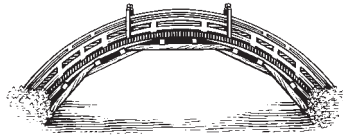


## BOOK REVIEWS



## Is Asia the Last Bastion of Capital Punishment?

*William Schabas*

A review of

David T. Johnson and Franklin E. Zimring

*The Next Frontier: National Development, Political Change, and the Death Penalty in Asia*

New York: Oxford University Press, 2009. ≈ 544 pp.

Capital punishment has virtually disappeared from Europe. It is rarely carried out in Africa, except for a few states in the northeast with largely Muslim populations. Aside from the United States, in the western hemisphere there has been only one execution in the past six years. All told, nearly 150 states have abandoned capital punishment, according to the latest United Nations report.<sup>1</sup> The remaining forty or so that continue to use the noose (or increasingly, the needle) are in Asia.

David T. Johnson and Franklin E. Zimring are scholars in, to use their words, the “relatively new and unpracticed discipline” of the comparative study of death penalty policy (p. 289). This major new study, with a highly original focus, considers the phenomenon of capital punishment from a regional perspective. Their book *The Next Frontier: National Development, Political Change, and the Death Penalty in Asia* provides insight into both specificities that may explain what appears to be a case of Asian exceptionalism and indications that may contribute to a more universal understanding of the decline, and ultimately abolition of, the death penalty.

The authors decided to concentrate on five case studies in East Asia: Japan, the Philippines, South Korea, Taiwan, and mainland China. In effect, this focus confines the study to a segment of Asia and sets aside a large and difficult piece of the death penalty puzzle: the Middle East. Perhaps these two fine scholars will provide us with a sequel that explains the lingering enthusiasm for capital punishment in countries such as Iran, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia (as well as in Pakistan, which is not quite in the Middle East).

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**WILLIAM SCHABAS** is Professor of Human Rights Law at the National University of Ireland, Galway, Director of the Irish Centre for Human Rights, and Global Legal Scholar at the University of Warwick. He can be reached at <william.schabas@nuigalway.ie>.

<sup>1</sup> “Capital Punishment and Implementation of the Safeguards Guaranteeing Protection of the Rights of Those Facing the Death Penalty,” Report of the Secretary-General, UN Doc. E/2010/10, para. 31.

The book's analytical framework rests on measuring whether the death penalty is "operational," "exceptional," "nominal," or "symbolic." China is clearly in the operational category, in that it executes more than one person per million of population. Singapore and North Korea also belong to the category. Countries with one execution per 10 million of population are deemed exceptional. Readers may be surprised to learn that the United States is well-entrenched in the exceptional rather than the operational group. In Asia, countries making exceptional use of the death penalty include Thailand and Vietnam. In the nominal category, Johnson and Zimring list states with one execution per 25 million (Malaysia, for example).

Of the five countries under examination, one has abolished the death penalty completely and two others are close to abolishing it. The Philippines abolished capital punishment following the Marcos regime and then reintroduced it before abolishing the death penalty again in 2006. South Korea is deemed *de facto* abolitionist because it has not executed anyone since 1997. Taiwan is likewise *de facto* abolitionist, having held no executions since 1995. Maturing democratization in all three jurisdictions provides the best explanation for evolution on the subject. All three countries fit well within the overall international trend.

Both China and Japan seem to be less obviously part of this abolitionist process. China stands out if only because of the sheer volume of executions. Indeed, the huge numbers—the actual figures are a state secret and estimates vary considerably, but all seem to agree that the annual count is in the thousands—tend to distort attempts at statistical comparison, a problem the authors address with some innovative analytical approaches. Yet, even China is in motion; the authors signal "changes in death penalty policy that have started to arrive in clusters at the national level of government in the PRC" (p. 277). In Japan, by contrast, the number of executions is really quite small. The new government elected in late 2009 seems likely to reduce, if not totally eliminate, the use of capital punishment by failing to set execution dates.

Johnson and Zimring consider the phenomenon of capital punishment from a historical standpoint, looking at political, cultural, and other factors that may have influenced decisionmaking in this area over the years. In most cases, detailed statistical analysis is provided, enabling a more thorough picture than has ever before been provided in the literature. For example, it is instructive to consider the annual figures for executions in Taiwan, broken down by crime: homicide, rape and homicide, robbery, kidnapping, drugs, and banditry. In the late 1980s, Taiwan was executing 60 to 70 persons each

year, many of them for banditry. The numbers have declined steadily and have not exceeded 10 since the beginning of the new century. Surprisingly, only a tiny proportion, about 2.7% of the total, is associated with drug trafficking.

The primary conclusion is that political evolution rather than cultural factors inherent to Asia provides the principal guide to understanding why some countries progress toward abolition of the death penalty. This has as its corollary a rejection of “Asian values” as a useful explanation for the persistence of capital punishment in the region. The political approach will vary with Korea, the Philippines, and Taiwan, and also explains the backwardness of China on the matter. In effect, the more a country is guided by democratic governance and human rights, the greater the impetus for abolition. Yet there is also much evidence that China is actually part of the same trend that drives the other countries.

When we look further afield, we find examples of authoritarian regimes that have abolished the death penalty. Rwanda, in Africa, is a recent example. There are other similar situations in Latin America, such as in Cuba, which has essentially stopped executions and proclaimed that it is “philosophically speaking” against the death penalty and plans to eliminate capital punishment “when suitable conditions exist.”<sup>2</sup> Thus, while political enlightenment may also encourage more liberal approaches to criminal law, including restriction and elimination of capital punishment, there is no shortage of exceptions.

