
The author of this book is currently Professor of International Affairs in the School of Foreign Service and Government at Georgetown University. He is also a Senior Fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations. During the first Clinton administration he was Director for European Affairs on the National Security Council, and prior to that, a policy planner in the State Department. This book has the feel of a job application to the Obama administration. Clearly written, it couples policy with authoritative history and an elegant theory. Professor Kupchan appears to see himself as a Democratic Party Henry Kissinger, and why not?

Kupchan’s book provides a secondary source examination of a ‘representative sample’ of cases of successful and failed zones of stable peace — successful if they endured for at least a decade. On this basis, he maintains that such zones, which appear along a continuum of increasing durability from a *rapprochement* through a security community to a full union such as the United States itself, emerge through a four-phase process. An initial act of unilateral accommodation is followed by reciprocal restraint; this is followed by societal integration; and what comes after this is the generation of new narratives and identities. The conditions supporting the process — the first desirable, the second and third necessary — are checks on unfettered power at home, compatible social orders and cultural commonality. This is not a strong theory, Kupchan hastens to say (the ‘representative sample’ of his methodological footnotes on p. 9 has become ‘only a sample’ by p. 13); it is merely a ‘framework’ for scholars and ‘guide’ for policy-makers. This is theory-building in its ‘early stage’ (p. 10).

Except to neoconservatives and other ideologists, all of this will probably seem uncontroversial and at first one wonders why Kupchan bothered to go to such lengths to make his points. Furthermore, there is a huge amount of repetition built into the unwieldy structure of the book. Thus the first chapter, which sets out the argument succinctly, is followed by one ‘which lays out the book’s conceptual foundations in greater detail and explores the causes of stable peace in more depth’. The whole argument is then rehearsed yet again in the equally long concluding chapter. As for the large filling in this sandwich — the cases, such as the Anglo-American *rapprochement* and the European Community — this consists of ‘historical summaries’ drawing on ‘the most authoritative books and articles that pertain to each case’ (p. 9).

The explanation of Kupchan’s general approach is no doubt that he wishes to address both scholars and policy-makers, but scholars will probably not study the cases because the material is too familiar, while policy-makers will not study them because they do not have the time. The long chapters describing and
analysing the cases actually feel like working papers which, having been written, might with advantage have been jettisoned, their conclusions alone having been woven into the general argument at appropriate points, with readers needing more being directed to key secondary sources in the footnotes. In short, I cannot help thinking that Kupchan would have made a greater impact on both scholars and policy-makers had he written a shorter book based on the clear thematic structure of the final chapter.

The weak structure of the book is a pity because Kupchan has a lucid style and writes with authority and wisdom. In the course of his argument, he knocks firmly on the head a number of dangerously misleading nostrums, among them that democracy is essential to stable peace and economic interdependence almost so, and that the resolute exercise of preponderant power is a fundamental requirement of international order. This book is about the paramountcy to stable peace of politics, and what early on Kupchan calls ‘deft diplomacy’. This is why the first Bush administration is so often his target, and why for this, the author is so warmly to be commended.

G. R. Berridge
Emeritus Professor of International Politics, University of Leicester, UK