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Ashley J. Tellis with Alison Szalwinski and Michael Wills

Overview

Assessing National Power in Asia
Ashley J. Tellis

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This chapter explains how three distinct conceptions of power—as resources, ability, and outcomes—informed the framework of this study and presents an overview of each chapter in the volume.

MAIN ARGUMENT

The many diverse expressions of power can be compressed into three broad conceptions: power as resources, power as ability, and power as outcomes. Framing national power in terms of resources, ability, and outcomes is a useful means of evaluating the countries of the Asia-Pacific region. Resources are the dominant consideration in competitive social environments, but solely examining resources can be deceptive. Almost as important is national performance, which accounts for variance in converting raw materials into physical and social products. This broad conception of power provides a better baseline for understanding strategic competition than a narrow focus on military metrics because disruptive scientific and technological advances can allow dynamic nations to rapidly overtake their competitors in future capabilities. By examining the resources of the major countries in the Asia-Pacific and their ability to convert these resources into national performance, this volume in the *Strategic Asia* series lays the foundation for a three-year study of each nation's likelihood of achieving its desired outcomes in international relations.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- Political realism emphasizes national power as the most important determinant of whether a state can achieve its strategic objectives.
- National performance, which encompasses state-society relations and the capacity for rationality in strategic action, determines whether a nation can effectively convert material resources into elements of national power.
- Military capability must necessarily be included in any portrait of national power even if it is not by itself an effective predictor of regional outcomes.

Overview

Assessing National Power in Asia

Ashley J. Tellis

In a competitive international environment, material power represents the necessary, though not sufficient, condition for a country to achieve its desired strategic objectives, whatever those may be. The fundamental importance of tangible capabilities for success has endured over time, irrespective of what kind of human collectives dominate at any given point in history. Consequently, all entities involved in contestational politics seek to maximize their power, even though there are considerable variations in the skill with which this resource is accumulated, organized, or deployed. The rise of the modern state signaled the intensification of power accumulation in ways previously unknown in history: social mobilization, technological innovation, bureaucratic organization, institutional design, and ideological promotion came together on a grand scale to stimulate the production of material capabilities for such diverse ends as national consolidation, internal development, and external security. But regardless of the character or the aims of various constituent entities, or the depth or scale of their mutual antagonisms, power has remained fundamental to success in every political system.

Hence, it may seem surprising that despite its pivotal standing in sociopolitical life, power still remains an "essentially contested concept."[1] The vast literature on the subject in fact suggests that what makes countries "powerful" in international politics is often hard to articulate precisely or

Ashley J. Tellis is a Senior Associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and Research Director of the Strategic Asia Program at The National Bureau of Asian Research. He can be reached at <atellis@carnegieendowment.org>.

[1] W. B. Gallie, "Essentially Contested Concepts," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 56 (1955): 167–98.

universally, even when there is an intuitive consensus about their relative strength. Contemporary social science actually abounds with different, often incommensurable, notions of power, and modern international relations theory is not much different: sometimes power is treated as the property of an entity, or as a resource; sometimes it is viewed as the characterization of relationships between entities, or as the attribute of particular systems or social structures; sometimes it is presumed to be a product of inequality, and at other times it is presumed to derive from shared values; and sometimes it is judged to be zero-sum, reflexive, or transitive, and at other times the exact opposite.[2]

Relating Power to National Power

The notion of national power explored in this *Strategic Asia* volume is grounded broadly in political realism. Political realism here refers to the tradition of understanding human behavior as part of the permanent struggle for security. It views the units of analysis, whether they be individuals, fiefdoms, or states, as largely self-regarding political entities that are locked into competition with one another, where each remains the principal limitation on the security, freedom, and ambitions of the others. As a result of such rivalry, all entities are propelled to enlarge their material capabilities in order to advance their own interests. The resulting maximization at the national level is driven primarily by the desire to minimize the prospect of harm arising from one's own relative weakness in what is overall a pervasively competitive environment that sometimes resembles the Hobbesian state of nature.

Because power alone protects its possessors in such a milieu, with greater power offering greater degrees of protection, it is possible to compress many diverse expressions of power into three broad conceptions. As the French sociologists Raymond Boudon and Francois Bourricaud summarized, power may be treated in the first instance as simply an "*allocation of resources*, of whatever nature these might be."[3] This notion of power, which refers to the sum total of the capabilities available to any entity for influencing others, is an old one and goes back to Thomas Hobbes, who

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[2] Dennis H. Wrong, *Power: Its Forms, Bases, and Uses* (Piscataway: Transaction Publishers, 1980). It may well be that these conflicting notions are indeed irreconcilable because every analytical concept, including power, is ultimately theory-dependent, as Karl Popper demonstrated in the early 1930s in *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*. If all concepts are thus by definition theory-laden, then both the idea of power and any disputes over its characteristics can only be articulated and resolved within the context of a specific theory. This constraint implies that even a crucial organizing variable such as power cannot really be understood either a-theoretically or meta-theoretically. Specifying its provenance, therefore, remains essential for intellectual clarity and explanatory utility.

