

of a rules-based global order and by strengthening these countries' resilience towards China's BRI charm offensive(s).

The outbreak of COVID-19 and Beijing's turn to virtual diplomacy (2020–autumn 2022) are not dealt with in this study, as the dataset mainly covers the years 2015 to 2020. The reader might also wonder why the transformations of the international environment that China is facing do not feature more prominently. Changes in China's foreign policy choices might, as (indirectly) conceded in the author's case studies, also derive from the perception of an increasingly hostile regional and global environment and the formation of alliances and networks resorting to containment measures. And, as a short additional footnote: China's willingness to support select international (or multilateral) norms might not be the outcome of compliance but a response to the expectations and demands by its strategic partners (including those in Africa or in the Arab world). For a prospective follow-up study, featuring developments since 2020, it would hence be crucial to take the broader actor constellations as well as the time dimension, i.e. the evolution of Chinese diplomacy, into account.

In a nutshell, by compiling and analysing a broad dataset of first-hand interviews with people involved in the formulation (or in the internal analysis and evaluation) of Chinese foreign policy, Rühlig's book offers insight into the "black box" of the Chinese party-state. By elaborating on the diversity of actors and the multiple layers of Chinese politics, he offers a sound explanation for the perceived contradictions in China's engagement in global affairs and delineates ways to deal with an internally fragmented China.

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Fractured China: How State Transformation Is Shaping China's Rise

Lee Jones and Shahar Hameiri. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021. 280 pp. £26.99. ISBN 9781009048460

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There is no shortage of academic literature which seeks to interpret Chinese foreign policy behaviour. Recently, a number of empirical studies have attracted attention, including an account by Rush Doshi (now in the Biden administration) of a deliberate "grand strategy" through which Beijing is purportedly playing a "long game" to displace the US as the world's leading state.

This sort of realist thinking has become dominant over recent years. In the process, however, contradictions and inconsistencies in Chinese foreign policy behaviour often have to be interpreted to fit a consistent framework of "grand strategy."

In *Fractured China*, Lee Jones and Shahar Hameiri offer an alternative approach to understanding Chinese foreign policy by developing a theoretical framework which can help explain "inconsistent behaviour in China's foreign and security policymaking and implementation" (p. 2).

The key concept in their approach is "state transformation." This can be understood across three main vectors: fragmentation, or the "horizontal dispersal of power and authority across multiple agencies" (p. 27); decentralization, whereby "power and control over resources [are] devolved to



sub-national agencies” (p. 29), especially in international economic relations; and internationalization, a process of “domestic agencies acquiring an international presence or function” (p. 34).

The first two vectors will be familiar to students of Chinese politics, and Jones and Hameiri consciously draw on literature on “fragmented authoritarianism,” contrasting their use of these insights on Chinese politics with much of the literature of grand strategy and Chinese foreign policy, which tends to reduce the state to a unitary and well-coordinated actor. The third vector, internationalization, has been shaped particularly by a period of globalization and would be more familiar in the political economy space. Bringing these different perspectives together in a theoretical framework is one of the strengths of this study, and – as Jones and Hameiri argue – takes us beyond a “sterile debate” between those who see China as revisionist and those who have argued it has been a predominantly status quo power.

This state transformation is reflected in differentiated objectives and interests across parts of the party-state. Jones and Hameiri theorize the state in Gramscian terms, not separate from society as in a Weberian model, but as “condensations of social relations and conflicts rooted in evolving political-economy contexts” (p. 21). The consequences of this state transformation for foreign policy behaviour are developed into a three-fold typology, which suggests that different parts of the state might alternatively seek to influence national policy guidelines, to interpret them to fit their own interests better, or in cases even to ignore them.

However, arguing that “China today is not a unitary international actor” (p. 3) does not mean a free-for-all. Instead, Jones and Hameiri posit a “dynamic and evolving ‘Chinese-style regulatory state’” (p. 13). While the party-state is fractured, they show that top-down agencies and leaders can steer and guide policymaking, especially through the Communist Party’s structures and processes.

After an introduction and exposition of the framework, the book moves to three case studies, around the South China Sea, non-traditional security governance in the Greater Mekong sub-region, and international development financing, which make good use of the hundred or so interviews conducted by the authors. The South China Sea case is a “hard” one for the thesis, given its strategic importance to the Chinese leadership, and Jones and Hameiri show convincingly that apparent contradictions between simultaneous assertive behaviour and efforts to charm its neighbours can be explained by state transformation. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, for example, is interpreted as “promoting stability, losing influence,” while oil companies “push for profit” and the PLA Navy seeks resources.

The authors deal thoughtfully with possible criticisms of their framework, including the argument that things have changed since Xi Jinping came to power a decade ago. They suggest that while Xi has sought to enhance coordination across different parts of the state, this has not (yet) been fully effective, and the essential dynamics of state transformation remain in place. This is plausible given that the framework is developed not only on the basis of a top-down analysis of policymaking in China, but the wider context, including the impact of China’s integration into globalization.

This raises one question for further study: if we are moving into a “deglobalized” or “decoupled” world where relations between China and the US/West have deteriorated markedly, will the Chinese state be further transformed in different ways that might reshape its foreign policy making and behaviour? The theoretical framework in this book seems robust enough to deal with that scenario, or with one where that decoupling with the West is accompanied by a deepening of China’s relations with the Global South in a new phase of “globalization.” Investigating the empirical consequences of these ongoing changes for Chinese foreign policy shapes an important agenda for further work.