At the other end of the spectrum, there are modern political democracies, such as the United States, where the death penalty seems well-entrenched. But as in China, there is also much to suggest that the United States is being drawn along by the global tsunami of abolition: absolute numbers of executions continue to decline, juries are increasingly reluctant to impose death sentences, and gradually state legislatures are turning away from capital punishment.

Johnson and Zimring are probably correct that East Asia will be the next frontier in the abolition of the death penalty. They have chosen a fascinating laboratory in which to study developments in this direction and convincingly put an end to the theory that capital punishment lingers on because of “Asian values.” The countries Johnson and Zimring have examined behave no differently on this issue than other countries elsewhere in the world.

The five Asian nations that are considered are a few years behind countries in Africa, Latin America, and Europe, and a few years ahead of the Middle East

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<sup>2</sup> “Capital Punishment and Implementation of the Safeguards Guaranteeing Protection of the Rights of Those Facing the Death Penalty,” para. 26.

and possibly the United States. With only about 45 states that continue to use the death penalty, and even fewer in the “operational” category, and a constant rate of between two and three countries abolishing capital punishment per year, universal abolition is perhaps only a couple of decades away. ◆

## ASEAN: Where Process Has Priority

Donald E. Weatherbee

A review of

Alice D. Ba

*(Re)Negotiating East and Southeast Asia: Region, Regionalism,  
and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations*

Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009 ≈ 344 pp.

In July 2009, arriving in Bangkok for her first dialogue with her Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) counterparts, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton exultingly declared, “We’re back!” What she meant was that in relations with Asia, the United States would give higher priority to Southeast Asia and ASEAN, the region’s multilateral framework for intraregional and international cooperation. It is not, however, as if the United States ever left. Since 2005, the framework for ASEAN-U.S. cooperation has been the “Joint Vision Statement on the ASEAN-U.S. Enhanced Partnership” and the 2006 Plan of Action, which produced the U.S. Comprehensive Development Assistance Program for ASEAN in 2008. These programs have had a low level of political visibility. Secretary Clinton’s Bangkok exclamation was less an issue of what the United States was doing than of the growing perception by regional elites that the United States was not doing enough. The concern was that Washington had neglected the broader array of U.S. national interests in the region as the rise of China threatened the balance of power.

The region has welcomed what have been up to now the Obama administration’s largely symbolic actions to demonstrate a higher level and greater intensity of U.S. engagement with ASEAN. The most important of these has been the August 2009 U.S. accession to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC) in Southeast Asia. The decision to sign on to the TAC added a significant plank to the U.S. regional platform; until then, the United States had been the only major ASEAN dialogue partner that had not accepted the region’s normative framework for peaceful relations. Secretary Clinton promised to upgrade the U.S. diplomatic presence in ASEAN by appointing a resident ambassador. President Barack Obama’s meeting *en bloc* with his ASEAN counterparts was another key step toward a closer ASEAN-U.S.

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**DONALD E. WEATHERBEE** is the Donald S. Russell Distinguished Professor Emeritus at the University of South Carolina and author of *International Relations in Southeast Asia: The Struggle for Autonomy* (2005). He can be reached at <donald.e.weatherbee@verizon.net>.

relationship. Obama's November 2009 meeting during the Singapore APEC session included all ten ASEAN heads of government. It is expected that summitry will become an ongoing element of the official ASEAN-U.S. partnership.

The willingness of the U.S. president to sit down in an ASEAN setting with Myanmar's prime minister underlined another change in the new administration's approach to the region. The U.S. relationship with ASEAN will no longer be held hostage by Myanmar (still Burma in U.S. government-speak). This was applauded in Southeast Asia as proof of the decoupling of Myanmar from Washington's appreciation of ASEAN. Although U.S. economic sanctions remain in place, an emerging strategy of seeking dialogue and engagement with, not just isolation of, Myanmar is convergent with ASEAN's approach to the Myanmar regime.

Even as the Obama administration seems willing to deepen U.S. involvement with ASEAN, questions can be raised about the grouping's institutional relevance and future cohesion. Under its new charter there is no real change in ASEAN's *modus operandi*, which rests on absolute sovereignty and collective non-interference in a member's domestic affairs. Decisionmaking remains that of consensus. Tough political issues are not brought to ASEAN's table. Although ASEAN has pledged to build an ASEAN Community by 2015, this requires leadership that does not exist. The annual transfer of the ASEAN chair to member countries on an alphabetic rotation means that the drive and thrust for community-building is at the mercy of the will and politics of the year's ASEAN head.

We are now at the intersection of two political dynamics: the Obama administration's declared interest in a deeper engagement with an ASEAN that seems to be flailing about for political relevance. Alice D. Ba's book on ASEAN and its place in East Asian regionalism has been read against this backdrop. *(Re)Negotiating East and Southeast Asia* is a study of ASEAN's processing of the issues the organization has addressed in its more than four decade history. By focusing on process, Ba is not judgmentally tied to policy outcomes in terms of success or failure. Adopting a theoretical approach that might be called "constructivist-lite," she conceives of ASEAN as a dialogue-driven process of social exchange among elites in which cooperation involves negotiation not just over material interests but also over social relations, social practices, and social identities. From this vantage, ASEAN's primary function "has had less to do with coordinating cooperation and divvying up gains than it has with the facilitation of an ongoing dialogue on what 'region' means for them," with regionalism being understood as a cumulative process through

which actors can grow into ASEAN ideas, norms, and practices (p. 41). To understand the evolution of ASEAN, Ba argues that one must be aware of how the material and the ideational interact in two intertwined and interdependent “stories” that unfold from ASEAN’s inception in 1967 to the present (and future). The stories are the renegotiations of ASEAN’s intraregional relations and the collective ASEAN renegotiations of Southeast Asia’s relations with larger powers, especially those in Northeast Asia and the United States.

