

Journal of the British Association for Chinese Studies, Vol. 3 December 2013
ISSN 2048-0601
© British Association for Chinese Studies

Superpower, China?! New Narratives of Global Leadership under Examination

‘Chinese understanding of the United States
remains shallow and seriously distorted’.
(David L. Shambaugh, 1991)¹

**William A. Callahan, *China Dreams: 20 Visions of the Future*, New York:
Oxford University Press, 2013, pp. 212, ISBN 9780199896400, US\$ 25.95**

Niv Horesh
University of Nottingham

Introduction

China watchers could hardly imagine a more timely, authoritative and original piece of work than the one under review. This is because this year’s leadership transition at the helm of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) from Hu Jintao to Xi Jinping has arguably laid to rest Deng Xiaoping’s long-running ‘hide and bide’ (*taoguang yanghui* 韬光养晦) policy, if not in substance than surely in form.

Evidence to that effect was on full display, for example, in Trinidad and Tobago last June, when Xi and First Lady Peng Liyuan touched down in the small oil-rich island for a state visit. There was something unmistakably ostentatious – almost a swagger – in Peng’s turquoise attire and Xi’s matching tie, as the pair strode down the gangway. Such a swagger would have been

¹ David L. Shambaugh, *Beautiful Imperialist: China Perceives America, 1972-1990*, Princeton University Press, p. 41.

less remarkable had this been any other first couple. Yet, perhaps owing to the haunting memory of Jiang Qing, Chinese first ladies had hitherto shunned the limelight. Also, in comparison to Xi, there is something very drab in how Deng Xiaoping, Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao now seem to have conducted themselves in public.

In short, China is nowadays seeking to project soft power in parts of the world where it had been operating more quietly hitherto. To be sure, the literature on Chinese soft power is fast growing, as is the literature on China as global economic powerhouse. However, to date little has been published in English on the new aspirational narratives of global leadership that are presently being spun in Beijing for domestic, academic and foreign audiences. Callahan, who is the Chair in International Relations at the London School of Economics, may be the first to attempt such an account in a comprehensive manner. He succeeds at that task precisely because he does not purport to break through the 'opaque nature' of *Zhongnanhai* 中南海, in a bid to glean titbits of information on elite politics (p. 45). Neither is he at pains to read much into party-state communiqués, or to make sense of the inchoateness of current Chinese foreign-policy rhetoric.

Rather, Callahan argues that in order to fathom how the rhetoric of Chinese foreign policy might sound in 2020 and beyond, one needs to recognise the new discursive ferment in Chinese academe at present. Ultimately, it is the academics' discourse that will seep into, excite and reshape *Zhongnanhai* policy articulation simply because the latter's old Marxian-Maoist tropes have lost traction, even if 'socialism' remains popular. That academic discourse is much more genuine and readily accessible than in-house CCP material, but it has hitherto attracted less attention amongst Western China-watchers.

Far from confining himself to dissident academics, émigrés and firebrand artists all-too familiar in the West, Callahan is also minutely attuned to proponents of the CCP and the 'China Model' within PRC academe. These academics often advise senior officialdom, and are busy cogitating alternatives to American global leadership, or the 'American Dream' more broadly. Callahan is well attuned to them, as he is attuned to influential bloggers like

Han Han, who operate for the most part within the prescribed parameters of public discourse.

The alternative 'China Model' (*Zhongguo moshi* 中国模式) ferment in Chinese academe matters a great deal, and should be taken more seriously in the West, not least because its authors are much better informed, worldly and arguably much less doctrinaire than professional Chinese US-watchers were in the late 1980s, as indicated in Shambaugh's observation above. In fact, as Callahan himself tells us (Chapter 3), at least three of the boldest critics of the 'American Model' in Chinese academe were trained by elite American universities: economist Hu Angang 胡鞍钢 (Yale postdoc, 1991-2), political scientist Pan Wei 潘维 (Berkeley PhD, 1996) and international relations expert Yan Xuetong 阎学通 (Berkeley PhD, 1992).