[3] Raymond Boudon and Francois Bourricaud, *A Critical Dictionary of Sociology* (London: Routledge, 1989), 267.

defined it as "man's present means to any future apparent good."[4] Power, in this conception, is dispositional. It refers not to actual performance but merely to the capacities or assets possessed by any given entity, resources that either may enable certain outcomes to be produced by the very fact of their existence or could be utilized subsequently to produce particular outcomes through intentional action.

The view of power as resources is particularly appealing to theorists of international relations who often treat countries as "bordered power-containers":[5] the country is akin to a receptacle and the resources it possesses are akin to stock, allowing the latter to be measured, quantified, and compared with the holdings possessed by others. Although there may be disputes about which particular resources, such as population, natural wealth, productive capabilities, and military strength, are best suited to describe a country's national power, the utility of having a standardized set of measurable variables allows for cross-country comparisons and the global rank ordering of nations. Because material endowments matter in competitive social environments and because superior assets help their possessors secure advantageous outcomes—even if this causality does not hold in every instance—the tradition of viewing power as resources continues to remain attractive and cannot be easily discarded, no matter what its limitations may be.

The second conception of power highlighted by Boudon and Bourricaud is the "*ability* to use…resources," which in turn implies, among other things, "a *plan of use* and [the necessity of] minimal information about the conditions and consequences of this use."[6] This notion of power as ability is a valuable complement to the conceptualization of power as resources because it emphasizes intentionality and the active dimension of the actual-potential dichotomy that inheres in any notion of power centered on brute capabilities. This approach, by focusing on the idea of the power "to do" something, as opposed to the notion of power emanating from a stock of resources, opens the door to thinking about power as strategy in which the processes, relationships, and situations that shape purposeful action all play an important role.

This shift in focus from objects, which remain central to the idea of power as resources, to deliberate action in a certain context, which constitutes the cornerstone anchoring the idea of power as ability, is extremely useful for conceptualizing national power as understood within the framework of

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[4] Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (London: Oxford University Press, 1996), chap. 10.

[5] Anthony Giddens, *The Nation-State and Violence* (Oakland: University of California Press, 1985).

[6] Boudon and Bourricaud, *A Critical Dictionary of Sociology*, 267.

international relations theory. By highlighting the importance of calculated activity against the backdrop of certain structured relationships as well as specific forms of interaction between particular entities within or outside the nation, resources can be treated not simply as mute facts of nature but rather as products created as a result of willful state or societal action—outcomes that owe their existence to negotiation, bargaining, and even coercion between different entities within a given country or beyond it. Specifically, the idea of power as ability allows state-society relations to be restored to a pivotal position in the understanding of how national power comes to be produced by or in a given country; it also opens the door to incorporating various transnational activities into the production of national power. Both of these elements, in turn, highlight the fact that resources, which ordinarily define the relative power of various countries, do not exist in usable form *ex ante* but rather are brought into being *ex post* through conscious action for certain political ends.

The third notion discussed by Boudon and Bourricaud centers on "the *strategic* character of power," namely that "ultimately it is exercised not only against the inertia of things, but against the *resistance of opposing wills*."[7] This conception of power, which focuses fundamentally on the consequences of a given action, comports with the common human intuition of what it means to be powerful: getting one's way.[8] In its strongest form, this understanding of power incorporates the simple question of whether an agent is able to influence the targeted entity to act in a desired way, even if that entails undermining the target's own interests—an idea that was later encapsulated in Robert Dahl's now classic definition of power as the ability of A to get B to do something B would otherwise not do.[9]

Many kinds of historical explanation employ such an understanding of power when explaining the success of political action. This notion of power as outcomes is also immensely appealing to many theories of international relations, especially political realism. By incorporating both power as resources and power as ability into the singular conception of power as outcomes, most realist approaches ordinarily seek to explain a country's ability to attain its desired ends—despite possible resistance by others—as a logical function of its possessing greater resources, which in turn derive

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[7] Boudon and Bourricaud, *A Critical Dictionary of Sociology*, 267.

[8] In social theory, Max Weber was perhaps the first among classical theorists to not only systematically reflect on power as an outcome but actually embed it in an analysis of human interaction (while also allowing for the possibility of treating it as an emergent property of various aggregated interactions) when he described power as "the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which this probability rests." See Max Weber, *The Theory Of Social And Economic Organization* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2009).

[9] Robert A. Dahl, "The Concept of Power," *Behavioral Science* 2, no. 3 (1957): 201–15.

ultimately from its superior ability to mobilize these assets through concerted state and societal actions.

