

Fostering Stability or Creating a Monster?
The Rise of China and U.S. Policy toward East Asia

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“With One Hand Tied: Dealing with China During
A Period of Preoccupation”

Thomas J. Christensen

Professor of Politics and International Affairs
Princeton University
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Whether one views U.S. Asia policy over the past 14 years as a success or a failure depends heavily on the theoretical lens with which one views international security politics and U.S.-China relations in particular. This essay will present two competing lenses through which to view trends in the region since 1991 and to judge the related effectiveness of U.S. policies toward China and its neighbors. It will explore both views with reference to debates on U.S. policy in the scholarly literature and in the popular press. For the purposes of illustrating the two points of view, I will focus on two very different articles on U.S. policy toward the region by a scholar influential in the academic and policy worlds, Aaron Friedberg. I will conclude the essay with an attempt at synthesis of Friedberg’s two quite different positions. Most informed observers hold some combination of the two worldviews (as Friedberg likely does himself). Moreover, even holders of each of the starkest versions of the two worldviews might offer similar policy prescriptions for many aspects of U.S. policy toward China and the East Asia region.

The first view of the U.S. role in East Asian international relations since the end of the Cold War emphasizes the shared interests of the United States and all regional actors in regional stability. From this widely held perspective, international relations are, or at least should be, positive-sum in nature. The main dangers in international politics lie in security dilemmas and spirals of tension that arise when states in a world lacking an effective world government mistrust each other for a range of historical, geographical, economic, or political reasons. Many argue that such mistrust is particularly perilous when such states are left to their own devices without the help of powerful third-party providers of common security, effective international institutions, or common roots in liberal democracy to assuage their mutual fears.¹

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, many analysts employing these theoretical perspectives believed that the major cause of instability in East Asia was the severe lack

¹ The notion of the “security dilemma” is rooted in structural realism, particularly “defensive realism,” but is shared by a broad range of theoretical schools including liberal institutionalism---which discusses how institutional settings can reduce mistrust---liberalism----which emphasizes how sets of liberal democracies can increase mutual trust through transparency, domestic constraints on war, and/or shared norms of non-aggression----and psychological theories, which argue that security dilemmas and the spirals of tension that they cause are exacerbated by, if not rooted in, mutual misperceptions. Most authors do not stay within one theoretical tradition. Despite the tendency to categorize authors in one school or another, most combine structural realist variables with institutional, domestic, and psychological ones to explain variation in the severity of security dilemmas. For relevant works, see Robert Jervis, “Cooperation Under the Security Dilemma,” *World Politics* (January 1978), pp. 167-214; Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton, NJ; Princeton University Press, ch. 3); Jervis, “From Balance to Concert: A Study of Security Cooperation,” in Kenneth Oye, ed. *Cooperation Under Anarchy*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ Press, 1986), pp. 58-69; Stephen Van Evera. *Causes of War: Power and the Roots of Conflict* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University press, 1999); Jack Snyder, *Myths of Empire* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991) (the forthcoming Chinese language version of this book includes a preface that touches on defensive versus offensive realism); G. John Ikenberry, *After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order After Major Wars* (Princeton, NJ; Princeton University Press, 2001); Glenn Snyder, “The Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics” *World Politics* 36 (July 1984), pp. 461-495; Thomas J. Christensen and Jack L. Snyder, “Chain Gangs and Passed Bucks” Predicting Alliance Patterns in Multipolarity,” *International Organization* (Spring 1990), pp. 137-168; G. John Ikenberry and Andrew Moravcsik, “Liberal Theory and Politics of Security in Northeast Asia,” Paper Prepared for the Ford Foundation Project on Non-Traditional Security, Seoul, South Korea, January 30, 2004; various essays in G. John Ikenberry and Michael Mastanduno, eds., *International Relations Theory and the Asia Pacific* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003); and James Fearon, “Rationalist Explanations for War,” *International Organization* vol. 49, no. 3 (Summer 1995), pp. 379-414.

of trust among historical rivals, the questionable longevity and intensity of the reassuring U.S. military presence in East Asia, and the dearth of economic or political conditions that might reduce tensions even in America's absence. The region, as Aaron Friedberg put it, seemed particularly "ripe for rivalry," as it lacked many of the pacifying attributes of post-Cold War Western Europe: deep economic integration, multilateral confidence-building institutions, accepted international borders, and widespread liberal democracy.² Such factors help ameliorate or eliminate the normal "security dilemmas," mutual misapprehensions, and "spirals of tension" that we would expect to find in a world undergoing dramatic structural adjustment with the collapse of the Soviet Union.³ Since ethnic tensions and sovereignty disputes make East Asia particularly prone to such spirals, the lack of such ameliorating factors seemed particularly important, especially if the U.S. role as external referee and provider of mutual security somehow is called into question.

If one adopts this point of view, East Asia is much better off now than it was at the time of the Soviet Union's demise even though many relevant problems remain: there is still widespread mistrust based on the historical legacies of Japanese and Western imperialism; maritime sovereignty disputes are plentiful; there are new concerns over the potential effects of North Korean nuclearization; there are uncertainties related to the fast-paced growth of PRC power; and there are on-going tensions across the Taiwan

² Aaron L. Friedberg, "Ripe for Rivalry: Prospects for Peace in a Multipolar Asia," *International Security*, (Winter 1993/94), vol. 18, no. 3, pp. 5-33; also see John Duffield, "Asia-Pacific Security Institutions in Comparative Perspective," in John Ikenberry and Michael Mastanduno, eds., *International Relations Theory and the Asia Pacific* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003); and Thomas J. Christensen, "China, the U.S.-Japan Alliance and the Security Dilemma in East Asia," *International Security*, Vol. 23, No. 4 (Spring 1999).

³ Stephen Van Evera, "Primed for Peace: Europe After the Cold War," *International Security*, Vol. 15, No. 3 (Winter 1990/91), pp. 7-57.

Strait. Despite these remaining problems, one can only portray the current situation in the region as extremely positive in comparison to the outlook for the region in the early 1990s. Moreover, U.S. policy helped facilitate many of these changes. So, from this perspective, U.S. policy has been a real success. We have witnessed significant growth in widely recognized factors for stability, including deepening regional economic integration and the creation of regional multilateral institutions involving all of the major actors in the region. What is perhaps most important is China's prominent role in these developments in the past decade. China's economy is now at the center of regional integration. Moreover, China is now quite active in multilateral diplomacy, whereas Beijing was quite suspicious of multilateral organizations in the first half of the 1990s. Without China's active participation the organizations can only have limited meaning in terms of regional confidence-building.⁴

The second view of international politics portrays international relations, especially between existing and rising great powers, as a largely zero-sum struggle for leadership. Advocates of this view draw easy analogies between contemporary U.S.-China relations and the historical examples of relations among rising challengers and incumbent leading great powers. Those relations generally have been tense and highly competitive.⁵ From this perspective, espoused by Friedberg in an article in late 2000,

⁴ For the evolution of China's attitudes about multilateral security forums in the 1990s, see Alastair Iain Johnston and Paul Evans, "China's Engagement with Multilateral Security Organizations," in Alastair Iain Johnston and Robert S. Ross, *Engaging China: The Management of an Emerging Power* (New York: Routledge, 1999), pp. 235-272.

⁵ The most prominent examples of what has been labeled "offensive realism," the school that portrays great power transitions as largely zero-sum competitions, are John Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: WW Norton 2001), and Fareed Zakaria, *From Wealth to Power* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999). Although not all authors working in power transition theory and structural realism view international relations as a purely zero-sum game, many emphasize the importance of relative gains and relative costs, as opposed to absolute gains and absolute costs, thereby leaning in the

even if conflict is avoidable in the near term, eventual Sino-American competition for primacy in the East Asia region (or, perhaps, the globe) will likely lead the two states into a Cold War, if not a shooting war. In such a competitive worldview one actor's gains are by definition the other actor's loss.⁶

If we see regional international relations largely as a zero-sum struggle for influence between an extant hegemon, the United States, and a swiftly rising challenger, China, then the United States has done rather poorly since the break-up of the Soviet Union. China's economic, diplomatic, and military influence has clearly grown very quickly, especially in the past several years. In many ways, it has done so as an intentional result of U.S. engagement policies and it has done so precisely through the mechanisms that are designed to assuage security dilemmas: the deepening of regional

direction of the zero-sum side of the spectrum between zero-sum and positive-sum analysis. For works espousing or critiquing this theoretical position, see Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1979); Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in International Politics* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1981); 1968); Jacek Kugler and A.F.K. Organski, "The Power Transition: A Retrospective and Prospective Evaluation," in Manus I. Midlarsky, ed., *Handbook of War Studies* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), pp. 171–194; Joseph Grieco, "Anarchy and the Limits of Cooperation: A Realist Critique of the Newest Liberal Institutionalism," *International Organization* 42,3 (Summer 1988): 485-508; Robert Powell, "The Neorealist-Neoliberal Debate" *International Organization* Spring 1994; Grieco, "Understanding the Problem of International Cooperation: The Limits of Neoliberal Institutionalism and the Future of Realist Theory," and Robert Keohane, "Institutional Theory and the Challenge After the Cold War," in David Baldwin, ed., *Neoliberalism and Neorealism: The Contemporary Debate* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), chs. 11-12; and Dale Copeland, *The Origins of Major War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000); In public presentations, Mearsheimer and Grieco have both been critical of U.S. engagement policy toward China, a position that flows naturally from their theoretical leanings. On the debate between offensive and defensive realists, see Jeffrey W. Talliaferro, "Security Seeking Under Anarchy: Defensive Realism Revisited," *International Security* Vol. 25, No. 3 (Winter 2000/2001), pp. 128-161; Sean M. Lynn-Jones and Steven E. Miller, "Preface," in Michael E. Brown, Owen M. Coté, Lynn-Jones, and Miller, eds., *The Perils of Anarchy: Contemporary Realism and International Security* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1995), pp. ix–xii; Benjamin Frankel, "Restating the Realist Case: An Introduction," *Security Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 3 (Spring 1996), pp. xiv–xx; and Sean M. Lynn-Jones, "Realism and America's Rise: A Review Essay," *International Security*, Vol. 23, No. 2 (Fall 1998), pp. 157–182.

⁶ For predictions of a Sino-American competition for power in East Asia, see, for example, John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2001). See also, Richard J. Bernstein and Ross Munro, "The Coming Conflict with China," *Foreign Affairs*, Fall 1997; Aaron L. Friedberg, "The Struggle for Mastery in Asia," *Commentary*, Vol. 110, Issue 4, November 2000; and Robert Kagan, "The Illusion of 'Managing' China," *Washington Post*, Sunday, May 15, 2005, p. B07.

economic integration, the development of regional multilateral institutions, and China's active participation in both of these processes. Given the historically unprecedented degree of U.S. preponderance in the region at the end of the Cold War and China's dramatic increase in economic and military power since then, all indicators suggest Beijing is gaining significant ground in any alleged head-to-head struggle for regional power and prestige. China began its rise from a very weak initial position and is not yet close to being a peer competitor of the United States. Still, the United States has arguably done much more to foster the growth of Chinese national power potential than to hinder it. So, from this perspective U.S. policy can certainly be seen as a failure. For this reason, the structural realist scholar, John Mearsheimer, labels as "misguided" U.S. engagement policy toward China.⁷ Washington's China policy may have successfully avoided conflict with a rising China in the near term, but it also has inadvertently aided mightily in the increase in China's economic, political, and military power, all of which comes at Washington's long-term expense.

Many of those concerned primarily with America's competition for power with China seem particularly worried about the period following September 11, 2001 as the United States seems to have become distracted in the Global War on Terror while China has quickly and dramatically gained leverage in Southeast Asia, Northeast Asia, and even Australia with impressive economic and diplomatic initiatives.⁸ For example, until very

⁷ Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, p. 402. . Importantly, he believes this mistaken strategy is rooted in a deep tradition in American strategic thinking of economic and political Liberalism, the core philosophical church of positive-sum versions of international relations theory.

⁸ Joshua Kurlantzick, "How China is Changing Global Diplomacy: Cultural Revolution," *The New Republic*, June 27, 2005; and Randy Schriver's unpublished paper, entitled "The China Challenge," presented to the CSIS study group entitled "With One Hand Tied," on June 15, 2005. For a somewhat less concerned portrayal of Chinese gains and U.S. challenges, see Evelyn Goh, "The Bush Administration and Southeast Asian Regional Security Strategies," in Robert M. Hathaway and Wilson Lee, eds., *George W. Bush and East Asia: A First Term Assessment*, (Washington: Woodrow Wilson Center, 2005), pp. 183-194.

recently, a widespread impression in the region has been that when the United States does engage with states in Southeast Asia it often sounds monotone and obsessed with terrorism at the expense of other issues.⁹ In the meantime, China has kept its eyes on the great power prize and has created strategic dependencies on China among its neighbors and has prevented balancing coalitions from forming by embracing regional multilateralism in an almost sickly sweet fashion.

