

PREFACE

The authors were prompted to undertake this work by their experience in teaching courses on Asian international relations since World War II. We found that the literature lacked a single, comprehensive, systemic account of this complex subject. For teaching purposes we improvised by splicing together selections from books and other sources, but this still left a need for an integrated approach to the subject. We hope that the result of our approach will serve the interests of various readerships, scholars and students, diplomats, journalists, military and intelligence personnel, members of international organizations and businesses, and others interested in how Asia became what it is today, playing an increasingly consequential role in global political, economic, and security affairs.

Our discussion of Asia is to be understood in a geopolitical sense, not including the Middle East. One of our objectives has been to integrate developments in South and Central Asia along with East Asia into the story of how the region developed from extensive colonial dependence into the vibrant, assertive Asia that it had become by the turn of the new millennium. Another objective was to provide perspective on one of the topics of compelling interest today: the rise of China. Because of China's central place in the international relations of Asia, from the time when it represented a power vacuum in the early postwar years, to its turbulent role during the Cold War, and now to its position as a major geopolitical and economic force, we devote a full chapter to the remarkable trajectory of the People's Republic.

As reflected in our subtitle, we address elements of both change and continuity in the period since the watershed events of World War II. There have been transformative events such as decolonization, the end of the Cold War (in which Asia played a crucial role), and the increasing salience of transnational issues such as terrorism. At the same time, many deeply rooted issues have persisted in the most militarized region of the world. Issues such as the division of Korea and its implications for nuclear proliferation, the Taiwan issue and its potential for catastrophic regional conflict, and the Indian-Pakistani dispute and other sources of instability in South Asia figure in our story from the early postwar years to the present.

We believe that contemporaneous documents—leaders’ talks and speeches, international agreements, secret policy assessments—enrich accounts of events by what they show of policymakers’ assumptions and perceptions at the time. We encourage readers to look into the original sources we have cited, and to whet their appetites we have scattered boxed excerpts of key documents throughout the text.

We are grateful to the undergraduate and graduate students and faculty members who have participated in our classes and stimulated our ideas on this subject at the Johns Hopkins University’s School of Advanced International Studies, at Stanford University, and at the U.S. Naval Postgraduate School over the past two decades. We also express our gratitude to academic and government colleagues with whom we debated the issues and trends we recount in this book over many years. Finally, we owe thanks to the two anonymous reviews for the publisher, whose suggestions have improved the book, and to the staff at Stanford University Press for their congenial and professional assistance. Each of the coauthors is convinced that all remaining flaws in the book are the fault of the other.