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POWER, IDEAS, AND MILITARY STRATEGY

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Overview

Power and Ideas in the Making of Strategy
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This chapter analyzes the variables that shape a country's grand and national military strategies and discusses their implications for U.S. policy in Asia.

MAIN ARGUMENT

All nations possess grand strategies and affiliated, but subordinate, military strategies. The former refer to the totality of resources and how they are utilized to achieve policy goals. The latter pertain to the economic resources and manpower needed to sustain the armed forces and achieve military objectives. Four variables prove to be significant determinants of grand and national military strategies. The first is a state's strategic geographic and political environment, including the internal and external circumstances that shape its identification of adversaries and allocation of power between the tasks of external security and internal order. The second variable is national resources, which include both a country's physical assets and its intangible capacities to produce these goods. Third, grand and national military strategies are influenced by the ambitions and effectiveness of the political leadership. Finally, a country's strategic culture affects how its leadership interprets the security environment, prioritizes military instruments and strategies, and defines the norms that shape the pursuit of power in international politics.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- Because most U.S. partners in Asia are handicapped in different ways where their grand and national military strategies are concerned, preserving the liberal international order that protects U.S. interests will depend on the rejuvenation of U.S. power.
- U.S. alliances and partnerships are vital tools for preserving U.S. hegemony and cost less over the long term than the alternatives of economic autarky and strategic solipsism.
- Recognizing and coping with the threats posed by China is critical if the traditional U.S. military strategy of power projection supporting U.S. primacy is to be sustained.

Power and Ideas in the Making of Strategy

Ashley J. Tellis

Although the notion of grand strategy is familiar to both academics and policymakers, it can often be elusive. Edward Mead Earle first elaborated the concept in *Makers of Modern Strategy: Military Thought from Machiavelli to Hitler*, a classic work published at the height of World War II, wherein he described grand strategy as "the art of controlling and utilizing the resources of a nation—or a coalition of nations—including its armed forces, to the end that its vital interests shall be effectively promoted and secured against enemies, actual, potential, or merely presumed."[1]

If grand strategy thus refers to "the capacity of [a] nation's leaders to bring together all of the elements, both military and nonmilitary, for the preservation and enhancement of the nation's long-term (that is, in wartime *and* peacetime) best interests,"[2] it is evidently "an inherent element of statecraft at all times."[3] It may even be identical to statecraft, insofar as it is oriented toward enlarging and utilizing national power to procure the highest ends that a country seeks as a matter of self-interest. Grand strategy, accordingly, is fundamentally reflected in policy. Any examination of what a nation's grand strategy actually is requires a close examination of that nation's priorities, the manner in which it balances ends and means, and how it incorporates various resources to secure its principal strategic aims.

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[1] Edward Mead Earle, ed., *Makers of Modern Strategy: Military Thought from Machiavelli to Hitler* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1943), viii.

[2] Paul Kennedy, "Grand Strategy in War and Peace: Toward a Broader Definition," in *Grand Strategies in War and Peace*, ed. Paul Kennedy (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 5. Emphasis in the original.

[3] Earle, *Makers of Modern Strategy*, viii.

The role of "fighting power" as "one of the instruments of grand strategy," then, acquires importance mainly at a more derivative level of planning, one that is concerned with "national military strategy," as it is usually labeled in the United States.[4] This intellectual abstraction encompasses understanding the strategic environment surrounding a country as well as the threats, opportunities, and constraints confronting its armed services; delineating the operational objectives that the services are expected to satisfy; specifying the ways in which these aims will be accomplished; and explicating the means by which they are to be realized at some given level of risk. National military strategy in this sense obviously derives from grand strategy: whereas the latter refers to the totality of resources and how they are utilized by a country to achieve "the goal defined by fundamental policy," the former pertains only to "the economic resources and manpower [necessary] to sustain the fighting services," along with an explication of how these are intended to achieve the military objectives derived from larger political interests.[5]

Neither a country's grand strategy nor its subordinate national military strategy may necessarily find expression in any written document. The United States is in fact a conspicuous outlier in this regard because it is perhaps the only modern great power that has, at least in the postwar era, articulated both its national aims and the usage of its coercive instruments in publicly available texts—the former though its *National Security Strategy* documents and the latter through the *National Defense Strategy* and the *National Military Strategy* series. No other country historically has followed a similar practice, and even the terminology employed in the naming of these documents is uniquely American.

