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CONCLUSION

Tactical or Fundamental Change?

Pauline Kerr, Stuart Harris, and Qin Yaqing

Introduction

The question on the minds of many observers of China's growth and development is, what role will China be playing in world politics over the next twenty years? There is no way that we can know. Three decades ago, nobody could foresee what is happening in China today, and it is equally difficult to predict what will happen in the two decades ahead. What the authors of this book set out to investigate is what we can learn from China's diplomatic approaches and practices that offer some guide to understanding the likely international role for China over the next two decades. We assume that diplomacy, both as an instrument of foreign policy and as a learning and socializing process that fosters both positive and negative change, is an indicator of China's present thinking about its future role. In this concluding chapter we will look directly at Chinese thinking behind its new diplomacy, considering particularly the issue of whether or not China's embrace of new diplomacy is a tactical or fundamental change.

The analytical framework we develop in the book to engage with these questions refers to the strategic and domestic factors—historical and contemporary—that influence China's diplomacy and to the influence that these diplomatic processes have on subsequent diplomatic practices.

This concluding chapter is in three parts. The first section reviews the authors' findings and arguments regarding the historical and contemporary strategic and domestic drivers of China's new diplomacy, its evolution, and characteristics up to the present. The second section tackles directly the more difficult question of whether or not China's new diplomacy is a tactical or fundamental change. It starts with some discussion of what might be termed tactical or fundamental change and then refers to the main themes that the

authors marshal as argument and evidence for either tactical or fundamental change, namely (1) China's involvement in globalization, engagement, and interdependence; (2) China's power in general and its defense strategies in particular; (3) China's identity; and (4) China's diplomatic processes as possible agents of change. The third section summarizes what this analysis means for China's future diplomatic role and mentions some dilemmas that confront China's officials and their international interlocutors.

China's "New" Diplomacy: Its Characteristics, Drivers, and Evolution

The authors agree that China has indeed moved toward diplomatic practices that have new elements. According to Qin, for example, it has three main features: China's improved relations with other major powers,¹ China's active economic diplomacy,² and its multilateral diplomacy.³ Zhu and Wang add that bilateral relations, not just with major powers, have expanded and deepened, especially through strategic dialogues and partnerships. China's "vigorous participation" in international institutions, according to Zhu,⁴ and China's adoption of most of the norms and rules of international law, according to Kent,⁵ are other features of China's new diplomacy. Overall, the major change from earlier periods of China's history is its engagement with the institutions, standards, practices, and norms of international society.

The authors also agree that the drivers for China's new diplomacy are found at both strategic and domestic levels, and there is a strong view that domestic level explanations, while intertwined with strategic ones, are more important. Nonetheless, as we will see, there is difference over the extent or degree to which some factors are influential. The start of China's diplomatic reorientation began with Deng Xiaoping's opening-up and reform policies in 1978. There were both strategic and domestic factors behind Deng's decision, which was the outcome of a long domestic debate between those who wished to continue along a path of self-sufficiency and isolation and those, including Deng Xiaoping, who believed that for China to prosper it had to take another route. Deng and his followers believed the "world situation" had changed, away from a set of strategic factors that had been hostile to China and toward a situation where world war was avoidable. As Qin, Zhu, Harris, and others indicate, "China shifted its goal from preparation for a world war to economic development at home."⁶ And, as Harris explains, it was Deng's view that peace and development were now among the key strategic factors and that fostering these was essential for China's own development. China's current leadership believes that the contemporary strategic context continues to exhibit such a trend, that China has benefited from the international system,

and that its maintenance is a major driving factor of its diplomacy.

Likewise, China's leadership over the last three decades has endorsed Deng's stated domestic imperatives for reform. As Qin points out, China "has set domestic economic development as the priority national goal."⁷ And, as Zhu argues, the domestic goal of a "well-off society in China" now "helps to define several of China's diplomatic objectives, namely to strive for a peaceful and stable international environment, a harmonious and friendly neighborhood, equal and reciprocal cooperation, and for objective and amicable public opinions."⁸ The imperatives for domestic development and a "well-off society" are numerous. For example, Yongjin Zhang refers to the historical "national security problematique" of "keeping China together," which he argues is the litmus test of any Chinese regime's legitimacy. Qin, however, argues that "the legitimacy of the Chinese Government rests . . . on the economic achievements" more than it does on supporting nationalist sentiments in response to China's growing pluralist society.⁹

While diplomacy has been driven by domestic economic development for some thirty years, other societal factors are becoming increasingly important. As more of Chinese society becomes middle class, as a civil society develops, and as the information technology (IT) revolution increasingly permeates the public and private space of the Chinese people, public opinion is increasingly influencing Chinese diplomacy. Zhu argues that China's Foreign Ministry proposals for the "construction of a harmonious society inside and a harmonious world outside are, in fact, the reflection of the inner needs of China's transformation to a pluralized society and the essential dynamics of the transition of China's diplomacy."¹⁰

Zhu also emphasizes another more recent reason—with both domestic and strategic elements—for China's changed diplomatic practices. China is increasingly concerned with the construction of its identity and seeks to portray a national image as a "responsible actor" with obligations, not just to its own development but to that of other countries.¹¹ In part, China's emphasis on its obligations is a diplomatic reassurance to other states that its obvious rise is not a "zero-sum" outcome but rather a "win-win" result for all.¹² That said, China's diplomatic behavior helps to constitute China's identity as a member of international society. Thus, reassurance is both a normal diplomatic tactic and a constituting factor of China's identity.

