

# 1 *Comprehensive East Asian Security*

Comprehensive security is a policy that will secure our national survival or protect our social order... through the combination of diplomacy, national defense, economic and other policy measures.

– Japanese Diplomatic Blue Book, 1981, p. 30

Is East Asia increasingly prosperous and stable? If so, why?

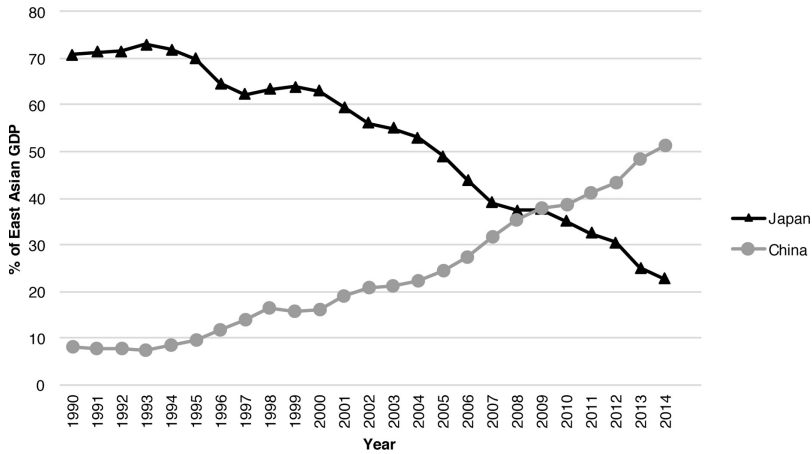
China's share of regional gross domestic product (GDP) grew from 8 percent in 1990 to 51 percent in 2014, while Japan's share fell from 72 percent in 1990 to 22 percent (Figure 1.1).<sup>1</sup> China's share of regional trade grew from 8 percent in 1990 to 39 percent by 2014 (Figure 1.2).

As the region has grown richer and more integrated over the past twenty-five years, and as China has grown richer and more integrated within East Asia itself, East Asian defense spending has steadily declined. The proportion of the economy devoted to defense spending is now roughly half of what it was in 1990 and shows no sign of increasing. Indeed, East Asian military expenditures are now similar to those in Latin America (Figure 1.3).<sup>2</sup> Specifically, the defense spending of the eleven main East Asian states declined from an average of 3.35 percent of GDP in 1990 to an average of 1.84 percent in 2015.

The rest of this book is essentially an effort to explain these three figures – a rich China in a deeply intertwined region that is experiencing long-term declines in defense spending. I argue that these three figures tell an accurate, enduring, and often overlooked story about East Asia: what I am calling the quest for comprehensive security. The region has grown richer. China has already managed a head-spinningly

<sup>1</sup> Figures from the World Bank, World Development Indicators.

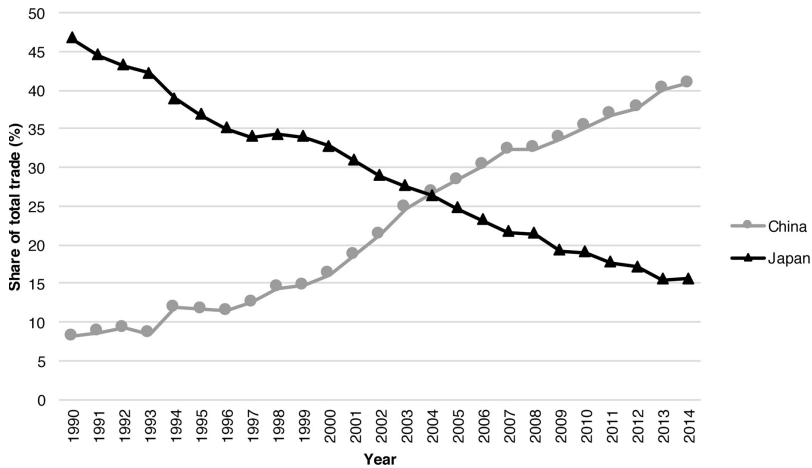
<sup>2</sup> East Asia: China, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Australia, Singapore, Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand. Latin America: Mexico, Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Columbia, Ecuador, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela.



