



## **The Long Game** by Rush Doshi

### **Book Summary:**

In *The Long Game*, author and international relations expert Rush Doshi offers readers a unique take on China's much-analyzed rise as America's preeminent geopolitical competitor. Citing party speeches, white papers, and other documents from the Chinese Communist Party, Dr. Doshi insists this rise is no historic or economic accident. Rather, Doshi asserts that China's rise is the consequence of a deliberate grand strategy stretching back decades, one which is deeply rooted in the Party's ideology.

Dr. Doshi begins his book by dispelling any myths the reader may have about the Chinese "Communist" Party. Communism's internationalism notwithstanding, the Chinese Communist Party is fervently nationalistic, according to Doshi, with a Darwinian worldview defined by China's "Century of Humiliation" and beyond. Philosophically rooted in their party's Leninist principles, Chinese Communist leaders accordingly seek to restore China's "wealth and power" in a distinctly authoritarian and centralized way. Doshi contends, then, that the Party's internal dialogue constitutes a grand strategy that can accurately explain and predict China's behavior vis-à-vis the United States. Furthermore, as Doshi illustrates throughout the book, this dialogue better explains China's behavior than other plausible explanations of Chinese behavior, like diffusion or bureaucratic infighting.

According to Doshi, China's behavior since the early 1980s can be broken into four intentional stages—accommodation, blunting, building, and global expansion. Each stage, moreover, corresponded or corresponds to associated political, military, and economic choices telegraphed by the Party or Party leaders themselves. In the initial "accommodation" stage, lasting most of the 1980s, the United States and China were quasi-allies, claims Doshi. Both countries were chiefly concerned with the Soviet threat, and this was reflected in the mellow tone the Chinese Communist Party struck toward the United States.

Doshi argues, however, that this all changed with the "trifecta" of Tiananmen Square, the collapse of the Soviet union, and America's romp in the Persian Gulf War. Chinese Communist leadership genuinely feared America, unchecked by the Soviet Union and ever-concerned with human rights, would repeat in China what it achieved in Kuwait. Thus, roughly from 1989 to 2009, the People's Republic began purposely "blunting" American power in the Indo-Pacific region, according to Doshi. Following America's 2008 financial crisis, China then switched to "building" within this same region, as it sensed growing weakness in the United States'



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economic model. Lastly, with Donald Trump’s election in 2016 and the growing Chinese sense that America was in retreat, this regional “building” became a “global expansion.”

After laying out the Communist leaders’ words and China’s corresponding political, military, and economic choices in each of these stages, Doshi addresses America’s potential response. Doshi encourages the United States not to abandon Taiwan, or strike any similar bargain with the People’s Republic. Such negotiation or retrenchment, Doshi maintains, would only communicate weakness to a Communist regime that sees America as increasingly unable to maintain its global commitments. Additionally, Doshi cautions those who are optimistic that China’s regime will simply reform or collapse, arguing that the Communist regime is both stable and enduring. Finally, Doshi encourages the United States to turn the tables on China, and adopt its own blunting and building strategy to limit China’s unchecked ambitions.



### **What is Read2Lead?**

Read2Lead is a tool to help leaders develop themselves and their teams. Read2Lead modules give junior officers a ready-to-use product that they can integrate into their leader professional development programs.

### **What's in this article-based Read2Lead module?**

- A short summary of the article
- A series of questions that can be used to conduct a 60 minute LPD session
- Additional resources that may be helpful for the facilitator

### **What do I need to do to run an article or book-based Read2Lead program?**

- First, read the article and review this prep guide (to include the additional resources). You can easily prepare to run this LPD session in 60 – 90 min.
- Second, schedule the LPD and issue clear instructions to attendees. Some things to consider.
  - a) Do you want to do this in person or virtually?
  - b) Do you want people to read the article in advance (recommended for a 60 min session, but if you have a 90-minute session planned, people could read the article on site)
  - c) How you will arrange/set up your LPD space. Often, friends sit together. This can be detrimental to lively discussion. You might consider assigning small groups or pairing people up with specific partners.
- Third, issue guidance and get the LPD on the training calendar. Clearly communicate the message that this is a planned event and warrants the attendees' full attention.
- Fourth, rehearse. While this guide is intended to make the process easy, it is always a 'best practice' to rehearse your LPD rather than just walking in and winging it. Your prep will pay dividends in multiple ways.
- Finally, execute the plan outlined below!
- Note - you might also consider an AAR after the event. If you have any lessons learned or suggestions for improving this guide, let us know at CJO@westpoint.edu



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### LPD Session Guide

The following guide is adaptable for a 60 or 90-minute LPD session.

For a 60-minute session, discussion leaders can proceed immediately to the questions listed below.

For a 90-minute session, leaders could further familiarize participants with the book's themes by opening the session with this documentary, [Near Peer: China \(Understanding the Chinese Military\)](#).

The following questions and some of the suggested talking points are simply recommendations. We encourage you to modify them based on your/your unit's goals and situation.

