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# The Role of the Chinese Military in National Security Policymaking

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the enlarged alliance and the force posture of new members have yet to be made. For this reason, U.S. and other Western participants in these decisions could profitably read *Enlarging NATO: The Russia Factor*, especially its analysis of alternative defense arrangements and the shape of an arms sales regime in Eastern Europe.

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Swaine, Michael D. *The Role of the Chinese Military in National Security Policymaking*. Santa Monica, Calif.:

RAND, 1997. 89pp. \$15

Michael Swaine, a top analyst of Chinese security affairs at RAND Corporation, provides in this revised version of his short book a comprehensive report of research supported by the Office of the Secretary of Defense. The nature of this work and of Swaine's analysis does not make for easy reading, but he reminds us on page 1 why we may wish to pursue the topic: "China's rise as a major power constitutes one of the most significant strategic events of the post-Cold War period." China's emergence and the role of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) are worth the attention of those who hope to understand, or even influence, this all-important transformation. This work is a significant addition to the growing body of literature (as reflected in its superb bibliography) on China's previously obscure security-policy process.

The opening summary may be skipped. Its ideas are largely lost in verbiage befitting Beijing's convoluted bureaucracy. For example, Swaine mixes reflections on universal human interactions with analysis of government processes (which is useful, however, in that it affirms that a changing China is not immune to bureaucratic foibles).

Some readers may be troubled by the inability of even the best of China specialists to pull back all the silk curtains. For example, if China were an open society, the recitation of its national strategic objectives might appropriately be viewed as a valuable window on the intentions of the leadership, as implied in this work. However, that presumes that the objectives are indeed formulated guides to the implementation of foreign and defense policy. These orotund objectives may instead just as well be seen as propagandistic reflections or by-products largely stemming from whatever laudable activities (ignoring others) the country has undertaken, and the directions China has for diverse reasons taken in national development—rather than the other way around. To illustrate, the stated national objective "to ensure continued national prosperity" simply mirrors the success of Deng Xiaoping's bold economic reforms and overtures to the outside that are making China prosperous; of course almost all Chinese, including the national and military leaders, want to jump on that bandwagon. Put bluntly, prosperity, even "continued prosperity," clearly does not derive from the formulation of this grandiloquent "strategic objective." This designedly tedious example demonstrates that at times the scope of the

author's research and analysis may be exhaustive yet unsatisfying.

Do not despair, but do note that this book is not for the general reader. It is for the China-watcher or defense and foreign policy professional who is both familiar with and absorbed in Chinese security policy-making. The insights are those of a deeply steeped observer, offering facts, analysis, and sometimes just conjecture. Not every question that arises is answered crisply. In the final chapter, entitled "Conclusions," very little is conclusive, but there is record-setting usage of words like *if*, *probably*, *could*, *might*, and *may*. But alas, this is a book about xenophobic and enigmatic China.

Swaine, however, hits his stride in the chapter on defense policy, reaffirming his reputation for excellence in this area. For many readers of the *Naval War College Review*, this fourth chapter may itself make the book worth reading—assuming an abiding interest in the fine grain of Chinese defense policy, organization, personalities, and their interplay. For example, in providing a straightforward, comprehensive description of the PLA's important General Staff Department (GSD), its policy orientation and proclivities, and how it plays in the defense arena, Swaine does the best possible job. Similarly, in a few sentences, he captures the essence of PLA Navy modernization and then succinctly reveals how the PLA Air Force stacks up.

Furthermore, such perceptive descriptions provide the reader with a bonus of insights into Beijing's way of thinking about defense policy implementation, and they more broadly reveal the Chinese way of thinking and

doing. As Swaine correctly implies, these insights may be of inestimable value to the United States in the complex task of forging a policy for dealing with China and the PLA—a policy that must succeed generally in serving U.S. interests in Asia and also specifically in managing relations with the biggest, fastest-growing country on earth, and with its modernizing military. If one cares profoundly about that, one should read Michael Swaine's book.

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Griffiths, Ann L., and Peter T. Haydon, eds. *Maritime Forces in Global Security: Comparative Views of Maritime Strategy as We Approach the 21st Century*. Halifax, Nova Scotia: The Centre for Foreign Policy Studies, Dalhousie Univ., 1995. 362pp. \$12

This book (fifth in a series of conferences and colloquia on maritime security hosted by Dalhousie University's Centre for Foreign Policy Studies) contains the proceedings of an international colloquium held in June 1994. Its aim was to examine different views of the role of maritime forces, and especially medium maritime powers, in the closing days of the twentieth century. Participants represented primarily Canada, the United States, and the United Kingdom, but they also came from France, Australia, Argentina, and India.

This work addresses four main topics: new issues in maritime security, cooperative security, maritime strategies of medium maritime powers, and the future of Canadian naval forces.