**Figure 1.1** Share of total East Asian GDP, 1990–2014 (%).

Countries: China, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Vietnam, Philippines, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, and Australia.

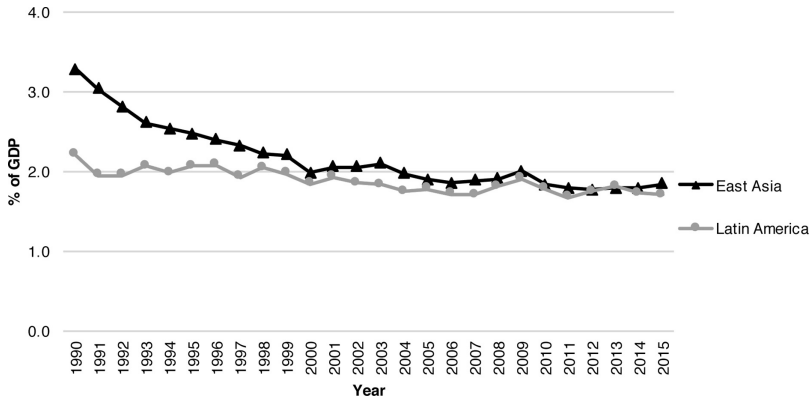
*Source:* World Bank, World Development Indicators.



**Figure 1.2** Share of East Asian regional trade, 1990–2014 (%).

*Source:* World Bank, World Development Indicators.

fast regional power transition. Countries are rapidly increasing their economic ties to China and each other. And, East Asian countries have steadily reduced their defense spending because they see little need to arm. There are numerous issues still to be resolved, but countries think



**Figure 1.3** East Asian and Latin American defense spending, 1990–2015 (% of GDP). East Asian countries: China, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Vietnam, Philippines, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, and Australia. Latin American countries: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Columbia, Ecuador, Peru, Uruguay, Venezuela, and Mexico.

*Source:* Information from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), [www.sipri.org/databases/milex](http://www.sipri.org/databases/milex), 2016.

most of those issues are not worth fighting over. All countries in the region have to coexist with each other – none is picking up and moving somewhere else – and countries are thus dealing with that reality and seeking diplomatic, not military, solutions with each other.

This East Asian reality runs counter to a largely Western narrative that views China's rise as a threat and the region as increasingly unstable. Indeed, for over a quarter-century, some scholars have made dire and continued predictions that East Asia is going to experience an arms race, that the regional security dilemma is intensifying, and that dangerous instability driven by China is just around the corner. In recent years, perceptions of increased Chinese assertiveness, regional fears, and a muscular U.S. rebalancing effort toward the Pacific have increased concern among some observers that the region may be drifting toward rivalry and containment blocs.<sup>3</sup> This

<sup>3</sup> Avery Goldstein, "First Things First: The Pressing Danger of Crisis Instability in U.S.–China Relations," *International Security* 37, no. 4 (Spring 2013): 55. Adam P. Liff and G. John Ikenberry, "Racing Toward Tragedy? China's Rise, Military Competition in the Asia Pacific, and the Security Dilemma," *International Security* 39, no. 2 (Fall 2014): pp. 52, 88; Ja Ian Chong and

literature sees substantial uncertainty about intentions and goals among East Asian states, with countries rapidly arming themselves, and nationalist publics pushing leaders to stand tough in disputes with neighbors.<sup>4</sup>

However, there is little evidence that East Asian states are engaged in an arms race, and few states are sending costly signals about their resolve to suffer the costs of war. In the scholarly literature, costly signals are actions that a country committed to fighting over an issue would take, but that a country that was bluffing would not take. Almost all countries in East Asia are not sending costly signals to each other in any meaningful manner.