A final important and often neglected driver of change in other analyses is China's learning experiences from being involved in and socialized by the diplomatic practices and processes of global institutions and other relationships with countries and other diplomatic actors. As Zhu points out, China's foreign policy reflects a process of "learning while practising, practising while learning, and improving continuously."¹³ China, she argues, is "learning

about multilateralism, regionalism and regional cooperation."¹⁴ She describes the three stages of China's "learning curve" and illustrates her argument through China's participation in diplomatic negotiations on arms control and disarmament. Kent also refers to China's socialization through its participation in and impact on the institution of international law. Moreover, as she argues, the impact of international law on China "is of seminal importance in determining whether China's international "socialization" is long-term or merely of short-term, instrumental significance. Likewise, China's own influence on international law tells us important things about the nature of China's socialization."¹⁵ Hence, an important finding in this volume is that diplomatic processes are not only drivers of change; they are also the manifestations of China's new identity and are therefore both causal and constituting factors.

Definitions, Arguments, and Evidence of Tactical or Fundamental Change

While there is general agreement among the authors about the characteristics, drivers, and evolution of China's new diplomacy, there is less clarity about the more complex issue of whether or not this is a tactical or fundamental change. Or perhaps it is more accurate to say that there are some authors (mostly those living in China) who are optimistic that change is fundamental and relates to China's evolving identity and some authors (mostly those living outside China) who are more cautious. That said, there appears to be little conviction among the latter group that China's change is mostly tactical in the sense that it is driven by hegemonic or revisionist intentions using military force—as many critics suggest. One question to explore further is whether change can start as a tactical response in order to realize pragmatic objectives and immediate interests and then, as a result of learning, practicing, socialization, and confidence, adjust its course to become a fundamental change resulting in modifications to China's identity.

Such terms as "tactical" and "fundamental" require further clarification.¹⁶ The central question in this context is, what are the key criteria that are suggested in the debate for judging if China's new diplomacy signals a tactical or fundamental change? Unfortunately the debate does not offer clear criteria for making judgments on the matter. Nonetheless, it is useful to note the implied criteria that are detectable in different arguments. Arguments supporting China's tactical change tend to emphasize its development of material interests and power, particularly military power, for the purpose of strategic dominance and other revisionist intentions. Other factors (indeed many of those that, as we will see, are stressed by those who disagree with the critics)

are perceived as second-order indicators. Arguments for China's fundamental change do not ignore its material interests and power but usually emphasize that there is a domestic rationale for them and that China, in its present mode, is a status quo power. They also stress the importance of other factors—particularly interdependence and engagement with international society's norms, standards, and principles—and the construction of a national identity that incorporates these attributes. Many of these factors have been taught and learned partly through interactive processes with outside players, such as diplomatic actors and international organizations.

Globalization, Engagement, and Interdependence

The authors' first set of thematic considerations that can be taken as argument and perhaps evidence for tactical or fundamental change revolve around the strategic factors of globalization, engagement, and interdependence—and the associated domestic factors. It is useful to remember at this point that, as several authors mention, separating the strategic and the domestic factors is analytically useful, but in reality the relationship is a two-way street where the influence is back and forth and circular rather than linear.¹⁷

From Harris's cautious analysis, it becomes clear that while globalization and its constituting process of complex interdependence are a major change behind China's new diplomacy, they are the source of contradictions that now and in the future need to be diplomatically managed. For example, interdependence has led to China's extraordinary growth and improved economic security. Yet, strategically, China's growth is the source of many other countries' insecurity, which China now has to manage. Likewise, interdependence is a source of insecurity for those inside China who see it as the source of China's vulnerability to outside economic, political, and social pressures. China's perception of vulnerability to the outside world has a long history dating back to the nineteenth century. Its most recent manifestation was the divisive domestic debate prior to and after Deng's opening-up and reform policies.¹⁸ The present Chinese leadership, some of whom still worry that interdependence restrains China's sovereignty, is nevertheless committed to managing these contradictions and pursuing economic integration. As Zhu indicates, at end of 2005 the top Chinese leadership "reiterated that . . . China had no alternative but to 'unequivocally stick to the direction of the reform.'"¹⁹

Notwithstanding Zhu's similar view that China "has stepped into a way with no retreat, and reached a point of no return," she notes the "imbalances" that have followed China's rapid economic growth from economic integration²⁰ and which require extraordinary diplomatic management internationally and

domestically. She elaborates on three imbalances: between domestic and international markets, between economic and social developments, and between human welfare and sustainable development. Zhu's analysis suggests that the Chinese government will need not only the cooperation of the Chinese people but the support of the international community to manage such imbalances as human welfare and environmental/climate change degradation; and hence this will continue to be a major challenge for the future. At the same time, Zhu's "no retreat" argument supports the view that fundamental change is taking place.

