PART III

EAST ASIA AND THE UNITED STATES

One night it came to me . . . that there was nothing to do but to take them all, and to educate the Filipinos, and uplift and civilize and Christianize them as our fellowmen.

—PRESIDENT WILLIAM MCKINLEY, 1898

Dewey could have gone about his affairs elsewhere and left the competent Filipino citizens to set up the form of government they might prefer and deal with the friars and their doubtful acquisitions according to the Filipino idea of justice and fairness—ideas which have since been tested and found to be of as high an order as any that prevail in Europe or America.

—MARK TWAIN, 1898

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CHAPTER 8

THE ROLE OF THE UNITED STATES IN EAST ASIA

The United States is not balancing China, and thus it is no surprise that the rest of East Asia is not, either. Debate over whether or not to view China as a threat is increasing in Washington, but so far there is little consensus. The business community is strongly in favor of building durable relations with China, while the military establishment is more skeptical. There are also those who are willing to take a "wait and see" attitude, hoping that over time, developments can assuage U.S. fears about future Chinese intentions.

Threats to the United States in East Asia do not arise from the traditional sources of great power rivalry and conflict. Rather, the greatest threats to the United States in the region could arise from the actions of the smallest and weakest countries, Taiwan and North Korea. Furthermore, these threats are also not direct threats against the United States, but instead they arise indirectly—from a U.S. decision to defend Taiwan, or from the possibility that North Korea could sell nuclear weapons to a Middle Eastern terrorist group that would use it against the United States. Aside from these indirect threats, the United States, like most East Asian countries, faces no direct military threat to its security.

Yet U.S. interests in the region are as much economic as they are military. Economic growth, not military conflict, has been the hallmark of the modern East Asian region, and U.S. economic ties to the region are deep and growing deeper. The United States has traditionally interacted with East Asia through a series of bilateral arrangements, known as the "hub and spoke" model. When U.S. power was at its height during the Cold War, this strategy was largely successful at promoting U.S. interests and fostering growth and stability in the region. Now, however, this strategy is under increasing strain. While relations with Japan have grown closer, most other U.S. bilateral security arrangements

in the region are in the process of evolving or being scaled back. At the same time, the rise of regional multilateral cooperative institutions, while hardly in a position to replace the role of the United States, are creating alternate pathways to cooperation. Combined with China's rise and increasingly active diplomacy, the United States is now increasingly in the position of reacting to changes in East Asia, rather than instigating them.

Despite these deep ties to the region, however, the United States is not an East Asian nation; rather, it is a global power with regional interests. The United States is only intermittently attentive to the region; Washington often deems problems elsewhere in the world as more important than issues in East Asia. It will mainly intervene in the region when it is in its interests to do so. This has implications both for U.S. policy in the region, and for how East Asian states view the U.S. presence. The United States remains by far the most powerful and important country in the world, and all East Asian states would like more, not less, American attention to the region, even if they also know they cannot rely on, nor expect, unquestioned U.S. support. Still, most of the states welcome or accept U.S. leadership, in other words, are satisfied with the status quo: a U.S. military presence that is not unduly intrusive, in addition to stable economic relations with China.

To that end, the United States faces a difficult path in the future. It can try to remain the most important and influential country in the region, but this will require more sustained attention to the region and a more equal relationship with many countries than has been the case in the past. Or, the United States can allow East Asian cooperation to develop, with it occasionally being included and occasionally being absent. How U.S. policy develops will have key implications for stability in the region. If the United States and China ultimately begin to balance each other militarily, the region as a whole will become increasingly unstable. If the two great powers find a modus vivendi, even if that is not outright partnership, the region will more likely be stable.

IS THE UNITED STATES AN EAST ASIAN NATION?

As noted in chapter 1, regions are defined by ideational as well as material factors. The processes within the region may be different from those outside of it, and states may interact differently with states inside or outside of the region. The United States has been deeply involved in East Asia for more than a century, but involvement—even war—is not the proper criterion for determining whether a state is within or outside of a region. Rather, as Barry

Buzan has argued, it depends much more on whether the issues within the region are the primary ones upon which the state focuses.[1] By this definition, the United States is a global actor that has regional interests. In defining the United States in this way, I build on the work of scholars such as Thomas Christensen, Christopher Layne, and others, who define the United States as an "offshore balancer" in East Asia.[2]