The attempt to explain success, particularly in conflicts, purely through the availability of superior resources, even with military capabilities as the relevant proxy, has unfortunately not fared too well analytically. Numerous studies have suggested that "the international distribution of capabilities" seems to correlate poorly with getting one's way consistently in international wars or disputes—and numerous explanations have, in turn, been adduced to "save" the presumption that superior resources are necessary for the production of favorable outcomes.[10] Given the discomfiting fact that poorly endowed entities are often able to win tests of will in international politics, Kenneth Waltz attempted in his celebrated *Theory of International Politics* to restate the case for the relevance of power as resources and ability by arguing that even if superior capabilities cannot produce success in every instance, they do enlarge their possessors' autonomy—undoubtedly a more defensible notion, but one that also runs into evidentiary difficulties of other kinds.[11]

The Framework of the Volume

Despite whatever their inherent limitations may be, each of the three conceptions of power elaborated above offers important insights that are of value to any analysis of national power. The studies gathered in this 2015–16 volume of the *Strategic Asia* series, *Foundations of National Power in the Asia-Pacific*, are envisaged as the first phase of a three-year effort aimed at understanding the future character of geopolitical competition in the Asia-Pacific region. The success of such an evaluation hinges considerably on the ability to judge the capacities of the key political entities involved, because national power serves as the foundation that enables them to secure their geopolitical and geostrategic aims.

The very first volume in the *Strategic Asia* series, *Strategic Asia 2001–02: Power and Purpose*, assessed the national power of key Asian states in the context of their grand strategies.[12] The chapters in this volume revisit that earlier discussion, aiming to investigate the national power of critical states in the Strategic Asia Program's arc of focus more systematically, using a schema developed at the RAND Corporation at the turn of the century. This framework was developed primarily for the intelligence community and was originally

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[10] Ashley J. Tellis, Janice Bially, Christopher Layne, Melissa McPherson, and Jerry M. Sollinger, *Measuring National Power in the Postindustrial Age: Analyst's Handbook* (Santa Monica: RAND, 2000).

[11] Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Long Grove: Waveland Press, 2010).

[12] Richard J. Ellings and Aaron L. Friedberg, eds., *Strategic Asia 2001–02: Power and Purpose* (Seattle: National Bureau of Asian Research [NBR], 2001).

intended to help country specialists assess the capacities of potential great powers in depth.[13] It was consciously designed to enable the close scrutiny of a few significant countries, one at a time, and hence required the integration of significant quantities of raw data as well as specialized knowledge.

Single-author assessments of the kind gathered in this volume cannot match the collaborative work undertaken by large teams of intelligence analysts with access to classified information—an issue that becomes particularly relevant when evaluations of military capabilities are concerned. Yet although the chapters that follow deviate somewhat from the analytical template described in the next section with respect to scope of coverage and level of detail, the broad framework is nonetheless consistently followed in every chapter. This framework uses several traditional measures of national power, while incorporating the notion of state capacity to describe how a country might produce—in absolute terms—both the material resources and the military power necessary to influence regional and global events. Toward that end, all these studies are anchored primarily in the tradition of power as resources, but they also draw substantially from the notion of power as ability. Each country is investigated intensively in order to assess the extent and the depth of its capabilities beyond the basic yardsticks of physical size, natural resources, economic growth rates, and military inventories. Because national power here is conceived simply as the capacity of a country to pursue strategic goals through purposeful action, each chapter attempts to engage both the external dimension, which consists of how a nation is affected by its wider environment, and the internal dimension, which consists of a nation's capacity to mold and transform the resources of its society into actionable knowledge that produces the best civilian and military capabilities possible.

By thus analyzing a country's material capabilities as well as its ability to produce those assets, this volume aims to establish a baseline for describing the absolute power of a given country, while also illuminating how each stacks up relative to its Asian neighbors when all the chapters are read synoptically. It is important to note that these studies do not make any attempt to assess whether the national capabilities of the countries examined suffice to advance their specific political aims in the Asian or the global context. That examination—of power as outcomes—will be the focus of the third-year product of this research effort. The third volume will integrate the analysis of capabilities published here—which draws from the notion of power as resources and the notion of power as ability—with next year's volume on the strategic culture of various Asian states in order to assess how resources and worldviews come together to produce the warfighting capabilities that each

[13] Tellis et al., *Measuring National Power in the Postindustrial Age.*

country believes are required for success in the face of concrete regional and global threats. The next three volumes of the *Strategic Asia* series, beginning with the current book, are thus conceived as an integrated effort, even though each particular one addresses a different but related topic.

Thinking about National Capabilities

Creating a useful national power profile that incorporates notions of both power as resources and power as ability requires not simply judging certain attributes of the country in question, such as population size or GNP, but unpacking the concept of the "country" itself in order to look within that which is often treated as a black box.

Such reconstruction is justified on the assumption that the real sinews of national power are manifested not merely by the visible military assets brandished during ceremonies or parades but rather by deeper capacities such as the aptitude for innovation, the fecundity of social institutions, and the quality of the knowledge base—all of which profoundly bear on a country's capacity to produce the *ultima ratio regum* in international politics: effective military power.[14] The validity of this assumption, in turn, derives from three specific premises.

The first premise is that the international system has witnessed for some time now something resembling a science-based "knowledge revolution," most clearly manifested by the current breakthroughs in information processing, technology, and management; biotechnology; advanced materials; robotics; renewable energy and energy storage; and the "Internet of things"—disruptive innovations that promise consequential transformations in society at large with major implications in both the civilian and the military realms.[15]

The second premise is that the performance of the state (understood specifically as the governing institutions that steer a nation's political direction) and the character of state-society relations (understood specifically as the character of the interdependence between the rulers and the ruled) are critical to a country's success in the evolving international system for two reasons. The first is that no matter how successful a given society may be in developing or exploiting the science-based knowledge revolution currently underway, a minimally efficient state is required if these societal advances are to be transformed into national power. The second is that societal vitality is

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[14] Tellis et al., *Measuring National Power in the Postindustrial Age*, 12.

