

From the Ground Up: recent contributions of the China/area studies and Sino–American relations literature to IR theory

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G. John Ikenberry and Michael Mastanduno, eds, *International Relations Theory and the Asia–Pacific* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003)

David M. Lampton, *Same Bed, Different Dreams: Managing U.S.–China Relations, 1989–2000* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001)

Wang Jianwei, *Limited Adversaries: Post-Cold War Sino–American Images* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 2000)

Thomas J. Christensen, *Useful Adversaries: Grand Strategy, Domestic Mobilization, and Sino–American Conflict, 1947–1958* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996)

Alastair Iain Johnston, *Cultural Realism: Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in Chinese History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995)

There has long been a debate in political science circles between those who stress the primacy of more generalizable theoretical approaches, and those who stress the primacy of particularistic area studies approaches, in addressing real world conundrums. Perhaps in comparative politics the debate has raged most violently, typified by the 1997 debate between Robert Bates and Chalmers Johnson.¹ There has not been much of a debate in the field of international relations (IR), however. In the field of IR, it would seem that as regards any discussions of methods, the scales seem to have tipped notably away from the area studies type of approach and

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1. See Robert H. Bates, 'Letter from the President: area studies and the discipline', *APSA-CP: Newsletter of the APSA Organized Section on Comparative Politics* 7(1), (1996), pp. 1–2; Robert H. Bates, 'Area studies and the discipline: a useful controversy?' *PS: Political Science & Politics*, (June 1997), pp. 166–169; and Chalmers Johnson, 'Preconception vs. observation, or the contributions of rational choice theory and area studies to contemporary political science', *PS: Political Science & Politics*, (June 1997), pp. 170–174.

toward the theoretical in the post-World War Two era with the theoretical primacy of political Realism as elaborated by Hans Morgenthau and others, and especially the Structural Realism of Kenneth Waltz and his followers.

IR has, however, had a debate on methodology that is not entirely unrelated to that of CP's Bates/Johnson debate, IR's so-called 'second debate', wherein J. David Singer argued for a more 'scientific' (primarily quantitative or behavioral) approach to the study of IR, and Hedley Bull defended the more traditional 'classical' (primarily historical, qualitative) approach.² It is interesting to note the parallels between the area studies side of the CP debate (Johnson) and the classical side of the IR debate (Bull) on the one hand, and the more theoretically abstract (as it regards work 'in the field', in other countries) work of Singer and Bates on the other. Both Johnson and Bull were arguing for the importance of things like history, culture, philosophy and an approach more generally qualitative, whereas Singer and Bates come from the more dominant side of their respective fields, emphasizing a more parsimonious, quantitative and theoretically-generalizable approach. Despite the parallels, Bull's argument is more general and abstract than Johnson's, and he was not arguing for area studies itself, as Johnson was.

While the field of IR has seen 'area studies' work done in what might be called IR's subfield of foreign policy studies, this work is not taken very seriously by Structural Realists because it factors at the second level of analysis. Hence, under the recent two decades of Neo-Realist theoretical hegemony, it has been too often neglected. While writers such as Lapid and Kratochwil have tried to bring culture back into IR debates,³ a step in the right direction, IR has not had an area studies debate, per se, as has CP. Perhaps IR needs a 'fourth debate'—a debate emphasizing the importance of first and second level 'inside the black box of state' and area studies approaches, in addition to the more generalized, parsimony-oriented, structural and quantitative approaches.⁴

This series of five books shows how what we might call an area studies approach (here in the context of Chinese security and foreign policy studies and Sino-American relations) can contribute to the broader international relations literature. Taken together, such studies also seem to suggest potential shortcomings in a more purely theoretical approach, and particularly that of the dominant approach to IR theory in the past 50 years, Realism (Structural Realism in particular), which has an inherent tendency to 'black-box' the state and hence de-emphasize the particularistic differences that area studies approaches highlight. This study will consider each book in turn, concluding with a summary of their contributions and a brief

2. Hedley Bull, 'International theory: the case for a classical approach', *World Politics* 18(3), (April 1966), pp. 361–377. J. David Singer, 'The incomplete theorist: insight without evidence', in James N. Rosenau and Klaus Knorr, eds, *Contending Approaches to International Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1969), pp. 63–86. Both can be found in John Vasquez, *Classics of International Relations* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1986/1996), Bull on pp. 76–81 and Singer on pp. 82–90.

3. Yosef Lapid and Friedrich Kratochwil, eds, *The Return of Culture and Identity in IR Theory* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1996). See also Neil L. Waters, ed., *Beyond the Area Studies Wars: Toward a New International Studies* (Hanover, NH: Middlebury College Press and the University Press of New England, 2000).

4. Such a debate would undoubtedly pit Structural Realism on the one hand, against constructivism, neo-liberal institutionalism (including the liberal/democratic peace theory advocates), and studies of the influences of domestic politics, on the other. IR's first debate was Realism vs. Idealism, its second debate is described above, and its third debate was Post-Modernism vs. Structural Realism.

discussion of the implications for IR theory and the Sino–American relations and Chinese security and foreign policy studies literature. Scholars in the Sino–American relations and Chinese foreign policy ‘subfields’ of IR have done better than the abstract, generalist theoreticians of IR⁵ in integrating broader theoretical propositions with local, area studies knowledge. This brief essay concludes that IR scholars should draw more abundantly from area studies expertise as they theorize, as these scholars have, because these sorts of second-level foreign policy studies, based in local knowledge, have much to contribute to IR in terms of theory building and theory testing.

Wang Jianwei

Wang Jianwei’s *Limited Adversaries: Post-Cold War Sino–American Images* is a study of Sino–American mutual images—or more basically, perceptions—and how they have influenced the bilateral relationship. The title of the book is related to Wang’s categorization of mutual images as: enemy, limited adversary, neutral, friendly non-ally, limited ally, and ally (p. 33). He says the US and China viewed each other as ‘enemies’ in the early Cold War period, as ‘friendly non-allies’ after Nixon’s 1972 China visit or at least by Deng’s 1979 visit to the US, and as ‘limited adversaries’ today, which explains the sensitivity with which the two sides must relate to each other, and the volatility in the relationship in recent years. While cautioning that assigning direct causality between such images and behavior is not a simple matter, he concludes that studying mutual perceptions and images is fruitful because these factors do influence policy behavior and consequently help us ‘explain and understand international behavior’ (p. 27).