Popular opinion in the United States sees America as European, not East Asian. Culturally and ethnically, the dominant narrative about American identity focuses on its European and Protestant roots. As recently as 1928, Al Smith was the first legitimate Catholic presidential candidate, and it was not until 1960 that a non-Protestant became president. Indeed, concern about immigration of non–northern European immigrants has existed since the founding of the Republic, beginning with worries about southern European immigration and followed by the Chinese exclusion act of 1882 and other measures in the early twentieth century; today a debate rages about immigration, focused mostly on Hispanics.[3] As Tony Horwitz recently noted, "Coursing through the immigration debate is the unexamined faith that American history rests on English bedrock, or Plymouth Rock to be specific."[4] Scholars regularly group the United States with European countries, categorizing them as "Western" or even "Anglo-American."[5] Ethnically, African-descended Americans make up three times the population than do Asian-descended Americans, 12.8 to 3.8 percent, and yet few would call the United States "an African nation."[6]

Culturally and ethnically, then, it is clear that the United States is not an East Asian nation. Yet politicians regularly assert that, because of its interests in East Asia. However, the key is not whether a state has interests in a particular region, but rather the priority of those interests. The United States has global interests, and can choose to withdraw from any region. Indeed, one enduring strand of U.S. identity is the "isolationist" urge to pull back to the North American continent.[7] This contrasts with the East Asian states, which, despite their global interests and concerns, are principally focused on issues that arise from interactions among themselves.

The Iraq war and the North Korean nuclear issue are good examples of this. While the states of East Asia have been concerned in recent years primarily with North Korea, the United States has focused more on Iraq and events in the Middle East, attempting to manage the North Korean issue here and there. As Admiral James Fallon, commander of U.S. forces in the Asia-Pacific, said in 2006, "[U.S. policymakers] are intensely focused on the Middle East, so I tend to business out here."[8] Were any crisis to develop on the Korean peninsula, the United States would have the option of getting involved or not, while Japan,

China, and the Koreas would have no choice but to deal with that situation. For example, a war or a regime collapse in North Korea would unleash a flood of refugees to the surrounding countries. The United States, however, could choose whether to allow in refugees, and how much money it would want to devote to the aftermath of radical change in North Korea. It's worth remembering that during the Cold War, one of the chief South Korean fears was that the United States would not involve itself in a crisis.[9] It is thus unlikely that the United States will start paying consistent attention to the region, even though East Asian states want more, not less, of that. As Brantley Womack notes, "U.S. participation in [East Asia] is episodic and issue-driven," rather than continual and encompassing.[10]

Still, the United States is the most powerful country in the world—it has been called a "hyper power"—and its power is so much greater than all others that few dare even compete.[11] All states in East Asia—including North Korea and China—want good relations with America; the economic, diplomatic, and military benefits of that relationship can be extraordinary. Furthermore, no East Asian state in the region, even China, wants to exclude the United States from the region.

Although East Asian states are continually developing their own regional institutions, engaging in informal cooperation, and increasingly trading and investing in one another, this is more a natural progression than it is an attempt to exclude the United States. For the past fifty years, the United States was the unquestioned dominant military and economic power in the region, so it was possible to ignore the nascent East Asian attempts at cooperation. However, China now seems more willing to work with multilateral regimes than is the United States. The United States has not signed ASEAN's Treaty on Amity and Cooperation, while China has. The United States refuses to sign the UNCLOS (U.N. Convention on the Law of the Sea), which forms the basis of ASEAN maritime cooperation, while China has signed it. The United States is belatedly beginning to negotiate free-trade agreements in the region. As mechanisms other than the "hub and spokes" become more institutionalized, the United States will have to face up to the fact that it is deciding not to be involved. In fact, it has historically been dismissive of East Asian regional attempts at creating multilateral institutions and other forms of cooperation, believing that such efforts were both unlikely to succeed, and absent American participation, unlikely to be effective.[12] The "hub and spokes" model for U.S. relations in East Asia has come under pressure.

Yet the fact that the United States is not an East Asian country means that as the region continues to integrate economically, politically, and institutionally, the United States will be increasingly facing a dilemma: to pay more at-

tention to the region in order to remain more involved, or to allow East Asia to develop on its own with only occasional and intermittent U.S. participation. As Dennis Blair and John Hanley noted in 2001, "the fundamental security challenge in the Asia-Pacific region is to transform the balance of power approach . . . into one that instead aims to produce security communities."[13] Given America's global interests, it appears that this tension will be difficult to resolve.

