

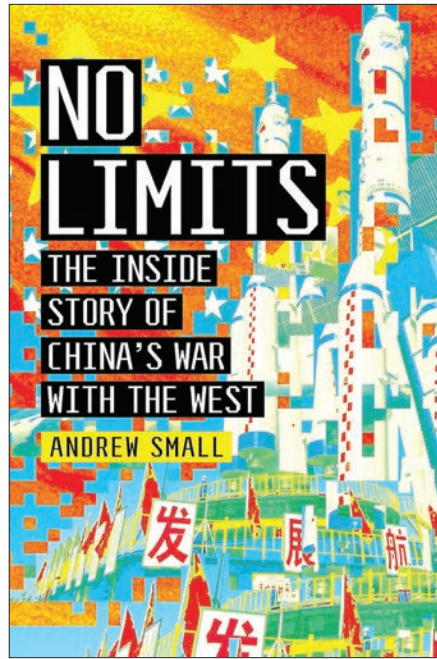
Lambeth makes clear that despite ultimately achieving success, “ill-advised leadership directives, in this case an inappropriate gradualist strategy at the campaign’s start that misunderstood the enemy and wrongly insisted on ROE intended for a different kind of war,” cost lives. He bluntly charges:

[T]here were the incalculable but monumental human costs that were imposed by the war’s overly prolonged and pointless early incrementalism. Without seeking at this point to provide even a rough estimate of the number of innocent Iraqis and Syrians who were killed or wounded throughout the more than four-year-long campaign, the anemic start that President [Barack] Obama insisted on at the effort’s outset and sustained with no truly consequential escalation for two more years produced millions of displaced civilians and caused a profusion of noncombatant fatalities in both countries, most of them at the hands of [IS] marauders rather than as the result of any errant coalition bombs.

Lambeth’s book is especially timely, as it comes as the Department of Defense is implementing its much-touted Civilian Harm Mitigation and Response Action Plan. This plan aims to institutionalize a bureaucracy with restrictive use-of-force policies that are disturbingly similar to that which proved so problematic in the air war against IS.

Airpower in the War Against ISIS stands for the proposition that airpower forcefully applied in a timely manner by savvy commanders will accomplish the mission with the least amount of civilian harm. It is a must-read not only for military professionals but also civilians wanting to understand how airpower could be optimally used in modern battlespaces. JFQ

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No Limits: The Inside Story of China’s War With the West (sold in Europe as *The Rupture: China and the Global Race for the Future*)

By Andrew Small

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Reviewed by Thomas F. Lynch III

No Limits: *The Inside Story of China’s War With the West* is a valuable book. It is simultaneously analytical and personal. *No Limits* is an incisive, selective history about how the promise of China’s integration into Western economic systems and global institutions gave way to acrimony and rivalry. It also is author Andrew Small’s memoir about how his quarter-century-long iterative interactions with China evolved from hope and cautious optimism about Sino-global integration into resigned fatalism that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) can never tolerate such a happy ending. The CCP must instead view itself as perpetual victim and implacable rival of the West.

Small has unique personal expertise on the promise and peril of China. A native Brit, Small was an English teacher in a rural Chinese village in the late 1990s, then worked in the early 2000s as director of the Foreign Policy Centre’s office in Beijing, at a time when the Western trade and banking sector was growing fast. He ultimately settled into his present, almost two-decade role as a senior transatlantic fellow with the Asia Program at the German Marshall Fund of the United States. Throughout this quarter-century studying Chinese relations with especially America and Europe, Small developed special and trusted relations with an array of prominent Chinese political, economic, and military figures. He also gained impressive professional understandings and unique personal insights that make his ringing of alarm bells in *No Limits* about the CCP’s dangers to the Western-led international order resonate loudly.

Small tells us in *No Limits* that he felt the positive potential of China’s rise. He knew many in Chinese economic and political leadership who saw the opportunity to export expanding national wealth and know-how to enhance growth in parts of the world left behind by Western economic organizations and development institutions. Small reminds us that China’s outward face in the 1990s and early 2000s featured business-friendly personae like Premier Wen Jiabao (2003–2013) and Chairman of the Board of the China Investment Corporation—China’s sovereign wealth and development fund—Jin Liqun (2008–2013). Small writes of how Wen, Jin, and others of that era soothed Europe and calmed America while smoothing pathways for Western businesses into China, stimulating Chinese economic demand and holding onto Western bonds and stocks during the tumultuous Great Recession in a manner that helped arrest global financial calamity. They then invested an enormous amount of China’s wealth into the struggling economies of southern and eastern Europe, when richer European and American investments dried up.

