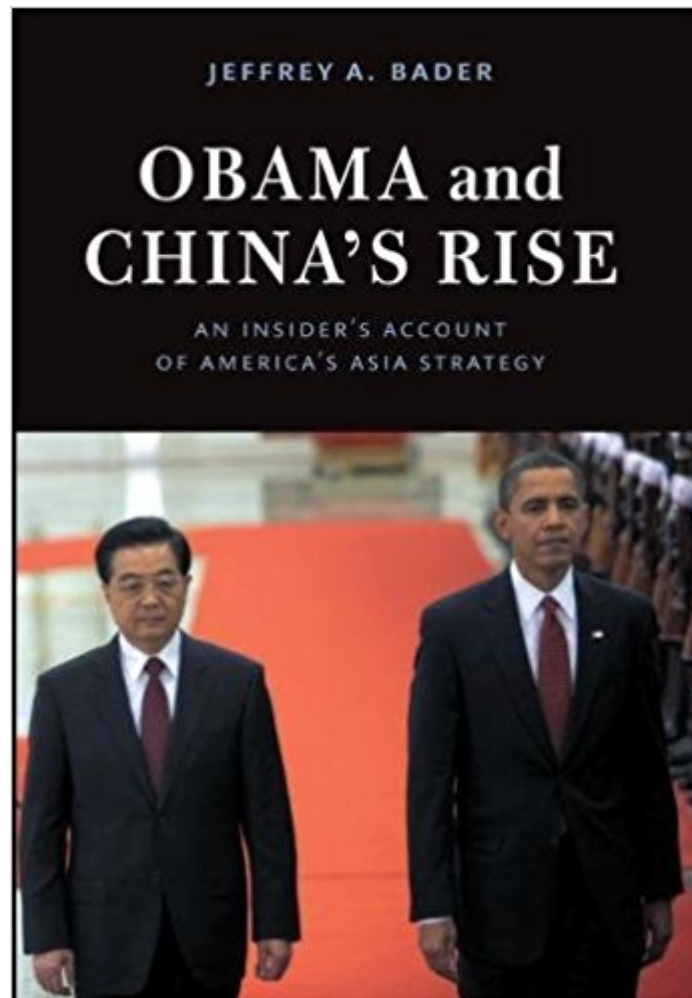




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# Obama And China's Rise: An Insider's Account Of America's Asia Strategy



## Synopsis

"Future presidents will need to find the right balance in China policy, so as to maintain America's strength and watchfulness but not fall into the classic security dilemma, wherein each side believes that growing capabilities reflect hostile intent and responds by producing that reality. I believe that President Obama struck that balance." —From *Obama and China's Rise*

In 2005, veteran diplomat and Asia analyst Jeffrey Bader met for the first time with the then-junior U.S. senator from Illinois. When Barack Obama entered the White House a few years later, Bader was named the senior director for East Asian affairs on the National Security Council, becoming one of a handful of advisers responsible for formulating and implementing the administration's policy regarding that key region. For obvious reasons—a booming economy, expanding military power, and increasing influence over the region—the looming impact of a rising China dominated their efforts. Obama's original intent was to extend U.S. influence and presence in East Asia, which he felt had been neglected by a Bush administration fixated on the Middle East, particularly Iraq, and the war on terror. China's rise, particularly its military buildup, was heightening anxiety among its neighbors, including key U.S. allies Japan and South Korea. Bader explains the administration's efforts to develop stable relations with China while improving relationships with key partners worried about Beijing's new assertiveness. In *Obama and China's Rise*, Bader reveals what he did, discusses what he saw, and interprets what it meant—first during the Obama campaign, and then for the administration. The result is an illuminating backstage view of the formulation and execution of American foreign policy as well as a candid assessment of both. Bader combines insightful and authoritative foreign policy analysis with a revealing and humanizing narrative of his own personal journey.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"This small gem of a book, written by a highly respected foreign policy practitioner, is filled to overflowing with insights into how policies are made and implemented. It should be required reading for all students of foreign affairs." [Stapleton Roy](#), Former U.S. ambassador to China, Indonesia, and Singapore

"Benefiting from his rich experience in Asian matters and particularly his service on President Obama's National Security Council, Ambassador Bader has produced a fascinating description of the complexity of daily decisionmaking required of the national security team, ranging from organizing agendas and follow-up for innumerable meetings by the president with heads of state to responding to crises such as the earthquake and tsunami in Japan. Anyone interested in foreign policy, particularly regarding Asia, will find this highly readable account fascinating." [Carla Hills](#), Hills and Company International Consultants, former U.S. Trade Representative

