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INTRODUCTION TO RESEARCH IN ASIA-PACIFIC AFFAIRS

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The study of the societies of Asia and the Pacific through Western methods of the humanities and social sciences has always been driven by the dynamics of wealth and power. The European study of Asian and Pacific societies and cultures was central to the colonial enterprise; originally as a fascination with other wealthy and powerful societies, then as part of a Western ideological hegemony determined to demonstrate that the societies of Asia and the Pacific were in decline, in contrast to the Europeans' own ascendancy (Anderson 1991, 163–64). The study of proud pasts and contemporary societies soon became part of dozens of independence movements across Asia and the Pacific, a vital ingredient of the intellectual emancipation of colonized peoples (Chatterjee 1993). With independence came a Cold War, a desperate zero-sum struggle between capitalism and communism that mandated the need in the rival camps to understand the particular character of the newly independent governments and the societies they ruled in Asia and the Pacific. "Area Studies", the deep research of Asian and Pacific societies, grounded in extensive fieldwork and advanced proficiency in vernacular languages, was born. Across the Western world, Asia and the Pacific were divided into regions and studied in their own departments. In establishing a national university in 1946, the Australian government mandated that one of four areas of global excellence the new university had to achieve was in Pacific studies (which at the time was intended to include Asian studies) — precisely because of the new and unknown world

of international relations that was to be ushered in by the independence of states to Australia's north and east.

The rapid economic ascent of Northeast and then Southeast Asian economies led to renewed attention to Asian societies. Debates arose over the causes of the Asian economic miracle: was it a question of culture, or institutions, or the peculiar legacy of war and colonialism (World Bank 1993; Johnson 1982; Amsden 2001)? These debates drew regional thinkers into the battle lines, as some advocated the catalytic role of distinctive Asian "values" in the stability and success of a lengthening chain of Asian economic success stories (Barr 2005). Others countered that there was in fact nothing distinctive about Asia's economic success; the stunning growth rates were a consequence of "perspiration" (meaning large infusions of investment and low-cost labour) rather than "inspiration" (meaning superior cultural values or institutional design) (Krugman 1994). Today, Asia and the Pacific stand at the cusp of the security consequences of the past three decades of their societies' remarkable economic rise, as economic prosperity has led to a deepening rivalry and the recession of American strategic primacy (White 2012; Wesley 2015). Speculation over a "post-American world" (Zakaria 2009), a "new Asian hemisphere" (Mahbubani 2008), or an "Asian century" (Australian Government 2012) has been rife, as an eagerness to peer into the future and understand the consequences of rapid economic and security evolution in the Asia-Pacific has only increased over time. Despite the continued turmoil in the Middle East, the United States has resolved to "rebalance" its security, diplomatic and trade, and investment attentions towards the Asia-Pacific, just as it chose to concentrate on the Atlantic after the Second World War (Clinton, 2011). The stage seems to be set for yet another wave of research into Asia-Pacific states and societies, this time pondering their likely trajectories as newly empowered security actors.

Looking back at the centuries-long trajectories of humanities and social sciences research into the societies of Asia and the Pacific is humbling. From the stunning insights of classical philological research to the remarkable participatory field research on communities in conflict in the current day (see Jacob, this volume), one is struck by the complex facets of Asia-Pacific societies, and how much they offer us, not only on their own terms, but also in terms of the human condition generally. Occasionally, the general public catches a glimpse of the richness of research into Asia-Pacific societies (Jared Diamond's hugely popular *Guns, Germs, and Steel* is perhaps the best example), but more often than not Asia-Pacific research is consumed by Asia-Pacific specialists. It is remarkable that a region

that contains nearly two-thirds of the world's population, and is soon to contribute a similar proportion of global productivity, with a majority of the world's classical civilizations and responsible for most of the world's dominant religions, is so little heeded beyond its specialists. It is perhaps a testament to the continuing ethnocentrism of Western academic and policy communities that someone who spends his or her life working on European or American affairs is regarded as a generalist, while an "Asia specialist" or an even rarer "Pacific specialist" is regarded as a niche career trajectory.

