China's
Asymmetric Statecraft

Contents

List of Tables / viii

Acknowledgments / x

Note on Romanization, Names, and Translation / xiii

List of Abbreviations / xiv

Introduction: Understanding China's Regional Diplomacy / 3

1 A Regional Competition Theory of Asymmetric Statecraft / 18

2 East Asia, 1955–65 / 56

3 South Asia, 1955–63 / 91

4 Indochina, 1962–75 / 123

5 Regional Diplomacy in the New Era / 155

Conclusion / 180

Notes / 189

Bibliography / 237

Index / 263

INTRODUCTION

Understanding China's Regional Diplomacy

"China" in Chinese means "Middle Kingdom" and originally referred to the region in which the emperor lived. As the prominent American sinologist John King Fairbank (1907–91) noted, the Middle Kingdom perspective is a useful one for scholars seeking to understand how Chinese leaders view the world beyond their country.[1] European great powers weakened the Asian tributary system, hitherto dominated by China, in the late nineteenth century. The Chinese revolution of 1911, moreover, ended the Qing Dynasty, thus initiating a new chapter of Chinese modernization. However, China's Nationalist and Communist leaders alike were significantly influenced by traditional Chinese culture, not least the Middle Kingdom perspective, from which, consciously or not, they viewed China's foreign relations. Indeed, these leaders expressed sentiments arising from the Middle Kingdom concept through the use of ideological terminology. For example, as Fairbank observed, the People's Republic of China (PRC) expressed its world view through the lens of Marxism-Leninism.[2] Fairbank's scholarly view thus has significant implications for understanding China's foreign relations. In a dyadic relationship, the concepts of the Middle Kingdom and its "neighbouring states" exist simultaneously. Therefore, scholars cannot construct the concept of the Middle Kingdom without its counterpart – that of its neighbouring states. As such, Chinese regional diplomacy is integral to scholars' understanding of Chinese foreign policy.

As Fairbank put it well, the PRC seriously considered its regional diplomacy toward its immediate neighbours. Wang Jiaxiang, the founding director of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Liaison Department, stressed this point in his inaugural speech to the department in March 1951. In his words, “we must pay attention to countries in our neighbourhood, because they are very close to us. Any sign of trouble or changes in these countries will have an immediate impact on us.” Wang elaborated his point with an analogy: “If a neighbour comes down with a bad cold, you must avoid catching it.”[3] In February 1989, Liu Huaqing, deputy secretary-general of the Central Military Commission (CMC), also underlined the importance of regional diplomacy: “It is very complex, with respect to the situations of our neighbourhood and neighbouring states … [We] need to make predictions and be prepared for incidents.”[4] In October 2013, Chinese president Xi Jinping attended “the Conference on the Diplomatic Work with Neighbouring Countries” in Beijing. According to an official press release, Xi Jinping placed emphasis on the utmost strategic significance to China of its neighbouring countries.[5] The immediate audiences to China’s rise are the country’s weaker neighbours. Therefore, understanding Chinese regional diplomacy is crucial to understanding the implications of China’s ascent.

How does China manage relationships with its immediate neighbours? According to Fairbank, Chinese traditional statecraft carries considerable significance for scholars’ understanding of contemporary foreign conduct. In ancient Asia, China tailored its regional diplomacy through the lens of “asymmetric statecraft,” i.e., how a strong concentration of power engages with multiple weaker neighbours, whereby selective and uniform strategies played crucial roles. Ancient Chinese leaders sometimes adopted selective strategies, such as the *fen er zhi zhi* (divide-and-rule) strategy. For example, the Han Dynasty exploited internal discord between the Xiongnu (Hsiung-nu) by cooperating with the Southern Xiongnu, sending expeditions to outflank the Northern Xiongnu.[6] The Sui Dynasty adopted the *li qiang he ruo* (splitting the strong while cooperating with the weak) strategy toward tribal groups under the rule of the Tujue (Turks)[7] and exacerbated divisions in the Tujue Khanate to a far greater extent by joining forces with the Eastern Tujue Khanate against the Western Tujue Khanate.[8] All these strategies exemplify the practice of selective strategies, but Chinese leaders also adopted uniform strategies at times. The aim of *huai rou yuan ren* (cherishing men from afar), for instance, was to educate foreign leaders in China’s neighbourhood. To consolidate a Sinocentric interstate order, China adopted a strategy of *hou wang bo lai* (giving much and receiving little) toward its weaker neighbours. For example, the Hongwu Emperor, the founding emperor of the Ming Dynasty, compiled a list of fifteen countries, including Korea, Japan, and Vietnam, that were "not to be invaded" without legitimate reasons.[9] The list itself demonstrates Chinese patterns of uniform strategies – attempts to treat all weaker neighbours in much the same way.

