

## BOOK REVIEWS

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### A COMING CONFRONTATION WITH THE U.S. OVER TAIWAN?

Lewis, John Wilson, and Xue Litai. *Imagined Enemies: China Prepares for Uncertain War*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford Univ. Press, 2006. 377pp. \$60

This sophisticated Chinese-language research, based on numerous original sources and interviews, completes Lewis and Xue's authoritative series on China's military development. Other books in the series, all published by Stanford University Press, are *China's Strategic Seapower: The Politics of Force Modernization in the Nuclear Age* (1994), *Uncertain Partners: Stalin, Mao, and the Korean War* (1993), and *China Builds the Bomb* (1988).

In this fourth and final volume, the authors (both scholars affiliated with Stanford) begin by surveying Chinese military culture and history. Among their findings is that as part of a larger effort to exploit military tension with Moscow to further his personal power, in 1969 Marshal Lin Biao placed China's nuclear forces on "full alert" (an action both unprecedented and, thus far, unrepeated) without Mao Zedong's approval or knowledge. Such assertions should be weighed against other information as it emerges. Lingering uncertainties are hardly the fault of the authors, however, because, as they point out, "no [Chinese] Party, military, or

state contemporary security-related archives have been opened up to the general citizenry, let alone foreign scholars."

Part Two elucidates China's military decision making. A key finding is that China's national command authority resides with the Politburo Standing Committee even during "the most intense crises involving armed threats and military deployments" but that it transfers to the Party's Central Military Commission in war. Untested in battle since 1979 (against Vietnam), the dynamics of these complex bureaucracies remain uncertain even after this penetrating analysis.

The third part examines China's recent efforts to modernize its strategic rocket forces and air force. Efforts to improve strategic missile command, mobility, and survivability appear to have been partially tested in the 1995–1996 cross-strait crisis and in subsequent exercises. The authors' earlier assertion that China's current doctrine of "active defense" can justify preemption even before the enemy has struck because the enemy *intended* to strike first" raises troubling questions about China's stated policy of

no first use of nuclear weapons (NFU). Indeed, the authors demonstrate that, alarmed at the prospect of a conventional attack on its strategic infrastructure, China's military planners have recently revisited NFU. This, and lingering problems with military aviation (despite the catalyst of the 1991 Gulf War, subsequent Russian imports, and incremental domestic progress), have caused Beijing to seek additional deterrence through a growing arsenal of conventional missiles.

Finally, the authors assess the degree to which China's military has met the strategic imperatives of its ancient strategists and modern leaders. They reach the sobering conclusion that despite China's continuing difficulty in approaching Western technological and even organizational levels, Taiwan's importance to Chinese identity, strategic value, and position as a bellwether of national territorial integrity justify extraordinary expenditure of blood and treasure. Moreover, China's military planners appear to believe that by investing selectively in asymmetric weapons, they can reconcile these conflicting realities without fueling an arms race and hence mutual insecurity. It is to be hoped that a new generation in Beijing, Taipei, and Washington, drawing on Lewis's and Xue's research, will find the collective wisdom to avert conflict that would devastate all parties involved.

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Dreyer, Edward L. *Zheng He: China and the Oceans in the Early Ming Dynasty, 1405–1433*. Old Tappan, N.J.: Pearson Longman, 2006. 238pp. \$20.67

The military history of China has become a common element in the professional reading of many American military officers. Journals like this one have included an important focus on the Chinese past and present, and Edward Dreyer's book contributes important new history and analysis to that understanding. Studying the Chinese foreign expeditionary armada of the early fifteenth century, Dreyer outlines a Chinese strategy and set of naval tactics that are familiar to today's naval officer.

