

Lasater, Martin L., and Peter Kien-hong Yu, with Kuang-ming Hsu and Robyn Lim. Taiwan's Security in the Post-Deng Xiaoping Era. London and Portland OR: Frank Cass, 2000.

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thus crucial, yet they do not appear at all in the presentation of the argument in chapter one. In her discussion of the El Salvadoran transition, Wood points to the importance of UN, US, and other third party intervention in getting the FMLN and the regime to shift to a cooperation equilibrium (pp. 92, 94-95, 101, 105ff). In contrast, third parties in South Africa have very little to do with helping establish the credibility of strategy shifts in the negotiation and implementation phases. The importance of third parties here is in the effects of financial sanctions on elite interests (pp. 157, 158, 168) and the collapse of communism on perceptions of ANC negotiating power (p. 181). Whether or not such effects are exogenous to the South African case (Wood claims they are not), they clearly are in the El Salvadoran case. Given the importance third parties played in propelling a negotiated transition to democracy in both cases, democracy may have been forged from below – and from the outside.

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Lasater, Martin L., and Peter Kien-hong Yu, with Kuang-ming Hsu and Robyn Lim. *Taiwan's Security in the Post-Deng Xiaoping Era*. London and Portland OR: Frank Cass, 2000).

With the heightened threat of massive terrorist violence since the 11 September attacks, there might be some question as to why recommend a book on regional security in East Asia. The answer is two-fold. First, in addition to the ongoing violence in the Middle East and the nuclear confrontation in South Asia, the military tensions between China and Taiwan across the Taiwan Straits are the third most-serious global hotspot. And second, the four contributors to this book have provided very detailed studies. With almost a reference book attention to detail in their survey of key background factors to this East Asian regional confrontation, the book focuses on the issues of Taiwan's security, the Chinese military threat to the island, and the likelihood of American intervention into any future conflict.

Of the book's nine chapters, Martin Lasater, a private scholar at the Atlantic Council of the United States and author of several books on Taiwan security affairs, provides the majority of the studies. In his introductory chapter on "Critical Factors in Taiwan's Security," Lasater outlines Taiwan's value to China, the US interests in Taiwan and its future, the respective strengths of the militaries of the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Republic of China (ROC) on Taiwan, and the U.S. arms sales to Taiwan. He goes on to develop some of these factors more fully in his later chapters dealing with "Chinese

Unification Policies,” “The Taiwan Issue in Sino-American Relations,” and “Theatre Missile Defence and Taiwan’s Security.” Lasater also provides the book’s “Conclusions and Policy Suggestions” chapter, which takes a strong security implications approach – apparently intended for American government policymakers.

Peter Kien-hong Yu, a research professor at the National University of Singapore, provides an in-depth assessment of the Chinese military threat to Taiwan in his two chapters in the book. His chapter on “Mainland China’s Military Pressures on Taiwan: An Assessment” concludes that “between 2005 and 2010, the CPLA [Chinese People’s Liberation Army] will gain a clear qualitative edge” over Taiwan’s armed forces. (p. 133) In his follow-on chapter on “Scenarios of CPLA Attack of the Taiwan Area,” Yu provides a useful examination of the major PLA invasion scenarios for seizing the island.¹

Kuang-ming Hsu, a political science professor at the ROC Air Force Academy in Taiwan, provides a chapter on “Taipei’s National and Military Strategies and Policies.” Hsu reviews the kinds of military threats to the national security of Taiwan as well as the ROC government’s strategic limitations and choices. Robyn Lim, an international relations professor at Nanzan University in Nagoya (Japan), provides a chapter on “Taiwan and Asia-Pacific Security.” Lim places the China-Taiwan confrontation within the East Asian regional security equation, which includes the other key players, the United States and Japan.

In addition to being a multi-author assessment of Taiwan’s security, the book constitutes a review of China-Taiwan affairs in the 1990s juxtaposed against the present rule of the Chinese “Third Generation” leadership under Jiang Zemin. In 1989, Jiang was selected as the new communist party (CCP) leader by the “Second Generation” leadership under Deng Xiaoping, who died in February 1997. The selection of Jiang and his fellow-generation party leaders has been seen as Deng’s effort to smooth the leadership transition by preventing a repetition of the rocky transition that followed the death of party chairman Mao Zedong in 1976.

Each of the nine chapters contains extensive endnotes, in addition to a useful bibliography and index. Although the co-authors’ source materials only go up to the end of 1999, the three chapters on Chinese perspectives by Yu and Hsu make excellent use of available Chinese language sources from the mainland and Taiwan media. Even so, the greatest difficulty in assessing Chinese and Taiwan security issues is still the well-known problem of locating reliable sources as well as accurate information. The lack of transparency in Chinese government affairs – where even economic and population statistics are considered “state secrets” and the media is largely state-controlled – makes any assessment of military and national security issues difficult. A further useful aide to readers is the numerous detailed tables. For example, Table 8 (p. 280) lists 28 types of Chinese use of force against Taiwan and the likelihood of US military intervention in each

case. While it is possible to debate the authors' assessments in the various tables, they do provide considerable scope for reflection.

This book will have a useful place on the reviewer's reference shelf, but there are three principal concerns that need to be noted. First, the book reads like a top-level "background briefing book" for American government policymakers and national opinion-makers, with a prime emphasis on the direct policy implications of the cross-straits confrontation for the United States. A second concern is that more recent writings on the Chinese threat to Taiwan give considerable emphasis to the role of asymmetrical military doctrine and computer warfare (also referred to as cyberwar) with regard to Chinese military planning. And third, the book was published prior to the break-through presidential election victory on Taiwan of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) candidate Chen Shui-bian in May 2000 – ending 50 years of Kuomintang (Nationalist-KMT) rule on the island. With the ongoing government reforms on Taiwan in mind, some of the chapters need to be complemented by more recent writings to update the reader on current activities.²

Even so, these collected chapters continue to provide background detail and insight into the ongoing China-Taiwan tensions. And, for that reason alone, these studies deserve to be read for insights into, for example, the current CCP transition to the "Fourth Generation" leadership in Beijing.

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Endnotes

1. For other recent threat studies, see Robert D'A. Henderson, *Will China use force against Taiwan?* (Toronto: Canadian Institute of Strategic Studies, Strategic Datalink # 86, February 2000); and Richard L. Russell, "What if . . . China attacks Taiwan?," *Parameters* (Carlisle, PA: US Army War College) 31 no. 3 (Autumn 2001), pp. 76- 91.
2. For example, see Robert D'A. Henderson, "Transforming KMT Intelligence on Taiwan," *International Journal of Intelligence and CounterIntelligence* 15, no. 2 (Summer 2002), pp. 275-88.