As a consequence, the humanities and social sciences study of Asia-Pacific societies has been remarkably non self-reflective. Certainly, for generations, scholars have responded to the work of others, either following their lead or reacting in objection to what other scholars have produced. And controversies over research methods and approaches that have erupted in the broader disciplines of the humanities and social sciences have made their way to Asia and Pacific studies. But few major methodological or conceptual debates have originated from within the study of Asian and Pacific societies, and it is very hard to find extended discussions of methods from within Asian and Pacific studies (major exceptions being subaltern studies and the impact of rising powers). This is most certainly not because Asian and Pacific research is conceptually unsophisticated; quite the opposite. It is more likely attributable to the enormous range, scope, and dynamism of the Asia-Pacific as a field of study, the additional time and effort to acquire vernacular proficiency required of its researchers, and the deep and complex history and contexts of Asian and Pacific societies. Who has time to engage in extended conceptual or methodological exegesis when there is so much of deep and pressing interest to be investigated and understood on the ground?

Muddy Boots and Smart Suits is an attempt by a contemporary community of researchers clustered around the Coral Bell School of Asia Pacific Affairs at the Australian National University (ANU) to reflect on the process of researching Asian and Pacific societies, politics, and security. The tradition of humanities and social sciences research into Asian and Pacific societies at the ANU is one of the oldest continuous traditions in the world, counting among its grandees C.P. Fitzgerald, A.L. Basham, O.H.K. Spate, Pierre Ryckmans, Wang Gungwu, and J.A.C. Mackie. Beyond this has been the ANU's ability to use this deep country expertise to inform its research into the international relations, strategic dynamics, and economics of the region, and the extensive networks of collaboration

developed with other centres of world expertise in Asia and the Pacific, Europe, and North America. This volume is an attempt to write on the controversies, approaches, and dilemmas of researching the societies and politics of Asia and the Pacific, and to point to promising new avenues for research in the field.

This volume arose as the counterpart to a project on "deep security" (see Wesley, this volume). In preparing a special issue of the journal, *Asia Pacific Policy Studies*, teams of researchers at the Bell School selected four countries in the Asia-Pacific to subject to the deep security approach: Solomon Islands, Indonesia, Myanmar, and China. Three interlinked essays were written for each of these countries: one on the domestic sources and dynamics of security and insecurity; one on how state responses to these domestic security dilemmas impacted on regional relations; and one on the cumulative effect on global security relations. All twelve papers were workshopped extensively, including with policy specialists from government agencies; teams working on each of the levels interrogated and debated conclusions reached in the other papers. And out of this ferment and mutual learning emerged repeated reflections and observations on concepts and methods of Asia-Pacific studies by authors, commentators, and participants. Formalized, discussed, and debated, these reflections and observations comprise the chapters of this volume.

The "deep security" project has itself been inspired by path-breaking work on the complex relationship between academic research and policy in the security field (see George 1993) and applied to the Asia-Pacific region (see Taylor, Milner, and Ball 2006). The project is particularly sensitive to the question of how knowledge about security in the Asia-Pacific is produced and defended, and for whom (Evans 1994; Wilson and Dirlik 1995; Tan 2013). It also draws on studies that have applied international relations theory to the specific dynamics of the Asia-Pacific (Alagappa 1998; Ikenberry and Mastanduno 2003; Kang 2003; Suh, Katzenstein, and Carlson 2004; Acharya 2004; Goh 2007/08; Acharya 2013; Goh 2013).

The essays in *Muddy Boots and Smart Suits* are collected into five sections. The first is devoted to fieldwork: the advantages, approaches, and dilemmas of detailed research of politics and security affairs on the ground in Pacific and Asian societies. It begins with Julien Barbara's reflections on research into the Solomon Islands during the period when that state had been subject to one of the longest running and most comprehensive

state-building interventions yet seen: the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI). Barbara distinguishes between research *of* policy — in which scholars have conducted detailed and objective studies of the progress of the intervention, thereby contributing to the growing corpus of critical literature on the state-building enterprise in general and the RAMSI mission in particular — and research *for* policy — where researchers are commissioned by governments to investigate aspects of Solomon Islands society deemed relevant to the state-building enterprise. Critical to both approaches has been deep country knowledge and a commitment to spending long periods of time in the society under study, understanding the complex political and social dynamics of a society responding to a state-building intervention.