Starting in 1405 the eunuch Admiral Zheng He led a series of seven voyages from the shores of the Ming empire into the South China Sea and Indian Ocean. These voyages were made by fleets larger than any the world had ever seen; armadas of over two hundred vessels, the largest wooden vessels ever constructed, carrying roughly thirty thousand sailors and marine infantry. Scholars and Chinese government historians have characterized these expeditions, which reached as far west as the coast of Africa, as peaceful voyages of discovery. Dreyer, however, disagrees. He writes instead, "After thoroughly reviewing the primary Chinese sources, I concluded that the purpose of the voyages was actually 'power projection' . . . rather than mere exploration. Zheng He's voyages were undertaken to force the states of Southeast Asia and the Indian Ocean to acknowledge the power and majesty of Ming China and its emperor."

The book is structured in a straightforward manner, chronologically moving from Zheng He's personal biography and the background history of the voyages to the voyages themselves. While not a professional naval architect, Dreyer has obviously done his research.

He provides documentary and archaeological evidence, as well as explanation of basic principles of naval architecture, to support his conclusion that the largest of the ships, the *baochuan*, or “treasure ships,” were at least three times larger than Nelson’s flagship HMS *Victory*.

While the book is not annotated, the level of academic rigor is evidenced by an impressive group of appendixes. The reader should expect nothing less from Dreyer, a leading sinologist who is well versed in not only the history but also the language of the original Chinese source materials. Much of his history comes directly from contemporary primary sources, and the appendixes include translations of the original historical material. This inspired inclusion allows readers to draw their own conclusions. There are also time lines, a valuable index, and a bibliographic essay discussing previous interpretations of Zheng He’s voyages from academic, journalistic, and Chinese government sources.

Conventional wisdom in the military-history community holds that China’s small naval heritage is of little value. Naval battles on the grand lakes and rivers of the Middle Kingdom are not afforded the consideration or importance given to Admiral Matthew C. Perry’s victory on Lake Erie or Rear Admiral David Porter’s gunboat campaigns on the Mississippi. Dreyer’s profile of Zheng He and the history of the voyages of the Foreign Expeditionary Armada provide a new view of Chinese naval heritage, one that includes interesting parallels to American naval strategy important to today’s naval professionals. The Chinese government has held up the voyages of Zheng He as

exemplars of their own future naval strategy. Dreyer’s book offers a compelling revision of past views on the Ming fleets that can help guide future discussion on China’s modern naval ambitions.

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Bauer, Gretchen, and Scott D. Taylor, eds. *Politics in Southern Africa: State and Society in Transition*. Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 2005. 404pp. \$26.50

In the first few pages of this book it becomes clear that Gretchen Bauer and Scott Taylor are not Afripessimists. Indeed, one rather suspects that they have little tolerance for observers who look at the African continent and see nothing but misery, defeat, and despair. Such a depiction, according to the editors, relies on far too broad an analytical brush. Bauer and Taylor warn, quite reasonably, against treating Africa as some sort of political and cultural monolith and argue instead for a more regionally focused research approach.

The editors defend with convincing logic their choice to examine the region of southern Africa. Southern Africa contains some of the strongest economies on the continent and is more closely intra-linked than other African regions. If, as Bauer and Taylor contend, regional success stories are being submerged by Africa-wide studies, this work should give those stories the exposure and credit they deserve. *Politics in Southern Africa* is certainly organized to identify regional and local state success. Having made a convincing argument for a regional approach, they examine

the individual regional states: Malawi, Zambia, Botswana, Mozambique, Angola, Zimbabwe, Namibia, and South Africa. Subsequent chapters are devoted to regionwide issues of AIDS, women and politics, and “southern Africa’s international relations.” A final chapter presents research conclusions and predictions for the future.

This approach is sound, and the book’s scholarship is commendable. Each chapter is well written, carefully organized, and packed with pertinent factual data and strong analysis. All this makes the volume a useful addition to the lay reader and scholar alike.

While *Politics in Southern Africa* contributes to a deeper understanding of regional issues and forces, the book is also surprising. For the reader, after finding it easy to agree with the potential benefits of using a regional approach, is ready, even eager, for a parade of success stories and analyses that offer a counterbalance to the somber predictions and gloomy assessments of the Afripessimists. Alas, this is not what follows. Rather than a book of successes, this is a book of “ifs.” For example, it is argued that *if* Botswana can gain control of its AIDS epidemic, and *if* its diamond mines do not run dry before the country can diversify, a stunning success will ensue. In a similar vein, the book maintains that *if* South Africa can control its endemic crime wave and *if* the country can avoid a political system dominated by one party (the ANC), serious progress can be made. Similar conditional stipulations can be found in every chapter.

