

outside (as Shen recognizes), it has been reactive, meaning that each nationalistic movement has its own particular characteristics. If this is so, a case study of Chinese nationalism in the context of Sino-American relations does not lead to general conclusions on Chinese nationalism. Nevertheless, thanks to Shen's painstaking effort, the questions that his study raises will lead us to think further about Chinese nationalism.

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Assessing the Threat: The Chinese Military and Taiwan's Security

Edited by MICHAEL D. SWAINE, ANDREW N. D. YANG and EVAN S. MEDEIROS

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This is a rich book on a subject that may easily be compared to a moving target. Aware of the fast-changing reality surrounding Taiwan's security, the editors of this volume have aimed to give "a more comprehensive and complex picture of the potential Chinese military threat to Taiwan – and the larger challenge to Asia – than usually appears in studies of the subject" (p. 3). Including papers selected from three successive conferences held from 2004 to 2006 in Taipei, *Assessing the Threat* has on the whole reached its objective. However, like all studies of a possible but unprecedented war in the Taiwan Strait, it raises many unanswerable questions, as well as a few which could have been better addressed.

Each chapter brings value. Organized in four sections, the main body of the book is divided into two parts: the first titled "The People's Liberation Army (PLA)'s doctrine and capabilities" (section 2); and the other, "Threats, deterrence, and escalation control in a Taiwan contingency" (section 3). The first section, apart from the introduction, also includes a very promising contribution from Alex Liebman on China's Asia policy and its need to maintain a balance between reassuring its neighbours and deterring Taiwan from moving toward formal independence. In the last section, Alan Romberg looks at the future East Asian security architecture and concludes that even the most optimistic scenario would not convince China to "forego a deterrent capability against Taiwan" (p. 331). Michael Swaine and Oriana Skylar Mastro then assess the threat not only for the island-state but also for the US, and they make a couple of useful recommendations.

Although discussing well-researched issues, the two main sections give absolutely no impression of *déjà vu*. Dean Cheng shows how the PLA has been slowly moving from a theoretical to a practical approach to joint operations, a crucial factor in any Taiwan military contingency. Basing his analysis on the growing quantity of works published by the main PLA academies, Lonnie Henley underscores how the concepts of "war control" and "escalation management" have made their way into the PLA, arguably (in my view) increasing the risks of a limited use of force. Roy Kamphauser and Justin Liang present in a very unconventional way the various facets of PLA power projection, understood as a variable of China's comprehensive national power and including its growing participation in Peace-Keeping Operations (PKO) and joint exercises with other militaries.

The third section, consisting of six chapters, is the heart of this study: air force deterrence and escalation (Kenneth Allen), naval options in an escalatory scenario (Bernard Cole), the nuclear dimension (Brad Robert) and PRC information operations (James Mulvenon) are among the best-covered subjects. Well-known

Taiwanese expert Andrew Yang looks at his country's preparation against the Chinese military threat. Finally, Roger Cliff shows that, in view of the PLA's rapid modernization, the US needs urgently to strengthen its force posture in the Western Pacific in order to maintain its ability to deter a conflict in the Strait.

This last assessment underlines the growing problem that the US is facing about Taiwan, but also reminds us that China's threat is not only military in nature. China's claimed "soft power," including its economic attraction, is reaching more Taiwanese today. In this new context, how willing would the Taiwanese people be to fight a war against a country that is also their main trade partner, investment destination and client? Clearly, a single chapter on Taiwan's military, albeit very professional and accurate, cannot address all the issues regarding the roles and attitudes of the Taiwanese armed forces and society in case of a war in the Strait. Having personally participated in one of the conferences from which this book originated (in 2005), I was struck by the lack of interest of Taiwanese authors in their nation's military. While trumpeting its nationalism, has Taiwan already surrendered its weapons? Probably not, in view of its politicians' commitment to increase substantially the defence budget in the coming years (over three per cent). However, the Taiwanese diminishing threat awareness and will to fight have become factors of the equation for everyone, including the US.

Another question stems from China's growing intention to "sanctuarize" Taiwan, as French nuclear strategists would say. That is to say, any foreign country's intervention (read the US) in a conflict over Taiwan could trigger a Chinese nuclear reaction against that country. Robert's chapter is thoughtful but refrains from assessing the impact of the daring statements made by some PLA generals and experts since 2005 about China's possible first use of nuclear weapons on the concept of deterrence, its failure, but also its success, in particular if the US is faced with a divided or a demoralized Taiwan.

A final omission is the today much-discussed issue of information warfare. The PLA or (independent) Chinese hackers do not have the monopoly of this new type of operation: it would have been useful to present and factor in American and Taiwanese capacity to attack and damage the PLA's own command and control, or communication systems. Asymmetrical warfare can act as an equaliser in armed conflicts for all sides.

In spite of these reservations, *Assessing the Threat* has hit its target and should be a travelling companion to everyone contemplating to ply the rough waters of the Taiwan Strait issue.

JEAN-PIERRE CABESTAN

Keeping Democracy at Bay: Hong Kong and the Challenge of Chinese Political Reform

SUZANNE PEPPER

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Suzanne Pepper's book is a political history of Hong Kong from the early days of the colony to the recent era of the Special Autonomous Region (SAR). She centres on the refusal of the colonial authorities to bring democracy to what she rightly sees as a very sophisticated Chinese society. It certainly is refreshing to see a book which goes against common wisdom on this subject. It is, as a whole, notable for its very thorough criticism of the British authorities.