



Cool War: The Future of Global Competition

Noah Feldman

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A bold and thought-provoking look at the future of U.S.-China relations, and how their coming power struggle will reshape the competitive playing field for nations around the world

The Cold War seemingly ended in a decisive victory for the West. But now, Noah Feldman argues, we are entering an era of renewed global struggle: the era of Cool War. Just as the Cold War matched the planet's reigning superpowers in a contest for geopolitical supremacy, so this new age will pit the United States against a rising China in a contest for dominance, alliances, and resources. Already visible in Asia, the conflict will extend to the Middle East (U.S.-backed Israel versus Chinese-backed Iran), Africa, and beyond.

Yet this Cool War differs fundamentally from the zero-sum showdowns of the past: The world's major power and its leading challenger are economically interdependent to an unprecedented degree. Exports to the U.S. account for nearly a quarter of Chinese trade, while the Chinese government holds 8 percent of America's outstanding debt. This positive-sum interdependence has profound implications for nations, corporations, and international institutions. It makes what looked to be a classic contest between two great powers into something much more complex, contradictory, and badly in need of the shrewd and carefully reasoned analysis that Feldman provides.

To understand the looming competition with China, we must understand the incentives that drive Chinese policy. Feldman offers an arresting take on that country's secretive hierarchy, proposing that the hereditary "princelings" who reap the benefits of the complicated Chinese political system are actually in partnership with the meritocrats who keep the system full of fresh talent and the reformers who are trying to root out corruption and foster government accountability. He provides a clear-eyed analysis of the years ahead, showing how China's rise presents opportunities as well as risks. Robust competition could make the U.S. leaner, smarter, and more pragmatic, and could drive China to greater respect for human rights. Alternatively, disputes over trade, territory, or human rights could jeopardize the global economic equilibrium—or provoke a catastrophic "hot war" that neither country wants.

The U.S. and China may be divided by political culture and belief, but they are also bound together by mutual self-interest. *Cool War* makes the case for competitive cooperation as the only way forward that can preserve the peace and make winners out of both sides.

Advance praise for *Cool War*

"We are leaving the era of 'Chimerica'—when China and America were economically joined at the hip—and entering the era of what Noah Feldman has justly and wittily dubbed 'Cool War.' Feldman anatomizes the rapid transformation of the Sino-American relationship from an unequal trading partnership into a new and heavily armed ambivalence. Just how cool the conflict stays, Feldman suggests, will be determined not in cyberspace or at sea but in international institutions. *Cool War* is essential reading for any serious student of the emergent bipolar order in the Asia-Pacific region."—**Niall Ferguson, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Colossus: The Rise and Fall of the American Empire* and *Civilization: The West and the Rest***

"By giving realism and liberal internationalism their due, and by giving credence to both naked self-interest and legal norms, Noah Feldman's dissection of the United States–China relationship is smart, balanced, and

wise.”—**Robert D. Kaplan**, *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Revenge of Geography*

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From Reader Review Cool War: The Future of Global Competition for online ebook

Hunter Marston says

And interesting take on the U.S.-China rivalry in the years to come.

Greg says

This book has little to contribute to the analysis of US-Chinese relations. It is essentially a rehash of what others have said before. Its primary value is for the middle-to-low-brow audience that haven't been following the issues. Its value is that it is a short, easy read without too much diplomatic jargon, and would be educational for a clueless undergraduate.

Sara says

While someone the ideas are increasing this book does not contribute much to the overall topic. Those familiar with the reality of the Chinese-American relationship will have previous exposure to the ideas brought up. Additionally the book's organization made the overall quality weaker.

Joey says

This book is worth reading. It is what the doctor just ordered because nowadays, the relationship between China and my country has never been good for one reason: China has been laying claim to the Spratly Islands, apparently located in our territory based on the international law. However, nowadays, China has been obstinate and aggressive. They are now building a military base on one of the islets despite the fact that the Philippines has submitted its complaints to the international tribunals. Our government has even had diplomatic discourses with its government many times. Why China's attitude toward us is like this? Upon reading this, my self-analyses have been proven right: China's economy is rising and China wants to expand its geostrategy.

COOL WAR, for Noal Feldman, means two countries are economically interdependent, but tend to be at odd against each other when it comes to geostrategy. The words are far different from COLD WAR when two countries have aggressive competition for building nuclear plants.