THE UNITED STATES IS NOT BALANCING CHINA

There are some in the United States who are skeptical about China's emergence. However, the United States itself is not balancing China, and a basic direction of American policy toward China has not yet emerged. The debate in Washington is between those who see economic interdependence with China as beneficial for the United States, those who are more skeptical of China view and hence feel that balancing Chinese power is the prudent policy, and those who believe it is possible to socialize China into global values. As Thomas Christensen notes, "Especially if one uses the United States' containment policies toward the Soviet Union as a basis of comparison, the [argument] that the United States has been dedicated to a grand strategy of containment of China as a general policy to maintain U.S. hegemony—is, for the most part, divorced from reality."[14] Michael O'Hanlon points out that "many attributes of U.S. power are changing only slowly, and most U.S. interests are changing little in Asia."[15]

Those in the United States who view economic interdependence as binding their country and China together tend to come from the business community. They view the economic relations as so deep and important that threatening these ties would be dangerous for both countries. As Stephen Cohen writes, "The United States' international power position has not been enhanced by the domestic economy's increased dependence on the kindness of strangers with cash to lend. On the other hand, the Asian super-creditors have gained little real leverage over their biggest borrower."[16] Of a $263 billion increase in U.S. imports from East Asia between 1995 and 2005, China accounted for almost $200 billion, and between 1981 and 2005, U.S. imports from China increased more than 10,000 percent. Furthermore, the Asian creditor countries have compiled almost $2 trillion worth of U.S. debt in the past decade, and six Asian countries account for 53 percent of the total foreign holdings of U.S. Treasury securities in 2005.[17] Wal-Mart alone bought $18 billion worth of Chinese goods in 2005, and U.S. companies are investing

in China and increasingly outsourcing production to China (and other areas of the globe).

The depth of this economic relationship has led some to argue that U.S.-Chinese interdependence is so deep that the two cannot compete in traditional terms. Niall Ferguson noted that of twelve competitive Senate seats in the 2006 elections, "Not one of the candidates [was] willing to play the anti-China card."[18] Ferguson goes on to note that "American voters just don't see China as a problem . . . 22 percent of voters see Iraq as the country's top concern, 10 percent give first place to the economy, 7 percent cite unemployment. Trade is nowhere."[19] Former National Security Agency senior director for Asian affairs Michael Green and China analyst Bates Gill wrote in a 2006 opinion piece that "Mr. Bush must try to prevent China-specific trade legislation and punitive executive branch action against China."[20] Political scientist Xiaobo Lu has said, "To understand China-American ties, just look at the amount of American debt held by China."[21] When Chinese President Hu Jintao visited Seattle in 2006, Boeing CEO Alan Mulally's reaction was to exclaim, "China rocks!"[22] Gary Locke, former governor of Washington State, said that "the U.S.-Chinese relationship is stronger and better than ever before . . . but even if there are some disputes with China, the relationship is much better than ten years ago, much better than 30 years ago."[23]

But while the business community sees China as an opportunity, the military establishment is far more suspicious. The Pentagon's 2006 *Quadrennial Defense Review* said that China has the "greatest potential to compete militarily with America," and that Chinese military modernization "already puts regional balances at risk."[24] It advocates deploying six aircraft carriers and 60 percent of U.S. submarines to the Pacific to "support engagement, presence, and deterrence."[25] The Heritage Foundation's John Tkacik, Jr., writes that "'hedging' has become the watchword in China relations in Washington. It's about time."[26] Despite being concerned foremost with the ongoing U.S. involvement in the Middle East, long-term military planning is increasingly suspicious of China's diplomatic and military moves in East Asia.

Yet the question is not as stark as economic versus military interests: a vigorous debate has broken out in Washington over Chinese identity as well. And although the debate is rarely couched using this academic term, there are those who believe that it is possible to socialize China. Others, who are more skeptical, believe that Chinese power is all that matters. For example, the Bush administration's 2002 *National Security Strategy of the United States* declares, "The United States welcomes the emergence of a strong, peaceful, and prosperous China."[27]

The U.S. military has also increasingly called for engagement and interaction with its Chinese counterparts, in part to establish just what kind of a country China is. U.S. Pacific Fleet commander Admiral Gary Roughead said in 2006, "We're interested in increasing transparency with the PLA Navy. Its increasing capability is at a rate commensurate with the country's economic growth . . . by engaging them, we hope to gain some insight into that."[28] In 2006, during a four-city tour of Chinese military bases, Admiral William Fallon, commander of U.S. forces in the Asia-Pacific, said that "the more they are like us, the easier it will be . . . it's when you don't know, you assume everyone's out to kill you . . . This is one area where the secretary of defense [then, Donald Rumsfeld] in particular has been pro-engagement."[29] Chinese Defense Minister Cao Gangchuan said to Fallon, "I'm looking forward to seeing you here, sir, once a year."[30] Later, Fallon said that confidence building measures and exchanges of lower-level military officers were important: "I believe we need to start moving down this road, and the sooner we do it, the better off we will be."[31] The United States and China have also discussed establishing a military hotline and conducting joint naval drills.[32]