Wang’s survey is based on a combination of research and a survey of 200 ‘intermediate elites’ in the foreign policy process in the US and China. From among three groups of people who influence the foreign policy process, Wang chose this group over foreign policy elites (the top decision-makers in foreign policy issues) and the general public because foreign policy elites are difficult to get access to and not very candid about the true issues and motivations that shape their choices, and because the views of the general public are usually too subjective and capricious to be of great value. Consequently, his study is based on surveys and interviews of intermediate elites in China and the US, consisting of intellectuals, business people and diplomats—people with no direct foreign policymaking power, but whom could influence those who do—and questions about their views of the other side, what things shaped these views, and how these views have changed over time.

A sampling of some of his more significant findings follows. Among Americans, Wang noted a tendency to exaggerate either their likes or dislikes of China and the Chinese, which might contribute to the dramatic ups and downs in American policy

5. Most China experts would agree that John J. Mearsheimer’s work on China in *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2001) and ‘The future of the American Pacifier’, *Foreign Affairs*, (September/October 2001), pp. 46–61, is indicative of the problems posed by a brilliant theoretician with no area studies training in China making great claims about China’s rise, its foreign policy and its intentions, because of his reliance on grand theory.

toward China (p. 79). He found that those on both sides who'd had the most contact with the other side tended to have the most amiable feelings toward the other side, suggesting intercultural exchange bears fruit (p. 89). The thing Americans liked least about China was its government. Some 74.1% of American respondents held unfavorable views of the Chinese government (p. 107), and when asked what first came to mind when they thought of the other side's society, the most common American response was 'authoritarian' (pp. 98, 100). The thing the Chinese liked least about America was its international behavior (p. 202), many noting a contradiction in how the US emphasized democracy while engaging in what they saw as hegemonic practices in its foreign policy (p. 169). Some 48.3% of Chinese respondents had favorable views of the US government (p. 107), but when asked what first came to mind when they thought of the other side's society, the most common Chinese responses were 'highly developed' and 'various social problems' (pp. 98, 100).

Disparities in each side's views of the other's status in international affairs were significant. Some 21.3% of Americans said China was important, and nearly 60% said China was either 'not a world power' or that China wasn't a power now but could be in the future (pp. 164, 168). A chart on p. 189 shows that in the 1990s, whereas the US view of China's importance declined, the Chinese view of the importance of the US climbed. Wang points out that this disparity in views of each other's relative importance could have been an important source of Sino-American tensions in the last decade.

Wang also surveyed his subjects to ascertain how the Tiananmen Square incident, and the resultant US imposition of sanctions on China, impacted their mutual images; 57.6% of Americans said the incident had 'some effect' or a 'great effect' on their views of China, whereas 42.9% of Chinese said the incident had 'some effect' or a 'great effect' on their views of the US (p. 218).⁶ In both cases, the people who'd visited the other country more often were less affected, and the views of respondents who depended most on television for their knowledge of the other were more negatively affected than those who depended on other sources of information (p. 220). The incident tended to reinforce any negative images people on both sides had of the other—for the Americans, that the Chinese government had no respect for its citizens' rights, and for the Chinese, that the US pushed others around (responding to the US reactions to Tiananmen). Interestingly, Wang notes that Tiananmen may have brought mutual images closer to reality than they had been before the incident (p. 252).⁷

One specific source of misperceptions Wang discusses is what is known in social psychology as Fundamental Attribution Error (FAE). FAE is the idea that while we attribute our own problems or mistakes to situational factors, we tend to attribute others' problems and mistakes to dispositional factors, like a flawed personality trait or ill intentions (p. 256). In Sino-American relations he concludes that

6. Note: if these numbers seem a bit low, remember that those interviewed knew the other side well and were consequently less likely to be swayed by this single incident than would have been the average citizen, whom the event affected more so, as indicated by swings in public opinion after the event.

7. This is supported by Richard Madsen's work, *China and the American Dream: A Moral Inquiry* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), which documents Sino-American myths and mutual misperceptions.

dispositional factors are more commonly used to explain the behavior of the other than are rational factors. Examples are Chinese comments to the effect that, 'the US intervened in Kosovo because they are hegemonists—they just want to rule the world', and American comments like, 'the Chinese leaders killed their own people at Tiananmen Square because they are bloodthirsty communist tyrants'. Such comments do not account for situational factors like US values regarding human rights and the fact that Western leaders were blamed for doing too little too late in Bosnia in the former case, or that Chinese leaders were in a difficult situation and were trying their best to keep the ship of state afloat so as to continue the political and economic reforms Deng had already begun, in the latter.

Noting the importance of structural as well as ideational factors, Wang says that the changes in the international structure in the last decade, following the end of the Cold War, have created a situation he calls 'structural uncertainty', wherein misperceptions are more likely as countries' foreign policy goals and strategies change, and as identities, roles and expectations about their relationship to the international system change (p. 259). In this less structured post-Cold War environment, actors depend more on perceptions, and thus misperceptions become a larger problem. In this environment, Wang argues, 'misperceptions, rather than conflicts of real interest, could well push US–China relations to the edge. If a confrontation does occur, it will be the biggest diplomatic tragedy of the 21st century, because neither is expansionist in nature and they do not have fundamentally incompatible strategic interests' (p. 265). Here Wang shows us how the structure of the international system and mutual perceptions work together.