The ASEAN narrative begins in the transformation of the regional environment in 1967 with the convergence of regime change in Indonesia, the crisis and uncertainties of intraregional conflict, and the uncertainties of great-power policies. This created opportunities for transcending nationalisms in a framework of regional unity in which the common purpose is defined as “regional resilience.” The notion of regional resilience is one of the leitmotifs in the book. As understood by Ba, ASEAN’s capacity to maintain its commitment to regionalism against external and internal threats could weaken or even divide the association. The commitment’s source is a sense of vulnerability and fragility. If, as Ba does, we accept regional resilience as the fundamental organizing principle of ASEAN, then we have the explanation of why ASEAN does nothing to rock the boat of regionalist commitment even if this commitment requires inaction and lowest common denominator decisionmaking. For ASEAN, unity is the most important political quality. As such, success is defined simply as organizational persistence.

Ba details how the ASEAN social process and national identities interacted while the key concepts and obligations of ASEAN were clarified in the dialogues that sought consensus over ASEAN’s Zone of Peace, Freedom, and Neutrality, dealings with Vietnam, and preferential trading arrangements. In the process, the author concludes that, with the social construction of “one Southeast Asia,” the region “had gained both agency and social purpose” (p. 131). The prominence given in the book to ASEAN as the normative expression of “one Southeast Asia” tends to obscure the political reality of Southeast Asia. The “one” is daily divided into its constituent units—the member states—who still prefer to advance national interests bilaterally rather than through ASEAN’s multilateral platform.

The author’s discussion of ASEAN’s economic regionalism begins with the intra-ASEAN debates over the ASEAN Free Trade Agreement (AFTA), the East Asia Economic Group (EAEG), and APEC. The discussion continues with examinations of the impact of the 1997–98 Asian financial crisis and the development of the Chiang Mai Initiative, the ASEAN +3 regionalist format, and possible broader formats of Asian regionalism, such as the East Asia



Summit. The issue for ASEAN is how a smaller grouping, such as ASEAN, might exist within larger groupings without losing identity or purpose.

The considerations of economic regionalism are balanced by the author's discussion of ASEAN's place in security regionalism, particularly as it is focused on the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). Ba insists that the ARF is not just a reactive response to the changed strategic environment in Southeast Asia in the 1990s but rather part of "an equally significant effort to deepen and regionalize intra-ASEAN security cooperation and consultations" (p. 191). Critics have argued that the "ASEAN way" has inhibited any ARF potential to go beyond being a talk-shop. One should not expect the practices and normative rules of ASEAN as applied in the ARF to constrain the use of force any more than one should expect the TAC to constrain Thailand or Cambodia in a border face-off or China, a TAC signatory, in the South China Sea.

Ba writes from an academic and constructivist theoretical vantage. She is little interested in what she sees as the practitioner's material and power-based concerns. To her, what is important is the cumulative interactive social process leading to stable expectations and consensus on behavior. She asserts that it is the ASEAN experience—in terms of both the association's socialization process and normative underpinnings—that has inspired wider East Asian regionalist initiatives. She sees the ASEAN process as more conducive to East Asian rather than Asia-Pacific regionalism (p. 233). For ASEAN to maintain its influence and claim to centrality in Asian regionalism, Ba cautions that "it will have to demonstrate its own organizational coherence and clarity of leadership" (p. 222), no mean task if the past is any predictor of the future.

In her summary analysis of ASEAN's ideational evolution, Ba states that ASEAN's present condition is in important ways "an accumulation of forty years of rethinking U.S.–Southeast Asia relations" (p. 237). Certainly in the last decade ASEAN's accelerated association with an East Asian urge for regionalism is a reflection of heightened questions about U.S. power and purpose and the need for non–U.S.-based alternatives. This is a realist conclusion. She warns that a new U.S. commitment to reversing the perceptual trends of the recent past "will take sustained attention of a particular sort and, most of all, mutual respect" (p. 239). ASEAN's claim to U.S. attention has more to do with the Southeast Asian regional balance of power than with fostering regional resilience. The United States does not want ASEAN, pressed by a rising China, to renegotiate Asian regionalism in an exclusionary way. ♦

## Confusing Confucius in Contemporary China

*Russell Leigh Moses*

A review of

Daniel A. Bell

*China's New Confucianism: Politics and Everyday Life in a Changing Society*

Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008. ≈ 280 pp.

China is composed of many pieces and places, and for Daniel Bell the biggest piece in the place lately is Confucianism. China, we are told on the dust jacket, “is embracing a new Confucianism that offers a compelling alternative to Western liberalism,” especially as there is a moral vacuum with the rise of capitalism and the erosion of Marxist ideology.

Bell’s argument is evinced in a series of chapters—topical essays, really, many of which were published elsewhere in different forms—and the book is divided into three sections: politics, society, and education. A fourth part of the book, labeled “Appendices,” further explores the connection between Confucianism and politics by looking at Yu Dan’s bestselling reappraisal and reapplication of *The Analects* as well as at how Confucianism might inform constitutionalism. Each section can be read on its own merits, but the common thread running through the book is stylistic. Bell weaves individual anecdotes into the current fabric of the country, presenting these aspects of China as representative of the country and the direction of the system as a whole.

For politics, Bell points to scholars and intellectuals who write regularly about Confucianism and insists that the fact that they do publish and have a readership is indicative of their growing hold on political discourse. Democratic alternatives, he argues, are on the wane as far as serious options about China’s future are concerned and debated, and Confucianism fills the void nicely, given its traditional roots and a persistent nostalgia for a simpler time. And where foreign policy is concerned, Bell is quick to point out that Confucian notions of morality might well affect the conduct of military practices in a more humane direction.