Rather than engaging in military competition, East Asian countries are pursuing *comprehensive security*: a wide range of diplomatic, institutional, and economic strategies – as well as military strategies – in their dealings with each other. This pursuit of comprehensive security is regionwide. Almost all countries in the region view their security

Todd H. Hall, “The Lessons of 1914 for East Asia Today: Missing the Trees for the Forest,” *International Security* 39, no. 1 (Summer 2014): 42; Jonathan Holslag, *China’s Coming War with Asia* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2015); John J. Mearsheimer, “The Gathering Storm: China’s Challenge to US Power in Asia,” *Chinese Journal of International Politics* 3, no. 4 (2010): 381–96; Dan De Luce and Keith Johnson, “How FP Stumbled into a War with China – and Lost,” *Foreign Policy*, January 15, 2016, [foreignpolicy.com/2016/01/15/how-fp-stumbled-into-a-war-with-china-and-lost/](http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/01/15/how-fp-stumbled-into-a-war-with-china-and-lost/); Harry J. Kazianis, “Get Ready, America: Are China and Japan Destined for War?” *National Interest*, January 22, 2016, [nationalinterest.org/blog/the-buzz/get-ready-america-are-china-japan-destined-war-14991](http://nationalinterest.org/blog/the-buzz/get-ready-america-are-china-japan-destined-war-14991); Aaron Friedberg, “Ripe for Rivalry: Prospects for Peace in a Multipolar Asia,” *International Security* 18, no. 3 (Winter 1993/1994): 5–33; Abraham M. Denmark, “Could Tensions in the South China Sea Spark a War?” *National Interest*, May 31, 2014, [nationalinterest.org/feature/could-tensions-the-south-china-sea-spark-war-10572](http://nationalinterest.org/feature/could-tensions-the-south-china-sea-spark-war-10572); Robert D. Kaplan, “The South China Sea Is the Future of Conflict,” *Foreign Policy*, August, 15, 2011, [foreignpolicy.com/2011/08/15/the-south-china-sea-is-the-future-of-conflict/](http://foreignpolicy.com/2011/08/15/the-south-china-sea-is-the-future-of-conflict/); Andrew Browne, “The Specter of an Accidental China–U.S. War,” *Wall Street Journal*, August 16, 2016, [www.wsj.com/articles/the-specter-of-an-accidental-china-u-s-war-1471360811?tesla=y](http://www.wsj.com/articles/the-specter-of-an-accidental-china-u-s-war-1471360811?tesla=y); and Sebastian Rosato, “Why the United States and China Are on a Collision Course,” *Policy Brief* (Cambridge, MA: Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, May 2015), [belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/publication/25378/why\\_the\\_united\\_states\\_and\\_china\\_are\\_on\\_a\\_collision\\_course.html](http://belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/publication/25378/why_the_united_states_and_china_are_on_a_collision_course.html).

<sup>4</sup> Jessica Chen Weiss, “Authoritarian Signaling, Mass Audiences, and Nationalist Protest in China,” *International Organization* 67, no. 1 (2013): 1–35; Chong and Hall, “The Lessons of 1914 for East Asia Today,” 26; Goldstein, “First Things First,” 59; Liff and Ikenberry, “Racing Toward Tragedy?” 88.

environment as relatively benign, particularly compared to a generation ago. China's economic growth, East Asian growth, and increasing security is a regional phenomenon that has been occurring together. The intertwined nature and increasing interactions among regional countries are closely linked. China's rise occurred within a rapidly integrating region that has been experiencing dramatic economic growth and prolonged social and political stabilization. Both China and the region have grown richer and more stable together, and the policies they have pursued have been, for the most part, mutually reinforcing. The major exception to this argument is North Korea, which is attempting to convince everyone that it is willing to use force to achieve its aims.

The explanation for this relatively stable security environment in East Asia is straightforward: few countries fear for their survival. Even residual maritime disputes do not threaten their national survival. Leaders and citizens want economic growth, social integration, and better regional architecture. Their publics and businesses are oriented toward openness, trade, and increasing cultural and social interactions in the region. As Etel Solingen put it, "Leaders in most East Asian states pivoted their political control on economic performance and integration into the global economy."<sup>5</sup> Indeed, China threatens the survival of only one country – Taiwan – and even that relationship has largely stabilized over the years due to rapid economic integration between the two sides and an agreement that Taiwan can act like a country as long as it does not call itself a country.

