



2010.03.01

On Upshur on Neil J. Diamant, *Embattled Glory: Veterans, Military Families, and the Politics of Patriotism in China, 1949–2007*. [MWSR 2010.02.05.]

Response by Neil J. Diamant, Dickinson College (diamantn@dickinson.edu).

Prof. Upshur does an excellent job summarizing the arguments (which she does not critique). However, on matters related to sources and methodology she introduces criticisms that are either unfair or surprisingly ignorant of social science methodology. Let me give several examples:

(1) She notes that I did not consult Defense Ministry Archives or national level government bureaus. As I point out in the Appendix about sources, these archives are *closed* to foreign researchers and most all Chinese researchers as well. This is not a fair critique.

(2) She criticizes me for selection bias, pointing out that Beijing, Shanghai, their suburbs, and Shandong Province are not representative of China. I agree that Beijing and Shanghai are not typical, but Shandong is not an “outlier” province at all. But more importantly, I chose these areas owing to the likelihood of *positive treatment* of veterans based on arguments in the secondary literature about (a) the significance of nationalism, (b) a high level of political control, and (c) a legacy of military recruitment. The logic, which I clearly explain, was that, if veterans were not afforded positive treatment in these places, it is highly unlikely that their treatment was better in areas with less government control, a legacy of resistance to recruitment, and the like. That is, I selected the areas on the basis of the *hypothesis*. This is social science ABCs. I also note that I did my best to secure access to archives in poorer areas, but was denied (probably because veterans were not treated well at all, as confirmed by materials I did find).

(3) Prof. Upshur fails to note that many of the documents that I found in these archives were *national level* reports that included information on many other provinces (Guangdong, Jiangxi, Fujian, Hainan, Henan, Shaanxi, Jiangsu, etc.). I also used the entire *People’s Daily* database to cull reports from around the country.

(4) Prof. Upshur complains that rather than focus on postwar Taiwan, which she thinks is similar to the mainland, I compare China to other political entities both large and small throughout history, including the Roman Empire, the United States, and Russia. She considers many of these comparisons either distracting or pointless, especially in the case of small states. However, isn’t comparative research intended to enhance the external validity of an argument? If my argument focuses on the “beneficial” impact of total war on the postwar status of veterans, why does size of the participant country matter so much? The point was to show China as an outlier because its wars were mainly border conflicts. Ironically, Prof. Upshur would rather I compare the PRC to Taiwan, a pretty small place! For her, size matters, until it doesn’t. Aside from this, I can easily point out many differences between the PRC and Taiwan. For instance: the United States gave the latter financial support (noted in the book), most all veterans there were and remained bachelors, and the Nationalists allowed quasi lineage organizations for veterans.

(5) Prof. Upshur does not acknowledge that my book *does* include data on veterans on Taiwan in many chapters (employment, identity, health, bureaucracy, political activism). I culled these data from unpublished dissertations in the United States and Taiwan, secondary sources in Chinese, and archives. The book is not organized as “case studies” of countries, but rather as a primary case of China with insights and comparisons to many countries to point out where China was different or similar. My book is probably the most rigorously comparative research effort in the China field, a field often criticized as too parochial in its lack of comparisons.

(6) Her one “content critique” is about the Manchu employment. All I can say here is that I relied on the best research available on the Manchu military (Pam Crossley and Mark Elliot). My sources are properly cited.