

War and peace in Asia

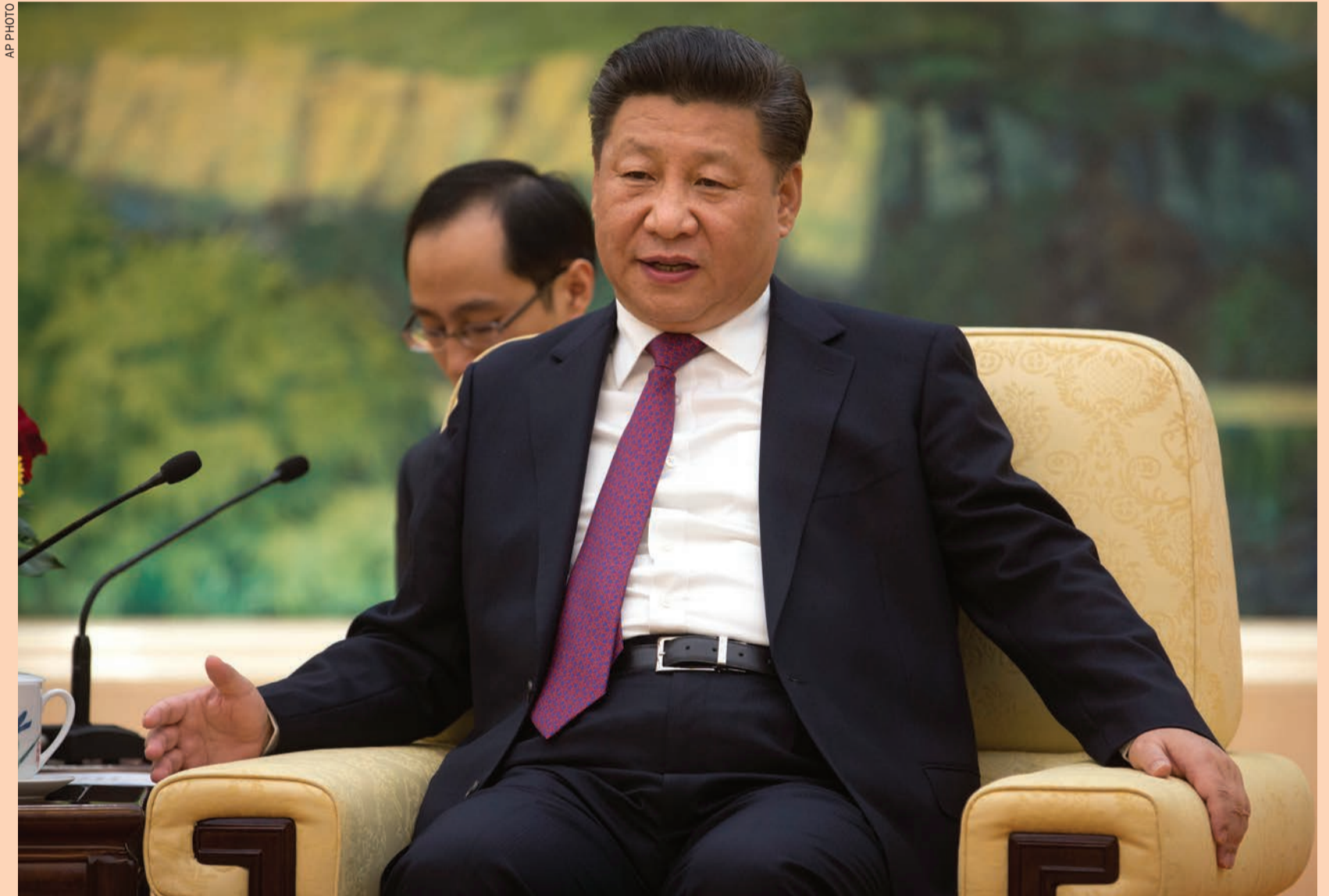
By Gideon Rachman

In Chinese history, foreign visitors to the imperial court were often treated as “barbarians” who were expected to pay tribute to the emperor. There are echoes of this in the way that modern China’s leaders engage with the rest of the world, as I discovered in November 2013, as part of a small group of visitors received by President Xi Jinping in Beijing. There were plenty of eminent people in the group, including former prime ministers such as Gordon Brown of Britain, and Mario Monti of Italy, as well as a smattering of western billionaires. Yet the foreign grandees were treated a bit like a class of schoolchildren.

