

main conflict in the chapter, otherwise known as the Imjin War (1592–1598). The war is set up primarily as a prelude to Qing rule, and Westad recommends JaHyun Kim Haboush's book *The Great East Asian War and the Birth of the Korean Nation* (Columbia University Press, 2016) multiple times. The personalities involved get relatively short shrift; the Wanli Emperor at least arrives via some block quotes and a citation to work written or edited by Oxford University's Jay Lewis. The physical compactness and beauty of the book occasionally has its downside, in that the author largely leaves the distillation of structural transformation to the reader amid the nimble excitement of bibliographical attainments.

Chapter two places Westad in more familiar terrain, covering 1866–1992. Li Hongzhang gets bumped from the stage in favour of the more narratively efficient Yuan Shikai in Seoul. Again, some wonderful fragments appear in this chapter, some of them derived from Yuanchong Wang's research on tributary relations. Westad moves with admirable dexterity through previously mastered topics like the Chinese civil war, although his comment that the Korean War "radicalized CCP policies, so that campaigns against real or perceived enemies intensified and became more brutal and long-lasting" (p. 119) seems to beg for a counterfactual argument.

The concluding chapter of *Empire and Righteous Nation* provides a coda rather than the capstone to a unified whole; in other words, the implications of the tributary histories covered in the book's longer core might have been more abundantly worked out. But the text's temporal and thematic ambitions at least open up new questions, like the general imbalance in the literature where Xi Jinping's connections to the Chinese foreign policies of the past are constantly interrogated but Kim Jong Un's mere awareness of Korea's pre-colonial history, or Sino-Korean relations prior to 1894, is never discussed. In the end, this book represents an admirable effort to encounter and synthesize an exceptionally wide swath of scholarship, and the book will be useful for teaching, debate and for the occasional intelligence analyst trying to decipher Beijing's grand strategy on the peninsula.

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Sanctions with Chinese Characteristics: Rhetoric and Restraint in China's Diplomacy

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Amidst the mounting anxiety over China's supposedly more aggressive foreign policy, Angela Poh's valuable new book explores an intriguing puzzle: what explains China's restraint in using unilateral economic sanctions up until March 2018? Her answer is both innovative and important: China's longstanding rhetorical opposition to Western sanctions has constrained Beijing's own use of economic sanctions.

Faced with Western sanctions ever since the PRC's inception, Chinese policy-makers responded with what Poh labels a "counter-stigmatisation" strategy: denouncing the legitimacy of Western sanctions while insisting that sanctions should not be used to promote democracy or human rights and should only be imposed when agreed upon by the UN Security Council.

This rhetoric has trapped Beijing, Poh argues. Chinese leaders' concerns with international audience costs limit their willingness to impose sanctions while enabling target countries to constrain China's use of sanctions by either "shaming" or "flattery," namely, pointing out Beijing's hypocrisy in deploying the very sanctions it has denounced for decades.

Poh's book is structured around comparing this rhetorical argument against four competing explanations for China's apparent restraint: that China is not yet powerful enough, or is constrained by domestic actors, by its participation in international organizations (primarily, the WTO), or by its own strategic culture. She starts off by explaining the theory of international audience costs and then documents Beijing's "counter-stigmatisation" strategy through a detailed coding of 768 speeches by Chinese representatives to the UN from 1997 to 2016.

Her core empirical argument is delivered in three subsequent chapters. The first, covering 34 cases of UN Security Council sanctions, finds that Chinese rhetoric aligned with Beijing's votes in 18 cases, while China's "material interests" aligned with only ten cases. Counting this as a success for her claims, she then goes on to (favourably) compare her rhetorical argument against the four competing explanations in three brief case studies examining the logic behind Chinese support for UN sanctions against North Korea, Syria and Guinea-Bissau.

The final two empirical chapters re-examine eight "classic" cases of China's unilateral sanctions between 2008 and 2018: against France, the US, Japan, Norway, the Philippines, Vietnam, Taiwan and South Korea. Poh highlights the unofficial, limited and ad-hoc nature of Chinese sanctions in these cases, while arguing that once "other parties used rhetorical action such as shaming or flattery to draw international attention to Chinese behaviour," Beijing was compelled to withdraw or reduce its sanctions (p. 223). The concluding chapter reiterates her core claim, namely: compared to the four alternative explanations, China's "longstanding sanctions rhetoric has had the most influence on its sanctions behaviour" (p. 259).