[15] Ibid., 6.

indispensable for a state's success, even as an effective state is critical for the success of collective action in society.[16]

The third premise is that national power in a rivalrous international system will continue to find its most potent expression in terms of warfighting capabilities, and that the best forces will be those that can better exploit emerging militarily critical technologies, such as those relating to information and communications, energetic materials, electronics, optics and sensors, signature control, cyber, and space, to nurture the highest forms of combat proficiency in order to sustain projectable power against opposition at the greatest distance necessary.[17]

Articulating a conception of national power that satisfactorily accommodates these three premises requires unpacking the term "country" in order that its constituent entities—population, state structures, state-society relations, constitutional arrangements, culture, and worldview—may be conceived as active social artifacts that, in interaction, make up the entity that looks from the outside as a geographic representation. Such disaggregation, then, allows national power to be seen as a product that ensues from the synergy of three distinct realms, every one of which is as important as the other for the generation of usable power in international politics. The first realm encompasses the level of resources either available to or produced by a country. The second realm encompasses national performance deriving from the security pressures facing a country; from the efficiency of its governing institutions, nominally labeled "the state," as well as society at large; and from its capacity for rational maximization of material power. Finally, the third realm encompasses military capability, which is understood in terms of operational proficiency or effectiveness produced as a result of both the strategic resources available to a military organization and its ability to convert those resources into effective coercive power. These three realms together describe national power (see **Figure 1**).

The first realm depicts the national resources that a country must possess if it is to achieve its aims in international politics. These capacities could be crudely considered the raw materials that enable successful national action in any political realm—diplomatic, economic, or military—and they remain the foundation from which effective military forces are produced. Since the beginning of the modern international system, this dimension has been the focus of most comparisons of national power, which has been measured by variables such as population, size of territory, economic strength (frequently in terms of GNP or GDP), and natural resources.

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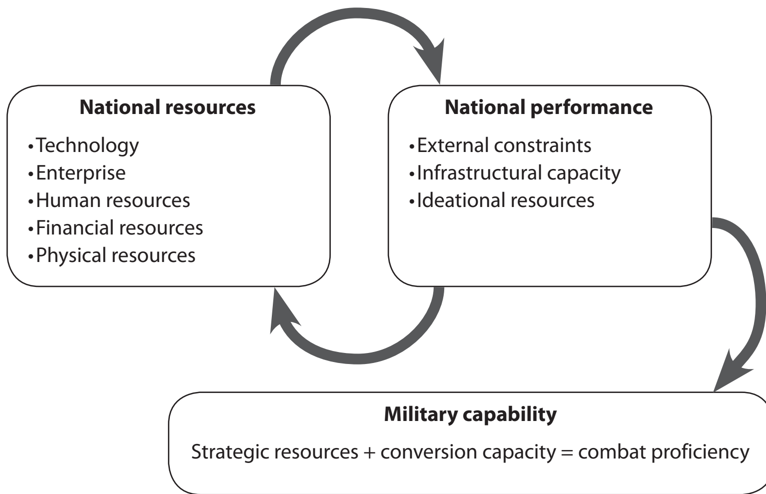
[16] Tellis et al., *Measuring National Power in the Postindustrial Age*, 22.

[17] Ibid., 27–28.

FIGURE 1 The three realms of national power



SOURCE: Ashley J. Tellis et al., *Measuring National Power in the Postindustrial Age: Analyst's Handbook* (Santa Monica: RAND, 2000), 5.

In neoclassical economics, these variables are generally captured by the locution "factors of production," which encompass land, labor, capital, and enterprise, thereby including all the elements that combine to make up the productive system and, by implication, the material foundations of national power. Because these elements have enduring significance, they cannot simply be jettisoned; hence, they are incorporated into the framework above in the context of other, newer qualitative variables that speak to a country's wider ability to incorporate the science-based knowledge revolution into its political, economic, and social spheres.

Thus, for instance, the authors in this volume examine how the countries on which they focus are positioned with respect to cutting-edge technology: the priority placed on it, the achievements or absence thereof, and the level of resources committed to the acquisition of new technology as well as the strategies pursued toward that end. Because the capacity to shift the technological production frontier outward has a critical bearing on national power, the analyses here also consider, under the rubric of enterprise, each given country's aptitude for innovation and how this might be diffused within its society. Quantifying technological vitality is often a

difficult enterprise, but examining the levels of R&D expenditures as well as patent performance might offer useful clues. Given that the size and quality of the labor force are vital ingredients of economic growth and technological change, the chapters perforce consider population trends and educational achievements in both the formal and informal realms. The category of financial resources attempts to capture the accumulation of capital and the effectiveness of that accumulation. Hence, it considers broadly domestic savings and investment (including foreign contributions), aggregate GDP growth, and the performance of particular sectors relevant to the country examined. Finally, the realm of national resources includes physical assets, and special attention is paid to energy and critical materials. In an interdependent global economy, physical resources should be the least significant factor of production so long as markets operate efficiently and without political constraints. Since this still remains an ideal, assessing physical resources is important because they are crucial sources of revenue or external dependency for several Asian nations.