It is true that China is seen as increasingly aggressive, particularly in the United States, and the U.S. Pentagon is planning for the possibility of a military strategy in dealing with China. As the administration of recently elected President Trump takes form, Trump and his key advisers appear to be planning to take a more confrontational stance toward China. For example, the leader of Trump's National Trade Council, Peter Navarro, has blamed China for virtually all American economic and strategic woes, writing that "Over the past decade, riding tall astride the Trojan Horse of free trade, a 'predatory' China has stolen millions of American manufacturing jobs

<sup>5</sup> Etel Solingen, "Pax Asiatica Versus Bella Levantina: The Foundations of War and Peace in East Asia and the Middle East," *American Political Science Review* 101, no. 4 (November 2007), 757–80, 758.

from under our noses.”<sup>6</sup> In January 2017, Trump’s secretary of state nominee Rex Tillerson also suggested the United States might engage in a naval blockade of Chinese South China Sea claims. Trump advisers have called for increasing the U.S. navy to 350 ships and suggested levying a 45 percent tariff on Chinese goods.<sup>7</sup> Trump himself has suggested abandoning U.S. alliances with Japan and Korea and that the “one-China policy” was up for reconsideration, and his first official order of business upon taking the presidency in January 2017 was to formally pull out of the Trans-Pacific Partnership economic initiative.

How this U.S.–China dynamic plays out will have an impact on regional security, of course. But if the United States and China increasingly compete directly with each other or engage in a trade war, it is unlikely that East Asian countries will feel the necessity to choose sides. The evidence is fairly clear: regional states want good relations with both the United States and China, and there is little appetite in the region for a containment coalition against China. Put differently, East Asian leaders and peoples share some, but not all, American priorities.

Considering the ample evidence of China’s rising power, states in the region could easily have already begun a vigorous counterbalancing strategy against China if that were their intention. It seems reasonable to argue that if states were going to balance against China, they would have begun by now. Those who predict that a containment coalition will rise against China in the future need to explain why this has not already occurred, despite three decades of transparent and rapid Chinese economic, diplomatic, and military growth.<sup>8</sup> Idle speculation about what could happen decades from now provides little insight into the decisions states are making today. If China’s neighbors

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Isaac Stone Fish, “Trump’s China-Bashing Id,” *Slate*, December 22, 2016, [www.slate.com/articles/news\\_and\\_politics/foreigners/2016/12/peter\\_navarro\\_trump\\_s\\_trade\\_czar\\_embodies\\_the\\_china\\_bashing\\_id\\_of\\_his\\_campaign.html](http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/foreigners/2016/12/peter_navarro_trump_s_trade_czar_embodies_the_china_bashing_id_of_his_campaign.html).

<sup>7</sup> Peter Navarro, “Trump’s 45% Tariff on Chinese Goods Is Perfectly Calculated,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 21, 2016, [www.latimes.com/opinion/op-ed/la-oe-navarro-trump-trade-china-tariffs-20160721-snap-story.html](http://www.latimes.com/opinion/op-ed/la-oe-navarro-trump-trade-china-tariffs-20160721-snap-story.html).

<sup>8</sup> See, for example, David C. Gompert, Astrid Cevallos, and Cristina L. Garafola, *War with China: Thinking Through the Unthinkable* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2016). [www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RR1140.html](http://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR1140.html).

believed China would be more dangerous in the future, they would have begun preparing for that possibility already.

