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THE MICHIGAN WAY

*William Zimmerman**

Harold Jacobson was a man of many parts. He was an accomplished and skilled administrator, who was Chair of the Department of Political Science, Director of the Center for Political Studies, acting Director of the Institute for Social Research, and interim Associate Vice President for International Affairs. In those roles and in many others, he was the best person in a committee I ever saw. He was very smart, and even more so, wise. He thought strategically and politically. Time and time again, I witnessed him interject, with exquisite timing, a remark that turned a discussion in exactly the right way. He would agree with everything someone said but then add a brief codicil that resulted in a better outcome than that person had advocated. Moreover that person often did not even notice that his or her position had been altered. After having watched Jake on the Executive Committee of Michigan's College of Literature Science and the Arts, the former Dean, Peter Steiner, said admiringly of Jake that Jake was the only person he, Steiner, knew who 'could remove someone's socks without taking off their shoes.'

His extraordinary service record extended well beyond the confines of the University. He was enormously active in service-related terms internationally as well, receiving the 1995 Award for International Science Cooperation of the American Association for Advancement of Science. He traveled so much to do so many good things—to advise the Secretary General of the United Nations or to work on projects regarding state behavior and the implementation of environmental accords—that when my last words of a phone conversation were “have a good trip,” my wife would always ask, “how's Jake?” Occasionally, I would have been talking to someone else but far more often she would be right.

He was a beloved teacher at all levels, a fact recognized by his receipt of the University of Michigan Good Teaching Award and the Excellence in Education Award. He supervised scores of dissertations and prepared graduate students superbly for the time when, as young faculty members, they would be doing research without a mentor. For years, he taught the core

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proseminar in world politics. In addition to teaching his undergraduate courses in international organization, he reached thousands of undergraduate students over the years as a lecturer for the introductory course in world politics, Political Science 160.

Jake was also a prolific scholar. He authored, edited, or co-edited a dozen books on American foreign policy, international organization and law, and global environmental policy. His first monograph concerning Soviet behavior in the economic and social organs of the United Nations was a standard source on Soviet behavior in international organization.¹ His textbooks in American foreign policy were widely adopted.² The book on the nuclear test ban treaty co-authored with Eric Stein of the University of Michigan Law School received the University of Michigan Press award for the best book the Press had published in the year the book came out.³ He and our former colleague, Michel Oksenberg, produced an important study on China's growing involvement in the world economy.⁴ When he died, he and Charlotte Ku of the American Society of International Law were on the verge of completing a project that addressed the crucial issue of the democratic accountability of interventions under the auspices of international organizations.⁵ That book has been published posthumously. It is, in many respects, a fitting ending to his scholarly career. Jake could be very hard-nosed in his thinking about how states behaved in world politics. At the same time, his belief that States, especially democratic States, could overcome the collective action problems endemic in world politics through the development of law and organization was a common theme throughout his scholarly career.

In this brief tribute, though, I want to address in somewhat greater detail his penultimate book, a major volume he edited with Edith Brown Weiss entitled *Engaging Countries: Strengthening Compliance with International Environmental Accords*.⁶ It is a nice exemplar of Jake's organizational skills and his notions about how he and others should do research, notions that resulted in what must be a real rarity, namely, an edited and multi-authored volume receiving honorable mention by an International Studies Association

1. Harold K. Jacobson, *THE USSR AND THE UN'S ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL ACTIVITIES* (1963).

2. See, e.g., *THE SHAPING OF FOREIGN POLICY* (Harold K. Jacobson & William Zimmerman, eds., 1969), *AMERICA'S FOREIGN POLICY* (Harold K. Jacobson ed., 1960).

3. Harold Karan Jacobson & Eric Stein, *DIPLOMATS, SCIENTISTS, AND POLITICIANS: THE UNITED STATES AND THE NUCLEAR TEST BAN NEGOTIATIONS* (1966).

4. Harold K. Jacobson & Michel Oksenberg, *CHINA'S PARTICIPATION IN THE IMF, THE WORLD BANK, AND GATT: TOWARD A GLOBAL ECONOMIC ORDER* (1990).

5. *DEMOCRATIC ACCOUNTABILITY AND USE OF FORCE IN INTERNATIONAL LAW* (Charlotte Ku & Harold K. Jacobson eds., 2003); see also Charlotte Ku, *When Can Nations Go to War? Politics and Change in the UN Security System*, 24 MICH. J. INT'L L. 1077 (2003).