While mindful of such contradictions and imbalances raised by Harris and Zhu respectively, Qin argues optimistically that as "interdependence continues to increase . . . China's international behavior is likely to be more accommodative and more cooperative."²¹ For Qin, interdependence has been achieved through China's economic diplomacy, which he argues is "one of China's most important processes for integrating China into the world economic system."²² That is, economic diplomacy is not only an instrument for ensuring China's economic development; it is "a process that socializes Chinese officials about the global market."²³ Zhu also notes that the processes for "integration into the world economic system . . . [have] led to a profound change in China's understanding of globalization, the international system, and its position in that system."²⁴ In particular, China's fifteen years of negotiations on its entry into the World Trade Organization (WTO) were a major learning and socializing experience. This emphasis not just on the instrumental but also on the agency aspects of diplomacy is an important observation and one that several other authors stress. It is important because it highlights that diplomatic processes have an effect on policy outcomes and a follow-on effect on future diplomatic processes. As such, this observation points to the role that global institutions and other state and nonstate diplomatic actors play in complying with standards that serve best to socialize Chinese diplomatic actors. In this respect, Qin's observation illustrates that interdependence has different dimensions and suggests there is an evolving diplomatic and even social interdependence.

China's interdependence with the global market and international society is, according to many of the Chinese authors living in China, an indicator of fundamental change because it is an important aspect of China's changed identity. In anticipation of the critics' view that interdependence is a problematic criteria to establish empirically, Qin argues that there is quantitative evidence that supports the case for fundamental change, namely the following: China's high dependence on international trade as a share of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), a positive factor that supports China's growth; China's increasing dependence on oil, which will require even greater cooperation;

and China's membership of the WTO²⁵ and its increasing membership of multilateral conventions, which compares favorably with that of many other countries.²⁶

Kent's analysis of China's engagement goes beyond the economic dimension of globalization and elaborates further on Qin's point about China's membership of international organizations. She provides a historical longitudinal study of over two hundred years (1800 to the present) that traces China's attitudes to international law. Her evidence shows that "in conjunction with its growing international power and status, China has moved from its status in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as victim and opponent of international law to becoming a supporter and, finally now in the twenty-first century, a champion of international law."²⁷ However, Kent cautions that despite becoming a defender of international law, "in the international human rights regime, China's record has been almost consistently negative."²⁸ This important continuity in China's human rights diplomacy as well as China's ambivalent diplomacy toward the international environmental regime are strong qualifications to the optimistic case for China's engagement with international norms and its associated change in identity. That said, these qualifications do little to support the view that China's new diplomacy is pursuing a tactical revisionist agenda. By realist criteria, however, such continuities do not define great power status.

Yongjin Zhang also warns that the qualifications raised by Kent's evidence indicate that there are obstacles to China's diplomatic approach to integration into international society. He sees a major challenge coming from the changing international discourse on sovereignty: from one that China endorses and is based on the norms of a Westphalian international society to another that is based on the normative notion of legitimate statehood through providing human security and human rights and that, as Kent shows, China does not completely endorse. Yongjin Zhang argues that this changing discourse has implications for China's historical "national security problematique," which he calls "keeping China together."²⁹ He argues further that China's longstanding internal (in)security dynamic—also reflected in its pursuit of "reunification" of Taiwan—is a domestic factor that is likely to shape China's diplomacy since "keeping China together" is "still regarded as the litmus test of the legitimacy of any Chinese state and regime."³⁰

Yongjin Zhang's emphasis on China's different conceptualization of sovereignty, based on territorial and jurisdictional sovereignty,³¹ is certainly an argument made by the critics who see it as a continuity that undermines the view that China's identity is changing. Yet, the extent of that continuity needs to be qualified. As Yongjin argues, "the record of China's social and diplomatic practice of state sovereignty . . . is erratic, inconsistent, and often even

contradictory,"³² as the above section on globalization and China's engagement suggests. As Yongjin and others point out, in joining the WTO, "the Chinese leadership knowingly allowed the constrictions of Chinese sovereignty, internal and external, political as well as economic."³³ Hence, such contradictions will continue to inform China's diplomacy.

Power

The authors' second set of thematic considerations that can be taken as argument and perhaps evidence for tactical or fundamental change revolve around China's power in general and its military power in particular. It has already been noted that arguments supporting the view that China's new diplomacy is a tactical change tend to emphasize the importance of power in international relations, particularly economic power and military strength for strategic and revisionist purposes. Arguments for fundamental change do not ignore such material interests as economic and military power but rather see the rationale for them mainly at the domestic level. There is also an emphasis on other factors, such as interdependence and identity. In general, the authors tend to support these latter arguments though, importantly, You Ji gives more weight to China's power and military strength, as noted below.