## So What?

The research presented in this book is consistent with a sizable literature that sees East Asia as relatively stable and prosperous.<sup>9</sup> For example, Evelyn Goh identifies both complicity and resistance to U.S. hegemony in East Asia, and carefully charts the changing order in the region that desires to incorporate both China and the United States but that is fundamentally more stable than generally believed.<sup>10</sup> Iain Johnston has argued that China's new assertiveness is neither new nor that assertive.<sup>11</sup> And Amitav Acharya has consistently argued that East Asian countries are building an institutional order that moves far beyond American hegemony.<sup>12</sup>

Accurately understanding East Asian regional perceptions and their grand strategies is central to U.S. policy in East Asia. The key debate is whether to contain China, and whether East Asian countries would go along with a containment policy of China. The outlines of a Trump approach to East Asia are only beginning to become clear and will not fully emerge for some years. Yet, as noted previously, early indications have revealed that a Trump administration will more likely pursue a policy toward China that is more nationalist and confrontational than usual in security issues, and more isolationist and protectionist than usual in economic issues.

Only time will show how East Asian countries will react to a more confrontational United States. Yet if the survival of East Asian

<sup>9</sup> Steve Chan, *Looking for Balance: China, the United States, and Power Balancing in East Asia* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012); Thomas Christensen, *The China Challenge: Shaping the Choices of a Rising Power* (New York: Norton, 2015).

<sup>10</sup> Evelyn Goh, *The Struggle for Order: Hegemony, Hierarchy, and Transition in Post-Cold War East Asia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

<sup>11</sup> Alastair Iain Johnston, "How New and Assertive Is China's New Assertiveness?" *International Security* 37, no. 4 (Spring 2013): 7–48; and Alastair Iain Johnston, "What (If Anything) Does East Asia Tell Us About International Relations Theory?" *Annual Review of Political Science* 15, no. 1 (2012): 53–78.

<sup>12</sup> Amitav Acharya, "The Emerging Regional Architecture of World Politics," *World Politics* 59, no. 4 (2007); and Amitav Acharya, *The End of American World Order* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

states is not actually threatened and East Asian countries prefer to use economic, institutional, and diplomatic tools to deal with each other rather than military force, then U.S. policy should emphasize economic and diplomatic engagement with the region. A minimalist U.S. approach – one that avoids getting deeply involved in regional issues where the U.S. has no direct stake – is more likely to promote stability than a maximalist one that blunders in and hopes to perpetuate U.S. primacy for its own sake. The research presented in this book leads to the conclusion that East Asian countries do not want to choose between China and the United States; and that while American presence is welcomed, there is little appetite for a containment strategy against China. Indeed, all countries in the region are increasing their economic, social, and diplomatic relations with China, not limiting them. Within this larger context, it is unlikely that these same countries would then choose to side with the United States against China, especially if their own national survival was not threatened.

### Costly Signals and Cheap Talk

How do we know that countries care enough about an issue to fight over it? This book uses the insights of “bargaining theory” as its overall framework. Bargaining theory posits that although bigger countries might be stronger than smaller countries, what is more important is *how much* a country cares about an issue – and that is hard to measure. A small country that cares intensely about an issue could prevail over a much bigger country that doesn’t care as much.<sup>13</sup> This approach relies on the central insight that because war is costly, states are better off negotiating than fighting. After all, if it is obvious which side will win a war, then both sides might as well simply agree on the outcome and avoid fighting in the first place.

However, what if the outcome is *not* clear? It is often difficult to determine a country’s relative capabilities and how much it cares

<sup>13</sup> James D. Fearon, “Rationalist Explanations for War,” *International Organization* 49, no. 3 (Summer 1995): 379–414; Robert Powell, “Bargaining Theory and International Conflict,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 5 (2002): 1–30; Robert Powell, “War as a Commitment Problem,” *International Organization* 60, no. 1 (January 2006): 169–203; David A. Lake, “Two Cheers for Bargaining Theory: Assessing Rationalist Explanations of the Iraq War,” *International Security* 35, no. 3 (Winter 2010/2011): 8.



about the issue.<sup>14</sup> States may wish to misrepresent their willingness to use force over a disputed issue to deter potential challengers. Put more simply, states may bluff. Talking tough and exaggerating one's strength and willingness to fight is a classic strategy to deter others or cause them to back down without a fight. The reason wars can start is because of the difficulty in differentiating between a country that is bluffing and a country that truly is willing to go to war.

