

The Lessons of 1914 for East Asia Today

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Missing the Trees for the Forest

A century has passed since the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo set in motion a chain of events that would eventually convulse Europe in war. Possibly no conflict has been the focus of more scholarly attention. The questions of how and why European states came to abandon peaceful coexistence for four years of armed hostilities—ending tens of millions of lives and several imperial dynasties—have captivated historians and international relations scholars alike.

Today, Europe appears far removed from the precipice off which it fell a century ago. If anything, most European states currently seem more concerned about the damage potentially caused by financial instruments than instruments of war. On a global scale, the destructive power of contemporary weaponry so dwarfs armaments of that earlier era that some scholars have argued great power war to be obsolete.¹ Additionally, the international community has established international institutions, forums, and consultative mechanisms to channel conflict away from the battlefield and into the conference room.

Yet, not only do the great power relations of that era persist in intriguing scholars; as Steven Miller and Sean Lynn-Jones observe, they also continue to “haunt,” for “they raise troubling doubts about our ability to conduct affairs of state safely in an international environment plagued by a continuing risk of war.”² In many ways, these doubts have assumed a renewed salience

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1. John E. Mueller, *Retreat from Doomsday: The Obsolescence of Major War* (New York: Basic Books, 1989); and Kenneth N. Waltz, “The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: More May Be Better,” Adelphi Paper No. 171 (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1981).

2. Steven E. Miller and Sean M. Lynn-Jones, “Preface,” in Steven E. Miller, Sean M. Lynn-Jones, and Stephen Van Evera, eds., *Military Strategy and the Origins of the First World War* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991), p. xi; and Dingding Chen and Xiaoyu Pu, and Alastair Iain Johnston, “Correspondence: Debating China’s Assertiveness,” *International Security*, Vol. 38, No. 3 (Winter 2013/14), pp. 176–183.

as the world enters an era of significant ambiguity. Possibly foremost among the sources of this ambiguity is the economic and military growth of the People's Republic of China (PRC), a development that has introduced uncertainty into the strategic relations among great powers, particularly the PRC and the United States, and serves as a reminder that history may be far from over.

Indeed, there would seem to be striking parallels between the situation facing the PRC and the United States in this century to that of Imperial Germany and Great Britain at the beginning of the last. Both situations involve late-developing states confronting entrenched liberal great powers in positions of global military dominance. In the common narrative of the latter pair, Imperial Germany—dissatisfied with its lot in the world, seeking to expand its influence, generate a global presence, and “take its place in the sun”—set itself on a path to conflict with an entrenched yet declining Great Britain wary to relinquish its position. The result was deteriorating relations, security competition, and finally the tragic outbreak of World War I.

The lesson that emerges from this analogy is thus a worrying one, pointing to the dangers of war between a rising and an established power. It encourages observers to be on the lookout for possible signs of dissatisfaction in the PRC, to question whether it is seeking to dethrone the United States or contest the existing global order in ways similar to Germany a century ago. Much work has already been done on this topic; in fact, within the community of international relations scholars, it has arguably had a key role in framing debates about the future of the PRC in the international system.³

We believe, however, the analogy across these two great power dyads to be of limited use. We reach this conclusion not only because of contextual differences between the lead-up to World War I and the present that many scholars

3. Robert J. Art, “The United States and the Rise of China: Implications for the Long Haul,” *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 125, No. 3 (Fall 2010), pp. 359–391; Steve Chan, “Exploring Puzzles in Power-Transition Theory: Implications for Sino-American Relations,” *Security Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 3 (Spring 2004), pp. 103–141; Robert B. Zoellick, “China: What Engagement Should Mean,” *National Interest*, No. 46 (Winter 1996/97), pp. 13–22; Aaron L. Friedberg, “The Future of U.S.-China Relations: Is Conflict Inevitable?” *International Security*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (Fall 2005), pp. 7–45; David Hale and Lyric Hughes Hale, “China Takes Off,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 82, No. 6 (November/December 2003), pp. 36–53; Renée Jeffery, “Evaluating the ‘China Threat’: Power Transition Theory, the Successor-State Image, and the Dangers of Historical Analogies,” *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 63, No. 2 (June 2009), pp. 309–324; Alastair Iain Johnston, “Is China a Status Quo Power?” *International Security*, Vol. 27, No. 4 (Spring 2003), pp. 5–56; Nicholas D. Kristof, “The Rise of China,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 27, No. 5 (November/December 1993), pp. 59–74; David Rapkin and William Thompson, “Power Transition, Challenge, and the (Re) Emergence of China,” *International Interactions*, Vol. 29, No. 4 (2003), pp. 315–342; Richard Rosecrance, “Power and International Relations: The Rise of China and Its Effects,” *International Studies Perspectives*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (February 2006), pp. 31–35; Zhang Wenmu, “Sea Power and China’s Strategic Choices,” *China Security*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (Summer 2006), pp. 17–31; and Edward N. Luttwak, *The Rise of China vs. the Logic of Strategy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2012).

of international relations have already identified. It is also because of the more general way in which analogies can function to limit and distort the comprehension of problems. That said, we believe that the experience of World War I itself remains rife with lessons possibly more relevant now than ever. The outbreak of World War I was a complex, yet contingent, event to which multiple factors contributed, absent any one of which history might have unfolded quite differently. Although not necessarily portents of another full-scale world war, the factors we identify do have the potential to exacerbate the risk of tensions or increase the likelihood of conflict in East Asia.

Stated differently and perhaps counterintuitively, in this case there may be more value in focusing on the trees instead of seeking to see the forest. World War I is not just an instance of war between a rising power and an established one; it is also an example of how great power relations can break down in an era of dense and dynamic political, strategic, and economic ties. Examining specific sources of strain and fragility in that system can help to identify the potential hazards that may emerge in coming years. Specifically, we highlight three major complications that contributed to the outbreak of World War I: security commitments, domestic political pressures, and repeated crises. Our selection of these factors was not random. They reflect the existing literature on the outbreak of World War I in the fields of history and international relations. Moreover, they demonstrate key similarities to dynamics at play in contemporary East Asia, where interstate friction is arguably most keen. So although none of the protagonists of World War I find reincarnation in the present, we nonetheless believe that the outbreak of World War I offers warnings full of relevance.

This article proceeds as follows. In the next section, we examine the allures and pitfalls of the analogy between German-British relations in the last century and PRC-U.S. relations in this one. Not only do we survey the disputes concerning this analogy and outline already well-recognized differences between the two cases, but we also explore the drawbacks of analogies more generally. We argue that focusing on this analogy as a point of debate obscures other, more relevant lessons from that chapter in European history. We then proceed to outline three major lessons. Although not necessarily heralding a replication of the World War I, they do point to significant sources of concern that may result in the unnecessary and dangerous repetition of follies that led to its outbreak.

German Apples and Mandarin Oranges?

As both popular and scholarly observers have sought to grapple with the future trajectory of PRC-U.S. relations, the analogy of Anglo-German relations

has loomed large. John Ikenberry captures this basic tendency: “As Germany unified and grew, so, too did its dissatisfactions and demands, and as it grew more powerful, it increasingly appeared as a threat to other great powers. . . . Many observers see this dynamic emerging in U.S.-Chinese relations.”⁴ The implications are ominous. Explicitly drawing the analogy to contemporary China, Robert Kagan writes, “Rarely have rising powers risen without sparking a major war that reshaped the international system to reflect new realities of power. . . . Germany’s rise after 1870, and Europe’s reaction to it, eventually produced World War I.”⁵ In this section, we probe more deeply the usefulness of this analogy and find it wanting—not simply because of obvious differences between then and now, but also for how it functions to occlude understanding rather than enhance it.

CLEAR PARALLELS?

The dominant narrative of Anglo-German tensions is one in which “Germany grew out of its position as a ‘cluster of insignificant States under insignificant princelings’” and subsequently went on to challenge the international system and Great Britain’s dominant position within it.⁶ More precisely, the narrative asserts that a potent combination of economic growth and dissatisfaction with the current distribution of benefits in the international system drove Imperial Germany to engage in a *Weltpolitik* (world policy) that evoked Britain’s concern and antipathy.⁷ This set the stage for the collision among major powers in July 1914 that sparked World War I.

The most tangible element of this German *Weltpolitik* was a program of naval expansion aimed at contesting British hegemony over the seas. In 1898 Germany inaugurated its first Naval Law and with it authorized a massive program of shipbuilding. Its authors desired to field a seaborne force that would permit Germany not only to escape from under the shadow of potential British naval coercion, but to turn the tables and potentially subject the British to the threat of force. The British, however, were unwilling to passively accommodate German plans and answered with additional, more advanced ships of their own, thereby engendering a major arms race. As John Maurer notes, in the period between 1906 and 1912, “Britain launched 29 capital ships and

4. G. John Ikenberry, “The Rise of China and the Future of the West,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 87, No. 1 (January/February 2008), p. 27.

5. Robert Kagan, “The Illusion of ‘Managing’ China,” *Washington Post*, May 15, 2005.

6. Paul M. Kennedy, *The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism, 1860–1914* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1980), p. 465.

7. Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 194–199.

Germany launched 17. Naval expenditures in both countries soared to pay for this arms buildup: Germany's naval budget practically doubled, and Britain's naval estimates increased by over 40%.⁸ The consequence was that Germany gained a navy without gaining any naval advantage, while needlessly antagonizing the British.

The other elements of German *Weltpolitik* were less tangible, but also intimidated dissatisfaction with the status quo. *Weltpolitik* comprised a heterogeneous mix of vague notions that Germany deserved to be a world power, that it should have more colonial possessions and market access, and that it should be given more freedom of action on the global stage.⁹ Such themes are apparent, for instance, in a speech given in 1897 by Bernhard von Bülow while still foreign minister, in which he announced: "We definitely do not feel the need to have a finger in every pie. But we believe it is inadvisable, from the outset, to exclude Germany from competition with other nations in lands with a rich and promising future. The days when Germans granted one neighbor the earth, the other the sea, and reserved for themselves the sky, where pure doctrine reigns—those days are over. . . . In short, we do not want to put anyone in our shadow, but we also demand our place in the sun."¹⁰

As a late-blooming great power, Imperial Germany—having only unified in 1871—did indeed find itself in a world where many of the colonial spoils had already been divided. At the same time, it found difficulty articulating exactly what its "place in the sun" constituted. Practically, Germany pushed and prodded diplomatically to obtain comparatively modest colonial possessions, but it also engaged in relatively fruitless provocations—such as using gunboat diplomacy to protest French actions in Morocco—that served to further alienate the British. The cumulative result was that German behavior in the last decade of the nineteenth century and first decade of the twentieth managed to create in the eyes of British observers the image of "a professional blackmailer,

8. John H. Maurer, "The Anglo-German Naval Rivalry and Informal Arms Control, 1912–1914," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 36, No. 2 (June 1992), p. 284. See also Holger H. Herwig, *"Luxury" Fleet: The Imperial German Navy, 1888–1918* (Abingdon, U.K.: Routledge, 2014); Kennedy, *The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism, 1860–1914*; Arthur Jacob Marder, *From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow: The Royal Navy in the Fisher Era*, 5 vols. (London: Oxford University Press, 1961–70); and Robert K. Massie, *Dreadnought: Britain, Germany, and the Coming of the Great War* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1992).

9. Christopher Clark, *The Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914* (New York: HarperCollins, 2013), pp. 150–152; James Joll, *The Origins of the First World War* (New York: Longman, 1992), pp. 181–182; and Imanuel Geiss, "Origins of the First World War," in Hannsjoachim Wolfgang Koch, ed., *The Origins of the First World War: Great Power Rivalry and German War Aims* (London: Macmillan, 1984), p. 54.

10. Bernhard von Bülow, "Bernhard von Bülow on Germany's 'Place in the Sun' (December 6, 1897)," trans. Adam Blauhut, http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/pdf/eng/607_Buelow_Place%20in%20the%20Sun_111.pdf.

whose extortions are wrung from his victims by the threat of some vague and dreadful consequences in case of a refusal.”¹¹

Thus the naval challenge, attempts to change the international allocation of benefits, and the desire to expand its influence set Imperial Germany on a collision course with Great Britain. What is more, the economic ties between the two countries could not prevent the conflict. As Paul Papayouanou argues, economic interdependence served to mitigate British containment of Germany, while Germany was unaffected because “its pseudo-democratic political system gave prominence to aggressive socioeconomic, political and military interests.”¹² Paul Kennedy, in concluding his extensive study of the origins of Anglo-German rivalry, writes, “An assassination in the Balkans may have provided the ‘spark’ for war. . . . Yet, so far as the British and German governments were concerned, the 1914–1918 conflict was essentially entered into because the former power wished to preserve the existing *status quo* whereas the latter . . . was taking steps to alter it.”¹³ Underpinning all of this was the growth of German power—the fruit of unification and industrialization—that in a short time made it capable of mounting an assault on British hegemony.¹⁴ In this manner, one can draw a direct line from the economic and military rise of a united Germany to the outbreak of World War I.

