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China's Rising Sea Power: The PLA Navy's Submarine Challenge,

Peter J. Woolley

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It is this third section that will be of greatest interest to Western scholars seeking insights into PLA thinking about China's strategic situation. The authors of this volume believe that China, both a land and a sea power, faces multifaceted strategic opportunities and challenges. Despite its eighteen-thousand-kilometer coastline, China is currently constrained by the world's longest island chain, centering on strategically, politically, and economically vital Taiwan. Taiwan is far from China's only disputed territory, however: "1,000,000 square kilometers" of maritime territory, "one ninth of China's national land territory," remains under contention. The authors also identify energy supply security as critical to China's national development. Their statement that the South China Sea possesses "rich oil reserves equivalent to that of [the] Middle East" conflicts with Western assessments, however, leaving the reader wondering about the true strategic underpinnings of Beijing's claims.

The authors foresee possible threats to China's "sovereignty, maritime rights, and great cause of reunification," threats that, should all other measures fail, may necessitate a defensive (and therefore inherently just) war on China's "borderlines, seacoasts, and air spaces." The resulting "high-tech local wars" may well require the PLA to confront a technologically superior adversary. Accordingly, the authors suggest emphasizing preemption; employment of a broad spectrum of military technologies, including asymmetric "trump card" weapons; and integration of civilian and military forces in missions (e.g., "guerrilla warfare on the sea") that incorporate political, economic, and legal

warfare. While this volume raises as many questions as it answers, it is nevertheless a welcome contribution to a vital field in which so little authoritative information is available.

ANDREW S. ERICKSON
Naval War College



Howarth, Peter. *China's Rising Sea Power: The PLA Navy's Submarine Challenge*. New York: Frank Cass, 2006. 198pp. \$125

Peter Howarth, an Australian former diplomat and intelligence analyst, presents an excellent mix of strategic theory, political dynamics, and tactical detail in considering the Chinese submarine fleet. His treatment demonstrates a keen understanding of both parts of the phrase "politico-military strategy," and it is the type of thinking that Jeffrey Record of the Air War College recently opined is too often missing in the American community. Indeed, the book is a pleasure to read, if only because one gets to visit so many old friends in strategic theory, such as Alfred Thayer Mahan, Julian Corbett, Bernard Brodie, Hervé Coutau-Begarie, Raoul Castex, Andre Beaufre, René Daveluy, Colin Gray, Carl Döenitz, and Herbert Rosinski, as well as Mao Tse-tung, Deng Xiaoping, and Sun Tzu.

Like so many others who write about China's navy since the fall of the Berlin Wall, Howarth is inclined to make sensational claims on the subject, presumably thereby justifying the work and attracting attention. However, what distinguishes Howarth from so many others who have searched and found reasons to be alarmed at the conventional naval power of China is that he

tempers the sensational with frank assessments of China's limitations.

At the heart of this examination of Chinese submarines, practically speaking, is the potential showdown over Taiwan. While Howarth notes that "China, like Germany, is handicapped by geography," he points out that the defense of Taiwan is equally handicapped by oceanography: its narrow and crowded seas are ideal for diesel submarines. His frankness, however, about such U.S. problems as naval drawdown, global responsibility, vulnerability of surface ships to missile saturation, and the difficulties of operations in narrow seas gives one new pause.

As an example of what is best about his work, Howarth considers not only the tactical problems for China, Taiwan, and the United States (including the exact requirements for successful submarine warfare against a carrier-based navy) but also the proper political context of that potential conflict—that a politically free and economically prosperous Taiwan is a dagger pointed at the heart of the legitimacy of the Chinese Communist Party. Returning to the intersection of tactics and strategic judgment, Howarth includes in his final chapter an economical summary of the logic by which Chinese decision makers might be optimistic enough about their chances for success to initiate a conflict with Taiwan.

One weakness in this confluence of politics, strategy, and tactical matchups is that Howarth exaggerates the strategic influence of the great thinkers on policy. His demonstration of how submarine warfare fits with Sun Tzu overreaches, suggesting as it does that submarine warfare fits perfectly with preformed Chinese strategic preferences. The logic

of a preemptive surprise attack is part of the Chinese strategic culture, he says, but one does not have to cite the number of wars per year in which the Ming dynasty engaged, for example, in order to support the conclusion that "the Pentagon has some justification in considering that the risk of Beijing resorting to force to try to resolve the Taiwan issue is growing with the modernization and transformation of the PRC's military capabilities."

Howarth is better off with his more elegant logic that submarines are designed for the task of concealment and surprise and that surprise is a good tactic when one's forces are inferior. Eastern and Western war planners have both made use of the submarine and have appreciated it for the qualities for which it is designed, regardless of whether they were Chinese or their ancient ancestors were contemporaries of Sun Tzu.

Nonetheless, it is exactly this effort to blend classic strategic thinking with current politics and tactical complexities that is informative, intelligent, and provocative in this book. It is recommended for any library on naval affairs or Asian conflict, and good reading for both U.S. and Chinese war planners.

PETER J. WOOLLEY
Fairleigh Dickinson University



Cole, Bernard D. *Taiwan's Security: History and Prospects*. New York: Routledge, 2006. 254pp. \$125

Given the importance of the Taiwan issue for U.S. foreign and security policy in East Asia, it is striking that relatively little has been written on Taiwan's defense reform and modernization