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## Why Taiwan? Geostrategic Rationales for China's Territorial Integrity, by Alan M. Wachman

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My only criticism of *On Tactics* is that some of the selected essays veer into areas that could more aptly be described as “strategy” or “enterprise management.” For example, “Toward a New Identity” chronicles Admiral Luce’s struggle to keep the Atlantic fleet together long enough to test the tactical doctrines flowing out of the recently founded Naval War College. Although this is a fine essay, it does not provide the reader with any particular insight into *tactics*. Rather, it provides insight into why new tactics can be difficult to develop. Similarly, “Creating ASW Killing Zones,” although an excellent piece on Cold War antisubmarine warfare operations and strategy, does not provide much in the way of *tactical* insights on how to defeat the submarine threat.

The great advantage of this book, and indeed the entire Wheel Books series, is that it makes many excellent articles and essays readily available to the reading public—essays that might otherwise have fallen by the wayside. Overall, this volume is an excellent addition to any personal library. The size of the book and length of the articles make it an excellent work for professional development, wardroom discussion, and thought-provoking conversation.

CHARLES H. LEWIS



Wachman, Alan M. *Why Taiwan? Geostrategic Rationales for China's Territorial Integrity*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford Univ. Press, 2007. 272pp. \$25.95

Tufts Fletcher School professor Alan Wachman was a giant in the China, East Asian studies, and international relations field who remains sorely missed

following his untimely death in 2012. In what is widely considered one of his major scholarly contributions, through this pithy, well-researched book—rightly considered a classic—Wachman engages in exceptional interdisciplinary analysis to offer provocative coverage of historical episodes that have shaped Taiwan’s status fundamentally. Some events raise penetrating questions about what might have resulted had they ended differently; other factors inspire critical questions about East Asia’s future. Wachman develops a theme of the strategic salience of “imagined geography” as the best explanation for the significant variation over time in the association of Taiwan as part of Chinese sovereign territory in the minds of the leaders, and even the populace, of mainland China. He does so through close examination of key Chinese documents and terminology as well as careful consideration of their relative authority and reliability.

Wachman suggests that Sun Yat-sen, Chiang Kai-shek, the Chinese Communist Party, Mao Zedong, and even possibly Deng Xiaoping did not initially consider Taiwan to be part of China in the sense that it is understood officially today. This approach raises compelling questions about state formation and national identity that are critical to the understanding of international relations. Indeed, it may be argued that “imagined geography” is a global phenomenon and hardly peculiar to China. It is important to remember that Taiwan was formally incorporated into Qing administration in 1683, nearly a century before the founding of the United States. One may contrast such historical events as the American acquisition and incorporation of Hawaii and Alaska and conclude that the factors Wachman considers do

not negate mainland China's sovereignty claim to Taiwan. Rather, it is primarily concerned for the maintenance of Taiwan's democracy and the freedoms of its citizens that continue to inspire Washington's involvement long after the Carter administration abrogated the United States–Republic of China Mutual Security Treaty in 1980.

While Wachman clearly documents Taiwan's strategic salience (real and perceived), other factors may be important as well. An alternative explanation might consider the challenge of Taiwan as a separate polity (e.g., democratic system). The vast majority of the other "lost territories" to which Wachman compares Taiwan have never been separate polities; the few that have been have not persisted for significant periods of time. Hence, political salience may be an appropriate variable. In fact, the challenge of Taiwan as a separate polity has emerged periodically throughout history (e.g., through Dutch occupation, Qing dynasty separatism under Ming loyalist Zheng Chenggong, Japanese imperialism, Nationalist rule, and today's multiparty democracy). China's imperial rulers initially viewed Taiwan as a remote, politically unorganized hinterland. Subsequently, however, as alternative political systems were imposed or developed on it with identities and objectives potentially at odds with those of Beijing, it periodically assumed heightened importance. This has geographic underpinnings in the sense that physical location rendered Taiwan susceptible to both influence and conquest by foreign maritime powers and later to technological acquisition, trade, and the attainment of per capita gross domestic product at levels that the vast majority of political scientists

agree are conducive to the development of a democratic political system.

But the Taiwan question has been, and remains to this day, a fundamentally political one. While Taiwan's geography has not changed, its political identity has varied tremendously. Since the end of the Cold War, U.S. support for Taiwan has arguably hinged on its rapidly liberalized political system, not its geostrategic significance. Taiwan is fundamentally useful in a geostrategic sense primarily for the basing of capabilities to facilitate its own defense. While some U.S. policy makers no doubt see geostrategic benefits to the island's present status even today, it is difficult to imagine Washington being willing to risk the expenditure of increasing amounts of blood and treasure if and when Taiwan's democratic system is no longer at stake. Should the day come when a majority of Taiwan's populace favors formal unification with the mainland—and this popular will is expressed through a transparent democratic process with no external coercion—it is inconceivable that Washington could actively oppose such a transition on geostrategic grounds. There is, however, the disturbing possibility that even if Washington's policy toward Taipei is not fundamentally geostrategic in motivation, policy advocated by elements of China's government (particularly the military) may be.

Wachman does acknowledge related complexities and the difficulty of finding conclusive evidence for his geostrategic explanation. However one may view these sensitive issues—which remain hotly contested—Wachman has made a valuable contribution on a critical issue whose complex history and enduring significance are forgotten at the peril of all in the Asia-Pacific. The complexities

Wachman introduces provide important considerations for the continuing debate over Taiwan's future. Those fortunate enough to have known Wachman personally know what a fine friend and

colleague he was; all can benefit from his intellectual legacy, of which this book is an important, enduring part.

ANDREW S. ERICKSON

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#### OUR REVIEWERS

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