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Taiwan's Security: History and Prospects

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tempers the sensational with frank assessments of China's limitations.

At the heart of this examination of Chinese submarines, practically speaking, is the potential showdown over Taiwan. While Howarth notes that "China, like Germany, is handicapped by geography," he points out that the defense of Taiwan is equally handicapped by oceanography: its narrow and crowded seas are ideal for diesel submarines. His frankness, however, about such U.S. problems as naval drawdown, global responsibility, vulnerability of surface ships to missile saturation, and the difficulties of operations in narrow seas gives one new pause.

As an example of what is best about his work, Howarth considers not only the tactical problems for China, Taiwan, and the United States (including the exact requirements for successful submarine warfare against a carrier-based navy) but also the proper political context of that potential conflict—that a politically free and economically prosperous Taiwan is a dagger pointed at the heart of the legitimacy of the Chinese Communist Party. Returning to the intersection of tactics and strategic judgment, Howarth includes in his final chapter an economical summary of the logic by which Chinese decision makers might be optimistic enough about their chances for success to initiate a conflict with Taiwan.

One weakness in this confluence of politics, strategy, and tactical matchups is that Howarth exaggerates the strategic influence of the great thinkers on policy. His demonstration of how submarine warfare fits with Sun Tzu overreaches, suggesting as it does that submarine warfare fits perfectly with preformed Chinese strategic preferences. The logic

of a preemptive surprise attack is part of the Chinese strategic culture, he says, but one does not have to cite the number of wars per year in which the Ming dynasty engaged, for example, in order to support the conclusion that "the Pentagon has some justification in considering that the risk of Beijing resorting to force to try to resolve the Taiwan issue is growing with the modernization and transformation of the PRC's military capabilities."

Howarth is better off with his more elegant logic that submarines are designed for the task of concealment and surprise and that surprise is a good tactic when one's forces are inferior. Eastern and Western war planners have both made use of the submarine and have appreciated it for the qualities for which it is designed, regardless of whether they were Chinese or their ancient ancestors were contemporaries of Sun Tzu.

Nonetheless, it is exactly this effort to blend classic strategic thinking with current politics and tactical complexities that is informative, intelligent, and provocative in this book. It is recommended for any library on naval affairs or Asian conflict, and good reading for both U.S. and Chinese war planners.

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Cole, Bernard D. *Taiwan's Security: History and Prospects*. New York: Routledge, 2006. 254pp. \$125

Given the importance of the Taiwan issue for U.S. foreign and security policy in East Asia, it is striking that relatively little has been written on Taiwan's defense reform and modernization

programs, especially in contrast to the substantial amount of work scholars and policy analysts have produced in recent years on Chinese military modernization and its implications for regional security. Bernard Cole's *Taiwan's Security: History and Prospects*, which provides a comprehensive and well-written assessment of recent developments in Taiwan's defense establishment, represents an important step in filling this gap.

In this work, Cole—a respected China scholar who served in the U.S. Navy for thirty years and is now professor of international history at the National War College—examines the changes currently under way in Taiwan's armed forces and defense bureaucracy. The main purpose of Cole's thorough and well-researched study is to assess changes in Taiwan's defense posture and their implications for the island's security. After presenting a brief history of Taiwan's military and an overview of the Chinese military threat, Cole explains that Taiwan in recent years has been unwilling to increase the level of resources devoted to its own military capabilities. Although Taiwan is reorganizing its defense bureaucracy and its military is professional and well trained, the growing asymmetry in defense spending between Taiwan and China is resulting in a rapid erosion of Taiwan's long-standing qualitative edge over the Chinese military. Indeed, Cole argues quite persuasively that the cross-strait military balance is tipping toward China as a result of Taiwan's relatively modest response to the growing security challenge represented by the acceleration of Chinese military modernization. Consequently, Taiwan cannot defend itself on its own and may not even be

able to hold out until the U.S. military could intervene decisively.

Cole also includes a brief discussion of the factors underlying Taiwan's unwillingness to do more to counter China's growing military capability. He argues, first, that many officials in Taiwan believe Chinese military threats lack credibility and, second, that decision makers in Taipei are convinced that the United States would come to Taiwan's assistance even if they turn out to have underestimated China's willingness to use force. According to Cole, the U.S. decision to send two aircraft carrier battle groups to the region during the 1995–96 Taiwan Strait crisis not only convinced Beijing that attacking Taiwan would likely result in American military intervention but also led Taipei to the same conclusion. Given the assumptions that China lacks the willingness to use force and that U.S. intervention is virtually assured in the unlikely event of a cross-strait conflict, many politicians in Taiwan conclude that the island does not really need to invest its own scarce resources in defense. In all, *Taiwan's Security* makes an important contribution to scholarship and policy analysis by providing a readable and informative assessment of a previously understudied aspect of the U.S.-China-Taiwan relationship.

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Asada, Sadao. *From Mahan to Pearl Harbor: The Imperial Japanese Navy and the United States*. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 2006. 385pp. \$36.95