Wang's findings are important in a number of ways. The study takes national image studies to a new level methodologically, suggesting how such images might affect the bilateral relationship over time. The effect of the Tiananmen Square incident, which he handles effectively in his work, is indicative of the way in which such a domestic incident can have a profound impact on mutual images, and ultimately on bilateral relations.⁸ His elaboration of Fundamental Attribution Error is also instructive in understanding the source of some of the mutual misperceptions. The study suggests that in one sense the international environment has come to be less predictable in the post-Cold War world, making the role of perception (and misperception) all the more important. Yet at the same time, as Sino–American mutual images become more sophisticated and less variable, the bilateral relationship may consequently be growing more stable as well. Clearly written for an academic audience, Wang Jianwei's book breaks important new ground in its methodology and in addressing the importance of perception and mutual images in an important bilateral relationship in the field of international relations.

8. My own research in 2002 supports this. Of 30 American China/security experts I interviewed in Washington, DC (and by telephone), in June and July 2002, when asked if it was the Tiananmen incident or the end of the Cold War that was 'most likely to be responsible for the downturn or increased volatility in Sino–American relations in the 1990s', 69% said it was the Tiananmen incident.

David M. Lampton

David Lampton's 2001 book, *Same Bed, Different Dreams: Managing U.S.–China Relations, 1989–2000* confirms both his status as America's premier Sinologist, and his ability to both apply and contribute to IR theory in his work on Sino–American relations. The book is a detailed (450 page) look at relations between China and the US between 1989 and 2000, a period characterized by what Lampton defines as four turning points in the bilateral relationship: (1) 1989 and the Tiananmen Square incident; (2) 1994 and President Clinton's delinkage of human rights and economic relations with China; (3) the 1995–1996 Taiwan Strait confrontation; and (4) April–November 1999, a period including crises over American rejection of Premier Zhu Rongji's WTO concessions during his April trip to the US, the US/NATO intervention in Yugoslavia, the US bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade, and the release of the Cox Report alleging Chinese spying in the US. Lampton's contribution to IR theory is his creative application of Waltz' classic three-level analysis⁹ to his study of Sino–American relations, breaking his book down into a consideration of the respective effects of issues at the global, state/civil society, and individual levels, and concluding with seven suggestions for US foreign policy makers as to how they might better manage Sino–American relations (pp. 365–378).

In discussing the three levels of analysis as they relate to Sino–American relations, Lampton considers key factors at each level. At the systemic or global level, Lampton discusses China's relations with international institutions, China's role in the global economy, and the dilemmas of third parties. In a discussion of PRC/US triangles, Lampton considers questions systemic or structural in nature, à la Waltz' later work,¹⁰ noting how considerations of Soviet moves influenced Chinese and American moves, etc., particularly the entente between Beijing and Washington in the 1970s when Sino–Soviet relations were at their worst (pp. 221–223). His conclusion about the triangle in recent years, however, is that there are more reasons for conflict than cooperation between Russia and China. Consequently, the US does not have to worry about Sino–Russian collusion unless the US drives them together by its own actions (pp. 230–232), a statement which could challenge Structural Realist assumptions about post-Cold War balancing.

Moving to the state/civil society/domestic politics level, Lampton aptly captures the frustration of leaders in both Washington and Beijing in dealing with the other's pluralistic decision making processes and social complexity. For example, reflecting the exasperation of many senior Chinese leaders in dealing with a US government with multiple voices, particularly a Congress which has taken a more and more pronounced role in US foreign policymaking in recent years, Deng Xiaoping said during his 1979 trip to the US, 'How many governments do you have? We can only deal with one government' (pp. 282–283). The same can be true of the Chinese government. In China it is quite common for provincial and local leaders to set particular trade and investment policies that differ from and are even

9. Kenneth Waltz, *Man, the State, and War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959). Man, the state, and war, stood for Waltz' three levels of analysis—the individual level, the state/domestic level, and the global level.

10. Kenneth W. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1979).

at odds with central governmental policy. Lampton cites an example where US officials were trying to determine whether it had been official Chinese policy to allow a PLA-affiliated company to sell particular nuclear weapons parts to Pakistan, or if it had been the unofficial act of a local corrupt official unbeknownst to the central government. In addition, people like former Senator Newt Gingrich and PLA General Xiong Guangkai have said things in an official capacity that are not official policy. 'Part of the trick in managing bilateral relations for both nations, therefore, is discerning genuine policy from the normal chatter and unruly behavior of pluralized polities' (p. 283).

Among domestic level issues, Lampton found several other factors that played an important role in shaping policy as well. One of the most important was the two sides' respective national identities and beliefs about the national self. Americans view themselves as having a special responsibility in world affairs because of the power and position the US has held in recent years, exemplified by its tendency to intervene militarily in other countries in the name of democracy and human rights. On the Chinese side, what is important has been the Chinese view of itself as victim over the last two centuries, its consequent sensitivity in dealing with foreign powers, and its self-image as international defender against great power chauvinism. Lampton finds that public opinion matters in both countries and to the leadership of both countries as well, citing as examples American popular disgust at the Tiananmen massacre and Chinese popular indignation at the US bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade.

Domestic political cycles have a role to play in shaping policy as well, exemplified in US election year antics and Chinese secession crises and posturing for its quinquennial Party Congress meetings. To illustrate this point, Lampton provides a helpful overview of the 1989–1996 period, noting that the Tiananmen incident of 1989 soured relations for both sides. While China had come out of the post-1989 retrenchment and was more open to positive relations with Washington by late 1992 after its Fourteenth Party Congress (which had decided reforms would continue anew), the US was enmeshed in the 1992 presidential election where Clinton was accusing incumbent President Bush of 'coddling dictators', so there would be no warming to China that year. By 1994, when President Clinton had begun sorting out his foreign policy and was ready to open up toward Beijing, the fall 1994 Republican takeover of Congress left him with strong congressional opposition to doing so, and China had entered into a secession crisis of its own as Deng had become more obviously ill. It was not until 1996, after the 1995–1996 Taiwan Strait Crisis brought the two nations to the brink of disaster, and both Presidents Jiang and Clinton had solidified their command of foreign policy, that 'the domestic stars of both nations began to come into conjunction', and things began to improve (p. 302).