Since 1949, divergent perspectives – Chinese traditional cultures, modern sovereign norms, and Marxism-Leninism – have been reconciled with the practice of Chinese regional diplomacy. On the one hand, equality among sovereign states has become a key element of modern international law. As a member of the international community, the PRC publicly accepted this norm and developed the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence. Meanwhile, Marxism-Leninism has also been a guiding principle of the PRC's foreign relations. As a socialist country, the PRC emphasizes upholding of the principles of both internationalism and patriotism.[10] Thus, its foreign policy statements usually avoid mention of traditional Chinese statecraft concepts such as selective or uniform strategies. On the other hand, the PRC's principal leaders have proven to be receptive to notions of traditional Chinese statecraft, as demonstrated by their understanding of Northern Song Dynasty historian Sima Guang's book on governance, *Zizhi tongjian (Comprehensive Mirror in Aid of Governance).* This general chronicle of Chinese history, based on records from the reign of King Weilie of the Eastern Zhou Dynasty to the reign of Emperor Shizong of Later Zhou, covering a period of 1,362 years, summarizes the lessons of statecraft. According to official accounts, Mao Zedong reviewed the entire book seventeen times during his life, and Deng Xiaoping read the chronicle "countless times."[11] Moreover, in his speeches, Xi Jinping has frequently referred to Chinese classical works, including *Zizhi tongjian*.[12] The PRC thus accepted the norms of the modern sovereign system, used Marxist-Leninist terminology, and practised foreign policy through the lens of traditional Chinese statecraft.[13] Consequently, the world beyond China needed to deal with the paradox of how to reconcile these divergent perspectives toward an understanding of the PRC's foreign policy, particularly its regional diplomacy toward immediate neighbours.

One way of coping with this difficulty is by identifying certain factors of enduring relevance and treating them as the starting point for analyzing Chinese regional diplomacy. Two constant factors in particular are worth noting: 1) China's neighbours can generally be considered weaker powers, and 2) Chinese regional diplomacy needs to deal with more than one weak neighbour simultaneously. One scholar analyzes the features of Chinese regional diplomacy by referring to the case of South Asia:

> During the 1959–60 period, China peacefully settled all the issues that had arisen between Kathmandu and Peking [Beijing], and on almost all issues it showed the spirit of accommodation, generosity, and reasonableness towards Nepal. By doing so, Peking tried to demonstrate that it was prepared to settle issues peacefully and indirectly suggested that in its border dispute with India, the latter was to be blamed. This was, in fact, a part of China's diplomatic game by which it sought to extend influence in Nepal and to isolate India from there.[14]

The author argues that China adopted a "selective strategy" toward India and Nepal. This case raises an important research question: under what circumstances did China treat weaker neighbours either the same way, i.e., through uniform strategies, or try to differentiate among them through selective concessions or targeted coercion, i.e., selective strategies? In other words, when does China adopt uniform or selective strategies toward its multiple weaker neighbours? The term "uniform strategies" refers to those Chinese attempts to treat weaker neighbours in the same manner, whereas the term "selective strategies" refers to the Chinese approach of differentiating among many weaker neighbours by either offering selective concessions or applying targeted coercion. A systematic analysis of Chinese regional diplomacy suggests that China adopts uniform strategies in some regions and selective strategies in others. Why does China practise its regional diplomacy in different ways?