Despite the differences in the two forms of analysis, there are areas of common ground, particularly when we analyze the policy prescriptions for the United States as it faces a rising China in Asia. In fact, as we will see, there might be a causal link between various U.S. policies derided in Beijing as examples of “containment” of China, and Beijing’s adoption of pro-active and constructive diplomacy that has helped stabilize the region to the benefit of all. By maintaining a strong military presence and a firm deterrent commitment to the security of Taiwan while upgrading its bilateral alliance with Japan in the mid-1990s, the United States helped channel China’s competitive energies into positive-sum areas such as multilateral confidence-building and economic accords. It is almost certainly not coincidental that it was just after the Taiwan Straits Crisis of 1995-96 and the Clinton-Hashimoto Joint Communique on the US-Japan Alliance that Beijing began its most serious pursuit of regional multilateralism in Asia. In other words, by making Chinese security elites worry about the possibility of U.S. encirclement, Washington helped Chinese government elites recognize that cooperation with its neighbors appears wise as a hedge against such an encirclement campaign. Of course,

⁹ As one former U.S. official put it to me, at a major East Asian conference in Southeast Asia in recent years, the Chinese entourage came prepared to discuss a wide variety of issues while the U.S. entourage came to discuss terrorism and, even more specifically, the potential proliferation of shoulder-held anti-aircraft missiles to terrorist groups. For prescriptions to rectify this, see Goh, “The Bush Administration,” p. 193.

China benefits from the fact that its economic and diplomatic partners are now less likely to want to choose the United States over China. But if the United States can maintain its own diplomatic equities in the region Washington can dissuade these actors from choosing China over the United States as well. Thereby, Washington can benefit from the positive-sum stabilizing role that Beijing's regional outreach provides in terms of reducing spirals of tension without paying a high price in terms of actual zero-sum competition with China.

The danger for the United States lies in China's ability to dissuade actors from supporting U.S. operations inside and outside the region. In the case of Taiwan, most regional actors have long wanted to avoid involvement in any case, so the U.S. loses little from China's added leverage with these actors. What would pose serious new dangers for the United States would be if China were able to dissuade regional actors from supporting the United States in conflicts with China over regional issues other than Taiwan, or if China could dissuade regional actors from cooperating with the United States in operations against third parties either in the region or outside the region. This last outcome should be preventable through constructive U.S. diplomacy, but the importance of working to prevent it should not be underestimated. The U.S. alliance system in Asia is a series of critically important links in the network that allows the United States to project military power around the world in a timely and sustained manner. Witness, for example, the key role that U.S. bases such as those in Thailand, Singapore, and Central Asia have played in military operations such as Desert Fox and Operation Enduring Freedom. China's ability to block such cooperation from regional actors could then have a severe impact on U.S. global national security interests.

To the degree that China has a “grand strategy” at all, it seems likely that, up until now, Chinese efforts to reassure its neighbors, push regional multilateralism, and deepen regional economic interdependence are rooted as much in a hedging strategy against potential U.S. pressure on China than they are rooted in a straightforward drive for regional hegemony or a desire to extrude the United States from the region. For example, in a recent book Avery Goldstein argues persuasively that China has adopted a neo-Bismarckian strategy designed to prevent the formation of an overwhelming countering coalition as it builds its strength at home.¹⁰ Such a strategy of “hedging” (often expressed as “liangmian xiazhu” in Chinese) does not call for direct confrontation of the United States and its allies and, in most cases, proscribes such confrontation, especially in the near term.

If such a hard-headed approach is indeed behind the rhetoric about a “peaceful rise,” then such formulations might have more to do with new tactics and strategies and less to do with fundamentally “new thinking” about the nature of international relations.¹¹ Such tactical shifts can still be significant, however. If China is more focused on preventing the United States from forming a strangling coalition around China and less focused on extruding the United States from the region, then Beijing’s concern about the

¹⁰ For an excellent recent book on China’s grand strategy, see Avery Goldstein, *Rising to the Challenge: China’s Grand Strategy and International Security* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005); for another fine analysis of Beijing’s hedging strategy, see David Shambaugh, “China Engages Asia: Reshaping the Regional Order,” *International Security* Vol. 29, No. 5 (Winter 2004/05), pp. 64-99. For this author’s general view of CCP grand strategy, see “China” in Richard Ellings and Aaron Friedberg, eds., *Power and Purpose: Strategic Asia, 2001-2002* (Seattle, National Bureau of Asian Research, 2001); for a very systematic analysis arguing that China has not yet shown signs of strong revisionism in its foreign policy, see Alastair Iain Johnston, “Is China a Status Quo Power,” *International Security* (Spring 2003), Vol. 27, No. 4, pp. 5-56.

¹¹ For an excellent summation of China’s alleged “new thinking” in diplomacy, see Taylor Fravel and Evan Medeiros, “China’s New Diplomacy,” *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 2003. Some aspects of the new thinking, such as Zheng Bijian’s concept of “peaceful rise” took a bit of a pounding in 2004, partially because Chinese elites became increasingly concerned with trends in cross-Strait relations. See Mark Leonard, “The Road Obscured,” *The Financial Times*, July 9, 2005 on line at <http://news.ft.com>.

prospect of U.S. dominance in Asia might play a constructive role in encouraging Beijing to reduce tensions with its neighbors. If the United States does not entirely drop the ball on maintaining its own relationships with its allies and security partners in the region, the United States could end up in the best of all possible worlds: Chinese competitive energies would be largely channeled into positive-sum endeavors such as reassuring its neighbors and building long-term Chinese equities in peace and stability in the region, while the U.S. could maintain a strong military presence and set of alliances to prevent China from converting its growing material power into regional political hegemony.

A Tale of Two Friedbergs? Should Washington Work to Reduce Regional Tension or Gear Up for a Bipolar Struggle for Regional Mastery?

Two very different articles by one author, Aaron Friedberg, serve as useful bookends for an analytic debate between those emphasizing the shared interests and positive-sum aspects of Sino-American relations in a post-Cold War East Asia and those who, instead, see a clear zero-sum competition for regional influence in which all forms of Chinese success on the international stage seem to come at Washington's expense. As with most debates, a reasonable observer might want to mix and match elements of both theoretical views. But the exercise of highlighting and underscoring the two most clearly marked positions in the debate should still prove useful in helping us understand the trade-offs involved at any given time in leaning toward one direction or the other.

In 1993 Aaron Friedberg published a very influential article in the journal *International Security*: "Ripe for Rivalry: Prospects for Peace in a Multipolar Asia." "Ripe for Rivalry" has not only been widely read, but widely misread. Contra

Friedberg's explicit line of argumentation in the piece, the article is often accused of being insufficiently sensitive to the characteristics that make East Asia different from Europe. One common complaint is that, as an example of "structural realism," Friedberg applies analytic devices designed for understanding European great power politics to a region that is culturally, politically, and economically so distinct from Europe that such analytic lenses only distort reality. In fact, although Friedberg is not an area specialist by training, the main thrust of the article is that post-Cold War East Asia is fundamentally different than post-Cold War Western Europe. It is precisely for this reason that he considered Asia significantly more dangerous. For related reasons, "Ripe for Rivalry" has also unfairly been viewed as highly pessimistic about the prospects for future peace and stability in East Asia. It would be a gross exaggeration to call the article optimistic at the time of its writing, but its level of long-term pessimism has been overstated.¹² In fact, as we will see, his later article on U.S.-China relations, published just before the Bush Administration took office, was considerably more pessimistic than "Ripe for Rivalry." The later article was so gloomy precisely because, unlike "Ripe for Rivalry," it indeed accepts many of the tenets of the most pessimistic strains of structural realism and,

¹² David C. Kang, "Getting Asia Wrong: The Need for New Analytic Frameworks," *International Security* Spring 2003; and Kang and Amitav Acharya's debate in *International Security* in *International Security* 2003-2004. "Ripe for Rivalry" is commonly conflated with other works by Friedberg which more easily fit the label of structural realism. See, for example, David Shambaugh, "Reshaping the Regional Order," *International Security*, Vol. 29, No. 3 (Winter 2004/2005), fn. 94 at p. 94; G. John Ikenberry and Andrew Moravcsik, "Liberal Theory and Politics of Security in Northeast Asia," Paper Prepared for the Ford Foundation Project on Non-Traditional Security, Seoul, South Korea, January 30, 2004, p. 2. I chaired a panel at APSA in 2003 where more than one scholar on the panel and several in the audience labeled Friedberg's article an example of regionally insensitive "neo-realism" that had made incorrect predictions. This common misconception provided the inspiration for this project. I argued that the article was more liberal than realist and that given his variables, the theoretical aspects of the article have held up fairly well even if the region is more stable than Friedberg might have expected at the time. A sustained U.S. presence as security guarantor, increased economic interdependence, and some growth in multilateral economic and security cooperation have all been accompanied by some increase in stability. Problems remain in the region, but so do many negative factors identified clearly by Friedberg in the article.

therefore, assumes that a rising China and an incumbent U.S. hegemon are nearly destined for a strategic showdown.

“Ripe for Rivalry” is not an example of structural realism, but a hybrid theoretical work that emphasizes the importance of a raft of variables associated with the work of Liberal and Liberal institutionalist scholars.¹³ Friedberg’s article reasonably considers structural change at the end of the Cold War as a foundational condition that poses challenges for stability in Asia, but then focuses on the severe shortage of pacifying domestic, economic, and institutional factors in East Asia. Friedberg underscored the importance of the following potentially destabilizing regional characteristics, none of them necessarily rooted in a zero-sum, *realpolitik* struggle for power: different political systems across states; limited intra-regional economic interdependence; weak regional multilateral institutions; vast differences in wealth within and across national borders; cultural and ethnic tensions rooted in and exacerbated by legacies of historical conflict; widespread territorial disputes; and the lack of secure, second-strike nuclear capabilities in some of the key regional actors. Positive developments on any or all of these scores, he argues, could help mitigate the destabilizing influences of the structural shock supplied by the collapse of the Soviet Union. In Western Europe widespread liberal democracy, highly interdependent economies, deep reconciliation among historical foes, high degrees of security institutionalization in NATO, OSCE, etc., and developed secure second strike capabilities in four of the relevant regional actors (Russia, the United

¹³ Even in its title, the article is consciously more beholden to the liberal take on post-Cold War European security—Stephen Van Evera’s “Primed for Peace.”—than it is John Mearsheimer’s pessimistic neo-realist piece “Back to the Future,” which considers the end of Cold War bipolarity dangerous even for Western Europe. Stephen Van Evera, “Primed for Peace: Europe After the Cold War,” *International Security*, Vol. 15, No. 3 (Winter 1990/91), pp. 7-57; and John J. Mearsheimer, “Back to the Future: Instability in Europe After the Cold War,” *International Security* Vol. 15, No. 1 (Summer 1990), pp. 5-56.

States, Britain, and France), all meant that peace would likely flourish despite the structural shock of Soviet collapse. East Asia, however, was fraught with mistrust, animosity, and uncertainty. Many questions remained, therefore, about the region's future stability.

“Ripe for Rivalry” argues that one solution to the problem of regional rivalries and mistrust is the continued presence of the United States as a provider of common security and an honest broker in the regional disputes. Since the United States was widely considered in the region to be the “least distrusted actor” and since it is the only single actor powerful enough to provide collective security goods, its continued presence was considered vital to regional stability.¹⁴ This is especially true for the period before the other aforementioned stabilizing factors were in place. In a nutshell, the United States had a key role to play in buying time for the development of stabilizing economic and political relationships.

Perhaps the most pessimistic aspect of Friedberg's 1993 article was his expressed doubt about the longevity of a robust U.S. military presence in the region. Friedberg shared the views of many regional actors at the time: after the collapse of the Soviet threat, the United States very well might choose to reduce its security footprint around the world. U.S. alliances in Asia in particular might suffer from the absence of a common Soviet threat, problems related to alliance burden-sharing, and tensions related to trade and other economic disputes with Japan and others, etc... In 1993 Friedberg could not have known that the Clinton Administration, via the Nye Initiative, would maintain a robust presence in the region and strengthen alliances there, particularly with

¹⁴ This description of the U.S. role in the region is generally attributed to Singapore's Lee Kwan Yew. See, for example, Roger Buckley, *United States in the Asia-Pacific Since 1945* (West Nyack, NY: Cambridge University Press), p. v.

