

China Goes Global: The Partial Power

David Shambaugh

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China has gone global, but most China experts in the American academic community have gone local, moving in the opposite direction. As Shambaugh has observed rightly, 'big picture' books on China in the United States have been written by virtually anyone but China scholars. A crucial reason for this academic trend is the current obsession with theories and methods in the social sciences departments, which has changed the incentive structure for scholars who compete for employment, promotion, recognition, and funding. Moreover, given the increasingly complex nature of China's greater presence in the world on so many dimensions, it is also the case that a new generation of scholars trained to be specialized in narrow research topics would arguably find it difficult to write a big book even if they want to. As guilty as many others, this reviewer also encourages his own students to follow a narrow path out of fear that they would otherwise be placed at a competitive disadvantage even though he shares the same concern with Shambaugh.

Shambaugh clearly wants to write a 'go-to' book on Chinese foreign relations for the general public, providing a broad coverage and using an accessible writing style. He is uniquely qualified to generalize about China without being superficial because he draws from his detailed knowledge of the Chinese system and discourse based on decades of research and extensive field experience. He has succeeded brilliantly in what he hopes to achieve with this book.

For students of International Relations and Asia, this book offers at least three large benefits. First, the book has been a *tour de force* on Chinese foreign relations in recent years. It examines the Chinese discourse on their country's roles in the world, the Chinese foreign policy-making institutions and process, Chinese relations with the different regions of the world, China in the global institutions, and China's global presence in the economic, cultural, and security arenas. Shambaugh's analysis of the Chinese debates over foreign policy, the Chinese decision-making process, and the Chinese security activities around the world is particularly

illuminating reflecting on his well-known expertise in these areas. This is a must-read for students of Chinese foreign policy.

Second, Shambaugh rejects much of the current hype about China dominating the world. The Pew Research Center published its latest global survey on 18 July 2013, which shows that majorities or pluralities in 23 out of the 39 countries surveyed believed that China has surpassed or will soon surpass the United States as the leading power. In contrast, Shambaugh argues that China is a partial power, with greater presence but not necessarily greater influence. He maintains that China's global presence is broader but shallow, a pithy assessment that is likely to become widely cited. His is a reasoned and empirically grounded position differing from both the 'dragon slayers' and 'panda huggers' in the American policy debate on China. Some of those views are strongly expressed but shallow in reasoning and evidence. They would benefit from reading Shambaugh's book.

This reviewer agrees that China has excelled in only a few areas such as trade and that the China model is really not emulated even in the developing world. There is virtually no interest in the developed countries in learning from the Chinese development experience unlike their past fascination with the Japanese model. As a non-democratic country, China cannot hope to have much soft power in the contemporary world in which virtually all advanced countries and emerging powers are democracies.

Third, readers who have expertise on China could also benefit from reading what Shambaugh says about what is going on empirically and intellectually related to China in other regions of the world. There was a time when China scholars only needed to travel back and forth between their countries and China. No more. They now have to follow China around the world, which is both rewarding and perplexing. Shambaugh sheds light on the poor state of China studies in many parts of the world, including emerging giants like Brazil. This reviewer concurs based on his own observation. The developed countries simply dominate in China studies like in so many other areas. Moving around the world, one hears so many different stories about China – one wonders if they are talking about the same country. Not assuming that one has to study China or any country for that matter, it is fascinating to observe such an asymmetry of knowledge production despite the rise of the rest and a more globalized world. One hopes for other regions to rise intellectually, which could also offer a needed corrective to the prevailing scholarship in the developed countries that is necessarily shaped by their own historical experience and values.

As Shambaugh himself has made it clear, one has to pick and choose. That is understandable, and Shambaugh has already covered so much. But if one still hopes for more as this reviewer does, one wants to hear how Shambaugh theorizes the ‘China going global’ phenomenon. Put simply, what is the theoretical big picture about China’s rise? Shambaugh has loosely followed Joseph Nye’s definition of power in Nye’s 2011 book *The Future of Power*. But Shambaugh’s theoretical basis for his description of China’s partial power and shallow influence is not fully explained. One wonders if it is to be expected for any rising power to have a partial power initially and broad but thin global presence before thickening it. Answers to that kind of questions would require explicit comparisons with other great powers rising in history. Also aiming at a broad audience and examining the contemporary world politics, Nye explicitly compares different countries, including China, breaking down different dimensions of power, and reaches a similar conclusion about China’s power status as Shambaugh does. Thus, readers who want to acquire an insightful and deep knowledge about China in the world as well as International Relations analysis of China’s rise are recommended to read both books, which complement each other.

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