This question is one of both theoretical and policy significance. On the theoretical side, Chinese regional diplomacy provides scholars with an opportunity to generalize about a great power's patterns of behaviour. On the policy side, it offers policy makers a basis for understanding Chinese geopolitical positions and ambitions. For example, security conflicts exist between China and its weaker neighbours in the South China Sea and South Asia. Although the ascent of China has increased the power gap between it and its weaker neighbours in these two regions, it never settles the territorial disputes among them. In managing such conflicts, however, China produces different patterns of regional diplomacy in these regions. In the South China Sea, China seeks to maintain a uniform strategy toward Vietnam, the Philippines, and Malaysia; in South Asia, by contrast, China practises selective strategies – carefully maintaining the status quo with India and enhancing Pakistan's positions. Understanding the implications of Chinese behaviour would be particularly useful for the United States and its allies in Asia. Therefore, this book seeks to construct a theory that better explains China's regional diplomacy, shedding light on contemporary debates about Chinese regional diplomacy in the new era.

THEORETICAL MOTIVATIONS

The major theoretical motivation behind this book is to better explain China's regional diplomacy toward its immediate neighbours. Academic interest in Chinese regional diplomacy is indeed surging, but existing explanations fail to adequately address the core question of uniform or selective strategies. Scholars either examine China's policy toward one particular weaker neighbour – thus missing the connections among China's strategies toward multiple weaker neighbours in a regional context – or argue that external threats or domestic-ideological factors drive Chinese regional diplomacy. Adding to international relations theories that focus on external threats, domestic politics, and ideology, this book proposes a regional competition theory, which argues that both the number of regional competitors and alignment relationships shape a great power's regional diplomacy with respect to uniform strategies or selective strategies. The external threat theory, the domestic-ideological theory, and the regional competition theory are introduced here and presented in full in Chapter 1.

The external threat theory views a state's foreign policy as a response to external threat, defined mainly by the military strength of the state's main enemies. This theory addresses the principal question of restraints on Chinese regional diplomacy by focusing on the international distribution of military strength. However, it inadequately explains Chinese regional practices for two reasons. First, China may adopt similar regional strategies when its external threat perception changes. For example, China began to view the Soviet Union as its primary threat after the Sino-Soviet border clash in 1969, but it did not change its policies toward its weaker Indochinese allies – North Vietnam (officially, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam or DRV) and Cambodia – at the same time. Instead, it maintained its uniform strategies toward these weaker allies both before and after the Sino-Soviet border conflict. In other words, the external threat theory cannot adequately explain the continuity of Chinese regional diplomacy. Second, China may adopt a different regional strategy even as its external threat perception remains the same. For example, from 1958 to 1959, China had substantial military capabilities in South Asia, whereas the Soviet Union did not have any military presence in the region. A country without military capabilities (the Soviet Union) could not threaten one with military capabilities (China), but Soviet aid packages to China's South Asian neighbours led to Sino-Soviet competition in the region. Accordingly, China changed its regional diplomacy from uniform strategies to selective strategies. The external threat theory cannot fully account for the change in China's South Asian policy between 1958 and 1959. This example also suggests that, whereas military strength is a crucial means of dealing with regional competition, it is not the only one.

The domestic-ideological theory examines domestic bases of foreign policy and does a good job of advancing the understanding of internal-international linkage. This theory suggests persuasively that domestic problems exacerbate a state's security problems, and it explains why China adopts different strategies given similar international conditions. Nonetheless, the theory has two limitations in explaining Chinese regional practices. First, it inadequately explains why China adopts selective strategies toward multiple weaker neighbours given the domestic-ideological conditions at a particular historical moment. For example, from 1973 to 1975, China continued with its Cultural Revolution to resist American "imperialism" and Soviet "revisionists." Constant domestic-ideological priorities, however, cannot fully explain China's selective strategies toward the DRV and Cambodia: circumscribing the DRV's armed struggle in South Vietnam but encouraging the armed struggle in Cambodia. Second, the theory does not adequately explain why China may adopt similar strategies toward multiple weaker neighbours under significantly different domestic-ideological conditions. For instance, China's domestic conditions in the two periods 1956–57 and 1960–61 were significantly different. In the first period, China stressed economic construction, whereas in the second period, it emphasized class struggle. However, China made territorial concessions to Burma in both periods even though economic crisis occurred only during the second period.