The editors also point out that the region is at a crossroads. There are potentially positive trends, such as the undeniable, if sometimes glacial, growth of civil

society and of ecological awareness, and these trends potentially bode well. The fact that they are observable, if only faintly, in such dysfunctional states as Zimbabwe should not be dismissed. This brings up the matter of the editors’ conclusions.

In an act of courage, Bauer and Taylor do not shy away from conclusions about the fate of southern Africa, and they deserve credit for that. However, in this process they enter the realm of rose-tinted optimism. They choose to see the southern African glass as half-full, arguing the region will see a vibrant civil society, a culture of constitutionalism, converging economies, and democratic stability. Still, that Bauer and Taylor would edge out on this predictive limb is perhaps one of the book’s strongest selling points, as their conclusions serve as both an invitation to readers for debate and a challenge to learn more about the region.

RICHARD NORTON  
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Ghazvinian, John. *Untapped: The Scramble for Africa’s Oil*. New York: Harcourt, 2007. 320pp. \$25

John Ghazvinian, who has a doctorate in history from Oxford University and currently is a visiting fellow at the University of Pennsylvania, was born in Iran and raised in Los Angeles and London. He is a skilled journalist who takes the reader on an extensive journey in Africa to better know “more about where our oil will be coming from.” His bottom line is that “oil, far from being a blessing to African countries, is a curse. Without exception, every developing country where oil has been discovered

has seen its standard of living decline and its people suffer.”

Why the scramble for African oil? Because African oil is of high quality and therefore relatively cheap to refine. Africa is surrounded by water, so access to the sea and less expensive maritime transport further reduces costs (in comparison to Central Asia, which must ship by pipeline), and there is increasing global demand, in which Africa represents a larger percentage of new discoveries and production. In addition, newly discovered offshore reserves coupled with new ultra-deepwater drilling technology and transshipment directly from oil platforms avoids the usual onshore problems.

Ghazvinian’s field work is based on wide-ranging interviews with politicians, economists, warlords, diplomats, aid workers, oil-company executives, activists, priests, crude-oil bandits, soldiers, bureaucrats, technocrats, scientists, historians, oil-rig workers, lawyers, bankers, old men, and boys, among others. He provides comprehensive assessments on Nigeria, Gabon, Cameroon, Congo, Angola, Equatorial Guinea, Sao Tome and Principe, Chad, and Sudan. Ghazvinian is quick to point out that each country differs in terms of the dynamics of the complex factors at work. A few examples in his words:

“Nigeria, it is simply the doomsday scenario, an amalgamation of all the worst oil has to offer Africa: corruption, ethnic hatred, Dutch disease, and rentierism, organized crime, militant rebellion, hostage taking, and sabotage of industry activity, and a country held together tenuously.”

“Gabon is the golden child ruled by a self-interested French puppet who

forgot to prepare his country for life after oil and has left it with a castrated economy.”

“Cameroon and Congo are much the same story, but in the latter country, oil has fueled a bloody civil war that has left the population traumatized and afraid to speak out against the country’s high-level corruption.”

“Angola is the sleeping giant where billions of dollars have disappeared and where government maintains deep distrust of and distance from the international community.”

Ghazvinian concludes with a discussion of the U.S. military’s increasing interest in Africa, such as in the Gulf of Guinea and the establishment of a new Africa Command. He also details China’s long-term strategy of gaining access to oil by providing patient capital for oil infrastructure in riskier areas coupled with considerable development aid without the typical Western conditionality.

The reader will find this informative, comprehensive, fast-paced journey to Africa invaluable in better understanding the challenges and complexities of the “curse of oil.”