But behind this early promise, Small reminds us of enduring peril. The CCP

was there lurking—profiting from economic growth but paranoid about any challenge to its political strength or omnipotence. Historians often point to the Tiananmen Square protests and massacre of 1989 as the post-Mao benchmark of CCP limits on how much economic growth and openness could be tolerated in China. Small transports us to the 1999–2001 period for continuity in evidence that CCP strictures and constraints on political and economic activity could be relaxed a bit, but never forsaken, even in a fast-modernizing China.

He tells how in 1999 students from his rural former school were rounded up by CCP officials and trucked to a U.S. consulate for a CCP-choreographed protest of the accidental American bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade days earlier. The students were paid and saw the demonstration as a field trip, but the incident demonstrated CCP reach, political authority, and control. Small then recounts how in 2001, China acceded to the World Trade Organization (WTO) at American and Western insistence but without Beijing's first having committed to WTO rules like constraint of government export subsidies, adherence to fair labor standards, or acceptance of environmental protections. This set the stage for decades of international economic damage.

Once China was in the WTO, CCP-run business and CCP-overseen private ventures set in motion a flood of Chinese state-subsidized, hypercompetitive exports. Abroad, these exports hit blue-collar legacy industries and workers exceptionally hard, increasing unemployment and driving cavernous income inequality in a manner that catalyzed ideological polarization in many countries. As China did not formally recognize the arbitration mechanisms of the WTO to be binding, the forum became less of a cooperative trade-expanding enterprise and more of a litigious assembly for growing unresolvable squabbles over trade practices seen as unassailable in the CCP's dogma of "capitalism with Chinese state characteristics."

Small's narrative reminds us that these early coal-mine canaries sang but were not heard. It took until much later—into

the late 2010s—for Western leaders to recognize the ill-will borne them by CCP leaders. By then, Western-oriented, reform party leaders such as Wen Jiabao found themselves under scrutiny by CCP traditionalists for corruption. Wen himself vanished into isolation in the wake of a 2012 Party-led corruption investigation, and Small recounts how some of Wen's most trusted young advisors found themselves placed under house arrest or fled the country to avoid such a fate. A great firewall grew up around China's Internet, Party restrictions on semiprivate companies multiplied, and a crackdown on Hong Kong political protests ensued, as did a callous CCP refusal to accept any responsibility or accountability during the COVID-19 pandemic. In this saga of a resurgent, liberty-strangling CCP, the rise of Xi Jinping might have been an accelerant, but the campfire already was burning. America and Europe were slow to accept that an unchastened CCP was doing again what it always had done: whatever it needed to do at whatever cost to retain control. As Small observes sagely, but ruefully:

the longstanding [Western] push to embrace and integrate China was characterized in part by the hope that since its ambitions for wealth, influence and power were realizable within the system, the Chinese Communist Party could accommodate itself to it and that some of the other faces of China would still be part of that process. Understandably, there has been a great reluctance to give up on that bet.

Small's warning in *No Limits* is a clarion call. The promise of liberalization and democratization is impossible under the CCP. In this conclusion, Small aligns with those found in recent works like Aaron Friedberg's *Getting China Wrong* (Polity, 2022), Rush Doshi's *The Long Game: China's Grand Strategy to Displace American Order* (Oxford University Press, 2021), and Hal Brands and Michael Beckley's *Danger Zone: The Coming Conflict With China* (Norton, 2022), among others. But as Small lived the decline of Chinese promise personally, his warning to American and European

senior figures should carry extra weight. The negative rethink on China dominant today was not driven by hostile know-nothings who wanted to see Beijing fail, but by many of those who had been closest to China and wanted to see China succeed. Like Small, they now view China as a scary place and the CCP as a determined and dangerous global adversary.

Small warns that Western success can be secured only if the West's leaders now focus like a laser on this implacable and determined rival. By extension, joint force leaders must prioritize the growing Chinese military as the pacing, near-peer threat. They must innovate, organize, and train the joint force primarily to counter a CCP-led China that the October 2022 U.S. National Security Strategy identifies as the only country with both the intent to reshape the American-led international order and, increasingly, the power to achieve it. JFQ

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