Callahan seriously engages with these and other 'China Model' thinkers. He is particularly critical of what he sees as their triumphalism and their notion of China as being an un-shifting, timeless 'civilisational-state'. Moreover, Callahan's meticulous handling of the literature in Chinese on the so-called 'China Model' is greatly enriched by his intimate familiarity with earlier pioneering work in English that discussed how China's breakneck economic growth might (or might *not*) one day alter the way this world works. Thus, readers will often find here useful reference to – but also much elaboration on, and lively debate with – authors such as Rosemary Foot, Alastair Iain Johnston, Mark Leonard, Marc Matten, Pál Nyíri, John Naisbitt, Zhang Weiwei, Richard Madsen, James Mann and – last but not least – Martin Jacques.

Structure and Arguments

China Dreams is divided into six chapters in addition to the Introduction (pp. 1-16, 'China Is the Future') and Epilogue (pp. 163-176, 'A Chimerican Dream'). If the Introduction and much of what follows bemoan what Callahan sees as misguided, essentialist and static notions of Chinese (or American) exceptionalism, the Epilogue seems to allude to the strong likelihood of a more syncretic future where the battle of ideas will *not* be won by either state, but

shaped in equal measure by transnationalism, multiculturalism and consumerism.

The popular 2010 romantic comedy *Du Lala's Promotion Diary* (*Du Lala shengzhi ji* 杜拉拉升职记) is about a young Chinese lady working for a big American corporation. Freely drawing on Du's fictional escapades, Callahan concludes in the Epilogue that Americans and Chinese have a lot more in common than their politicians are usually prepared to admit. But Du's escapades should not distract: this book is no 'media studies' study. Right from the outset, Callahan explains that he is basically in agreement with commentators such as Howard W. French who famously castigated Martin Jacques' best-seller *When China Rules the World* (Penguin, 2009) as pro-CCP boosterism that sounds like '...a compilation of ideas gleaned by the water cooler at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, the state's official think tank'.²

However, in fairness to Jacques, one would note that he has expressed concerns that China's rise might not only change the world for the better, but that it could also inflame Han chauvinism in the long run. Jacques' sober and politically *incorrect* treatment of this issue clearly departs, for example, from that of Zhang Weiwei (*The China Wave*, World Century, 2012), even though the two share the belief that modern China is a non-aggressive 'civilisational state'. In fact, Jacques' concerns underscore much of Callahan's discussion about the spectre of Han chauvinism in Chapter 4 of *China Dreams*, where he describes the abuse that debutante singer Lou Jing was recently subjected to, as daughter of a Chinese mother and African-American father.

Chapter 1 (pp. 17-43, 'Officials, Dissidents, and Citizen Intellectuals') ably describes the new streak of photogenic, confident and media-savvy CCP leaders from the ill-fated Bo Xilai right through to Xi Jinping. Interestingly, both Bo and Xi sent their children to study at Harvard, although in public they subtly nurtured an image of leaders who would stand up more proactively to the US.

² Howard W. French, 'In Case You Missed Them: Books by Martin Jacques and Yasheng Huang', *The China Beat*, 1 February 2010 <http://www.thechinabeat.org/?p=1446> [Last accessed 21 July 2013].

Callahan then shifts to the other end of the spectrum to discuss briefly dissidents like artist Ai Weiwei and Nobel prize laureate Liu Xiaobo. Focused on the middle ground between the establishment and its *nemeses*, later in the chapter Callahan is mainly concerned with China's version of public intellectuals ('Citizen Intellectuals'). Because of the constraints of censorship, these intellectuals may be less outspoken and contrarian than their Western peers or exiled dissident comrades, but they do nevertheless carry much weight through the internet. For by 'Citizen Intellectuals', Callahan means not just pro-CCP 'China Model' proponents but also Neo-Maoist (i.e., Cui Zhiyuan) or liberal (i.e., Xu Jilin) critics of the CCP who operate *within* rather than *against* the system.

This chapter is also of much value because it carefully charts the evolution of Chinese perceptions of the US since the early 2000s. Early on, Chinese popular and academic sentiments negatively revolved around US 'plots' to subvert China's rise, whether they be through the bombing of the Belgrade embassy, or Beijing's 'denial' of holding the Olympic Games in favour of Sydney. Underlying the 'plots' was of course deeply entrenched – if not CCP-fanned – resentment of the insults that imperialist Europe and Japan had inflicted on China before 1949, namely, during the 'Century of National Humiliation' (*Bainian guochi* 百年国耻).