For all of these notions, causality is at a premium in Bell’s approach. As someone writing as a philosopher, Bell fills that tradition nicely, making

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RUSSELL LEIGH MOSES is Dean of the Beijing Center for Chinese Studies, where he also teaches courses on Chinese politics. He writes a column on Chinese political developments for the “China Real Time Report” online section of the *Wall Street Journal*. He can be reached at <r.moses@thebeijingcenter.org>.

a compelling argument by presenting evidence that works in favor of a contention. He does not mention, however, other strands of the political narrative of contemporary China: the urge toward enhancing authoritarian rule evinced by a number of leading intellectuals and many members of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), the ceiling placed on political commentary on the Internet, the shrinking space for NGOs, and the fact that Confucianism is only very rarely spoken of in party publications, especially when reform is broached.

In another instance, Bell submits that the rituals associated with Confucianism “serve to protect the interests of different vulnerable groups,” and he offers examples of family meals and the veneration of the elderly. But nowhere in this section does one read about how effective the new yearning for Confucianism is in the protection of human rights advocates detained or jailed by the state. Perhaps that discussion would deplete the argument of its force.

Despite what Bell implies, the assembly of the odd indicator or two is not equivalent to demonstrating that what is noteworthy and new in Chinese society among some is at the same time necessarily pervasive and currently present in Chinese politics and among Chinese officials. Bell contends that the renewed interest in Confucianism is telling, but what about the uptick in attention to such luminaries as Hegel, Jürgen Habermas, and Hannah Arendt? Are German sages dominating Chinese political thinking? Of course not, but why is Confucius the man of the current match? Bell does not offer an opinion on that, eager as he is to promote the wave of Confucianism carrying so much of China before it.

Everyday life in China is the subject of the second part of *China's New Confucianism*. Sex, singing, sports, and domestic servants are the cases that Bell employs to further support his sense of a surging Confucian value system. All is open to interpretation in his universe, it appears, so long as Confucianism can be presented as increasingly slipping into the decisions people make in contemporary China. Thus, speaking of the trade in mistresses and Kang Youwei's writings, Bell insists that “it would be dogmatic to rule out creative adaptations of traditional practices simply because they deviate from Western-style creative marriage arrangements” (p. 74).

Perhaps, but should we rule such adaptations in? One would be very hard-pressed indeed to find anyone in mainstream China thinking seriously about allowing Confucianism to determine the designs of matrimony. And Kang's legacy is a complex one. Though admired by Mao Zedong for some of his efforts, Kang was also a person whose utopian writings were less serious

than his political efforts to restore the Qing Dynasty after it had been dead for more than a decade. Ask any two Chinese scholars about Kang and you are likely to get at least three different views: that of the party; that of traditional analysis, which casts Kang as an incomplete patriot; and the revisionist view of Kang as seriously misguided.

Bell's style here—and indeed throughout much of the book—is to note that someone considered to be a Confucian wrote something about some aspect of social life in the past and then to suggest that this observation might be connected with a similar development in current times. But that is a far cry from demonstrating that such a view is widely accepted or even enjoys a level of traction that would compel its incorporation into daily life and work.

Indeed, Bell seems to be confused frequently between those elements of Confucianism that could help China and those that are actually attractive and are drawing attention in some quarters of this very diverse society. In Bell's conception, there are a lot of closet Confucians out there—or at the very least there are many people who simply do not realize that they could be one.

The book's section on education is by far the most engaging because it is genuine and because Bell does not insist that day-to-day experiences need to be of some Confucian character. His conclusion is informed by his experience in the classroom, including the reactions of students to his approach and the subjects under discussion. Readers may be surprised that the author is able to teach political theory in Beijing. However, qualified foreign scholars do so with increasing regularity, in large part because many of their Chinese colleagues prefer to write and participate in international conferences rather than instruct.

Still, there are moments when Bell makes statements that are stunning. He writes that he “had to be cautious with Western journalists [because] unlike Chinese journalists, they do not always check quotes before they are published, which has led to some mistakes” (p. 144). Left unsaid is that any errors that a Chinese reporter might commit would be those that appeared in draft form, given that censorship (and self-censorship) are ways of professional life here. Bell must know the power of censorship (though he states that there are ways “around the restrictions”), considering that his book has yet to be translated and published in Chinese.

Indeed, if Confucianism is a potent political force—and, as Bell has written elsewhere, the likely next name of the Chinese Communist Party—should not a Chinese translation of his book at least be available in China for discussion and debate?

There are as many paths to China's future as there are pieces to its present. This book presents one slice of the contemporary, and a rather thin slice at that. Regrettably, the author sees these single sections as summing up not only the current situation but also the likely path of the culture and country. Anecdotes do not an argument make, and a fascination with a persuasive philosophy should stand simply as that rather than as a prescription or a prognostication for a society still struggling to find its way, with all sorts of avenues to trod on, not simply a single, sage-lit path. ◆

## A Stimulating Analysis of China Present—and Past

*Jonathan Fenby*

A review of

Charles Horner

*Rising China and Its Postmodern Fate: Memories of Empire  
in a New Global Context*

Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2009. ≈ 232 pp.

Charles Horner has written an important and carefully argued book that suggests new ways of looking at China's modern history and ends with a stimulating conclusion that "China" and the People's Republic of China (PRC) are not the same thing. "The two never got along very well with each other," he adds, stating that Mao Zedong waged "a brutal campaign" seeking the destruction of China, but that China "fought the PRC to a standstill and then went on to defeat it outright" (p. 198).

I would argue for a rather more nuanced verdict. The PRC still seems to me quite powerful internally, and the Communist Party, if it has atrophied in some respects, has adapted in others, to quote the title of David Shambaugh's excellent recent study on the subject.<sup>1</sup> But Horner's conclusion is the logical conclusion to a story that he starts with the Yuan Dynasty and that traces fascinating links between past and present.