1. (10-12 minutes) The author offers this quote from Chinese Premier Deng Xiaoping: "Unlike the Americans...our efficiency is higher; we carry out things as soon as we have made up our mind...It is our strength, and we must retain this advantage." Do you agree this is a genuine strength? How do you think this philosophy compares to the decentralized, American political tradition, especially the Army's concept of Mission Command.
  - a. *[The Chinese economic miracle cannot be understated in terms of economic growth and the raw number of people lifted out of poverty.](#) All of this has happened, no less, under the eye of an authoritarian, "communist" regime. Remind session participants that we underestimate or dismiss this adversary and its capabilities at our own risk.*
  - b. *[This miracle, however, is already running out of steam, and it may even prove transitory.](#) Many elements of China's success may be more brittle than they appear at first glance. Remind audience participants that China has weaknesses as well as strengths, and that these strengths and weaknesses may be deeply intertwined.*
  - c. *[The culture of mission command, i.e. decentralized decision-making, may be one such intertwined strength and weakness for the United States.](#) Probe the audience to think about such interrelated strengths our society has and how they can be best leveraged.*
  
2. (10-12 minutes) The author places Chinese behavior in four neat buckets—accommodation, blunting, building, and global expansion. Do you believe these descriptors adequately describe Chinese state behavior during this period of time? Do



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- you think the author relies too much on textual documents to cite regime intention? Is it possible Chinese leaders may make these statements more for internal consumption?
- a. *On second look, China's behavior doesn't always neatly mesh with the author's buckets or descriptors. Mention China's aggressive behavior during the [1995/1996 Taiwan Strait Crisis](#) and the [2001 Hainan Island Crisis](#).*
  - b. *East Asian relationships are complex, as this [article on Chinese-Japanese-Korean relationships illustrates](#). Perhaps China's relationships with surrounding countries defies the simplistic blunting or building model put forward by Dr. Doshi.*
  - c. *Additionally, imply that an authoritarian regime may make statements for internal audiences that contradict its actual behavior. [Consider Vladimir Putin bluffing regarding the use of nuclear weapons in Ukraine](#).*
3. (10-12 minutes) Both the optional AUP movie and book make the Chinese military threat seem quite formidable. Is it possible, however, that this military threat may be overstated, especially with regard to Taiwan?
- a. *[Russia has struggled immensely in its invasion of Ukraine. Is it possible that China could struggle with similar efforts to invade Taiwan?](#) Cite this article from the Atlantic Council describing [fraught difficulties facing China in order to invade Taiwan](#).*
  - b. *More to the point, many of Russia's struggles in Ukraine stem from its [ill-reformed personnel system](#). Is it possible a Chinese invasion of Taiwan may struggle as a result of its own [incomplete transformation of its personnel system](#)?*
  - c. *Additionally, [Russian logistics performance in Ukraine has been dismal](#). Is it possible China may [face similar challenges with a sea and airborne invasion of Taiwan](#)?*
4. (10-12 minutes) The author seems pessimistic that China will ever democratically reform or change its government for the better? Do you share this pessimism? Why or why not?
- a. *[South Korea and Taiwan were effectively one-party states until the 1990s](#). Spurred in no small part by its economic development, South Korea did become more liberal and democratic in the proceeding decades. Is there any reason this couldn't happen in China?*



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5. (10-12 minutes) The author believes a tailored strategy of building and blunting will serve the United States well in countering the People’s Republic of China. Do you agree or disagree with this strategy? Moreover, are there individual elements of this blunting and building strategy that you disagree with? What would you add or subtract from this strategy?
- Push participants to think about specific blunting strategies with which their branch could engage. For example, could MI LTs schedule a deep dive into ATP 7-100.3 “Chinese Tactics” for their S2 for a follow-on LPD? Could ADA officers better familiarize themselves with Chinese ship-killer missiles? Similarly, push participants to think about the building strategies they could engage in as well. Could TC officers study the logistics of MacArthur’s New Guinea campaign to better understand what may be in store for a conflict in the South Pacific? Similarly, could engineers study what airfield and port expansion was like for this and the Marines’ island hopping campaign? Finally, could all branches better familiarize themselves with East Asian militaries to see what training with potential peers may entail?*
  - Lost in all this discussion of China and the United States is the attitude of smaller but potent countries like Japan, South Korea, Australia, Vietnam, and India? How do they and their individual concerns fit into this blunting and building strategy for the United States?*

**Follow-on Reading**

- ATP 7-100.3 “Chinese Tactics”
- [“The PLA at 95 and the Current Crisis in the Taiwan Strait: A Conversation with Roderick Lee”](#) podcast from the China Power Project at the Center for Strategic and International Studies
- [America’s Asian Alliances](#) by Robert D. Blackwill and Paul Dibb

*This Read2Lead was developed by First Lieutenant Clinton Grable. Clinton is a Military Intelligence Officer assigned to the 513th Military Intelligence Brigade at Fort Gordon, Georgia. He holds a BA in Government from Dartmouth College and is a graduate of Fort Benning’s Officer Candidate School. Before commissioning, Clinton was a medic assigned to the 3d U.S. Infantry Regiment (The Old Guard) at Fort Myer, VA, where he was a Military Horseman with the United States Army Caisson Platoon.*