Given this narrative, it is not difficult to see how drawing the analogy to PRC-U.S. relations becomes tempting. Like Imperial Germany, the PRC is a rapidly growing, illiberal power that finds itself in a system not of its making. The PRC has also embarked on a major program of military modernization—not just naval capabilities but also air, missile, and cyber—with the potential to pose significant obstacles to U.S. power projection in the Asia-Pacific.¹⁵

The United States, for its part, appears committed to maintaining naval supremacy; thus an arms race is a distinct possibility. In addition, and highly reminiscent of British perceptions of a boorish German diplomacy, a narrative of “Chinese assertiveness” has recently been making the rounds among policymakers and pundits in the United States.¹⁶ Moreover, the strong eco-

11. Eyre Crowe, “Memorandum on the Present State of British Relations with France and Germany” (London: His Majesty’s Stationery Office [HMSO], 1928).

12. Paul A. Papayouanou, “Interdependence, Institutions, and the Balance of Power: Britain, Germany, and World War I,” *International Security*, Vol. 20, No. 4 (Spring 1996), p. 53.

13. Kennedy, *The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism, 1860–1914*, p. 470.

14. Paul M. Kennedy, “The First World War and the International Power System,” *International Security*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (Summer 1984), pp. 7–40.

15. Evan Braden Montgomery, “Contested Primacy in the Western Pacific: China’s Rise and the Future of U.S. Power Projection,” *International Security*, Vol. 38, No. 4 (Spring 2014), pp. 115–149.

16. Alastair Iain Johnston, “How New and Assertive Is China’s New Assertiveness?” *International*

conomic ties between the United States and China are not a source of reassurance, but simply one more point of similarity. The elements that fueled the Anglo-German rivalry would indeed appear to be present. Disconcertingly, following this analogy to its logical conclusion predicts a good chance of war.

PROBLEMS WITH THE ANALOGY

Such a leap of reasoning introduces a multitude of problems, however. Other scholars have already sought to ask if China harbors revisionist intentions,¹⁷ or even if China is actually approaching the power of the United States in economic or military terms.¹⁸ We do not seek to answer those questions here. Even if we were to answer both questions in the affirmative, the commonalities identified by those who invoke the analogy are not necessarily sufficient for the replication of outcomes. The reason is that the above narrative obscures key differences between the geostrategic, technological, and sociohistorical environments of then and today.

The first blind spot in the analogy is a matter of geography. As Jack Levy has noted, observers need to be alert to the existence of multiple, simultaneously existing power systems within international relations.¹⁹ Globally, on the basis of naval dominance, prewar Great Britain may be considered the predominant power of its era. From its position sandwiched between the Dual Alliance of France and Russia, however, Germany confronted far greater threats to its security from other powers at the time. The Dual Alliance meant that in the event of hostilities Germany would have to contend with a war on two fronts. The success of the German war plan, the so-called Schlieffen Plan—to knock France out of the war before Russia had the chance to fully mobilize its forces—depended on there being a window of time between the outbreak of war and Russia being able to bring its military strength to bear on the eastern front.

Although conceivably feasible when formulated, the German war plan in the period prior to the July 1914 crisis was rapidly losing its perceived viability in the face of Russian military modernization. In particular, improvements under way in the Russian railway system—funded by loans from France—

Security, Vol. 37, No. 4 (Spring 2013), pp. 7–48; and Chen and Pu, and Johnston, “Correspondence: Debating China’s Assertiveness,” pp. 176–183.

17. Johnston, “Is China a Status Quo Power?”

18. Steve Chan, *China, the U.S., and the Power-Transition Theory: A Critique* (Abingdon, U.K.: Routledge, 2007); and Michael Beckley, “China’s Century? Why America’s Edge Will Endure,” *International Security*, Vol. 36, No. 3 (Winter 2011/12), pp. 41–78.

19. Jack S. Levy, “Power Transition Theory and the Rise of China,” in Robert S. Ross and Zhu Feng, eds., *China’s Ascent: Power, Security, and the Future of International Politics* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2008), pp. 11–33.

carried the potential of drastically reducing the amount of time needed for Russian forces to mobilize. On top of this, the size of Russian military forces was also growing. At 1.5 million in 1914, Russia's troop strength was already twice that of Germany; within a few years, it was expected to increase by another third.²⁰ The German leadership thus saw itself in an eroding position vis-à-vis the Dual Alliance, and more specifically Russia.²¹ As a consequence, the British threat to Germany was at best secondary, and there were strong incentives for Germany to launch a preventive war before its strategic window closed.²²

While Germany's greatest threat may have come from the east as opposed to the British Isles, the German naval challenge struck at the heart of British security and welfare. Not only was Britain's status in the world dependent on its naval power, but its access to foodstuffs, commerce, and its colonies all relied on unfettered sea transit. As argued in one contemporary British memorandum, the defeat of British naval forces would mean "the destruction of our merchant marine, the stoppage of our manufactures, scarcity of food, invasion, disruption of Empire."²³ The British foreign secretary, Sir Edward Grey, put it even more succinctly: "The Navy is our one and only means of defence and our life depends on it and it alone."²⁴ What for Germany may have been a means to expand its influence and prestige as a great power,²⁵ for Britain was a menace to its survival placed right off its coast. Thus it perceived the stakes of the competition as existential.

The current geostrategic context of PRC-U.S. relations could not be more different. The PRC does not have any neighbors on its borders capable of offering the same threat of invasion that tsarist Russia did to Imperial Germany. And although the PRC may increasingly be able to complicate U.S. power projection in the region, this remains a far cry from having the ability to blockade or invade the U.S. mainland, if that were even possible. Fears for national survival played a key motivating role in the outbreak of World War I. For Germany, the July crisis presented the chance to escape from under the shadow of a looming Russian menace; for Britain, a German victory and thus

20. Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, p. 331.

21. Dale C. Copeland, *The Origins of Major War* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2000), pp. 63–69.

22. Ibid.; and Chan, *China, the U.S., and the Power-Transition Theory*, pp. 51–62.

23. "The Navy Estimates and the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Memorandum on the Growth of Expenditure," November 16, 1901, CAB 37/59/118, Records of the Cabinet Office, National Archives, Kew, United Kingdom.

24. G.P. Gooch and Harold Temperley, eds., *British Documents on the Origins of the War*, Vol. 6: *Anglo-German Tension: Armaments and Negotiation, 1907–12* (London: HMSO, 1930), No. 361.

25. Michelle Murray, "Identity, Insecurity, and Great Power Politics: The Tragedy of German Naval Ambition before the First World War," *Security Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 4 (2010), pp. 656–688.

hegemony on the continent spelled a renewed and greater naval threat. Neither the PRC nor the United States faces such dire straits. Quite simply, much less hangs in the balance for either country.²⁶

A second blind spot is the issue of technological change. The geostrategic factors above played a role in a world where security depended on soldiers stopping soldiers and ships sinking ships; nuclear weapons were not a factor. Numerous international relations scholars have pointed out that nuclear weapons significantly change the equation, rendering many of the concerns faced by powers in the lead-up to World War I moot.²⁷ As Avery Goldstein writes, "Because nuclear powers cannot confidently eliminate the risk of unacceptable retaliation by their adversaries, they cannot engage one another in military battles that have a real potential to escalate to unrestrained warfare."²⁸ According to this view, while nuclear weapons do not prevent the possibility of "limited warfare and crises," their presence does render existential security threats posed by conventional military forces among great powers a thing of the past.²⁹ Even if one does not harbor the faith that nuclear weapons technology alone brings peace,³⁰ the argument is difficult to make that these weapons have not changed the fundamental dynamics of the situation by making attempts by great powers to conquer one another equivalent to suicide.³¹

Still, looking either at the particulars of geostrategic position or broader issues of the impact of military technology makes no sense without also taking into account a third factor: the mutual fear permeating the sociohistoric context. Without this third factor, concerns about the military balance lose their urgency and significance—this reality is evidenced by the lack of security competition among Britain, France, and Germany today. Germany and Britain worried for their survival not simply as a function of their geographic and military circumstances, but also because of the perception that they inhabited a Hobbesian environment. As Stephen Van Evera writes, "Europeans in general, and Germans in particular, imagined a world of states so belligerent that the coming of war was merely a matter of time."³²

26. Robert S. Ross, "The Geography of Peace: East Asia in the Twenty-First Century," in Michael E. Brown et al., eds., *The Rise of China* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2000), p. 170.

27. Luttwak, *The Rise of China vs. the Logic of Strategy*; Art, "The United States and the Rise of China"; and Avery Goldstein, "Great Expectations: Interpreting China's Arrival," *International Security*, Vol. 22, No. 3 (Winter 1997/98), pp. 36–73.

28. Goldstein, "Great Expectations," p. 70.

29. *Ibid.*

30. Scott D. Sagan, "The Perils of Proliferation: Organization Theory, Deterrence Theory, and the Spread of Nuclear Weapons," *International Security*, Vol. 18, No. 4 (Spring 1994), pp. 66–107.

31. Robert Jervis, *The Meaning of the Nuclear Revolution: Statecraft and the Prospect of Armageddon* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1989).

32. Stephen Van Evera, "Why Cooperation Failed in 1914," *World Politics*, Vol. 38, No. 1 (Fall 1985),

Although the PRC and U.S. security establishments may now eye each other warily, it is highly unlikely that either side harbors the same fears concerning invasion and loss of sovereignty as the European great powers prior to World War I. This lack of mutual existential fear is not just a matter of nuclear deterrence, for the degree of nuclear competition and concerns about deterrence failure have also declined when compared with the height of the Cold War. This absence of deep-seated fears may conceivably be a product of the declining benefits of conquest resulting from globalization,³³ the obsolescence of great power war as a viable idea,³⁴ or even the broad shift to a more Lockean—if not Kantian—world in response to internalized norms and practices.³⁵ Regardless of the reason, the simple fact is that the perceived intensity and stakes of security competition between great powers have fundamentally changed.

That contemporary perceptions are different is nowhere more obvious than in the fall from favor of social Darwinism as a guiding worldview. Shared across participants in the events leading to World War I was a belief that nations were akin to organisms engaged in an inevitable struggle for survival. This process, in turn, drove the evolution of mankind—“[T]he path of progress is strewn with the wrecks of nations,” as one contemporary tract phrased it.³⁶ War played a special role in this process, acting as a welcome test of the fittest.³⁷ It is against the background of this worldview, for instance, that German Chancellor von Bülow remarked, “In the struggle between nationalities, one nation is the hammer and the other the anvil; one is the victor and the other the vanquished. . . . It is the law of life and development in history that where two national civilizations meet they must fight for ascendancy.”³⁸

This is not an isolated example. As Hannsjoachim Koch observes, “[A]ny careful scrutiny of the newspapers and periodicals of the period, especially between 1890 and 1914 . . . offer[s] more than ample examples of Social

p. 87. See also Stephen Van Evera, “The Cult of the Offensive and the Origins of the First World War,” *International Security*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (Summer 1984), pp. 58–107.

33. Stephen G. Brooks, “The Globalization of Production and the Changing Benefits of Conquest,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 43, No. 5 (October 1999), pp. 646–670. For a China-specific analysis, see M. Taylor Fravel, “International Relations Theory and China’s Rise: Assessing China’s Potential for Territorial Expansion,” *International Studies Review*, Vol. 12, No. 4 (December 2010), pp. 505–532.

34. Mueller, *Retreat from Doomsday*.

35. Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

36. Hannsjoachim Wolfgang Koch, “Social Darwinism as a Factor in the ‘New Imperialism,’” in Koch, *The Origins of the First World War*, p. 330.

37. Joll, *The Origins of the First World War*, pp. 215–217; and Van Evera, “Why Cooperation Failed in 1914,” pp. 90–92.

38. Hew Strachan, *The First World War*, Vol. 1: *To Arms* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 134.

Darwinian currents of thought in Germany, Britain and the Empire, the United States and France.”³⁹ Nor was it only journalists, for “statesmen . . . did so in the same measure.”⁴⁰ In contrast, although in the current context of PRC-U.S. relations one finds talk of rising and declining powers, and within PRC political discourse even appeals to “the revival of the nation” and claims that the weak will be bullied, one has to probe far to the fringes to find those who anticipate a coming racial war that will determine the survival of the fittest.