First, we were ushered into the echoing central area of the Great Hall of the People; then we were lined up on benches for a photo with the president. After a little while, Xi swept into the room and shook a few hands (“I touched him,” gasped Francis Fukuyama, the famous academic, in mock awe) - before posing for the photo.

A few minutes later, the president’s discourse began. Seated at the centre of a banqueting room, with a giant mural of the Great Wall of China behind him, chandeliers above him, and a semi-circle of former western leaders arranged in front of him, Xi began his remarks by reminding his visitors that “China is an ancient civilisation with over 5,000 years of history.” It was, in some respects, a boilerplate remark. Yet China’s awareness of its thousands of years of history is fundamental to the country’s understanding of itself. It also inevitably means that China, in some ways, sees the US as an upstart nation - a country that has been in existence for fewer than 250 years, a shorter lifespan than most Chinese dynasties.

Xi’s determination to rebuild the wealth and power of his nation was the central theme of his speech. One of his favourite slogans, which he tried out several times on his foreign audience, was



Chinese President Xi Jinping speaks during a meeting at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing

The rivalry between the US and China is one of the most striking and dangerous themes in international politics

“the great rejuvenation” of the Chinese nation. But he was also keen to reassure his audience that China’s rise would not lead to conflict with the outside world - “We all need to work together to avoid the Thucydides trap - destructive tensions between an emerging power and established powers,” he insisted.

Xi’s reference to “Thucydides’ trap” showed that he (or his staff) had been following the American debate about the rise of China. Graham Allison, a Harvard professor, had coined the phrase with reference to the ancient Greek historian’s observation that the war

between Athens and Sparta in the fifth century BC was caused by Athens’ fear of a rising Sparta. He has calculated that in 12 of 16 cases since 1500, the rivalry between a great power and a rising power had ended in war.

Despite Xi’s attempts at reassurance, there is no doubt that strategic tensions are rising between the US and China. Over the past year, China has attempted to re-enforce its disputed claims to most of the South China Sea by building artificial islands and military installations across the ocean. In response, the US navy has deliberately sailed through these disputed

waters - prompting a furious rhetorical response in Beijing.

The rivalry between the US and China is one of the most striking and dangerous themes in international politics. But rising tensions in East Asia are just part of a larger story. The Obama years have been characterised by a series of challenges to the west’s dominance of international politics. In the Middle East, a state-system largely constructed by Britain and France in the early 20th century - and which was then maintained by American power after 1945 - is now crumbling, amid violence and political anarchy. In Europe, Russia’s occupation of Crimea in 2014 marked the first forcible annexation of territory on the European landmass since 1945.

The red thread connecting these seemingly regional crises is the west’s growing inability to function as a

pole of stability and power, imposing order on a chaotic world. In the US, President Barack Obama’s critics often argue that western weakness is the fault of Obama himself. But in fact there are much deeper historical forces at work. For more than 500 years, ever since the dawn of the European colonial age, the fate of countries and peoples in Asia, Africa and the Americas were shaped by developments and decisions made in Europe - and, later, the US. But the west’s centuries-long domination of world affairs is now coming to a close. The root cause of this change is the extraordinary economic development in Asia over the past 50 years. Western political power was founded on technological, military and economic dominance - but these advantages are fast eroding. And the consequences are now being felt in global politics.

The idea that the rise of

Asia might one day threaten the west’s geopolitical dominance still seemed like a remote prospect when I first moved to Asia as a foreign correspondent in 1993. China was growing at double-digit rates, but it was still an obviously impoverished country. Even in Shanghai, the country’s commercial capital, there were still more mopeds than cars on the streets. The gleaming skyscrapers of Pudong, which today symbolise the city’s wealth - had not yet made it off the architects’ easel. Even then, there were military tensions between China and the US. But, in 1996, when Beijing attempted to intimidate Taiwan by staging missile tests in the waters around its “rebel province”, the US swiftly dispatched aircraft carriers to the region - and Beijing backed off. There was still no doubt that America was the sole superpower.