Years ago, James Fearon argued that *costly signals* from states that are truly willing to fight can set them apart from countries that are engaging in "cheap talk."<sup>15</sup> Costly signals are actions that a committed country would take, but that a country that was bluffing would not take. First and foremost among his examples of costly signals is military expenditures. Investing in the military is costly, but it also directly improves the chances of a country in war. A country that doesn't care that much about an issue may talk tough, but if it is not investing in its military it is probably not serious about its willingness to fight.

This book is organized to use bargaining theory as the key lens through which to assess East Asian countries' security strategies. Chapter 2 introduces the theoretical framework that uses military expenditures as the central and most commonly used indicator of costly signals, security strategies, and intentions in the scholarly literature. Overwhelmingly, scholars exploring costly signals and threat perceptions use military expenditures and preparations as the most common indicator of resolve to fight a war.

A straightforward application of this measure to East Asia would expect states that are preparing for war (or have high threat perceptions) to be spending heavily on their militaries. If East Asia is as unstable and close to war as the pessimists argue, then we should see ample costly signaling in the region. Indeed, the whole point of costly signals is that they clearly communicate one country's intentions to another country. This book examines all types of costly signals, but focuses primarily on military expenditures as a key costly signal for a nation's security perceptions and priorities. And, bargaining theory works in

<sup>14</sup> Formally, "asymmetric information." In Fearon's model, there always exists a bargain between two states that is preferable to suffering the costs of war.

<sup>15</sup> Clayton L. Thyne, "Cheap Signals with Costly Consequences: The Effect of Interstate Relations on Civil War," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 50, no. 6 (December 2006): 937–61.

a straightforward and intuitive manner when applied to contemporary East Asian security dynamics: there is a marked absence of costly signals. Countries in the region are not excessively investing in their militaries or preparing for long-term war. They do not limit economic relations with China, nor do they apply economic sanctions on China. Nor do leaders of East Asian countries make rhetorical statements about a willingness to fight China that put their reputations at stake and create the expectation within their own peoples of forceful action.

At an extreme, costly signaling and rapid increases in defense spending can result in an arms race. After all, an arms race is simply two countries engaging in reciprocal costly signals. As Chapter 3 will explore in more detail, there is almost no evidence of anything approaching an arms race in East Asia. The intuition of an arms race is fairly straightforward, and the widely influential Buzan and Herring definition of an arms race is “two sides going flat out or almost flat out in major competitive investments in military capacity.”<sup>16</sup> Perhaps a bit more precisely, Rider, Findley, and Diehl use the “straightforward and replicable” definition of an arms race as 8 percent or more increases in military expenditures by both states over at least three years.<sup>17</sup> However, rather than sending signals that carry “some risk of rejection and war,”<sup>18</sup> East Asian countries indeed appear to be signaling that they do not want to fight. There are no dyads (pairs of countries) in East Asia that come anywhere near to meeting the definitions of an arms race as commonly used by political scientists.

Chapter 3 also compares East Asia with Latin America in their military spending and deployments. This comparison leads to a surprising conclusion: East Asia and Latin America look similar in their military spending and deployments. By some measures, Latin America is even more militarized than East Asia. In short, no matter how it is measured, over the past quarter-century, militarization and military spending in East Asia have been reduced by almost half. This granular measurement of defense spending reveals that states in East Asia are not, in fact, engaging in arms races or sending costly signals.

<sup>16</sup> Barry Buzan and Eric Herring, *The Arms Dynamic in World Politics* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998), 80.

<sup>17</sup> Toby J. Rider, Michael G. Findley, and Paul F. Diehl, “Just Part of the Game? Arms Races, Rivalry, and War,” *Journal of Peace Research* 48, no. 1 (2011): 90.

<sup>18</sup> Fearon, “Rationalist Explanations for War,” 396–7.