Also significant is the collapse of the imperialist imperative as an article of faith among great powers. As touched upon above, part of Imperial Germany’s dissatisfaction derived from entering late into the scramble for colonies, arriving at a time when much of the world had already been partitioned. In both the official and popular mind at the time, colonial possessions were viewed as a source of prestige, the price of admission for membership in the club of “world powers,” and a necessary accessory in the struggle for national prosperity, even survival.⁴¹ Although European powers often reached bargains as to who received what—such as during the Conference of Berlin in 1884–85—such cooperation could not obscure the reality: the push for colonies was, at base, zero sum. What one country gained was lost to the others. Correspondingly, the desire to acquire new territory or even defend existing possessions introduced additional sources of militarized competition, discontent, and insecurity into an already unstable international environment, as borne witness by the Fashoda crisis, the two Moroccan crises, the Russo-Japanese War, and the enduring tensions of the Anglo-Russian Great Game in Central Asia around the turn of the last century.

Presently, economic competition and its attendant national concerns still exist, but they play out in a much different environment. For one, colonies—with few exceptions—are a thing of the past. Moreover, in place of the Great Game of colonial acquisition, a post–World War II structure of international institutions now exists that, as Ikenberry argues, is “built around rules and norms of nondiscrimination and market openness, creating conditions for rising states to advance their expanding economic and political goals within it.”⁴² Negotiating teams have replaced gunboats as the primary means of securing economic access, and regardless of occasional trade frictions, great powers are nowhere near the state of hypervigilance and jockeying for colonial advantage that characterized the beginning of the last century. In fact, China is a ma-

39. Koch, “Social Darwinism as a Factor in the ‘New Imperialism,’” pp. 333–334.

40. *Ibid.*, p. 334.

41. Joll, *The Origins of the First World War*, pp. 174–196; and Van Evera, “Why Cooperation Failed in 1914,” p. 89.

42. Ikenberry, “The Rise of China and the Future of the West,” p. 29.

for beneficiary of the prevailing world order. And as Ikenberry observes, in the course of the past three decades, “[China has] discovered the massive returns that are possible by operating within this open-market system.”⁴³ Such benefits remove an important source of instability and dissatisfaction—overlooked in the common analogy—that plagued relations among the great powers prior to World War I.

There is also one further omission in a narrative that asserts a relatively linear course from Anglo-German naval competition and antagonism to the outbreak of World War I. Namely, in the period immediately before the July crisis Germany had resigned itself to British naval supremacy, and relations were, if anything, on the mend.⁴⁴ When war did come, Germany was not seeking a chance to challenge Britain; quite the opposite, it preferred for Britain to stay on the sidelines. During the July crisis, the German leadership greeted the news—misreported—that Britain would remain neutral with cheers and champagne.⁴⁵ These developments raise the interesting counterfactual of how the future might have turned out differently if the trend of *détente* between the two powers had proceeded uninterrupted by the events of 1914.

Moreover, Christopher Clark observes that in 1914 “the Anglo-Russian alliance was under serious strain—it looked unlikely to survive the scheduled date for renewal in 1915. . . . [T]here were even signs of a change of heart among the British policy-makers, who had recently been sampling the fruits of *détente* with Germany.”⁴⁶ The above discussion suggests far more contingency than the common narrative of Anglo-German tensions tends to assume. Had relations between Russia and Britain had time to further deteriorate and if Russia had been able to threaten hegemony over the continent, it is conceivable we would now be warning of the Anglo-Russian analogy.⁴⁷

In sum, warnings for PRC-U.S. relations based on parallels drawn to the Anglo-German experience may be less useful than they first appear. As outlined above, such an analogy overlooks key differences in the geostrategic, technological, and sociohistorical context that factored into the outbreak of World War I. These differences make it much less likely that history will replay itself in the same manner. Furthermore, the linear narrative upon which such admonitions are based is in itself not as robust as is popularly asserted. The actual historical record suggests much greater contingency.

43. *Ibid.*

44. Sean M. Lynn-Jones, “*Détente and Deterrence: Anglo-German Relations, 1911–1914*,” *International Security*, Vol. 11, No. 2 (Fall 1986), pp. 121–150; and Maurer, “The Anglo-German Naval Rivalry and Informal Arms Control, 1912–1914,” pp. 284–308.

45. Joll, *The Origins of the First World War*, pp. 24–25.

46. Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, p. 363.

47. See Steve Chan on the post hoc bias in this case. Chan, *China, the U.S., and the Power-Transition Theory*, pp. 26–41.

AN ANALOGY TO AVOID

The above narrative serves as an additional example of the need for caution when approaching analogies.⁴⁸ In the case above, the isolated similarities shared by Imperial Germany and the PRC can appear striking—both are late, but rapidly developing, nondemocratic states with aspirations of naval power; so, too, with those between the United States and Great Britain as liberal naval hegemony. These similarities, however, can blind observers to the major differences in context outlined above that set the stage for the outbreak of war in 1914. Analogies invite the temptation to shoehorn new actors into old roles while providing distractions from the fact that the stage they occupy has changed.

Crucially, analogical thinking can encourage top-down processing that prompts a search for confirming evidence while ignoring divergences. Alternately, it can lead observers to interpret ambiguous evidence in line with analogically derived expectations.⁴⁹ The Anglo-German analogy frames principled disagreements or conflict between the United States and the PRC as manifestations of a new, confrontational *Weltpolitik* on the part of the latter and stepping-stones toward war. This may in part help to explain the pervasiveness of what Iain Johnston terms the “new Chinese assertiveness” meme that has recently gained prominence despite important areas of cooperation and large continuities in PRC behavior.⁵⁰

What is more, by centering the debate on whether or not the PRC is a dissatisfied challenger in the tradition of Imperial Germany, this analogy diverts attention from the alternative mechanisms that can potentially lead to tensions, even conflict, in contemporary East Asia. By conceptualizing the history of World War I not as the climatic conclusion of a flawed linear narrative but instead the contingent product of multiple contributing factors, the authors see in it a rich source of lessons pertaining to possible hazards and sources of instability within the international system, many of them relevant to East Asia today. It is to three of the most prominent of these lessons that we now turn.

Lesson #1: Beware of Complex Security Commitments

Europe on the eve of World War I was a tangled mess of bilateral security agreements and understandings. Unlike the multilateral alliance blocs that

48. Yuen Foong Khong, *Analogies at War: Korea, Munich, Dien Bien Phu, and the Vietnam Decisions of 1965* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992). See also Jeffery, “Evaluating the ‘China Threat.’”

49. Khong, *Analogies at War*, pp. 37–46; and Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1976), pp. 143–202.

50. Johnston, “How New and Assertive Is China’s New Assertiveness?”

would face off in the Cold War, alliance relations in 1914 were, at base, composed of interlocking bilateral understandings of varying commitment. Even the nominally multilateral Triple Alliance was, in practice, better characterized as a set of bilateral pairings differing widely in terms of durability and fidelity. Further complicating this landscape were additional bilateral commitments to actors outside these groupings, such as Russia to Serbia or Britain to Belgium; far from being deterrents, these commitments helped to ensure that the committing parties and their allies would be drawn into conflicts not of their making. International relations scholars have long noted the instability of the pre-World War I alliance system.⁵¹

THREE PROPERTIES OF A DANGEROUS MIX

Three troubling properties of this system urge caution rather than confidence when surveying the bilateral networks of East Asia today. First, bilateral relations created dependencies, and insecure actors that worried about the loss of a bilateral partner tended to take on greater commitments—chaining themselves to their partners.⁵² This increased the likelihood that they would be drawn into a conflict neither of choice nor of pressing interest. The most prominent example is the Franco-Russian relationship. France, without Russia, faced a German threat it could hardly counter on its own. As Eugenia Kiesling writes, “Nothing was certain in 1914, except that France could not survive a war without Russia’s active engagement against Germany.”⁵³ Whereas in the lead-up to the war France struggled to pass laws extending military service to offset the size of the German military, Russia, as noted above, was already surpassing its western neighbor in increasing its number of men in uniform.

French leaders could see what was happening: as time progressed, France would need Russia more than Russia would need France. Anxious about abandonment, France sought to tighten its bonds, including acceptance of going to war over a Balkan conflict. As Clarke notes, “The French were willing to accept this risk, because their primary concern was not that Russia would act precipitately, but rather that she . . . would grow so preponderant as to lose interest in

51. Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979), pp. 166–167; Stephen Van Evera, *Causes of War: Power and the Roots of Conflict* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1999), pp. 227–230; and Robert S. Ross, “The Domestic Sources of China’s ‘Assertive Diplomacy,’ 2009–2010,” in Rosemary Foot, ed., *China across the Divide: The Domestic and Global in Politics and Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 72–96.

52. Thomas J. Christensen and Jack Snyder, “Chain Gangs and Passed Bucks: Predicting Alliance Patterns in Multipolarity,” *International Organization*, Vol. 44, No. 2 (Spring 1990), pp. 137–168.

53. Eugenia C. Kiesling, “France,” in Richard F. Hamilton and Holger H. Herwig, eds., *The Origins of World War I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 245.

the security value of the alliance.”⁵⁴ France was not alone. Despite clearly being the stronger partner, Germany feared the loss of Austria-Hungary. As James Joll observes, “The realization by the Germans that Austria-Hungary was her only reliable ally and that she must be supported at all costs . . . was an important motive for the German decisions of 1914.”⁵⁵

Not all actors prior to World War I sought to tighten their bonds of alliance, however; some opted for ambiguity. This is a second feature of the pre-World War I bilateral alliance structure: the unclear commitments of key actors, foremost Great Britain. Specifically, even though British political and military relations with France had grown considerably closer in the decade before the war, the British continued to insist that, as Sir Eyre Crowe wrote in 1911, “the entente is not an alliance.”⁵⁶ The reasoning behind this policy was understandable. Not only would an outright military alliance with France make Germany more “defensive,” but it would also embolden both French and Russian aggressiveness.⁵⁷ This policy, however, led the German side to believe that Britain might still be kept out of the war. As Van Evera writes, “The British government indeed failed to convey a clear threat to the Germans until after the crisis was out of control, and the Germans apparently were misled by this.”⁵⁸ There is much historical debate as to whether or not a more forceful stance by Great Britain would have averted war, but at the very least it might have strengthened voices in Germany advocating attempts to contain the conflict. States fearful of enabling their partners in reckless behavior—and thus being dragged into an unwanted conflagration—purposefully sent ambiguous signals that then increased the likelihood of miscalculation.

This complex mix of tight and loose commitments combined to generate a third and final property—namely, that while many security agreements and commitments were bilateral in form, they were multilateral in their consequences. The bilateral commitments that formed the alliance system—formal and informal—prior to World War I created a web of linkages that entwined multiple actors, thereby increasing the chances that a conflict involving one would metastasize into a conflict involving all. A political cartoon titled “Chain of Friendship,” attributed to the *Brooklyn Eagle* in July 1914, captures this dynamic well. It depicts a small, defiant character labeled “Serbia” standing ready to receive a fisticuff from the larger “Austria-Hungary,” who in turn is menaced with a blow from a character labeled “Russia,” himself threatened

54. Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, p. 351.

55. Joll, *The Origins of the First World War*, p. 65.

56. *Ibid.*, p. 63.

57. Van Evera, “The Cult of the Offensive and the Origins of the First World War,” pp. 100–101.

58. *Ibid.*, p. 101.

with a beating from the character “Germany,” while “France” and a portly character in a waistcoat (Great Britain) rush to join the fray.⁵⁹

Britain was bound by no commitment to the Serbian regime. Neither was France. France was, however, bound to Russia, and Russia saw itself as needing to defend Serbia. Thus British commitments to France (and also Belgium, which stood in the path of the German army) meant Britain and France would be drawn into what, absent such ties, might simply have been the “third Balkan war.” Local conflicts of minor significance could and finally did reverberate through the connections of commitment in the system to trigger a massive war.

A WORRISOME MIX NOW?

