

China Report: 52:2, 2015

The Ashgate Research Companion to Chinese Foreign Policy

Editor: Emilian Kavalski

Ashgate, Great Britain, 2012

Pages 481 + xx, price not indicated

This fine collection of 31 essays, not counting the editor's introduction and epilogue, is concise and authoritative. China's foreign policy is examined in six segments, as we see below. The method employed is 'analytical eclecticism', with themes selected designed to provide understanding of 'unobservable whole' of China's foreign policy. The net result is as comprehensive a survey as might be assembled in a 420-page volume. That said, I missed an essay on Chinese diplomacy, i.e. the working of foreign ministry and the diplomatic service, i.e. the policy instruments, and their interplay with home actors, official and non-official, plus the ministry's organization and the methods employed.

As for the chapter authors and co-authors, 26 are Chinese, while 11 are Western; most of the former are based in Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan or the West; only one author with a Chinese name is affiliated to a university in China. Should not more China-based authors have contributed, or was that a function of the academic freedom that the editor sought?

How is China's foreign policy to be judged, asks editor Kavalski? Noting that there is no non-Western IR theory, the editor posits three alternative motivating elements behind China's external agency: offensive, pacifist and defensive. He cites Zhu's 2010 work, *China's New Diplomacy*, which had noted that the country is shifting from 'a passive, reactive, isolated and traditional regional power to a more active, interactive, interconnected, and modernizing global power'. This is a key question that virtually every recent analysis on China confronts in its own fashion.

In Part I, one essay posits as the single continuity China's concern with projecting its autonomous and independent agency in world affairs. One conclusion: independence from external influence and domination remains a key foreign policy goal; China is not a status quo power towards the liberal international order (Lai-Ha Chan, Chapter 1). Another essay studies China's strategic culture through 'operation code analysis' (developed by Leites and George), examining speeches of succeeding Chinese leaders, from Mao to Hu, via 'verbs in context system'. Alas, the essay was written before the arrival of President Xi Jinping. The final piece applies IR theory to China's policy, and assigns some weight to power transition concepts. China's nascent IR ideas are briefly examined. Yan Xuetong's theory of 'moral realism' does not find mention,

though it resembles *Tianxia* concepts, i.e. a centralizing power that co-opts lesser states in an inclusive tributary system.

Four essays in Part II focus on the domestic sources of foreign policy, covering nationalism, communist ideology, the military and the imperatives of economic development. One might have added to this: provinces as sub-state actors. Each essay succinctly presents complex themes. Among the key points: growth in internet communication makes it difficult to prevent nationalist opinion mobilization, though the propaganda system retains the ability to suppress this when required; the 'new security concept' of 1997 is more a political and economic construct than purely military, and involves the PLA in a support role to foreign policy; growing demand for external energy resources influences foreign policy.

Part III deals with the external impact of Chinese foreign policy. An essay on soft power diplomacy is noteworthy; President Hu had called this activity 'a paramount state mission'. But the results of such investments are unclear; as author James Reilly points out, attraction, à la Nye, is not the same as 'obtaining desired outcomes *through* attraction'; he wonders why China is seen as more attractive in the developing world than in the West. Might we respond that the potential threat that China poses is not a concern with the former, especially in the Africa and the Latin America-Caribbean region? Some estimates place the cost of CCTV's global operations at around \$10 billion, with a like sum devoted to Confucius centers and classrooms. But it is impossible to quantify, or even guesstimate results, save through perception studies carried out by the likes of Pew, BBC and the host of new indexes that assess the value of a country brand. Confucius institutes are also examined in incisive fashion, including the fact that most of its language teachers are unqualified (a point that comes up in conversation with Chinese academics); those in Russia are 'illegal' as they do not meet registration standards required for all academic teaching at universities; in Africa, a few have even gone 'commercial' for private benefit. Religion is, unusually, covered in that same essay, but the treatment is rather superficial. Another essay deals with the Chinese diaspora, a subject that deserves greater attention, also from the perspective of comparative examination, say with India. This essay concludes that official attempts to mobilize the diaspora have produced 'mixed results, less successful than outreach to Chinese citizens living abroad'.