Japan. Nor could he have known that the fast-paced growth of the United States in the 1990s and the extended malaise of Japan would reduce the salience of trade imbalances between Washington and Tokyo. Neither could Friedberg have known about the election of the Bush Administration on a foreign policy platform of strengthening U.S. alliances. Finally, Friedberg could not have known about the transforming and catalyzing effect of 9-11 on U.S. power projection, defense budgets, etc.. So, it made sense in 1993 for him to be a bit agnostic about whether the stabilizing U.S. role would endure.

Friedberg was not, however, fatalistic about U.S. policy nor was he extremely pessimistic about the ability of the region to get its house in order over time and reduce regional tensions, especially if the United States continued to supply public security goods that bought time for the aforementioned mitigating factors to grow. In my opinion, he correctly viewed the prospect for significant US withdrawal from East Asia at the time as both bone-headed and possible. However, he hardly viewed it as an imperative driven by the changed structure of the international system. The conclusion of the article is more accurately labeled cautious, rather than pessimistic. Friedberg wrote in 1993:

What is unfolding in Asia is a race between the accelerating dynamics of multipolarity, which could increase the chances of conflict, and the growth of mitigating factors that should tend to dampen them and to improve the prospects for a continuing peace. The race is still in its early phases and it is still too soon to pick a winner. As underdeveloped as they currently are, the forces conducive to greater stability are probably in the lead...¹⁵

In order to supply time for the mitigating factors to win this race between stability and instability, Friedberg prescribes continued US military presence in the region, particularly in Japan. He also asserted that the United States and other regional actors should

¹⁵ Friedberg, "Ripe for Rivalry," pp. 27-28. This statement can only be viewed as highly pessimistic when one contrasts it with the rosier liberal analyses of Western Europe found in Stephen Van Evera's work in the early 1990s and the subsequent work of authors like Robert Jervis (APSR, March 2002).

encourage the development of confidence-building measures, multilateral security institutions, and economic interdependence.

From the theoretical point of view expressed in “Ripe for Rivalry,” one has reason to be more optimistic now than Friedberg himself was in 1993. Not only has the United States maintained its bases in Japan, since the launching of the Nye Initiative in 1994 U.S.-Japan security relations have improved. Japan’s Self Defense Forces have grown significantly more active in the region and the world to the great satisfaction of Washington elites. If anything, September 11 and the growth of Chinese power have only undergirded this process of increased Japanese assertiveness and increased U.S.-Japan coordination. Some of the other stabilizing factors that Friedberg saw as lacking in East Asia in 1993 have developed in the interim: the region integrated economically at a very fast pace; and China has improved political relations with many key regional actors, most notably the ASEAN states, Australia, India, the Central Asian former Soviet Republics, and the Republic of Korea.

Washington’s provision of a sustained security guarantee for the region has arguably fostered this process in both intended and unintended ways. Judging from U.S. government documents like the Department of Defense’s 1998 East Asia Strategy Report, U.S. provision of collective goods in the form of security assurances to all regional players was an intentional and central part of U.S. strategy at the time.¹⁶ By providing common security, the United States provided more time for regional actors to find ways to handle their differences and animosities more peaceably, thereby reducing the likelihood of severe spirals of tension.

¹⁶ Department of Defense, East Asia Strategy Report, November 1998.

Washington's maintenance of a strong set of bilateral security relationships with various regional actors, especially Japan and Taiwan, also had important positive effects in China that may not have been intended. The buttressing of relations with U.S. friends and allies provided incentives for Beijing to explore multilateral diplomacy as a hedge against American power. New forms of multilateral cooperation have been created and existing multilateral organizations have been somewhat strengthened, largely by China's active participation. The ASEAN Regional Forum has grown in size and importance since its inception in 1994 in large part because China has participated more actively in the organization over time. In April 1996, just after the 1995-1996 Taiwan Strait Crisis, China reached multilateral security agreements and adopted mutual confidence-building measures along its border with four former Soviet Republics. This group, originally the "Shanghai 5" would expand to 6 and become the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in 2001.¹⁷ The organization is notable for several reasons: it greatly reduced the chance for border tensions and disputes among its members; it was promoted by China, a country previously quite nervous about multilateralism; it emphasized common security concerns, such as terrorism and separatism, rather than *realpolitik* competition; and, it does not include the United States or its allies.

China improved its relations with Southeast Asian states in part by playing up its generally stabilizing regional role in the 1997 Asian financial crisis. After asserting itself in an increasingly proactive way in the ASEAN Regional Forum and APEC since the mid-1990s, Beijing played a major role in the creation of ASEAN plus Three (ASEAN plus China, Japan and South Korea), a forum that discusses both economics and security

¹⁷ Goldstein, "The Fen (RMB) is Mightier than the Sword."

affairs.¹⁸ From the perspective of reducing security dilemmas and reducing misperceptions, such cooperative behavior and the creation of inclusive multilateral organizations should be applauded since the organization links Northeast Asia and Southeast Asia and includes the three major actors in the former, among whom ethnic tensions and unresolved historical issues are plentiful.

Another variable that Friedberg emphasized in “Ripe for Rivalry” as a force for instability in early post-Cold War East Asia, as compared to post-Cold War Western Europe, was the lack of deep economic interdependence. Where regional economic cooperation existed in 1993, it generally took the form of Asian nations cooperating to produce goods for third markets. Intra-regional trade as a percentage of GNP was rather low, especially in comparison to a highly integrated Western Europe. Intra-regional investment was often limited to turn-key plants targeting markets outside the region, especially the United States. The biggest export market for nearly all the actors in the region at the time was the United States. In contrast, today, nearly half of regional exports are to other regional actors and China, not the United States, is the biggest trade partner of many of the regional actors. That list most recently and most notably includes South Korea and Japan, two U.S. allies and traditional large-scale exporters to the United States.¹⁹ Japan had long been China’s largest trade partner, but the fact that the

¹⁸ Amitav Acharya, “The Role of Regional Organizations: Are Views Changing? A Paper Prepared for the Pacific Symposium, 2004, National Defense University, Washington, D.C. April 22-23 , 2004.

¹⁹ Speech by Shamshad Akhtar, Director General, Southeast Asia Department Asian Development Bank “Economic Integration of East Asia: Trends, Challenges and Opportunities At the Symposium on “The Challenges and Opportunities of Economic Integration in East Asia” The Royal Society, London, 27 October 2004, at <http://www.adb.org/Documents/Speeches/2004/sp2004033.asp>. For discussion of the growth in intra-regional trade in the early part of this decade and China’s central role in it, see World Bank, “East Asia Update: Looking Beyond Short-Term Shocks,” April 2003 East Asia and Pacific Region, at <http://www.indofn.nl/economie/03.18.1.pdf> Footnote for economic integration for East Asia.

relationship is now reciprocal shows how integrated the local economies have become.²⁰ In 2004 China replaced Japan as the number one regional target for neighboring states' exports as well.²¹ While ASEAN still trades more with the United States than with China, that gap is closing quickly and ASEAN-China trade will likely surpass ASEAN-U.S. trade within a decade. More than half of Chinese imports are used in Chinese export industries, and an increasing percentage of Chinese exports are destined for the region. So, we can see how China's economic development is at the center of regional economic integration.²²

Fueling trade interdependence is the flow of foreign capital into China, especially in manufacturing industries that require both foreign inputs and foreign markets. As one recent Congressional Research Service report points out, "the bulk of China's exports are manufactured under foreign brand names, and over half of China's exports are produced by foreign-owned companies." China has become the biggest target for Foreign Direct investment in the world. Utilized Foreign Direct Investment increased from \$40.71 billion U.S. dollars in 2000 to \$64 billion in 2004. Much of that new capital is from the region. In fact, while yearly U.S. investment in China has stayed relatively flat in the past few years, regional investment in China has skyrocketed. For example, Japan used to trade heavily with China but invest little. But Japanese investment has been flowing into China in the past years, as has Taiwanese, South Korean, and Southeast Asian investment. Japan's investment increased from \$2.91 billion dollars in 2000, to \$5.4

²⁰ Thomas Lum and Dick K. Kanto, "China's Trade with the United States and the World," Congressional Research Service Report for Congress, Updated April 29, 2005

²¹ For coverage of these statistics, see Heather Smith, Garth Day, Brian Thomas, and Luke Yeaman, "The Changing Pattern of East Asia's Growth," especially p. 49, at www.treasury.gov.au/documents/958/PDF/05_changing_pattern.pdf.

²² Smith, Day, et al., "The Changing pattern," pp. 50-51.

billion in 2004, surpassing U.S. investment by a healthy sum. The increase in South Korea's investment in China is the most dramatic, jumping from \$1.49 billion in 2000 to \$6.2 billion in 2004, over 50% more than investments from the United States in that year.²³ These flows of intra-regional investment and trade have created a vast network of transnational production often centered around the Chinese economy. According to some political scientists, interdependence based on transnational production reduces incentives for trade conflict and international military conflict well above and beyond the effects of simple interdependence based on bilateral trade in finished products.²⁴

China has attempted to catalyze existing trends through economic diplomacy. One factor that might help secure China's leading role in the ASEAN economies is the China-ASEAN free trade agreement (FTA) signed in 2001 and due to take effect in 2010.²⁵ This FTA supplements agreements reached in multilateral forums like APEC, the Asian Development Bank, or the WTO. What is arguably more important than these international institutions and trade agreements in altering the trends identified by Friedberg in 1993 has been the simple fact of fast-paced Chinese economic growth combined with a Chinese economy highly open to trade and investment. Without the central role China has played, there would not be the truly impressive economic

²³ Thomas Lum and Dick K. Kanto, "China's Trade with the United States and the World," Congressional Research Service Report for Congress, Updated April 29, 2005. p. 37.

²⁴ Helen Milner, "Resisting the Protectionist Temptation: Industry and the Making of Trade Policy in France and the US in the 1970s," *International Organization*, 41:4 (Autumn 1987), pp. 639-657; and Stephen Brooks, "The Globalization of Production and the Declining Benefits of Conquest," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* Vol. 43 (October 1999), pp. 646-690.

²⁵ China-ASEAN trade surpassed US\$ 100 billion in 2004 according to a Chinese government website, see China, ASEAN trade over 100 billion in 2004 (2005/02/04).

<http://www.chinaembassy.org.in/eng/zgbd/t182607.htm> This reflected a one-year growth of 30%, along with 40% growth in China's trade with South Korea. U.S. trade with ASEAN stood at US\$ 136 billion according to Christopher Hill's June 7, 2005 Testimony to the Asia and Pacific Affairs Subcommittee of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, which can be found at <http://tokyo.usembassy.gov/e/p/tp-20050608-14.html>

interdependence that we see in the region.²⁶ So, from the perspective of “Ripe for Rivalry,” a China that is growing fast and is confident in its foreign and domestic economic policies is a positive factor for regional stability and, therefore, for U.S. national security interests.

Even by the standards of “Ripe for Rivalry,” however, there are still big problems in the region: mistrust between China and Japan is still very strong. Moreover, although China has successfully negotiated many of its territorial disputes on land, the region still has many maritime sovereignty disputes---between China and Japan, Japan and Korea, China and the ASEAN states, and among the ASEAN states themselves. Some of these disputes have intensified as a result of seabed exploration by multiple actors and sub-surface military activities by the PRC in particular. Moreover, despite intense economic integration across the Taiwan Strait, politically Taiwan seems significantly more distant from the mainland than it did in 1993. The threat of real conflict across the Strait (as opposed to missile exercises and other martial demonstrations) seems higher this decade than last, even though cross-Strait conditions are rather calm at the time of this writing.