His parallel conclusion is that "rising China is not now, and will not be, the creation of only a handful of isolated politburo members in Beijing, but the result instead of the now always-changing give and take of life throughout the Chinese world" (p. 197). Again, I would offer a modification—the major economic decisions made at the central governmental level in the later part of 2008 show that the leadership remains important to shaping China, and the internal security straitjacket that envelops China and so provides an essential element in the character of today's country is maintained from the top.

Those points aside, the essential value of this book is that it makes one think again and again about what has constituted China over the centuries since the Yuan Dynasty and the implications for the 21st century. The overview of how the telling of that history has evolved, both in the West and in China,

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JONATHAN FENBY is author of *The Penguin History of Modern China*. He can be reached at <jtfenby@hotmail.com>.

<sup>1</sup> David Shambaugh, *China's Communist Party: Atrophy and Adaptation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009).

is worth the price of the book alone, particularly when Horner draws a line linking the different views of the Ming naval expansion, for example, or explores the Taiping, or highlights the role of violence in history after 1800. His treatment of the multicultural, multiethnic nature of Qing rule—from its heights under the Qianlong emperor to its “negotiated fall”—expertly compresses recent historical re-evaluation. He brings out the complexity of that dynasty’s approach to ruling China as part of its much broader empire, and has telling passages on the way that the need for change was enunciated a couple of decades before the launch of the May Fourth Movement.

The “conceptual legerdemain,” to use Horner’s phrase, of the Communist regime in transforming capitalism from a creed imposed by greedy foreigners into a system said to be rooted in Chinese history has been a considerable post-1978 achievement. The role of capital has, indeed, been extremely important, due to the availability of a lake of Chinese savings (and, more recently, a flood of cheap loans from state banks). In that sense, China is more capitalist than the West, with wages playing a smaller role in the overall composition of GDP. But one must not forget that major factor inputs, such as land, labor, and capital markets, remain regulated by politically driven controls, as do the prices of such key inputs as electricity and water.

Given imperial efforts at similar controls, it may be that today “China is China” once more, free from the imported constraints of Maoism-Marxism imposed from above after 1949. But there is no shortage of awkward questions that this book brings out, even if it cannot provide a complete answer to all of them; “Chineseness,” as the author notes, is an elusive concept.

There is, to start with, the contradiction between the current regime’s depiction of itself as a new system installed in 1949 and its fervent defense of geographical boundaries set by the last imperial dynasty; between the claim that China is special because it rests on thousands of years of history and the fact that China’s current shape was set only in the late 18th century. Why, if China has been immutable for so long, were the Ming still building walls in the middle of what is today’s PRC? As Horner writes, “the great legacy of the Qing dynasty to the new republic of China was the terminological sleight of hand that transformed a multinational empire into a national state” (p. 161).

How does urbanization sit with the old Maoist idea of the countryside surrounding cities? How does central authority cope with what has been termed “translocal China,” in which provincial centers foster direct links with the rest of the world? Can what Horner terms “the mind of Modern China” be seen in isolation from the rest of the world any more? Will it follow an asymmetric course with “the mind of the Modern West” in which their lines

“may come tantalizingly close but will never quite touch, or along paths that will eventually intersect” (p. 177)? Is the revival of Confucianism a genuine return to ancient roots or a process encouraged by the authorities for their own politico-cultural purposes that outweigh the traditional Communist rejection of the sage as a barrier to modernization?

In just two hundred pages and eleven crisply organized chapters, Horner manages to pack enough thought-provoking questions to keep his reader busy re-evaluating his or her views of China today. One does not have to agree completely with Horner; the value of the book is to provoke fresh consideration of a history that has far too often stemmed from assumptions that must be questioned, not only from 1949 but reaching back to the Pax Mongolica. Looking ahead, Horner leaves us with a good gauge for the future—the outcome of the struggle between the PRC and “China” created today’s rising nation, he concludes, adding that “of all the memories that will live on into the minds of Post-modern China, this decisive battle—and how and why it was fought—will be the most important” (p. 198). ◆



## Is It Too Late to Save Japan?

*Tobias Harris*

A review of

John Haffner, Tomas Casas i Klett, and Jean-Pierre Lehmann  
*Japan's Open Future: An Agenda for Global Citizenship*  
 New York: Anthem Press, 2009. ≈ 336 pp.

Published just as Japan's Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) stumbled into the election that drove it from power decisively for the first time since the party was created in 1955, *Japan's Open Future: An Agenda for Global Citizenship* by John Haffner, Tomas Casas i Klett, and Jean-Pierre Lehmann was timed perfectly. These three Westerners stepped in with a blueprint for a more open and liberal Japan, based on their intimate familiarity with the country, just as the Japanese people chose the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ)—a party that is, if not uniformly progressive, at least more progressive than the LDP.

The decay in Japan's social, economic, and political institutions, the book argues, is well advanced. Having inherited institutions that enabled Japan to pursue and “catch up” with the West economically not once but twice, Japan's leaders have struggled to adapt to a new, more global age: “Japan's policymakers stubbornly hold to the untenable dogma of mercantilism—the idea that a nation's prosperity depends on the foreign trade surpluses it generates, where exports and outward investments are good, imports impoverish and inward foreign investments are bad” (p. 85). In other words, Japan's foreign economic policy is unchanged from the Meiji period. Married to mercantilism is an outmoded idea of the Japanese nation-state, which the authors argue rests on a constructed, sanitized history that asserts the homogeneity of the Japanese nation and often downplays or excises from official retellings the darker moments of Japan's past (although the authors acknowledge both Japan's official apologies and China's manipulation of the history issue for domestic reasons).