RICHMOND M. LLOYD  
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Martel, William C. *Victory in War: Foundations of Modern Military Policy*. New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2007. 446pp. \$36.95

William Martel, formerly of the Naval War College and now of the Fletcher School at Tufts University, accomplishes his chief goal of starting a discussion of a worthy, intensely policy-relevant topic. He demonstrates that a consensus

definition of the term “victory” remains out of grasp, despite centuries of learned commentary on military affairs. Martel casts his book as a preliminary investigation of the nature of victory. This “pre-theoretical” inquiry, he declares, is the best that can be achieved, given the nature of war—a violent clash of wills pervaded by uncertainty and strong passions. Given these realities, no social-science theory can tell political and military officials how they can arrange matters to assure victory.

After surveying the works of classical and modern strategic theorists, Martel constructs a framework for analyzing past wars and informing future deliberations on when and how to use force to achieve policy objectives. Victory, says Martel, can be classified by: its level, designated (in descending order) grand strategic, political-military, or tactical; how, and how much, the war alters the prewar status quo; how fully the victorious society mobilizes itself for war; and the manner and scope of postwar obligations incurred by the victor. The author next uses this framework to classify several U.S. military actions, ranging from the 1986 Libya raid to Operation IRAQI FREEDOM.

Evaluating victory is an ambiguous undertaking, even using this analytical approach. The Libya raid yielded only a “quasi-political-military victory,” inducing a change of political behavior on Moammar Gadhafi’s part. The outcome of the 2003 invasion of Iraq, sure to engender the most controversy among Martel’s case studies, remains in doubt. While American policy makers are clearly thinking in terms of a thoroughgoing, grand-strategic victory that reorders Middle Eastern affairs, only a partial victory is yet in hand, and even

that result could slip away amid terrorism and communal bloodletting. *Victory in War* renders a service by improving our ability to learn from past operations and think through future operations before embarking on them.

Given the preliminary nature of Martel’s work, certain issues await elucidation. Most notably, the terms affixed to the levels of victory—grand strategic, political-military, and tactical—imply that the author wants to invert the familiar Clausewitzian relationship between policy and strategy. Placing grand-strategic victory above political-military victory in the hierarchy suggests that strategy—roughly speaking, “grand strategy” means deploying diplomatic, economic, and ideological as well as military power to realize policy aims—ranks above politics in the order of things. A taxonomy clearly affirming the supremacy of policy would enhance Martel’s analytical enterprise and its relevance to practitioners and scholars considerably.

In short, *Victory in War* marks the beginning of what promises to be a fruitful debate on matters of vital interest to political and military leaders—and the nations they serve.

JAMES R. HOLMES  
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Prados, John. *Safe for Democracy: The Secret Wars of the CIA*. Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2006. 696pp. \$35

In an era where overhead imagery is available to anyone with a computer and a credit card, where the twenty-four-hour cable news cycle drives government decisions and the Internet

provides global connectivity, are secret wars still possible? Not according to the author of *Safe for Democracy: The Secret Wars of the CIA*.

Veteran intelligence and policy writer John Prados provides a detailed, if somewhat disjointed, chronology of CIA covert actions since the inception of the agency. Prados describes the most recent chapters in the long history of U.S. covert actions, dividing covert actions into two types: political actions (including propaganda and psychological operations) and paramilitary operations. Covert and clandestine intelligence collections are addressed only peripherally, often when covert action and collection must be weighed against one another.

Prados focuses on several common threads. He describes the rivalries within the CIA between the proponents of political and paramilitary operations, and between covert operations and clandestine intelligence collections. He also discusses the competition between the rival “baronies” of the regional divisions within the agency’s Directorate of Operations. The author generally takes a negative view of covert actions, maintaining (for the most part) that they are antithetical to American ideals. With more justification, he points out that covert actions rarely lead to permanent solutions.

However, Prados makes several excellent points that are often overlooked. First, CIA covert actions are carried out on the orders of the president. The varying degrees of control between different administrations, and the relationship between the president and his Director of Central Intelligence, are key factors that determine both the degree of autonomy given to the agency and the amount of operational detail a

president receives. Even when given a high degree of autonomy, the CIA has operated under presidential guidance. Second, Prados points out that from the start it was impossible to keep covert actions totally secret. Many of the operations discussed (such as the Bay of Pigs, Angola, and in Southeast Asia) could not be accomplished on that scale today. Most importantly, Prados argues that covert actions are a poor substitute for policy.