Of course, in the “Ripe for Rivalry” world, tensions over Taiwan and poor Sino-Japanese relations are not in U.S. national security interest since they increase the risk of conflict in a region of great economic and strategic importance to the United States. Even as the U.S.-Japan alliance tightens in part because of China’s increased military threat to Taiwan and its bullying behavior toward Japan, this is not necessarily a positive development from this perspective. Especially given the historical legacy of conflict and the high degree of mistrust that flows from it, Japanese assertiveness can only lead to a

²⁶ See for example, Eric Teo Chu Cheow, “China as the Center of Asian Economic Integration,” China Brief, Volume 4, Issue 15 (July 22, 2004) http://www.jamestown.org/publications_details.php?volume_id=395&issue_id=3025&article_id=2368296

further spiral of tensions between Japan and China, to the detriment of regional stability. This is doubly true when that assertiveness seems to have implications for relations across the Taiwan Strait. For example, an influential Chinese academic and government consultant, Prof. Wu Xinbo, recently wrote a powerful article expressing grave concern about trends in Japanese strategic thinking, in the U.S.-Japan alliance, and in particular, in recent Japanese policy toward Taiwan.²⁷ Other Chinese analysts similarly decry the upgrades in the U.S.-Japan alliance and Washington's effort to use the "China military threat" theory to justify its pursuit of continued hegemony in East Asia.²⁸

From Reassurance to Struggle for Mastery: Friedberg revisits Asia in 2000

While the analysis in "Ripe for Rivalry" should render one more optimistic in this decade than one was in last, a subsequent article by Friedberg, "The Struggle for Mastery in Asia," (*Commentary*: November 2000), is highly pessimistic about regional security dynamics. In his 2000 article Friedberg offers dire prognoses of a severe, largely zero-sum Sino-American struggle for influence in Asia. If one takes Friedberg's 2000 article to heart, reducing tensions is no longer the name of the game for U.S. policy: protecting and expanding America's relative power position in relation to a rising China is.

Employing a different analytic focus than he did in 1993, in 2000 Friedberg seems quite concerned about the new development of regional characteristics that seemed to him to

²⁷ Wu Xinbo, "Taihai: Ri Xiang Tong Mei 'Bingjian Zuozhan.'" "The Taiwan Strait: Japan Thinks it Will Fight Shoulder to Shoulder with the United States," [Huanqiu Shibao [Global Times], June 20, 2005. For and analysis of such concerns in China about the U.S.-Japan alliance in the 1990s, see Christensen, "China, Japan, and the U.S.-Japan Alliance."

²⁸ Wang Xinjun, "Mei Weihe Guchui 'Zhongguo Junshi Weixie'" "Why Does the United States Play up the 'China Military Threat'" *Huanqiu Shibao* [Global Times], June 13, 1950, p. 11. Also see Liu Yantang, "Political Bureau Study Session," in *Beijing Liaowang* June 6, 2005, pp. 12-15 in Foreign Broadcast Information Service, June 9, 2005, Document CPP20050609000084.

be dangerous only in their absence in 1993. What appeared as factors that might stabilize regional relations in 1993 now appear as potentially detrimental to US national security interests because they reduce Washington's relative power in the region in its competition with Beijing. Friedberg writes:

As time passes, China will probably become even less susceptible to American economic pressure than it is today. Chinese exports to the United States may be large, but even now they are greatly overshadowed by China's exports to its Asian neighbors. And as important as the U.S. is as a source of capital, it now [in 2000] comes in among the five largest providers of direct foreign investment to China; the other four [Hong Kong, Japan, Singapore, and South Korea] are all Asian players.

Of course, this is precisely what we would have expected if the region was to break out of its thin intra-regional interdependence of 1993 and the heavy reliance on outside markets that was considered so destabilizing earlier. "Struggle for Mastery" similarly bemoans the political leverage afforded the mainland by economic integration with Taiwan. The PRC's assistance to Thailand during the 1997 financial crisis is also cast in a worrisome light.

In 2000, unlike 1993, Friedberg also portrays China's active participation in existing and new regional international regimes as potentially potent parts of a strategy to "displace the United States from Asia." The danger is no longer that crude balancing and spirals of tensions will occur among regional actors in the absence of a potent U.S. role or robust regional institutions, as it was for Friedberg in 1993, but that the regional actors will bandwagon with and accommodate a rising China leaving the United States in the lurch. In 2000 Friedberg wrote: "China will no doubt become an even more enthusiastic participant in multilateral security dialogues and other forums in Asia, using them to convey the image of a good international citizen and an open, unthreatening

power.” Of course, this is exactly what multilateral confidence building is all about. In 1993, Friedberg argued colorfully and pessimistically that the “rich alphabet soup” of multilateral institutions in Europe was, in Asia, a “thin gruel indeed.” In 2000 the soup is becoming somewhat thicker, but in 2000 Friedberg argued that the corn starch added to make it so is laced with Chinese sedatives and hallucinogens that weaken the resolve of the falsely reassured regional actors, including U.S. allies. What was multilateral confidence-building in 1993, is a Chinese peace offensive in 2000.

ASEAN plus Three provides a good illustration. For those worried about security dilemmas and spirals of tension, ASEAN plus Three might be seen as highly stabilizing since it includes Southeast Asian and Northeast Asian actors and all three major security actors in Northeast Asia, each of whom engaged in military conflicts with the other two at some point in the last century. But from the view of a Sino-American power struggle, ASEAN plus Three looks particularly worrisome to some analysts precisely because it includes two U.S. allies---Japan and the Republic of Korea--- but excludes the United States. Some fear that China’s promotion of the grouping is an effort to drive a wedge between the United States and its regional allies. It does not help matters, from this perspective, that China has been such a proactive proponent of ASEAN plus Three. What has exacerbated this concern recently is that China and Malaysia, two of the most anti-American actors in the grouping, have pushed hard for an Asian Summit Meeting (ASM) [or an East-Asian Summit Meeting (EAS)] scheduled for late this year. As Randall Schriver points out, there is only one thing clear about that summit to date: it will exclude the United States.²⁹

²⁹ Schriver, “The China Challenge.”

The planned exclusion of the United States from the summit is seen as particularly important, because the summit is the likely venue for the creation of an “East Asian Community.” Even moderate, influential Chinese international relations analysts such as Professor Wang Jisi at Peking University have called for American exclusion from the Summit, even while a top official and foreign affairs advisor, Zheng Bijian, traveled to Washington to assure the United States that China has no intention to extrude the United States from the region. The Director General of the PRC Foreign Ministry’s Department of Asian Affairs similarly tried to reassure nervous Asian actors of this at the Shangrila Dialogue in early June 2005.³⁰ So, although Beijing seems to be working to exclude the United States from the organization, its diplomats at the same time seem dedicated to cushioning the blow of such a strategy through diplomacy about inclusiveness and regional openness.

From an analytic point of view, it is difficult to imagine a regional situation that would look positive from both of Friedberg’s articles’ perspectives. If we wanted more meaningful multilateral institutions in the region, then there was no way to avoid increasing the relative importance of China in those regimes. In the early 1990s China was extremely suspicious of multilateral regimes, especially in the security realm. That changed significantly in the late 1990s and now China is adopting a much more pro-

³⁰ Ta Kung Pao Cites PRC Scholars on China's Multilateralism in East Asia, in Foreign Broadcast and Information Services, *CPP20050621000061 Hong Kong Ta Kung Pao (Internet Version-WWW) in Chinese 21 Jun 05*. For Zheng Bijian’s position on non-exclusion of U.S. or EU interests, see “China’s peaceful rise part of Asia peaceful rising, official says” Xinhuanet April 22, 2005. <http://www.hq.xinhuanet.com>. Zheng carried a similar message to the United States during a visit in mid-June. See, “No Anti-US Plan in Asia: China” *Reuters*, June 18, 2005. For Cui Tiankai’s statements, see Zhang Yongxing, “Chinese Representative Explains China’s New Concept of Security at Asuan Security Conference,” Beijing Xinhua News Service, June 4, 2005 in FBIS June 5, 2005, CPP20050605000027.

active posture toward global and regional multilateral institutions. In fact, rather than following the lead of the United States and Japan, China is championing some multilateral initiatives in the region. Similarly, the China-ASEAN Free Trade Area, scheduled to take effect in 2010, excludes the United States but promises to accelerate trade and investment between China and its southern neighbors. Globally, since the early 1990s China has joined the WTO, been more active in the UNSC, and has joined or at least agreed to comply with several major arms control agreements (NPT, CWC, BWC, CTBT). China has also settled several of its land border disputes and is in the process of settling others. China helped create, hosted, and recently helped revive the six-party talks on North Korea's nuclear weapons. Finally, China has been advocating trilateral functional cooperative meetings with the ROK and Japan, including on security issues. If successful over time, this regime could create a parallel structure to the United States, Japan, and South Korea Trilateral Coordination and Organization Group (or TCOG), one of the most important U.S.-led security institutions in Asia.³¹

In "Struggle for Mastery" seemingly everything that increases China's appeal to its neighbors and reassures them about China's intentions---from economic integration to multilateral cooperation---appears threatening to U.S. interests in this zero-sum competition. Many of the prescriptions from "Ripe for Rivalry," when filled over the following 7 years, turn out to be dangerous to U.S. national security interests in Friedberg's mind. China's economic integration in the region increases China's power and reduces U.S. economic leverage against China and others. China's ability to influence its neighbors and, especially, Taiwan, through peaceful engagement and

³¹ For a concise review, see David Gompert, Francois Godemont, Evan S. Medeiros, and James C. Mulvenon, "China on the Move," Rand Conference Proceedings, 2005, pp. 30-32.

economic integration, rather than military means, improves China's security environment. Such an improvement thereby damages the U.S. security portfolio. China's participation in multilateral economic and security organizations reassures China's neighbors, reducing the likelihood that they will see the rise of China as a threat and thereby reducing the likelihood that they will agree to cooperate with the United States in balancing against that rise (until, perhaps, it is too late to do so effectively). With the exception of both articles prescribing a sustained U.S. presence, the analyses and forecasts in the two articles are then strikingly different.

A recent article in the *New Republic* by Joshua Kurlantzick emphasizes in a similar manner the dangers of China's newfound diplomatic "soft-power." Kurlantzick complains that the Pentagon and "hawkish" U.S. commentators are blinded by their obsession with the modernization of the Chinese military: "Too often, official Washington, whether focused on China's military or awed by China's booming economy, simply disregards the gravity of China's changing foreign policy." He argues that China has quietly and effectively been using diplomatic leverage in the developing world and even with U.S. allies to become a much more serious rival to the United States than its relatively backward military capabilities would ever allow. Moving well past Friedberg's notion of a Sino-American rivalry in the region, Kurlantzick sees China vying with the United States for hegemony around the world. Pointing to how Chinese soft power appears to be spreading quickly to such disparate places as Latin America and Australia, he writes: "China may become the first nation since the fall of the Soviet Union that could seriously challenge the United States for control of the international system."³²

³² Joshua Kurlantzick, "How China is Changing Global Diplomacy: Cultural Revolution," *New Republic*, June 27, 2005.

“Struggle for Mastery” does not explicitly dismiss the idea that a peaceful and stable China could rise without threatening U.S. interests, but from the logic of the article it is hard to see exactly how that might occur. John Mearsheimer takes a similarly dark view of China’s rise from the perspective of great power competition and, therefore, the policy of “constructive engagement” espoused by most American elites. He believes that this policy is based on the false hope that international engagement of China will do more than just make China strong, but will also make it more cooperative. In 2001, Mearsheimer writes:

China is still very far away from the point where it has enough latent power to make a run at regional hegemony. So it is not too late for the United State to reverse course and do what it can to slow the rise of China. In fact, the structural imperatives of the international system, which are powerful, will probably force the United States to abandon its policy of constructive engagement in the near future.³³

Mearsheimer recognizes that China is hardly poised to become a global superpower rival of the United States any time soon. But, he asserts, a long-term regional power transition is under way in East Asia and China’s relative influence in comparison to that of the United States has increased dramatically. Moreover, it is likely to continue to do so barring a massive slow down in the Chinese economy, a political implosion in the PRC, or large-scale natural disaster in China. Therefore, he believes a sharp adjustment in U.S. policy away from engagement is in order and that international forces will eventually bring U.S. elites around to his point of view. Prominent Chinese international relations

³³ Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, p. 402.

experts like Shi Yinhong and Yan Xuetong, believe Mearsheimer's prediction for a change in U.S.-China policy is well under way.³⁴

Another U.S. analyst, Michael Weinstein, seems to agree with Mearsheimer that the United States should do more to contain China, but is more pessimistic about its ability to do so. Weinstein seemingly bemoans the fact that global economic interests will prevent the United States from adopting an effective containment policy against China. He writes: "China's next stage of development brings the incipient conflict between Beijing and Washington into full view. Holding back Chinese expansion -- if that is even possible -- carries the high probability of derailing globalization; allowing it to occur makes the realization of Beijing's geostrategic aims far more likely...Look for Beijing to proceed confidently on its course and for Washington to be incapable of mounting effective resistance."³⁵

Another zero-sum analyst, Robert Kagan, takes a position in the middle between Mearsheimer and Weinstein. Kagan believes containment has already started, but that the illusion that the United States might be able to manage China's rise along the lines prescribed in "Ripe for Rivalry" has led to a dangerously watered down containment effort. Kagan writes: "The United States may not be able to avoid a policy of containing

³⁴ See "PRC Scholar Shi Yinhong: China, US 'Structural Contradictions' Deepening," in Foreign Broadcast Information Services, CPP20050613000226 Beijing Guoji Xianqu Daobao (Internet Version-WWW) in Chinese 13 Jun 05. Shi writes, "The US superpower is determined to preserve its most important and most celebrated strategic asset, that is, US military superiority, while China for its part proceeds from its fundamental and elementary national interests in being determined to achieve its indispensable military modernization. This fundamental contradiction will gradually affect or regulate Sino-US relations to an ever weightier degree, giving them more and more of a primary strategic tinge of a rivalry relationship between powers." For Yan's views, see PRC's Wang Jisi: China May Leave G8 in Future; Scholars Support Multilateralism CPP20050622000094 Hong Kong Wen Wei Po (Internet Version-WWW) in Foreign Broadcast Information Services, Chinese 22 Jun 05 [Dispatch from Beijing News Center by reporter Ke Chung: "Beijing University Dean: China May Not Join G8"]

³⁵ Michael A. Weinstein, *Intelligence Brief: China*, 28 June 2005
<http://www.pinr.com>.