The realm of national resources analyzed in this way is obviously important because it represents a society's tangible and intangible assets. As the causal arrow on the top of Figure 1 indicates, however, they are significant not simply as raw materials but rather as valuables that permit an organized state to sustain itself and, hence, are intimately linked to the second realm of national performance. The cyclic character of this relationship is equally important: as the causal arrow on the bottom linking the resources and performance boxes indicates, even raw materials—the truly brute gifts of nature—often have little economic or political value unless actualized as a result of conscious human action at the state and societal levels. This leads to the insight that national performance—the arena of state-society interactions, the values that shape them, and the constraints that channel them—is critical for the "production" of all the components identified under the rubric of resources, which, even if they exist as such in nature, require human artifice to realize their economic and political worth.

National performance, accordingly, becomes critical. In the framework above, this second realm seeks to capture the mechanisms that enable countries to create or convert national resources, which represent latent power, into tangible forms of usable power. The objective of incorporating this transformative dimension of national power is to move beyond the traditional view of countries as resource containers to one that scrutinizes them as active social structures consisting of state and societal actors and institutions, all of which exist in an environment populated by many similar entities abroad. Introducing this dimension permits an analysis of national power that goes beyond most traditional measures: understanding a state's relationship both

to its external security environment (and its internal security environment, if appropriate) and to its own society and the consequences thereof for national power capability.

To achieve these aims, the chapters that follow address to the degree possible three separate but related components. First, they locate the given country's production of national power in the context of its security environment, on the assumption that nations that face acute external or internal security challenges would in principle be motivated to maximize power generation in order to equip their rulers with the wherewithal required to neutralize these hazards. Alternatively stated, these countries' rulers would be motivated to maximize the production of national power in order to entrench their own internal domination while parrying external threats.

Framing the problem in this way leads to the second task: considering what Michael Mann once described in a pathbreaking study as "infrastructural power."[18] In this context, infrastructural power refers to the capacity of the state to penetrate its own society, regulate its activities, and extract its resources, while at the same time permitting those ruled sufficient ordered freedom to engage in private activities that maximize the production of the assets previously treated as natural resources. Attaining these ends involves two broad kinds of activities: the capacity to set goals in the face of competing societal interests, and the capacity to attain those goals through the mechanisms of penetration, extraction, and regulation of social relations. These diverse activities constitute the warp and woof of domestic politics and yet are fundamental to a country's capacity to produce national power.

Finally, the ideational component is critical as well. Does the state encode the logic of instrumental rationality in its policies and institutions, while also being substantively rational in the sense mandated by political realism, namely, possessing the conscious desire to enlarge material power?

The maximization of national power in this framework, then, derives from an effective state nurturing the production of high levels of national resources. These in turn contribute toward the maintenance and enlargement of state capacity that, interacting in a virtuous cycle, can produce the military capabilities required to underwrite the internal and external security or ambitions of the country writ large.

Because the analyses in this volume are embedded in the tradition of understanding power as resources and power as ability, rather than power as outcomes, the treatments of military capabilities do not focus on analyzing whether the combat forces in a given country would be capable of successfully prosecuting various missions against its adversaries. As noted

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[18] Michael Mann, "The Autonomous Power of the State: Its Origins, Mechanisms and Results," *European Journal of Sociology/Archives Européennes de Sociologie* 25, no. 2 (1984): 185–213.

earlier, that analysis will have to await the third volume of this research effort. What is undertaken in the chapters that follow is a broad analysis of military power, primarily in terms of the resources available and, whenever possible, supplemented by a discussion of conversion capability. Military resources here refer mainly to manpower under arms, equipment inventory, defense budgets, and the defense industrial base. Conversion capability refers to the type of military strategy pursued; the character of civil-military relations; the doctrine, training, and organization of the forces; and their capacity for innovation—the critical variables that condition how the available military resources are converted into combat proficiency in different warfighting domains.

The country studies all conclude with a discussion of military capability, but not necessarily at the level of detail denoted in the graphical depiction of national power earlier. There are two reasons for this, both practical. Assessing combat proficiency in terms of various operational competencies is an exceptionally involved enterprise and requires access to enormous amounts of information (especially in regard to training and operations) that is often not available in the open literature, and which even when available may require military experience to interpret. Moreover, the *Strategic Asia* series has examined the military capabilities of various Asian states at high levels of granularity before.[19] Given the need to limit the scope of each chapter for the purposes of this volume, concentrating on the important realms of national resources and performance, with just enough focus on military power to complete the story, was deemed sufficient. The discussions of military capability in the chapters that follow are, therefore, more in the nature of broad surveys, anchored importantly in the analysis of national resources as well as state aims and performance, than detailed assessments of operational competency.