At the end of this long and detailed book, the reader is left feeling that something is missing. The author’s treatment is not balanced, and one wonders if other viewpoints would tell a different story. Still, this is a valuable book for students of intelligence activities.

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Tillman, Barrett. *LeMay*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007. 205pp. \$21.95

Some great leaders are remembered only as a caricature, and General Curtis E. LeMay may be the epitome of this unfortunate tendency. Mention LeMay, and many see only the movie character General “Buck” Turgidson in the 1964 film *Dr. Strangelove*. Barrett Tillman’s balanced and concise depiction of LeMay puts this limited (and largely inaccurate) view into context. More importantly, he retrieves some of the enduring lessons of leadership that can be learned from one of America’s greatest airmen.

This is precisely the intent of Palgrave Macmillan’s “Great Generals” series. These books—titles on Patton, Grant,

Eisenhower, MacArthur, and Stonewall Jackson have already appeared—are designed to be “quick reads,” of as much interest to the general public as to the military history buff. The work under review treats an important leader who may be in particular need of some rehabilitation, and it is a great advertisement for the entire series. In a single day’s reading one can dispel many of the “Strangelovian” myths and appreciate the man, the leader, and the timeless leadership lessons his example provides. Tillman skillfully blends elements from LeMay’s personal and professional lives with the historical, providing a remarkably nuanced appreciation for this greatest of bomber generals. Any reader can profit from this comprehensive account; for instance, any reader familiar with the classic film *Twelve O’clock High* will recognize that a good bit of LeMay went into Gregory Peck’s character, Brigadier General Frank Savage. But even the most serious student of military history is likely to learn something new about LeMay’s life and times.

Tillman’s portrayal of LeMay, however, is not solely complimentary. While he obviously has great appreciation and admiration for his subject, he is also frank about LeMay’s shortcomings. He admits that LeMay was much more effective as a commander and operator in the field than in Washington, D.C., as vice chief and then chief of staff of the Air Force. Tillman also calls LeMay’s decision to run for vice president in George Wallace’s independent party bid of 1968 “disastrous for his reputation,” although he finds any conclusion that LeMay himself was a racist “demonstrably false.” In sum, *LeMay* offers a balanced description of the general and his leadership.

LeMay’s insights into leadership are still useful today. The “bedrock of his leadership was professional competence.” He was known as the premier pilot, navigator, and bombardier in all his early bomber commands. Throughout the book, LeMay’s emphasis on competence, accountability to high standards, teamwork, developing subordinates, and communication come through loud and clear. Tillman uses LeMay’s own words as his final word on leadership: “No matter how well you apply the art of leadership, no matter how strong your unit, or how high the morale of your men, if your leadership is not directed completely toward the mission, your leadership has failed . . . [in a single word, leadership is] Responsibility.”

It is one thing to describe the principles of leadership. It is quite another to understand how the great leaders in history have lived and applied those principles. Barrett Tillman’s excellent narrative salvages both LeMay and his timeless lessons for today’s leaders.

DAVID BUCKWALTER  
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Davis, Lance E., and Stanley L. Engerman. *Naval Blockades in Peace and War: An Economic History since 1750*. New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2006. 325pp. \$85

As its title states, this book is an economic history examining the impact of naval blockades in general, but it really focuses on four major wars since 1750: the Napoleonic Wars (including the War of 1812), the American Civil War, World War I, and World War II (including the U.S. blockade of Japan).

While providing voluminous data on the economic effectiveness of naval blockades, the authors' conclusions are generally dismissive of their military usefulness, suggesting that an opponent's "military strength" and "productive capacity play a more important role in the outcome of war."