Moving to his discussion of the individual level of international politics, Lampton notes that while in the days of yore leaders like Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping in Beijing and Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger in Washington could almost single-handedly make America/China policy, in both countries things have become more complicated and more pluralized, as we have discussed above. Still, certain individuals and groups of individuals have played an inordinate role in the

policymaking process. Lampton maintains that there are at least four categories for individuals who have shaped Sino–American relations. First are those who are empowered by their positions to make foreign policy, such as China’s core or supreme leaders, and America’s president, national security advisor, secretaries of state and defense. Second, are those who ‘control the “strategic compass” of their respective policymaking systems’, such as key congressional committee chairpersons like Senator Jesse Helms and Congressman Christopher Smith. Third, are the informal advisers who are the sages of Sino–American relations and are often called upon to provide advice to those in power—people such as Henry Kissinger and Wang Daohan. Fourth, are those without formal government position, but who, by virtue of their distinct political, economic, intellectual, or organizational power, influence the policy process and the context in which it occurs—people such as US–China Business Council President Bob Kapp, AIG President Maurice Greenberg, and intellectuals and dissidents like Dai Qing and Wei Jingsheng (p. 315). He maintains that any study of Sino–American relations that overlooks the role and contribution of such figures is incomplete.

Lampton is an extremely engaging writer, bringing life to his subject with many colorful anecdotes, many of which come from his own extensive experience in Sino–American relations, including his work as former President of the National Committee on US–China Relations. *Same Bed, Different Dreams* is a beautiful effort, skillfully combining his academic and practical expertise in sinology/area studies, Beijing and Washington politics, Chinese and American foreign policy, and international relations. His work makes clear the undeniable importance of the consideration of factors at all three levels (global, domestic, and individual) when analyzing foreign policy, bilateral relationships, and/or international relations dilemmas writ large.

Alastair Iain Johnston

Alastair Iain Johnston’s work, *Cultural Realism: Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in Chinese History*, is an in-depth analysis of ancient Chinese strategic thought in which he applies his knowledge of international relations and the language, culture, history, politics and philosophy of China, to a study of the nature and importance of strategic culture in Chinese history, focusing on the Ming Dynasty’s strategy toward the Mongols between 1368 and 1644. Johnston’s goals are to determine if China could be said to have had a consistent strategic culture,¹¹ and if indeed that strategic culture has influenced the nation’s security behavior. His answer is yes on both counts, citing the importance of strategic culture as an ‘inside the black box of state’ factor that must be accounted for in studies of international behavior, and the important finding that China’s realpolitik behavior is derived from ideation-based strategic cultural norms, not material-based structural realities.

Johnston’s study reveals that, as it regards discussions of China’s past and

11. Strategic culture is ‘ranked grand strategic preferences derived from central paradigmatic assumptions about the nature of conflict and the enemy, and collectively shared by decision makers’ (p. IX).

present security behavior, China has had two strategic cultures historically. The first is what he calls a symbolic or idealized set of assumptions and ranked preferences, the second an operational set. The symbolic set, which he calls the Confucian–Mencian paradigm, has been disconnected from security policy decision-making for the most part and has existed more so ‘in an habitual discourse designed, in part, to justify behavior in culturally acceptable terms’ (p. X). It flowed from the Confucian–Mencian norm that ‘war and weaponry [are] inauspicious tool[s], and should only be used in unavoidable circumstances’ (p. 62) and stressed the importance of ‘not fighting and [yet]¹² subduing the enemy’ (p. 99). The second, operational set is what Johnston calls the parabellum or hard realpolitik strategic culture, or parabellum paradigm. While tempered by a sensitivity to the actor’s own capabilities, this paradigm ‘assumes that conflict is a constant feature of human affairs, that it is due largely to the rapacious or threatening nature of the adversary, and that in this zero-sum context ...’ (p. 249) ‘the best way of dealing with security threats is to eliminate them through the use of force’ (p. X).

Johnston makes the case that while the symbolic, Confucian–Mencian paradigm has been most often cited as representing the core of Chinese strategic thought and action, it is actually the parabellum paradigm that has guided Chinese policy makers through the centuries. He bases his assertion on two things. First is a review of the seven Chinese strategic classics, which he maintains favor an offensive over a static defensive/accommodationist approach to security problems (p. 30). The seven classics include not only Sun Zi’s well-known *Art of War* [*Sun Zi Bing Fa*], but *Wu Zi Bing Fa* (by Wu Qi), *Si Ma Fa* (by Si Ma Rangju), *Wei Liao Zi* (by Wei Liao), *Tai Gong Li Tao* (author unknown), *Huang Shi Gong San Lue* (author also uncertain, but said to be Zhang Liang under pseudonym Huang Shi Gong), and the *Tang Tai Zong Li Wei Gong Wen Dui* (said to be a dialogue between Tang emperor Tai Zong and his chief military advisor). Johnston’s conclusion is that ‘for the most part, the texts accept that warfare and conflict are relatively constant features of interstate affairs, that conflict with an enemy tends towards zero-sum stakes, and consequently that violence is a highly efficacious means for dealing with conflict’, which leads Johnston to conclude that China’s seven military classics contribute to a core parabellum paradigm of Chinese strategic thought (p. 61). Moreover, in a consideration of whether accommodationist, offensive/expansionist, or defensive grand strategies are preferred in the seven military classics, all except one (the *San Lue*) overwhelmingly prefer the offensive-expansionist grand strategy. All of this is quite contrary to the stereotype of Chinese strategic culture as being Confucian-pacifist in nature.