Similar dynamics may also now be taking root in contemporary East Asia. On the one hand, fear may push some regional actors to bind themselves more tightly to their partners. Japan, for instance, facing perceived growth in PRC strength and challenges, appears at the time of this writing set to accept greater commitments to militarily support the United States, even when this might pull it into peripheral conflicts. Already the stipulations in the Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Mutual Defense cooperation for “[c]ooperation in situations in areas surrounding Japan that will have an important influence on Japan’s peace and security” hint that Japan may be drawn into a Taiwan Strait or Korean Peninsula contingency in which the United States is a primary protagonist.⁶⁰

Furthermore, Japan now seems to be moving to reinterpret Article 9 of its constitution to allow collective defense, thus further expanding both the range of conflicts in which it may become involved and the types of military actions it can legally undertake.⁶¹ A recent review requested by Japanese Prime Minister Abe Shinzo not only concluded that the constitution should be reinterpreted to permit collective defense even when Japan was not directly attacked, but also argued that collective defense was justified when “not taking action could significantly undermine trust in the Japan-U.S. alliance.”⁶² Japan is now extending ties to other regional actors as well, supporting Southeast Asian maritime security enhancement efforts, notably for Vietnam,

59. To view the cartoon, see http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Chain_of_Friendship_cartoon.gif.

60. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, “The Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation,” n.d., <http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/n-america/us/security/guideline2.html>.

61. Shinzo Abe, “Press Conference by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe,” May 15, 2014, http://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/96_abe/statement/2014/0515kaiken.html.

62. Advisory Panel on Reconstruction of the Legal Basis for Security, “Report of the Advisory Panel on Reconstruction of the Legal Basis for Security,” May 15, 2014, http://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/singi/anzenhosyou2/dai7/houkoku_en.pdf.

the Philippines, and Indonesia as it loosens long-standing, self-imposed restrictions on exports of defense equipment.⁶³

Other states in the region have also voiced concerns about a drawdown of the U.S. presence in the Asia-Pacific and U.S. withdrawal from underwriting public goods such as the freedom of navigation, maritime security, and an open regional economic architecture.⁶⁴ The 2013 Australian Defence White Paper, for example, repeatedly points out that the “United States underpins strategic stability through its network of alliances and security partnerships, its significant force posture, and its political, diplomatic and other contributions to regional cooperation.”⁶⁵ Australia, unsurprisingly, has thus welcomed a greater U.S. military presence on its territory. The Philippines, too, has now moved to allow an “enhanced rotational” stationing of U.S. military assets.⁶⁶ Although such a presence may be viewed as further tethering the United States to the security needs of both actors, the street can run both ways, and either or both may also find themselves dragged into regional conflicts outside their range of interests.

On the other hand, concerns about entrapment encourage ambiguous commitments in today’s Asia-Pacific, especially by the United States. The U.S. government insists that it “does not take a position” on territorial disputes in the East and South China Seas so long as there is no resort to violence.⁶⁷ It emphasizes the nonuse of force, freedom of navigation and

63. “Abe Confirms Aid for Philippines Coast Guard,” *Japan Times*, October 10, 2014, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/10/10/national/abe-confirms-aid-for-philippine-coast-guard/#U3768xbSZ9Q>; “Japan Coast Guard Vessels and Equipment in High Demand in S.E. Asia, Africa,” *Asahi Shinbun*, September 30, 2014, http://ajw.asahi.com/article/asia/around_asia/AJ201309300001; “Japan Extends Patrol Ship Carrot to Vietnam, Plus ¥96 Billion Loan,” *Japan Times*, December 15, 2013, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2013/12/15/national/japan-extends-patrol-ship-carrot-to-vietnam-plus-¥96-billion-loan/#U373axbSZ9Q>; and Prime Minister’s Office, Government of Japan, “Press Conference by the Cabinet Chief Secretary,” April 1, 2014, http://japan.kantei.go.jp/tyoukanpress/201404/01_a.html.

64. See Hsien Loong Lee, “Speech by [Singapore] Prime Minister at Gala Dinner Hosted by U.S. Chamber of Commerce and U.S.-ASEAN Business Council,” Washington, D.C., April 3, 2013, http://www.pmo.gov.sg/content/pmosite/mediacentre/speechesninterviews/primeminister/2013/April/speech_by_prime_ministerleehsienloongatgaladinnerhostedbyuschamb.html#; and Noboru Yamaguchi, “Facilitating the U.S. Pivot: A Japanese Perspective,” *Global Asia*, Vol. 7, No. 4 (Winter 2012), pp. 42–45.

65. Government of Australia, *Defence White Paper 2013* (Canberra: Government of Australia, 2013), p. 26.

66. Embassy of the United States, Manila, Republic of the Philippines, “Signing of Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement,” April 28, 2014, <http://manila.usembassy.gov/edca-signing-april-2014.html>; and Department of Foreign Affairs, Republic of the Philippines, “Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) on the Proposed Increased Rotational Presence (IRP) Framework Agreement,” August 16, 2013, <https://www.dfa.gov.ph/index.php/2013-06-27-21-50-36/dfa-releases/554-frequently-asked-questions-faqs-on-the-proposed-increased-rotational-presence-irp-framework-agreement>.

67. Hillary Rodham Clinton, “Press Statement: The South China Sea” (Washington, D.C.: U.S. De-

safe passage, and opposition to unilateral changes to the status quo—even though U.S. allies such as Japan and the Philippines as well as newer American friends such as Vietnam are disputants. The United States likewise takes Taiwan's status as undetermined, although it "opposes unilateral attempts by either side [of the Taiwan Strait] to change the status quo."⁶⁸ Notably, current U.S. policy toward Taiwan grew out of a long-standing approach of "strategic ambiguity."⁶⁹

The United States has thus tried to walk a fine line—to both reassure and restrain partners while deterring challengers. Such efforts were on display most recently during U.S. President Barack Obama's visit to Japan. While on the one hand emphasizing that the U.S. "treaty commitment to Japan's security is absolute . . . including the Senkaku Islands," Obama went on to state, "There's no red line that's been drawn."⁷⁰

The intricacies of U.S. policy can confuse other actors, however. U.S. partners may believe they have U.S. support—or at the least leeway—to press their claims more robustly. Efforts by Taiwan's Chen Shui-bian administration to frame cross-strait ties as "one country on each side [of the Taiwan Strait]" and the Benigno Aquino administration's emphasis on the Philippines' South China Sea claims are arguably examples of such behavior. Alternately, the PRC may understand the United States' position as allowing an assertion of claims using measures just short of force. PRC perceptions of a limited U.S. commitment to Japan, particularly over disputed maritime claims and possibly even Taiwan, can encourage probing by paramilitary and even military forces that may prove escalatory. In short, such balancing acts are difficult to maintain and can invite dangerous misconceptions, by friends and rivals alike.

Other actors in Asia also demonstrate a tendency toward ambiguity. Members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) generally indicate that they do not want to choose between the United States and China.⁷¹

partment of State, July 22, 2011), <http://www.state.gov/secretary/20092013clinton/rm/2011/07/168989.htm>; and Hilary Rodham Clinton, "Remarks with Japanese Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida after Their Meeting" (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of State, January 18, 2013), <http://www.state.gov/secretary/20092013clinton/rm/2013/01/203050.htm>.

68. Kurt M. Campbell, testimony before the House Foreign Affairs Committee, "Why Taiwan Matters, Part II," 112th Cong., 1st sess., October 4, 2011, <http://www.state.gov/p/eap/rls/rm/2011/10/174980.htm?goMobile=0>.

69. Mira Rapp-Hooper, "'Strength' or Strategy in the Taiwan Strait," *National Interest*, October 26, 2013, <http://nationalinterest.org/commentary/strength-or-strategy-the-taiwan-strait-9310>.

70. Office of the Press Secretary, White House, "Joint Press Conference with President Obama and Prime Minister Abe of Japan," April 24, 2014, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/04/24/joint-press-conference-president-obama-and-prime-minister-abe-japan>.

71. Amitav Acharya, "ASEAN's Dilemma: Courting Washington without Hurting Beijing," *Asia Pacific Bulletin*, No. 133 (Honolulu: East-West Center, October 18, 2011).

These include Singapore, which hosts U.S. forces on rotational deployment, trains its own troops in the United States, and has a strategic partnership with Washington, as well as Vietnam, which is exploring ways to enhance security ties with America.⁷² Articulating similar hopes are Thailand, a long-standing U.S. ally, as well as Malaysia and Indonesia, which are also trying to improve defense cooperation with the United States.⁷³

Ambivalence over security commitments among regional actors in Asia reflects simultaneous desires to benefit from increasing economic integration with China as well as to address apprehensions about China's long-term trajectory as a major power. Such "hedging" may inadvertently encourage the PRC and the United States to question the long-term reliability of partnerships with Southeast Asia, and can feed the impression that the region is a battleground for influence. Tokyo's apparent inability to follow through with claims

72. Wendell Minnick, "Singapore, China Plan Security Cooperation," *Defense News*, January 7, 2008, <http://minnickarticles.blogspot.sg/2009/09/singapore-china-plan-security.html>; Ian Storey, "China's Bilateral Defense Diplomacy in Southeast Asia," *Asian Security*, Vol. 8, No. 3 (October 2012), pp. 287–310; Carl Thayer, "Vietnam Gradually Warms Up to U.S. Military," *Diplomat*, November 6, 2013, <http://thediplomat.com/2013/11/vietnam-gradually-warms-up-to-us-military/>; "China, Vietnam Boost Security Cooperation," *Voice of Vietnam*, November 15, 2013, <http://english.vov.vn/Politics/Diplomacy/China-Vietnam-boost-security-cooperation/267187.vov>; Barack Obama and Truong Tan Sang, "Joint Statement by President Barack Obama of the United States of America and President Truong Tan Sang of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam" (Washington, D.C.: White House, July 25, 2013), <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/07/25/joint-statement-president-barack-obama-united-states-america-and-preside>; U.S. Department of State, "Joint Statement of the United States–Singapore Strategic Partners Dialogue," January 18, 2012, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2012/01/181488.htm>; U.S. Department of State, "Strategic Framework Agreement between the United States of America and the Republic of Singapore for a Closer Cooperation Partnership in Defense and Security," July 12, 2005, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/95360.pdf>; and "Zhongguo-Xinjiapo di sici fangwu zhengce duihua zai Xinjiapo juxing" [Fourth China-Singapore defense policy dialogue held in Singapore], Xinhua, September 11, 2012, http://news.xinhuanet.com/world/2012-09/11/c_113042808.htm.

73. Storey, "China's Bilateral Defense Diplomacy in Southeast Asia"; U.S. Department of Defense, "2012 Joint Vision Statement for the Thai-U.S. Defense Alliance," November 15, 2012, <http://www.defense.gov/releases/release.aspx?releaseid=15685>; Carl Thayer, "China's New Regional Security Treaty with ASEAN," *RP Defense*, October 16, 2013, <http://rpdefense.over-blog.com/2013/10/china-s-new-regional-security-treaty-with-asean.html>; "KL-Beijing Pererat Kerjasama Strategik Komprehensif" [KL and Beijing strengthen comprehensive strategic cooperation], *Utusan Melayu*, October 4, 2013, http://www.utusan.com.my/utusan/Dalam_Negeri/20131005/dn_04/KL-Beijing-pererat-kerjasama-strategik-komprehensif; "Malaysia Boosts Its Regional Defense Cooperation," UPI, November 1, 2013, http://www.upi.com/Top_News/Special/2013/11/01/Malaysia-boosts-its-regional-defense-cooperation/UPI-13751383330035/; Office of the Spokesperson, U.S. Department of State, "United States–Indonesia Comprehensive Partnership," October 8, 2013, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2013/10/215196.htm>; Andrew J. Shapiro, "U.S.-Malaysia Partnership" (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of State, February 15, 2012), <http://www.state.gov/t/pm/rls/rm/184846.htm>; "Xi's Indonesia Visit Lifts Bilateral Ties, Charts Future Cooperation," Xinhua, October 3, 2013, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2013-10/03/c_132770995.htm; and Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China, "Zhong Yinni Quanmian Zhanlue Huoban Guanxi Weilai Guihua" [Future plans for China-Indonesia comprehensive strategic partnership], October 4, 2013, Jakarta, Indonesia, http://www.gov.cn/ldhd/2013-10/04/content_2500331.htm.

for a more robust regional policy similarly raises doubts about Japan's regional role, especially in light of prolonged slow economic growth and the long-term environmental challenges posed by the Fukushima nuclear disaster.⁷⁴ Alternatively, although China has fewer commitments, it does have an increasingly uncertain security relationship with North Korea capable of provoking confusion. Ambiguity about how China might respond to hostilities on the Korean Peninsula adds to the likelihood of miscalculation.⁷⁵

This complex, disparate mix of bilateral security relationships in East Asia can undermine regional stability even if it does not presage systemic war. As the complexity of security entanglements increases, so too do the possibilities of miscalculation and the chances that minor clashes will envelop multiple actors. Crises that result are likely to affect and involve a significant number of regional actors not just because of their ties to a larger web of security arrangements, but also because any resulting instability can disrupt regional communications and trade. The complex mesh of interlocking commitments and partnerships that is the U.S.-centered hub-and-spokes system creates interconnectedness without full coordination.