Chapters 4 through 8 delve into key case studies that examine the lack of costly signals and arms racing in East Asia. Chapter 4, which examines North Korea's military and security strategy, is the conforming "empirical indicator" that clearly and tightly fits the costly signaling that Fearon identified. North Korea has consistently taken actions that show it is willing to fight for its survival, and the North sends a wide range of costly signals to that effect. For its part, South Korea also sends costly signals to North Korea to show it will not back down to Northern pressure. Competition on the Korean peninsula is thus the benchmark by which to compare other East Asian countries. Even more than South Korea, however, North Korea is doing everything it can to signal a willingness to fight for its survival. It spends heavily on its military. It suffers enormous economic costs in order to limit its interactions with its adversaries. It consistently makes rhetorical claims that it is willing to fight. Perhaps most importantly, other countries believe North Korea: it is widely and commonly agreed that North Korea is not bluffing, but is indeed prepared to fight for its survival. In short, this book affirms that costly signals are a useful and identifiable tool. North Korea is an exemplary, textbook case of costly signaling, and in fact is the only clear case of costly signals in the entire East Asian region.

### Why Countries Do Not Send Costly Signals

What if a country does *not* send costly signals? The most intuitive and straightforward reason is that it does not intend to fight and is not preparing for war. Bargaining theory argues that if a country does send costly signals, then it must care enough about an issue to be willing to fight. Conversely, if a country does not send costly signals, the issue must not be worth fighting over.<sup>19</sup>

Compared to North Korea, none of the other East Asian countries are using costly signals or preparing for war in dealing with each other and China. Detailed case studies in Chapters 5 through 8 explain East

<sup>19</sup> The only two exceptions I have found in the literature are Branislav L. Slantchev, "Feigning Weakness," *International Organization*, Vol. 64, No. 3 (July 2010), pp. 357–88; and Scott Wolford, "Showing Restraint, Signaling Resolve: Coalitions and Crisis Bargaining," *American Journal of Political Science* 58, no. 1 (2014): 144–156, both of which obtain only under explicit scope conditions.

Asian countries' strategies toward the United States, China, and each other. Individually, these case studies reveal a consistent pattern that East Asian countries are not preparing to choose sides or contain China. Taken together, these chapters reveal a consistent, regionwide process of integration, slow learning, and evolution in policies; the use of a wide variety of diplomatic, economic, institutional, and military strategies to manage relations with each other; and a search for comprehensive security.

In Chapter 5, South Korea provides an important contrast case to North Korea. While South Korea does send costly signals to North Korea about its willingness to fight, South Korean relations with China and Japan fit almost none of the standard theories. Most theory predicts that South Korea should fear a rising, powerful, authoritarian China and cleave toward Japan – a capitalist, rich, democracy with a close U.S. alliance. Yet South Korea is far more skeptical of Japan, and less skeptical of China, than many Western analysts expect or desire. South Korea is not militarizing its relations with China, but rather increasing its relations with China economically, diplomatically, and socially. Opinion polls have consistently found that Koreans view Japan as a greater national security threat than China, and this makes perfect sense when viewed from the perspective of Korean history. Korea has lived next to a powerful China for centuries, and its only real threats have come from Japan. This is unlikely to change.

Chapters 6 and 7 are a pairwise comparison of the Philippines and Vietnam, both of which are not using costly signals or preparations for war in their dealings with China. Both these countries are in Southeast Asia, both have maritime disputes with China, and both have deep economic ties to China. The Philippines is a longtime U.S. ally with a mutual defense treaty with the United States, while Vietnam recently fought a war against the United States and only normalized relations in 1995. A granular exploration of their strategies toward both the United States and China reveals that neither the Philippines nor Vietnam is displaying a willingness to go to war with China. Indeed, both countries have steadily reduced their military expenditures and military deployments – even naval deployments – over the past twenty-five years.

Put differently, neither country is pursuing a military strategy of costly signaling in its relations with China. Rather, both countries are pursuing diplomatic and institutional strategies in dealing with China.

