

## International Trade Law and China: From Paternalism to Partnership, and now Pessimism?

Greg Shaffer, University of California, Irvine School of Law

**ABSTRACT:** This article assesses what lies behind China's successful use of international trade law and the broader implications for institutions within China and globally. The World Trade Organization (WTO) is unique in China's international relations as it is the only forum where China has resolved its disputes through law and the use of third party dispute settlement. To defend itself, China has invested significant resources in building legal capacity. In doing so, it engaged in internal change that gave rise to public-private partnerships for international trade relations. The article evaluates developments in China in government, academia, law firms, and private trade associations. It assesses the broader implications of these developments for the multilateral trading system and within China. It builds from original research involving over a decade of fieldwork and dozens of interviews with Chinese officials, Chinese academics, Chinese lawyers, U.S. and European lawyers who have worked with China, members of Chinese think tanks, and Chinese company and industry association representatives. We combined our interviews and fieldwork with a review of primary and secondary sources in English and Chinese.