Boldly, Poh concludes by predicting continuity. While noting China's recent use of economic pressure (such as toward Australia) and acknowledging the "increased willingness" of Chinese leaders to deploy "implicit and informal" economic sanctions, she predicts that Chinese sanctions will remain ambiguous, targeted, and limited in scope and duration (p. 272).

Poh's intensive and rigorous inquiry into Chinese official rhetoric and her creative exploration into the constraining effects of this rhetoric upon China's use of sanctions and its voting patterns in the UN are notable strengths. She also provides a useful index explaining her coding choices, enhancing the book's value for graduate students and scholars. However, what Poh describes as a significant level of correlation between China's rhetoric and its UN voting patterns (18 of 34 cases) might also be interpreted as a high level of hypocrisy. The surprising claim that China went against its own material interests in 24 of the 34 cases (p. 146) raises questions about the coding of these interests.

While Chinese sanctions are defined – correctly, in my estimation – as generally "ad hoc," "limited in scope and duration" (p. 17) and "relatively restrained and reluctant" (p. 20), the absence of clear and consistent standards for measuring this restraint limits the potential for comparisons with other countries or for assessing potential changes going forward.

The core mechanism by which China's rhetoric actually constrains Beijing's actions also remains underspecified. It is unclear, for instance, whether the causal mechanism relies more upon a psychological argument about Chinese concerns with "status" or more upon a rationalist approach highlighting reputational concerns over making

credible commitments. There are a number of unexplored, alternative reasons why Beijing relies upon an informal, ad-hoc, limited approach to sanctions (for instance, it limits domestic costs while reducing diplomatic tensions). Furthermore, as Poh concedes, the case studies offer limited evidence of her hypothesized mechanism actually affecting Chinese actions (p. 249).

Surprisingly, the concluding chapter only briefly mentions what may be the most important policy implication, namely “even small states that are economically dependent upon China” can use shaming or flattery to “either coerce or induce China to change its behaviour in a more favourable direction” (p. 267). Presumably, this technique would be even more effective if deployed more widely and by more powerful states, offering countries targeted by Chinese economic sanctions a low-cost, high-payoff tool for restraining China’s use of economic coercion.

As anxiety over China’s presumed assertiveness continues to surge around the world, Poh’s book thus offers a compelling case that policymakers should explicitly call out Beijing’s hypocrisy when it deploys sanctions. This innovative policy implication, augmented by the book’s conceptual and methodological contributions, render this work a timely and important contribution to our understanding of China’s economic statecraft.

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China’s Civilian Army: The Making of Wolf Warrior Diplomacy

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Telling the story of the PRC’s diplomatic cadres from 1949 to the present, *China’s Civilian Army* offers fundamental insights into a key puzzle in China’s contemporary foreign policy. Based on interviews with Chinese diplomats and a largely untapped reservoir of their historical memoirs, Peter Martin shows how China’s bellicose and at times seemingly counterproductive diplomacy is a function of its domestic politics. “Wolf Warrior diplomacy” is explained as a product of diplomats’ efforts to survive and thrive as part of a system that increasingly demands performances of unquestioning loyalty and unwavering ideological orthodoxy over policy pragmatism or personal initiative. The case is coherent and intuitive, and certainly helps advance understanding of the phenomenon. Yet the book’s original empirical materials also suggest diplomats’ personal convictions and political beliefs have been at least as important as domestic political exigency.

China’s Civilian Army corrects a tendency in Chinese foreign policy studies to write off the importance of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs due to its low institutional standing in (what little is known of) the PRC’s policymaking process. As Martin argues, given the severe limits on foreign engagement across other parts of the PRC Party-state, and fetters on civil society and cultural industries, the MFA’s cadres have been more central to the country’s foreign relations than diplomats of many other countries (pp. 4–5). Politically constrained and generally lacking any authority to make policy decisions, they have built a record of disciplined, high-volume