"An exemplary analysis of U.S. policy toward Asia during the early years of the Obama administration, *Obama and China's Rise* is also a seasoned policymaker's firsthand account of the way in which domestic political factors impinge on our relations with China, Japan, Korea, and other East Asian countries." [Michael Armacost](#), Chairman of the Asia Foundation, former U.S. ambassador to Japan

Jeffrey A. Bader is the John C. Whitehead Senior Fellow for International Diplomacy with the John L. Thornton China Center at the Brookings Institution. He returned to Brookings after serving in the Obama administration from January 2009 to April 2011 as senior director for East Asian affairs on the National Security Council. Prior to joining the Obama team, he was a senior fellow in Foreign Policy at Brookings, where he also served as the first director of the Thornton Center.

Great appraisal of contemporary foreign policy from the architect of Sino-American Relations for Obama.

US real policies are not explained well. Suddenly the rise of nationalism in Japan, US-Japan common maritime exercises, US Pressure in different energy lines that goes through China. are missing. One can only see bureaucratic level foreign policy analyses. System levels analyses are missing and they

are very important.

The writer praises every person who he ever worked with and gives detailed descriptions of all of his contributions. It is like a award acceptance speech and resume combined.

The main geostrategic challenge facing Asia--as well as the U.S. presence there--has been the extraordinary rise of China in the past decade. In *Obama and China's Rise*, Jeffrey Bader, a veteran diplomat of over 30 years, recounts his experiences working for Obama's presidential campaign and serving as the senior director for East Asian affairs on Obama's National Security Council from January 2009 to April 2011. Bader starts off outlining the Obama administration's seven major goals in Asia: 1) rebalance U.S. global priorities with greater attention paid to Asia, 2) promote a stable relationship and closer cooperation with China on international issues, 3) work towards complete denuclearization in North Korea through bilateral or multilateral negotiations, 4) strengthen and participate in Asian regional institutions, 5) strengthen alliances and partnerships--especially with Japan, South Korea, India, Indonesia, and Australia, 6) maintain forward deployment of U.S. armed forces in the region, and 7) negotiate agreements to expand trade and exports to the region. The Obama team was fully aware of the importance of maintaining a stable and functional relationship with China. From the 2008 campaign on, the administration was careful not to label China as the bogeyman of all America's ailments. The book is organized around three phases of major U.S.-China interactions that occurred during Bader's tenure at the National Security Council. The first stage was to lay the groundwork for a stable and healthy bilateral relationship. On April 1, 2009, President Obama and Chinese President Hu Jintao announced the establishment of the Strategic and Economic Dialogue (S&ED), which would provide a platform for a dozen officials from each side to meet annually. This mechanism is unprecedented in U.S. relations with any other country in the world, which indicates the paramount importance the Obama administration attached to China. The first phase also involved Obama's first trip to China, close cooperation on North Korea and Iran, parallel implementation of economic stimulus packages, and some limited cooperation at the Copenhagen Climate Conference. Despite this progress, the Obama administration has faced a China more assertive than at any other time in recent memory. This was especially true in 2010, a year defined by Chinese assertiveness and the second phase of Obama's dealings with China. In 2010, Chinese policy tilted toward sheltering North Korea from international sanctions. The Chinese also excluded the United States from military activities in the Yellow Sea and engaged in an overt confrontation with Japan after the collision of a Chinese fishing boat with two Japanese Coast