Indeed, much recent American policy analyses of China recognize that China's rise depends on China's identity and how that develops over time. The strand of thinking that argues that the United States can "socialize" China, and that China can and should be an upstanding international citizen, are arguments about China's identity and its beliefs. The 2006 *National Security Strategy* called for a policy to "encourage China to make the right strategic decisions for its people while we hedge against other possibilities."[33] In December 2005, then–Deputy Secretary of State Robert Zoellick called on China to become a "responsible stakeholder" in international affairs, and "This concept has spurred a useful debate in China about its role in the world."[34] In a subtle critique of China's behavior, Zoellick later said, "For America's own future, I always find it unfortunate when we blame others for our own problems. So we also have to focus on things we need to do."[35]

This U.S. attempt to change China's identity has been under way for many years. Alastair Iain Johnston noted, "The Clinton administration's strategy of constructive engagement was, for some, aimed at pulling China into the 'international community,' and exposing it to new norms of the market and domestic governance."[36] Clinton's Defense Secretary William Perry had made similar claims a decade earlier, arguing that, "engagement is the best strategy to ensure that as China increases its power, it does so as a responsible member of the international community."[37] Others have harshly criticized China precisely because of its values, citing human rights

abuses and its authoritarian government as reasons why it is both dangerous and unpredictable.

In sum, the United States has not decided how to view China or what overall U.S. policy toward it should be. The United States is deeply entwined with China's economy, and that relationship continues to grow, while the security situation has not yet reached a stable equilibrium. Of key importance is the realization that much thinking in the U.S. emphasizes Chinese identity. Many who are skeptical about China point to the authoritarian nature of the Chinese Communist Party and Chinese nationalism. Those who are more optimistic hope that China over time will be increasingly socialized into international norms and values. Robert Ross concludes, "The United States and China are the two great powers of East Asia. They will not be strategic partners."[38]

DOES U.S. POWER REASSURE EAST ASIAN STATES?

That the United States is not balancing China provides a perspective on two common explanations for why East Asian states too are not doing so. That is, some scholars have argued that some states are "too small to balance," and that East Asian capitulation to, or bandwagoning with, China is largely a foregone conclusion. Others emphasize the role of the United States as an offshore balancer, arguing that it is the U.S. presence that allows East Asia to remain relatively unconcerned about China's rise.[39] These two arguments are logically incompatible, although they are often used together. That is, if small states can rely on an offshore balancer in the face of a rising power, then they are not inevitably doomed to capitulation to that rising power. At the same time, if the United States is not balancing China, that reassurance to East Asian states is limited.

As noted in chapter 1, the argument that small states capitulate in the face of overwhelming power actually finds little empirical support. Many small states do not submit even when the odds are strongly against them, if they care about the issue strongly enough. Indeed, the record of past U.S. military conflict is replete with wars against states that by purely material standards should have capitulated immediately. For example, since 1991, Iraq twice defied the United States instead of succumbing, despite a massive disparity in their relative power positions. The Taliban regime in Afghanistan did not give in to U.S. demands that it turn over Osama bin Laden in 2001, despite the obvious intent by the United States to use force if the Taliban did not comply. By basic measures of power, North Vietnam during the 1960s as well

should never have chosen to resist the United States. These examples should give pause to those promoting the notion that East Asian states will simply capitulate in the face of rising Chinese power. That is, states make a choice about whether to capitulate, and overwhelmingly they choose not to. Thus an explanation for stability in East Asia that emphasizes East Asian states' inability to balance China needs to be shown, not asserted.

The problem with arguing that East Asian states will capitulate in the face of Chinese power is even harder to sustain because if these states truly feared China, one obvious option is to seek closer U.S. relations by which to balance China. The argument that U.S. power reassures East Asian states and allows them to avoid balancing is widely held, particularly in the United States. Richard Betts argued in 1994 that while Japan will probably not balance Beijing in the short term, that possibility becomes relevant "if Russia and the United States ceased to provide strategic counterweights to China."[40] At the same time, Aaron Friedberg wrote, "For the time being, Japan and South Korea have chosen to continue their Cold War policies of taking shelter beneath the U.S. nuclear umbrella, although their willingness to continue doing so will depend on the intensity of the threats they perceive and their faith in American security guarantees."[41] There is no doubt that the United States is the most powerful military presence in the region, and indeed around the globe. It is also true that these countries in general are comfortable with that presence.

As we saw in chapter 4, if Taiwan, with only 23 million people and close geographic proximity to China, could choose to balance because of a U.S. military umbrella, then all the other states in East Asia could as well. Hypothetically, were states such as Vietnam or Malaysia genuinely afraid of China, they would be working much harder to improve their relations with the United States. That is, they would be actively attempting to engage the United States on a range of issues, most notably military ones. It is significant that many states have chosen not to do that, and in some cases are even resistant to a greater U.S. military presence; it tells us about their perception of China, and indicates the U.S. military presence may not be as central to their security thinking as is generally believed.