Zhu notes that China's opening up and integration with world markets has increased China's comprehensive power.³⁴ Qin cautions against misunderstandings about China's new power by arguing that a systematic analysis of China's power—using comparative measures of GDP and military expenditure of the United States and most other major powers—shows it is limited relative to that of the United States and other major powers. He argues it would take "at least thirty years before China's GDP catches up with that of the United States. In the meantime, the U.S. economy will continue to grow."³⁵ Moreover, "for the next thirty to fifty years, China will most rationally concentrate on its domestic affairs, and China's power will not be strong enough to threaten the system and the dominant power within."³⁶ With regard to intention, China, he argues, has made many statements putting forward new concepts, such as the "new security concept" and "building the harmonious world" concept, which indicate that China "has no intention to be revolutionary in the international system."³⁷ China's indications of peaceful intentions are further confirmed by other factors, such as its economic interdependence and endorsement of the norms of international society.

However, notwithstanding Qin's optimistic argument about the nature and intent of China's power, most critics consider that the key indicator of whether or not China's new diplomacy is a fundamental change is its national defense strategy and its military modernization program. You examines what

he refers to as "the diplomacy-defense nexus" as a window into this question. He focuses on China's threat perceptions and argues that China is more concerned about maritime military threats than land threats, the two most important of which are conflict involving the United States over Taiwan's moves to gain independence and conflict over the sea lanes of communication (SLOCs). While the latter is less important than the former, in You's view it is an increasing threat since China's domestic development and stability depend on unrestricted global transportation, not least to ensure its energy security. Oil routes from the Middle East through the Hormuz and Malacca Straits³⁸ in Southeast Asia are especially important to protect. You argues that threats to China's sea-borne transportation have changed to become the drivers of a "navy of offense."³⁹ This puts China in a dilemma since the main threat is still conflict over Taiwan, and the combat doctrine and requirements for that are different to that of SLOC protection.⁴⁰ His argument that Beijing "rightly concludes that SLOC security is more a matter of diplomacy than military affairs"⁴¹ leaves open the possibility that this approach is pragmatic and perhaps temporary, especially given his emphasis that acquisitions for such worse-case maritime scenarios continue. China's SLOC diplomacy involves strengthening its relations with littoral and energy-providing states and, of course, the United States, since it is the dominant maritime power. Nonetheless, it is clear from You's analysis that this is a fragile diplomacy-military nexus and one that will require extraordinary management, notwithstanding Qin's earlier point that energy security is and will be an arena of cooperation between China and other states.

With regard to China's perceptions of threats from its land borders, You argues that the implementation of extensive diplomatic settlements with neighboring countries has changed this once negative dynamic to one that is much more positive. He points out that "the PLA's war posture is strategically defensive defense along land borders" with an associated doctrine of "defense as the main principle backed up by limited counterattacks."⁴² *Houfazhiren* (launching retaliatory strikes only after being attacked) is the key doctrinal guidance, which restricts the People's Liberation Army (PLA) to a defensive posture against any continental military threat,⁴³ though key-point counter-attack does not entirely exclude preemptive strikes.⁴⁴

You's analysis of China's defense strategy provides a cautious account that must be factored into calculations about the implications of China's new diplomacy. While it is clear that China has a defensive strategy for both maritime and land threats and that diplomacy is the preferred approach, there are offensive elements within that overall defensive strategy. But given the restrictions on such offensive elements, there is little to suggest that China's new

diplomacy aims to support a defense strategy with a revisionist intention and force structure.

China's power is an important focus of Ann Kent's analysis and gives an interesting twist to the orthodox view. Her central argument is that "the story of China's rise since the nineteenth century suggests that *only with increasing power and status* has China become amenable to international norms and rules and more susceptible to cultural change."⁴⁵ Kent concludes that "the interpenetration of China's diplomacy and the rules of international law, coinciding as they have with an increase in China's power, suggests that, contrary to the arguments of its critics, China has not exploited its power to bypass international law, nor is it likely to do so."⁴⁶

Identity

The third set of thematic considerations that can be taken as argument or perhaps as evidence for tactical or fundamental change revolves around the question of China's contemporary identity. As has become evident, for advocates of fundamental change, China's evolving identity is perhaps the key supporting factor. For Qin, one of the advocates, national identity "refers to the degree to which a state identifies with international society."⁴⁷ For Zhu, "reform and opening up not only changed China's outlook fundamentally, but they also changed China's nature."⁴⁸ She argues that China became a responsible member of the international community following the rules, norms, principles, and procedures of the international institutions and is now a status quo power internalizing these norms through an increasing intensive process of socialization. And for Qin, China is now "experiencing a redefinition of its national identity, transforming itself from an outsider of the international system into one of its members."⁴⁹ Identity is so important for Qin that he argues "if we want to understand China's external behavior, it is necessary to examine the change in its national identity. This is a more reliable indicator for prediction of China's future diplomacy."⁵⁰

A guarded account of China's identity is implied in Yongjin's chapter, which suggests that China's response to the new discourse on sovereignty, which emphasizes legitimate statehood, will have an impact on China's identity at both the domestic and international levels. That is, if China is to claim legitimate statehood as a core element of its identity manifested in its diplomatic practice, then it will need to add substance and go beyond its current public diplomacy on human rights.

