

Introduction: Toward a New Paradigm for International Relations

For three and a half centuries and more, international relations has been seen as a matter of ties among nation-states: France, China, Russia, Japan, and, preeminently over the past two decades, the United States of America. Yet in a globalizing system of rising complexity, that view has grown too simple. It is time for a new paradigm.

To be sure, America has the strongest military in the world. Despite persistent U.S. domestic controversy over fiscal policy, the dollar continues to prevail as the global key currency. In many ways the United States still remains, as Secretary of State Madeleine Albright often self-confidently put it in the late 1990s, the “indispensable nation.”¹

Yet there is much that such rhetoric does not, in the early twenty-first century, adequately explain about international affairs. Why does the “indispensable nation” acquiesce to trade and financial policies that blunt its growth, and why does it not work harder to configure the rules of the game? Why does it oscillate so strikingly over time in the dynamism of its response to the world? Why does it pay so much attention to some small countries, often not highly strategic, and ignore other large ones, some among the most consequential in the world?

The Problem for Analysis

Much, in the final analysis, proves obscure when the focus is only on nations. Instead, the conceptual net needs to be cast more widely, to encompass a broader range of international actors. On an ever more

complex global chessboard, leaders and their publics interact across protean dimensions. To comprehend that reality, and to foretell the future, those multiple dimensions of public affairs need to be grasped and their role in the complex interactions that now configure the world better conceptualized.

Subnational actors, to be sure, have gotten significant attention in international relations theory for over two decades. They were a concern of classic works, such as Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye's *Power and Interdependence*, in the late 1970s.² Subnational analyses, however, have generally focused on transnational actors, such as multinational corporations and global religious organizations, rather than on geographically defined units such as cities. Yet cities are a crucial—perhaps *the* crucial—dimension of the subnational universe, which is growing ever more important in global affairs. Throughout the Middle Ages—indeed, until the Peace of Westphalia in 1648—cities were key actors in international relations. And they are becoming so once again, as the reality of global localism grows ever more salient.³

An extensive and useful literature has evolved concerning the notion of the global city.⁴ This notion has been applied, however, mainly in the economic realm. New York and London have been examined in detail, as quintessential expressions, with the notion being applied to Tokyo also.⁵ Surprisingly, however, the concept of the global city has rarely been applied to political affairs.⁶

For many years, that failure to include predominantly political towns within the rubric of *global city* was apt. These cities were, in truth, parochial, with little international dimension. Their overriding concern was domestic politics, with a focus on the local legislature. Washington, D.C., itself was dominated by parochial congressional politics throughout the first two-thirds (1800–1950 or so) of its existence (see chapter 1).

Yet global politics is changing profoundly, and diplomats ignore that historic transformation at their peril. Telecommunications and transportation are much faster and more efficient than they have ever been before, while economic relations are more intimate and interactive, creating an increasingly tangible new global political-economic community. Global political cities, rising within this broader configuration, are distinguished not by their agglomeration of CEOs or their intensity of financial trading but rather by their remarkable influence (as sophisticated, yet often

nongovernmental, communities interactive with government) over policy decisions and by their amassing of strategic intelligence on topics that range from national policy trends to geopolitical risk.

Why Asia in Washington?

Washington is a particularly interesting focal point of research on global political cities for several reasons. Most important, of course, it is the geographical seat of the world's most powerful national government. Almost as vital, however, it is one of the world's most significant centers of multilateral policy activity, with the headquarters of the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the Inter-American Development Bank, and the Organization of American States, just to name a few major resident organizations located within its confines. It also hosts one of the world's most vigorous NGO communities, housing groups such as the World Wildlife Fund and InterAction as well as major activities of Amnesty International and the International Red Cross. Building on but transcending the capabilities of the U.S. government, Washington also houses a formidable information analysis complex, including the world's most influential think tanks.

As a consequence of the foregoing, enhanced by the soft-power legitimacy of American society and values in a global world, Greater Washington has emerged in the Internet age as a preeminent agenda-setting center. It has done so even on issues—ranging from the massacre of Armenians by Turkey during World War I, to the ill treatment of “comfort women” in East Asia during World War II, to ethnic cleansing in Darfur today—that are virtually unrelated to America’s conventional bilateral relations with the world or, indeed, even to the United States as a geopolitical entity at all.

Within Washington, the role of Asia, as opposed to other global regions, is an especially important subject for research, particularly as a topic in contemporary international political economy. Again, one can distinguish several reasons. Substantively, Asia represents the core of the non-Western industrialized world; its political-economic prospects determine the capacity of non-Western nations to challenge the long-standing preeminence of the West. More abstractly, Asia's rapid socioeconomic rise raises the important conceptual question of how

economic power and geopolitical influence are related in today's world, if indeed they are related at all. In addition, since Asian people are mainly non-Caucasian, the role of Asia in Washington implicitly raises the delicate and troublesome issue of how race matters in international global governance.

U.S.-Asian relations are uniquely configured, being both highly asymmetric along many dimensions and also characterized by large gaps in mutual understanding. They thus present important cases in the study of both misperception and the impact of cognitive distortions on international relations. Finally, since Asia has been late developing compared to the West, its changing role in Washington raises major issues regarding how rising powers assimilate themselves into global governance structures. These are no doubt more starkly posed in the drama of what I call Asia in Washington than in any other world region's relationships with the U.S. national capital.