Part IV deals with China's relations with the US, Russia, EU and India. In a single chapter format, it is difficult to cover the main bilateral developments, and make original points. In the India chapter, by Jing-Dong Yuan argues that China's strategy in the Indian Ocean region is less about domination and 'more about how it can use a combination of diplomatic and economic means to influence littoral states'. He concludes: 'Sino-Indian relations are today marked by opportunities for cooperation and pitfalls of setbacks and potential conflicts...Coexistence seems a foregone conclusion, but the future direction of Sino-India has not yet been cast in stone'.

China's regional diplomacy, which especially merits close attention, is covered in Part V. These chapters examine ties with the Middle East (including a detailed account of secretive relations with Israel); Central Asia (which has gained in importance since 2014, with the unrolling of the Silk Road project that emphasizes land-based energy, rail and trade routes); SE Asia ('Southeast Asia emerges as the testing ground for the Sino-American competition for influence'; though a conclusion that ASEAN+8 has become a constrain on China's regional ambition may be questionable); North-East Asia (rising nationalism is a constraint on foreign policy for China, Japan and ROK, but worst case scenarios should not be exaggerated); Africa (Ghana-China relations are examined as a case study, showing both the trade and investment gains, and the adverse impact on Ghana's economy); Latin America (12 of its 33 states maintain ties with Taiwan; China-LAC economic exchanges are burgeoning); and Oceania (by 2009, 130,000 Chinese students were in Australia and 30,000 in New Zealand; but while the economic dependence of these two countries on China has expanded, they have no strategy on how to deal with possible moves by Beijing to use its clout to exert political pressure).

The final section of the book covers disparate issues: Taiwan, peacekeeping operations, globalization, climate policy, Tibet and human rights, transnational social movements, and internet censorship. Zhiming Chen's closely argued Taiwan chapter concludes that Beijing seeks 'creeping reunification' by expanding Taiwan's socio-economic dependence on the Mainland, while KMT works on its status quo 'Three No's' and DPP pursues 'creeping independence'. In the chapter on globalization, Lui Hebron observes that China has greatly benefited from the current international economic system, and has adopted 'a foreign policy centered on moderation, self-restraint, and cooperation'. The Tibet chapter by Yuchao Zhu notes that Western countries do not challenge China's sovereignty over Tibet, and that it's growing economic and strategic strength has enhanced China's position in diplomatic battles; yet, 'despite some progress, the issue of Tibet continues to plague China's foreign policy'. Jie Chen's chapter on transnational social movements notes that 1000 international NGOs (INGOs) operate in China through representative offices and local partners, bringing in \$100 to 200 million; he cites another estimate that at least 2000 unregistered INGOs are working in China.

The editor's epilogue is disappointing. Summarizing the key messages of different chapters, he puts forward a notion of 'logic of relationships': that for Beijing, world politics is not about applying abstract norms, but a set of particular relationships with obligations defined in the context of each relationship. But is that not always the case? Perhaps such empirical observation appears novel to those steeped in IR theory.

The strength of this book is that one can build virtually all the chapters into individual studies of value. Thanks to this compilation's tight focus and sound

editing, the reader is left with a desire to know more. Surely a list of suggested readings at the end of each chapter would have helped those interested in further examination.

Looking to the big picture, in Chapter 2 Mingjiang Li examines China's pursuit of international status, clearly a major objective. Is it willing to provide 'international public goods' to the world system? He suggests that China has been a free rider vis-à-vis the international system, and that its domestic governance system is also not attuned to 'mainstream international values'. Yet, some developments of 2015 point to a evolving Chinese response to this challenge; the creation of the Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank (and to a lesser extent the BRICS-sponsored New Development Bank), as also the commitment of \$46 billion as aid and investment in Pakistan in a hazardous environment, point to a more active foreign engagement. It seems that under Xi Jinping's leadership, China is shifting into a new phase of international engagement, mirrored also in the new neighborhood rubric, 'One Belt One Road', that builds new linkages with neighbors, even while the three of China's largest immediate neighbors, Russia, India and Japan, view this initiative with a blend of caution and reserve. It appears that Beijing is now at the cusp of a new level of foreign affairs engagement.

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