The greater the number of commitments the United States assumes, the higher the number of conceivable flash points capable of drawing both it and its partners into a larger confrontation. Moreover, the multiplication of commitments also raises the stakes: the United States may see itself as having to take a firm stance in a conflict scenario on a matter of peripheral interest out of concern for its reputation among allies, friends, and adversaries. In short, the complicated jumble of security entanglements in the Asia-Pacific at present increases the likelihood that multiple actors will be pulled into a conflict not of their making. Although war is not predetermined, these dynamics do not augur well for stability.

Lesson #2: Beware of Nationalism

A second cautionary lesson derives from the domestic political dynamics of certain states involved in World War I, most prominently Imperial Germany. In

74. Shinzo Abe, "Address by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, at the Sixty-Eighth Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations," United Nations Headquarters, New York, New York, Thursday, September 26, 2013, http://www.kantei.go.jp/foreign/96_abe/statement/201309/26generaldebate_e.html; and Sourabh Gupta, "Japan-U.S. Alliance: Persistent Inclinations of a Cautious Ally," *East Asia Forum*, November 7, 2013, <http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2012/11/07/japan-us-alliance-persistent-inclinations-of-a-cautious-ally/>.

75. Bonnie S. Glaser and Scott Snyder, "Responding to Change on the Korean Peninsula: Impediments to U.S.-South Korea-China Coordination" (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, May 2010), pp. 13–19.

such states, nationalist constituencies offered a bulwark against demands for greater political and social reform. The support of such constituents, however, came at the price of precious flexibility on the international stage.

A DOUBLE-EDGED SWORD

Imperial Germany faced strong domestic political pressures linked to the dislocations and tensions generated by industrialization and the increasing divergence of socioeconomic interests among political groups. Such pressures manifested in the discontent of government, military, and other conservative elites with the growing presence of Social Democratic representatives in the Reichstag.⁷⁶ As a consequence, the former sought support against the erosion of their power by courting and even cultivating nationalist forces within the domain of public opinion.

The nationalist forces, generally speaking, sought a strong state and were anti-democratic and militaristic. They were thus the natural—or in some cases manufactured—allies for oligarchic regimes seeking to limit democratic and socialist advances. To be clear, the nationalist groups active in pre-World War I Germany were not uniform. Some emerged spontaneously to advocate for particular policies, such as the expansion of empire; others emerged with the help of elite or military actors. Regardless, they formed a highly vocal constituency within the German public that supplied a reservoir of ready support for costly armaments programs and strengthened the hand of the government and other elite interests against social forces demanding radical reforms.⁷⁷ The German Navy League, for example, was both official and populist in its origins, and was not only a source of advocacy for increased naval spending; it was also monarchist and antisocialist.⁷⁸

These same nationalists also sought a muscular foreign policy, were harshly critical of compromise, and were quick to advocate the use of force. Correspondingly, their strident advocacy for the might and prestige of the nation was not always in tune with the policies of the regime, and the German government faced outrage from their nationalist constituents when perceived as acting weak or capitulating on the international stage. As Kennedy writes of

76. Michael R. Gordon, "Domestic Conflict and the Origins of the First World War: The British and German Cases," *Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 46, No. 2 (June 1974), pp. 198–199; and Wolfgang J. Mommsen, "Domestic Factors in German Foreign Policy before 1914," *Central European History*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (March 1973), pp. 3–43.

77. Jack Snyder, *Myths of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambition* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1991), pp. 103–105.

78. Geoff Eley, "Reshaping the Right: Radical Nationalism and the German Navy League, 1898–1908," *Historical Journal*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (June 1978), pp. 327–354; and Joll, *The Origins of the First World War*, p. 134.

the nationalists at the time, “[T]he impulse to their activities derived from a firm belief in the idea of the strong, ordered nation-state, and considerations about . . . preserving the ‘face’ of the establishment came in a poor second.”⁷⁹

Precisely because conservative, nationalist elements in the public constituted an important source of support, government actors were sensitive to their criticisms and dissatisfactions. As Clark notes of the states involved in World War I, “In more authoritarian regimes, public support was an indispensable ersatz for democratic legitimacy.”⁸⁰ Compounding this situation, nationalist attacks were a form of internal critique—far from challenging the professed values of the regime, they took leaders to task for not living up to national ideals.

The strong cries of nationalist actors could thus serve as a limiting force on the ability of their governments to pursue pragmatic foreign policies, restricting the space for concessions and providing incentives for prestige politics. One can observe this dynamic in Chancellor Theobald Bethmann Hollweg’s explanation of the German position at the time of the July crisis: “The earlier errors: simultaneously Turkish policy against Russia, Morocco against France, the navy against England—challenge everybody, put yourself in everybody’s path, and actually weaken no one in this fashion. Reason: aimlessness, need for little prestige successes, and solicitude for every current of public opinion.”⁸¹ It would be wrong, however, to think of nationalist public opinion as something existing independent of the German government, or as Clark notes, “like a fog pressing on the window panes of ministerial offices.”⁸²

The government itself was in part responsible for the cultivation of such nationalist constituencies not only through patronage of nationalist groups and supportive press interventions, but also through the more basic means of popular education and even youth leagues.⁸³ Kennedy writes, “[T]he radical nationalists were no longer voices in the wilderness and their ideas were common currency among most of the anti-socialist forces. . . . [I]t made the execution of any moderate diplomacy very difficult; and the excessive hopes and demands of the chauvinists threatened, when disappointed by diplomatic failures, to rebound at the very sorcerer’s apprentices which helped instigate these feeling in the first place.”⁸⁴

79. Kennedy, *The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism, 1860–1914*, p. 378.

80. Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, p. 227.

81. Kurt Reizler, diary entry, quoted in Fritz Stern, “Bethmann Hollweg and the War: The Limits of Responsibility,” in Leonard Krieger and Fritz Stern, eds., *The Responsibility of Power: Historical Essays in Honor of Hajo Holborn* (London: Macmillan, 1968), p. 265.

82. Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, p. 236.

83. Joll, *The Origins of the First World War*, pp. 223–224.

84. Kennedy, *The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism, 1860–1914*, p. 385.

Imperial Germany was not alone in being subject to the influences of domestic nationalism. Tsarist Russia arguably was in a much more precarious position in the period prior to World War I, having in 1905 survived open revolt. While elite conservative supporters of the regime actually counseled caution against the possible strains of foreign conflict, high tsarist officials feared the outrage of nationalist constituents, particularly pan-Slavic nationalists.⁸⁵ At the time of the July crisis, the tsar faced warnings from his ministers that “Russia would never forgive the sovereign” should he back down, and “unless he yielded to popular demands and unsheathed the sword on Serbia’s behalf, [he] would run the risk of revolution and perhaps loss of his throne.”⁸⁶

The point here is not to argue for *Primat der Innenpolitik* (the primacy of domestic politics), as if domestic, nationalist forces alone propelled the German or Russian government off the precipice.⁸⁷ To do so would be to ignore both the structural pressures existing at the time and the ways in which the elites were themselves involved in generating the nationalist dynamics they confronted. Nationalist actors were neither fully puppet masters nor puppets. Rather, a more fruitful way of looking at the role of nationalist public opinion is as part of a two-level game. Nationalist constituents served to limit the set of possible solutions available to leaders on the international stage, thus restricting their ability to pursue the more flexible policies and compromises that could have helped to avert conflict.⁸⁸

Additionally, the presence of nationalist pressure groups increased the stakes and payoffs of prestige politics and even—as a result of the bellicose rhetorical salvos launched by their mouthpieces in the press—helped to worsen popular relations between states. The aggressive nationalist constituencies in Imperial Germany and tsarist Russia did not by themselves cause World War I. They did, however, contribute to the tensions that preceded the Great War by tilting the scales of domestic political incentives in the direction of confrontation.

85. Samuel R. Williamson Jr. and Ernest R. May, “An Identity of Opinion: Historians and July 1914,” *Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 79, No. 2 (June 2007), p. 369.

86. S.D. Sazonov, *Vospominaniya* [Recollections] (Paris and Berlin, 1927), p. 247, as translated and cited in I.V. Bestuzhev, “Russian Foreign Policy February–June 1914,” *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 1, No. 93 (1966), p. 104. See also L.L. Farrar Jr., “The Primacy of Foreign Policy: An Evaluation of the Role of Public Opinion during the July Crisis 1914,” *International Interactions*, Vol. 7, No. 4 (1981), p. 403.

87. For discussions of this, see Farrar, “The Primacy of Foreign Policy”; Jack S. Levy, “Domestic Politics and War,” in Robert I. Rotberg and Theodore K. Rabb, eds., *The Origin and Prevention of Major Wars* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 79–100; and Fareed Zakaria, “Realism and Domestic Politics: A Review Essay,” *International Security*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (Summer 1992), pp. 177–198.

88. Robert D. Putnam, “Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games,” *International Organization*, Vol. 42, No. 3 (Summer 1988), pp. 427–460.

What emerges, therefore, is a lesson concerning the relationship of insecure regimes to their nationalist constituencies. Nationalist forces offer a ready means to countermand progressive social actors, and therefore present a natural constituency for officials and elites seeking to fortify their position against radical reforms, especially when reformers can be framed as placing the individual above the nation. As Heinrich Class, chairman of the Pan-German League, stated, "We wanted nothing to do with tolerance if it sheltered the enemies of the Volk and the state. Humanity in the sense of that liberal idea we spurned, for our Volk was bound to come off worse."⁸⁹ The alliance between a regime and its nationalist citizens is not a seamless one, for a functioning foreign policy requires concessions that from a nationalist perspective can verge on traitorous. The more a regime cultivates or leans on its nationalist constituency to shield it against domestic compromise, the less room it has for foreign compromise for fear of outraging the same.

NATIONALISM RENEWED?

Shifting focus to East Asia, the lesson above appears to have important implications for the PRC in particular. To be clear, there are numerous differences between Imperial Germany and the PRC. For one, the former had a meaningfully competitive elected body—the Reichstag—whose support was needed, for instance, for taxation and budgetary issues. It also permitted the growth of vibrant, vocal, diverse political associations and a less strictly censored press and sphere of public debate. The PRC, in contrast, is arguably much less tolerant of organized political activity, provides fewer opportunities for oppositional political participation, and exercises much tighter control over the press and public expression in general. That said, the point here is not to draw analogies, claiming that the PRC is reprising the role of Imperial Germany, but rather to draw lessons for similar dynamics that may also be at work in the present.

The PRC government has sought to cement domestic support by leaning on nationalism, and this indeed presents the risks of a kindred dynamic taking hold. In the aftermath of the domestic political upheaval in 1989, culminating most famously in the violent clearing of Tiananmen Square in June of that year, the PRC government instituted a patriotic education campaign to shore up loyalty.⁹⁰ This campaign emphasized past humiliations at the hands of foreign

89. Heinrich Class, *Wider den Strom* [Against the current] (Leipzig, Germany: K.F. Koehler, 1932), p. 17, quoted in Eley, "Reshaping the Right: Radical Nationalism and the German Navy League, 1898–1908," p. 348.

