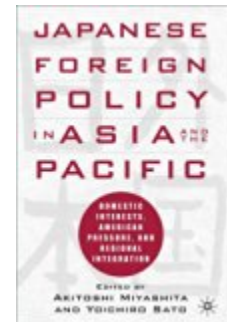


H-Net Reviews

in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Akitoshi Miyashita, Yoichiro Sato, eds. *Japanese Foreign Policy in Asia and the Pacific: Domestic Interests, American Pressure, and Regional Integration*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001. x + 208 pp. \$55.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-312-23920-6.

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Interested browsers would do well to note this book's subtitle. The focus of this book is clearly on the interaction of Japanese domestic interests and American pressure in the creation of Japanese foreign policy rather than in policy itself. The two questions this book addresses both deal with American influence: first, should Japanese foreign policy be considered "reactive" to American pressure (a la Kent Calder's 1988 thesis), and second, under what conditions is American pressure (*gaiatsu*) effective? [1] These questions are not new, but the editors intend to contribute to the debate by accentuating the social scientific rigor of their study.

The editors start the book by observing that too often, studies of Japan's "reactive" behavior encounter selection bias by choosing a case where Japanese and American interests converge. This opens their claims for a proactive Japanese foreign policy to criticism. In this volume, the editors attempt to provide a more methodologically rigorous examination of Calder's thesis by analyzing a set of cases in which Japanese and American interests diverge to varying degrees. This variation on the independent variable gives them leverage to make stronger claims. For those not familiar with the "reactive state" debate, the chapter by Keiko Hirata offers an excellent literature review, although it is not clear why this was postponed until chapter 5. Each of the chapters examines these issues with a different case study. One of the strengths of this book is the wide range of topics, both geographically and in terms of issues.

The authors generally come down on the reactive side of the debate, finding that American pressure is successful when the issue is highly salient for the United States, but Japan is freer to follow an independent line when

American interest wanes.

This can be seen in many of the chapters. In chapter 3, Akitoshi Miyashita studies Japanese aid to China and Russia. He argues that contrary to popular wisdom, the resumption of Japanese aid to China after the Tiananmen Square killings was not the proactive G7-leading policy it is made out to be. In fact, Japanese aid only resumed after President Bush and European leaders had decided that aid should be resumed. Similarly, American pressure forced Japan to provide aid to Yeltsin's new government in post-coup Russia. In chapter 7, William Long agrees that Japan's aid to Russia was driven by pressure from Washington. He also claims, in line with the book's thesis, that when American interests were not at stake in reacting to Chinese and South Asian nuclear testing—Japan was free to manipulate its ODA policy to achieve non-proliferation objectives. Saori Katada makes a similar argument in chapter 9, claiming that Japan was able to make independent moves to deal with the Asian Financial Crisis early on during the summer of 1997 because the United States was not fully aware of the issue's importance. By the fall of that year, however, the United States Treasury Department became heavily involved, and Japan returned to playing a supportive role. In chapter 5, Keiko Hirata offers a study of Japanese policy towards Indo-China. She finds that Japanese policy activism—engaging Vietnam during the Cold War and peacemaking activities in Cambodia in the 1990s—was highly dependent on U.S. interest. When the region is highly salient for Washington, Japan limits itself to following the American line, but when the region falls off the American radar, Japan becomes proactive.

There are some exceptions, however. C. K. Yeung, in

chapter 8, insists that Japan is consistently proactive, arguing that Japanese policies towards APEC are the fruit of a long-term goal of regional integration in Japanese policy rather than the result of U.S. pressure. Yasumasa Kuroda takes issue with the debate itself in chapter 6, finding Japanese policy towards the Middle East too vague to make any substantive conclusions. While it is hard to see practical the value of his contribution, Kuroda is right to raise the issue of symbolic action versus concrete action in Japanese foreign policy. Yoichiro Sato's first contribution, chapter 2, sidesteps the debate with an interesting study of how Japan reacts to U.S. economic demands, finding that utilizing sub-national cleavages within Japan is crucial to successful *gaiatsu*.

For all the editors' emphasis on methodological excellence, a fundamental problem remains. Their argument is that one should examine cases in which the interests of "Japan" and "America" diverge, treating these two countries as unitary actors. One of the editors recognizes this in chapter 10, claiming that analytical clarity forces them to reject a pluralist perspective of foreign policy as the result of a struggle between divergent domestic actors. As a result, they are forced to use a realist perspective to assess Japanese national interests—a perspective whose usefulness in understanding Japanese behavior has been seriously questioned.[2] Yet the one uncontested conclusion of this debate is that *gaiatsu* works best when American actors line up with some faction within Japan (often the Ministry of Foreign Affairs). In other words, when *gaiatsu* works, it works because Japan is *not* a unitary actor. In this context, what is the utility of citing "national" interests instead of sub-national actor interests?

Indeed, some of the book's most interesting sections are those discussing how sub-national actors use American support in their struggles within the political process. This can refer to Calder's image of *gaiatsu* as a Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) tool to fight domestic special interests. In chapter 4, for example, Hidekazu Sakai studies Japanese reactions to the 1998 North Korean missile launch. He argues that MOFA used American and South Korean pressure to preserve the 1994 Agreed Framework as a weapon to fight hard-line LDP politicians who favored cutting off KEDO funds after the missile test.

The book's strongest point, however, is its demonstration that the role of *gaiatsu* goes far beyond that, however. For example, in Yoichiro Sato's discussion of U.S.-Japan trade talks (chapter 2), he examines the ways in which MITI leveraged *gaiatsu* to increase its control over some industries; conversely the supermarket industry used American pressure (Toys 'R Us) to free itself of MITI regulations. In chapter 10, he suggests that LDP politicians were able to use their contacts with financial experts in the United States a tool to reduce their dependence on the Japanese Ministry of Finance

Nevertheless, there were points at which the authors hinted at these sub-national processes without investigating them. In chapter 8, for example, C.K. Yeung begins to describe how inter-ministry struggles between MOFA and MITI affected Japanese policy towards APEC, but limits himself to a few generalizations, when he could have offered a fascinating analysis of how dealing with American pressure on the issue played out in that struggle.

The most pleasant surprise about this volume is the high quality of presentation. Each of the chapters provides the right mix of historical background and current analysis so a non-specialist reader can follow their arguments without getting lost in details. Since the book's topics range widely, this is important. Surprisingly, given that most of the authors are non-native speakers of English, the chapters are consistently well written. There is relatively little of the awkward sentences and hard-to-read language that characterizes most academic writing. While it still may be over the heads of most undergraduates, its breadth and presentation make it perfectly suited for use in a graduate course on Japan or Asia.

Notes

[1]. Kent Calder, "Japanese Foreign Economic Policy Formation: Explaining the 'Reactive State'" in *World Politics* 40 (1988), p. 519.

[2]. For an assessment, see Glenn Hook et al, *Japan's International Relations: Politics, Economics, and Security* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001).

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