Although the United States does not have the same military footprint in East Asia that it did at the height of the Cold War, it does remain by far the most powerful military in the region. And there have been occasional new American deployments. In March 2001, Singapore completed construction of a deep-water port at Changi Naval Base. In the first year after its opening, five U.S. carriers docked there. Singapore also is closely cooperating with the U.S. in its counterterrorism efforts, notably the Proliferation Security

Initiative and the Container Security Initiative. Thailand has worked closely with the United States on counterterrorism, enough so that the United States declared Thailand a "major non-NATO ally" in 2003.[42] The two countries conduct an annual joint military exercise known as "Cobra Gold," which focuses on counterterrorism and counter-crime efforts.[43] Indonesia offers limited repair and port visit facilities to the United States in the port of Surabaya. Malaysia hosted over fifteen U.S. naval ship visits in 2005, and also allows U.S. Navy SEALs to train in the jungles.[44]

Yet these collaborations do not mean that East Asian states are using U.S. power to balance China; they do not necessarily view these sporadic U.S. deployments as a hedge against growing Chinese power. As was shown in earlier chapters, many East Asian states are hesitant about further U.S. deployments, in some cases precisely because they fear the United States may be setting the stage for a potential containment policy against China. While the U.S. military presence is one factor involved in East Asian states' alignment strategies, it is not the only one—and indeed is probably one of the less important factors—behind East Asian accommodation of China. As the preceding chapters have noted, East Asian states have little if any threat perception from China in the first place, and are moving closer to China, not father away. While the Philippines, South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, and Singapore might be able to imagine some U.S. support against China under special circumstances, it is hard to envision the United States defending Vietnam or Indonesia or Malaysia against China. The evidence that East Asian states rely on a U.S. military presence to hedge against China is often misplaced.

The U.S. handling of the Asian financial crisis, and even its war on terror, has been received with muted enthusiasm in some parts of East Asia, and in some cases outright hostility. A Pew Research Center poll in 2003 revealed that only 15 percent of Indonesians had a positive view of the United States.[45] Australians were also heavily opposed to sending military deployments in Iraq, while throughout the region there was skepticism about U.S. intentions both in the Middle East and the implications for U.S. policy in the region itself.

Reflecting these sentiments, the Malaysian *Business Times* editorialized in 1996 that "this is not to belittle the role of the U.S. forces in the region . . . yet one has to also question the consistency of the United States in rendering help . . . there is no guarantee that a U.S. presence means a U.S. commitment to safeguard the security of every nation in this region."[46] The Thai newspaper *Siam Post* also editorialized in 1996 that "the swift U.S. military response to the China-Taiwan crisis made Asian-Pacific countries feel somewhat se-

cure, though most were well aware that the deployment of the U.S. naval forces was just for show because the American people would never approve of their engaging in real combat."[47] Malaysian leader Mohammed Mahatir has been one of the most vocal critics of U.S. policies in the region. He publicly argued that the rise of China should not be the cause of a U.S. containment policy in the region, and called the U.S. naval presence in East Asia "a waste of money as there was nothing to fear from either Japan or China . . . I don't think the U.S. military presence guarantees security in Asia . . . If we are invaded it is not certain that the U.S. would extend a helping hand."[48]

Other ASEAN states, while incrementally increasing their military cooperation with the United States, have done so out of a concern over terrorism and local security issues, not because of fears over China. With the exception of Taiwan and South Korea, none of the U.S. military deployments around the region are aimed at defense or deterrence against a specific external threat, and instead are aimed at internal stability, border control, and terrorism. While many Southeast Asian states are cooperating with the United States, it is important to note that the nature of this cooperation is qualitatively different from its Cold War alliances of the 1970s. None of these agreements cover military cooperation against third-party threats, and none have provisions of a political nature necessary for actual deterrence against those kinds of threats. As noted in chapter 6, Thailand rejected a U.S. request to preposition military equipment on ships in the Gulf of Thailand.[49] Nikolas Busse writes, "Balance of power is about deterrence more than anything else. Thus, conceiving of FPDA [Five Power Defense Arrangements] or similar arrangements as tools for balancing seems difficult if they lack proper mechanisms of deterrence."[50]

East Asian states view U.S. power and presence as they view Chinese power—a fact of life to be accommodated, benefited from, and adjusted to as much as possible.[51] The region is concerned primarily with economic growth, and the states are not overly focused on external threats to their survival. To that end, both the argument that states are too small to balance, and that the United States reassures them against Chinese aggrandizement, are difficult to sustain empirically.