90. William A. Callahan, *China: The Pessimist Nation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 32–38; and Zheng Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation: Historical Memory in Chinese Politics and Foreign Relations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), pp. 95–117.

powers and aimed to focus attention on foreign threats as opposed to domestic troubles. As explained by one official source, it aspired to “end the turmoil and counterrevolutionary tendencies among primary and secondary students.”⁹¹ Patriotic education was combined with large celebrations in the 1990s of patriotic anniversaries, including the end of World War II. The PRC government cultivated a heightened nationalist consciousness, in no small part based on a narrative of humiliation and suffering at the hands of foreign actors, with the expectation this would translate into allegiance to the regime and a rejection of “Western” political reforms. Although nationalist sentiment in the PRC had deep historic roots prior to this, in the 1990s it—together with taking credit for domestic stability and economic growth—came to assume an even more important role in Chinese Communist Party’s narrative of regime legitimacy.⁹²

Now, two decades onward, these efforts have borne fruit and there exists a vocal nationalist constituency within the PRC. Expression of nationalist sentiments has also proliferated beyond official education and propaganda. For one, the commercialization of the press, bringing with it the profit incentive, has encouraged newspapers to engage in sensationalist nationalist reporting and presses to crank out national tracts, particularly concerning Japan, quite simply because nationalism is a safe topic that sells.⁹³ At the same, the spread of the internet has provided a new forum for spontaneous and aggressive nationalist discourse. This new “cyber-nationalism,” as Shih-Ding Liu argues, “cannot simply be dismissed as top-down government manipulation or party propaganda. . . . Rather, the Chinese cyber-nationalists are keen to find their way to engage in nationalist politics and claim for the nation a vision that is not necessarily in line with the official discourse.”⁹⁴ While PRC authorities exercise censorship of both the traditional press and online media, the latter presents a forum that much more easily escapes total control.⁹⁵

Significantly, PRC authorities also turn to both the traditional press and online media as indicators of public opinion.⁹⁶ These indicators are heavily bi-

91. He Dongchang, “Xu” [preface], in National Education Committee, Elementary Education Section, ed., *Wuwan Guochi* [Never forget national humiliation] (Tianjin, China: Xinlei Chubanshe, 1991), p. 1, translated and quoted in Callahan, *China*, p. 37.

92. Yinan He, *The Search for Reconciliation: Sino-Japanese and German-Polish Relations since World War II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 234–288; and Manjari Miller, *Wronged by Empire: Post-Imperial Ideology and Foreign Policy in India and China* (Redwood City, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2013), pp. 106–129.

93. Susan L. Shirk, “Changing Media, Changing Foreign Policy,” in Shirk, ed., *Changing Media, Changing China* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 225–226.

94. Shih-Ding Liu, “China’s Popular Nationalism on the Internet. Report on the 2005 Anti-Japan Network Struggles,” *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (March 2006), p. 148.

95. Xiao Gang, “The Rise of Online Opinion and Its Political Impact,” in Shirk, *Changing Media, Changing China*, pp. 202–224.

96. Shirk, “Changing Media, Changing Foreign Policy,” p. 239.

ased, however. Not only do they reflect official opinion control, but the latter also tends to be weighted toward extreme actors willing to risk the consequences of expressing their opinions.⁹⁷ The public opinion that emerges is thus one generated by the predominance of audible voices, not necessarily the quantified spread of opinion. As James Reilly has noted, public opinion in China is not measured by opinion polling. Rather it “often operates as a set of collective notions that enter the public arena through such venues as popular media and the internet.”⁹⁸ The result is the image of a highly nationalist public that has assumed an authoritative dominance, especially on issues concerning Japan.

One could posit that the PRC government, given its tools for managing discourse in the public sphere and freedom from institutionalized mechanisms of domestic accountability, should still remain relatively free to pursue a pragmatic foreign policy as necessary. Nationalist public opinion, regardless of how it is perceived, should therefore be of peripheral importance. Historically, this would appear to be the case, as evidenced, for example, by China’s behavior in its territorial disputes with Japan in the 1990s.⁹⁹ Some scholars, however, have raised questions as to whether this presumption still holds. Thomas Christensen, for instance, writes, “[D]omestic voices calling for a more muscular Chinese foreign policy have created a heated political environment. . . . [G]one are the days when Chinese elites could ignore these voices.”¹⁰⁰ The reason, Christensen argues, is that “the regime seems more nervous about maintaining long-term legitimacy and social stability than at any time since the period just after the 1989 Tiananmen massacre.”¹⁰¹

In fact, Sino-Japanese efforts in 2008 to implement cooperative agreements concerning territorial issues faltered because of concerns about nationalist pressure.¹⁰² Robert Ross argues that the influence of domestic nationalist voices further grew in 2009 and 2010 as a consequence of increased regime insecurity owing to economic stresses and the expansion of internet-based communication beyond government control.¹⁰³ He claims that this resulting sensitivity to nationalist opinion was manifest in the strident PRC responses to U.S. military exercises with South Korea following North Korea’s sinking of a

97. Susan L. Shirk, *China: Fragile Superpower* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 102.

98. James Reilly, *Strong Society, Smart State: The Rise of Public Opinion in China’s Japan Policy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), p. 178.

99. Phillip C. Saunders and Ericka Strecker Downes, “Legitimacy and the Limits of Nationalism: China and the Diaoyu Islands,” *International Security*, Vol. 23, No. 3 (Winter 1998/99), pp. 114–146.

100. Thomas J. Christensen, “Advantages of an Assertive China—Responding to Beijing’s Abrasive Diplomacy,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 90, No. 2 (March/April 2011), p. 60.

101. *Ibid.*

102. Shirk, “Changing Media, Changing Foreign Policy,” pp. 244–245.

103. Ross, “The Domestic Sources of China’s ‘Assertive Diplomacy,’ 2009–2010.”

South Korean navy vessel, and Japan's arrest of a Chinese fisherman who used his trawler to ram Japanese Coast Guard ships in a disputed area of the East China Sea. Ominously, Ross sees these effects as representing not an aberration, but a solidifying trend.

If correct, these more recent analyses would suggest that the PRC regime may be subject to a dynamic familiar from the prehistory of World War I.¹⁰⁴ In seeking to offset regime insecurity and calls for political reform, it risks becoming even more beholden to its nationalist constituency, a constituency that the regime itself helped to cultivate. The lesson of that earlier era is that looking to nationalist forces to fortify a regime imposes a Faustian bargain with pernicious foreign policy consequences. Flexibility, pragmatism, and compromise are the bane of nationalist discourse. Yet, these are the elements necessary for any state not wishing to set itself at odds—even invite open conflict—with its international interlocutors. That nationalism in China can fuel parallel sentiments elsewhere in the region, such as in Japan, the Philippines, and Vietnam, which can in turn further fan China's nationalist impulses, further compounds matters.

Lesson #3: Beware of Repeated Crises

While the outbreak of World War I caught many within Europe by surprise, it was not entirely a bolt from the blue. World War I came in the wake of a series of crises that had set the stage for its appearance: the first and second Moroccan crises of 1905–06 and 1911, the Bosnian crisis of 1908–09, the Balkan wars in 1912 and 1913, as well as the domestic turmoil in Russia following Russia's defeat in the 1904–05 Russo-Japanese War.¹⁰⁵ The outbreak of World War I cannot be traced back to any one crisis in the years prior to 1914; rather it is the cumulative and reinforcing consequences of multiple crises to which scholars should look. These repeated crises had three important and interrelated types of effects on both the states involved and the European system more broadly, effects that with each iteration made war more likely.

REPEATED CRISES, GROWING DANGERS

The first effect was the emergence of an array of increasing and overlapping antagonisms, as each crisis further aggrieved actors without resolving under-

104. Indeed, Ross himself notes the similarities between nationalist influences on Chinese foreign policy and those of Wilhelmine Germany. See *ibid.*, p. 87.

105. David Stevenson, "Militarization and Diplomacy in Europe before 1914," *International Security*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (Summer 1997), pp. 125–161.

lying tensions. The second Moroccan crisis—as Germany yet again sought to assert its influence in North African affairs—came even closer to war than the first, as Kiesling writes, not “because Morocco had become more valuable or French leaders more warlike . . . [but] because the repetition of the German assault on French dignity constituted an additional insult in itself.”¹⁰⁶ Similarly, the repeated Balkan crises left Russia, Austria-Hungary, and Serbia seething at perceived offenses. The Dual Monarchy’s annexation of Bosnia-Hungary in 1907 outraged Russia and Serbia, while Serbian gains in the Balkan wars created, according to the German ambassador in Vienna at the time, “a feeling of shame, of smothered rage, the feeling of having been led by the nose by Russia and her friends.”¹⁰⁷ In this environment, increasing antipathy fueled mistrust and hypersensitivity, and minor events—such as the appointment of a German to reform the Ottoman army (the Liman affair)¹⁰⁸ or the treatment of German deserters of French Foreign Legion (the Casablanca incident)¹⁰⁹—led to belligerent threats. As grievances accumulated, the system grew more volatile.

A second, related, effect was an increasing hardening of positions. The crises generated winners and losers, and regardless into which camp a state fell, the lesson was the same: the need for greater firmness. The Bosnian crisis, which emerged when Austria-Hungary annexed the formerly Ottoman provinces of Bosnia-Herzegovina, epitomizes this dynamic. Austria-Hungary was immediately opposed by Russia and Serbia, and there were intimations of war as all sides mobilized their troops. Germany, in turn, threw its weight behind its southern ally, threatening to come to its aid, and Russia and Serbia backed down. Austria-Hungary and Germany took the lesson that the threat of force could cow Russia into retreat. As the Austrian foreign minister, Alois Aehrenthal, noted, “[A] text-book (*Schulbeispiel*) example of how success is only certain if the strength (*Kraft*) is there to get one’s way.”¹¹⁰ For Russia, on the other hand, “it was a humiliation, the like of which Russia must never

106. Kiesling, “France,” p. 241.

107. L.C.F. Turner, *Origins of the First World War* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1970), p. 50.

108. Sean McMeekin, *The Russian Origins of the First World War* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2011), pp. 30–33.

109. Michael E. Nolan, *The Inverted Mirror: Mythologizing the Enemy in France and Germany, 1898–1914* (Oxford: Berghahn, 2005), pp. 14–15. See also Margaret MacMillan, *The War That Ended Peace* (London: Profile, 2013), p. 400.

110. Aehrenthal to Wekerle, March 31, 1909, Politisches Archiv XII/357, Haus-, Hof-, und Staatsarchiv, Vienna, Austria, as quoted in F.R. Bridge, *The Hapsburg Monarchy among the Great Powers, 1815–1918* (Oxford: Berg, 1990), p. 295. See also MacMillan, *The War That Ended Peace*, p. 407.

again be made to endure."¹¹¹ Russia consequently sought to strengthen its military to ensure that would be the case.

Other crises had similar results. The two Moroccan crises were widely viewed as German defeats, and when faced with the July crisis of 1914 the kaiser reportedly emphasized, "This time I shall not given in."¹¹² France, for its part, had responded to the crises in Morocco by augmenting its military capabilities and increasing those of its ally, Russia. Indeed, such crises often played a crucial role in overcoming domestic opposition to bills mandating military increases in countries such as Germany and France.¹¹³ In short, repeated crises reinforced a belief in the need to stand strong next time around, fueling the drive to build military strength and greatly limiting the room for compromise without loss of face.

Concurrently, a seemingly contradictory third effect emerged, namely, a degree of complacency and confidence in the ability of the European powers to avoid an all-out war.¹¹⁴ Like the fable of the boy who cried wolf, the repeated threats of war in the years prior to its actual outbreak helped numb European actors to the risks they faced. As the French politician Jean Jaurès stated, "Europe has been afflicted by so many crises for so many years, it has been put dangerously to the test so many times without war breaking out that it has almost ceased to believe in the threat."¹¹⁵ Previous crises had been contained in spite of rattling sabers, and many saw no reason why the troubles between Austria-Hungary and Serbia should not also follow such a pattern.

Indeed, the initial British response to the Dual Monarchy's ultimatum was to invite Italy, Germany, and France to arrange a joint meeting "in order to endeavor to find an issue to prevent complications."¹¹⁶ That British policymakers such as Sir Edward Grey, the foreign secretary, should believe such a solution possible is quite comprehensible: such cooperation had limited the second Balkan war to the Balkans. As Lynn-Jones observes, "Grey's hopes for a diplo-

111. Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, p. 259.

112. Fritz Fischer, *War of Illusions: German Policies from 1911 to 1914* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1975), p. 478. See also Clark, *The Sleepwalkers*, p. 522; and MacMillan, *The War That Ended Peace*, p. 529.

113. David Stevenson, *Armaments and the Coming of War: Europe, 1904–1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 198–225; and John F.V. Krieger, *France and the Origins of the First World War* (London: Macmillan, 1983), pp. 74–81.

114. Holger H. Herwig, *The First World War: Germany and Austria, 1914–1918* (London: Arnold, 1997), p. 7.

115. Jean Jaurès, *Oeuvres de Jean Jaurès* [Works of Jean Jaurès], Vol. 5 (Paris: Rieder, 1933), p. 233, as quoted in Georges Haupt, *Socialism and the Great War: The Collapse of the Second International* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 108. See also Margaret MacMillan, "1914 and 2014: Should We Be Worried?" *International Affairs*, Vol. 90, No. 1 (January 2014), p. 68.