However, it would be hard to conclude that merely because such documents are absent, other great powers do not possess either grand strategies or national military strategies of their own. On the contrary, their purposeful behavior in international politics suggests that they do consciously pursue specific strategies, even if these are not formally articulated in particular documents. The larger methodological point, therefore, is that all nations, and especially the great powers, possess grand strategies and affiliated military strategies. These may exist at a subconscious level or, when conscious, may be found only in scattered form, such as in speeches by elected functionaries or senior government officials, parliamentary proceedings and debates, ministerial reports, and other official documents such as white papers.

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[4] B.H. Liddell Hart, *Strategy*, 2nd ed. (New York: New American Library, 1967), 322.

[5] Ibid.

The diffusion of these materials implies that the task of elucidating both grand strategy and military strategy often requires discernment rather than simple description. This is true even if singular documents exist because there is no assurance that any country's policies in practice actually comport with its publicly disseminated texts. Analyzing grand strategy as well as national military strategy, therefore, requires reviewing formal documents (when these exist), but more importantly looking beyond them. It entails consciously integrating knowledge about a country's geographic and political environments, national aims and resources, historical inheritance and self-understanding, and institutional and technological capacities through whatever sources convey them in order to produce a defensible interpretation that, when bisected with the understanding of other nations' objectives, interests, and calculations, enables some judgment of the strategic consequences.

Through these investigations, which constitute the thrust of much national security research, it is possible to describe the broad contours of a country's grand strategy and military strategy. How these strategies come to be produced within a given political system is more challenging to discern. Most of the efforts thus far have focused on understanding how particular strategy documents are crafted at the bureaucratic level, examining from which offices they originate, how the process of collating ideas proceeds, and where crucial decisions about a country's ultimate direction are made.[6] This volume of *Strategic Asia* has a different intellectual focus: it concentrates on analyzing the national military strategies of the key Asian states within the context of their overall grand strategies and understanding how these strategies have developed as a result of the interactions between their material power and strategic cultures.

The Making of National Strategies

This volume represents a capstone that builds upon the work undertaken in the Strategic Asia Program during the previous two years. The first phase of this three-year effort, *Strategic Asia 2015–16: Foundations of National Power in the Asia-Pacific*, examined the capacity of various Asian states to produce material power through a study of both their resource bases and their state and societal performance insofar as these bear on the generation of military capabilities. The second phase, *Strategic Asia 2016–17: Understanding Strategic Cultures in the Asia-Pacific*, focused on explaining the ideational frames of

[6] For a useful example, see Alan G. Stolberg, *How Nation-States Craft National Security Strategy Documents* (Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute, 2012).

reference that shape how countries understand their political environment and the value, purpose, use, and limitations of coercive power in competitive politics. As such, this volume served as a companion to the previous year's study, with its focus on the material foundations of national power.

The current volume identifies what the major states in the Asia-Pacific region view as their most important security problems and, against this backdrop, examines how their material capabilities and intangible worldviews combine to shape the specific strategies that these states have adopted in dealing with their most important challenges. The thrust of each chapter, consequently, is at once both analytical and interpretative. To explain how a country's grand strategy and national military strategy serve as solutions, the most important contemporary problems facing the country are first identified. Thereafter, the various plausible strategies available are delineated through a rational reconstruction of the range of alternatives. This framing is intended to examine how certain strategies become dominant as a consequence of the intersection of a nation's material power and subjective understanding of its strategic circumstances. The country's external environment, capacity for generating hard power, historical memory, strategic ambitions, and domestic institutions (especially political leadership) all play a critical role in explaining why some strategies come to be preferred over others. These insights are finally employed to assess the durability of the dominant strategy (that is, its susceptibility to change), its adequacy for satisfying the country's principal geopolitical aims (given the wider regional changes), and the impact of the strategy on regional or global stability (in the context relevant for each country and especially for the United States).

