China Coping with Complex Interdependence: Neoliberal Institutionalism and Beyond

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In terms of breadth and depth of knowledge about Chinese politics during the reform era, access to strategic interlocutors (key Chinese state agencies and policy institutions) in the arena of foreign and security policy, and both personal contact and rapport with Chinese foreign policy elite (including members of the top leadership), few China scholars in the United States can match the caliber of David Mike Lampton. To many colleagues, his outstanding scholarship is a powerful testament to the (rarely seen) synergy between the role of a cutting-edge researcher that continuously produces seminal works in the field, on the one hand, and the role of an effective idea binder that illuminates both the public discourse on U.S. China policy within the Beltway and the policy dialogue across the Pacific, on the other. For the same reason, few China scholars today can pull off a book project like *The Making of Chinese Foreign and Security Policy* because the conception, implementation, and production of this ambitious book require not just visionary and persistent intellectual leadership but also extraordinary amounts of social capital and research resources.

There is no doubt that the publication of this volume will be widely

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regarded as a milestone in the scholarship of Chinese politics. The assembly of expertise is dazzling. The overall architecture is robust, pertinently addressing both the most cogent research questions about the changes and continuities in the structure and process of China's foreign policymaking, and the most timely and relevant intellectual questions about the explanatory sources and predictability of China's international behavior at the turn of the century. The coherence of the volume is amazingly high, with masterfully framed research questions animating all chapters throughout. The degree to which the individual chapters compliment each other is far above and beyond what most readers might expect of an edited volume, as the project benefited from close consultation and intensive deliberation among authors through the holding of two workshops. The book has extended some of the existing literature by underscoring the broad changes in the making of Chinese foreign policy in terms of technocratization, decentralization, and convergence of domestic and foreign policymaking. This volume has also broken new ground as most of the chapters systematically contextualize the making of Chinese foreign and security policies in terms of both emerging societal pluralism and the country's escalating enmeshment in "complex interdependence" (in Joseph Nye and Robert Keohane's terms). Most chapters go beyond a crude treatment of complex interdependence by carefully unbundling the forces of globalization, identifying them in terms of market conditionality (that is imposed by increasing trade dependence, competition over transnational capital, and the rapid integration of China's coastal manufacturing sector with global production networks), the emergence of sub-national and non-sanctioned actors with transnational ties, the socializing function of epistemic community, and/or the constraining and enabling effects of international regimes. Theoretically speaking, the volume is also in tune with the latest intellectual current in the international relations field as it implicitly pits the neoliberal paradigm against the neorealist persuasion. Most ostensibly, the book privileges the concept of "adaptive learning" in characterizing the process through which Chinese elite gradually outgrew a narrow, state-centric conception of national interests and practice of realpolitik—a learning that took place as China traveled down the slippery

slope of expanding regional and global involvement. Many chapters in this volume—particularly those by Cheung and Tang, Moore and Yang, Economy, and Pearson—vividly illustrated how China, despite its distinctive domestic institutions and national practices, is not immune from the trend of the globalization of national politics, a phenomenon under which a nation's growing enmeshment in the global political economy is remaking policy preferences, political coalitions, and central-local bargaining at home.

However, the volume is not without its weakness, limitations, and ideological bias. While most of the chapter authors should be credited for their well-documented historical account of the evolution of political space, institutional arrangements, and political agents in a given foreign policy arena, some critical details have still escaped their attention. For instance, Lu Ning's chapter did not pick up on a critical decision by the Politburo in 1994 that gave Jiang Zemin exclusive authority in managing Sino-U.S. relations and thereby eclipsed much of Li Peng's authority in directing the Foreign Affairs Leading Small Group. As another example, no chapter sheds much light on the role of the Ministry of State Security, an apparatus which oftentimes operates as a powerful shadow Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Many chapters were clearly inspired by neoliberal institutionalism, which emphasizes that multilateral institutions can alter state strategies by changing the cost of alternatives. Typically, the authors of these chapters explain the increasing conformity of Chinese international behavior with global norms and practices in terms of the political elite's (1) updated reading of China's susceptibility and vulnerability to external forces, (2) expanded understanding of both the positive-sum dimension of international politics and the limited compatibility of China's national interests with multilateral arrangements, and (3) better-informed assessment of the policy constraints, options, and trade-offs they face. Essentially, many chapters treat ideational factors as intervening variables. Ideas matter only to the extent that they have influence beyond the effects of power, interest, and institutions. The authors invariably fail to recognize Alexander Wendt's two-prone proposition that the meaning of power and the content of inter-

ests are largely a function of ideas, and that institutions—which are made of norms and rules despite being objective social facts—are ideational phenomenon. In a nutshell, the volume never outgrows the straightjacket of the rationalist paradigm because it shies away from the fundamental question of how the increasingly complex and rapidly changing social milieu has transformed the very dynamics of the Chinese state elite's social construction of identity, self-image, principled beliefs, and perception about friends and foes. Had they applied the insights of social constructivists, they would have uncovered the process of "glocalization" with Chinese characteristics that is transforming identities, interests, and strategies of the central Chinese state, provincial governments, and non-state actors through a combination of global and local processes.

The volume—like many in the extant Western literature—uncritically accepts an artificial (and arguably false) dichotomy between China's so-called *parochial*, *nationalistic*, and *unilateralist* national interests on the one hand, and the *cosmopolitan*, *transnationalist*, and *multilateralist* norms and practices on the other. Virtually all authors unconsciously assume that "global norms" (as well as the intellectual stock flowing out of the so-called "epistemic community") are uniformly and intrinsically progressive, universal, legitimate, robust, and free of ideological or ethno-centric bias. This unexamined premise oftentimes makes no meaningful distinction between the proliferation of the scientific understanding about global warming effects on the one hand, and the spread of the gospel of economic liberalism (in particular the so-called "Washington Consensus") on the other. Thus the acceptance or internalization of these "shared" ideas, norms, and practices is assumed to be intrinsically desirable and progressive; signs of resistance, however, are necessarily deplorable and troublesome. Furthermore, most of the authors vastly discount China's long-term potential to transform the existing regional order. They fail to appreciate the legitimate aspirations harbored by some Chinese policy elite and intellectuals that the Chinese nation-state (much as the Indian, Brazilian, or Indonesian nation-state)—in its capacity as guardian of the collective interests of a sizable portion of the human race—is entitled to have a meaningful say both in reforming or transforming the U.S.-dominated architecture of

global governance and in the construction of the prevailing international norms, which up to this point have largely reflected the collective identity and communal concerns of the advanced industrialized states.