116. Joll, *The Origins of the First World War*, p. 17.

matic solution . . . reflected his understanding of Anglo-German cooperation in previous Balkan crises."¹¹⁷ Faith that the conflict could once again be localized, if not prevented, meant that key actors, such as Britain, did not realize the urgency of the situation until it was too late.

AND THE NEW NORMAL?

Unresolved disputes and repeated friction in today's Asia-Pacific echo dynamics in pre-Great War Europe. There is growing regional attention to the PRC's willingness to use more expansive legal and administrative instruments as well as its increasingly robust capabilities to press disputed maritime claims. PRC ships and aircraft appear to be challenging effective Japanese administration of the Diaoyutai/Senkakus, and PRC forces have moved to occupy features in the South China Sea also claimed by the Philippines.¹¹⁸ Since 2009, there has been greater frequency of high-profile activities by PRC official and military ships as well as aircraft that at times has resulted in stand-offs with vessels from Japan, the Philippines, the United States, and Vietnam.¹¹⁹ May 2014 even saw a series of stand-offs and intentional collisions among Vietnamese and PRC law enforcement vessels following the Chinese positioning of an oil rig near the Paracel Islands off Vietnam's coast, which the PRC controls and Vietnam claims.¹²⁰

In November 2013, the PRC also established an air defense identification zone (ADIZ) covering the Diaoyutai/Senkakus, and apparently went beyond common practice by requiring advance notification from all "aircraft flying in"

117. Lynn-Jones, "Détente and Deterrence," p. 183.

118. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, People's Republic of China, "2013 nian 1 yue 28 ri Waijiaobu Fayanren Hong Lei zhuchi lixing jizhehui" [Scheduled press conference with Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Hong Lei, January 28, 2013], http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_chn/fyrbt_602243/t1008571.shtml; Department of Foreign Affairs, Government of the Republic of the Philippines, "Philippine Position on the Bajo de Masinloc (Scarborough Shoal) and the Waters around Its Vicinity," *Official Gazette*, April 18, 2012, <http://www.gov.ph/2012/04/18/philippine-position-on-bajo-de-masinloc-and-the-waters-within-its-vicinity/>; and Meng Ke, "Toushi Zhongguo: Zhongguo jinbi Diaoyudao chuhu Riben yiliao" [China perspective: Chinese pressure on Diaoyudao (Senkaku) not expected by Japan], BBC Chinese, December 18, 2013, http://www.bbc.co.uk/zhongwen/simp/china_watch/2013/12/131217_china_watch_hitoshi_tanaka.shtml.

119. Johnston, "How New and Assertive Is China's New Assertiveness?" pp. 17–32; M. Taylor Fravel, "Drawing Lines in the Water," *Diplomat*, September 14, 2012, <http://thedi diplomat.com/china-power/drawing-lines-in-the-water/>; and M. Taylor Fravel, "Maritime Security in the South China Sea and the Competition over Maritime Rights," in Michael A. McDevitt, ed., *The Long Littoral Project: The South China Sea* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Naval Analysis, 2013), pp. 34–50.

120. "China Urges Vietnam to End Its Disruptive Activities," CCTV.com (English ed.), May 9, 2014, <http://english.cntv.cn/2014/05/09/VIDE1399589881664917.shtml>; and Viet Nam Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Viet Nam Demands China Withdraw from Territorial Waters," May 6, 2014, <http://www.mofa.gov.vn/en/nr040807104143/nr111027144142/ns140508010729>.

the ADIZ.¹²¹ (Existing regulations generally ask for identification only from aircraft heading toward sovereign airspace through an ADIZ.)¹²² In response, the United States, Japan, and South Korea challenged these declarations through official statements and military flights in the ADIZ.¹²³ Furthermore, in early December 2013 Hainan Province announced a fisheries regulation that demanded non-Chinese fishing vessels obtain approval to operate in PRC-claimed areas of the South China Sea.¹²⁴ These actions come on top of the recurring frictions over North Korean nuclear and weapons programs and periodic tensions over relations across the Taiwan Strait.

As these contentious issues and stress points in the Asia-Pacific come to overlap and interconnect, they increasingly draw the interest and attention of more actors in the region, including those originally less involved. Concerns about PRC assertiveness over the Diaoyutai/Senkakus are fueling antagonisms and driving Japan and the United States to augment the seaborne capabilities of the Philippines and Vietnam, both of which have competing maritime claims with the PRC.¹²⁵ U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Daniel Russel testified to Congress that the United States objects to the PRC's "unilateral attempts to change the status quo" in both the East and South China Seas, including Beijing's ADIZ declaration and nine-dashed line claim.¹²⁶ U.S. Chief of Naval Operations

121. Ministry of National Defense, People's Republic of China, "Announcement of the Aircraft Identification Rules for the East China Sea Air Defense Identification Zone of the PRC," November 23, 2013, http://eng.mod.gov.cn/Press/2013-11/23/content_4476143.htm.

122. Peter A. Dutton, "Caelum Liberam: Air Defense Identification Zones outside Sovereign Airspace," *American Journal of International Law*, Vol. 103, No. 4 (October 2009), pp. 691-709.

123. Kristine Kwok, "Japan and South Korea Hold Joint Exercise in China's Air Defence Zone," *South China Morning Post*, December 12, 2014, <http://www.scmp.com/news/china/article/1379044/japan-and-south-korea-hold-joint-sea-drill-china-air-defence-zone?page=all>; and Madison Park, "Why China's New Air Zone Incensed Japan, U.S.," CNN, November 27, 2013, <http://edition.cnn.com/2013/11/25/world/asia/china-japan-island-explainer/index.html>.

124. "Hainan: Waiguoren, Waiguo yuchuan jinru guanxia shuiyu zuoye xu jing pizhun" [Hainan: Foreigners, foreign fishing vessels entering and operating in jurisdiction zone require approval], Xinhua, December 1, 2013, http://news.xinhuanet.com/local/2013-12/01/c_118367109.htm.

125. Lesley Wroughton, "U.S. Offers Help to Southeast Asia, Most to Vietnam, to Patrol Seas," Reuters, December 16, 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/12/16/us-vietnam-usa-kerry-maritime-idUSBRE9BF07M20131216>.

126. Daniel R. Russel, "America's Future in Asia: From Rebalancing to Managing Sovereignty Disputes," testimony before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific, 113th Cong., 2nd sess., February 5, 2014, <http://www.state.gov/p/eap/rls/rm/2014/02/221293.htm>. The Nine Dashed Lines are a series of lines on Chinese maps that demarcate PRC claims over the South China Sea inherited from the Republic of China. These lines envelop most of the South China Sea but remain, at best, only partially defined by official Chinese sources. See "Waijiaobu fayanren Hong Lei jiu Meiguo Guowuyuan guanyuan she Nanhai yanlun da jizhe wen" [Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Hong Lei answers reporters' questions regarding U.S. State Department official's statements on the South China Sea], Xinhua, February 9, 2014, http://news.xinhuanet.com/world/2014-02/09/c_119248694.htm.

Adm. Jonathan Greenert further stated that the United States “would help” the Philippines if China occupied a Filipino-claimed Spratly island.¹²⁷

Meanwhile, Australia is articulating a policy position on regional maritime disputes that is as wary of PRC actions as its U.S. ally, and welcomes greater U.S. involvement in Asia.¹²⁸ ASEAN members, including nonclaimants, largely favor a multilateral South China Sea code of conduct that keeps force off the table in handling disputes, which contrasts with the PRC’s preference for bilateral approaches and blunts a key PRC advantage.¹²⁹ For its part, the PRC has shielded North Korea despite provocative behavior including the sinking of a South Korean corvette and the shelling of a South Korean-held island. The PRC strongly opposed joint U.S.-South Korean exercises in the Yellow Sea and condemnations of North Korean actions.¹³⁰ These linkages among actors over previously disparate issues give particular disputes the potential to precipitate broader crises.

Accompanying all of these events in East Asia is a hardening of public attitudes toward rivals over mutual antagonisms. Japanese attitudes toward China have declined precipitously, with 93 percent of respondents to a 2013 Pew Global Attitudes poll taking a negative view of the PRC.¹³¹ Feelings would appear to be mutual, with Chinese attitudes toward Japan also highly negative.¹³² Perceptions of China have additionally declined in the Philippines,¹³³ and President Aquino has made allusions between China and

127. Manuel Mogato, “U.S. Admiral Assures Philippines of Help in Disputed Sea,” Reuters, February 13, 2014, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/02/13/us-philippines-usa-southchinesea-idUSBREA1C0LV20140213>.

128. Government of Australia, *Defence White Paper 2013*; Department of Foreign Affairs, Government of Australia, “China’s Announcement of an Air Defence Identification Zone in the East China Sea,” November 26, 2013, http://www.foreignminister.gov.au/releases/2013/jb_mr_131126a.html.

129. ASEAN Secretariat, “Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea,” November 4, 2002, <http://www.asean.org/asean/external-relations/china/item/declaration-on-the-conduct-of-parties-in-the-south-china-sea>.

130. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, People’s Republic of China, “2010 nian 7 yue 15 ri Waijiaobu Fayanren Qin Gang juxing lixing jizhehui” [Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Qin Gang’s scheduled press briefing, July 15, 2010] (Beijing: State Council Information Office, July 16, 2010), <http://www.scio.gov.cn/ztk/xwfb/jjfy/12/wqfbh/Document/1311564/1311564.htm>; John Hemmings, “Cheonan Raises Tensions with China,” *East Asia Forum*, August 19, 2010, <http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2010/08/19/cheonan-raises-tensions-with-china/>; and Scott A. Snyder and See-won Byun, “Cheonan and Yeonpyeong: The Northeast Asian Response to North Korea’s Provocations” (Washington, D.C.: Council on Foreign Relations, April 2011).

131. See Pew Research Center, *Global Attitudes Project* (Washington, D.C.: Pew Research Center, July 2013), <http://www.pewglobal.org/database/indicator/24/group/7/>.

132. “Bad Feelings between Chinese, Japanese Worst in a Decade: Poll,” UPI, August 8, 2013, http://www.upi.com/Top_News/World-News/2013/08/08/Bad-feelings-between-Chinese-Japanese-worst-in-a-decade-poll/UPI-35351375978657/#ixzz2tOzD3vDQ.

133. See Pew Research Center, *Global Attitudes Project*.

Nazi Germany.¹³⁴ Vietnam, too, is witnessing a growing trend of anti-China protests following rising Hanoi-Beijing tensions over competing South China Sea claims.¹³⁵ Most recently, anti-China demonstrations in Vietnam turned violent following skirmishes between PRC and Vietnamese law enforcement ships that accompanied Chinese efforts to position an oil rig in waters off the disputed Paracels.¹³⁶ Even in the United States, a plurality of the public—about a fifth of Americans—now sees China as the greatest threat to the country according to a recent Gallup poll, above North Korea, Iran, and Iraq.¹³⁷

Unfavorable perceptions and antagonisms can have malevolent effects. For one, a negative image can shape how future behavior is perceived, in a manner psychologists call “top-down processing.” Ambiguous behavior may be interpreted in a negative fashion, leading to cycles of recrimination. Negative public attitudes create incentives to be uncompromising and may encourage provocative behavior—if not by political leaders themselves, then political entrepreneurs seeking to make a name. Such attitudes thus raise the potential for confrontation and crisis escalation as they become more common.

Simultaneously, recurring tensions in the Asia-Pacific seem to be feeding a belief that rivals will cave given sufficient demonstrations of force and resolve even if fundamental differences continue to fester. The PRC’s efforts to assert maritime claims since 2009 has seen Chinese vessels involved in near collisions with ships from the U.S. Navy and Japan’s Maritime Self-Defense Force and Coast Guard as well as actual collisions with Japanese and Vietnamese ships.¹³⁸ These come on top of PRC authorities arresting Vietnamese fishermen in disputed waters, and a PRC warship aiming its fire control radar on a Japanese destroyer.¹³⁹ In reaction, Japan and South Korea increased maritime

134. Keith Bradsher, “Philippine Leader Sounds Alarm on China,” *New York Times*, February 5, 2014.

135. Marianne Brown, “Anti-China Protesters in Hanoi Mark Border War Anniversary,” Voice of America (VOA), February 16, 2014, <http://www.voanews.com/content/anti-china-protesters-in-hanoi-mark-border-war-anniversary/1852347.html>.