Further caution is evident in Harris's analysis, which suggests that China confronts a dilemma with regard to its identity. He refers to China's need to have its past prestige restored and to be treated as a great power, especially by

the United States. But Harris argues that since the United States tends to regard military power an essential attribute for a great power, China feels it is not accepted; hence, China's military modernizations are important for China's identity. Yet, robust pursuit of such programs will increase perceptions of a China threat and undermine the very image that China seeks to be a responsible member of the international society and a builder of a "harmonious world."

Diplomatic Practices and Processes

The fourth set of thematic considerations that informs the question of whether China's diplomacy is a tactical or fundamental change revolve around China's diplomatic practices and processes. At one level, this analysis provides detailed insights into the formulation and implementation of China's diplomacy and into its changes and continuities. Among such trends are the six noted below.

First, in general terms, ideological factors are less important. Personal factors are still important but less so, though Zhang believes they are stronger than does Harris (who notes that strong confrontational and assertive diplomacy by China is less common now than in the past). Moreover, Chinese diplomacy is more confident and less defensive, notwithstanding a sense of vulnerability. If China seeks to offset this vulnerability by robust military modernizations, then it will only increase others' perceptions of a "China threat," which, in turn, will increase China's sense of vulnerability. As mentioned already, this is a dilemma for China. Another trend, as Zhang points out, is China's proactive summit diplomacy involving the public role of the "president as diplomat-in-chief."⁵¹

Second, a major change with regard to the formulation of Chinese diplomacy and foreign policy, which mimics trends in many other countries, is the institutionalization and pluralization of China's foreign-affairs bureaucracy.⁵² This reflects the increasing number of issues on the agenda and the public's interest in China's foreign affairs and diplomacy.⁵³ This, together with the growing number of other bureaucracies involved in diplomacy, poses increasing coordination demands on China's Foreign Ministry that have not always been satisfactorily provided.

Third, China's negotiating behavior, according to Zhang, shows both continuity and change. Principles, or what are seen as guidelines or preconditions, for reaching agreement remain important, but flexibility also continues. Likewise, personal friendship and top-level leadership in negotiations continue to be valued. At the same time, there are changes: China now has a non-aligned foreign policy and diplomacy and generally adheres to the rules and

norms of the international community. At the same time, it expects to be treated as an equal and to enjoy the rights that other countries do. Such negotiating behavior both supports China's identity as a responsible power and provides negotiating leverage.⁵⁴ A final feature of China's changed approach to negotiation is the effort it puts into bureaucratic coordination, although like many other countries this remains a challenge for Chinese negotiators.

Fourth, with regard to some specific diplomatic practices around certain key policies, several trends are evident that indicate both changes and continuities, and, overall, that China's diplomacy is changing to become more like that of most other countries. Though importantly, as Yongjin argues, "Chinese *realpolitik* has not evolved in the direction realist theories have anticipated, either in the form of balance of power, or that of balance of threat in regional and global diplomacy."⁵⁵ Harris notes that with regard to the critical U.S.-China relationship, there is a change from the early years of the George W. Bush administration when U.S. unipolarity was at its height, when attitudes toward China under the diplomatic rhetoric of "strategic competitor" were cool, and when China sought bilateral "constructive partnerships" with a variety of countries as "direct and explicit attempts to counter U.S. unipolarity."⁵⁶ China later sought multilateralism as a "positive way to achieve its diplomatic objectives, including reassuring others but also diluting U.S. influence."⁵⁷ Today, Harris argues, China's "aim is now less ambitious"⁵⁸ and less confronting to the United States.

China's partnerships and strategic dialogues with other countries continue to be important and are pursued increasingly through China's economic diplomacy. While willing to take positions independent of the United States, China is careful not to focus on differences that are highly sensitive to the United States, a diplomatic practice that helps to enhance China's relationships with other countries. The key irritant in the U.S.-China relationship, Taiwan, is for the moment in a period of quiescence according to Harris.⁵⁹ This follows China's move to engage rather than confront the United States over cross-strait relations at a time when the United States is disapproving Taiwanese moves toward independence and when it is preoccupied with the war in Iraq and Afghanistan. These ups and downs lead Harris to argue that the relationship is "complex and unpredictable"⁶⁰ and will continue to be so, a point on which there is little disagreement. It would appear from his overall analysis that China's diplomacy toward the United States, while seeking U.S. respect for China's great power potential, does not aim to challenge the United States in ways that would give rise to a response that might upset its domestic economic and social development and its growing reputation as a responsible member of international society. That China's concern about its

identity is a key consideration in the U.S.-China relationship suggests there is more than tactical revisionist diplomacy at work.