The result has been that Japan's leaders not only have insulated the economy through mercantilist practices but also have isolated the Japanese people from international connections. The neo-nationalist narrative has made

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**TOBIAS HARRIS** is a doctoral student in political science at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the author of the Japanese politics blog *Observing Japan*. He can be reached at <tharris@mit.edu>.

Japan's relations with its Asian neighbors trickier, and, by failing to teach most Japanese how to communicate effectively in English, the education system has made it difficult for Japanese citizens to communicate with Americans and other peoples from all over the world. Being less than proficient in English has meant that Japanese are not able to engage fully in the global discussions that occur in the world's *lingua franca*. This, the authors assert, amounts to "international autism."

In short, even as the old institutions that insulated Japan from the world decay, those very institutions have prevented the Japanese people from implementing reforms that would revitalize the government and the economy.

Haffner, Casas i Klett, and Lehmann have no shortage of proposals to fix Japan's institutions. They outline how Japan should build a more humane economic system that is at once more open to risk-taking by individuals and involvement by foreigners in Japan's economy while also providing a more secure safety net and embracing a foreign policy approach rooted not in the nation-state's traditional concern with security challenges but in solving regional and international economic and environmental challenges.

The problem, though, is how Japan moves from the bleak present to an open future. It is one thing to draft proposals; it is quite another to turn those proposals into policies. And it is not enough to change policies. The focus on the linguistic deficiencies of the Japanese people suggests that mindsets—culture, in other words—must change as well. Although cultural change is by no means impossible, such change does not follow the plans and decrees of government officials.

The election of the DPJ was surely a step in the right direction for Japan. Not only is the DPJ more open to the concept of global citizenship, but the Hatoyama government's administrative reforms will ultimately enable more political leadership capable of creative policymaking and reform.

Even with more capable political leadership, however, Japan may still struggle to change in the manner outlined by Haffner, Casas i Klett, and Lehmann. It is not at all clear that there is enough support among the Japanese people for greater economic openness and risk-taking. After all, in the 2009 general election, neither the DPJ nor the LDP ran as the party of openness. A tragic consequence of the global financial crisis for Japan may be that, in addition to ruling out the possibility of neoliberal reform, which is preferred by some members of the LDP, the crisis may also have ruled out Scandinavian-style social democratic reform in which greater openness is coupled with greater protection. Faced with economic stagnation and demographic decline,

the Japanese people may not have the stomach for ambitious reforms, or the voices of the “losers” from reform may drown out pro-reform voices.

The authors acknowledge the obstacles facing substantial reform but offer one wild card that could lead Japan to introduce radical changes: China. Pointing to Japan’s earlier “openings”—both of which occurred at the hands of the United States—they suggest that China could play a similar role. Greater dependence on China, which is expected to surpass Japan as the world’s second-largest economy this year, could galvanize the Japanese people and their political leaders to undertake tough and long-delayed reforms, much as the Meiji reformers built a modern nation-state to fend off the Western powers.

Unlike during the Meiji period, however, when the reformers enjoyed autocratic powers and were virtually building a state from scratch, or during the occupation when General MacArthur exercised dictatorial powers (with the help of Japanese bureaucrats), building a new system today requires accommodating or overcoming the resistance of entrenched interests within a democratic system. Thus far, would-be reformers have struggled to overcome these obstacles. Japan will not be remade solely by the power of good ideas such as those found in *Japan’s Open Future*. ◆

## Explaining the Longevity of India's Open Economic Policy

Pradeep Taneja

A review of

Jalal Alamgir

*India's Open-Economy Policy: Globalism, Rivalry, Continuity*

New York: Routledge, 2008 ≈ 192 pp.

Although India's economic reform program and subsequent growth story have not received as much attention from scholars as China's open-door policy, enough has been written to give us a fairly good idea of the key elements of the reform agenda that have transformed India's international image from a poverty-stricken country into that of a land of opportunities. As Jalal Alamgir writes in the preface to *India's Open-Economy Policy: Globalism, Rivalry, Continuity*, "economic openness has come to be accepted in society as a core national value" (p. xii). The focus of his book, therefore, is not so much on the substance of India's open-economy policy as it is on the reasons for the policy's endurance.

In trying to explain why the external economic policies, adopted by the Indian government in the wake of the 1991 balance of payments crisis, have continued despite political protests and changes of government, Alamgir argues that the reforms were justified and continued on the basis of the idea of openness, which was in turn informed by the twin concepts of globalism and rivalry. The ideational motivations for the open-economy policy arose, the author argues, from national ambition ("what do we want to achieve as a nation") and national placement ("where are we placed relative to other nations").

According to Alamgir, globalism, or the desire to play an important role in world affairs, has been a continuing theme in Indian policy circles and can be traced to the country's struggle for independence. India's globalist ambitions, however, underwent a major shift from "a normative claim to globalism" (p. 76) in the 1960s. The earlier normative globalism was based on a desire to influence world politics "according to values cherished in India's nationalist struggle: peace, democracy, self-determination, and non-alignment" (p. 74). However, the 1962 war with China, Alamgir argues, threw the rivalry with China into sharp relief, such that by the 1990s China was

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PRADEEP TANEJA is a Lecturer in Asian Politics and International Relations at the University of Melbourne. He can be reached at <ptaneja@unimelb.edu.au>.

seen as India's main political, economic, and military rival, requiring a "multi-dimensional and strategic policy response" (p. 46).