China; we are, in fact, already doing so. This is a sufficiently unsettling prospect, however, that we are doing all we can to avoid thinking about it.” For Kagan, like Mearsheimer, the United States is not so much distracted in the Global War on Terror or weakened by a fifth column of U.S. investors and business people. Rather Washington is deluded by the Liberal theories that give U.S. security analysts false hope that China’s rise could be peaceful and consistent with U.S. interests, if only the United States can avoid increasing regional tensions and unnecessarily antagonizing China.³⁶

Again the tension between the two worldviews seems sharp here. The growth of the Chinese economy has arguably been the driver of the region’s economic integration and the increase in China’s diplomatic activities has been at the center of the growth in meaningful multilateralism in East Asia. China’s emergence as the number one target of FDI in the region and the world is good from the perspective of increasing the costs of conflict for all actors and thereby increasing the positive-sum gains for peace. From a zero-sum perspective, however, China’s increasing importance to all of the regional actors and the decline in exports to the United States as a percentage of total exports means that China is gaining leverage over its neighbors at America’s expense. More generally, China’s fast-paced economic growth allows China the ability to flex its muscles in various ways, from offering preferential loans and business deals to real or potential enemies of the United States, to holding U.S. treasury bonds as a strategic lever against the United States, to purchasing weapons and weapons technology abroad. Foreign direct investors and their home states are more beholden to China thus increasing Beijing’s leverage over them and decreasing U.S. power and flexibility in the region. So, if one wants to solve the various security dilemmas discussed in “Ripe for Rivalry,”

³⁶ Robert Kagan, “The Illusion of ‘Managing’ China,” *Washington Post*, Sunday, May 15, 2005, p. B07.

regional economic interdependence is one of the surest solutions. But if one wants to limit the growth of China's influence in the region in comparison to that of the United States, then it would have been preferable to maintain the less integrated hub and spokes system in which regional actors were highly dependent on the United States but relatively independent of each other.

While one can hardly deny China's rise in the region, even if we accept a zero-sum perspective on economics and diplomacy, the U.S. performance has not been all bad. It is true that the United States has advanced its relations with South Asian and Central Asian states since September 11, 2001, including both India and Pakistan. Moreover, the U.S.-Japan alliance is arguably stronger now than at any time since the end of the Cold War. The U.S. economy remains highly important to all of the regional actors, especially to the ASEAN states and to China itself.

China, however, has also made advances in all of these areas. In Central Asia, China was the founding member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, which includes various Central and South Asian actors as members or observers, but excludes the United States.³⁷ At that organization's most recent meeting in July, members called for a timeline for the withdrawal of foreign military forces in member states that were deployed initially to fight the Global War on Terror in Afghanistan. This very thinly veiled reference to U.S. bases in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan is precisely what zero-sum analysts fear from multilateral organizations that include both of the potential U.S. great power rivals, China and Russia, and wavering U.S. security partners like Kyrgyzstan and

³⁷ Lyle Goldstein, "China in the new Central Asia: The Fen (RMB) is Mightier than the Sword," *Fletcher Forum of World Affairs* Vol. 29, No. 1 (Winter 2005), pp. 13-34.

Uzbekistan, but exclude the United States.³⁸ China also recently offered diplomatic reassurances to the Karimov regime in Uzbekistan following the murderous crackdown on protestors in that country. The Chinese leadership did more than maintain Karimov's scheduled summit in Beijing in June following the massacres, they heaped praise on the Uzbek leader's resolute stance against the "three evils," separatism, terrorism, and extremism.³⁹ This occurred at a time when Washington was alienating its important Central Asian security partner by demanding an international investigation into the massacre. In South Asia, China has enjoyed great recent progress in trade and diplomacy with India, as bilateral Sino-Indian trade has ballooned (with the surplus on the Indian side) and serious border negotiations have begun to address issues that led to war between the two Asian giants in 1962.⁴⁰

Perhaps what is most dramatic from the perspective of a Sino-American power competition is that China has enjoyed markedly improved diplomatic relations with two

³⁸ For the original SCO Declaration, see "Declaration of Heads of States of Shanghai Cooperation Organization," at July 5, 2005 at <http://www.sectsc.org/home.asp?LanguageID=2> For the removal of any remaining veil as to whom the SCO was referring to and what Beijing's position on the matter is, see the People's Daily Online article on July 13, 2005 entitled "Deadline Expected of Anti-Terrorism Military Presence"; "Marina Volkova, "Shanghai Cooperation Against Terrorism," Rossiyskaya Gazeta, July 6, 2005 in FBIS, July 6, 2005, Doc. 200507061477. For a tough reaction to the SCO declaration from the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Richard Myers, see Ann Scott Tyson, "Pentagon Pressured to Pull Out of Uzbek, Kyrgyz Bases: Russia And China Bullying Central Asia, U.S. Says," Washington Post, July 15, 2005, Pg. 19. Recently the SCO has expanded the number of observers in the organization to include India, Iran, and Pakistan, a trend that concerns the U.S. Army War College's Stephen Blank from a geo-strategic perspective. See his "New Turns in Chinese Policy Towards Central Asia," *Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst*, June 15, 2005.

³⁹ Stephen Blank, "Islam, Karimov, and the Heirs of Tiananmen," Tuesday, June 14, 2005, http://jamestown.org/edm/article.php?article_id=2369877.

⁴⁰ Sino-Indian trade grew to 13.6 billion US dollars in 2004 (a sharp increase of over 70%) and China made key concessions on border disputes over the province of Sikkim during an April 2005 visit to India by Premier Wen Jiabao. See "Trade Powers India-China Ties," BBC News, April 8, 2005 at http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/4425831.stm.

key U.S. allies, South Korea and the Philippines, since the late 1990s.⁴¹ Moreover, even in bilateral relationships in which China's diplomatic relations are quite weak, economic leverage still looms large. Political relations between Japan and China and across the Taiwan Strait are currently quite cold, but economic relations are deep and growing quickly. Sino-Japanese economic cooperation has skyrocketed, with China becoming China's number one trade partner in 2004. China is Taiwan's leading overseas investment target and its largest trade partner, with Taiwan enjoying a mammoth trade surplus with the mainland.⁴²

Although neither Taiwan nor Japan will likely be eager to simply accommodate mainland China on core security issues, the economic relationship that they have with the PRC will almost certainly affect their choices moving forward. Outside of Japan and Taiwan, many actors in the region, including Thailand, Singapore, and Vietnam seem to want to hedge their bets in the face of a potential U.S.-China showdown. They do not want to be forced to choose the United States over China.⁴³ (The good news, of course, from an American perspective is they do not want to be forced to choose China over the United States either). Meanwhile, in South Asia, U.S. relations with India have improved markedly even as the United States has maintained a limited strategic partnership with Pakistan in the war on terror.

⁴¹ On recent improvement in PRC- Philippines relations on security issues, see for example Jaime Laude, "Chinese Defense Official Due in Manila for Dialogue," *The Philippine Star*, May 22 2005. On how Sino-ROK relations have improved not only in economics and diplomacy, but in the cultural arena as well, see Antaneta Bezlova, "China, South Korea hip to each other," *Asia Times*, June 23, 2005.

⁴² In this decade China has become South Korea's largest export market and largest target for Foreign Direct Investment. See Thomas Lum and Dick K. Kanto, "China's Trade with the United States and the World," Congressional Research Service Report, Updated April 29, 2005, pp. 10-12.

⁴³ See Evelyn Goh, "Meeting the China Challenge: The U.S. in Southeast Asian Regional Security Strategies," Policy Studies Number 16, East-West Center 2005.

Regardless of how one scores the Sino-American competition for relative power over the past several years, there was really no way to get the kind of economic integration and multilateral confidence-building that we have seen develop since 1993 without a marked increase in Chinese influence in the region. If the goal of U.S. foreign policy in 1993 was to stay engaged in East Asia, particularly in Japan, so as to encourage regional economic interdependence, the early growth of multilateral institutions, and a greater role for China in these processes, then U.S. policy has been a fantastic success. As Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill recently testified to Congress, the United States has to a considerable degree achieved much of what Washington sought for the region ten years ago, “[then, we] all wanted China to become more actively involved in regional and global affairs.” Continuing along the lines of “Ripe for Rivalry,” he stated: “China’s success in extending its political influence in the Asia-Pacific region and throughout the developing world is, in my view, a logical evolution, closely tied to its emerging economic clout, *and certainly is not a zero-sum game for the United States.*”⁴⁴ Former Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Randall Schriver recently used similar language about China’s developing relations with India and Australia, stating that the United States “is not interested in playing a zero-sum game” in diplomatic competition with China for the hearts and minds of those countries.⁴⁵

But from the point of view of “Struggle for Mastery,” this is largely a zero-sum game, so the picture is considerably more negative. Chinese regional power has grown

⁴⁴ Christopher R. Hill, Assistant Secretary for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, Testimony Before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Subcommittee on East Asian and Pacific Affairs, June 7, 2005. Emphasis added. Hill also mentioned the areas in which the United States hopes for more progress in Chinese diplomacy.

⁴⁵ Han Nai-kuo, “U.S. Adjusting Military Deployment with China in Mind: Shriver (sic),” CNA (Taipei) July 13, 2005.

very fast indeed, particularly in the economic realm. China therefore enjoys much more political influence than it did in 1993 in countries like South Korea, Philippines, Australia, and Thailand. This might render these nations less willing or able to assist the United States in checking the growth of Chinese power in the future. Although Taiwan is more independence-minded, not less so, than it was in 1993, it is more beholden to the mainland economically, not to mention the fact that it is significantly more threatened militarily.

The concluding passages in the “Struggle for Mastery” article are perhaps the most striking for our purposes here. Friedberg suggests that, if China can somehow avoid being “excessively high-handed or even brutal” towards its neighbors in the short term, there will be very real risks for the United States. Under such conditions, Chinese strategists might be able to achieve their fantasy of “easing the U.S. out of East Asia without firing a shot.” It would seem then that near-term Chinese nationalism and irrationality would be a strategic asset for the United States, rather than a source of concern. From this perspective, it might be in Washington’s long-term strategic interest to goad China into adopting an excessively high-handed or even brutal set of policies toward Japan or Taiwan for example. In the same vein, some Chinese commentators believe that U.S. elites perceive cooperative multilateral networks in the region as harmful to the U.S. effort to maintain U.S. supremacy.⁴⁶

From the point of view of a radical interpretation of “Struggle for Mastery,” it might in fact be fortunate that many of the destabilizing factors discussed in *Ripe for Rivalry* still exist. The positive side of regional rivalries and ethnic tensions is that they

⁴⁶ See, for example, Wang Xinjun, “Mei Weihe Guchui ‘Zhongguo Junshi Weixie’” “Why Does the United States Play up the ‘China Military Threat’” *Huanqiu Shibao* [Global Times], June 13, 2005, p. 11.

can serve as glue for U.S. defense relationships in the region. For example, in late 2004 and early 2005 the PRC seemed to be engaged in some of the aggressive foot-shooting Friedberg referred to in the conclusion of “Struggle for Mastery.” Bullying of Taiwan with the Anti-secession law, naval activities near Japan, and anti-Japanese protests in Chinese urban centers that bordered on riots, only seemed to delay accommodation across the Taiwan Strait, alienated Japanese elites and citizens further from China, and tightened the U.S.-Japan alliance. They seem even to have contributed to improved ties between Taiwan and Japan.⁴⁷ Thereby, China has helped catalyze Japan’s long-term move toward becoming a more “normal” great-power ally, something that both the Clinton and Bush Administrations have sought.