Hu Jintao was lacklustre compared to Xi on the world stage, but – as Callahan tells readers – it was he who in 2005 started shifting China's narrative from indignation to worldly optimism when he envisioned a more 'Harmonious World' at the UN. This brings to mind an important point: the lack of reliable information from inside *Zhongnanhai* can potentially lead to an overemphasis on differences in style, clique, generation and personality within the CCP leadership, whereas in fact there has also been quite a bit of substantive continuity from Deng to Xi.

In 2009, Chinese narrative optimism continued along the same lines, as the country seemed for the most part to have avoided the Global Financial Crisis. Precisely at that point, an alternative 'Beijing Consensus' or 'China Model' began to be discussed more confidently and openly in Chinese academe. Sometimes, though perhaps not as ubiquitously as suggested here, these

discussions assumed triumphalist overtones about the coming of a new Tang-like cosmopolitan Chinese golden age (*shengshi*). The latest iteration of that optimism was embodied in Xi's 2012 pronouncement about the 'Great Awakening of the Chinese Nation' (*Zhonghua minzu weida de fuxing*) and the equivalence of the 'China Dream' (*Zhongguo meng*) to the American one.

Chapter 2 (pp. 44-65, 'Strategic Futures and the Post-American World Order') makes for an excellent exposition of the academic thought that underpins Xi's vision, and the extent to which it can be considered novel. As indicated above, Callahan is intrinsically suspicious of the emerging Chinese narratives of leadership, yet his suspicion is at once wonderfully reflexive and grounded in geo-strategic realities. He thus states, for example (p. 45, cf. p. 50):

Even with its many problems, the CCP is not about to collapse... While Chinese nationalism is strong and Confucianism is a growing force, Chinese tradition does not dominate the discussion of 'Chinese characteristics' as much as people in the West think.

For this reason, Callahan tends to dismiss philosopher Zhao Tingyang's argument that the world in the future might see the decline of the Westphalian nation-state order in favour of more fluid polities co-existing 'all under heaven' (*Tianxia*), perhaps along Chinese pre-modern tributary lines. By the same token, Callahan rightly observes that modern socialism, not just Confucianism, is still the touchstone of many Chinese thinkers as they assail American contemporary society as grossly inegalitarian, even whilst China itself is grappling with yawning gaps between rich and poor.

Hu Jintao's 'Harmonious World' overwrote Maoist belligerence to draw on China's rich Confucian legacy – one that from inception had arguably been averse to war. It cannot be purely coincidental that, PLA modernisation notwithstanding, the Chinese saying that good men do not serve as soldiers is still fairly ingrained in the popular mindset. Yet, Callahan is not easily impressed by such civilisational arguments (p. 48):

Actually, Chinese history – like most countries’ histories – has involved many periods of violent expansion and contraction.

This is a rationalistic argument that would immediately appeal to the mind of the historian, even if mainly carried forward by political scientists such as Alastair Iain Johnston or, more recently, Wang Yuan-kang (*Harmony and War*, Columbia University Press, 2011). As Callahan keeps reminding his readers throughout the book, every new empire somewhat pathetically professes to be ‘uniquely unique’, namely, a kind of moral improvement on its predecessor. It remains the case, however, that the characterisation of early-modern Europe as much more prone to warfare and expansionism than imperial China is not merely a product of today’s fashionable New Confucian discourse in the PRC.³

In fact, it was European history specialists like Paul Kennedy who made similar observations much earlier, based on painstaking comparative research. After all, in his critique of Wang Yuan-kang’s work, even a US-trained proponent of the ‘New Qing History’ like Kirk Larsen, who often places Sino-Manchu imperialism on a par with Western imperialism, has conceded that there was something quite un-Western in how Ming China stopped short of occupying Korea back in the mid-1400s.⁴

Next, Callahan turns to explore Colonel Liu Mingfu’s controversial and much discussed book (*Zhongguo meng*, 2010) about the urgent need for China to enhance its military capabilities (pp. 58-62, cf. p. 15). Liu has startled many a security analyst in the West. But his nationalistic, chest-thumping prose should be read precisely against those other deeply entrenched popular sentiments in China that abhor organised violence. Far from applauding Liu, Callahan nevertheless does a marvellous job of de-sensationalising some of his more judicious observations. Liu, Callahan tells us, is basically concerned about the prospect of the US militarily intimidating China in the future, hence his desire

³ Today’s New Confucianism should of course *not* be confused with Song era neo-Confucianism, i.e., *daoxue*, a philosophy that dominated late-imperial Chinese statecraft.