Second, Johnston does a review of China’s actual security behavior vis-à-vis the Mongols during the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644). His conclusion is that the Ming leaders preferred an aggressive, offensive strategy to a defensive or accommodationist strategy, though when their capabilities for offensive strategies were lacking, they chose defensive strategies as a second strategy of choice (the expansion of the Great Wall is one example). If capabilities were lacking even for an effective defensive strategy, they resorted to accommodationist strategies. In each case,

12. Bracketed segments are my own additions.

Johnston found that leaders saw offensive strategies as the most effective way of dealing with the Mongols, in accordance with the parabellum paradigm. Yet even when defensive or accommodationist policies were chosen, he found very few examples of appeals to the Confucian–Mencian paradigm of magnanimity, but rather found that decision makers still preferred offensive strategies but simply could not pursue them because of insufficient capabilities (p. 230). Johnston concludes that while present in Chinese writings on strategic thinking, the Confucian–Mencian paradigm existed more as ‘an idealized level of discourse ... disconnected from the operational advice, axioms, and decision rules that derive from the parabellum paradigm’ (p. 155). While most work on China’s strategic thought continues to treat it as defensive, limiting war, and disesteeming violence, ‘the historical behavior of Chinese rulers and military figures presents a far more mixed picture’ (p. 27). In sum, ‘... the parabellum paradigm is, for the most part, dominant’ (p. 249).

There are several implications for Johnston’s study. The first is that the great tradition of Chinese strategic thought and relations with its neighbors is not, as most scholars would have it, Confucian–Mencian and pacifist in nature. Though Mao Zedong was well read in the classics, Maoist thought, likewise, was clearly disconnected from the Confucian–Mencian paradigm. For example, Mao once said, ‘... if we want to get rid of the gun we must take up the gun’¹³ (p. 256). Mao, in his Leninist understanding of the utility of violence, clearly rejected the central Confucian notion that one could ‘not fight and [yet] subdue the enemy’ (p. 255). Still, recent Chinese thinking on Chinese foreign policy and strategic thought has resurrected the Confucian–Mencian paradigm as being representative of international relations or deterrence with ‘Chinese characteristics’ (p. 254–255). Johnston’s work begs the important question, what exactly are ‘Chinese characteristics’ as it regards international relations? According to his findings, and if history is any guide, IR with ‘Chinese characteristics’ is not necessarily the Confucian–Mencian, pacifist approach, but is more likely the more offensive parabellum paradigm. If he is right, his work has important implications for China’s neighbors and for the United States.

What is important about Johnston’s research as it regards IR theory and especially as it applies to China, is Johnston’s conclusion that the origins of China’s historical parabellum realpolitik behavior lay in its strategic culture as learned behavior, not as something imposed on it by an anarchical international system. This is consistent with the work of constructivists like Alex Wendt and others who have argued that realpolitik behavior is learned and derives from states’ own identities and their views of each other, not from anarchical structures.¹⁴ Johnston argues that the parabellum strategic culture must exist *a priori* to see the realpolitik behavior that changes in relative capabilities under conditions of anarchy bring about (p. 264). He also notes that the parabellum strategic culture engendered realpolitik behavior whether local systemic conditions were what we would call anarchic, or whether the system was unipolar and China was the dominant state, suggesting that the realpolitik behavior

13. Johnston took the quote from ‘War and the strategic question’, *Mao’s Selected Works* (Beijing, 1967).

14. Alexander Wendt, ‘Anarchy is what states make of it: the social construction of state politics’, *International Organization* 46(2), (1992), pp. 391–425; *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

was not a result of anarchy, but of an underlying parabellum strategic culture (pp. 265–266). Here again, a study that is based in area studies expertise makes an important contribution to international relations theory.

Thomas J. Christensen

In *Useful Adversaries: Grand Strategy, Domestic Mobilization, and Sino–American Conflict, 1947–1958*, Thomas Christensen’s contribution to IR theory is his in-depth analysis of China’s domestic political processes and pressures, and how they influence foreign policy choices, via a two-level domestic mobilization model. Once again, it is his knowledge of China and Chinese politics that makes his analysis possible. As Christensen puts it, his work is

... a bridge between theories of foreign policy that emphasize the impact of international pressures and those that focus on domestic politics. I argue that, when international changes suggest the need for new, controversial, and expensive national security policies, leaders will often have difficulty implementing those policies. In order to secure public support for their most basic strategy, they may, in certain cases, decide to adopt a more hostile or more ideological foreign policy than they otherwise would prefer. In these cases, we cannot understand such hostility or crusading by studying international factors or domestic politics in isolation. Domestic politics matter ... (p. 4).

Christensen’s two-level domestic mobilization model takes the ability of the state to mobilize the public for a particular security goal as an important intervening variable laying between the security challenges of the international milieu and the actual strategies adopted by the state in meeting these international challenges (p. 13). His approach illustrates the way in which the international/third level is important as it confronts policymakers with dilemmas and opportunities, but the preferred policy options for policymakers are arrived at only through considerations of what it takes at the domestic level to achieve the preferred policy goals.

Christensen relies on several cases to buttress his arguments. He begins with a discussion of how Harry S. Truman, elected president on a ‘bring the boys back home’ platform of military *de*-mobilization after the Second World War, sought to *re*-mobilize the US polity for his Cold War security strategies in the later 1940s, and how this broader Cold War positioning vis-à-vis the Soviet Union shaped his China policy. Truman’s dilemma was the fact that just as the USSR was rising as a threat and British power as a counter to the Soviets in Western Europe was crumbling, the American public was demanding a focus on the home front and pressing Washington to bring its forces home from Europe and Asia after the war.

In Truman’s 1947 ‘Truman Doctrine’ speech, where he made the case to the public and to Congress that the US had to rise to counter the growing Soviet threat in Turkey, Greece, and elsewhere, his appeal was highly ideological, casting the Communist threat as a universal menace that only America could counter. The goal of the speech was ‘to scare hell out of the American people’, to create enough support in Congress to get the necessary \$250 million Truman was requesting for the effort. Truman himself called it, ‘the greatest selling job ever facing a President’

(p. 50). The sum was an unprecedented amount for a president to request in peacetime, so Truman concluded that oversell was necessary to get the job done.