Fifth, as Harris also shows, the U.S.-China relationship also permeates other important aspects of China's diplomacy: the Six-Party Talks on North Korea's nuclear program, relations with Latin America, energy security, and relations with its neighbors. Here again, as Harris argues, "nothing in China's diplomacy suggests that it is comfortable with the dominating influence of the United States. Correspondingly, however, nothing suggests that it is prepared to challenge that influence."⁶¹ For Harris, "this seems to be based less on its waiting to become strong in order to challenge at a later stage than that its priorities remain economic and social."⁶²

Finally, one of the most significant changes is China's embrace of multilateralism. As Wang states, "China is adopting multilateral diplomacy as the process for reconciling its interests with those of the international community."⁶³ Over the last decade, China has increasingly adopted multilateral approaches. For example, China not only actively participates in the region but takes a leading if not necessarily dominating role in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the Six-Party Talks, as well as being active in Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). For China, multilateralism supports several of its key objectives: a world order that is not based on unipolarity, management of regional issues such as North Korea's nuclear program, management of energy security and environmental degradation, and the legitimacy that it seeks to enhance its image as a responsible player.

Brendan Taylor examines another aspect of China's multilateral diplomacy—its "unofficial" diplomacy in conferences, workshops, and meetings. In several forums, for example, the North East Asia Cooperation Dialogue (NEACD) and the IISS Shangri-La Dialogue, China was initially a reluctant player. However, through its attendance and then participation, China learned that such unofficial meetings could be a helpful diplomatic process for representing China's interests. As Taylor argues, China's participation in the NEACD in April 2006 has been interpreted as a diplomatic signal to the United States that China, as the chair of the Six-Party Talks, was willing to cooperate with the United States. Likewise, several years earlier, China used the NEACD to resume bilateral military consultations after the "accidental" bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade by the United States in December 1999.⁶⁴ Multilateralism, as Wang stresses, can be a diplomatic process that supports China's interests. Moreover, as Taylor shows, and as we will discuss further, multilateralism has also helped to socialize China.

At another level, an analysis of China's diplomatic practices and processes provides insights into an important and somewhat novel observation made

by several authors in this volume, namely that China is learning new positive forms of behavior. As Zhu argues, China is "learning while practising, practising while learning, and improving continuously."⁶⁵ Her observation raises questions about *how* Chinese officials learn to adopt new practices, such as multilateralism. Certainly, one of those ways is through their interactions and diplomatic experiences within global and international institutions and with state and nonstate actors. Learning, for example, how multilateralism works has not only influenced how Chinese officials practice diplomacy but also China's actual policies. Furthermore, as we have seen already, changes in policies and diplomacy have an impact on China's identity. Diplomacy and diplomatic actors are therefore important agents of change.

As Zhu argues, there are "many examples of complex learning in China's diplomacy."⁶⁶ Already mentioned is her reference to China's "learning curve." She argues that, during the cold war, China was "detached"; then, during the early post-cold war period, China became "suspicious"; and, finally since the mid-1990s, China has become "actively involved in multilateral institutions."⁶⁷ She mentions China's participation in the United Nations on arms control and disarmament issues and how in 1980 this was undertaken as a measure of goodwill toward the international society by an unprepared delegation. However, "gradually China began to learn the procedures and to offer its own proposals and suggestions, such as banning chemical weapons."⁶⁸ In other words, diplomatic participation in the UN global disarmament forums helped to change China's policies.

Several other examples illustrate how China has learned from its diplomatic experiences. Chinese diplomats' involvement in the fifteen-year negotiations on entry into the WTO and in other international organizations has been a significant learning experience that helped to change China's identity in important ways. As Qin points out, economic diplomacy is not just an instrument for ensuring China's economic development; it is "a process that socializes Chinese officials about the global market."⁶⁹ Through the WTO negotiations, Chinese officials did learn about the global market, and their participation in the forum resulted in China changing many areas of domestic law and social practice. As Wang argues, "Since China's participation in international institutions, more and more international norms are used to define the domestic political agenda, such as the massive new legislation and abrogation of laws in China after its accession into the WTO. This demonstrates how China has been socialized by its participation in the multilateral system and how this has had an impact on China's domestic political, economic, and social development."⁷⁰

Kent also refers to China's learning experiences in the area of international law. Her study of two hundred years of China's interaction with international

law shows how China learned to be an opponent of such law when it was applied unfairly by other states and then how it came to use it instrumentally as a defensive weapon that served China's interests. Over time China became aware not only that law serves its interests but that it is a basic requirement for international order. Kent argues, moreover, that, in the process of being socialized, China "assumed an important role in the development and codification of international law,"⁷¹ which not only served its interests but was a "set of universal norms, principles, and rules that provided the foundation of international order necessary for the international community as a whole."⁷² China's championing of international law became particularly obvious after the Bush administration began to bypass international treaties and invaded Iraq without UN authority,⁷³ resulting in an absence of leadership in maintaining and implementing international law.

