Abstract: For over a quarter century, there have been dire and continued predictions that East Asia is experiencing an arms race, that the regional security dilemma is intensifying, and that dangerous instability driven by China is just around the corner. Yet in reality, over the past twenty-five years, the proportion of the economy devoted to defense spending in East Asia has steadily declined. Is East Asia actually more peaceful than the conventional wisdom might suggest? If so, why? I argue that there is little evidence that East Asian states are engaged in an arms race, that few states are sending costly signals about their resolve to suffer the costs of war, that there is indeed almost no evidence that states in the region are preparing for war, and that the region is more peaceful, stable, and prosperous now than at anytime in the past century. If the region is more stable than popularly believed, then the U.S. pivot to East Asia should remain focused on diplomatic and economic initiatives and not get sidetracked with military issues.

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Kang has published numerous scholarly articles in journals such as International Organization and International Security, and his co-authored article “Testing Balance of Power Theory in World History” was awarded “Best article, 2007-2009,” by the European Journal of International Relations. Kang has also written opinion pieces in the New York Times, the Financial Times, the Washington Post, and the Los Angeles Times, as well as writing a monthly column for the Joongang Ilbo in Korean. He received an A.B. with honors from Stanford University and his Ph.D. from Berkeley.

This event is sponsored in part by a grant from the Korea Foundation and the Northeast Asia Council of the Association for Asian Studies and a U.S. Department of Education Title VI grant to The Ohio State University East Asian Studies Center.

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