136. Jane Perlez, “Vietnamese Police Block Anti-Chinese Demonstrations after Violence over Oil Rig,” *New York Times*, May 18, 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/19/world/asia/anti-chinese-protests-end-in-vietnam.html?_r=0.

137. Jeffrey M. Jones, “Far Fewer Americans Now Say Iran Is No. 1 U.S. Enemy: Nuclear Agreements May Be Fuelling Change” (Washington, D.C.: Gallup, February 20, 2014), <http://www.gallup.com/poll/167501/far-fewer-americans-say-iran-no-enemy.aspx>.

138. Johnston, “How New and Assertive Is China’s New Assertiveness?” pp. 17–31; Fravel, “Drawing Lines in the Water”; “China Urges Vietnam to End Its Disruptive Activities”; and “Viet Nam Demands China Withdraw from Territorial Waters.”

139. “China Military Officials Admit Radar Lock on Japanese Ship, Says Report,” *South China Morning Post*, March 18, 2013, <http://www.scmp.com/news/china/article/1193600/china-military-officials-admit-radar-lock-japanese-ship-says-report>.

patrols in disputed waters as well as challenges to the PRC's ADIZ in the expectation that Beijing would back down and not actively pursue its demands. Seoul even expanded its own existing ADIZ to further overlap with the PRC's.¹⁴⁰ More frequent resort to the threat and even the low-level use of force among regional actors suggests confidence about the effectiveness of such instruments that actually create permissive conditions for miscalculation and escalation.

The United States, for its part, is continuing surveillance of PRC military activity in the East and South China Seas while setting the rotational deployment of military forces through Singapore, the Philippines, and Australia. The United States additionally uses diplomatic and economic pressure, sometimes coupled with implicit military threats, to force North Korea to retreat on issues such as its nuclear weapons programs, sometimes in conjunction with the PRC.¹⁴¹

Behind the more frequent appearance of coercive behavior in East Asia seem to be widely held beliefs that the use of force can be effective and that states can control crisis escalation nimbly enough to avoid conflict. Referring to China's deployment of paramilitary vessels to waters disputed with Japan, a senior Chinese foreign ministry adviser, Qu Xing, recounted that "strong countermeasures broke Japanese actual control over Diaoyu Island without allowing the entire situation to go out of control."¹⁴² Qu further stated that China's deployment of Maritime Surveillance vessels to Scarborough Shoal "rescued Chinese fishermen [from the Philippine navy] and effectively controlled Huangyan Island . . . without creating military conflict in the area."¹⁴³

Even if such deployment of coercive force encouraged others to de-escalate at particular moments, over time such behavior can exacerbate antagonisms and further raise the risks of miscalculation and clashes. Indeed, in the aftermath of the various crises, stand-offs, and confrontations in East Asia have come further efforts to upgrade military and operational capacities across the Asia-Pacific. Consequently, a nascent arms race appears to be taking root in

140. Sang-Hun Choe, "South Korea Announces Expansion of Its Air Defense Zone," *New York Times*, December 8, 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2013/12/09/world/asia/east-china-sea-air-defense-zone.html?_r=0.

141. Joo-hee Lee, "Park Warns against Complacency on Threat from North Korea," *Korea Herald*, August 20, 2013, <http://www.asianewsnet.net/Park-warns-against-complacency-on-threat-from-Nort-50526.html>.

142. Deng Yuan, "Qu Xing: Zhongguo Waijiao de Dingceng Sheji yu Dixian Siwei" [Qu Xing: Top-level planning and base-line considerations in Chinese foreign policy], *Guoji Xianqu Daobao*, September 16, 2013, <http://ihl.cankaoxiaoxi.com/2013/0916/272722.shtml>. See also Timothy R. Heath, "Diplomacy Work Forum: Xi Steps Up Efforts to Shape a China-Centered Regional Order," *China Brief*, November 7, 2013, p. 6.

143. Deng, "Qu Xing."

East Asia.¹⁴⁴ The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute's (SIPRI's) *Yearbook 2013* lists East Asia as having the highest overall military spending outside North America and Western and Central Europe, a trend that has largely held constant since the early 2000s.¹⁴⁵ Five of SIPRI's top fifteen defense spenders by country are governments active in East Asia.¹⁴⁶

Yet confidence, if not complacency, about the effectiveness of coercion and the ability to avoid larger conflagration in East Asia is evident in the relative inattention to the development of crisis and dispute management mechanisms. The most sustained efforts in this direction are ASEAN's glacial attempts to develop a code of conduct for behavior in the South China Sea with the PRC, the recent Filipino attempt to seek arbitration from the International Tribunal on the Law of the Sea Convention notwithstanding.¹⁴⁷ Otherwise, the PRC seemed to believe that vague communications three years before served as sufficient advance notice to other regional actors of its ADIZ declaration.¹⁴⁸ The government of Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda similarly proceeded as if Chinese leaders would accept nationalization of Diaoyutai/Senkakus as an alternative to the purchase of the islands by right-wing Tokyo Governor Ishihara Shintaro from a private owner.¹⁴⁹ Right-leaning Japanese politicians also behave as if visits to the Yasukuni Shrine, especially by the prime minister, will have no lasting effect on regional ties. That there is no proverbial "reset

144. Trefor Moss, "More Money, More Power for Asian Militaries," *China Real Time* blog, *Wall Street Journal*, February 5, 2014, <http://blogs.wsj.com/searealtime/2014/02/05/more-money-more-power-for-asian-militaries/>.

145. "Military Expenditure," *SIPRI Yearbook 2013* (Stockholm: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute [SIPRI], 2013), <http://www.sipri.org/yearbook/2013/03>.

146. "Trends in World Military Expenditure, 2012" (Stockholm: SIPRI, April 2013), p. 2.

147. "China, ASEAN Nations Agree on Guidelines for Implementation of DOC in South China Sea," *People's Daily Online*, July 20, 2011, <http://english.people.com.cn/90001/90776/90883/7446480.html>; "Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea"; Albert del Rosario, "Statement: The Secretary of Foreign Affairs on the UNCLOS Arbitral Proceedings against China, January 22, 2013," *Official Gazette*, January 22, 2013, <http://www.gov.ph/2013/01/22/statement-the-secretary-of-foreign-affairs-on-the-unclos-arbitral-proceedings-against-china-january-22-2013/>; Rodolfo C. Severino, "How Much Can ASEAN Do for a South China Sea Code of Conduct?" *East Asia Forum*, October 30, 2013, <http://www.eastasiaforum.org/2013/10/30/how-much-can-asean-do-for-a-south-china-sea-code-of-conduct/>; and Carlyle A. Thayer, "New Commitment to a Code of Conduct in the South China Sea?" (Seattle: National Bureau of Asian Research, October 9, 2013), <http://nbr.org/research/activity.aspx?id=360#.UwTpvHnSZ9Q>.

148. Xiao Yu, "Ribben Baozhi: Zhongguo san nian qian xiang Rifang toulou sheli kongshiqu" [Japanese papers: China revealed plans for ADIZ to Japan three years ago], *VOA Chinese*, January 3, 2014, <http://www.voachinese.com/content/china-japan-adiz-20140103/1822633.html>.

149. Prime Minister's Office, Government of Japan, "Press Conference by the Cabinet Chief Secretary (Excerpt)," September 6, 2013, http://www.kantei.go.jp/foreign/tyoukanpress/201309/06_p.html; Prime Minister's Office, Government of Japan, "Press Conference by Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda," August 24, 2012, http://www.kantei.go.jp/foreign/noda/statement/201208/24kaiken_e.html; and James Manicom, *Bridging Troubled Waters: China, Japan, and Maritime Order in the East China Sea* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2014), pp. 166, 182.

button” in regional politics means that mutual provocations and the reliance on coercive instruments at the expense diplomacy may be setting East Asia up for confrontation, particularly when politicians cannot talk themselves out of a quandary.

Conclusion

The period leading up to the outbreak of World War I continues to offer relevant lessons for scholars and policymakers today. Yet, these are not the lessons derived from general analogies involving competition between rising and declining powers or even the propensity for conflict during power transitions. Grand narratives that attempt to equate the situation of contemporary actors with that of key players prior to World War I are anachronistic and fatalistic at best, if not outright misleading and confusing. Moreover, such analogical reasoning can be highly pernicious, leading actors to exaggerate the magnitude of stakes involved in otherwise minor conflicts.

It is more useful to look to the prehistory of the Great War as a source of insight into the specific types of dynamics that can increase the potential for friction among states and erode regional stability. We argue that three dynamics warrant the most caution. They are the heightened chances for misjudgment and the expansion of conflict resulting from a complex, uneven web of security commitments; the reduced room for compromise and flexibility given increased nationalist pressure; and the sharpened animosities, hardening of positions, and paradoxically increased comfort parties have with threatening force that come from recurring crises. These dynamics were not unique to interstate relations in the lead-up to World War I, but there is a substantial amount of rich empirical data surrounding this set of events that has been accumulated from decades of research. A better grasp of the mechanisms that precipitate tension, crisis, and escalation can in turn assist policymakers in finding better ways to manage differences, avoid tensions spinning out of control, and avert conflict.

We appreciate that identifying dangers does not equal having access to easy solutions. Nevertheless, we believe these lessons suggest that efforts not simply to diffuse crises but to create durable arrangements are the best hope. Regional actors need to avoid turning differences into issues of national honor and regime legitimacy by seeking solutions that sidestep intractable arguments over sovereignty or deflate political tensions through legal avenues. The fishing agreement signed in 2013 between Japan and Taiwan that shelved sovereignty issues, efforts by the Philippines to pursue legal arbitration of its territorial disputes with China, and the 2014 Indonesia-Philippine maritime

boundary demarcation agreement are laudable in this regard.¹⁵⁰ Strong, united diplomatic pressure is needed, however, to push conflicts onto these tracks; the current disunity of ASEAN and the willingness of regional actors to be content simply with the abatement of crises are thus major causes for concern. Action needs to be taken before a future crisis becomes tangled in the growing web of security commitments and drags the region into conflict.

150. "Agreement between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines and the Government of the Republic of Indonesia Concerning the Delimitation of the Exclusive Economic Zone Boundary," *Official Gazette*, May 23, 2014, <http://www.gov.ph/2014/05/23/agreement-between-the-government-of-the-republic-of-the-philippines-and-the-government-of-the-republic-indonesia-concerning-the-delimitation-of-the-exclusive-economic-zone-boundary/>; "Q&A on the Philippine and Indonesian Agreement on the Exclusive Economic Zone Boundary," *Official Gazette*, May 23, 2014, <http://www.gov.ph/2014/05/23/faqs-on-the-philippines-and-indonesia-agreement-on-the-delimitation-of-eez-boundary/>; Interchange Association, Japan, "Regarding 'Agreement between the Association for East Asian Relations and the Interchange Association, Japan on Fisheries,'" April 10, 2013, http://www.koryu.or.jp/taipei-tw/ez3_contents.nsf/Top/5366FA73425D35D449257B490029CC93?OpenDocument; Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Taiwan, "Republic of China (Taiwan) Signs Fisheries Agreement with Japan," April 16, 2013, <http://www.mofa.gov.tw/EnOfficial/ArticleDetail/DetailDefault/f017f4b3-5d0d-4408-ad7b-abe4044d7551?arfid=7b3b4d7a-8ee7-43a9-97f8-7f3d313ad781&opno=84ba3639-be42-4966-b873-78a267de8cf1>; and Department of Foreign Affairs, Republic of the Philippines, "West Philippine Sea Arbitration Update," April 2014, https://www.dfa.gov.ph/images/PDF/WPS_Update_II_-_April_2014_From_CDS_11_April_2014.pdf. For details on the demarcation of and operations under the Taiwan-Japan fisheries agreement, see Fisheries Agency, Executive Yuan Council of Agriculture, Taiwan, "Gonggao 'Dongya Guanxi Xiehui yu Gongyi Caituanfaren Jiaoliu Xiehui Yuye Xieyi Shiyong Haiyu Yuchuan Zuoye Guize'" [Public announcement "Regulations for Fishing Vessel Operations in Maritime Area Covered by the Fisheries Agreement between the Association for East Asian Relations and the Interchange Association"], March 5, 2014, [http://faweb.f.a.gov.tw/cht/LawsAnnounceFisheries/content.aspx?id=25&chk=0EEAE2EC-001B-4B84-9B8B-573BDE2B772C¶m=.](http://faweb.f.a.gov.tw/cht/LawsAnnounceFisheries/content.aspx?id=25&chk=0EEAE2EC-001B-4B84-9B8B-573BDE2B772C¶m=)