The external threat theory and the domestic-ideological theory provide key insights into asymmetric statecraft and Chinese regional diplomacy but have certain limitations in explaining the practice of Chinese asymmetric statecraft. The regional competition theory proposed in this book can help to overcome these limitations. A great power is a nation-state with independent offensive military capabilities superior to those of any other state in a region; a small power is one that does not possess this degree of military strength. From a great power perspective, a regional competitor is a state that does not share common objectives and that has independent capabilities in the region. Offensive military capabilities and foreign assistance are two major means of competition. Alliance or alignment involves some level of commitment and an exchange of benefits for allied countries. In particular, an alignment amounts to mutual expectations between two or more states that they will have each other's support in disputes or wars with other states.

The regional competition theory involves several hypotheses.

If a great power confronts a single regional competitor, its asymmetric statecraft toward weaker non-allied neighbours serves as a signal to its regional competitor. By communicating a particular image, the great power can 1) more effectively deter the competitor, 2) enhance its strength without major resistance from that competitor, and 3) weaken the competitor's potential or existing alliances. Therefore, the great power projects and maintains a consistent image to the competitor by establishing a pattern of behaviour through uniform strategies.

If a great power confronts multiple regional competitors, this situation may challenge the power gap between the great power and the weaker non-allied powers. The great power hence bases its asymmetric statecraft toward weaker powers on the degree of its regional competitors' involvement. The greater the number of regional competitors and weaker powers in a region, the greater the possibility of differing degrees of involvement. The great power thus adopts a selective strategy toward multiple weaker neighbours.

If a great power is an alignment leader, it needs to solve two types of problems: 1) the collective action problem, which occurs when members of an alliance are engaged in a struggle against a potential enemy, and each member wishes to benefit from the public goods (such as security) that the alignment offers but expects other members to assume the greater responsibility; and 2) "commitment problems," which occur when allies share the expectation of fighting a potential enemy, but each one faces the abandonment/entrapment dilemma. A lower degree of commitment to allies would increase the chance of being abandoned by allies in the event of conflict. A higher degree of commitment to allies would increase the chance of being entrapped by allies out of their interests.

The alignment leader's confrontation of a regional competitor signifies that the latter is the former's main rival. The alignment leader therefore seeks to mobilize all available resources against the regional competitor. As this gives weaker allies the incentive to be free riders in this conflict, the alignment leader faces collective action problems. Consequently, it must offer greater incentives to weaker allies by adopting selective strategies in dealing with them.

When confronting multiple, as opposed to single, regional competitors, the alignment leader resists free-riding regional competitors amid great power conflict. Weaker allies demand concessions that, if refused, will likely result in the less committed among them abandoning the alignment leader in the event of conflict or entrapping the alignment leader in some conflict only for the weaker allies' interests. To avoid this type of commitment problem, therefore, the alignment leader needs to adopt uniform strategies that demonstrate an impartial level of security commitment benefiting all members of the alignment.

The regional competition theory is a dynamic theory that accounts for foreign policy variation, for three reasons. First, in dyadic relationships, the concept of competition implies the existence of different objectives. A particular state's objectives are frequently subject to change. A changing relationship between two states, based on an analysis of their objectives, can therefore occur even more frequently. Second, regional competition is based on the distribution of offensive military strength and assistance capabilities at the regional level. A global shift in this balance occurs less frequently – over decades – than a regional shift, which can occur in the space of a few years. By using the concept of regional competition, scholars can discuss how changes in the regional balance of power affect foreign policy. Third, the regional competition theory examines both systemic and process variables. The distribution of capabilities is a systemic variable, while relationships are process variables. The regional competition theory classifies relationships as asymmetric relationships, competitive relationships, and alignment relationships. The existence of asymmetric relationships is a basic premise of this research project, whereas competitive relationships and alignment relationships are explaining factors to account for policy changes. Countries in a specific region that have different objectives and independent capabilities have competitive relationships. In the event of armed conflict, countries with expectations of mutual support have alignment relationships. Together, independent capabilities, competitive relationships, and alignment relationships explain a great power's asymmetric statecraft. In brief, the number of regional competitors a great power has and its alignment relationships shape the great power's asymmetric statecraft, in terms of uniform strategies or selective strategies, toward multiple weaker neighbours.