When the chapters that follow are examined synoptically, the interaction of four variables proves to be particularly significant in shaping grand and national military strategies. The first obviously is the strategic environment. The spatial-political context within which a country is located is critical because it defines the predicaments, and by implication the tasks, that grand strategy and national military strategy must satisfy. "Environment" in this context refers not merely to a country's geographic location, which often identifies its adversaries and allies, but also to its internal circumstances, because these affect how a nation's power has to be allocated between the tasks of external security and internal order. This is particularly true in the Asia-Pacific region where many countries are still young as modern states and the task of producing order has both internal and external dimensions.

The second variable that becomes immediately relevant is national resources, which include both a country's physical assets and its intangible capacities—entrepreneurship, innovation, and technology—to produce

these goods. Because most national resources must be produced by artifice, meaning that they are not available in ready-made form in nature, the character of the economic system and the quality of economic performance function as critical constraints that define the level and kind of resources to which a political leadership has access. The quality of military technology available to a state is particularly relevant here because it shapes the military strategies that can be developed to secure various political aims.

The ambitions and effectiveness of the political leadership constitute the third variable that determines the character of a country's grand strategy and military strategy. Political leadership effectively personifies the state, both to its own population and to other countries on the outside, and therefore—irrespective of the character of the political regime—serves as a functional proxy for the preferences of the country as a whole. The role of the executive is therefore important at multiple levels: it serves as the mediating instrument between state and society, directing how resources are to be extracted from the latter and how they should be applied toward securing various strategic ends; it directs the governing bureaucracies in formulating national policies, both domestic and foreign; and it affects international outcomes as a consequence of the goals, ambitions, and methods of leaders operating on their nation's behalf. To the degree that leaders consciously pursue the objective of expanding national power in the international arena, and are highly instrumentally rational toward that end, their grand strategies and military strategies would reflect their ambitions accordingly, being limited only by their levels of risk aversion.

Finally, strategic culture—the worldviews of a country's elites and especially decision-makers—makes a significant difference for the character of a nation's grand strategy and its military strategy. Ideas matter. They affect how a country's leadership interprets its national security environment and how it prioritizes the importance of military instruments in mitigating external and internal threats; they influence the emphasis placed on offensive versus defensive strategies in achieving military ends; and they articulate the values held by the polity, thereby reproducing the norms of behavior that define what a state considers to be acceptable or unacceptable in the pursuit of power in international politics. Strategic culture thus proves to be critical not simply in illuminating what causal effects states seek through the exercise of their power but equally in giving meaning to the variety of observed behaviors, which even when they appear similar could be driven by different strategic intentions.

Examining National Military Strategies in Asia

The chapters in this volume show how these four key variables and others interact to produce a wide variety of strategies depending on the unique strategic predicaments of the countries involved.

Oriana Skylar Mastro's study of China describes its current national military strategy as one of regional power projection, with the region defined expansively as radiating beyond East Asia and the South and East China Seas to Central Asia and South Asia, which include both the Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf. This gradual broadening of China's military interests could in time be manifested in military strategies aimed at regional hegemony or even a global presence, depending on how China's economic performance is sustained. What is clear, however, is that the grand strategy bolstering these military derivatives is ambitious and is driven entirely by Beijing's desire to become a conventional great power in international politics. What is fascinating about Mastro's analysis is that the four components that shape the making of national military strategy are present in China's case in virtually equal measure. China finds itself in a challenging security environment surrounded by both major external rivals and significant internal security threats, the latter exacerbated by the authoritarian regime. These problems would by themselves justify the production of considerable military power, but the spectacular performance of the Chinese economy during the last 40-odd years has provided the state with the means to build its coercive capabilities with fewer burdens than might have been the case otherwise. Furthermore, China's impressive technological capabilities have enabled the country to pursue increasingly capital-intensive military solutions, whether these be manifested in reducing Chinese military manpower or in developing sophisticated anti-access capabilities intended to check U.S. power projection along the Asian rimlands.