The external economic policy changes introduced since 1991 are an integral part of that response. Having witnessed China's international stature and influence rise rapidly following the success of its open-door policy, the author suggests that India's policymakers consciously cultivated a perception of a long-term strategic rivalry with China to sustain the support for their globalist agenda. China was "constructed" as a rival "within the broader imperative of globalism" (p. 128). In short, in order to compete with China for global influence, India must follow China's example by opening its economy to foreign trade and investment. Alamgir cites India's emulation of China's special economic zones (SEZ) policy as an example. He overlooks, however, the fact that China's SEZs were created not just to boost exports; they were also to act as laboratories for market-oriented economic reforms in a largely centrally planned economy. India's SEZ policy is qualitatively different from the framework governing the development of China's SEZs.<sup>1</sup> But Alamgir is right about the value of China as an exemplar for India's policymakers in selling the merits of their own liberal trade and investment policies to the Indian public. Moreover, the regular comparisons with China that the Indian media has drawn when reporting on India's own progress, or lack thereof, in various fields has made the job of these policymakers easier.

In attempting to provide an explanation for the continuity of open-economy policy despite the "politics of causes and consequences" (the title of chapter two in the book), the author somewhat overstates the resistance to economic reforms. Indeed, the adoption of liberal economic policies by the Indian government was frequently accompanied by protests and walkouts in the parliament and huge street demonstrations outside, but the "accompanying vicissitudes and violence in the domestic polity" were not "unprecedented," as Alamgir claims (p. 43). To be sure, economic liberalization policies did cause significant hardship to millions of poor farmers and low-income earners in the country. But the political violence in the 1990s had as much, if not more, to do with other sectarian causes as with open-economic policies. The globalism and rivalry framework also underestimates the level of support for the open-economy policy among middle-class Indians, without which it would have been well nigh impossible

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<sup>1</sup> Of China's original four SEZs, three were located in Guangdong Province and the fourth, Xiamen, in Fujian. Hainan Island was declared an SEZ in 1988. In addition to these five SEZs, China had established numerous economic and technological development zones in the 1980s. India's SEZs bear some resemblance to both types of zone but are also quite different from them.

for the authorities to push ahead with their reformist policies. Yet there is hardly any mention of such support in the book.

There is also no discussion of the various poverty alleviation schemes, launched by the Manmohan Singh government since 2004, as an antidote to the pain of reform, especially the multi-billion dollar employment scheme under the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA, renamed the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act in October 2009).<sup>2</sup> Though I am in agreement with the author that the construction of a rivalry with China and the portrayal by foreign media of India as an “emerging economy” (alongside Brazil, Russia, and China) contributed to the government’s ability to continue with the open-economy policy, it would be unrealistic to believe that ideational factors alone were responsible for the continuity of the policy.

Given that the focus of the book is on explaining the reasons for the continuity of India’s open-economy policy, it is a little disappointing that no attempt is made to actually identify “the small pro-reformist policy circle” (p. 102) or the “core group of leaders” (p. 122) who advanced this policy. It is clear that in India there was no “Berkeley Mafia” or “Chicago Boys,” who were credited with the market-oriented economic policies in Suharto’s Indonesia and Pinochet’s Chile respectively. But it would have been helpful for understanding the reform dynamics if the reader had been informed of the identity of the bureaucrats and reformist leaders who managed to provide continuity to economic policy despite several changes of government.

Surprisingly, Alamgir gets two very basic facts wrong on one page (p. 35)—the state where Babri mosque is located and the full name of the right-wing Hindu organization, the RSS. He writes about “the destruction of the Babri Mosque in Bihar” when anyone familiar with Indian politics would know that the disputed site is located in Ayodhya in the state of Uttar Pradesh. Likewise, the middle S in RSS stands for Swayamsevak, not Samajsevak.

The publisher should be aware that the copy of *India’s Open-Economy Policy* that this reviewer received had the bibliography and index pages at the front of the book, which was almost certainly the result of a fault in the printing and binding process. Neither this minor problem in the layout of the book nor my observations above, however, should take anything away from the substantial strengths of the book. Alamgir has made a tremendous effort in presenting a very persuasive and well-researched account of the ideational factors that have given longevity to India’s open-economy policy. ♦

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<sup>2</sup> For a discussion of the NREGA, see Salim Lakha and Pradeep Taneja, “Balancing Democracy and Globalisation: The Role of the State in Poverty Alleviation in India,” *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 32, no. 3 (December 2009): 408–24.

## The United States and Kashmir: When Less Is More

C. Raja Mohan

A review of

Howard B. Schaffer

*The Limits of Influence: America's Role in Kashmir*

Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2009. ≈ 272 pp.

For nearly six decades, diplomatic intervention in the India-Pakistan dispute over the state of Jammu and Kashmir has been ever so tempting for the United States. It has also been singularly unrewarding despite the deployment of some of the best U.S. diplomats and the intensity of high-level political attention devoted to the issue by U.S. presidents, especially John F. Kennedy.<sup>1</sup>

Howard Schaffer, with his long diplomatic experience in the subcontinent and activism in the influential Kashmir Study Group in the United States, is perhaps best-placed to tell us the story on why and how a solution to the Kashmir dispute has become so elusive for the United States. In many ways, Schaffer's volume is part of the story. *The Limits of Influence: America's Role in Kashmir* reveals the unending tension between the liberal internationalist impulses in the United States to resolve the Kashmir question and the persistent refusal of the region, or more accurately India, to fall in line.

Capturing the paradox well, the book is a fascinating tale of the limits of U.S. influence on the peace process in Kashmir. Yet Schaffer's main recommendation for Washington is to embark once again on an effort to promote a Kashmir settlement between India and Pakistan.

To be fair, Schaffer wants the United States to promote such a settlement differently this time. Through quiet diplomacy, Washington can

helpfully act as a sounding board, advising each side of the likely acceptability to the other of proposals it is considering putting on the negotiating table. But Americans should not sit at the negotiating table—a bad idea and one that Indians will not accept. Keeping to an informal, unobtrusive role, U.S. diplomats will want to discourage any public discussion of their activities.