Guard patrol boats in disputed waters near the Senkaku Islands--with the latter leading to a temporary freeze on Chinese rare earth exports to Japan. China also threatened to halt imports from companies that engaged in arms sales to Taiwan, a pointed jab at U.S. weapons sales to the country. Perhaps most significantly, China aggressively expanded its claims on the South China Sea. The Obama administration reacted by signaling to China that assertiveness would only make China lose critical economic partners. Yet even as the United States acknowledged the inevitability of China's rise, Bader summarizes that the Obama administration pragmatically "sought to ensure that China's rise served to stabilize, not destabilize, the Asia-Pacific region, which included five U.S. allies and other partners in whose security Americans had an interest." In light of this, the Obama administration reasserted U.S. interests in the South China Sea and reiterated America's commitment to Japan's security, even while remaining ostensibly neutral on the question of the Senkaku Islands. Bader believes that China clumsily alienated its partners in the region, yet its foreign policy analysts confused cause and effect and blamed the United States for the deterioration in China's relations with its neighbors. Bader writes that by the end of 2010, China had begun to rethink its assertive posturing. Bader suggests that it was not until early 2011, when Hu Jintao visited the United States, that U.S.-China bilateral relations began to get back on track, opening up what Bader considers the third stage, which has been marked by continued progress on security issues and greater emphasis on bilateral and global economic issues as China approaches its once-a-decade leadership transition. According to Bader's assessment, the Obama administration managed the key issues in the bilateral relationship quite well, making important progress on Iran, climate change, North Korea, and the world economy. Although Bader supports the administration's "strategic pivot" to East Asia, he believes the term is a misnomer that over-militarizes the actual implications of the policy. The net U.S. military presence is not going to increase except with the deployment of 2,500 U.S. Marines to Darwin, Australia. What better characterizes the dynamic, Bader argues, quoting National Security Adviser Thomas Donilon, is a "rebalancing of U.S. priorities toward the Asia-Pacific." *Obama and China's Rise* is the first account of Asia policy-making in the Obama administration written by someone who was part of the effort. Bader's account captures the details while contextualizing them in the larger picture. However, Bader's account does not reveal much about the disagreements among various policymakers about how best to deal with China and Asia at large, nor about how the administration decided on which strategy to pursue. *Obama and China's Rise* is a fine account of what the administration did, but is less suitable for those curious about why.

Bader was the senior director for East Asian affairs in Obama's National Security Council. This book is an account of Obama's first three years handling of foreign affairs, principally in Asia. Obama became president when the geostrategic challenge for America was to find the best approach to countering China's rise. Bader first gave an account of the situations in the major Asian countries at the time - Japan, North Korea, Taiwan, and Tibet. The latter two have been the perennial issues that America and China could not resolve; not when China insists on its "one-China" policy, and its determined hold on Tibet. Early on in his presidency Obama realized that he had to restore relationships with Asian countries that the Bush presidency had neglected. The immediate high point in 2009 was meant to be Obama's visit to China in November but that was almost jeopardized by the Dalai Lama's planned visit to Washington in October. Cancelling that would have created fodder for critics who were watchful for signs of the American president kowtowing to the Chinese. In the end, the Dalai Lama was persuaded to withdraw his plans to meet Obama in October, and Obama made public statements about the importance of pushing for a culturally free Tibet. North Korea presented sensitive problems with its nuclear weapons programme. Although it was economically and militarily weak, as well as politically isolated, it proved to be a factor that stood in the way of a warming of Sino-US relationship. Its shelling of a South Korean town and the sinking of a South Korean warship forced Washington to assume aggressive military postures such as sending its aircraft carrier USS George Washington to the Yellow Sea, a move that infuriated the Chinese because the Yellow Sea was the traditional invasion route of its enemies in the past. Furthermore, the US also wanted China to co-operate in pressuring Iran out of its nuclear programme. When China eventually overtook the US as the biggest emitter of greenhouse gas, Obama's administration sought to take the opportunity of getting China to stave off international demands by working on a compromise in the Copenhagen Summit. The tactic was to make China feel that if it did not co-operate, the talks would fail and China would be blamed for that. Bader gave detailed accounts of the maneuvering that took place in Copenhagen. The truth was that the US and China together had been the two major nations that needed to curb their emission of greenhouse gas. Finally, the US also wanted to ensure that the Chinese desist from keeping its currency under-valued. American economists were unsure if that was indeed the main economic issue, or whether the more important underlying problem was the migration of jobs from the US to China. With unemployment rising and kept at a high level in the US, Obama is still unable to find the solution. The current guess work is all about what China sees itself in the future - whether it will continue with the Deng Xiaoping doctrine "Tao guang yang hui, you suo zuo wei" (keep a low profile and take selective [more accurately, "useful"?] actions), or would it develop grander ambitions and

place itself as a direct peer competitor of the USA. Bader claimed modest gains by the Obama administration in its dealings with China and East Asia, but it is obvious from the book that the gains were indeed modest. The reason is that China had been and is continuing to grow economically and militarily and now has the means to ensure its deepest fear can be contained. That fear arises from memories of foreign gunboats sailing into the Middle Kingdom. If Obama does not appreciate the depth of this Chinese fear, he will not see the way to the relationship that he would like the America to have with China.

This is an educational piece by Jeffrey Bader that provides a brief recap of the diplomatic encounters between the US and China during President Barack Obama's first term. Bader's text provides a humble yet subjective account of the Obama Administration. The author is careful not to make assumptions about situations that he did not experience firsthand however, he portrays everything in a tone that seems to glorify the administration to a point beyond the ability to be criticized in any way. This book is filled with the outcome of events but does not give any insight as to the process by which the final decisions were made and why.

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