

**TW Notes on Susan Shirk *China: Fragile Superpower* Oxford 2007**

- “China is reemerging as a major power after one hundred and fifty years of being a weak player on the world stage... For two thousand years... China had the largest economy in the world.” P. 4
- “History teaches us that rising powers are likely to provoke war.” P.4
- “Even if the two sides manage to avoid a shooting war, a cold war with China would wreak havoc in the United States and throughout the world.” P.5
- “Our best chance of avoiding antagonism with China is to open up the black box of Chinese domestic politics, look inside, and figure out what makes China act as it does on the world stage.” P.5
- “China’s leaders face a troubling paradox. The more developed and prosperous the country becomes, the more insecure and threatened they feel.” P.5
- “China’s emergence as an economic superpower requires a difficult adjustment for Americans.” P.5
- “Like all politicians, China’s leaders are concerned first and foremost with their own political survival.” P.6
- “Chinese leaders are haunted by the fear that their days in power are numbered.”
- “Domestic considerations take precedence over foreign relations [even] during international crises.” P.8
- “Actively conscious that its rapid rise leads other countries to view it as a threat, China’s diplomats have worked hard since the 1990s to build its reputation as a good global citizen and regional neighbor... But in a crisis... China’s second, more aggressive persona emerges, with potentially dangerous consequences...”

Whenever the public pays close attention to an issue, leaders feel they have to act tough to show they are.” P.11

- “Every good diplomat knows that you can never get anywhere until you put yourself in the shoes of the person sitting across the table from you.” P.12
- “Chinese executives are fanning across the globe to seek secure supplies of energy and raw materials.” P.23
- “Economic interdependence has a moderating effect even on China’s difficult relations with Taiwan and Japan.” P. 24 (It’s now the largest trading partner of both.)
- “China’s leaders have learned that the relationship with the United States is too important to play politics with it. The symbiosis between the two giant economies gives both governments a strong incentive not to rock the relationship...”
- “From Beijing’s perspective, we are on the same economic team... Few Americans view the economic relationship in such a rosy light, however. China sells much more to American than America sells to China.” P.25
- “Another American complaint is no enforcement of intellectual property rights.” P.26
- “Chinese officials are becoming increasingly nervous about the risk of a protectionist backlash in the United States.” P.27
- She notes US concerns about “currency manipulation” and argues “China’s leaders have tried to accommodate US interests as best they could without throwing their own economy into a tailspin.” P.27

- She notes potential problems with China’s “shaky banking system” and concern with employment, inequality, corruption, the environment, and provision of social services.”
- “Interdependence breeds caution, but it doesn’t guarantee peace. China is having a hard time convincing Americans not to treat its economic rise as a national security threat.”
- “To understand the anxieties of China’s leaders, it helps to remember that in 1987 the Communist dynasty almost ended... For more than six weeks, million of students demonstrated for democracy.” P.35
- “Understanding how Chinese politics work involves a lot of guesswork.” P.38
- “[Chinese leaders] have to win the support of the ‘selectorate’, the group of people within the party who have the effective power to choose the leaders.” P.40
- “After two decades of policy consensus in support of market reform, Marxist critics of Western economics and market practices have launched a fierce onslaught against the reforms, blaming them for inequality, social unrest, and corruption. The critiques appear to have some official sponsorship.” P.51
- “The new Left, consisting of younger intellectuals many of whom learned their Marxism in American universities, has criticized Chinese foreign policy as too accommodating.”
- “Fearful of provoking public anger, Chinese leaders don’t dare take unpopular action – like raising gasoline taxes or electricity rates.” P.53
- They’ve resisted large appreciation of the RMB “because import pressure on the prices of agricultural products could spark a modern-day peasant rebellion, a drop

- in manufactured exports would increase unemployment, and the pressure on the shaky financial system could cause a mass run on the banks.” P.53
- “Economic flux agitates social life and frees people to form new thought and behavior patterns over which the Communist Party has no control.” P.55
  - “Communist leaders view labor unrest as the most threatening form of protest.” P.58
  - “Viewed objectively, China’s communist regime looks surprisingly resilient.” P.66
  - “As China’s leaders well know, the greatest political risk lying ahead of them is the possibility of an economic crash that throws millions of workers out of their jobs or sends millions of depositors to withdraw their savings from the shaky banking system. A massive environmental or public health disaster could also trigger regime collapse...” p.69
  - International crises can also be dangerous.
  - “[China’s military] is enjoying bigger budgets at least in part because today’s leaders are less politically secure and have a greater need to keep the military satisfied.” P.73
  - “Much of China’s foreign policy is highly pragmatic in order to prevent domestic disruption to domestic economic growth.” P.77
  - “By shining the light of publicity on foreign policy, the media are making it harder for decision makers not to treat foreign policy as domestic politics.” P. 78

- “Japan and India, as major Asian powers, believe that China intends to keep in a second-class status and reclaim the number one position for itself, and that a rising China represents a threat to their national security.” P.112
- More generally, however, she quotes a 2004 report from the US National Defense University that states “The days of Southeast Asia viewing China as a problem are over. Increasingly, the region sees China as a partner and market opportunity rather than as a potential threat.” P.113
- “Southeast Asian countries do not want to have to choose between the United States and China.” P.115
- “Chinese officials used to be highly skeptical about the value of participating in multilateral organizations in Asia... Over the past decade, however, China has become a born-again believer in regional multilateralism.” P.118
- “The best thing that ever happened to China – regional relations was its joining the World Trade Organization (WTO).” China’s tariffs are now only a little higher than industrial countries and much lower than most developing countries. P.132
- “Economic competition is easily misperceived as a geopolitical context for power, even in the era of globalization.” P.139
- “Chinese rage against Japan’s failure to acknowledge its wartime guilt has intensified instead of dissipating with time. Chinese young people are if anything more obsessed by the history question than are their parents...” p.155

- “The lesson drawn [by China’s officials] from the fall of the Soviet Union was that if you try to challenge the United States militarily, you will bankrupt yourself and collapse from internal problems.” P.243
- “Zhu Rongji... in 2000, was asked what he considered the greatest international threat to China. He replied ‘Problems in the US economy’.” P.247
- The political opposition in the US to CNOOC’s bid to buy UNOCAL “stunned and demoralized” the Chinese government. P.250
- There’s a lot of skepticism that while the US preaches free trade it often practices politics and protectionism.
- “Rising powers cause war not necessarily because they are innately belligerent, but because the reigning powers mishandle those who challenge the status quo in one way or another.” P.261
- “Our hopes for political reform in China... will never be realized through outside pressure.” P.262
- She argues a key part of US strategy should be to provide respect for China. “In China the formal ceremonies connote more respect than informal intimacy does... We should lavish respect on China’s leaders.” P.267
- “Making China a member of all important multilateral forums enhances the prestige of China and its leaders, as well as giving them a stronger sense of responsibility for maintaining world order.” P.267
- “China’s rise triggers our Cold War reflexes.” P.267
- “The challenge from China could have a salutary effect if it stimulates us to cure our own weaknesses.” P.268

- Zakaria argues this is how we have responded in the past to challenges such as the rise of Japan.
- “Unfortunately, cold War fears and protectionist instincts are clouding America’s economic reason.” P.268