The United States has deep economic ties with China and East Asia, and although there is some suspicion of China, the United States has not yet chosen to balance China. Indeed, there is little direct threat to American interests in East Asia—the biggest threat to American interests comes from the weakest state, North Korea. Even that threat is not a traditional military

one, but rather stems from the fear that a weak North Korean regime might sell one or two of its suspected nuclear weapons to terrorist groups that might use them against the United States.

There are many other nontraditional threats that could arise—certainly the Asian financial crisis of 1997 had a global impact on financial markets. Economic meltdown in China would have direct repercussions on the U.S. economy. Furthermore, pandemics such as avian flu could hurt the United States, and drug running and illicit trafficking of humans occurs in the region. To that end, the United States' interests in the region are similar to those of other East Asian states—not primarily military in focus, but rather economic and arising from nontraditional sources. For these reasons alone, the United States is welcomed in the region as a country that can potentially provide both leadership and resources to help to solve or at least mitigate these problems.

However, close scrutiny of East Asian attitudes toward the United States and China reveals that there is little regional appetite for an outright containment or balancing coalition against China. The discussion in the United States that emphasizes China's military modernization and potential threats a generation from now has little resonance in the region. Thus how U.S. foreign policy evolves will have a major impact on stability in the region. If the United States and China manage their relationship and coexist, even if they never develop warm relations, it will be stable. If the United States ultimately decides to view China as a threat, or if China's own actions make it reasonable to consider it a threat, the region can veer toward instability.

More generally, the United States faces a difficult challenge—how to remain deeply involved in a region that is rapidly transforming, often without U.S. action. Given its global concerns, it is unlikely that the United States will ever make East Asia its top priority. But as the region develops on its own, the Cold War "hub and spokes" model for U.S. relations in the region is coming under increasing strain. While all countries in the region desire more U.S. involvement and attention, they also are increasingly willing to craft security and economic arrangements on their own.

CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The rise and fall of great powers, and whether those things happen peacefully, has long been a preoccupation for students of international relations. Over the past half millennium in Europe, war and instability have accompanied the rise and fall of major states. Because Europe was the primary locus of both war and economic development over that time, it has been natural to conclude that the European experience is the norm in world politics.

Now China is in the middle of what may be a long ascent to global great power status. Indeed, it may already be a great power, with the only question being how much bigger China may become. The rise of China, and whether it can peacefully find a place in East Asia and the world, is thus one of the most important issues in contemporary international politics. Given the European historical experience, many conclude that China cannot rise peacefully. Others, attempting to assess China's current actions and goals, believe that it is possible for China to emerge without causing instability. This debate will likely continue well into the future, and thus defining the terms of the debate and isolating the central issues is an important step.

Jeffrey Frieden and David Lake argue that "progress in the study of international politics . . . depends on more, not less, rigorous theory and more, not less, systematic empirical testing."[1] This book has attempted just such a task. A main aspect of this project has been to sharpen our theories in an attempt to more accurately describe East Asian state strategies toward China and the main sources of stability and instability in the region. The evidence provided here leads to the conclusion that no East Asian state is actively balancing China. East Asian states see substantially greater economic opportunity in China than they do military threat, and hence East Asian states accept, rather than fear, China's expected emergence as a powerful and perhaps the

dominant state in East Asia. They prefer China to be strong rather than weak, and although the states of East Asia do not unequivocally welcome China in all areas, they are willing to defer judgment about what China wants.

Explaining how this has come about—and China has already peacefully managed thirty years of rapid economic and political growth—is also an important task. I have argued that pragmatic interests combine with national identity to explain the variation in state behavior in East Asia. This argument builds on a number of traditions in the study of international relations, from formal theorists to constructivists, that are sensitive to the role of ideas and that explore the microfoundations of state behavior within a specific context.

Much of East Asia's increasing stability is a result of material factors: strong states, military and economic development, and the decline of crisis points in the region. The last war of conquest was World War II; the Korean and Vietnam wars were both civil wars between nations divided by superpowers, as is the Taiwan issue. Furthermore, the hallmark of East Asia over the last half century has not been military conflict, it has been economic development. The domestic institutions and populations of East Asian countries are oriented toward economic growth, and there is little appetite within these rapidly developing countries for risky and far-fetched military adventures.

However, just as important as these material factors in explaining East Asia's increasing stability are identity and interests. East Asia has enjoyed thirty years of relative stability even while accommodating China's rapid emergence because of a shared understanding among East Asian states that although China will most likely reemerge as the regional core, its aims are limited. Calculations about alignment strategies on the spectrum between the extreme positions of balancing and bandwagoning are far more complex than simple measures of relative power would suggest, and although threat perceptions depend on the costs and benefits that the rising power poses, just as important are states' assessments about the identities and preferences of that rising power.