⁴ Larsen’s Roundtable comments on Wang’s book were made available online <http://www.h-net.org/~diplo/ISSF/PDF/ISSF-Roundtable-4-3.pdf> [Last accessed 21 July 2010].

for more military spending. Liu is *not* a simplistic triumphalist: though China's economic success seems compelling at the moment, he is acutely aware that the relative decline of the US has been diagnosed all too often in the past, only to be swept aside by resurgent energy and innovation.

Chapter 3 (pp. 66-97, 'The China Model and the Search for Wealth and Power') shows, in essence, how a few of China's most prominent economists have come to discard the kind of neo-classical/neo-liberal orthodoxy that still reigns supreme among Western economists even after the Global Financial Crisis. But there are also substantive differences between economists like Tsinghua University's Hu Angang, who sees the Mao era as having prepared China well for Deng's modernisation reforms, and economists like the World Bank's Justin Yifu Lin, who had fled his native Taiwan because he felt the future lay on the Mainland. Unlike Hu, Lin pins the success of Deng's reforms down to the repudiation of almost everything Mao Zedong had stood for. On the other hand, both Hu and Lin reject the 'Washington Consensus', namely, the notion that developing countries must privatise large swathes of their economies in order to catch up with the West.

The chapter then moves on to critique Peking University political scientist Pan Wei, arguably the founder of the 'China Model' school of thought, for what Callahan dubs 'Occidentalism', namely the mirror image of Edward Said's Orientalist bogey. According to Callahan, Pan's thought boils down to the notion that (p. 90, cf. p. 158):

For China to be good, it needs to understand all Western things as 'evil'.

Callahan is right here that 'China Model' scholars often rail against the 'evils' of what they see as rugged American individualism, as opposed to the 'selfless' and 'family-oriented' Chinese character. They thereby completely miss, for example, American conservatives' emphasis on family values and America's impressive, deeply-embedded culture of philanthropy and civic volunteering.

But, in fairness to Pan, it has to be recognised that he is one of the few thinkers in China who persuasively and eruditely relate to the implications of pre-modern Chinese history in his writing, when discussing, for example, what

he sees as the perils of pursuing Western-style democracy in a Chinese setting. To be sure, in the extended opening essay to his recent edited volume,⁵ Pan emphasises that he has great respect for the achievements of Western civilisation, and for just how far European democracy, egalitarianism and universal welfare principles have advanced since the Middle Ages.

Pan's aim is not to prove that the 'China Model' is more humane, only that it is different from Western understandings thereof, and better aligned with Chinese requisites. Equally importantly, Pan insists that the 'China Model' is not necessarily exportable to other parts of the world, whereas the 'Washington Consensus' was framed right from the outset as a one-size-fits-all.

Chapter 4 (pp. 98-123, 'Cosmopolitan, Fundamentalist, and Realist Dreams') builds on Frank Dikötter's and Barry Sautman's influential work to suggest that in fact, racism has historically constituted a much bigger problem in China than party-state rhetoric might acknowledge. The People's Republic version of multiculturalism casts the country as the domain of the *Zhonghua* 中华 nation, that is made up of the Han and 55 prescribed minorities, who all share distinctive features and provenance. Callahan ably problematises the *Zhonghua* trope as contradicting the more scientific, well known theory about the African origins of all *homo sapiens*. But he does so from an explicit 21st-century standpoint; from such a vantage point, even fairly traditionalist Chinese thinkers like Kang Youwei (1858-1927) – who was after all influenced by late-19th century European Social-Darwinism – do sound awfully racist nowadays.

Callahan then seems to suggest that the People's Republic still has an unacknowledged problem, particularly with African people. This is presumably because marriage between white males and Han females is widely tolerated, and at times even subtly approved of, whereas black-Han marriage is stridently frowned upon. That Obamania was, back in 2008, much less

⁵ Pan Wei 潘维 ed., 中国模式: 解读人民共和国的60年 (The China Model: a new developmental model from the sixty years of the People's Republic), Beijing: Zhongyang bianyi chubanshe, 2009.

pronounced in China than in Berlin or Tokyo might be relevant in this context, but not much discussed.

Callahan does seem to believe, at any rate, that many Chinese interpret the concept of modern nation-statehood as racially grounded statehood, much as Japan did until 1945. In other words, the Chinese have perhaps *not* moved on with the times, as Western multicultural societies have (post-war Japanese multiculturalism is a non-sequitur). These are arguments that demand systematic assessment rather than purely anecdotal evidence, such as the anonymous online abuse hurled at singer Lou Jing whose father is African-American.