Twenty years on, China is

War and peace in Asia (continued)

challenging the balance of power in the Pacific with much greater determination. But to truly understand the significance of the era we are living through, you need to go back to the era before European imperialism. At the beginning of the 1400s, China and the Islamic world were at levels of economic and political power and sophistication that were at least equivalent to those attained in Europe. The global balance of power began to tip with the great European voyages of exploration of the 1490s. In 1492, Christopher Columbus, a Genoese explorer employed by the Spanish crown, crossed the Atlantic. In 1498, Vasco da Gama, a Portuguese explorer, reached India.

Over the succeeding centuries, Europe's edge in military, seafaring and industrial technology allowed other European nations to build global empires. By the early 20th century, the British Empire alone covered almost a quarter of the world's land area.

Two world wars and a wave of decolonisation led to the collapse of European imperialism during the second half of the 20th century. But the emergence of the US as the world's pre-eminent power, in the aftermath of the Second World War, prolonged the hegemony of the west. Even the Soviet Union - which represented the alternative to the political "west" during the cold war - was a European power.

Over the past 50 years, however, the west's dominance of the global economy has steadily eroded. The economic transformation of Asia first became evident in Japan in the 1960s and then in South Korea, Taiwan and parts of Southeast Asia in the 1970s. From 1980 onwards, the Chinese economy began to grow at the double-digit rates pioneered by Japan in the 1960s. India also grew strongly, albeit not quite as fast, after economic reforms in the early 1990s.

A symbolic moment was reached in 2014 when the IMF announced that, measured in terms of purchasing power, China is now the world's largest economy. The US had been the largest since the early 1870s; now China was "number one". China's rise is just part of a larger shift in economic power. According to the IMF, three of the world's four largest economies are now in Asia. China came first, America second, India third and Japan fourth.

The fundamental reason for the shift in economic power to Asia is simple: weight of numbers. By 2025 some two-thirds of the world's population will live in Asia. By contrast the US will account for about 5 percent of the world's population and the European Union about 7 percent.

Hans Rosling of Sweden's Karolinska Institute puts it nicely when he describes the world's pin code as "1114" - meaning that of the planet's 7 billion people, roughly 1 billion live in Europe, 1 billion live in the Americas, 1 billion in Africa and 4 billion in Asia. By 2050,



Commander of United States Pacific Command Admiral Harry B. Harris Jr. (left) speaks with Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe at a meeting last month. The vision of an America that is less committed to playing the role of global policeman in Europe and the Middle East has also sown doubts about the durability of US power within Asia itself

the world's population is likely to be 9 billion, and the pin code will change to 1125, with both Africa and Asia adding a billion people.

For centuries, the wealth and technology gap between west and east was so enormous that western nations dominated international affairs and business - no matter the difference in population. But rapid economic development in Asia during the past two generations means that this wealth-gap has narrowed sufficiently for the weight of numbers in Asia to begin to tilt the balance of power in the world.

Western anxiety about the implications of the rise of Asia has played out in different forms. On the left - and now on the nationalist right, as expressed by

Donald Trump and Marine Le Pen - there is a great focus on the impact on the living standards of western workers. For much of the US establishment, however, there is also often a tendency to dismiss the rise of Asia as a mirage or a phase - that does not truly threaten US primacy. Any sign of economic and political weakness in China in particular is seized upon - and there is no shortage of warnings signs in the country, both political and economic, to highlight.

But, in geopolitical terms, a slowdown in Chinese or Asian growth would no longer be transformative. The economic development allowing China and India to push for great-power status has already happened. The most senior analysts in western governments are already operating on the as-

sumption that the shift in economic power from west to east will continue and that this economic change will translate into strategic power. America's National Intelligence Council, the centre for strategic thinking within the United States Intelligence Community, which brings together all of the country's intelligence agencies, including the CIA, predicted in 2012 that "by 2030 Asia will have surpassed North America and Europe combined in terms of global power, based on GDP, population size, military spending and technological investment."

The NIC was not shy of spelling out the implications of this trend for US power. It wrote that: "Pax Americana - the era of American ascendancy in international politics that began in 1945 - is fast winding down." Those words, published just before the beginning of Obama's second term, have come to seem prophetic over the ensuing four years. The US has stood aside while the fighting in Syria escalated and Russia - counted out as a great power after the cold war - has once again emerged as a threat to European security.