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C. RAJA MOHAN is the Strategic Affairs Editor of the *Indian Express*, New Delhi. He can be reached at <raja.mohan@expressindia.com>.

<sup>1</sup> For a study with a focus on President Kennedy's involvement in Kashmir that nicely complements Schaffer's story, see Timothy W. Crawford, "Kennedy and Kashmir, 1962–63: The Perils of Pivotal Peacemaking in South Asia," *India Review* 1, no. 3 (July 2002): 1–38.

Although the Obama administration should not dispatch a highly publicized special envoy as President Kennedy did in 1962 when he assigned Averell Harriman to the task, a private visit by someone recognized to have the President's confidence should be considered (pp. 199–200).

The problem with Schaffer's main recommendation is not just that discreet diplomacy does not come easily to Washington. It is that any kind of a U.S. role—quiet or unquiet—would kill the project in New Delhi. That inevitable prospect does not seem to daunt Schaffer.

The fact, however, is that Schaffer is not alone in disregarding the empirical evidence on the limits of U.S. influence on a Kashmir settlement. In my view, much of the foreign policy establishment in the Democratic Party has been itching for an activist role in Kashmir.

One source of this urge is ideological. Rejecting George W. Bush's hands-off policy toward conflict resolution in general, and the Kashmir dispute in particular, the Democrats want Washington to adopt a more active approach to resolving the world's pressing conflicts. One of the first acts of the Obama administration was to appoint special envoys to the Middle East and the Afghanistan-Pakistan region within 48 hours of the president being sworn in. It took considerable lobbying by Delhi and a lot of public noise in India to stop the administration from naming Kashmir as part of the mandate for veteran diplomat Richard Holbrooke when he was named the special representative for Pakistan and Afghanistan. That Kashmir was not named does not mean, however, that the Obama administration has decided to turn its back on the question.

Beyond the ideological imperative, there is a strong belief within the administration that the war in Afghanistan and the India-Pakistan dispute over Kashmir are linked. As a presidential candidate, Barack Obama embraced the U.S. intervention in Afghanistan as a war of necessity—in opposition to the occupation of Iraq as a needless war of choice. As part of his focus on Afghanistan, Obama saw a linkage between the trouble on Pakistan's western borders and Pakistan's enduring conflict with India on its eastern borders.

Whatever the administration's public deference to Indian sensitivities, the idea that Delhi should do something in Kashmir to make it easier for Islamabad to collaborate with Washington has gained considerable traction within the administration. However, there is no prospect at all of India accepting such a linkage between Kashmir and Afghanistan in any form that Washington proposes and pursues. One of Schaffer's major premises is that the improved relationship between India and the United States in recent years opens up new possibilities for a U.S. role in Kashmir.



In my view the opposite might be true. One of the reasons for the definitive improvement in U.S.-India relations was President Bush's refusal to press Delhi on Kashmir despite considerable pressure from Pakistan after September 11. Bush insisted that the United States would develop its relations with India and Pakistan independent of each other. This policy of de-hyphenation helped reduce historical suspicions of the United States in India and created the basis for productive cooperation between Delhi and Washington. If the Obama administration drifts away from the policy of de-hyphenation and renews U.S. activism in Kashmir, it would only help revive anti-American sentiments in India.

More dangerously, India is bound to see U.S. policy on Kashmir as motivated by increasing dependence on the Pakistan Army to achieve U.S. objectives in Afghanistan. There could be no surer way of undermining all the positives that have emerged in the Indo-U.S. relationship over the last decade.

Schaffer and sections of the Obama administration must come to terms with a simple correlation that offers an important insight for U.S. policymakers. The greatest progress in India-Pakistan relations in general and Kashmir in particular occurred when the Bush administration deliberately stepped back from promoting peace in Kashmir. The back channel negotiations between the Manmohan Singh government and the regime of General Pervez Musharraf produced more positive movement in bilateral relations in three years (2004–07) than had been achieved in the previous three decades.

The progress also involved the drafting of a framework for the settlement of the Kashmir dispute. Schaffer correctly identifies the five basic elements of this approach: avoiding a change in Kashmir's territorial status quo, making the border in Kashmir a porous one, granting significant autonomy to the two parts of Kashmir under the control of Delhi and Islamabad, creating a joint mechanism with a mandate for regulating some areas in Kashmir, and progressively reducing Indian and Pakistani troops in Kashmir along with reducing violence in the state. But further movement on India-Pakistan relations stalled when Musharraf's power in Pakistan began to erode amid the judicial challenge to his authority and the U.S. pressure on him to shed his uniform and accommodate Benazir Bhutto during 2007–08.

The absence of a U.S. role provided a sensible basis for India-Pakistan discussion on Kashmir. The moment Washington steps in, it would wreck the process by simply altering the context of negotiations. Given the past and present security cooperation between the United States and Pakistan, few in Delhi believe Washington can be an impartial actor in disputes with Islamabad.

U.S. enthusiasm for Kashmir diplomacy would result in both Islamabad and Delhi believing that the United States is tilting toward Pakistan.

Until now President Obama and Secretary Clinton have resisted calls to apply greater diplomatic pressure on India over Kashmir from the Democratic Party's foreign policy establishment, from the Pentagon (whose military leadership is anxiously seeking support from the Pakistan Army), and from the Labor government in Britain. It will be a pity if Obama and Clinton succumb to these pressures; for the greatest consequence of such a move would be a rapid downgrading of the strategic partnership between Washington and Delhi.

The United States has tilted toward Pakistan before, and few in India will be surprised if it does so again. The immediate casualty of this misstep would be Prime Minister Singh, who has gone farther than any of his predecessors in befriendng the United States and Pakistan and in exploring a creative solution to the Kashmir dispute. ◆



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