More generally, Dikötter's claims about the emphatic pre-modern (i.e., non-European) mainsprings of today's Chinese racist attitudes have been fairly effectively challenged by Yuri Pines,⁶ although Callahan does not engage with Pines' findings at all by way of balancing Dikötter's. Somewhat like Pines, Pan Wei argued that the dichotomy in Chinese eyes between Chinese and non-Chinese ('Barbarians') in pre-modern times was culturally rather than ethnically derived. According to Pan, it is this cultural derivation that has been informing up to the present an intrinsic – if subterranean – Chinese abhorrence of meddling in other peoples'/nations' affairs (*Hua bu zhi Yi* 华不制夷). In other words, Pan suggests that China will remain by and large disinclined to police other parts of the world or to remake them in its own mould. It is *not* preaching its 'Model' to the rest of the world, but other countries are of course free to 'borrow' from its culture if they so wish.⁷

Chapter 5 (pp. 124-143, 'Shanghai's Alternative Futures and China's New Civil Society') is a fascinating account of how some prominent artists in the People's Republic are managing to criticise the prevailing CCP order from

⁶ Yuri Pines, 'Beasts or Humans: Pre-Imperial Origins of Sino-Barbarian Dichotomy', in Reuven Amitai and Michal Biran, eds., *Mongols, Turks and Others: Eurasian Nomads and the Sedentary World*. Leiden: Brill, 2005: 59-102.

⁷ See, for example, Pan Wei's Working Paper, 'The Chinese Model of Development' (11 October 2007), posted by the independent, London-based think-tank, the Foreign Policy Centre.

<http://fpc.org.uk/fsblob/888.pdf> [Last accessed 22 July 2007].

within the system. Filmmaker Jia Zhangke thus provided a biting counterpoint to the Shanghai Expo 2010 state-led hype in his documentary on the city's anti-heroes (*Haishang chuanqi* 海上传奇) released the same year. Similarly, Cai Guoqiang's exhibition *Peasant Da Vincis* presented at the new Rockbund Museum around the same time insisted on celebrating *not* Shanghai's illustrious past and euphoric future but the ingenuity of some of China's autodidactic peasant anti-heroes who, without much funding, came close to designing homespun aircrafts.

Chapter 6 (pp. 144-162, 'The American Dream and Chinese Exceptionalism') makes for an excellent summary of the complex 20-odd different visions set out by the book's protagonists for China's future. Callahan is at his best here, as he explores not just the vagaries on the Chinese side, but also the similarities between proponents of Chinese exceptionalism like philosopher Kang Xiaoguang and proponents of American exceptionalism like presidential hopeful Newt Gingrich. All along, he treats his subject matter with much reflexive sensitivity (p. 152):

The American dream is like the China dream: It has many versions, and it promotes diverse and often conflicting values. The tension between freedom and equality is indicative of its complexity.

For this reason, it is perhaps a little surprising that Callahan chooses to sign off with a passage that departs from his otherwise deliberative tone throughout previous chapters. In what is arguably a throwback to his *China: The Pessimist Nature* (Oxford University Press, 2010), Callahan asserts here that (p. 162):

During the imperial period, Chinese authorities often enforced a strict division between "civilisation" and "barbarism" that had serious political consequences. In other words, if China's neighbours did not accept imperial Confucianism, then they risked invasion – and even extermination.

It is difficult to assess this assertion, as it is not conveyed by the main thrust of the discussion up to this point. Either way, the assertion seems directed more at popular readership than at academic audiences, and chimes all too

comfortably with the kind of rhetoric the American exceptionalists are enamoured of. Certainly, Chinese readers steeped in modern history might take umbrage at the use of the term 'extermination'. After all, both the Han-dominated Ming dynasty and the Manchu-dominated Qing dynasty prohibited mass overseas emigration, so it is hard to see where the idea of early-modern China actively exporting Confucianism arose. Neither do we have record of Zheng He's (1371-1473) famous expeditions spreading the gospel by the sword.