The Philippines is pursuing an institutional and multilateral strategy in dealing with China's maritime claims. The Philippines took a dispute to the international tribunal in the Hague. Often overlooked in the Philippines victory in the Hague ruling was that this was an institutional and diplomatic strategy, not a military one. There was little indication that it intended to pursue a military enforcement strategy of its maritime claims. In contrast, Vietnam is pursuing a bilateral diplomatic strategy with both China and the United States. Furthermore, it appears that the United States is chasing Vietnam, rather than the other way around; this is in contrast to theories that predict that Vietnam should be pursuing the United States in an attempt to balance against China. Ultimately, neither country is preparing for war in the South China Sea.

Chapter 8 examines two other pairs of East Asian countries that are pursuing comprehensive security with each other and the great powers. Japan and Australia are U.S. allies, but both have complex relationships with China and neither reveals costly signals. Japan has a set of disputes with China, but Japan also has enduring reluctance to taking a "normal," or even a leadership, role in the region. Japan under Prime Minister Abe has probably reached its high point of international assertiveness, and even under Abe defense spending has remained essentially flat, and revision of Article Nine has not proceeded. In short, if Abe is not able to change Japan's overall trajectory, it is unlikely that any other leader can do so in the short to medium term. As for Australia, this close U.S. ally has measurably positive views of China, views increasing American bellicose strategy toward China skeptically, and has many pressing security concerns near its borders that do not involve either China or the United States. These two stalwart U.S. allies are thus supportive of the United States but highly unlikely to clearly join a containment coalition against China.

Two other important countries – Singapore and Indonesia – have warm and close relations with China, even while they enjoy close relations with the United States. Singaporean leaders have consistently argued that the United States needs to take Chinese goals and attitudes seriously, even while Singapore pursues good relations with both China and the United States (redundant somehow). Indonesian leaders and citizens view the United States more skeptically than most countries in East Asia, both because Indonesia is a heavily Muslim country, and because it does not view China with the same skepticism as many

in the U.S. policy-making establishment. Not one of these four countries sends costly signals about its willingness to use military means as their primary strategy for dealing with China.

### American Policy to East Asia

The book concludes by examining implications for American grand strategy to the region. Chapter 9 examines U.S. security and economic relations in Asia, emphasizing that there is little evidence that East Asian countries are free-riding on a forward U.S. military commitment to the region. This chapter shows that in fact, the United States has steadily reduced its military commitment to the region over the past half-century and there is good evidence that countries would be careful about too eagerly joining a U.S. containment coalition against China. Rather, these countries have built increasingly complex and plentiful relations with each other, and that American presence, while welcomed, is not nearly as central to the functioning of the region as might be believed. The United States is a powerful patron, but it is not indispensable to the region.

Chapter 10 concludes with general observations about continued East Asian stability, as well as lessons for American grand strategy in the region. These countries have experienced more than a generation of increasing regional integration and spectacular economic growth. Leaders and publics have crafted peaceful, outward-looking foreign policies that attempt to navigate diplomatic, economic, and security issues as a whole. China's rise is intricately interwoven with this larger regional rise, and China's rise is just one element of the increasing economic, diplomatic, and social integration of East Asia. No country appears eager for a containment policy of China. All countries want good relations with both China and the United States. China is not a problem to be solved, but rather an immense, complex, and rapidly changing country that has to be lived with.

Within this situation, then, an American grand strategy that emphasizes a confrontational approach to China is unlikely to attract many Asian participants. Rather, it is more likely that East Asian countries will avoid being caught between the United States and China, and indeed will back slowly away. This chapter thus argues that a *minimalist* U.S. grand strategy – one that emphasizes diplomacy and economic relations, and that avoids entangling the United States in

regional issues to the extent possible, is the path most likely to contribute to American interests as well as the continued stability of the region. It argues against a mainstream American view of liberal hegemony that sees America as an indispensable element of regional stability, pointing out that too intrusive American attempts at military-first leadership often make things worse, not better. The decisions the new Trump administration makes can either accelerate the decline of the American-led order or further American leadership and influence the diplomacy and economic relations in the region.