6. *ENGAGING COUNTRIES: STRENGTHENING COMPLIANCE WITH INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL ACCORDS* (Edith Brown Weiss & Harold K. Jacobson eds., 1998).

prize committee. *Engaging Countries* demonstrated all of Jake's talents and predilections. The introductory chapters and the conclusion written by Jake and Edith Brown Weiss built on the individual chapters in ways that were characteristic of Jake and of what Jake often termed "the Michigan way."

For Jake, the Michigan way involved the assumption that there was no science without measurement. Measurement, in turn, implied quantification and the careful operationalization of key concepts. This led him to produce a number of quantitative studies in realms of international organization, such as state behavior in the United Nations General Assembly, where verbal description had been the norm.

But quantification for Jake needed some underlying theory in order to have value. He was often sharply critical of quantitative work that produced limited findings because, he thought, the author(s) had failed to bring a theoretical perspective to the data they had amassed. He also was a presumptive rationalist. As a student of Arnold Wolfers, it is scarcely surprising that he would emphasize that national interest was an ambiguous symbol. That being said, his predilections were to assume rationality on the part of individual decision makers and states and then to modify the rationality assumption in light of evidence.

Jake's quest for rigor and quantification carried over from areas like voting behavior in the UN General Assembly, where quantification was a natural, to addressing such fuzzy matters as international treaty compliance. It would have been very easy for the editors to have abandoned the effort at rigor and to write introductory and concluding chapters permeated by 'On the one hand, . . . On the other hand . . .' and to be satisfied with country chapters that were not explicitly comparable with one another.

Jake and Professor Brown Weiss did not take the easy way out. Rather, they pushed us (the country-chapter authors) to follow explicit criteria and to utilize data wherever possible. In doing so, they pushed themselves to produce cutting-edge scholarship about a topic that will be of great importance throughout the 21st century. They began with what they termed a "traditional, stylized view of international law." But they were driven by their conceptualization and the data about treaty compliance on the part of countries, large and small, democratic and authoritarian, to depict an international environment that was quite different from the states-as-sole-actors, hierarchical approach that has characterized much of the study of both international politics and international law. Rather, the world they describe is one populated in part by States—they remain the primary international actors which levy taxes and conscript and raise armies—but it also includes a bevy of IGOs, NGOs, enterprises, other nonstate actors, and even individuals.

In such a world, “there are various reasons that countries find [international treaties] in their interests.”⁷ Governments, it turned out, sometimes bandwagon and sometimes comply “because of pressures from other governments,”⁸ but they also comply because “domestic interests . . . force the issue.”⁹ In that world, the reason for the title of the volume becomes crystal clear: to increase international compliance, states and other relevant actors need to be engaged “from the beginning and [kept] engaged.”¹⁰

Engaging Countries thus illustrates the quality of his scholarship and his penchant for collaborative, co-authored ventures. But it also nicely shows Jake as the academic entrepreneur and advocate for the global dissemination of scientific social science that he was. He had the clever idea of having each chapter be co-authored by two persons, one an American and the other a native of the country. While by the time of his death in 2001 co-authored articles by, for instance, American and Russian scientists were no longer a rarity, they were a novelty at the outset of the research project. Readers will have their own judgment about the success of the various chapters. Writing as an American who co-authored one of the chapters and for whom this was one of my first experiences in co-authoring an article with a Russian, it was a wonderful experience and produced a valuable exchange of expertise and resulted in genuine synergism. Neither of us could have written the chapter we did without the participation of the other—and I am virtually certain this is a view that other country-chapter co-authors share.

Jake was an excellent scholar and an entrepreneur. He also had panache. He addressed the issue of providing incentives for the chapter authors of *Engaging Countries* by organizing some of the most enjoyable book conferences I ever attended. Because half the authors were Americans and half were not, our first meeting took place in Bermuda where we worked and played very hard. With a straight face Jake justified our meeting site on the grounds that it was equidistant between the United States and Europe and was thus saving the funders’ money. When I suggested we could have met in Reykjavík and flown Icelandic, he said, with the same straight face, that it hadn’t occurred to him.

Jake’s departure has left a huge hole in all of our lives, in part for his academic accomplishments. Mostly though, he will be remembered for who he was and the way he did what he did. In my own case, he was a mentor, friend, confidant, colleague, and co-author over a stretch of almost 40 years. We will all miss him enormously.

7. *Id.* at 2.

8. *Id.*

9. *Id.*

10. *Id.* at 552.