The drive to implement such solutions—which as a consequence threaten to shift local balances of power to China's advantage—has received singular impetus from the current leadership of Xi Jinping. Xi appears to have cast aside Deng Xiaoping's older strategy of "hide and bide" in favor of a bolder goal of "striving for achievement," which is intended to rejuvenate the Chinese people and restore China as a world power of consequence. This ambition finds ready reinforcement from China's strategic culture: given its understanding of the country's history as one of unjust humiliation, the importance of remedying past wrongs in a political environment that is viewed as still pervasively conflictual makes assertive international policies a natural outcome. Furthermore, offensive military solutions are preferred for both technological and ideational reasons, and all elements taken together

make the concerted expansion of national power a critical necessity for Beijing's success. China thus represents the best example of how the political environment, material capabilities, the character of leadership, and strategic culture combine in virtually equal measure to create a grand strategy and a national military strategy that matches it.

The chapter on Russia authored by Mark Katz is fascinating because, perhaps only second to China, the character of the political leadership overwhelmingly determines the character of Russia's grand strategy and the military strategy designed to support it. Although the strategic environment, weaknesses in material capabilities, and strategic culture all play a role in shaping Russia's national military strategy—which emphasizes hybrid warfare backstopped by revitalized nuclear capabilities for coercion short of war—neither this military approach nor the larger grand strategy of confronting the West would have taken shape without the singular role of Vladimir Putin. For all practical purposes, therefore, Russia's grand strategy and national military strategy are shaped largely by Putin's preferences, his perception of Russia's interests, and his reading of recent Russian history. Putin's conviction that NATO's expansion following the West's victory in the Cold War and the United States' continuing support for democracy movements worldwide are intended to fundamentally weaken Russia makes the Western powers appear to be a far greater threat to Moscow than even jihadist Islam or China.

This perceived threat fosters a tacit Russia-China alliance against the West, even at the cost of Russia being the junior partner, and a military strategy that focuses both on strengthening Russian control in its near abroad and on weakening Western democracies through "non-kinetic" means. The former objective has driven the modernization of some Russian conventional capabilities, whereas the latter underwrites the expanding use of instruments of political influence, cyberwarfare and other covert warfare capabilities, and the ultimate guarantor, nuclear weapons. Russia's continuing material weaknesses place the heavy-handed military competition of the Cold War beyond Moscow's reach. But its strategic culture, which provides confidence that Russia can weather its present adversity and make a comeback, as it has before, seems to reinforce Putin's conviction that the current grand strategy of confronting the West despite Russian weaknesses is already paying dividends. Whether it remains the best approach for protecting long-term national interests is a different question, but the preeminent role of political leadership in the making of Russia's current strategy ensures that Moscow's pugnacity will persist so long as Putin remains in power.

Christopher Hughes's chapter on Japan illuminates the current effort of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to steadily expand Japan's military capabilities under the rubric of the U.S.-Japan alliance, to bring Japan's military contributions closer to the ideal of active support for the United States regionally and globally (as well as the United Nations and other regional organizations involved in protecting international security), and to enlarge the scope of Japan's military operations in both their combat orientation and their geographic presence. This evolution of Japanese national military strategy, which is by no means complete, would continue under the aegis of the country's current grand strategy—the Yoshida doctrine of aligning with the United States and relying on its nuclear umbrella—but aims to stretch that inheritance by pushing Japan closer toward the goal of becoming a more "normal" nation.

Clearly the role of political leadership in the person of Abe is critical here, but unlike in the case of Putin, who has shifted Russian strategy primarily through his own will, Abe's efforts at reorienting Japanese military strategy have received a decisive fillip from significant changes in the country's strategic environment—namely, the rising threats posed by China and North Korea and the unsettling ambivalence of the United States in regard to its traditional role as security guarantor in the Asia-Pacific. Japan's material capabilities largely remain unchanged: its economic strength and technological sophistication remain impressive and could easily support a more expansive shift in military strategy. But its strategic culture still exhibits considerable diffidence and could yet prevent Abe's vision from being fully realized. In this instance, then, even a determined political leadership and a propitious external environment may not suffice to engineer the major changes in Japanese strategy that have been debated in recent years.