Nicholas Farrelly turns his attention to the study of political culture within the tradition of political anthropology. He begins with the foundational argument that thought and action within Asian and Pacific societies must be understood on their own terms, and goes on to argue that so much of the understanding that can be achieved on Asia and the Pacific must come from an attentiveness to the differences among how societies, and subgroups in states, view the workings of politics and history. Farrelly returns to the "clash of civilizations" debate to rescue one of its forgotten insights — that the twenty-first century will see an empowerment of non-Western societies, making the ethnocentric assumptions of so much research and statecraft redundant, and making the variations in political cultures of critical relevance to world affairs. He concludes by looking ahead at the intriguing intersection of variations in political cultures and the different spatial arenas created by quickening globalization and the communications revolution.

Cecilia Jacob's essay concludes the first section. It is a fascinating reflection on the study of conflict that contrasts the macro approach — focusing on conflict as something states engage in and therefore, the province of grand anarchic forces — with the micro approach — in which conflict is something that happens to and is perpetrated by individuals and communities. She argues that there is much to be gained by bringing together the macro and micro approaches, for both research on and policy responses to persistent conflict. Jacob discusses at length the possibilities presented to the study of conflict by the "practice turn" in social science research; in particular to the rich understanding provided of conflict drivers and dynamics, by focusing on the interface between the dispositions of those involved and the position created by

the conflictual context. As with so many of the essays in this volume, she points ahead to rich possibilities for further research.

The second section takes a closer look at research methods in the social sciences. Paul Kenny issues an invitation for researchers of Asian and Pacific societies to embrace the design-based revolution in the social sciences. He delves into the complexity of explanation and warns against the problem of confounding factors in what are often taken to be authoritative explanations of certain states of affairs in the Asia-Pacific. Kenny's call is for greater caution in our conclusions on Asia-Pacific affairs, thinking hard about what other explanations might account for what we are studying. He very usefully provides a half-dozen methods for guarding against confounding factors, pointing to the much deeper and more powerful insights to be gained from carefully designed and executed research methods.

Charles Miller's essay provides a counterpart to Kenny's invitation to qualitative research rigour by providing a strong case for the utility of quantitative research into Asian and Pacific affairs. Speaking across the qualitative-quantitative divide, he argues that many of the charges used by qualitative researchers to dismiss quantitative approaches are ill-founded and inaccurate. Urging us to take a new look at game theory, he argues that such approaches do not rely on an assumption that human beings are rational, but on the assumption that human beings are inherently *strategic*. Importantly, Miller draws our attention to the new frontiers of quantitative analysis in examining the role of ideas, culture, and history on contemporary situations in Asian and Pacific societies. Ultimately, argues Miller, the qualitative-quantitative divide is unhelpful and restricting. While "quants" invest heavily in their statistical training, they still rely heavily on the vernacular capacities and detailed country knowledge of their qualitative colleagues; in return, qualitative scholars should be open to the insights and advantages offered by quantitative approaches.

Section three is devoted to big-picture approaches to understanding the Asia-Pacific as a region. Joan Beaumont examines the role of war memory in the construction of and relations between Asia-Pacific states. She points to a "memory boom" across the world, and observes that this has great implications for the Asia-Pacific. War and its memories have played a powerful role in how nations have been imagined and constructed in the region, and there is much to be gained in understanding the constitution of its societies by examining the intriguing variations in how war is remembered. Memories of war are also becoming much more important in how Asia-Pacific states relate to each other. Memorials, parades, and

other markings of war memories are increasingly infused with political and even strategic importance in the Asia-Pacific; whereas war memory has been an important facet of reconciliation and accommodation in Europe, in the Asia-Pacific, they are becoming an important ingredient in rivalry and contestation. Beaumont concludes by pointing the way forward for further research on the contemporary roles of war memory in the Asia-Pacific.

Evi Fitriani focuses on regionalism as a key element in the Asia-Pacific order, now and into the future. She provides a detailed history of the evolution of regionalism in Southeast Asia and the broader region, noting the consistency of the drivers of accommodation among such a heterogeneous collection of states. Looking back as well as ahead, Fitriani argues that the great powers, which she defines as the United States, China, and Russia, are locked in a mutually-consequential embrace with Asia-Pacific regionalism. Regional institutions are heavily affected in what they are motivated to do and prevented from doing by the preferences of the great powers. At the same time, the great powers are strongly constrained by the power of regionalism in what they are able to achieve in the Asia-Pacific.