One might perhaps in this context mention Emperor Qianlong's (r. 1735-1796) notorious massacre of the Zughars. But that massacre had little to do with Confucian exigencies. It was precipitated it seems by a broader Manchu-Mongol rivalry over control of Central Asia.⁸

Concluding Remarks

In 1998, Professor Lucian Pye made famous scathing remarks about East Asia's chronic memory blockage and the consequent identity malaise muting any East Asian claims to global leadership. At the height of the Asian Financial Crisis and merely a decade after the fall of the Berlin Wall, Pye deemed neither China nor Japan capable of rising above their own parochialisms and cultural self-absorption to find an appropriate global idiom with which to envision an alternative East Asian world order. Pye was not even sure whether China, despite its economic promise, fitted at all into the dominant nation-state world order, being as it was a 'civilisation pretending to be a nation state'.⁹

Over the next decade, the Chinese nation-building project steamrolled ahead, and it would seem more than apposite to re-evaluate erstwhile strategic mind-sets. Indeed, until recently, Western readers were accustomed to the notion that much of the China boom was oversupply in disguise; that China's implosion was imminent; that at heart its 'economic miracle' was predicated on state-run banks diverting capital to resuscitate moribund state-owned behemoths; that China did not embrace the 'free-market' or 'de-

⁸ Peter C. Perdue, *China Marches West: The Qing Conquest of Central Eurasia* (Harvard University Press, 2004).

⁹ Lucian Pye, 'International Relations in Asia: Culture Nation and State', in *The Second Gaston Sigur Annual Lecture* (Washington, DC: George Washington University. Sigur Center for Asian Studies, 1998).

regulate' its economy quickly enough.¹⁰ These attributes might have stemmed from a Beijing-centric outlook rather than from a well informed survey of the three last decades of complex and often contradictory economic reform thrusts in their entirety. As it turns out, the lingering economic crisis in the US is a constant reminder that leading Western banks do not seem to have allocated capital much more rationally than their state-controlled counterparts in the People's Republic.¹¹

In contrast to Pye, Warren Cohen suggested not long ago that the question was *not* whether China would eventually contend with the US, but precisely *how soon* this might happen. Cohen had little doubt that China would eventually act just as aggressively on the world stage as those late 19th-century European powers, which China sees as having humiliated China itself. Thus, Cohen did not accord much credence to the rhetoric emanating from Beijing since the 1980s, which has been emphasising the PRC's intent on a 'Peaceful Rise' (*heping jueqi*) and has considerably softened Mao-era references to 'Western imperialism', 'Soviet revisionism' or 'world class warfare'.¹²

Professor William A. Callahan has now heavily weighed into this discussion with *China Dreams*. He has brilliantly shown that, at least in the intellectual realm, the response to Cohen's *how soon* is *now*. In other words, many Chinese academics are *already* deeply – and at times fairly creatively – engaged in mounting a comprehensive challenge to US global leadership; in weaving disparate alternative narratives of leadership that curiously profess to reject any type of hegemony; and in stylising distinct 'China Models' with varying degrees of historicised evidence.

¹⁰ See, e.g., Gordon Chang, *The Coming Collapse of China* (New York: Random House, 2001).

¹¹ Until recently, an extensive banking reform was viewed by some as an urgent requisite for sustained PRC growth. See Nicholas R. Lardy, *China's Unfinished Economic Revolution* (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 1998). For a more optimistic appraisal, see Barry Naughton, *Growing Out of the Plan: Chinese Economic Reform, 1978-1993* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

¹² Warren I. Cohen, 2009. 'China's Rise in Historical Perspectives', in Zhao and Liu, eds., *Managing the China Challenge: Global Perspectives* (New York: Routledge, 2009), pp. 23-40. On the strategy behind China's 'Peaceful Rise' – see also Yan Xuetong and Sun Xuefeng, *Zhongguo jueqi ji qi zhanlue (China's Rise and Its Strategy)* (Beijing: Beijing University Press, 2006).

Like Cohen, Callahan is concerned that China might act more aggressively on the world stage in decades to come. He is rightly disturbed by Chinese expressions of triumphalism and Han chauvinism, although how widespread and intrinsic these are may be open to debate. Crucially, Callahan also seems to entertain the possibility of a long and peaceful 'Chimerican' coexistence, girt by increasingly interdependent, urban and cosmopolitan society in both countries. In that sense, he is a *pessoptimist* rather than downright pessimistic.

Niv Horesh is Associate Professor and Reader at the School of Contemporary Chinese Studies, University of Nottingham.