But it is the threat to Pax Americana in the Pacific that may matter most in the long term. The Americans know that Asia is now the core of the global economy. As a result, one of the Obama administration's signature foreign policies has been the "pivot to Asia" - a transfer of military and diplomatic resources to Asia, in response to the easternisation of the global economy and the challenge of a rising China.

The Obama administration has also sought to be more cautious and strategic about how and when it uses American power. The US has deliberately hung back from deeper involvement in the Middle East, partly because it is attempting to preserve its power and resources for a struggle with a rising China. Yet power is also a matter of perceptions. So the vision of an America that is less committed to playing the role of global policeman in Europe and the Middle East has - ironically - also sown doubts about the durability of US power within Asia itself.

The Obama administration's ability to preserve the Pax Americana has also been eroded by the chronic problems of Washington's European allies. For all the accusations of "weakness" levelled at the Obama administration, the fact is that the US is easily the most robust part of the western alliance. With the European economy in crisis and European military spending falling, the US now accounts for almost 75 percent of NATO military spending.

In his incoherent and crude way, Donald Trump has put his finger on some of the emerging dilemmas for American power in the age of easternisation. He has questioned whether the US can continue to shoulder the financial burden of protecting its European and Asian allies from the potential aggression of Russia or China. And he also cast himself as the enemy of the "globalism" and the "terrible" trade deals that have provided the international economic framework

for the rise of Asia.

So Trumpism potentially presents both peril and opportunity for China. On a geopolitical level, it flirts with a pullback of American power in the Pacific - which would grant Beijing the sphere of influence that it longs for in its near-neighbourhood. But, economically, Trump's rampant protectionism threatens all the rising Asian economies with heavily restricted access to the world's largest market - the US.

For the Clinton camp and most of the American establishment, the Trump political formula is geopolitical and economic heresy. At the Democratic convention in Philadelphia last week, I heard stalwarts of the US foreign policy establishment, such as Madeleine Albright and Tom Donilon, make it clear that the maintenance of open global markets and the US alliance system remain the twin pillars of American foreign policy - as since 1945.

A Clinton victory in November will mean that the US will persevere with this tried-and-trusted formula. But the easternisation of economic and political power suggests that the years of uncontested western primacy are coming to a close - whoever wins the White House.

Gideon Rachman is the FT's chief foreign affairs commentator. His new book, 'Easternisation' has just been published in the UK by Bodley Head.



A supply ship at the Edvard Grieg oil field, in the North Sea



Statoil's headquarters on the outskirts of Oslo

By Mark Lewis

Paradox nation: Norway, a climate leader making money on oil

NORWAY wants to get rid of gasoline-fueled cars, plans to become carbon neutral by 2030 and spends billions on helping poor countries reduce their carbon footprints. Meanwhile, it's pushing ever farther into the Arctic Ocean in search of more oil and gas.

"We know there is a paradox," admits Vidar Helgesen, Norway's climate and energy minister. "We have been living well from oil and gas. But there is no country in the world that has done more to undermine the oil and gas industry than Norway."

The mountainous Scandinavian country of 5 million people is torn between its ambition to be a global leader on climate change and the awareness that its wealth is linked to the world's dependence on fossil fuels.

This apparent contradiction is particularly striking in Stavanger, Norway's oil capital.

The west coast town is the hub of an offshore industry that has made Norway the world's eighth biggest exporter of oil and third biggest exporter of natural gas. Norway's USD875 billion oil kitty is the world's largest sovereign wealth fund, and hydrocarbons account for 40 percent of Norwegian exports.

But very little of those fossil fuels are used at home. Like the rest of the country, Stavanger gets almost all its electricity from hydropower.

And the streams of Teslas driven by oil workers through the streets of Stavanger attest to the rich subsidies the government has poured into the electric car market. E-cars have zero import duty, sales tax is a quarter less than for conventional vehicles and most roads are free.

Some 29 percent of new cars sold in Norway are electric or hybrid. The government in June introduced a target of 100 percent by 2025.

Helgesen says Norway's example is spreading around the world, with once-skeptical car manufacturers investing in green technology and speeding the transition away from hydrocarbons.