Taylor refers to China's learning experience from participation in the unofficial diplomacy forum NEACD and quotes the observation of its founder, Susan Shirk: "When I founded NEACD in 1993, the most reluctant country was China, not North Korea. As the biggest kid on the block, China worried that everyone else would gang up and point fingers at it, blaming it for every problem. With each successive meeting, however, Chinese participants grew more relaxed and more confident. Today, the Chinese Government has become NEACD's most enthusiastic supporter and is promoting the idea of a permanent six-country security organization for Northeast Asia."⁷⁴

Taylor makes several other observations about China's learning processes in multilateral forums: that "China has, to a great extent, become a committed multilateralist"⁷⁵ for highly pragmatic reasons, that one of the rationales of regional countries for enmeshing China in regional multilateral forums was to socialize it into international norms, and that China has engaged with these mechanisms "on its own terms and to actually 'socialize' them to Beijing's way of doing business."⁷⁶ His reference to China's change in 2007 to participate fully in the regional IISS Shangri-La Dialogue and to send a high-ranking officer whose speech aimed to downplay the China threat thesis reminds us that Chinese diplomacy, in this case military diplomacy, aims to make learning a two-way process.

One important implication of the "learning, practising and improving" proposition is that diplomatic processes can be interdependent. From a learning perspective, if other states want China to learn "best practice," then they have to not only set but also comply with those standards. It would be hypocritical and imprudent to have different standards for different countries. As Geoffrey Wiseman argues, the U.S. failure to comply with the standards of international "diplomatic culture" in invading Iraq has resulted in several degrees of lost credibility.⁷⁷ From another angle, interdependent diplomacy is

also evident with regard to the Six-Party Talks and the issue of Taiwan. In many respects, the United States depends on China to lead the Six-Party Talks, while China depends on the United States to support its one-China policy.

Tactical or Fundamental Change: Implications for China's Future Diplomacy and Role in World Politics

What has the book's discussion revealed about the above issue? First, it is important to emphasize the difference between diplomatic tactics and tactical diplomacy. China, like any other country, uses tactics, and this is clearly demonstrated throughout the book.

Second, there is little evidence produced by the authors to suggest that China's new diplomacy involves China simply being engaged in a process of tactical diplomacy with a revisionist agenda. That said, the qualifications, cautions, and obstacles offered by many authors indicate that it would be imprudent to argue categorically at this stage that China's new diplomacy is evidence of a fundamental change that could not be reversed or varied substantially at some point in the future.

Third, consolidating the trends that support such a fundamental change will depend on many factors. One factor is the continuation of the strategic and domestic contexts that originally brought about China's reform and opening-up policies—that is, on a relatively stable international situation in which economic factors dominate strategic competition and on a domestic situation in which economic development and social and political progress are paramount. This will require responses from China's international interlocutors and from within China. For example, the international community, especially the United States, will not only need to adopt diplomatic practices that reinforce the standards of international society that best socialize China; they, too, will need to comply with them. China's diplomacy will need to endorse even more profoundly the norms of international society and especially those connected to legitimate statehood. As China takes on the role of making law in consultation with others, it, too, will need to practice what it preaches.

Fourth, other countries will also need to adopt diplomatic practices that help China to manage several problems. One problem is China's security dilemma, as described by Harris; and another is China's security problematique of "keeping China together," as described by Yongjin Zhang. The first will require China to adopt diplomatic practices with its international interlocutors that unequivocally confirm that it is not a threat, now or in the future; this applies particularly to the United States and Japan. The second

dilemma, as already indicated, will require China to provide for not only a well-off society but also for a society that does not fear its government.

Fifth, it is clear from the emphasis given to the processes of diplomacy that these activities are critically important in states learning and socializing each other in best practice. Moreover, a state's diplomatic practice is a major manifestation of its identity, and this is a signal of fundamental change. More research needs to be done on the role that diplomatic processes and diplomats can play as agents of positive change. The issue of China's change, starting with a revisionist intent or under duress and then through practice and socialization becoming an aspect of its identity, needs more systematic investigation in other contexts or in greater depth than is possible to cover in this book.