Section four considers how studies of conflict and order have been approached in the Asia-Pacific context. Hugh White opens this section by examining the largely-forgotten relationship between war and international order. Diagnosing our inattention to this connection to the long period of U.S. primacy following the Second World War, he argues that the period ahead, marked by the recession of this primacy and the growing potency and assertiveness of Asia's largest societies, will sketch much more starkly the relationship between war and order. In typically clear prose, White argues that the boundaries of international order are drawn by what the great powers are and are not willing to go to war over. This draws our attention to a great range of insights that the study of conflict and bargaining in the Asia-Pacific can yield — security scholars can offer us much more than simply observations about war, particularly at a time when there is so much uncertainty about how global power shifts will affect the future of global order.

Nick Bisley turns our attention to the often-assumed but ultimately murky connections between economic capacity and international influence. How and when does wealth translate to power, and are there trade-offs made during that translation? Bisley shows that these questions are of more than passing concern in the contemporary Asia-Pacific, but are deeply relevant to the evolving rivalries and order that will result. He then turns to the

even more difficult question of the impact of nationalism, ambition, and prestige considerations on the interests and perceptions of rising states. Out of this rich and complex mixture, Bisley sketches four possible futures for the Asia-Pacific: "muddling through" as the region's states pragmatically manage their interdependence and rivalries; collaboration to bring about a stable order based on explicit order agreements; contestation, in which rivalries become the driving factor in regional affairs; and transformation, in which interdependence and rivalry drive the formulation of a new corpus of rules and norms in the Asia-Pacific.

Peter Dean and Greg Raymond round out section four by presenting strategic culture as an approach that offers great advantages in understanding the deepening rivalries in the Asia-Pacific. They show strategic culture as a rich but highly contested field, often prone to fervent and ultimately unresolvable debates over what is to be explained and what does the explaining. Dean and Raymond provide a comprehensive introduction to the literature on strategic culture, as the evolution of four consecutive "phases" of scholarship, and discuss the extent and limitations of strategic culture scholarship in Asia and the Pacific. They conclude by pointing to new avenues for future research, ultimately observing that an era of rising non-Western societies will need to be understood in terms of the distinctive ways these societies conceptualize and act on their own security imperatives.

The fifth section examines the interface between research and policy in Asia-Pacific affairs. Michael Wesley's essay begins by observing the very different nature of the research-policy nexus in economics from that in the security realm. The result of the particular context and subject of security studies, he argues, creates the real peril of an "academic-policy complex" as pervasive as the military-industrial complex. Wesley sketches out an "independence-compliance" dilemma at the heart of the research-policy relationship in security studies: the more independent and critical a security scholar is, the less likely she or he is to be influential on policy; whereas the more willing she or he is to observe the conventions and even imperatives of the policy community in the interests of building and preserving influence, the more she or he sacrifices her or his independence. Wesley concludes by suggesting a different approach — that of "deep security" — which offers both researchers and policy officials the richness of detailed country-based knowledge with clear security analysis, as a clear differentiation in expertise and contribution between the scholarly and policy communities in the field of security.

In the volume's final chapter, Amy King and Nicholas Farrelly reflect on the traditions and approaches to Asia-Pacific research and look forward

to its evolving dilemmas. They begin by exploring the richness offered by the marriage between disciplinary and Area Studies expertise, and by the interface between research and policy practice. They caution, however, that both of these interactions have their own challenges. The paucity of Asia-Pacific scholarship in leading academic journals is a persisting anomaly, while policy-facing academics face an ongoing dilemma between measuring policy "impact" and racking up academic citations. King and Farrelly then turn their attention to the challenges facing scholars of Asia-Pacific affairs into the future. They point to five in particular: the problem of access to states that are sensitive to what they perceive as external criticism of their domestic affairs; the deluge of "hyperinformation" where researchers now are confronted with a bewildering array of sources, including those on the Internet; the challenge of maintaining language skills; the physical dangers in researching conflict zones; and the patient work of building research collaborations.

Muddy Boots and Smart Suits is not the last word on the techniques and dilemmas of studying Asia-Pacific affairs; nor is it the first. It is a series of reflections by one community of scholars about what they do, and it is intended to begin a conversation along these lines among the broader — and global — community of Asia-Pacific scholars. For all of the difficulties and dilemmas they face, scholars of Asia and the Pacific are united by one thing — the conviction that the region and societies they study are endlessly fascinating and rewarding — and that scholarship and understanding of these societies will be increasingly consequential for understanding how the world works. It is an exciting time to be a scholar of Asian and Pacific affairs.