This ‘selling job’ was to have a great effect on Truman’s China policy as well. ‘In the context of the mobilization drive for Europe, domestic politics played a decisive role in the creation of the China Aid Bill’ (p. 64), a bill which was meant to prop up a failing Nationalist regime and its corrupt and somewhat inept leader, Chiang Kai-Shek, as the Chinese Communists made steady gains in the Chinese Civil War. Christensen makes a strong case that strategically China had receded in importance in the thinking of American policymakers, and aid for Chiang was made not for truly strategic reasons, but because it would seem inconsistent NOT to help a non-communist ally in the face of a communist insurgency. While it may have become apparent to many in Washington that propping up the corrupt, failing, Nationalist regime was a lost cause, administration ‘officials decided that, within limits, too much foreign policy activity—opposing communism in both Europe and China—was necessary to avoid too little foreign policy activity—insufficient funding for European reconstruction and defense’ (p. 76). The China Aid Bill was passed into law.

Christensen also analyzes Truman and Acheson’s decision not to recognize the People’s Republic of China after its establishment in 1949. In May and June 1949, then US Ambassador to China Leighton Stuart informed Washington that Zhou Enlai was pushing Mao Zedong in a potentially nationalist, Tito-esque, anti-Soviet direction. Stuart wanted to go to Beijing (now Beijing) to meet Zhou, Mao, and Huang Hua to explore how Chinese and Americans might cooperate (p. 87). Unfortunately, Secretary of State Dean Acheson decided Stuart should not go because maintaining domestic political support for the State Department and its broader Cold War programs was more important than achieving détente with the Chinese Communists, even if the latter might have been a rational thing to do in and of itself as it regarded the America’s East Asia strategy (p. 88).

Christensen makes a compelling case that both Acheson and Truman had been convinced that a rapprochement with the Chinese Communists, including US recognition of the new regime, was both possible and practical in the late 1940s (pp. 104, 109–110, 120). Yet given criticism by anti-communist forces in Congress and the need for domestic mobilization for the Truman Doctrine, the administration needed to maintain an anti-communist front which could not be reconciled with closer ties to the Chinese Communists or lessening its support for Taiwan. The advent of the Korean War made this even more apparent.

Christensen argues that it was not the strategic significance of Taiwan, per se, that brought Truman to send the 7th Fleet into the Taiwan Strait immediately after the war broke out, but the even greater need not to look hypocritical in the domestic political context. Truman and Acheson’s assessment of the strategic value of Taiwan did not change overnight with the North Korean invasion of the south (the US had signaled in early 1950 that its ‘defensive perimeter’ did *not* include Taiwan or South Korea, as John Gaddis documents¹⁵). What had changed was the

15. John Lewis Gaddis, ‘The strategic perspective: the rise and fall of the “defensive perimeter” concept, 1947–1951’, in Dorothy Borg and Waldo Heinrichs, eds, *Uncertain Years: Chinese–American Relations, 1947–1950* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980).

US domestic political climate regarding the US role in East Asia (p. 134). He concludes,

Unfortunately for Sino–American relations, the potential for being accused of hypocrisy was great during an expensive mobilization drive backed by an ideological crusade. To avoid this crippling charge, the administration needed to demonstrate some degree of consistency between rhetoric and practice. Truman could not adopt a hands-off policy toward Taiwan, let alone a conciliatory policy toward Beijing, if he hoped to guarantee support for the Korean War and, more generally, to transform the fervor over Korea into broad popular support for larger security policy budgets (p. 137).

In this domestic and international political context the US would not be able to take advantage of anti-Soviet, Tito-esque tendencies in the CCP, nor would it have sufficient channels open with Beijing to take seriously Chinese warnings that it would enter the war if the US crossed the Yalu (p. 193). All of this would lay the foundation for future conflicts, like that of 1958.

Christensen argues that the 1958 Taiwan Strait Crisis can be explained by his two-level domestic mobilization approach as well. Because of the enormous gap between Chinese backwardness and Soviet and American power, Mao launched the Great Leap Forward of 1958, a utopian attempt to mobilize China's resources and labor to bring China into the modern era as an industrial and nuclear power in a few short years. Domestic hurdles to the utopian Great Leap, and Mao's need for mobilization to overcome them, were the impetus for Mao's stirring up the hornets' nest by shelling Taiwan-held islands Quemoy and Matsu, just off the Mainland coast, bringing the US into the fray, Christensen argues. Mao needed a populace on a war footing, ready to make huge sacrifices for the Great Leap, and this little conflict was just the ticket to stir them up, Mao believed (pp. 217–218). 'Mao did not want war, just conflict ... [to] guarantee popular consensus for his broad economic strategy ...' (p. 219). By stoking the fires of nationalism against the threat of American imperialism, Mao initiated the crisis to persuade the people to sacrifice for the motherland.

In his conclusion, Thomas Christensen eloquently drives home the point this essay has sought to make as well, that theoretical generalizability and sensitivity to local/national particularisms are not mutually exclusive. 'By including domestic political variables that take national traditions into account, the approach here builds a bridge between international relations theory, comparative politics, and area studies' (p. 248). As Christensen notes, if Mao had understood Cold War mobilization politics in Washington, he might not have feared an invasion of China by US troops near the Yalu River, and he might not have intervened in North Korea. Likewise, had Washington understood Mao's mobilization politics in 1958 it might not have worried about an invasion of Taiwan at the time, and if Truman had not had a Europe-centered Cold War policy in the late 1940s that needed an intense, oversold anti-communist aspect to it, Washington might have recognized the PRC and avoided much of the tension that followed.

By understanding the relationship between the international and domestic pressures leaders face in designing and implementing these sets of policies, we can sometimes

expose a deeper rationale behind leaders' decisions to create or prolong conflicts that might otherwise appear irrational or counterproductive (p. 7).

Christensen shows how domestic politics and area studies knowledge, which get inside the black box of state, are as indispensable to international politics as they are to comparative politics.