It should be noted, however, that in the conclusion of “Struggle for Mastery,” Friedberg also entertains the possibility of a domestic mellowing of China over time, a notion more commonly found in the pro-engagement, positive-sum analysis of U.S.-China relations found in “Ripe for Rivalry.” A more mellow Beijing might not be so focused on extruding the United States from the region or on dominating the region left behind by the exiting Americans. But little is said about the mellowing process in “Struggle for Mastery,” while “Ripe for Rivalry” was a full-fledged search for such calming influences. In “Struggle for Mastery” Friedberg is probably referring to the prospect of democratization in China, the long-term hope of many advocates of U.S. constructive engagement of China. But if one accepts a very stark realpolitik view of China’s rise and believes that the United States is in a zero-sum competition with China for regional hegemony, regardless of China’s domestic political system, then Chinese

⁴⁷ For coverage of these issues, please see my contribution to the *China Leadership Monitor*, Issue 13 Spring 2005 at chinaleadershipmonitor.org.

democratization might be a great disaster for the United States. A liberal democratic China might appear less threatening to the American public and to its democratic neighbors, some of whom are allied with the United States. A democratic mainland would also be more attractive to Taiwan and more likely to achieve the PRC's current goal of peaceful unification. Even if Taiwan still refused to unify after mainland liberalization and a democratic China decided to use force to compel national unification on its terms, it would be very hard for the United States government to convince its population to intervene against a nuclear power to prevent a democratic Taiwan from falling into the hands of a democratic mainland. It would certainly be harder than in the case of an authoritarian mainland attacking a democratic Taiwan. So, depending on which lens one applies to Chinese democratization, it is either a great strategic benefit for the United States---perhaps the big strategic prize for U.S. regional engagement---or a huge strategic danger.

Policy Implications: Living with a Complex World of Both Zero-sum and Positive-Sum Relations

Regardless of whether one agrees with Mearsheimer's prescriptions for preemptive abandonment of the U.S. policy of constructive engagement or not (and I do not), he is right to point out that, since the end of the Cold War, the United States generally has not been containing China but, for the most part, fostering its growth. Especially if we use the United States containment policies toward the Soviet Union as a basis of comparison, the complaint often heard from Chinese experts---that the United States has been dedicated to a grand strategy of containment of China as part of a general

policy to maintain U.S. hegemony----is, for the most part, fully divorced from reality.⁴⁸

The United States adopted a large series of measures not only to check Soviet military expansionism, but to weaken the Soviet Union economically and diplomatically. This is hardly the case with U.S. policy toward China since 1978. In fact, no foreign country has done more to make China stronger economically and diplomatically than the United States.⁴⁹

That having been said, there are indeed some important elements of zero-sum competition in U.S. policy toward China, particularly in the areas of military developments and militarily significant technology transfers. Sophisticated Chinese strategic analysts, like Huang Renwei, are able to separate U.S. military containment of China from the general engagement strategy in which it is embedded. Huang, who is highly influential in government circles, recently stated:

Sino-US relations can no longer be described simply as either "friend" or "foe" as broad-based common interests always exists between them and their exchanges in the economic and commercial fields are on the rise. While playing with the dual tactics of "engagement" and "containment," the United States finds that it can contain China vigorously in the field of military technology.... There are three major reasons for the United States to militarily contain China. First, the United

⁴⁸ This is a commonly heard theme in conversations with experts in China. Particularly after the bombing of the PRC embassy in Belgrade during the Kosovo War the containment and hegemony themes were common in Chinese publications as well. See, Yan Xuotong, *Meiguo Baquan yu Zhongguo Anquan* "U.S. Hegemony and Chinese Security," (Tianjin, PRC; Tianjuing People's Publishers, 2000); and Liang Fang , et al. eds, *Meiguo Endezhu Shijie Ma?* [Can the United States Hold Down the World?] (Beijing: National Defense University Press, 2000).

⁴⁹ When Chinese interlocutors say to me that a U.S. grand strategy of containment against China exists and has existed in the post-Cold War world, I routinely ask them to name a country that has done more in the reform era to make the PRC strong and influential than the United States. I have never received a serious reply though I have elicited visible frustration in some cases.

States can then maintain its deterrent force when cross-strait conflicts occur. Second, when China's military power in the region expands, it will belittle the value of US military presence and therefore upset the balance of US global strategy. Third, if China can possess long-distance attack capabilities, then China will be able to threaten the United States.⁵⁰

Huang's analysis seems spot-on. When we look at certain key aspects of U.S. policy toward China, we have to concede some points to those who would accuse the United States of "containing" China. Those aspects include: U.S. technology transfer restrictions on trade with China; U.S. pressure on the EU and Israel not to sell weapons to China; the upgrading of U.S. military capabilities in Guam; the offer of advanced weaponry to Taiwan; increase in defense coordination and consultation with Taiwan; and the push for a more active Japanese role in the U.S.-Japan alliance. These are all part of a fairly straightforward zero-sum competition between the United States and China in the military arena.⁵¹ (Although the US-Japan alliance upgrades have much broader goals than simply countering new Chinese capabilities and would likely be on the U.S. agenda even without China's rise, there is little doubt that China's military modernization and general assertiveness in the security realm have been a major catalyst to the changes in

⁵⁰ Huang Renwei quoted in Yang Liqun: "US Strategic Consideration in Militarily Containing China" JPRC Scholar on US Strategy of Militarily Containing China, Shanghai Jiefang Ribao (Internet Version-WWW) in Chinese 28 Jun 05 Foreign Broadcast Information Services, CPP20050714000030.

⁵¹ On U.S. pressure on Israel, see Ze'ev Schiff, "Israel Bows to U.S. Pressure, Will Curb Defense Exports," *Ha'aretz*, June 26, 2005; Sharon Weinberger, "New Technology Transfers to China on Hold, Pentagon Official Confirms," *Defense Daily*, June 16, 2005, p. 1; for the PRC official reaction to the U.S. pressure on Israel, see "PRC SpokesmanL US Concerns Over Military Cooperation with Israel 'Groundless'," Hong Kong AFP in FBIS, June 21, 2005, doc. CPP20050621000113.

that alliance relationship).⁵² The military containment measures, however, have clearly not altered the general trend lines of China's increasing influence in the region, nor were they designed to do so. Moreover, in the grand scheme of things, they hardly offset the U.S. trade, investment, and diplomatic policies that have contributed so much to China's general rise in the region.

There are, of course, zero-sum thinkers in the United States who would prefer that U.S. containment policy be extended more deeply into the realm of economic policy. For a concrete example of the sharp variation in the policy positions between zero-sum and positive-sum thinking on U.S.-China economic relations, observe the recent furor over the bid for Unocal by the China National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC).

CNOOC's bid provides a Rohrshach test for those in the debate between the positive-sum vs. zero-sum nature of Sino-American relations.⁵³

In many specific instances, however, the positive-sum world of "Ripe for Rivalry" and the zero-sum world of "Struggle for Mastery" are not always polar opposites in terms of U.S. policy choices toward the region. A robust U.S. military role combined with U.S. alliances and security partnerships in East Asia deter aggression and prevent intense intraregional security competitions in either world. The effort to maintain

⁵² See, for example, Martin Fackler, "Altered States, Breaking Taboos, Japan Redefines Its Role with China," *Wall Street Journal*, June 28, 2005, p. A1; and P.R. Kumaraswamy, "Return of the Red Card: Israel-China-U.S. Triangle," *Power and Interest News Report*, May 23, 2005 at <http://www.pinr.com>.

⁵³ On the zero-sum side of the equation is The Heritage Foundation's John Tkacik. See "Say No to CNOOC's Bid for Unocal," *Commentary*, *Wall Street Journal*, June 29, 2005. For the positive-sum side of the debate, see Sebastian Mallaby, "China's Latest 'Threat'" June 27, 2005, *Washington Post*, June 27, 2005; and Alan Murray, "U.S. Doesn't Need To Block CNOOC Bid --The Threat Is Enough" *Wall Street Journal*, June 29, 2005; Page A2. For an excellent review of the debate pitched in the terms of pessimists versus optimists, Steve Lohr, "Who's Afraid of China, Inc.?" *New York Times Sunday*, July 24, 2005, Section 3, pp. 1 and 9.

U.S. supremacy in East Asia is axiomatic in the world of the “Struggle for Mastery.” But U.S. military superiority in East Asia is important in the world of “Ripe for Rivalry” as well. For the United States to provide common security and reassure local actors from outside the region, the United States needs to be more powerful in the region than any single regional actor. So, a call for U.S. leadership is not the exclusive domain of a zero-sum *realpolitik* approach to regional problems. Therefore, to some degree both world views prescribe that American friends and allies adjust gradually to increased Chinese power in the region so that China’s rise does not spark sharp, destabilizing reactions later.

All things being equal, however, “The Ripe for Rivalry” worldview would lead U.S. leaders to be more cautious about the expansion of Japanese military roles and attentive to the ways in which increased Japanese assertiveness is marketed politically at home and abroad. The “Struggle for Mastery” worldview might see severe competition between the US-Japan alliance and the PRC as so likely that care in packaging of Japan’s new military roles is unnecessary. If the logic is pushed to the extreme, one might even argue that severe tensions between Japan and China in the near-term are very much in the U.S. interest. Such tensions will help mobilize the Japanese public around a more robust security posture including a revision of the Peace Constitution and, moreover, might aggravate China sufficiently to cause it to adopt the type of “high-handed and brutal” foreign policies that can further alienate Japan and other regional actors. This scenario could assist the United States in avoiding the fate of being extruded from the region by China’s “peaceful rise.”

There are other shared policy positions in the two worldviews, however. A traditional Cold-War-style containment policy toward China along the lines implicitly

advocated by Mearsheimer would arguably be a bad idea from both a positive-sum and a zero-sum analytic perspective. Any attempt to isolate or hurt the Chinese economy would alienate all regional actors from the United States, including Washington's closest allies. The economic effects on China would likely be limited and short-lived as a result and the economic pain would be shared in no small part by U.S. firms. Moreover, alienating U.S. allies and others by forcing them to choose China or the United States at a time of no conflict in the region would cost the U.S. dearly in its ability to maintain a regional military presence and its ability to build a countering alliance against China if Beijing were to become more belligerent in the future. As outlined above, those U.S. assets and security relationships are crucial both for playing the role of public goods provision outlined in "Ripe for Rivalry" and for strategic competition with China outlined in "Struggle for Mastery." An attempt to adopt a containment policy along the lines of U.S. Cold War economic policies toward the Soviet Union or an encircling alliance around China would, then, simply be ill-advised from either perspective.

On Taiwan, the picture is also mixed. There is some overlap between the two worldviews. From either point of view, the United States should deter mainland aggression (especially successful mainland aggression!) against Taiwan. In the "Ripe for Rivalry" world, Washington should do so because conflict over Taiwan, especially conflict provoked by the mainland, can destabilize the region, raising severe security dilemmas between China and its neighbors. U.S. acquiescence to PRC aggression could also damage the U.S. reputation for resolve in the region, without which the U.S. military presence in East Asia can not play its reassurance role. Moreover, successful Chinese aggression against Taiwan would almost certainly have a negative effect on the evolution

of China's domestic politics. If an authoritarian China successfully used force to subdue Taiwan's democracy, this would carry regressive lessons about what works and what fails in promoting China's national strength. From the point of view of easing security dilemmas, on the other hand, truly peaceful unification with the full acquiescence of Taiwan's democracy would be acceptable, especially if it followed mainland democratization. An authoritarian China bullying a democratic Taiwan, however, would be an unmitigated disaster both internationally and domestically. By countering PRC coercion of Taiwan with a tough deterrent stance and defense assistance to Taiwan, the United States might be channeling China's competitive energies into positive-sum areas such as economic integration. Such a strategy might even provide a boost to those on the mainland advocating democratization, who can add the patriotic mission of luring Taiwan back into the fold to their reasons for promoting liberalization in China. In March 2003, one bold Chinese scholar at the Central Party School, Liu Jianfei, did exactly that in an influential mainland publication.⁵⁴

In the world of "Struggle for Mastery" Washington should deter mainland aggression against Taiwan simply because the island's absorption into the PRC would increase China's material power, would eliminate a great source of distraction for the PRC in its quest for regional domination, and could foreclose a future alliance between Taiwan, Japan, and the United States. Washington might also try to deter Mainland aggression in order to avoid putting the U.S.-Japan alliance to the test in a Taiwan scenario, a test that the alliance might not pass. One potential difference between the two worldviews, however, is that from a strict zero-sum, structural perspective even peaceful

⁵⁴ Liu Jianfei, "Zhongguo Minzhu Zhengzhi Jianshe yu ZhongMei Guanxi (The Building of Democratic Politics in China and Sino-US Relations)," *Zhanlue yu Guanli* (Strategy and Management) March 2003, pp. 76-82.

unification could be viewed as bad for the United States, even if it were to follow Chinese democratization.

