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Dedicated to

Michael Leifer and Thomas W. Robinson

Cherished colleagues, friends, and pioneers
in the study of the international relations of Asia
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* Asia
Source CIA.
Preface to the Second Edition

Given the pace and scope of change in Asia and the increasing complexities of international relations in the region, we felt there was an urgent need for an up-to-date study when we published the first edition of this book back in 2008. But even in the short span of five years, the region has continued to evolve and change rapidly—and it has thus become clear that a newly revised and updated edition was needed. It is amazing to all of the contributing authors just how much has changed in such a short period of time.

For example, just after the first edition was published, the global financial crisis erupted. Although more insulated than Europe or North America, Asia was nonetheless deeply affected. A year later (2009–10) China embarked on what has become known as its “year of assertiveness”—taking a series of actions that aggravated relations with virtually all of its neighbors, thus undermining much of the progress Beijing had made over the previous decade with its regional “charm offensive.” China’s image in the region was badly tarnished and quickly soured. One result was that many—indeed most—Asian governments came clamoring to Washington imploring the new Obama administration to remain engaged and attentive to the region. Asian governments felt nervous about China’s more assertive profile while the United States was seemingly distracted with the Middle East and Afghanistan—hence they collectively called for a more robust and sustained American commitment to the region. For its part, Washington was having its own troubles with China after 2009, as mutual strategic distrust deepened and new strains in the relationship emerged.

These developments contributed to the Obama administration’s announced “pivot” or “rebalancing” initiative to Asia, although there was a general recognition in the administration that Asia commanded America’s priority strategic focus. While this initiative waned somewhat during Obama’s second term, Washington definitely increased its attentiveness and presence in Asia.
As a result, Beijing recalibrated its own regional diplomacy under its new president Xi Jinping and premier Li Keqiang, and at the time of this publication it seems clear that at least a "soft rivalry" for regional influence between the United States and China is underway. At the same time, we know—and the following pages illustrate—that the international relations of Asia are far too complex to view simply through such a bipolar lens. If there is a single defining characteristic of Asian international relations in this era, it is complexity. This requires all observers to adopt a multifaceted and multilevel perspective.

The arrival of Xi and Li on the regional stage has been accompanied over the past five years by new leaders in Australia, Japan, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, North and South Korea, the Philippines, and Thailand. In the cases of Pakistan and Russia, previous leaders returned to office following a hiatus. These new leaders, drawn from different generations and experiences, all bring new perspectives and policies to the Asian scene. New regional institutions—most notably the East Asian Summit—have also taken shape, while promising new ones like the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) are in the offing. Other regional changes have included increased security tensions associated with the maritime disputes in the East and South China seas, North Korea’s military belligerence and ongoing nuclear weapons program, and strains in bilateral relations among various Asian states. There have also been significant environmental disasters, such as Japan’s Fukushima Daiichi nuclear meltdown caused by the earthquake-induced tsunami in 2011, the Indonesian haze (smoke) that blanketed much of Southeast Asia in the summer of 2013, and the continually deteriorating air quality in China.

Given these and other important changes that have occurred in five short years, we felt the need to publish a fully updated and revised edition. Our wonderful editor at Rowman & Littlefield, Susan McEachern, was also a key stimulus (given how well received the first edition had been). Fortunately, when we approached the contributing authors in the summer of 2013, they were agreeable to revising their initial chapters. All contributors have expended considerable time and effort in revising their chapters—amounting to a substantial rewriting. As the editors of the volume, we are extremely grateful to these very busy colleagues (whose time is in high demand), and we gratefully thank each one.

We are also especially appreciative of the funding and support provided by George Washington University’s Siger Center for Asian Studies (our institutional home), and the China Policy Program of GWU’s Elliott School of International Affairs. Special thanks for his support is due to Elliott School alumni and International Council member Christopher J. Fussner.
Part One

INTRODUCTION: Asia

A Multidimensional Analysis
Chapter One

International Relations in Asia

A Multidimensional Analysis

DAVID SHAMBAUGH

International relations (IR) in Asia are increasingly complex and therefore require analysts to adopt multilevel and multidimensional frameworks in order to grasp the fluid dynamics in the region.

On one level, there are systemic factors that operate across the region and impact—one way or the other—all nations. These include multilateral institutions, major power relations, and economic and technological interdependencies. On a second level, there exist sub-regional factors that affect only certain parts of the region—Northeast, Southeast, South, or Central Asia—but do not impact the region as a whole (e.g., ethnic issues, historical frictions, boundary disputes). A third level consists of functional issues, some of which operate across the region (e.g., trade and investment) while others are more limited in their geographic scope (e.g., non-traditional security issues like piracy or criminal triads, as well as bilateral “security dilemmas” between antagonists like North and South Korea). A fourth set of factors involve fixed characteristics in the region, such as geography (e.g., continental vs. maritime domains) and sovereign borders. A fifth set of variables shaping international interactions in the region are historical factors—in Asia historical memories are deep and they continue to cast a long shadow over the contemporary region. A sixth set are norms of state behavior—which by their very nature are in a constant process of evolution, contestation, and renegotiation.1

As a consequence of these complexities and shaping factors, conceptualizing and understanding the dynamics of Asian international relations is increasingly vexing; thus it necessitates a multidimensional approach. This