

sure and its nationalist ideology. Interior China might not benefit from Japan's presence, but businesses and governments along the coast would. The Japanese, with large amounts of money, will have recruited allies in the coastal cities who do not want to pay the price that will be needed to satisfy the demands of the interior. An alliance between one or more coastal regions and Japan will emerge, confronting the power of Beijing. The amount of money that Japan will bring to bear will rapidly divide the central party itself and weaken the central government's ability to assert its control on the coastal cities.

China will be seen as part of the solution for countries like Japan that are feeling heavy pressure from demographic problems but cannot manage large-scale immigration. Unfortunately the timing will not be good. An inevitable downturn in the Chinese economy will make the central government more assertive and more nationalist. But the central government will itself be weakened by the corrosive effect of money. China will remain formally united, but power will tend to devolve to the regions.

A very real future for China in 2020 is its old nightmare—a country divided among competing regional leaders, foreign powers taking advantage of the situation to create regions where they can define economic rules to their advantage, and a central government trying to hold it all together but failing. A second possibility is a neo-Maoist China, centralized at the cost of economic progress. As always, the least likely scenario is the continuation of the current situation indefinitely.

It all boils down to this: China does not represent a geopolitical fault line in the next twenty years. Its geography makes that unlikely under any circumstances, and China's level of military development needs more than a decade to overcome this geographical limit. Internal stresses on the Chinese economy and society will give China far greater internal problems than it can reasonably handle, and therefore it will have little time for foreign policy adventures. To the extent that China will be involved with foreign powers, it will be defending itself against encroachment rather than projecting its own power.

## RUSSIA 2020

## REMATCH

In geopolitics, major conflicts repeat themselves. France and Germany, for example, fought multiple wars, as did Poland and Russia. When a single war does not resolve an underlying geopolitical issue, it is refought until the issue is finally settled. At the very least, even without another war, tension and confrontation are ongoing. Significant conflicts are rooted in underlying realities—and they do not go away easily. Keep in mind how quickly Balkan geopolitics led to a recurrence of wars that had been fought a century earlier.

Russia is the eastern portion of Europe and has clashed with the rest of Europe on multiple occasions. The Napoleonic wars, the two world wars, and the Cold War all dealt, at least in part, with the status of Russia and its relationship to the rest of Europe. None of these wars ultimately settled this question, because in the end a united and independent Russia survived or triumphed. The problem is that the very existence of a united Russia poses a significant potential challenge to Europe.

Russia is a vast region with a huge population. It is much poorer than the rest of Europe, but it has two assets—land and natural resources. As such it is a constant temptation for European powers, which see an oppor-