This book conducts in-depth analysis of three historical cases: China's policies in East Asia from 1955 to 1965; in South Asia from 1955 to 1963; and in Indochina from 1962 to 1975. On the one hand, because China enjoyed tremendous advantages over its weaker neighbours in Asia during these periods, records of Chinese regional diplomacy provide opportunities for scholars to develop theories of asymmetric statecraft. On the other hand, in each case, China interchangeably adopted uniform strategies or selective strategies. Because the number of China's regional competitors was subject to change, each case demonstrates how this changing number affected China's regional diplomacy toward its neighbours. Moreover, differences across cases demonstrate how alignment relationships also shaped China's regional diplomacy. In the first two time periods, China's targets were weaker non-allies, whereas in the third period, China's targets were its allies. The empirical record for the three cases includes a total of thirty-one Chinese policies toward particular weaker neighbours and eleven Chinese diplomatic manoeuvres in the three distinct regions. This selection of cases enables me to use process-tracing techniques and structured, focused comparison to examine causal relationships between independent variables and the dependent variable. By analyzing extensive primary documents and scholarly works, I will demonstrate how the number of regional competitors and alignment relationships shapes a great power's asymmetric statecraft, based on Chinese regional diplomacy during the Cold War. Chapter 1 will include an in-depth discussion of how these cases were selected.

Historical Significance

This book evaluates the regional competition theory by analyzing extensive archival and media sources, drawing on a wealth of archival evidence, much of it previously inaccessible. Archival sources include those of the Chinese Foreign Ministry; nine provincial and municipal archives in China; Russian and German archives; the US National Archives; the Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon, and Ford Presidential Libraries; and the NATO Archives in Brussels. It also develops arguments by analyzing obscure Chinese-language publications on the Chinese Communist Party and China's contemporary foreign relations from various libraries in China and the United States. Finally, it analyzes China's recent regional practices through an investigation of official publications, semi-official media sources, scholarly articles, and online sources. Detailed discussions of archival sources are presented at the beginning of the Bibliography. The archival sources enabled me to provide historical narratives that contrast with traditional views of the Cold War dynamics in Asia. Conventional wisdom defines the Cold War in terms of the US-Soviet bipolar rivalry. Rather, by dividing

Asia into the maritime East Asia, South Asia, and Indochina, this book considers different features of competition in different subregions in Asia. When China was a Soviet ally between 1955 and 1958–59, the US-China confrontation reflected US-Soviet rivalry. After the 1958–59 period, Sino-Soviet policy differences changed the landscape and resulted in the US-Soviet-Chinese triangular competition in East Asia and South Asia. After the 1964–65 period, this triangular competition extended to Indochina. When the US military withdrew from Indochina in 1973, the Sino-Soviet competition became the defining feature of Cold War tensions in Asia.

Between 1955 and 1965, Japan and Taiwan were mainland China's weaker neighbours in East Asia.[15] Meanwhile, the United States was China's regional competitor. Japan was a defeated power without substantial military strength, and Taiwan depended on American aid for its survival. During this period, the United States established military bases in Japan and Taiwan. Between 1955 and 1958, Beijing interchangeably applied pressure on or sought compromises with both Tokyo and Taipei. However, these pressures and compromises formed a larger, single, uniform strategy that Beijing applied to both Japan and Taiwan. In the summer of 1958, the Soviet Union emerged as a new competitor in East Asia, and China became increasingly concerned about the degree of both American and Soviet involvement in the region. Between 1958 and 1965, Beijing adjusted its policy, adopting selective strategies toward Japan and Taiwan in order to maintain its power advantage over these weaker neighbours.

India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Burma, and Nepal were China's non-allied neighbours in South Asia. Between 1955 and 1963, the United States was China's regional competitor, providing aid to the South Asian countries in order to limit Chinese influence. Between 1955 and 1959, China adopted uniform strategies toward, and sought compromises with, its weaker South Asian neighbours in an effort to dissuade their alignment with the United States. In the autumn of 1959, the Soviet Union became a regional competitor to China by extending aid in South Asia to weaken Chinese influence. Accordingly, between 1959 and 1963, China began assessing the degree of American and Soviet involvement in South Asia and adopted selective strategies toward its weaker neighbours in that region, countering the impact of American and Soviet aid while strengthening its own power advantages.

