Editor's Response: The Middle Way of Middle Theory

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The five reviews of *The Making of Chinese Foreign and Security Policy in the Era of Reform* fall into three categories. Their differences reflect the contending analytic schools that have divided political science for forty years. These diverse reviews say as much about the state of political science as they do about the volume they assess. In this response to the reviews, therefore, I will discuss what these essays tell us about political science and locate *The Making of Chinese Foreign and Security Policy* within that debate.

If you examine the five reviews, you will see that they fall along a spectrum. At one end you find J. David Singer—at the other, Ross Terrill.

Singer asserts that the tasks of scholarly value are to develop cross-system and cross-time generalizations and to pay particular attention to problems of measurement. Such is the zeal of his commitment to this proposition that he dismisses entire university and research systems as "conventional organizations" and labels policymakers obsessive, journalists ignorant, politicians gullible, and academics vulnerable to blandishments "of the cold warriors and their financiers." He certainly has generalized, albeit at the cost of the careful measurement he advocates.

You get a sense of Singer's methodology when he does a word count of the index—"The index is remarkably heavy on concrete names, agen-

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cies, places, and events while relatively light on general classes of phenomena." Indeed, in reaching this conclusion by this methodology, Singer inadvertently reveals one of the problems with his method—it can lead one astray. In fact, *The Making of Chinese Foreign and Security Policy* is inherently comparative and applies dynamic concepts using general classes of phenomena such as: "professionalization," "pluralization," "decentralization," and "globalization." In short, though the index may have a low frequency count of general concepts, they are central to the book, its structure, and its content. It further appears that Singer's methodology of index scanning did not require that he actually read the book's chapters.

At the other end of the analytic genre is Ross Terrill. Terrill, unlike Singer, is interested in the actual phenomena and behavior of the Chinese system, and he pays great attention to elites and the prisms of state and personal interest through which they view and shape their foreign policy choices. Further, he is quite clear where he disagrees with the perspective shared (to a greater or lesser extent) by the contributors to this volume. For Terrill, "the direction of Chinese foreign policy is discerned neither in the process of decision-making nor in the words spoken by Beijing leaders on party-state occasions." Instead, for Terrill, the lodestone to understanding is to be found in the ideology of the leadership and its goals—"to shore up the party-state at home; build up wealth and power in mercantilist fashion; be seen as an equal of America; and supplant the United States as the leading force in Asia."

Although most of the contributors to this volume would certainly agree that an elite's particular perceptions and goals are important, most also would say that policy increasingly reflects a great deal more than just those aspirations and declaratory objectives. The premise of the volume is that general classes of phenomena (such as "epistemic communities," "bureaucratic interests," "perceptions and information flows," "professionalization," "interdependence," "the boundaries of the permissible established by public acceptance," and "incremental decision-making") all powerfully shape policy. Terrill, for instance, never once mentions the word "budget"—as though elite aspirations are unconstrained by the current reality of economic scarcity.

For Terrill, understanding is not to be found in general classes of phenomena so much as it is to be found in elite views—these are particular to a specific time and place. Whatever one wants to say about this perspective, it is a far cry from Singer's call to broad generalization across time and/or space. I believe that Terrill's view of the policy process was more accurate when Mao Zedong was alive than it is today—indeed, that is a central point of the book and much of the evidence it marshals.

This brings us to the three reviews by Gregory Moore, Yun-han Chu, and David M. Finkelstein. What these three reviewers and the contributors to *The Making of Chinese Foreign and Security Policy* share is the search for something in-between vacuous generalizations, on the one hand, and narrow Sinology that is rooted in the belief that "China is China is China" —a *sui generis* case that defies even modest middle-level (second-level) generalizations, on the other. Indeed, at the end of his review, Singer makes a plea for "Sinologists to get out of the rut, and recognize that this country is in no way *sui generis*." Getting out of this rut was one of the major objectives of the volume.

The collective quest of the contributors to this volume has been to describe the degree to which Chinese behavior in the world has changed (or not changed) over time, to identify the considerations that account for those observations, and to give those factors some relative weight where possible. In this sense, this volume pursues the best of the behavioral tradition, a tradition so ably developed by the recently deceased Gabriel Almond. He was a man interested in generalization, without doing excessive violence to the individual characters of the phenomena he studied. This is the tradition that should animate China studies (and political science) as it moves into the new millennium.