

Reading Response 7

Modern Asia poses a threat to the United States conception of world order in its rise back to international prominence, which when coupled with historical ideological differences, has created a cocktail of mistrust. Since early on in its existence, the US has always found itself superior to other cultures, attempting to oppose its customs and traditions with the assumption countries would be willing and grateful. With Woodrow Wilson's entrance to office, US foreign policy transformed from one of seclusion on the North American continent, to a self-proclaimed hegemonic "watchdog" burdened with maintaining world peace. From the American perspective, this equilibrium is best kept "through democracy, open diplomacy, and the cultivation of shared rules and standards," (p. 269). While in theory this is a well intentioned goal, the issue is America's assumption that democracy and their "rules and standards" are what every country wishes to be enforced upon them.

From the Asian perspective, specifically China's, sovereignty to make their own decisions is key. This directly conflicts with the American mission to "democratize" the world under shared "rules and standards." US intervention is viewed simply "as a design to thwart China's rise," (p. 229), while American's claim that it's in the name of promoting human rights is seen "as a project to undermine China's domestic political structure," (p. 229). Although China has always kept to themselves in terms of foreign policy, never attempting to exert their own culture on others, this rejection of American ideals coupled with rising influence globally has created a sense of nervousness. As Chinese economic and military power continue to grow, so too shall American anxiety.

Even more unsettling about the situation, a Harvard study showed "that in fifteen cases in history where a rising and an established power interacted, ten ended in war," (p. 228). As both sides continue to assume the worst-case scenario, the odds of a peaceful resolution between the two becomes dimmer. In the end, the US must come to the realization that all

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great empires eventually decline. While this may not mean the demise of the US entirely, the nation must learn to coexist with others in a globalized world where they may not reign the sole hegemonic leader.