Surveying National Power in Asia: Key Insights

It is appropriate that a volume dedicated to surveying national power in Asia lead with a chapter on China because it not only is a vast country of almost subcontinental proportions but, more importantly, has been the most noteworthy example of rapidly expanding power in recent history. Thanks to its large size, China has been blessed with a vast reservoir of natural resources. Nadège Rolland's survey captures in fine detail the fact that China has been one of the few states to consciously pursue the

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[19] Ashley J. Tellis and Michael Wills, eds., *Strategic Asia 2005–06: Military Modernization in an Era of Uncertainty* (Seattle: NBR, 2005); and Ashley J. Tellis and Travis Tanner, eds., *Strategic Asia 2012–13: China's Military Challenge* (Seattle: NBR, 2012).

expansion of national power with almost fanatical zeal, bringing several consequences, not all beneficial. China's rise has led to the dramatic expansion of many national resources in the last three decades, especially Chinese capital stocks, the technology pool, and other physical resources. But political choices, especially the one-child policy, will prospectively result in a problematic contraction of the labor force, with real risks to China's ability to sustain its long-term future growth. The decision to control factor prices, even as China liberalized commodity prices as part of its marketization, has produced considerable wastefulness in utilizing natural resources, with painful environmental degradation as a result.

Rolland's chief conclusion, however, is that while China's quest for power thus far has produced incredible and arresting results both nationally and globally—not least because its impressive growth has yielded regionally disequilibrating military capabilities—Beijing's achievements could be at risk because of the contradictions in its state-society relations, the kernel of national performance. Referring to the current Chinese effort to sustain a market economy controlled by an authoritarian leadership, she concludes that "the nation's capacity to convert…resources into tangible forms of usable civilian and military power is hindered by a contradiction in terms between the essence of power in the 21st century—inspirational, technologically advanced, outward-looking, and innovative—and the intrinsic nature of the regime that is currently governing China." This leads to the unsettling possibility that intensified coercion within China and diversionary adventurism abroad could increasingly come to define Beijing's quest for national power in the future.

Unlike China, which is still a rising power in Asia, Japan is now a mature industrial economy that has suffered some eclipse because of Beijing's ascendency. Michael Auslin's study of Japan, however, is a reminder of the country's enduring importance and abiding strengths: high levels of development and wealth, social stability, and capacity for technological innovation. Japan, in fact, remains an extraordinary example of how a country can flourish despite possessing the most meager resource base—so long as it enjoys a capable state with reasonably effective infrastructural power, maximizes the benefits of international trade, and maintains a relatively efficient domestic market—though in Tokyo's case, the advantages of having the United States as a protector, as a guarantor of the safety of the global commons, and as an external consumer of Japanese products cannot be underestimated. Japan's success in accumulating national power remains a remarkable testament to the benefits of an effective state, productive state-society relations, and high levels of rationalization.

These virtues, Auslin emphasizes, will be tested in the years ahead as Japan copes with an increasingly dangerous regional environment produced

by growing Chinese assertiveness at a time when Japanese society is graying, its economy is hobbled by both debt and inefficient capital allocation, and the country is reeling from natural disasters, energy crises, and long deflation. In such circumstances, Japan's extant strengths in national performance—its elite cohesion and highly regulated social relations—could end up being weaknesses if they entrench groupthink, prevent policy innovation, and reinforce the nation's propensity for risk aversion. These shortcomings could be intensified if the interest-group politics that made corporatism successful in an earlier era now impede the national restructuring that requires sacrificing some of these lobbies for the sake of greater economic efficiency and social transformation. At a time when Japan has to think more seriously about military threats, its leadership is undoubtedly challenged in ways that it has never been before. Auslin notes that Japan has the capacity to respond to these challenges, though whether it can do so adequately—because of its cultural conservatism—remains an open question.

Chung Min Lee's chapter on the Republic of Korea highlights the similarities between South Korea and Japan where the production of national power is concerned. Like Japan, South Korea was born out of the crucible of conflict and still copes daily with an ever-present security threat to its north. It is a geographically small nation with poor stocks of natural resources but has compensated remarkably for these deficiencies through building up its human capital. Thanks to its integration into the U.S.-led liberal international order, South Korea has used the mechanisms of international trade to spur its national development in ways that are the envy of many developing countries. As Lee summarizes, "South Korea has joined a relatively small group of states that possess an advanced economy, significant conventional military capabilities, a sizable population base, growing technological capacities, good governance, and a robust democracy."

Lee's analysis substantiates the expectation that, as in Japan, favorable state-society relations have been fundamental for South Korea's success. A highly effective and purposeful state "acted as the principal architect, financier, and monitor of an export-driven industrialization policy"; through competent social control, it "supported [the] *chaebols* (family-run conglomerates) that spearheaded an economic turnaround"; and, in an example of the productive regulation of social relations, it "most importantly, harnessed the sheer industriousness of the Korean people, who were determined not to let endemic poverty become their national destiny."