On the whole, East Asian states believe that China has peaceful intentions, which includes stable and peaceful relations with its neighbors, domestic stability, and an emphasis on economic growth and economic relations. There is a regional understanding about China's goals and its appropriate role in regional affairs. China has already experienced rapid economic growth for three decades, and it is increasingly reclaiming its position as the regional core in East Asia that it has historically occupied. East Asia is already deeply intertwined with China, both culturally and economically.

There are other stabilizing factors in East Asia, as well. The region is more integrated than ever before, and the states in the region are busily building

numerous bilateral and multilateral institutions across a range of cultural, economic, and political issues. As recently as a decade ago, it was widely considered that East Asian regionalism was so scarce as to be unimportant. However, in the face of the rapid progress made in creating multilateral institutions in East Asia, today that view is more difficult to uphold. Furthermore, economic interdependence on the whole is rapidly stitching the region together, and although world markets remain important, the East Asian region itself is becoming an economic nexus in its own right. Finally, regional states themselves are increasingly legitimate and prosperous, and many have made a democratic transition. Although some states remain relatively weak—among them Cambodia and Myanmar—the majority of East Asian states have become more politically stable and legitimate over the past generation, not less.

In addition, Japan is the only East Asian state that might potentially compete with China for political influence, but it appears unlikely to do so, and such competition would occur only in the context of a U.S.-Japan alliance. Japanese grand strategy is in flux, and Japan remains the most skeptical of Chinese motives. However, even if Japan-China competition occurs, competition is unlikely to be military in nature, especially given that the economies of both countries are increasingly deeply intertwined. Japan is hedging on all fronts—it is embracing Chinese economic vigor while remaining alert to the possibility that Chinese political power and influence may move against its interests. Japan is also deepening its alliance with the United States while beginning to create the domestic and international institutional and political linkages that would allow that relationship to become more of a choice than an obligation.

Regarding the United States and China, there is also no issue that appears poised to inevitably drive conflict between these two states. Their interests are aligned in many areas—stabilization of the North Korean issue, concerns about terrorism, and pandemics. On the most important economic issues, Chinese and American interests are also increasingly intertwined, as both benefit from a vibrant regional trading order. Although in security strategy the two powers have not wholly reached a stable modus vivendi, a clash is also not inevitable. The United States and China are maritime and continental powers, respectively, and China has not yet chosen to directly compete with the U.S. military.[2]

If at some point the United States decides to move from a strategy of accommodating China's emergence to a strategy of outright balancing, a key question will be how East Asian states respond. The answer to this question is not as obvious as some might expect. If East Asian nations do not balance

China as realists expect, an American attempt to construct a balancing coalition to contain China using East Asian states will be highly problematic. The research presented in this book leads to the conclusion that many East Asian states will be extremely reluctant to choose sides. As one respected scholar wrote just before taking a position in the U.S. government in 2006, "U.S. policies designed to slow China's economic growth or isolate Beijing diplomatically in the region . . . would undercut the U.S. diplomatic position with everyone else in the region, including U.S. allies."[3]

Furthermore, if forced to choose, many East Asian states may not choose the United States. As Singaporean Ambassador to the United States Chan Heng Chee said in 2006, "many countries are comfortable with the status quo . . . with the United States as the dominant pole . . . [however] whether these sentiments are retained in the coming decades depends on what the United States does in alliance maintenance and what the U.S. does in foreign and economic policy internationally."[4] Her reminder, that East Asian states assess American actions and motivations as much as they assess China's actions and motivations, emphasizes that East Asian states are active regional participants in their own right. Others offer even more blunt assessments: Martin Stuart-Fox writes that:

> How are the states of Southeast Asia likely to respond to the rising power of China in the face of U.S. determination to maintain its unchallenged position of the world? Will they side with the world superpower? Certainly not in the case of the mainland states, and probably not in the case of Malaysia and Indonesia. . . . This would not just be because of geography, but also because history and ideas predispose the countries of Southeast Asia to draw on their own experience of the benefits of deference to status in working out their relations with China.[5]

Even if U.S. power recedes significantly from East Asia, the region may not become as dangerous or unstable as is generally believed, because other nations may continue to adjust to China's central position in East Asia. Indeed, the importance of the United States has been receding relative to regional influences for the past thirty years: although the United States still retains overwhelming power in the region, already its scope and influence is considerably smaller than it was at its height at the end of the Vietnam War. Furthermore, East Asian states have grown significantly stronger, richer, and generally more stable over the past generation, and multiple centers of stability have begun to emerge, from increased economic interdependence, nascent regional institutionalization that continues to gather momentum, and

overlapping and multiple identities and interests. That the United States plays an important security role in East Asia is relatively uncontroversial. Whether a significant United States withdrawal would be deleterious for the region is far more questionable. Historically, it has been Chinese weakness that led to chaos in East Asia. When China is strong and stable, order has been preserved. The picture of East Asia in the twenty-first century that emerges is one in which China, by virtue of geography, power, and identity, is becoming the core state. In response, Asian nations are likely to accommodate, rather than balance China, even if the United States reduces its presence in the region.

