 2025” harmonizes with the program of “Civil Military Fusion”:** this instructs that innovation in the civilian industrial base must be brought to the Chinese military as it seeks to “close the gap” with the US military and US Allies. China now seeks dominance across fields as diverse as undersea warfare, outer space, artificial intelligence, quantum computing, next generation IT, and joint force warfighting.

In the meantime, Xi Jinping speaks regularly of “preparing to fight and win wars.” From Europe to the Middle East, from the Indian Ocean to the Pacific, there is no region that is left out of China’s strategies for economic or military influence: China even has diplomatic engagement strategies for Africa, Latin America, and the polar regions.

If the economic foundations are laid, then the rest will follow.

4. This is a contest which the US and our Allies can and must win, but we must begin by disempowering the rise of China and winning the competition for economic and industrial power

As of now, many US businesses, financial institutions, and Allied nations continue to contribute to the advancement of China's economy and industrial base: in other words, to the foundations of China's growing global power.

This ongoing situation has roots in a prior American strategy towards China. For decades, American strategy towards China was known as "engage and hedge," meaning that the United States would engage commercially and diplomatically, while "hedging" by maintaining our advantages in military deterrence.

But, because of China's intentions, which we overlooked, this policy amounted to funding an arms race against ourselves. We have empowered and emboldened our greatest and most dangerous rival.

Rather than converting the People's Republic of China into a trusted friend or "responsible stakeholder," engagement has led – and continues to lead – to the enabling of a massive strategic adversary.

Engagement will eventually lead also to the demise of our military deterrence, as China continues to convert economic and industrial power to military advancement.

Xi Jinping may have done the world a service through his blunt revelation of the ambitions of the Chinese Communist Party – we are waking up to the CCP's objectives on a timeframe in which we can still win the larger competition.

But winning will mean that we must rethink how we wield economic power.

Bringing the People's Republic of China – an authoritarian nation whose values, practices, and treatment of its citizens are in conflict with the values and practices of the free and democratic world – into a globalizing world as a *primary industrial base for the community of nations* – was a grand mistake. China's leaders have made this the foundation for their far larger and more dangerous ambitions.

We must now focus on:

- beginning to seal off the pathways for China's economic and military expansion;
- investing in other democracies and like-minded nations; and
- becoming commercially competitive in emerging global markets of the future.

The world's democracies hold significant economic opportunities. From America to Europe to India to Japan and more, they make up two-thirds of the global economy. And they hold enormous unrealized potential, especially as new technologies and industries emerge.

Moreover, democracies offer the long-term security of a community that can be built upon shared values and concepts of world order. They are where we must focus as we move away from China and begin to disempower and disable the ambitions of the Communist Party.

Further, disengaging now does not mean disengaging forever. Growth in the democratic world, and successful commercial and diplomatic engagement with emerging economies, may set a long-term foundation for eventual reengagement with a less aggressive China. We can reengage when the free and democratic order is secure, and the dynamics of the contest have changed.

To distill these arguments into policy prescriptions, the US and Allies should pursue three strategic objectives:

1. Win the competition with China for economic and industrial power.
2. Maintain military deterrence and technological dominance.
3. Unite and integrate the world's democracies towards common cause and necessary policies.

These objectives can be achieved via the following actions:

- **Focus on our Alliances:** our greatest strength, both in economic and military power. The United States and our Allies must think globally, not regionally, in order to strengthen the “rules based international order.” China’s strategy is global, not regional – and the US and our Allies must be working from a shared set of policies and best practices in order to counter this global challenge.
- **Build an Alliance-based trading system:** engagement with China is a distraction from the industrialization and trade opportunities that we can find throughout the democratic world. Additionally, US and Allied governments should work with our major corporations and small businesses in order to enable competition with expanding Chinese companies and the discovery of market opportunities in emerging economies.
- **Engage with Major Powers:** enable India’s economic and military capacity as an anchor of democracy and priority partner in the Indian Ocean Region, the region where China aims to expand, and also where China’s geopolitical strategy is most vulnerable. Work also towards a long-term opening to Russia, which may, ultimately, become a partner or a balancing party in the long-term competition with China. Neither India nor Russia wishes to live within a world dominated by unrivalled Chinese power.
- **Focus on an integrated, global deterrence system:** increase interoperability and combat effectiveness among Allied militaries – US, European, and Asian – to enable a global deterrence posture and force structure that can prevent aggression from both China and Russia. This means deeper US-Allied integration with both Europe and Asia, and also deeper Allied integration *between* Europe and Asia.
- **Revise trade and engagement with China:** trade in energy, agriculture, consumer goods, and other areas can maintain stability without enabling Communist Party objectives, while ceasing excessive engagement on major technology and industrial goods will slow the growth of China’s power and close their path to victory. This must be done as a unified whole, across the Allied World. It will be the hardest, and most important adjustment that we must make.

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