G. John Ikenberry and Michael Mastanduno

Ikenberry and Mastanduno have co-edited a truly masterful volume which has brought together some of IR's best theorists with some of the best Asianists in the business (and many are both theorists and Asianists) to address the question of the relationship between international relations theory and studies of the Asia-Pacific region. The editors' conclusion, in line with the thrust of this essay, is that these two worlds do not meet often enough, which too often leads to 'under-theorized' policy debates on the one hand, and theoretical debates about the region that are done 'without the benefit of historical or comparative perspective', on the other (p. 1). Each of the essays is an effective example of bringing IR theory to bear on Asia studies, and likewise, in bringing an area studies approach to IR theory. While there is not space in this brief essay to do this volume and each of its essayists justice, several of the volume's highlights, particularly in reference to China and foreign and security policy, will be discussed here.

The editors start the volume by noting the contributions of various IR theories to understanding stability and cooperation in the Asia-Pacific. Realism emphasizes notions of balance of power and hegemonic stability. Liberal/Neo-Liberal approaches see as most important the roles of international institutions and economic interdependence. In his chapter, Thomas Berger also notes the contributions of constructivism, particularly the way in which state identity and interests are constructed, and the import of mutual perceptions and historical legacies to the region. The editors conclude that the following five theoretical angles on the question of Asia-Pacific stability and cooperation are most important and are used by the authors in the volume: 'balance of power, styles of hegemony, history and memory, domestic and international institutions, institutions and stability, and economic interdependence' (p. 4). Each is taken into account by one or more of the aforementioned theoretical approaches.

In his treatment of China and the US-Japan alliance, Thomas Christensen appears in this volume too with a discussion of a number of things that could bring about security dilemma dynamics among the three powers, including changes in the region's distribution of capabilities, and the importance of sea-lanes and energy supplies. Yet perhaps more important, he argues, are psychological factors such as the historical animosity and mistrust in the region, and the political geography of the Taiwan question, wherein defensive weapons in Taiwan are defined as a threat to Chinese security (p. 26). His consideration of these historical animosities leads him to conclude that the potential for great power rivalry between China and Japan is very real, even when standard Realist accounts might lead one to believe

hegemonic stability and a focus on economic development might deter military conflict.

In his consideration of China's emerging grand strategy, Avery Goldstein goes back to the future to coin a term, 'neo-Bismarckian', to describe China's strategy as it rises to great power status, harking of course to late nineteenth century Germany's rise to power. The parallel Goldstein draws is of two powers rising in the midst of powerful, distrustful neighbors, and the primary concern of the rising power to avoid provoking those neighbors into uniting to block its rise to power. Noting that both Realist and Neo-Liberal approaches to China's rise easily lend themselves to an expectation of conflict between China and the US or other regional powers, Goldstein notes the historical example of Germany's rise under Bismarck (pp. 58, 72), and its attempts to reassure its neighbors that it had no expansionist designs, as evidenced in China's case by China's trend toward greater multilateralism in the mid-1990s which is characterized by its good neighbor policy, the establishment of formal diplomatic relations with many of its once estranged neighbors, and the formation of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

Alistair Iain Johnston is a contributor here too and argues that socialization is an important force in shaping the behavior of states in IR, and that constructivism is an approach that best captures its effects. As a test case on the effects of international socialization on Chinese behavior, Johnston looks at China's discourse on multilateralism and regional security arrangements in the Asean Regional Forum (ARF) before and after China's entrance into the organization. He notes that China's rhetoric and behavior have evolved in ways that lead him to believe China's participation in the ARF has had an important socializing effect on China's security behavior.

David Kang writes about hierarchy and stability in IR, making the case that Waltz has provided a false dichotomy between anarchy and hierarchy (p. 165). Kang argues rather that under an anarchic system, there is a pole of hierarchy and equality and that there is a middle path wherein a power is hierarchic but acts in such a way that the other powers do not balance against it, but accept its dominant position while maintaining their own freedom within the system. This, Kang argues, was the case in East Asia traditionally under the vassal system of Chinese dominance of yore. His conclusion is that China's rise may again be accepted by the regional powers if China assures them that its intentions are benign. Hence, contrary to Waltzian logic, Kang finds the danger to stability of a rising China, as well as the importance of the US role in maintaining peace and stability in the region, may be overstated.

Henry Nau makes perhaps the most theoretically rich contribution in the volume, in his discussion of identity and the balance of power in Asia. In trying to understand states' orientations toward the use of force, Nau has found it most helpful to make a distinction between and then combine the concepts of identity and power (the material and the social), pitting the explanatory power of Realism against that of constructivism at the same time as he uses them together. Putting the distribution of identity on the X axis (running from regional identity convergence on the left to divergence on the right), and the distribution of power on the Y axis (with relatively unequal or centralized power on the top and relatively equal

or decentralized power on the bottom), he creates a matrix with four quadrants: hierarchy in sector 1 (upper left), empire in sector 2 (upper right), a security community in sector 3 (lower left), and anarchy in sector 4 (lower right). He notes that the Asia–Pacific is currently in sector 2 (empire), where regional identity is rather divergent and power distribution rather unequal and centralized under US hegemony (p. 221). He puts the Asia–Pacific in the lower left of that quadrant, however, closer to sector 3 (a security community) because of the influence of the US–Japan security alliance. Nau concludes that this approach explains more than either Realism or constructivism could explain alone, namely that the imperial structure Nau describes for the Asia–Pacific explains why military conflict in the region is ‘muted’, why economic cooperation is noteworthy despite low levels of institutionalization (i.e. it is held together by US ‘imperial’ power), and the existence of a security community subsystem (the US and Japan) mutes the potential for military conflict between Japan and the US. Nau finds that the imperial system coupled with the security community subsystem, as described here, is much more stable than a Realist account of anarchy would have one believe, and while it could pull apart at the seams for a number of reasons, it could also become yet more stable if the US stays engaged in the region and China continues its growth toward being an ever more ‘rational’, constructive neighbor in the community.

In his essay in the volume, John Duffield does a comparison between the Euro-Atlantic security institutions and those of the Asia–Pacific. He finds that a global structural approach (i.e. Neo-Realism) has been helpful in understanding the proliferation of security institutions in both regions after WW2. A regional structural approach, however, taking into account also perceptions and mistrust based on unresolved historical legacies, was found by Duffield to be more helpful in explaining the differences between the two regions in recent decades, namely the relative underdevelopment of security institutions in the Asia–Pacific.