Conceptual Ambitions

Together with its substantive promise as a vehicle for deepening our understanding of the world around us, *Asia in Washington* can also make important contributions to ongoing theoretical debates in both domestic politics and international political economy. It promises to contribute in seven major areas: a critique of realist theory, an illustration that domestic structure matters, an explication of the subnational factors that shape international relations, an explication of how crisis affects policy outcomes, an elaboration of how bandwagoning operates, an argument against empire theorists, and a contribution to understanding global governance.

—*Critique of realist theory.* Realist formulations of international interactions have been under attack intermittently for at least half a century.⁷ Yet how the behavior of sociopolitical communities at the subnational level actually inhibits or redirects national power projection has rarely been examined in detail. This volume demonstrates through concrete comparative case studies of foreign governmental interaction with Washington that influence does not flow only from conventional power characteristics, such as GDP, military strength, and geographical scale, but also from subnational sociopolitical traits.

—*Illustration that domestic structure matters.* The past decades have brought persistent admonitions to “bring the state back in.”⁸ Yet states are by no means homogeneous, and their configuration profoundly influences policy outcomes. All too little concrete analysis of just when and how state structure matters has been undertaken. By showing contrasts between the open character of the Washington political community, with its extensive extragovernmental penumbra of power, and the more closed sociopolitical character of many other global political cities, this research strives to make the importance of domestic social structure for policy clear.

—*Explication of subnational factors that shape international relations.* Subnational political-economic factors, apart from state structure, have been identified as generally important in international relations.⁹ As yet there has not been much work done on the concrete causal processes through which subnational forces influence nation-state behavior. This research strives to help fill that gap by showing concretely the relationship between embassies and local ethnic communities, for example, or degrees of interministerial conflict within national governments.

—*Explication of how crisis affects policy outcomes.* Social science theory has increasingly recognized that political-economic crisis moves policymaking forward.¹⁰ Yet views remain unsettled on precisely how crisis influences policy content or decisionmaking search processes.¹¹ By exploring how Washington expands under crisis conditions, such as civil war, world war, security crisis (as 9/11), and financial crisis (as 2008), this book examines the impact of crisis itself on the sociopolitical fabric of global cities.

—*Elaboration of how bandwagoning operates.* As Stephen Walt and others note, bandwagoning appears to be salient in the foreign policy of smaller nations dealing with the United States in the post–cold war world.¹² *Asia in Washington* considers how such countries—especially those that are upwardly mobile in international affairs, like the nations of Asia—curry favor with a dominant power, such as the United States, and thus compromise the hegemonic influence of such a power.

—*Argument against empire theorists.* The past decade has witnessed an explosion of literature regarding the political economy of empire, much of it presenting the post–cold war United States as a modern hegemon.¹³ *Asia in Washington* explores the formidable problems that even

leaders of a nation with overwhelming military power experience in shaping global policy agendas, when transnational actors have extensive access in a global political city like Washington. The book also considers how those transnational actors work to shape superpower agendas.

—*Contribution to understanding global governance.* As worldwide political-economic interdependence has risen, the importance of strengthened global-governance institutions has been ever more keenly recognized.¹⁴ Clearly nation-states alone cannot, in the post–cold war world, unilaterally determine the parameters within which the global system should operate. Yet they do have some influence. This volume strives to show how transnational interactions in the capital of the world’s most powerful nation—the home to so many important multi-lateral institutions as well—shapes the emergence of global norms and governing institutions, with a special focus on the interaction of the American and Asian actors in that process.

About the Book

This volume explores how Washington, as a sociopolitical community with important global functions transcending the U.S. government, is influenced by its interaction with Asia and what that interaction means for world affairs more generally. The chapters address four aspects. The first discussion develops the concept of the global political city and identifies the unique features of Washington within that context. These passages note that Washington has changed greatly as a sociopolitical community over the past thirty years. In particular, the American capital has developed a pronounced penumbra of power outside the U.S. government, which engages in intense interaction with the broader world—and that is gaining an ever more influential role in setting global agendas.

The second group of chapters contrasts the functional importance of Washington for Asia, and conversely of Asia for Washington, as those general transpacific relationships have evolved since the early days of the American republic around the dawn of the nineteenth century. These chapters point out that the transpacific equation has shifted substantially since World War II, with Washington growing increasingly important for Asia—but with the converse not nearly as true. This discussion shows the broad incentives that drive Asian nations to work so hard at

cultivating relations with Washington and the skewed patterns of interest and indifference with which they must contend in their dealings with official Washington. It thus clarifies the nature of the structural problem that Asian actors confront as they operate within Washington itself.

The third group of chapters examines comparatively the socio-political approaches of major Asian nations to Washington—how they articulate their interests and publicize their national agendas. This discussion points out that large nations, powerful in economic and political-military terms, are surprisingly ineffective in achieving their desired ends in Washington. To the contrary, smaller states, such as Singapore, appear to more efficiently achieve their objectives in the U.S. national capital.

The final discussion examines the global implications of Asia's distinctive patterns of interaction with the Washington sociopolitical community, both within and beyond the U.S. government. It suggests that Washington's relatively open penumbra of power—universities, think tanks, mass media, lobbyists, and other opinion makers—operates to constrain the dominance of what is often postulated to be a globally dominant American hegemon. It does so particularly by moderating and recalibrating the role of the formal American policy process in global agenda setting. Asian nations are especially active in monitoring and moderating Washington in the economic area, where their role in the U.S. capital is a major force in creating a more balanced and multilateral pattern of global governance than has generally been recognized to exist.

The pages to follow thus tell a counterintuitive story, one that is of major significance in understanding world affairs both today and in the foreseeable future. Even as U.S. preeminence in the conventional calculus of global power begins to wane, the international influence of Washington as a global agenda-setting community continues to grow, as we shall see in the coming pages.