Even if both sides accept that deterrence of unprovoked aggression against Taiwan is important, how one deters still matters. In 2001 the Bush Administration's deterrence strategy placed a heavy emphasis on military threats (summed up in the much noted phrase that the Administration would "do whatever it takes" to assist Taiwan). Whether or not the Administration's policy on cross-Strait relations was ever as simple and unconditional as it was portrayed to be, there can be little doubt that since early 2002 the policy toward cross-Strait relations has been quite balanced and moderate both in presentation and practice. One can never remove all of the strategic ambiguity from U.S. policy toward cross-Strait relations without risking war, but a good deal of it has been cleared up since Spring 2002, when then Vice President Hu Jintao visited Washington. Since then the Bush Administration has combined credible threats of intervention and defense if the mainland uses force on Taiwan with explicit and frequent assurances to the mainland and warnings to Taipei that the United States does not support Taiwan independence. In the process, I believe, the Administration has greatly reduced the likelihood of conflict over the next few years (although conflict remains quite possible). The Bush Administration has done so largely by reducing the likelihood that Taipei will continue to pursue permanent legal independence from the Chinese nation in its constitutional revision process, even as Washington continues to insist on peaceful settlement of differences across the Strait in its dealings with Beijing.

To a large degree, this has been a successful policy from either perspective above. The reduction of tensions across the Strait in the past several months is obviously good

from the point of view of preventing spirals of tension. As any student of the security dilemma knows, deterrence, like all forms of coercive diplomacy, involves both credible threats of punishment for transgressions and assurances that compliance will not lead to significant punishment in any case.⁵⁵ The Bush Administration has mixed those elements very skillfully in the past few years.

U.S. moderation on Taiwan has major payoffs even in terms of a straightforward, zero-sum power competition with China. As stated earlier, nobody is eager to side with the U.S. against China on this issue, so by appearing moderate and wise, Washington prevents Taiwan from becoming an issue that the PRC can use to drive wedges in U.S. security partnerships and alliances in the region. Moreover, U.S. moderation makes it marginally more likely that Japan will side with the United States in a cross-Strait conflict if one were still to occur.

There is a legitimate criticism from the zero-sum analysts' side of the fence, however. One might argue that the moderate U.S. posture since 2004 has increased somewhat the likelihood of lasting détente across the Taiwan Strait that could eventually lead to some sort of permanent peaceful settlement down the road. It has also reduced the chance that Taiwan might successfully and permanently separate itself politically from China. In the "Ripe for Rivalry" world a peaceful settlement of cross-Strait issues, especially if it preceded or accompanied liberalization of mainland politics, would be a great strategic benefit for the region and for the United States. In a "Struggle for Mastery," however, the outcome is at worst very bad for the United States, and at best

⁵⁵ Thomas Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966); James Davis, *Threats and Promises in Coercive Diplomacy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000); and Thomas J. Christensen, "The Contemporary Security Dilemma: Detering a Taiwan Conflict, Vol. 25: NO. 4 (Autumn 2002), pp. 7-21."

only acceptable (if the assumption is that “mellowing” generally accompanies liberalization).

Especially given the article’s long-term time horizons (out to 2050), a radical interpretation of the “Struggle for Mastery” thesis might prescribe provocative near-term actions by the United States and Taiwan. These might incite PRC overreactions that could more permanently alienate the Taiwan public and its elites from the mainland. The assurance part of the deterrence equation might simply fall by the wayside since conflict avoidance is not the name of the game, power competition is. In other words, near-term conflict might actually be preferable to near-term stability given the long-term trends in the balance of power across the Pacific. Since assurance is an essential part of deterrence, not an optional feature, the preferred U.S. policy might simply become an unconditional effort to wrest Taiwan permanently away from China, regardless of the near-term costs.⁵⁶ If the PRC were to concede Taiwan’s loss in the near-term, this would be good from the U.S. perspective. If the PRC were to decide to fight in the near-term, it would be much better for the United States to fight now than later.

From the perspective of a positive-sum analysis emphasizing the dangers of security dilemmas in the region, China’s developing relations with Southeast Asia, South Asia, and Central Asia should be cause for dancing in the streets in the United States, especially since a strong case can be made that U.S. policies helped bring about this outcome. The continued U.S. presence in the region has forced China to compete for influence in these areas using positive-sum strategies like aiding in economic stability in

⁵⁶ For a fuller explication of how deterrence theory and security dilemma theory apply to cross-Strait relations and U.S. China policy, see Thomas J. Christensen, “The Contemporary Security Dilemma: Detering A Taiwan Conflict,” *Washington Quarterly* Vol. 25. No. 4, pp. 7-21.

Southeast Asia, jointly countering terrorism in Central Asia, increasing economic interdependence throughout the region, and building and enhancing multilateral institutions that build confidence and reduce mistrust. If we study the timing of China's move from cautious and relatively passive participant in multilateralism to proactive initiator of new multilateral initiatives, we can see that the transformation occurred in the period 1996-2000, the same period in which the United States demonstrated dramatically its continuing commitment to Taiwan's security and upgraded the U.S.-Japan alliance.

After putting military pressure on the Philippines over territorial disputes in Mischief Reef in 1995, Beijing tried but was unsuccessful in shaping Taiwan's political posture toward the mainland through coercion in 1995-96. Beijing's policy largely failed, arguably, because the U.S. commitment to the island was concretely manifested in the dispatch of two carrier battle groups in March 1996 to the Taiwan area in response to the PLA missile and naval exercises aimed at the island. Through the Nye Initiative the United States and Japan undertook efforts to strengthen the U.S.-Japan alliance and to clarify Japanese roles in regional conflicts. All of these events contributed to Chinese concerns about an encircling alliance designed to contain China and permanently wrest Taiwan away from the Chinese nation. Many bureaucratic and psychological factors undoubtedly contributed to China's change from multilateral skeptic to multilateral champion, but there is evidence to suggest that a major catalyst in this evolution was the sense that multilateralism provided a potential hedge against worrisome trends in U.S.-bilateral diplomacy.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ For a rich analysis of China's shifting attitudes toward multi-lateral institutions in the mid-1990s, see Evans and Johnston, "China's Engagement," esp. pp. 258-260. Although they emphasize institutional and psychological factors in their analysis, they show quite convincingly that China's major advances in multilateral thinking followed the 1995-96 Taiwan Strait Crisis and the Nye Initiative for strengthening the

In the cases of China's newfound enthusiasm for multilateralism, one could argue that China's fears of the overall superiority of the United States and encirclement by U.S. regional alliances and security partnerships helped fuel if not create that enthusiasm. Beijing's desire for some sort of hedge against U.S. power thereby helped channel

U.S.-Japan alliance. Various documents, like the 1998 PRC Defense White Paper, make explicit statements about how multilateral approaches to regional security are preferable to Cold War "bilateralism." One extremely frank PRC scholar, Yan Xuetong, recently stated quite clearly that Chinese multilateral initiatives were desirable as a hedge against U.S. regional hegemony. A recent article reads: "Yan Xuetong held the view that multilateralism is very beneficial to China's rise. The more multilateral activities China takes part in, the more China's image will improve. He said: In terms of the conflicts with the United States in the course of China's rise, China will benefit from supporting multilateralism, because it is from multilateral organizations that it can get the most support." Yan also pointed out that 1996 was a "watershed" year for Chinese multilateralism. That, of course, was also the year that the United States sent two aircraft carrier battle groups to the Taiwan area and President Clinton and Prime Minister Hashimoto announced the upcoming Guidelines Review for the U.S.-Japan alliance as part of the Nye Initiative. See PRC's Wang Jisi: China May Leave G8 in Future; Scholars Support Multilateralism CPP20050622000094 Hong Kong Wen Wei Po (Internet Version-WWW) in Foreign Broadcast Information Services, Chinese 22 Jun 05 [Dispatch from Beijing News Center by reporter Ke Chung: "Beijing University Dean: China May Not Join G8"]. The Peking University Professor Li Yihu recently argued that granting India and two others observer status in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization will help "undermine the pressure exerted by the U.S.-Japan alliance." See: "PRC Expert: Sino-Russian Cooperation Will Batter US Offensives," Wen Wei Po, July 8, 2005 in FBIS, July 8, 2005 doc. 200507081477. In 2000 the influential government scholar Zhang Yunling similarly portrayed China's constructive approach to regional multilateral institutions as a way to counter the China threat theory and encirclement by U.S. alliances, see "Zonghe Anquan Gan Ji Dui Wo Guo Anquan de Sikao," [The Comprehensive Security Concept and Reflections on Our Nation's Security], in *Dangdai Yatai* [Contemporary Asia-Pacific Studies], 2000, No. 1, on line at <http://www.iapscass.cn/zaixianqk/zaixianqk.asp>. For an in-depth scholarly work that underscores the importance of tensions across the Taiwan Strait in determining PRC's strategy toward multilateralism in Southeast Asia, see Xu Xin, "Taiwan and China's National Identity," Unpublished PhD dissertation, Cornell University, 2004. For another scholarly piece emphasizing how China's assertiveness on multilateralism has been driven in large part by Chinese security analysts' perception of a "China threat" theory in the United States and the region and the need to falsify that theory through cooperative behavior, see Yong Deng, "Reputation and the Security Dilemma: China reacts to the 'China Threat Theory,'" in Alastair Iain Johnston and Robert Ross, eds. *New Approaches to China's Foreign Relations: Essays in Honor of Allen S. Whiting* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, forthcoming 2005); Thomas Christensen, Alastair Iain Johnston, and Robert Ross, "Conclusion," in Johnston and Ross, *New Approaches*; Johnston, "Is China A Status Quo Power," pp. 32-33. Alastair Iain Johnston and Robert Ross, eds., . See also, Michael A. Glosny, "Stabilizing the Backyard: Recent Developments in China's Policy Toward Southeast Asia," unpublished manuscript. For a pioneering analysis of the PRC's shifting relations with ASEAN in the mid-1990s, see Allen S. Whiting, "ASEAN Eyes China: The Security Dimension," *Asian Survey* Vol. 37, No. 4 (April 1997), pp. 299-322. Also see Rosemary Foot, "China in the ASEAN Regional Forum: Organizational Processes and Domestic Modes of Thought," *Asian Survey* Vol. 38, No. 5, May 1998, pp. 425-440; and Jing-dong Yuan, "Regional Institutional and Cooperative Security: Chinese Approaches and Policies," *Korean Journal of Defense Analysis*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (Autumn 2001), pp. 263-294.

China's competitive energies into areas in which the United States, China, and other regional actors all share some common interests. Since strategy is largely about getting others to take actions that are in one's own interest, in this sense China's recent burst of multilateralism is an example of long-term U.S. success in the region, not a failure to protect American equities in Asia.

A similar phenomenon occurred in early 2003 when China decided to push North Korea into multilateral talks and to take a leadership role in those talks as host of the negotiating process. China's skepticism about such a structure and reluctance to take the lead on a sensitive regional security issue were arguably overridden by fear of worse outcomes, namely a U.S. strike on North Korea, if China did not adopt a more proactive and constructive role.⁵⁸

While the huge recent diplomatic gains by China might seem scary from the perspective of "Struggle for Mastery," they are more than welcomed in the world of "Ripe for Rivalry." In that latter worldview, the United States was never trying primarily to strangle or even contain China's influence, instead it was trying to stabilize a region in transition by buying time for interdependence and confidence-building to take hold. If Washington succeeded to do so in part by raising the specter of U.S. strangulation in Chinese elites' minds, this would still be coded as a success for Washington's policy from a positive-sum point of view.