For all these successes, however, Lee flags the gray clouds now appearing on the horizon: South Korea's population is aging and will not be able to provide either the growth in the labor force or the effective demand of yesteryear, unless peaceful reunification with the North occurs (which is

likely to bring its own unique problems). South Korea's export advantages are progressively diminishing, as newer low-cost competitors such as China eat into its market share, and its traditional markets could reach saturation at some point in the future. Most significantly, the controlling power of the South Korean state is declining in the face of new social forces, which at a time when the developmental state model has reached the limits of its success requires both "a 'new political consensus' that goes beyond the reforms that were implemented in 1987" and "a new developmental model that ensures a viable but limited role for the state reflecting the key changes in Korean society." In a situation where, as Lee notes, "virtually every facet of…[South Korea's]…ability to produce and maintain core national capabilities will require unparalleled political and social re-engineering," the tasks of regeneration are formidable indeed. Yet for a society that represents a genuine miracle of contemporary social transformation, the odds of success in the continued production of national power must be judged as better than even.

In contrast to Japan and South Korea, but akin to China, Russia is a vast country with substantial natural resources, especially minerals and energy assets. As a result of its wrenching modernization during the twentieth century, the Soviet Union—contemporary Russia's progenitor—created a bureaucratic state that was highly proficient technologically, with a major military-industrial complex that defined its existence as a superpower. The convulsions resulting from the Soviet collapse weakened not only Russia's industrial capabilities but also its social order. Today, over two decades after that denouement, Andrew Kuchins's chapter in this volume suggests that Russia is still struggling to overcome varying degrees of weakness in regard to technological change, capacity for innovation, human capital development, and even GDP growth. Although appearing to have survived the worst of the economic crises that had bedeviled it after the Soviet collapse, Russia still possesses an unbalanced economy that remains too dependent on energy exports, is saddled by poor demographic indicators, is susceptible to capital flight, and is constrained by unfavorable migration trends that promise a net loss in human capital as "the best and brightest professionals…[leave]…Russia in droves, only to be replaced by less-educated, less-skilled migrants."

While Russia still commands significant military prowess (though even this is a pale reflection of its Soviet incarnation), the country's failure to thrive—beyond the current crises precipitated by its aggressive actions in Ukraine—is rooted largely in problematic state-society relations. The Russian state is anchored in "charismatic" authoritarian politics with wide varieties of contentiousness pervasive in state-society relations, even though these societal protest movements do not pose an existential threat to the political status quo. Because state power is preoccupied with the preservation of the apex holder's

domination, national performance, unfortunately, comes to be focused on the twin objectives of political legitimation, on the one hand—where strategies of economic rewards, co-optation, and the transformation of political resistance into officially sanctioned contention are all equally valuable—and the protection of access to resources, on the other. With regard to the latter objective, the assistance offered to old enterprises, companies with government stakes, and firms that preserve jobs is complemented by the favorable treatment extended to certain business magnates in exchange for their explicit support for and alignment with the true center of power in Moscow. Because these activities are oriented fundamentally toward expanding the leadership's personal power rather than strengthening the vitality of the state or country writ large, and have in recent times been ideologically buffered by a virulent form of Russian nationalism that, centered on the demonization of the West, has assumed a priority position as state ideology and in Russian society, Russia likely will continue to falter in the production of national power for some time to come.

Rajesh Rajagopalan's chapter on India finds a state possessed of great potential power. Like China and Russia, India is a subcontinental-sized state with significant natural resources (excepting energy and strategic materials). It also possesses a large population, which, unlike its major-power peers in Asia, is conspicuously young, thus assuring continued growth of the labor force for many decades. On other counts, however, India displays significant deficits where national resources are concerned: although its economy has been growing at a relatively high rate in recent years—from a low starting point over many decades—this success masks considerable weaknesses in its high-technology base, innovation ecosystem, and quality of human resources as well as in national savings and gross capital formation.

India's greatest shortcomings, however, reside not in the quality of its national resources but in the realm of national performance. As Rajagopalan succinctly concludes, India remains "encumbered by domestic politics and incompetent state management," reducing the country's power capacity. Although India continues to be challenged by both Pakistan and China, its limitations are scarcely external. In fact, New Delhi enjoys the advantages of a "broad elite consensus in major policy areas," yet finds it hard to translate this general agreement into elite cohesion, partly because of the pressures of democratic politics. Furthermore, the Indian state is highly autonomous relative to society, but neither penetrates that society nor extracts resources from it as efficiently as a state should. India's biggest weaknesses, however, lie in infrastructural power more broadly and in the ideational deficits embedded in its institutions: the bureaucracy is inadequate in capacity yet overbearing in reach; ossified governmental policies over the decades have stifled private

initiative and choked the development of efficient markets; and while the country as a whole has expressed a consistent desire to maximize its national power, India has failed to demonstrate adequate instrumental rationality—if its public policies and institutional design constitute evidence—that enables it to get there. Thus, even India's otherwise impressive military capabilities in this context do not undermine Rajagopalan's sobering conclusion "that while India has considerable capabilities to generate national power, they rest on relatively narrow foundations."