Between 1962 and 1975, North Vietnam and Cambodia were China's weaker Indochinese allies. The United States was China's regional competitor in the 1960s. During South Vietnam's disputes with North Vietnam and Cambodia, US support for South Vietnam made the Indochina conflict part of the broader US-China competition. Between 1962 and 1965, China adopted selective strategies toward North Vietnam and Cambodia to encourage Cambodia's armed struggle with the United States. In the spring of 1965, the Soviet Union became a regional competitor with China by extending aid to the two Indochinese countries. The Soviet aid helped China to counter US influence by supporting Chinese allies, but it also weakened Chinese influence by offering those allies new sources of external support and realignment options. China accordingly adopted uniform strategies toward North Vietnam and Cambodia to prevent their realignment with the Soviet Union. The US commitment to the complete withdrawal of armed forces from Indochina in 1973 left the Soviet Union as China's sole regional competitor. China then adopted selective strategies toward its weaker allies to pre-empt Soviet expansion in Indochina.

Policy Implications

The major policy motivation of this book is to contribute to the contemporary debate on China's regional diplomacy. The regional competition theory has policy implications to account for China's regional behaviour.

Chinese scholars have arrived at two important conclusions with respect to Chinese regional diplomacy. First, China is able to exert critical influence in its neighbourhood. For example, Chinese cooperation with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has shaped the regional order in Southeast Asia.[16] Also, as a great power neighbouring South Asia, China has strengthened the "8+1" cooperative mechanisms in the multilateral framework of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC).[17] According to Yan Xuetong,

> from a geographical perspective … it is more likely that our country can successfully shape the neighbourhood than the global environment. If we can concentrate our resources on shaping the neighbourhood, it will reduce direct pressures from the periphery … Our economic strength, particularly trade abilities, is global; but both military strength and political power are still regional. Therefore, [we] should take active initiatives on global economic and trade affairs, but not get involved in political-military affairs beyond our neighbourhood.[18]

Second, Chinese scholars emphasize the close connections between Chinese regional diplomacy (*zhoubian waijiao*) and major-power diplomacy (*daguo waijiao*). These connections can be analyzed in three ways. First, third parties complicate China's conduct of diplomacy vis-à-vis the United States. These third parties, usually China's weaker neighbours, can be either US allies or friends of China.[19] Second, the US military presence in the Asia-Pacific region could be used during American allies' security conflict with China. Consequently, in the eyes of many Chinese analysts, the US forward defence in Asia has demonstrated a tendency directed against China in the context of US-China power competition.[20] Third, the United States has deliberately fostered a degree of tension in East Asia, maintained and strengthened its military presence there, and exploited small powers' suspicions of China's rise to induce their greater political, economic, and security cooperation with the United States.[21]

US policy has resulted in two critical implications for Chinese regional diplomacy. On the one hand, China was aware that the United States would, to some extent, encourage China's neighbours to implement assertive policies vis-à-vis China. For example, Sino-ASEAN security problems, beyond those concerning territorial settlements in the South China Sea, could reflect the instability emanating from a power struggle between China and the United States. Moreover, new problems could potentially arise in Sino-ASEAN relations if the United States, China, and ASEAN maintain their current pace of power accumulation.[22] Likewise, China was also sensitive to Indian attempts to establish strategic superiority over Pakistan through US-India cooperation.[23] On the other hand, China has understood the irreplaceable role of the American military presence in Asia with respect to protecting Chinese interests. The US presence, a source of reassurance for many of China's neighbours amid their engagements with China, ensured regional stability and cooperation. Therefore, China made no attempt to exclude American influence in Asia but instead emphasized the United States' "constructive" role on the Chinese periphery.[24]

