

Faculti Summary

<https://faculti.net/reframing-international-law-the-china-strategy/>

In May 2018, the speaker traveled to China to engage with local international law specialists, motivated by China's ambitions to enhance its role in global law and governance, particularly with rising concerns about U.S. leadership under President Trump. The speaker formulated key discussion points related to multilateralism, administrative rule of law, and the World Trade Organization (WTO), noting that despite China's rhetoric about leadership, they ultimately observe a more counter-hegemonic approach focused on disrupting existing international systems rather than leading transformative change.

The speaker reflects on their academic experience analyzing major shifts in international law and how these changes typically arise from transnational advocacy movements that promote visions for better governance. They critique China's stance, suggesting that while its propaganda portrays a vision of harmony and development, its actions often undermine global health efforts and support autocratic regimes, which fails to mobilize a broader transnational advocacy movement.

Further discussion revolves around the dynamics of existing institutions like the WTO amidst growing nationalism and unilateralism, with the speaker expressing disappointment at the lack of genuine leadership from China in addressing global issues, such as climate change and non-proliferation. They argue that, despite critical junctures in history offering opportunities for transformation, the reality often falls short of potential change due to entrenched interests and resistance from status quo actors.

Ultimately, the speaker calls for strategies to confront backlash movements advocating for a return to outdated structures and encourages building new coalitions among middle power countries that seek alternatives to the binary choices presented by the U.S. and China.