Notes

1. Qin, "International Factors and China's External Behavior: Power, Interdependence and Institutions," 62. <--TN: Will update page number at page proof stage>
2. Ibid., 56.
3. Ibid., 57.
4. Zhu, "The Domestic Sources of China's Foreign Policy and Diplomacy," 158.
5. Kent, "China's Changing Attitude to the Norms of International Law and its Global Impact," 96. <--TN: Will update page number at page proof stage>
6. Qin, "International Factors and China's External Behavior: Power, Interdependence and Institutions," 54.
7. Ibid., 51.
8. Zhu, "The Domestic Sources of China's Foreign Policy and Diplomacy," 160.
9. Qin, "International Factors and China's External Behavior: Power, Interdependence and Institutions," 59.
10. Zhu, "The Domestic Sources of China's Foreign Policy and Diplomacy," 177.
11. Ibid., 161.
12. Ibid., 161–62.
13. Ibid., 163.
14. Ibid., 164.
15. Kent, "China's Changing Attitude to the Norms of International Law and its Global Impact," 72.
16. According to the *Concise Oxford English Dictionary*, the definition for tactical is "done or planned to gain a specific military end." The definition for "fundamental" is "of or serving as a foundation or core; of central importance; a central or primary rule or principle" (*Concise Oxford English Dictionary*, 11th ed. [Rev., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006], 575, 1465).
17. Zhu, "The Domestic Sources of China's Foreign Policy and Diplomacy," 172. <--TN: Will update page number at page proof stage>
18. Ibid., 158.
19. Ibid., 173.
20. Ibid., 174, 179.

21. Qin, "International Factors and China's External Behavior: Power, Interdependence and Institutions," 50.
22. Ibid., 56.
23. Ibid., 57.
24. Zhu, "The Domestic Sources of China's Foreign Policy and Diplomacy," 168.
25. Qin, "International Factors and China's External Behavior: Power, Interdependence and Institutions," 60, 64, 72. <?-TN:Will update page number at page proof stage>
26. Ibid., 58-61. <?-TN:Will update page number at page proof stage>
27. Kent, "China's Changing Attitude to the Norms of International Law and its Global Impact," 95.
28. Ibid., 94.
29. Yongjin, "Anticipating China's Future Diplomacy: History, Theory and Social Practice," 196.
30. Ibid., 212.
31. Zhang, "Continuities and Changes in China's Negotiating Behavior," 202.
32. Yongjin, "Anticipating China's Future Diplomacy: History, Theory and Social Practice," 202.
33. Ibid., 205.
34. Zhu, "The Domestic Sources of China's Foreign Policy and Diplomacy," 179-80. <?-TN:Will update page number at page proof stage>
35. Qin, "International Factors and China's External Behavior: Power, Interdependence and Institutions," 49.
36. Ibid., 49.
37. Ibid., 49.
38. You, "China's 'New Diplomacy', Foreign Policy and Defense Strategy," 140.
39. Ibid., 133-34.
40. Ibid., 118. <?-TN:Will update page number at page proof stage>
41. Ibid., 140.
42. Ibid., 124.
43. Ibid., 130.
44. Ibid., 126.
45. Kent, "China's Changing Attitude to the Norms of International Law and its Global Impact," 72-73.
46. Ibid., 95.
47. Qin, "International Factors and China's External Behavior: Power, Interdependence and Institutions," 61.
48. Zhu, "The Domestic Sources of China's Foreign Policy and Diplomacy," 179.
49. Qin, "International Factors and China's External Behavior: Power, Interdependence and Institutions," 62.
50. Ibid., 64.
51. Zhang, "Continuities and Changes in China's Negotiating Behavior," 227.
52. Ibid., 230.
53. Ibid., 226.
54. Ibid., 249.
55. Yongjin, "Anticipating China's Future Diplomacy: History, Theory and Social Practice," 194.
56. Harris, "Case Studies of China's 'New' Diplomacy: the United States; Latin America; the Six-Party Talks; Energy Security; Regional Neighbors," 314.

57. Ibid., 313.
58. Ibid., 314.
59. Harris, "China's Strategic Environment: Implications for Diplomacy," 38. <?-TN:Will update page number at page proof stage>
60. Ibid., 317.
61. Harris, "Case Studies of China's 'New' Diplomacy: the United States; Latin America; the Six-Party Talks; Energy Security; Regional Neighbors," 331.
62. Ibid., 331.
63. Wang, "Analyzing Features in China's 'New' Diplomacy: Strategic Dialogues and Multilateral Diplomacy," 264.
64. Taylor, "China's 'Unofficial' Diplomacy," 294.
65. Zhu, "The Domestic Sources of China's Foreign Policy and Diplomacy," 163.
66. Ibid., 164.
67. Ibid., 164.
68. Ibid., 164.
69. Qin, "International Factors and China's External Behavior: Power, Interdependence and Institutions," 57.
70. Wang, "Analyzing Features in China's 'New' Diplomacy: Strategic Dialogues and Multilateral Diplomacy," 274-75.
71. Kent, "China's Changing Attitude to the Norms of International Law and its Global Impact," 80.
72. Ibid., 82.
73. Ibid., 91.
74. Taylor, "China's 'Unofficial' Diplomacy," 294.
75. Ibid., 305.
76. Ibid., 305.
77. Geoffrey Wiseman, "Pax Americana: Bumping Into Diplomatic Culture," *International Studies Perspectives* 6 (2005): 409-30.