

Finally, in the chapter “What Chinese Power Means,” Mr. Lampton turns to the meaning of China to the policy community. China poses challenges, but it is not another Soviet Union contending for world leadership even as its comprehensive national power grows. The focus of China’s leadership is on domestic development. Solving many world problems—food, resource depletion, environment—requires China’s participation, but also U.S. leadership. Seeing the relationship only in terms of “might” and ignoring “money” and “mind” would be a strategic blunder.

As Mr. Lampton notes, both China and U.S. have made a “double gamble.” The U.S. has bet that China will become a “responsible stakeholder.” In turn, China has bet that the U.S. won’t frustrate but may even contribute to China’s growth. So far there have been good payoffs for both sides. Mr. Lampton concludes that both the U.S. and China, indeed, the world, should “do all within their power to increase the odds that these were the right wagers to make for a better world.”

Certainly one would hope so. But can we be so sanguine? Certainly one part of the answer can be found in how the regime handles China’s internal contradictions. The People’s Republic, like other societies subjected to Leninist rule, is kept under political pressure. And, Mr. Lampton notes, social upheavals have marked modern Chinese history, and the potential for disorder is never far below the surface. As China’s economic and social reforms have continued, bringing good times to many, so too societal controls have slipped. The pressures built by contemporary injustices and resentments is explosive. The regime understands indeed the disturbing potential of a single spark; they have good reasons to worry about the slightest leak unsettling “social stability.”

But what to do? Suppression is one option. Channeling this energy into nation-

alism is another. In other words, much of the regime’s power is directed not against the outside but at the volatile domestic scene—exemplified, perhaps unintentionally, by the cover of the book, a photograph of grim-faced internal security cops learning to police the Internet. The Games showed one smiling face of China power. But perhaps only when the regime no longer fears for its legitimacy and the frowning faces of those young policemen become history will China’s true power and status be realized.

**THE BIN LADENS:
AN ARABIAN FAMILY
IN THE AMERICAN CENTURY**
by Steve Coll
Penguin, 688 pages, \$35

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Reviewed by SADANAND DHUME

ON THE FACE of it, few alliances are as unlikely as that between the United States and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. One is the world’s oldest democracy, the other a secretive monarchy. One celebrates individualism and champions human rights; the other mandates an austere understanding of Islam’s collective responsibilities, and enforces perhaps the harshest policies toward women and religious minorities on the planet. The U.S. spearheads the War on Terrorism, now entering its eighth year. Meanwhile its ostensible ally, with its staggering oil wealth and control of Islam’s holiest sites, promotes the fundamentalist outlook shared by Islamist terrorists from Morocco to Mindanao.

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