However, although East Asia has become increasingly peaceful and stable over the past three decades—and trends are generally indicating more accommodation of China, not less—China is in the middle of its emergence and evolution, and is a long way from being a mature and stable country. As important as the past three decades have been to East Asian stability, China's ultimate intentions in the distant future are still unclear. If present trends continue, China may ultimately be a strong, reassuring, and stabilizing force in international politics. Alternatively, it is also possible that if China actually becomes the most powerful state in East Asia, it could increasingly pressure and intimidate other states. That is, China currently confronts the "commitment problem" identified by formal theorists: even if a state claims benign intentions today—and even if others believe it today—once circumstances change, a state's commitment to benign goals may change, as well.[6]

Although it is impossible to draw any firm conclusions about China's future path, the argument advanced in this book provides some guidance as to the important factors that are likely shape China's future course. Most significantly, concerns about future Chinese intentions are partly concerns about how Chinese national identity will develop. Will other states find credible a rising power's claims? The answer involves what the other states believe its intentions and values are, not just how powerful it is. Debate about whether China can remain unified, whether China can become a democracy, and how its nationalism develops, are essentially arguments about the future course of Chinese identity.

Chinese—and East Asian—identities are still in the process of being determined. Little is fixed, and there is no immutable "Chinese mind-set," just as there are no immutable perceptions of China. The actions that states take in the present will have an effect on what intentions and identities develop. How China acts, how East Asian states act, and how the United States and other global states act will affect the prospects for stability and peace in the region, and what identities ultimately form. As Avery Goldstein writes, "The future

will depend on the policies China and others choose to embrace once its current strategy has run its course, the transition is complete, and China has risen to the ranks of the great powers. At that time, different leaders in Beijing will make choices that reflect their country's new capabilities and transformed international constraints that cannot be confidently foreseen . . . speculation is premature at best and unwisely provocative at worst."[7]

Indeed, any prediction a generation into the future is mere speculation. How Chinese identity and power will develop is unknowable, and speculation is neither a satisfying nor interesting scholarly exercise.[8] What might be Chinese goals and beliefs a generation from now is at best a wild guess—so much will change between now and then, within China itself, within the region, and around the globe. In 1945 it would have been remarkable to think that thirty years into the future, the United States would be withdrawing from Vietnam, that China would be not only communist, but lost in the throes of a "cultural revolution" lasting a decade, or that a country like South Korea would be capable of economic growth making it the eleventh-largest economy in the world. In 1975, most observers thought the United States and Soviet Union would be locked into their rivalry well into the next century, and would have scoffed at the notion that China could manage an economic transformation that would dwarf that of South Korea's. Thus as the twenty-first century unfolds, it is probably wise that we remain cautious in our predictions about the future.

Making sense of a region as vast, ancient, and dynamic as East Asia is a monumental task. It is true that East Asian states have been increasingly "socialized" into a Western, Westphalian set of norms and beliefs about how the world works. International politics has become increasingly globalized, and all states are connected more tightly today than ever before. However, it is important to recognize that this convergence has been neither total nor unidirectional. That is, although all states must care about sovereignty, global norms, and the consequences of economic interdependence, they also retain their own historical experiences, regional concerns, and judgments about how what is of primary importance and what is secondary.[9] Thus East Asian states have adapted and taken some of these "Western" norms and practices, but not all of them.[10] Furthermore, these states are becoming increasingly influential in international politics. No longer just passive recipients of Western influences, they are active participants as well.

The United States has generally viewed its foreign policy and grand strategy as global, whether during the Cold War or now in its fight against terrorism. Yet most politics is actually more local than global, and the United States has also not been very good at understanding the nuance and com-

plexity of the diverse regions in which it has interests. China's rise in East Asia has global implications, to be sure. Yet perhaps more importantly, the East Asian region has its own internal dynamics, shared history, culture, and interactions—many of which occur without any attention to the larger world, and many of which are not well understood by Americans. To argue that a regional view of China's rise is critical does not mean that the search for basic, underlying factors is futile, or that social science cannot illuminate important issues in East Asia. Quite the opposite—if anything, this book emphasizes the need for rigorous and systematic study. How China and the East Asian region evolve in the coming generation will have a major impact on regional and global relations, and if all sides manage their relations with care, the future has the potential to be more peaceful, more prosperous, and more stable than the past.