Yet this negative assessment of blockades seems to run counter to many of the book's case studies, such as the War of 1812, which the authors call "a military disaster for the United States." During the American Civil War, the Northern blockade against the South played "a significant role in the Union victory." In World War I, Germany's debilitating "food crisis" was mainly due to "the effectiveness of the Allied blockade." Finally, in World War II the U.S. blockade against Japan was so tight that "it may have been the most effective naval blockade in history."

Given these generally positive views, it comes as a genuine surprise when the authors conclude by suggesting that the success rate of naval blockades "does not seem very high," and that nations will continue "to deploy blockades, but greater success than that which has occurred in the past should not be expected."

One problem might be the tables, some 142 in all, which document in minute detail the impact of naval blockades on wartime economies. Unfortunately, virtually all these tables were adapted from previous works, and some have not been updated. Another possible problem might be the authors' too-narrow focus on economic factors rather than on how economic and military pressure jointly achieved victory. The inability of the Confederacy to obtain iron plates from abroad to construct its own navy,

due mainly to the effectiveness of the Union blockade, is one case in point. The tight U.S. blockade against the Japanese home islands in combination with the use of the atom bomb may have been crucial in forcing Japan to surrender.

Before naval blockades are dismissed as an ineffective strategy, many other successful naval blockades that did not include large economic components would have to be considered. The authors of this book barely mention the U.S. "quarantine" during the Cuban Missile Crisis or Britain's use of maritime exclusion zones while retaking the Falkland Islands, both widely considered to be highly effective examples of naval blockades.

BRUCE ELLEMAN  
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Ferreiro, Larrie D. *Ships and Science: The Birth of Naval Architecture in the Scientific Revolution, 1600–1800*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2007. 432pp. \$45

This is the first in a planned two-volume history of the application of scientific theory to ship design. Larrie Ferreiro is well qualified to take this on, having both trained and worked as a naval architect and having earned a PhD in the history of science and technology.

The sailing ship was arguably the most complex mechanical system in common use prior to the Industrial Revolution. Thus a natural development of the scientific revolution of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was, for emerging "scientists," to try to explain the behavior of the ship at sea. The initial goals were to understand how it was

that ships floated and were propelled through the water, with the ultimate objective of applying scientific principles to optimize the design of ships before they were actually built. Ferreiro traces the pursuit of this emerging ship science through the work of key individuals, most notably Pierre Bouguer, the “father of naval architecture.” The book also takes a topical approach, focusing on efforts to develop the major concepts of ship design, including the proper configuration and placement of masts and sails, hull resistance in water, hull displacement, buoyancy, the center of gravity, and the metacenter. Running through this history is the evolving process of naval architecture through the end of the eighteenth century, including the development and standardization of terminology, ship models and plans, and experimental techniques.

This is ultimately a story of failure, a succession of scientific dead ends on the road to eventual enlightenment. Most of the baseline theoretical work of this period was later determined to be incorrect due to a variety of limitations inherent in early science, including inadequate mathematics, limited experimentation techniques, a lack of reliable means to spread ideas, and not least of all, dogged adherence to Aristotelian physics. It is nevertheless an instructive account of how early theorists came to understand the phenomena they were trying to explain.

Beyond the basic science, this is also an interesting story of the process of innovation within an established bureaucracy. Up until the nineteenth century there was virtually no demand for the application of scientific principles to ship design among those actually building or operating ships. Science was seen both as unnecessary and undesired by ship constructors, whose designs had proven quite adequate and whose livelihoods depended upon safeguarding their specialized and unwritten knowledge. Ferreiro’s thesis is that the primary impetus for developing and applying standardized scientific techniques to ship construction was an effort by administrators outside shipbuilding to impose increasing control over warship design and production. Although little actual change was evident by the end of the eighteenth century, Ferreiro reveals the elements of the eventual shift in bureaucratic control over ship design from individual craftsmen (ship carpenters) to members of an entirely new profession (naval architects).

This book well serves its primary purpose as a general history of the beginnings of naval architecture. It is also valuable as a broader history of technological innovation, offering insight into the relationship between science and technology and the social impact of technological change. I look forward to the second volume (post-1800) of the series.

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