One country that has had no option but to cope with the dramatic transformations in its external environment is South Korea. Chung Min Lee's chapter on the changes in South Korea's military strategy vividly describes how a nation that until not too long ago had to cope mainly with the threat of an invasion by North Korea now must simultaneously cope with the emergence of a powerful China (that still protects Pyongyang in many ways), North Korean nuclear weapons (which can increasingly threaten South Korea's principal security guarantor, the United States), and the Kim regime's persistent brinksmanship (both diplomatic and military). These challenges only complement Pyongyang's traditional threats of artillery attacks, cyberwarfare, sabotage, and conventional military operations, not to mention the ever-present possibility of a major domestic crisis in North Korea.

Given this worsening environment, Lee argues that preparing for extremely complex combined operations will come to replace South Korea's traditional military strategy of linear defense along the frontier and protection of its rear areas. Seoul's grand strategy, however, remains unchanged: it still seeks peaceful reunification if possible but, given the odds against success, is content to settle for preserving the status quo peacefully. Yet the steady worsening of South Korea's strategic environment puts these objectives at increasing risk. Although the country's material capabilities have not decayed despite the significant long-term risks to its economic growth and technological innovation, these advantages would nonetheless be endangered immediately should conflict break out on the peninsula. The country's deeply conflicted political system and the emphasis on autonomy fostered by its strategic culture have not helped its elites develop a consistent response to the emerging threats, thus leaving the nation buffeted by many forces that are proving hard to control. This fact notwithstanding, the burdens disproportionately levied by the external environment on the processes and outcomes of strategy formation make South Korea quite unique.

Like the studies of China, Japan, and South Korea in this volume, John Gill's chapter on India also represents a case study of a country whose national military strategy is in the throes of significant transition. Whereas the transition in the three East Asian powers is not fundamentally constrained by resources, India, alone among the emerging global powers, seems challenged by the demand for a new national military strategy that can service both its own ambitions and the expectations of its well-wishers at exactly the time when it is still not fully liberated from the shackles of economic constraints. All the same, Gill demonstrates that the traditional Indian grand strategy of nonalignment and the derivative national military strategy of static frontier defense concurrently oriented against Pakistan and China have passed the limits of success. New threats are posed by China's and Pakistan's nuclear arsenals, Pakistan's continuing terrorism against India, and China's growing military presence in Tibet, naval presence in the Indian Ocean, activities in space and cyberspace, and projection of economic power across Asia through the Belt and Road Initiative. New Delhi needs to develop new military strategies to cope with these emerging threats as well as support India's evolving grand strategy of seeking strategic partnerships in order to maximize its national power.

As India struggles with these tasks, Gill highlights multiple changes: deficiencies in material capability are still significant and institutional weaknesses at the political, civil-military, and military levels are rampant, suggesting acute vulnerabilities at multiple levels of leadership. The political shortcomings may in fact be the most troublesome. For all of its

grandiose ambitions, India's civilian leadership has never treated national security with the attention it deserves. Internal security continues to drain attention and resources, and external security is managed as if it were merely synonymous with maintaining a large military establishment and ensuring corruption-free defense acquisitions. India's strategic culture only exacerbates these problems through its reactive impulses and preference for incremental change. The net result is that even the pressures from an increasingly hostile environment seem insufficient to force the kind of change necessary to develop national military strategies that are adequate to India's ambitions of becoming a leading power.

Ann Marie Murphy's chapter on Indonesia suggests that its national military strategy is likely to prove even more inadequate to its security challenges than India's. Like India, Indonesia has pursued a grand strategy of nonalignment, opting to sit out superpower competition during the Cold War in favor of dealing with the problems of national integration at home. Indonesia's national military strategy, accordingly, was centered on building its land forces, which were most relevant for managing the internal threats arising from ethnic, religious, class, and regional cleavages in a vast and disparate archipelago. The relative neglect of external security was viable only because U.S. power was present in much of Southeast Asia, thus ensuring that neither the Soviet Union nor China could threaten Indonesia or its smaller regional siblings for much of the Cold War. Indonesia supplemented nonalignment by building up the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), which served as a peace pact among regional elites and prevented mutual interference in internal affairs.