Thomas Berger offers a constructivist interpretation of power and purpose in East Asia that asserts that the primary sources of tension in the region are found not in the geo-strategic environment, differences in development levels, or the character of the international institutions they are found in, but rather are found in the region’s ‘deep-rooted historically based suspicions and animosities, frustrated nationalism, and distinct conceptions of national identity’ and ‘differing understanding of the national mission in international affairs’ (p. 388). The stability in East Asia in recent decades, Berger concludes, is a result of a consensus among the nations of the region that economic development is the foremost objective, and the concomitant shift in national identities that allowed these states to become examples of what has become known as ‘the East Asian developmental state’.¹⁶ After delineating a constructivist approach and comparing and contrasting it with Neo-Realist and Neo-Liberal approaches, Berger concludes that East Asia’s stability could be shaken if its nations decide that the developmental state model isn’t working as they’d hoped and their identities shift to other models which don’t require peace and market stability so necessarily for their success. The implication is that crises like the 1997 Asian financial crisis have the potential to shake more

16. See Chalmers Johnson, *MITI and the Japanese Miracle* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1982).

than just financial markets, but could also shake regional international relations if nations decided to abandon the developmental state model.

Excellent essays on Japan's national identity by Masaru Tamamoto; on Realist expectations of states, markets and great power relations in the region by Jonathan Kirshner; on sources of Sino–Japanese economic conflict by Robert Gilpin; on economic interdependence and the future of Sino–American relations by Dale Copeland; and on Japanese foreign policy after the Cold War by William Grimes, round out the collection. Ikenberry and Mastanduno conclude their volume by describing four possible images of order in the Asia–Pacific, a discussion of US and Chinese roles in the region in coming years, and by noting, as has been the case with most of the authors in this review essay, that structural approaches to the region are not enough to explain the region's international relations.

Conclusion

I have tried to make the case in this review essay that international relations theory benefits from area studies approaches just as much as comparative politics does and that these five books are excellent examples of the benefits of the joining of IR and China/area studies work. Wang, Lampton, Johnston, and Christensen, as well as many of the authors in the edited volume, can be considered area specialists, being as they are experts in China studies, fluent in Chinese, and having lived in China and visited there numerous times. Yet in each of the five books here, the authors have focused on questions of international relations and foreign policy, bringing their China expertise to bear on work that has important theoretical implications for IR and IR theory.

Thomas J. Christensen's well-researched study on grand strategy, domestic mobilization and Sino–American conflict between 1947 and 1958 bridges the second and third (domestic and international) levels in IR to show how third/international level factors put pressures on leaders, and how those leaders must then consider second/domestic level factors as they make their policy choices. He focuses in particular on how leaders must mobilize governmental and popular support for major foreign policy decisions, and how this mobilization process sometimes leads them to do things that might not seem altogether rational from an international strategic perspective.

Alastair Iain Johnston, in his excellent work on strategic culture and grand strategy in Chinese history, maintains that China has had a realpolitik strategic culture for centuries, and that this strategic culture derives from ideational, not material structural forces. His study of China's seven military classics and his review of Ming Dynasty foreign policy towards the Mongols provides strong evidence that this realpolitik strategic culture existed despite varying regional systemic conditions during the period of study, and that it was constructed and passed down via the seven military classics.

David Lampton's impressive study of Sino–American relations between 1989 and 1999 contributes to IR theory first, simply because of its excellent scholarship, and second, because of its application of Waltz' well-established tripartite breakdown of international relations for a consideration of how factors at the global,

domestic, and individual levels influence Sino–American relations. Lampton’s use of theory and local knowledge is commendable and his work shows why Waltz’ three levels continue to be vital to studies of IR.

Wang Jianwei’s detailed account of Sino–American mutual images in the post-Cold War period is also a contribution to IR and IR theory because of its elucidation of specific Sino–American mutual images and their potential effect on the bilateral relationship. The study shows how events like the Tiananmen incident and phenomena like Fundamental Attribution Error can effect the images and perceptions policymakers hold of the other side in a bilateral relationship, images that shape policy both directly and indirectly.

Finally, *Ikenberry* and *Mastanduno’s* volume on IR theory and the Asia–Pacific is an explicit appeal to the joining of area studies and IR theory work, successfully bringing together experts in IR theory and East Asian area studies to discuss stability in the Asia–Pacific region. With authors in the volume taking up Neo-Realist, Neo-Liberal and constructivist and other approaches to questions of Chinese foreign policy, Sino–American relations, Sino–Japanese relations, Japan–US relations, regional security, economic interdependence and other issues, the editors conclude that the marriage of area studies to IR theory in this particular region is a very fruitful, even necessary, one.

As it is with comparative politics, so it is with international relations—area studies expertise and works based in local knowledge of a nation and its language, culture, history, philosophical canon, and domestic political particularisms, are important to the advance of the field and the theories that drive it. Grand theorizing in international relations has given scholars much food for thought and has brought great advances to the discipline. Without grounding in local realities, however, these theories cannot be connected to the real policy world in any meaningful way. Likewise, without contributions from the field, from scholars and practitioners rooted in particular national milieus, the higher level of theorizing in international relations will suffer from case study deficiencies (assuming there are even case studies) that will leave it paralyzed and disconnected from reality. As Bates conceded in his discussion with Johnson,

The combination of local knowledge and general modes of reasoning, of area studies and formal theory, represents a highly promising margin of our field. The blend will help to account for the power of forces that we know shape human behavior, in ways that we have hitherto been able to describe but not to explain. It is time to insist upon both ... (Bates, p. 169).

With this in mind, my hope is that IR scholars in general will better incorporate the work of ‘IR area specialists’ into the canon of IR, and that IR scholars will more regularly integrate both theory *and* the fruit of area knowledge into their work to advance the field of IR, as the authors discussed here have done so laudably.

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