

## PREFACE

THIS VOLUME GREW out of the recognition of two important facts. The first involves the increasing strategic weight of the Asia-Pacific region, a trend that warrants greater attention from scholars and policy makers alike. The second is focused on the growing importance of the strategic realities of Asia, which require viewing the entire continent under the multiple lenses of geography, culture, history, politics, and economics. Many of the concepts introduced by the advent of the field of strategic studies, including *deterrence* and *arms race*, are similarly quite fruitful.

An understanding of strategic studies can heighten our comprehension of Asia much as a deeper understanding of the region can enhance our knowledge of strategy. Fundamentally, the field of strategic studies is concerned with the relationship between politics and military force. On a basic level, however, strategy is universal: it can be applied in any state or at any time because human nature remains essentially unchanged. Yet strategy is also contextual: strategy is formulated and implemented in specific geographic, cultural, and social environments.

As an academic enterprise, the field of strategic studies arose in the wake of World War II and during the Cold War. The geopolitics of that period directly and indirectly influenced thinking on deterrence, arms races, and military balances. Although students of strategic studies consult Asian classics by Sun Tzu, among others, the field largely springs from Western thinkers, including Thucydides, Tacitus, Clausewitz, Jomini, Mahan, Corbett, Schelling, and Brodie. This volume looks at whether, and to what extent, strategic studies remain valid for Asia of the twenty-first century.

Aaron Friedberg provides an introduction (“Thinking About Strategy in Asia”) that clearly places this volume in the context of the historical political-military interaction among nations of the region and their bilateral relationships with the United States.

Geography provides the most fundamental and unchanging context of strategy. Although technology may somewhat eclipse the status of geography, it is unlikely to replace it. Thus, it is appropriate that the initial five chapters explore the Asian landscape as well as the influence of geography on formulating and implementing strategy. Roy Kamphausen (Chapter 1, “Asia as a Warfighting Environment”) emphasizes how mountains, deserts, rivers, and other features of Asian geography subdivide that vast area into multiple theaters with distinct characteristics and shape combat on land and sea. It also underscores the relevance of the straits and channels that provide continental Asia with access to open waters. Bruce Elleman (Chapter 2, “The Cyclical Nature of Chinese Sea Power”) examines the effects of geography on Chinese strategy during their long history. China has acted principally as a continental power, but it also has exercised maritime power before returning to tend its interests closer to home. Today Beijing is moving into a maritime cycle once again by projecting naval capabilities to unite greater China, expand its economy, and extend its influence across the Western Pacific.

Toshi Yoshihara (Chapter 3, “Chinese Maritime Geography”) elaborates on the influence of geography in shaping Chinese thinking on sea power. He stresses that China has come to regard its environment as claustrophobic vis-à-vis islands off the mainland, the so-called first island chain, that constrict its freedom of action. Such geopolitical realities are indispensable to an understanding of Chinese strategic behavior. James Holmes (Chapter 4, “Mahan and the South China Sea”) draws on the works of an illustrious American strategist to appreciate the strategic geography of the South China Sea. Finally, Michael Auslin (Chapter 5, “The US Alliance Structure in Asia”) traces the enlargement of American security pacts in Asia and outlines the partnerships established by Washington throughout the region. He also examines the threats to those arrangements, including the growth of territorial disputes among Asian powers and the possibility of future disruptions of access to the maritime commons.

A second group of chapters weighs the cultural context of strategy. Colin Gray (Chapter 6, “Strategy and Culture”) observes that the concept of culture

is problematic as well as necessary to an understanding of strategy. After rehearsing the methodological challenges that distinguish culture as an influence on strategy, he concludes that such barriers should not prevent academics and practitioners from recognizing the importance of culture. Three subsequent chapters provide assessments of how culture has or has not influenced the strategy making of the major powers in the region—namely, China, Japan, and India. These cultural insights are contributed by Andrew Wilson (Chapter 7, “The Chinese Way of War”), S. C. M. Paine (Chapter 8, “The Japanese Way of War”), and Timothy Hoyt (Chapter 9, “The Indian Way of War”).

The next two chapters explore the intersection of strategy and economics. For the first time in history, Asia has become the focal point of the global arms market. Over the last two decades, Asian militaries have greatly improved their capabilities. In his contribution on these advances, Richard Bitzinger (Chapter 10, “Military Modernization in Asia”) chronicles defense acquisition within the region. Bradford Lee (Chapter 11, “The Economic Context of Strategic Competition”) next calculates the link between productivity and competitiveness.

The last chapters investigate the application of the principal concepts of strategic studies to Asia. Possibly no concept was more pervasive during the Cold War than deterrence. According to Michael Chase (Chapter 12, “Nuclear Deterrence in Northeast Asia”), China and North Korea consider deterrence in a way different from how the United States and Soviet Union did during that era. Thomas Mahnken (Chapter 13, “Arms Races and Long-Term Competition”) examines advances in US and Chinese defense capabilities and concludes that neither protagonist is strategically autistic. At the same time, their actions fall short of the classic notion of an action-reaction arms race, and their competitors’ upgrades in weapons systems are not the exclusive impetus for their modernization efforts.

Then Michael Evans (Chapter 14, “Irregular Warfare in Asia”) assesses counterinsurgency theories against their practice in Asia. He claims that strategic studies have addressed irregular warfare in ways that are fraught with undertheorizing and a lack of historical perspective. Furthermore, although much can be learned from the character of the diverse irregular conflicts that have plagued Asia, most of the analytical methods employed in countering insurgency in the region have been grounded in Western strategic studies.

The conclusion to the volume, by Thomas Mahnken, Dan Blumenthal, and Michael Mazza (“Toward a Research Agenda”), looks ahead and identifies some of the most promising avenues for pursuing study and research on strategy in the Asia-Pacific region.

*Thomas G. Mahnken*

*August 2014*