In June, lawmakers forced through a commitment for Norway to become carbon neutral by 2030 — some 20 years ahead of schedule.

Norway is also one of the most generous donors to international initiatives to maintain rainforests, which help fight climate change by absorbing some of the heat-trapping carbon dioxide released by the burning of fossil fuels.

It has already spent \$1 billion saving trees in Brazil and is committed to spend up to \$350 million a year preserving trees in places like Indonesia and Guyana.

But Norway is accused of environmental hypocrisy, grandstanding overseas with environmental projects while allowing its domestic oil and gas industry to pump ever larger quantities of carbon into the atmosphere. Plans for carbon neutrality involve buying credits for helping reduce emissions abroad.

In fact, Norway was one of the few Western countries to see a rise in domestic carbon emissions in 2015. That was mainly due to the fact that its aging North Sea oil fields require ever



Electric cars queue in the bus lane (left), on the main road to Oslo

“ Norway has the cleanest hydrocarbons anywhere in the world. And as long as the world needs oil and gas, we will provide it.

VIDAR HELGESEN
NORWAY'S CLIMATE AND ENERGY
MINISTER

more energy to tap depleting reservoirs.

"The plan has always been to buy carbon credits to allow us to continue polluting as a country," says Lars Haltbrekken, chairman of the Norwegian chapter of Friends of the Earth, an environmental advocacy group.

"That is why we don't think carbon neutrality is the most important factor in combatting climate change," he says. "We can buy credits in developing countries. It doesn't require us to reduce emissions here in Norway."

A tougher European Union scheme will set emissions reduction targets within the next two years. But Norway, which is not an EU member, will still be able to trade emissions credits with European neighbors to reach its reduction quota.

Meanwhile, environmental activists bristle at exploration permits handed out to 13 oil

companies in May to drill in a new area of the Norwegian Arctic. Critics say the technology to safely explore in such remote areas is not properly tested and claim plunging prices make Arctic oil unaffordable without hefty Norwegian subsidies. While companies pay 78 percent tax on hydrocarbons they produce in Norwegian waters, they can claim back the same amount on costs for exploration.

"We absolutely regard this as a subsidy," says Ellen Viseth, a political advisor at the Bellona environmental group.

Viseth says the Barents Sea north of Norway is already one of the most expensive places in the world to produce oil.

"The price and the risk make it uneconomical," she says. "But the Norwegian government is heavily supporting the oil and gas industry. The oil companies don't take much of a risk but their upside is huge."

Norway's state-owned energy company Statoil scooped up the largest share of exploration rights in the latest licensing round. Chevron and ConocoPhillips also secured permits.

In June, Norway became one of the first countries to ratify last year's Paris Agreement on climate change, which seeks to limit global warming to less than 2 degrees C (3.6 degrees F) compared with pre-industrial times. Haltbrekken says that any Norwegian contribution to this target that does not involve a reduction in oil and gas is empty.

Helgesen disagrees.

"We are living in a time of tremendous energy transformation," he says. "We want to play a part whether it is in electrification, bio-energy, hydropower, or any other green energy. But Norway has the cleanest hydrocarbons anywhere in the world. And as long as the world needs oil and gas, we will provide it." AP

AP PHOTO



In Rio's Olympic water, it's all about avoiding the splash

By Stephen Wade

THERE'S a contradictory mission for rowers competing in this year's Summer Olympics. Get into your boat, work your hardest — but try to avoid the water.

And definitely don't swallow it.

On Saturday at the polluted Rodrigo de Freitas lagoon — the venue for Olympic rowing — rowers bleached the handles of oars. They swished with anti-bacterial mouthwash, kept water bottles in plastic bags, and took precautions to avoid co-

ming down with diarrhea or other gastrointestinal symptoms that could compromise years of training and a chance at gold.

To the naked eye, the lagoon's polluted water seemed clearer than usual on Saturday, likely the result of bioremediation to clean up the sewage-filled area.

Despite the immaculate appearance, a 16-month long independent analysis by The Associated Press has shown the rowing venue — and other water venues used by 1,400 athletes in the Olympics — is teeming with dangerous viruses from human sewa-

ge that could cause athletes to become ill.