N.Feldman emphasized the probable risks China could pose to the world, particularly to the USA when its economy has been symmetrical with the USA. In other words, China still does not have the ability to declare a war against the USA in the event of misunderstanding since surprisingly, the USA has a considerable amount of debt to China. By the same token, China still cannot brag its economy NOW because losing America could paralyze its economy. Therefore, both depend on each other. To put it mildly, Feldman emphasized that a big economy has been proven to be the best key to becoming a super power. However, no matter what underlying reasons that restraint both of them, paradoxically, each of them avoids waging a war.

Enough said! I am almost a spoiler now. You should read it. The book deals with Feldman's analyses of the origin of cool war, especially his anatomical dissection of China's economic values.

No matter how detailed the book is, it is apparent in my humble opinion that China still has hidden DESIRE to be a super power. Gee, Feldman's analyses could be the auguries. This is how complicated our world is. So, reading such genre is an eye-opener.

Claire says

Hmm, I did not pick up any kind of People's Republic of China v. United States of America rivalry on my big trip there the July of the year this book was published. I heard people say that my trip was a diplomatic envoy to share culture and knowledge between the two. Maybe that's why people liked when I spoke so highly of the experience at the farewell dinner? I was just taking the chance to practise oratory.

All I read when there in the Xinhua newspaper was about the Xinjiang province Uyghurs. (Guizhou University is significantly south of that region. Oh! A gale just hit that specific region! How about that.)

The whole gist of Feldman's book is that the great us versus them war of the world has changed into China against the United States, as of 2013, since the United States supports Israel and China supports Iran. I think that's a vast simplification disregarding the ethnic strife within all of these countries.

He concludes that we need each other, so that's why it's only a cool war.

Maybe at the time I was too distracted trying to learn how to play Chinese chess to pay attention to the actual politics playing out before my eyes. But, you see, it's different...

Seth says

If you can ignore the nonsensical title (I can't. Cool War?! Shouldn't that exist somewhere between a Hot and Cold War? Which would imply our relationship with China is worse, or at least closer to open conflict, than it was with the USSR?! Never mind....) there's some good stuff here. The second part, which discusses the elaborate and opaque power structure in China, is particularly interesting. Feldman's anecdotes to illustrate his ideas are by far the most engaging. Otherwise, his writing style is pretty dry. Perhaps the biggest shortcoming of this book is that very little is surprising. Of course the US is acting in its own interests. Of course they'll use Human Rights when it suits their agenda and ignore it otherwise. Of course this is a complicated and nuanced relationship, and (most damning of all) of course we don't know how this is going to play out. I read this book because I wanted a more informed opinion on US-China relations, and in that respect I got what I wanted, but unless a friend has the same curiosity, it's not a book I'll be recommending.

Mahmoud says

Very nice book about future wars/conflicts and Technology.

Andy says

Eh. Sometimes fascinating.

Daniel says

I actually found it quite an interesting book. Living in the city state of Singapore, I can see our government trying to keep a balanced approach between the two countries. Singapore does lots of business with both, but strategically is aligned with the US. Our government is also supposed to have been teaching generations of Chinese leaders how to run their country... Interesting read for people who are affected by relationship between the two countries.

Christopher Higgins says

"Cool War" posits that contrary to many pundits belief, the United States and China are not really on a inevitable course of war or an antagonistic economic relationship and instead that our futures are that of continued economic interdependence. While I lack the overall understanding of economics to offer a critique of the theory I will say that Noah Feldman presents his case in a way that makes in certainly pausable. My review suffers from the fact that I listened to the audio version of this book and some of the concepts were tough to digest in spoken form

Tom Pittman viii says

Part one is the only part worth reading

Alina says

This examination of the relationship between China and the United States contains some good information about the Chinese system of government, and thought-provoking analysis of the Chinese leadership's strategy regarding its place in the world.

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Another piece of the puzzle. Initially, I was confused as to why a professor of international law was writing about international relations between the USA & China, as IR is a bit "around the corner" from academic

international law (imagine the difference between a book on computer programming [law] versus a book about video games [international relations]). And while Professor Feldman admits to being an IR realist quite far into the book, this is not an realist-driven normative screed, or a realist explanation of events. Rather, it's a nuanced and thoughtful investigation of US-China relations, which involve military/political competition coupled with economic cooperation/interdependency. Only brief forays into international law, including the insight that international trade law and the WTO system is a good example of states abiding by treaties and int'l law in general, even when the system finds them at fault. If you're on the fence about whether to read the book, start here: <http://youtu.be/rKXIXUdWe8g>