This traditional military strategy centered on internal security is now at risk because of changes in the environment deriving from China's regional assertiveness, but Jakarta seems unable to rise to the challenge appropriately. Although Indonesia is an economic success story by many indicators, significant budgetary constraints prevent it from shifting appropriately to the air- and naval-centric military strategies that are necessary. Hesitations stemming from its strategic culture—its traditional desire to chart an independent course—prevent Indonesia from easily aligning with the United States as well. And its political leadership seems divided about the character of the Chinese threat, while simultaneously being unable to mobilize national power concertedly enough to deal with the problems posed by China. The shift in national military strategy that is desirable for enhancing security thus seems far away, leaving Indonesia's security dependent on China's forbearance or inattention, the modest protections from solidarity with ASEAN, or the U.S. regional military presence. The latter, though likely to continue, may

be insufficient if it is not coupled to political and strategic understandings with Washington.

Finally, Thomas Mahnken's chapter highlights the centrality of the United States for Asian security, a strategic fact of life since the end of World War II. Throughout this period, Washington pursued a unique national military strategy centered on defense at a distance: protecting U.S. interests by meeting threats as far away as possible from the continental United States. That goal resulted in major investments in power-projection capabilities intended to underwrite U.S. extended deterrence obligations around the world. These commitments were backstopped ultimately by strategic nuclear forces that were coupled—even if this was not always admitted—to strategies of damage limitation associated with doctrines of deterrence by denial. In tandem, the United States also sought wherever possible to preserve favorable regional balances of power so that its protectees could enjoy local advantages that lowered the burdens levied on U.S. extended deterrence. The U.S. military strategy of power projection, which entailed the use of forward-deployed and forward-operating combat forces to exert political influence at great distances, proved tenable because Washington enjoyed economic and technological superiority throughout the postwar era. This dominance made the U.S. grand strategy of preserving primacy a rational course of action, although it was frequently questioned by domestic critics because of its cost and international consequences.

The dramatic changes in the international environment that have occurred in the 25-plus years since the Cold War ended—the rise of China as a major rival, Russia's emergence as a disgruntled competitor, and the appearance of troublesome regional antagonists such as North Korea and Iran—now raise questions about the viability of this traditional military strategy of power projection. The material capabilities of the United States have by no means diminished during this period, and the country's scientific and technological base still permits it to overcome the operational obstacles extended by these challengers should the United States apply itself to doing so. As Mahnken notes, the real impediments to buttressing the nation's traditional military strategy of power projection actually arise from the character of the current political leadership and the contestations inherent in U.S. strategic culture. The rise of nationalism in U.S. politics and the election of a leader championing the vision of "America first" raise serious questions about whether the United States will stay committed to preserving its global primacy and, more importantly, whether that primacy will be protected through a sturdy network of alliances that require successful U.S. power projection for their continued value and effectiveness.

The Impact of Asian National Military Strategies on U.S. Interests

Taken together, the chapters in this volume and those in its two predecessors expand our understanding of how various Asian nations have developed their grand and national military strategies as a function of different, but comparable, external and internal variables and how the evolution of these strategies will continue to shape the ongoing geopolitical competition in the Asia-Pacific.