Rio treats only about half of its sewage, dumping the rest into the waters surrounding the metropolitan area of 12 million. Despite promises the water would be clean by the opening of the games, the AP's tests confirmed widespread contamination.

The pollution has set up a quandary for the athletes. Competitors in a water sport must essentially avoid the water.

Some have been training off and on for months in Rio, hoping to build up immunity. Others decided

to come in quickly and take their chances.

Canadian rower Carling Zeeman rushed to the dock to prepare for her heat, and instead of racing strategy from her coach, she got something else.

"I was greeted by a bottle of hand sanitizer," she said.

Officials did their best to put a positive front on the problem. The water, while polluted, does often look clean. Drier winter weather in Rio recently has also helped because there has been no torrential rain to flush human waste from the hillside slums

that surround the city into the lagoon.

The water looked so pristine that Matt Smith, the executive director of World Rowing — the world governing body of the sport — made a bold claim.

"It's nearly drinking water," Smith told reporters. "It's swimming quality. It's really good."

Smith, who heads the Switzerland-based body, said the lagoon provided "excellent water quality," which would shock Rio natives who live around the lagoon situated under the soaring Christ the Redeemer statue.

They are accustomed to smelling the stench, seeing fish die off, and few swim in a body of water that looks postcard-perfect from a distance but not so good up close.

Smith is relying on water-quality studies done by the state of Rio de Janeiro, which measure only bacteria levels. The studies have shown bacterial pollution levels regarded as safe by the World Health Organization and the International Olympic Committee.

The WHO and the state do not test for viruses, a more expensive and advanced test.

Many athletes complained more on Saturday about conditions they could see — in this case high winds and choppy water — and less about viruses and bacteria they couldn't. **AP**

ASK THE VET

By Dr Ruan Du Toit Bester



COMMON QUESTIONS ABOUT QUEENING AND BREEDING CATS

BREEDING cats can be a wonderful experience. However, unless you are prepared to learn how to take care of a breeding cat and have homes for all the kittens, you should spay your cat. There are already many unwanted kittens in Macau, and unspayed cats are at more risk for several diseases, so usually spaying your pet cat is the best option. If you want to investigate responsible breeding practices, however, here are some commonly asked questions.

AT WHAT AGE CAN CATS BE BRED?

Cats may become capable of pregnancy at as early as four months of age, but they should not be bred until they are at least one year old. If your kitten becomes accidentally pregnant at a very young age, you may need to take her to the vet and get the fetus removed.

HOW LONG DOES A CAT'S HEAT CYCLE LAST?

A cat will go into heat for one to two days or longer, every few weeks until she has been mated. In the northern hemisphere, these cycles will usually last from around January until around August. While in estrus (heat), female cats will try very hard to escape and find a mate, and may be very vocal. They will also attract male cats.

HOW CAN I MATE HER TO A PARTICULAR TOM?

Cats are capable of having kittens from different fathers in the same litter, so if you want your cat to only have kittens with one father cat, you should lock them up together for at least 24 hours, or up to four days to make sure. A female cat will continue to try and mate until her estrus cycle is over, regardless of whether or not she has already been made pregnant, so keep her away from other cats until she has finished her cycle.

HOW CAN I TELL IF SHE IS PREGNANT?

The gestation period lasts between 60-65 days. The first sign of pregnancy will be that your cat's heat cycles have stopped, but this in itself is not a sure sign of pregnancy. Her nipples may swell slightly and turn pink, and she may begin to eat a little more. At around the three week mark, your vet should be able to feel the kittens with palpitation. At five weeks, your cat's stomach will start to swell.

WHAT FOOD SHOULD I FEED MY CAT BEFORE AND DURING PREGNANCY?

It can be tempting to overfeed a pregnant cat, but generally they only need a slight increase in meals until the final



few weeks of pregnancy. Simply feed them normally, with a high quality food. Overfeeding her may be harmful, as it can make her unfit and less able to deal with the stress of birth. Three weeks before the birth, switch to kitten food, and give her small, frequent meals. You might also want to add calcium supplements at this time.

Breeding cats is not difficult if you have thoroughly researched the process and anticipated any problems. Take the time to make sure that your cat is happy and healthy and her kittens will be as well.

Hope this info helps
Till next week
Dr Ruan

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