Despite the consensus on China's ability to exert critical influence in its neighbourhood, and on the close connections between China's regional diplomacy and major-power diplomacy, Chinese scholars debate whether China should develop distinctive policies toward multiple weaker neighbours. Some argue that China should adopt uniform strategies that make no distinction among all such neighbours. According to Sun Xuefeng and Chen Hanxi, China should "exercise self-restraint" toward small powers in the Chinese neighbourhood, with the goal of maintaining stable US-China relations.[25] Xue Li argues that China should uphold a “principle of universal benefits” and make “appropriate concessions” to obtain the support of weaker neighbours.[26] In Zhang Yunling’s view, China has always adopted uniform strategies toward weaker neighbours. “When the South China Sea disputes escalated in 2013, China took various initiatives toward ASEAN – upgrading a free-trade zone, constructing a community of shared future for all humankind, negotiating a Code of Conduct of the South China Sea, and promoting the conclusion of treaties of good neighbourliness and friendship.”[27] As he puts it, China should establish more mechanisms with practical implications with ASEAN members, in pursuit of common security.[28] According to Fang Changping and Zheng Ling, China must avoid any selective treatment of ASEAN members.[29] This view is shared by Luo Shengrong and Zhao Qi, who emphasize that China should simultaneously promote cooperation with Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia, and Brunei toward stable relationships in the South China Sea.[30]

By contrast, other Chinese scholars emphasize the virtues of selective strategies.[31] Gao Cheng points out that “China can develop distinctive policies toward neighboring countries, in accordance with their political and economic relationships with China.” China “needs to further investigate the nature of each bilateral relationship and accordingly develop selective policies to deal with them.”[32] In particular, China should “cautiously hedge against” the Philippines and Vietnam and “actively cooperate with” Malaysia.[33] Zhou Fangyin argues that China should adopt a selective strategy – specifically, identifying targets, choosing windows of opportunity to implement policies, stepping up targeted pressures on specific countries, and avoiding uniform pressures.[34] He suggests that China establish deterrent postures in some cases while exercising self-restraint in others. In his view, Japan and the Philippines would be targets of coercion, whereas other regional audiences would be targets of reassurance.[35] In brief, as Wei Ling has suggested, China selectively engages with different countries on different issues while cooperating with weaker neighbours. Therefore, China should tailor its selective strategies in a more nuanced way by making distinctions between different countries to reflect their engagement on different issues.[36]

In light of the debate, Qi Huaigao and Ling Shengli suggest a potential way of reconciling these divergent perspectives. According to Qi Huaigao, China should adopt different policies in different regions: it should also proposes the hypotheses of the regional competition theory and provides procedures for evaluating the theory.

Chapters 2 to 4 examine China's Cold War diplomacy in East Asia, South Asia, and Indochina, using comparative case studies and process-tracing methods to assess the explanatory power of the regional competition theory.

Chapter 5 applies the theory to explain Chinese regional diplomacy in Southeast Asia and South Asia in recent years and predicts future Chinese behaviour with respect to shaping regional geopolitical maps of Asia.

The Conclusion summarizes major theoretical findings, identifies theoretical implications of historical research and area studies, and discusses future research on asymmetric statecraft.

© UBC Press 2023

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, without prior written permission of the publisher.

LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES CANADA CATALOGUING IN PUBLICATION

Title: China's asymmetric statecraft : alignments, competitors, and regional diplomacy / Yuxing Huang.
Names: Huang, Yuxing, author.
Series: Contemporary Chinese studies.
Description: Series statement: Contemporary Chinese studies | Includes bibliographical references and index.
Identifiers: Canadiana (print) 20220411913 | Canadiana (ebook) 20220411956 | ISBN 9780774868112 (hardcover) | ISBN 9780774868136 (PDF) | ISBN 9780774868143 (EPUB)
Subjects: LCSH: China – Foreign relations – 1949- | LCSH: China – Foreign relations – Asia. | LCSH: Asia – Foreign relations – China.
Classification: LCC DS777.8 .H83 2023 | DDC 327.5105 – dc23

UBC Press gratefully acknowledges the financial support for our publishing program of the Government of Canada (through the Canada Book Fund) and the British Columbia Arts Council. Publication was also made possible with financial support from Tsinghua University.

Set in Garamond and SimSun by Artegraphica Design Co.
Copy editor: Frank Chow
Proofreader: Dallas Harrison
Indexer: Margaret de Boer

UBC Press
The University of British Columbia
2029 West Mall
Vancouver, BC V6T 1Z2
www.ubcpress.ca