

insights of non-expert knowledge, perception, and use of urban space in Asia. It shows how life in cities is continuously taunting the more controlled spaces and places through appropriation and unintended uses, demonstrating that cities are fluid systems with different (temporary) uses and meanings depending on their users.

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CHINA'S FOREIGN POLICY CONTRADICTIONS: Lessons from China's R2P, Hong Kong, and WTO Policy. By *Tim Nicholas Rühlig*. *New York: Oxford University Press, 2022. xii, 265 pp. (Tables.) US\$74.00, cloth; US\$74.00, ebook. ISBN 9780197573303.*

China has become a central actor in global politics in areas such as climate change (see the heated discussions at the COP 27 in Sharm el-Sheikh Egypt), war and peace (see China's position on Russia's invasion of Ukraine), and as a technology leader (see US containment policies through semiconductor export controls). In these, and many other issues, China's participation in world affairs has become inevitable, and yet, it is extremely difficult to understand the behaviour of this major new player.

A main reason for this lack of understanding has to do with contradictions in the country's approach to global affairs. All major international relations schools have sought to explain China's foreign policies and strategies. While providing thorough analyses of China's behaviour *inter alia* in the United Nations, trade, financial regulation, marketcraft, and the Belt and Road Initiative, academic works often fail to explain the contradictory nature of Chinese engagements. The literature mostly takes a unitary-actor approach, meaning that the plethora of Chinese domestic actors pursuing conflicting policies is often overlooked. China's ambiguities, as Tim Nicholas Rühlig argues in *China's Foreign Policy Contradictions*, derive from domestic actors. To understand China's role in world affairs, one needs to open the black box of Chinese policy-making and engage with a multiplicity of players (policymakers, academics, industrialists etc.,) at the national and sub-national level. By drawing on primary sources and over 160 interviews, Rühlig offers a welcome addition to the literature, in a thorough examination of China's contradictory policies in three cases: Responsibility to Protect (R2P), One Country, Two Systems, and the implementation of WTO law.

In the first case, R2P, the book focuses on two main issues: China's role in norm-shaping and the implementation of R2P in Libya and Syria. International debate around the concept of R2P created challenges for China, as it defied the country's traditional Westphalian approach to state sovereignty. However in the end, China was able to limit maximalist approaches and promote a conceptualization of R2P in which the Security

Council (SC) was required to authorize its implementation. In itself, a much smaller change since the UN-Charter already allowed the SC to authorize military action. The outcome appears less hostile to Chinese policymakers than initially suggested. The implementation of R2P is more contradictory, with China abstaining in the case of Libya (SC Resolution 1973 leading to NATO's bombing of the country) and its vetoing of various SC resolutions in Syria. Rühlig explains these contradictions as the result of domestic actors competing and dealing with trade-offs related to the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) two main sources of legitimacy: national pride and economic performance. National pride necessitates being seen as a responsible international power, while balancing against the baggage of China's "century of humiliation," which often calls for a more forceful position vis-à-vis the West. The two cases are not independent from one another, and perhaps more could have been done to explain how NATO's intervention in Libya shaped domestic perceptions of the Syrian case. Economic considerations appear less relevant in the R2P case, except for the large number of workers present in Libya (unlike in Syria) due to infrastructure projects there, which required a large-scale evacuation. The picture that emerges from R2P is that of a self-interested, domestically-driven, and opportunistic foreign policy.

The second case, Hong Kong (HK), is much more sensitive. The case is structured along two main issues: the introduction of the National Security Law (NSL) related to Article 23 of the Basic Law (BL) and the selection of HK's Chief Executive (CE), that is electoral reform under Article 45 of the BL. The puzzle with regards to the NSL is that China waited for over 20 years to introduce this controversial law, as it contravenes the Sino-British Joint Declaration (SBJD) and the BL. Regarding electoral reform, despite the potential for compromise, the CCP pushed forward with its own approach. Rühlig explains these contradictions by domestic trade-offs between international legitimacy (a violation of the SBJD and the BL that would damage China's international reputation) and domestic legitimation (HK symbolic nature for national reunification), as well as economic factors. Among the latter are HK's role as a laboratory for liberal economic policies and as a major gateway for FDI and technology, as well as the role of HK elites. The central theme of this case is China's instrumental approach to (international) law, in which law is not always a constraint but also, a means to (CCP) power.

Finally, the third case looks into the implementation of WTO law. This chapter focuses on two main issues: the Dispute Settlement Body (DSB), where China's record is better than most other large economies, and reforms to the banking sector, where China has clearly failed to comply with its WTO obligations. Rühlig explains that the good compliance record with DSB cases has to do with various domestic factors including an initial lack of expertise (about the workings of the DSB), the presence of liberalizing forces within China (technocrats in the seeking to use the WTO accession to liberalize the

Chinese economy), and reputational costs (the relevance of national pride). Political economy factors are central in the banking regulation case since control over the banking system and the repression of savings are a crucial element in China's developmental economic model (in which banks provide credit according to political priorities). The take-home message in this case is that China adopts an instrumentalist approach to international (trade) law, and that it challenges universalist definitions of free trade, advocating instead a "varieties of free trade" approach.

Rühlig's original approach argues that China's foreign policy contradictions derive from competition between various legitimacy-seeking actors in the complex set-up of the Chinese party-state. Rather than grand strategy, what drives Chinese foreign policy and its contradictions is a desire for domestic legitimacy (in terms of national pride and economic performance) and a fragmented and complex institutional set-up, where top-down control co-exists with decentralization, fragmentation, and internationalization. This work is essential reading for anyone seeking to understand the complexities of China's foreign policy decision-making that goes beyond the usual unitary-state simplifications often found in the literature.

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CHINA'S RISE IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH: The Middle East, Africa, and Beijing's Alternative World Order. By *Dawn C. Murphy*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2022. x, 392 pp. (Tables, graphs, figures). US\$85.00, cloth. ISBN 9781503630093.

In her book, *China's Rise in the Global South: The Middle East, Africa, and Beijing's Alternative World Order*, Dawn Murphy covers the full scope of China's contemporary relations with countries in both Africa and the Middle East. The book, which is predicated largely on hard-done fieldwork and research, asks important questions, and proposes a novel theoretical construct to explain and interpret China's policies in the Global South and its global rise more broadly. Its larger and much more ambitious objective, however, is to examine each aspect of China's economic, political, and security policies in the two regions to determine the extent to which they converge/diverge with liberal values, as well as whether they are cooperative/competitive with the United States. China's policies and statements toward African and Middle Eastern countries are taken as indicative of its strategy throughout the Global South.

After an exhaustive review, Murphy concludes that although China does not seek to change the international distribution of territory in the Middle East and Sub-Saharan Africa, as its power grows, it is increasingly competing