Like India, Indonesia, another large and strategically located country, remains a sleeping giant. Its archipelagic character has constrained its national cohesion in some ways, but its tropical bounty has yielded, in Vikram Nehru's apt description, "a cornucopia of natural wealth, replete with oil, hydropower, geothermal power, various minerals, timber, rice, palm oil, cocoa, and coffee," which "has attracted traders in search of raw materials from time immemorial and foreign investors in more recent decades." Given these endowments, Indonesia is one of the world's largest commodity exporters, with an industrial base that is increasingly oriented toward natural resource processing and servicing the domestic market. Indonesia has demonstrated relatively rapid economic growth in recent times, with reasonably high rates of domestic savings and investment. But its most conspicuous weaknesses are manifested in innovation and technological capacity, which have had knock-on effects in all sectors of the economy. The poverty of Indonesia's human capital base has only further reduced its national capacity and, as Nehru concludes, "together with infrastructure deficiencies, persist as a binding constraint to future economic growth, technological development, and by implication the expansion of capabilities essential to Indonesia's national performance over the long term and projection of national power in coming decades."

Indonesia's relatively benign external environment in the past only muted pressures for the rapid accumulation of national power. And although managing internal challenges dominated Jakarta's security calculations for many years, state-society relations were shaped fundamentally by the authoritarian politics of charismatic strongmen, which in recent years have been replaced by the struggle to institutionalize democracy. This effort is ongoing—with the implication that the core task remains not maximizing national power to shape outcomes abroad but rather renegotiating the terms of rule and the control over resources at home. The democratization and decentralization that have become the hallmarks of Indonesian democracy today have done wonders for social stability. As Nehru notes, however, they have also produced "national coalition governments with little ability to reach consensus on new strategies" at a time when the "decentralization of political and fiscal power has weakened the center's ability to wield these

important instruments of social control" and political leaders have failed "to craft a compelling vision of the national interest, unite the nation, and give credence and credibility to policy reforms and new development initiatives." For some time to come, therefore, Indonesia—despite its growing concerns about China—will continue to be engrossed by internal challenges that limit its ability to play a significant role beyond Southeast Asia.

The last chapter in this volume, authored by Dennis Blair, focuses on the United States and its capacity to sustain national power in ways that preserve its primacy in the international system—a policy goal that is perhaps just as important as the academic exercise of evaluating the robustness of U.S. power. Because the United States remains the most powerful country internationally, its standing automatically defines the extremity of the global production-possibility frontier, meaning the curve that depicts a nation's maximum output possibilities for "guns" and "butter," given the available inputs and the existing state of technology. Therefore, in this instance more than others, the study of U.S. national power is relevant because it also helps identify what gaps might exist relative to the country's closest competitors. Blair succinctly captures the extent of U.S. national resource advantages when he notes that "the U.S. economy is both advanced and balanced, not dependent on a single sector. The United States possesses a large internal market and domestic supplies of raw materials and is roughly half as dependent on foreign trade as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) average."

Because the United States remains a system-maker rather than a system-taker, it is able to overcome any resource deficits it may have through sturdy access to international trade, which occurs under the seigniorage of the dollar and under trade rules shaped by American power. A quick survey of U.S. national resources, in fact, suggests that the United States enjoys unparalleled advantages in technology creation, economic innovation, and natural resources; it has some weakness in human capital formation but compensating advantages in immigration; and its awkward dependence on foreign capital for financing both trade and budgetary deficits is ironically a function of prosperity at home and the stability of the U.S. economic system.

Changing the pattern of the U.S. consumption-investment mix is perhaps the biggest contemporary challenge, which bears importantly on the obsolescence of the national infrastructure that Blair highlights as a critical weakness. This challenge is linked intimately with the United States' only national weakness of significance: national performance. As Blair notes damningly,

> Despite increasing evidence of deep-seated national problems that require legislative solutions along with competent executive branch action—for

> example, entitlement payments, healthcare, education, national infrastructure, immigration, and energy and disaster response—for the past fifteen years there has been scant government progress on the great majority of these issues. As the political parties have moved away from the center, propelled by the nature of their primary elections, unrestrained campaign contributions, gerrymandering, and the controversy-obsessed media, discussions of solutions to every major national problem degenerate relatively quickly into a stalemate. It has been impossible to fashion practical compromises that blend both public and private action. Beyond their failure to take on big problems, Congress and the executive branch have become less capable of carrying out even the routine functions of government—passing budgets on time and confirming appointees to key positions.

A more succinct summary of the challenges facing the United States could not have been articulated. Yet when the country's enormous strengths are placed in context—including its formidable military power that shows little sign of ebbing—the conclusion that many other nations would love to trade their problems for those of the United States is perhaps amply justified.

Conclusion

The chapters in this volume suggest that national performance matters more than any other variable for the production of national power. National performance is a specific manifestation of power as ability, and the diverse national analyses contained here indicate that the capacity to orchestrate successful social action makes all the difference to mobilizing the national resources that ultimately support the deployment of various military capabilities. Thus, even countries that are very well endowed with natural resources of different kinds, such as Russia, China, and Indonesia, risk being unable to sustain the levels of success that should otherwise accrue to them, given their natural endowments, because of weaknesses in their state-society relations. This same variable also accounts in different ways for whether countries like Japan and South Korea will be able to sustain continued success even as their early industrial advantages atrophy. And national performance again will determine whether India can finally grasp the great-power capabilities it has sought for many decades, even as the management of domestic politics also will determine the felicity with which the United States will be able to sustain its primacy in international politics in the decades to come.