There is also some real common ground between the two approaches in the realm of U.S. diplomacy. China has advanced very quickly in its diplomatic push in Southeast Asia and South Korea in particular. Even if one accepts the position that regional

⁵⁸ Thomas J. Christensen and Michael A. Glosny, "Sources of Stability and Instability in U.S.-China Relations," in Richard J. Ellings and Aaron L. Friedberg, eds., *Strategic Asia, 2003-2004, Fragility and Crisis* (Seattle, WA: National Bureau of Asian Research, 2003), pp. 33-52.

multilateralism and economic interdependence are forces for regional stability, from the perspective of either “Ripe for Rivalry” or “Struggle for Mastery” there is no reason that the United States should want to see such developments occur with the United States on the sidelines. So, there is nothing inconsistent with celebrating long-term U.S. successes since 1993 in channeling China’s competitive energies in a positive diplomatic direction and away from direct military rivalry with its southern neighbors on the one hand, and asserting that the United States should be active and constructive in its own diplomacy in Southeast Asia on the other. Deputy Secretary of State Robert Zoellick summed up this logic well recently in a press conference in Singapore:

“No, we’ve never had the concept of containing China...I think there is recognition in the region that China is a growing influence. And this is natural as China becomes a growing and larger economy and interconnects with this region as other parts of the world. I think the Chinese have tried to signal their multiple interests in Southeast Asia through their discussions of a free trade accord, which on the one hand shows the region that others can benefit from China’s growth, but also signals the rising influence of China in the region. From the U.S. perspective, the key message is that we believe we should have our own activist engagement with Southeast Asia and that a policy to try to limit or restrict China would be both foolish and ineffective.”⁵⁹

Rightly or wrongly, after September 11 many in the region received the impression that the United States has only been interested in fighting terrorism in the

⁵⁹ Deputy Secretary Zoellick Holds a News Conference in Singapore, As Released by the States Department, May 10, 2005, Congressional Quarterly FDCH Political Transcripts, May 10, 2005.

region and was, therefore, monotone in its diplomacy. It is, of course, understandable that the United States has emphasized counterterrorism in its relations with Southeast Asian nations since 9-11, but it would be good from almost any strategic point of view if Washington could also pursue a more balanced portfolio in its diplomacy. The tsunami disaster and the robust response to it by the United States and its allies may have gone a long way toward repairing some of the United States image problems in the region. Visits to the region in the first half of 2005 by Michael Green of the National Security Council, Robert Zoellick, the new Deputy Secretary of State, and most recently, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice should help alleviate regional concerns on this score. Zoellick's trip in particular seemed aimed at bringing economics back to the front of the U.S.-ASEAN agenda. The former U.S. Trade Representative has tremendous experience in the region working on free-trade agreements and emphasized economic cooperation on his trip.⁶⁰ The Bush Administration also seems to have made some important inroads with Vietnam recently, as is evidenced by Prime Minister Pham Van Khai's visit to Washington in mid-June 2006.⁶¹ Such U.S. efforts should be enhanced in the future regardless of whether one subscribes to the logic of "Ripe for Rivalry" or "Struggle for Mastery" or, as will many analysts, a bit of both.

⁶⁰ Goh, "Meeting the China Challenge," especially pp. 43-44. For the argument that the Bush Administration had gained the reputation for being monotone, to China's advantage, see Kurlantzick, "How China is Changing Global Diplomacy: Cultural Revolution," One former Bush Administration official pointed out that at one regional conference the United States focused almost all of its attention on one problem, the proliferation of shoulder-held anti-aircraft missiles, while China came prepared to discuss a panoply of issues of concern in the region. For analyses of how helpful the Zoellick trip was in rectifying the U.S. image in the region, see Evelyn Goh, "Southeast Asia Bright on U.S. Radar Screen," *Asia Times*, June 3, 2005. To see the various speeches and press conferences that emphasized tsunami relief and economic relations during Deputy Secretary Zoellick's six-nation tour, see the various reports at <http://uninfo.state.gov>.

⁶¹ Elena Nakashima, "Vietnam, U.S. to Improve Intelligence, Military Ties," *Washington Post*, June 17, 2005, p. 1.

There is a final reason for overlap between the two logics discussed above. As mentioned earlier, Asia still looks far from fully stable even from Friedberg's point of view in "Ripe for Rivalry." Historical issues are still a cause for tensions between China and Japan, Japan and Korea, Korea and China, to name just a few dyads. Regime types still vary wildly around the region. Irredentist claims and sovereignty disputes still abound, especially at sea, even though many land border disputes have been settled since 1993. As Friedberg predicted, certain Asian countries' efforts to develop a nuclear deterrent have caused greater instability, not stability.⁶² Finally, the development of regional multilateral institutions really only seems impressive when one uses 1993 as a comparative baseline. ASEAN and the ASEAN Regional Forum arguably do reduce regional tensions, but the limits of the organizations are evident whenever any positive security agenda, such as joint anti-piracy or anti-terrorism patrolling of the Malacca Strait is pursued in these groups. In the economic realm, wealth differentials within countries and between countries remain high. Perhaps most important of all, China remains undemocratic and potentially domestically unstable even as it grows impressively economically and militarily. So, there are plenty of reasons for the United States to keep its powder dry in East Asia and maintain its alliances and security partnerships, even if one subscribes fully to the logic of "Ripe for Rivalry." As a result, the policies flowing from such a theoretical viewpoint might not always look very different than the policies prescribed when employing the logic of "Struggle for Mastery."

The Global War on Terror and the North Korea nuclear issue reveal a world that arguably lies firmly between those portrayed in the two articles. The United States

⁶² Even if one believes that having a secure second-strike capability is a stabilizing factor, it is hard to argue that the road to acquiring one is anything but destabilizing.

continues to compete with China directly and through its alliances and security partnerships, especially the U.S.-Japan alliance. But this is only part of the picture. 9-11 and North Korea have revealed important common interests between the PRC and the United States even if the nations' interests hardly overlap entirely and even if there is plenty of room for tension in how to pursue resolution of the shared problems. Some of the differences about how to proceed are still rooted in the fact that, at the end of the day, the strategic competition portrayed so starkly in "Struggle for Mastery" indeed exists to some degree in the minds of the leaders on both sides of the Pacific. Both governments are consciously engaged in that competition, even as they cooperate on certain important issues of common concern. That having been said, in late July 2005, with the resumption of 6-Party talks through joint efforts by the United States, China, and South Korea, and the inception of the U.S.-PRC Senior Dialogue between the U.S. Department of State and the PRC Foreign Ministry, there is at least some hope that the United States, China, and other key regional actors might establish multilateral and bilateral methods to reduce regional tensions and pursue common security objectives. Pursuit of such an outcome with very cautious optimism hardly makes one an idealistic utopian, nor does it put at excessive risk the core national security interests of a nation with as much power and international standing as the United States.

An intelligent moderate position in a world of both "zero-sum" and "positive-sum" relations would be for the United States to maintain a robust presence in the region and a set of strong alliances without attempting to undercut China's diplomatic relationships with other regional actors, even with U.S. allies. In fact, the United States should foster China's engagement with the United States and its allies on issues of

common concern. Those who believe that these policies would weaken U.S. alliances, in my opinion, have too little faith in U.S. power and diplomacy. A healthy degree of Japanese wariness about the rise of China may indeed be good for the United States, especially as Washington hopes to encourage Japan to adopt a more active regional and global role in the alliance. China's bullying behavior toward Taiwan and its often ham-fisted diplomacy toward Japan has helped Washington in that process. But high degrees of Sino-Japanese tensions, as we have witnessed in the past few months, are not in Washington's interest because they could lead to unwanted conflict. Not only would a conflict between Japan and China be costly for the region as a whole, it is still entirely unclear how the U.S.-Japan alliance would fare in such a conflict. So, whether one sees the world from a zero-sum or positive-sum lens, it is hard to argue that a very high degree of Sino-Japanese tension is a good thing. Given Japan's existing political trajectory on security issues under Prime Minister Koizumi, such a high degree of tension is not really necessary for the United States to foster Japan's moves toward a more active international security role. Since U.S.-Japan alliance relations seem strong and are getting stronger, why rock the boat by encouraging the frightening prospect of greater tensions in Sino-Japanese relations?

In order to ease tensions in the U.S.-Japan-PRC triangle, the United States might propose a high-level trilateral dialogue on security issues.⁶³ This might not pan out in the end either because of Chinese reservations about a potential "two against one" structure or because of remaining political tensions between Tokyo and Beijing relating to Prime Minister Koizumi's visits to the Yasukuni shrine, but the United States need not be so

⁶³ This idea has been articulated publicly by Kurt Campbell and Francis Fukuyama. Has it been published?

jealously protective of its special relationship with Japan that it feels it needs to forego such an initiative.

As regards the Asian Summit Meeting, the United States, in my opinion, should not make an enormous fuss if Washington is not invited to participate actively. At the most basic level, the United States should be careful what it wishes for in its Asian diplomacy. The Bush Administration would be put in a tough spot if it were invited to participate fully in the summit. Would the President want to spend another week out of his busy schedule traveling to an Asian summit in addition to the APEC summit, which he already attends? Would the presence of a lower-level U.S. representative with observer status make a huge difference in terms of intelligence gathering or agenda setting, especially when close allies like Japan will be attending and will fully debrief Washington in any case?⁶⁴ Rather than publicly complaining about U.S. exclusion, it seems wiser for Washington to let local powers in ASEAN and elsewhere express their concerns about potential U.S. exclusion from the region. Washington can do this by quietly pointing out to relevant ASEAN capitals that the political forces behind China's or Malaysia's insistence on U.S. exclusion from the ASM run counter to those ASEAN countries' own national security interests over the longer term. This might lead those states to insist on a more open multilateral process in the ASM, perhaps securing invitations for Indian, Australian, or even American observers. It could lead them to place more value on the multilateral forums in which the United States more fully

⁶⁴ Moreover, some believe that Japan's relative power in East Asia is relatively great at present compared to where it will be in the future and that Japan should demonstrate more confidence in meetings with China, South Korea, and ASEAN. See Mitsuru Obe, "Jiji: Japan Downplays U.S. Concern About East Asian Community" in *Tokyo Jiji Press Jun 05 Foreign Broadcast Information Services June 24, 2005 Doc. JPP20050624000106*.

participates and to drag their feet on proposals in the ASEAN plus 3 or ASM framework that seem to favor Chinese interests over American interests. Perhaps the worst outcomes for the United States would be for Washington to complain publicly about U.S. exclusion and then be excluded anyway, demonstrating U.S. weakness, or to be invited at the highest level and then decide not to attend, thus slighting those who had fought for U.S. inclusion.⁶⁵

Conclusion

How should the United States respond to a rising China in order to shape Chinese policies themselves? In the largely sterile “engagement versus containment” debate, moderate “engagement” policies toward China are viewed as ways of leading to more constructive Chinese policies toward the region and thereby reducing the likelihood of conflict. They are therefore considered wise even if they reduce somewhat U.S. relative power if conflict were to arise. Tough U.S. policies, such as increasing the American military presence or tightening coordination with U.S. allies or regional security partners, are often viewed as increasing U.S. power potential in case of conflict, but also as increasing the chances for conflict by reducing the likelihood that China will adopt a reassuring and constructive posture toward its neighbors. U.S. toughness is often criticized because it alienates U.S. allies who do not want to see an aggressive China policy in Washington. On the other side of the debate, zero-sum thinkers criticize those

⁶⁵ The United States may pay some such costs already given the Administration’s decision not to send Secretary of State Rice to the ASEAN Regional Forum in July, but rather to send Deputy Secretary Robert Zoellick. It is possible that Deputy Secretary Zoellick’s cabinet-level rank and strong reputation in the region will cushion the blow a bit in Southeast Asia, but from all accounts, protocol is king in ASEAN, and the decision will almost certainly carry some diplomatic costs for the United States, perhaps to the benefit of Chinese diplomacy in the region.

advocating engagement for adopting a logic that simply plays into China's hands and allows Chinese power to grow unchecked by the one power that can do something about it, the United States.

The analysis offered above suggests that this debate is far too simple. Even if straightforward and full spectrum containment were attempted by the United States it would be counterproductive, not simply because it would raise China's ire, but because it would reduce Washington's relative power in the region. The United States would likely gain no new allies in such an effort and would lose some, if not all, of its current regional allies. In this sense, Washington's positive-sum engagement of China assists the United States even in the zero-sum aspects of its policies toward China because it helps the United States maintain its regional alliances.

On the opposite side of the same coin, China itself might be adopting many positive-sum strategies in the region not as a reward for American and allied moderation but at least in part as a way to counter U.S. influence. Beijing wants to make it more difficult and painful for regional actors to choose Washington over Beijing in any future stand-off. So, by maintaining a strong presence in the region, the United States has done more than provide collective goods in security and economic affairs, it may have provided a major catalyst for Beijing to help provide such collective goods as well. To the degree that this outcome does not lead the United States to become fully extruded from the region, the end result of the competition for leadership in the region may be a more stable and prosperous region in which regional actors do not want to choose sides in a U.S.-China conflict and Beijing and Washington lack any real pretense for starting one.