Understanding the impact of the various Asian strategies—at both the grand and military levels—on U.S. interests in particular would have been easier if U.S. grand strategy were set on a stable course, as seemed to be the case before Donald Trump's 2016 election as president. If the United States, reflecting the upsurge in nationalist sentiment and Trump's own inclinations to reduce U.S. responsibilities for the maintenance of global order, settles for a genuinely different grand strategy from that pursued throughout the Cold War period—for example, replacing the strategy of preserving primacy with one of settling for a global balance of power that ostensibly leaves the United States alone—how the various Asian military strategies evolve could have less significance for U.S. interests. The operative word here is "less," because it is entirely possible, as U.S. policymakers have understood since World War II, that even developments that do not initially affect U.S. security could eventually come to undermine it if the United States either cannot or will not play a role in shaping the development of other nations' strategies from the outset. An America-first strategy that attempts to maintain U.S. primacy in an insular sense may thus end up being far costlier than a strategy of maintaining primacy through sustaining "confederations" intended to preserve both the power superiority of the West and the benefits of the liberal international order. Although the latter may require the United States to bear the cost of producing some global public goods, the net benefits to Washington in terms of common security would make the inconveniences worthwhile.

If the United States, therefore, hews to the traditional course of preserving its global primacy through maintaining the power-projection capabilities necessary for onshore balancing in critical regions of the world, the challenges posed by China—at the levels of both grand strategy and national military strategy—would rank simply as the biggest threat to U.S. hegemony for many years to come. This challenge acquires additional significance because the expansion in Chinese military capabilities is likely to be sustained for a long time: environmental factors, increasing material capabilities, resolute leadership, and a parabellum strategic culture all combine to make the threats

posed by Beijing quite formidable. It is unfortunate, in this context, that U.S. policy has been unable to peel Russia away from its tacit alliance with China. Although Russian material power is weakening, Moscow's capabilities are still significant in certain narrow areas, and when committed in support of China, they make the latter more troublesome than it might otherwise be.

In these circumstances, Japanese power still offers formidable benefits to the United States. Tokyo's material capabilities are substantial and its military power is significant. But Japan's conflicted strategic culture may yet prevent it from developing its combat potential to the degree necessary to effectively supplement U.S. military power along the Asian rimlands. South Korea's national capabilities are similarly hampered by its strategic culture, its diffidence about a full partnership with Japan, and its sympathy for China. Moreover, the immensity of the challenges posed by North Korea ensure that it will be a long time before South Korea will have any surplus of either national or military power that could be allocated to aiding the United States in protecting the liberal order in Asia in the face of Chinese resistance.

India undoubtedly remains an important partner in this regard given its political incentives to oppose China's assertiveness. The country's significant weaknesses in material capability, hesitant strategic culture, and institutional and leadership infirmities imply that U.S. assistance will be necessary for quite some time before India is capable of balancing China independently. Until that point is reached, balancing China in partnership with the United States remains the only viable option for New Delhi—and for Washington, if the value of the affiliation with India is correctly appreciated. Indonesia is even further away than India from the viewpoint of securing cooperation for balancing China, given both its capacity constraints and its political reservations about allying with the United States. But Indonesia, along with Singapore, Vietnam, and the Philippines, are potentially important partners in this effort and hence are worth the investment of U.S. resources in building their national capacities.

Because most U.S. partners in Asia are handicapped in different ways where their grand and national military strategies are concerned, preserving the "balance of power that favors freedom" in the region will depend disproportionately on the rejuvenation of American power.[7] Trump's America-first strategy encapsulates this fundamental insight—which bodes well for success, but only if the administration can craft sensible policies aimed

[7] Condoleezza Rice, "Wriston Lecture: A Balance of Power That Favors Freedom" (speech presented at the Manhattan Institute, New York City, October 1, 2002).

at renewing U.S. strength.[8] Toward that end, Washington must recognize that U.S. alliances and partnerships, properly appreciated, are vital tools for preserving American hegemony at the least cost compared to the alternatives of economic autarky and strategic solipsism.[9]

[8] For an extended analysis of what such rejuvenation entails, see Ashley J. Tellis, *Balancing without Containment: An American Strategy for Managing China* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2014).

[9] For an elaboration of this argument, see Ashley J. Tellis, "Seeking Alliances and Partnerships: The Long Road to Confederationism in U.S. Grand Strategy," in *Strategic Asia 2014–15: U.S. Alliances and Partnerships at the Center of Global Power*, ed. Ashley J. Tellis, Abraham M. Denmark, and Greg Chaffin (Seattle: National Bureau of Asian Research, 2014), 3–32.