

THREE AND A HALF POWERS: THE NEW BALANCE IN ASIA. By Harold C. Hinton. Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1975. xiv, 306 pp. \$15.00, cloth. \$3.95, paper.

This is a sensible, balanced, and comprehensive account of the major trends in the international relations of the Far East since the Second World War. Part 1 describes the main trends through 1969: the reemergence of Japan, decolonization, the formation of the Sino-Soviet alliance, the American policy of containing China, the roots of the Sino-Soviet conflict, and the Vietnam War. Part 2 picks up the story between 1969 and 1974: the Sino-Soviet confrontation, the American withdrawal from Vietnam, the U.S. policy of *détente* with China and the Soviet Union, and recent developments in Japan, India, Pakistan, and Southeast Asia. Professor Hinton concludes with a cautiously optimistic prediction that the "combined effect of the policies and actions of the four principal powers (including Japan) and the less powerful states ought to be conducive, over time, to the operation of multipolarity and international stability."

In this book, as in his earlier comprehensive accounts of Chinese foreign policy, Hinton has avoided the currently fashionable efforts in political science and international relations to come up with another new "theory," or to substitute jargon or numbers for good sense. He writes, as he says in his introduction, "from the perspective of political history and political analysis rather than from that of one of the newer theories cum-methodologies. . . ." While I am very much in sympathy with such an approach, the danger exists that it will produce only a work of political journalism that will be easily outdated by the course of events. Although I do not think this is entirely the case with Hinton's book—largely because he is a good enough political analyst to avoid it—I do come away with a feeling of disappointment. This is partly because Hinton has not asked himself any questions he cannot answer, and partly because he has not probed deeply enough into the questions he has asked. Thus, while the specialist will undoubtedly agree with many of Hinton's judgments, he will seldom be excited by an original or provocative idea.

Let me give just two examples of what I mean. In the tantalizing three paragraphs that open his last chapter, Hinton begins to speculate on the similarities and differences between the half century after the Napoleonic Wars—when the international politics of Europe rested on a multilateral balance of power—and the current situation in the Far East. Although this particular historical analogy is genuinely provocative, there is, unfortunately, no real effort to distinguish the similarities and the differences of the two eras, or to define the distinctive characteristics of the present multipolarity. Similarly, Hinton avoids any real judgments on the durability of Sino-American or Soviet-American *détente*.

Finally, a minor but important nitpick. To argue that there is very little the United States could have done to prevent an accommodation between Mao and Stalin in 1949–50, as Hinton does, is to pass over much of the evidence from State Department documents. This evidence demonstrates quite clearly that Mao was interested in an American connection as late as the spring and summer of 1949, but that Truman and Acheson were unwilling to defy the "China Lobby" in Congress.

Despite these reservations, Hinton's book is the best that has yet been written on the subject.

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