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China's Future Nuclear Submarine Force

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projection. Moreover, while avoiding the entanglements of hard force specifications, they note the growing arsenal of land-based intermediate-range ballistic missiles and cruise missiles that might be employed in an integrated sea-denial effort, with possibly dire consequences.

Before receiving his PhD in international law and diplomacy, James Holmes had a lengthy career as a naval engineering officer, studied at the Naval War College, and pursued crucial oceanic issues. Toshi Yoshihara, who has competence in both Chinese and Japanese, has focused on Chinese strategic questions since earning his doctorate from the Fletcher School. Amid the highly balkanized world of contemporary Chinese security studies, the ongoing dialogue of these two Naval War College professors has produced a perceptive, balanced analysis that remains sensitive to operational constraints and escapes the narrow perspective often characterizing works by single authors.

Apart from issues explicitly raised, the book prompts numerous questions for contemplation. For example, what are the implications of “command of the commons” in peacetime? (Can the PRC exclude other nations from its littoral waters simply by threat and coercion, thereby achieving Sunzi’s ideal, or will assertions of localized superiority inevitably spawn conflict?) How will Mahan’s thrust be realized in the South China Sea, through land bases or vulnerable naval assets? Thus, despite the lamentable lack of maps and inevitable source constraints, *Chinese Naval Strategy* should be deemed critical reading for anyone concerned with PRC strategy and intentions.

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Erickson, Andrew S., Lyle J. Goldstein, William S. Murray, and Andrew R. Wilson, eds. *China's Future Nuclear Submarine Force*. Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 2007. 412pp. \$45

From the title, readers might expect this book to focus solely and closely on the People's Republic of China's aspirations to develop nuclear submarines as a means to enhance the reach of the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN). However, the seventeen chapters in this volume range well beyond submarines, considering more broadly what may be inferred from evolving naval capacities about the PRC's grand strategic objectives. Contributors to this book sift evidence—much of it from Chinese sources—for insight about what, specifically, Beijing is developing the capacity to do and what it is likely to do with it. Therefore, this work is likely to appeal not only to the submarine enthusiast but to any reader who is curious about the role of naval development in the PRC's quest to expand its military power.

The book, an outgrowth of a conference sponsored in 2005 by the China Maritime Studies Institute at the U.S. Naval War College, features contributions by some of America's most prominent (and promising) analysts of PRC naval affairs. It offers readers an incomparably thorough view from open sources of an emerging phenomenon and of the debate among analysts about the significance of this development. As with many edited volumes, this book offers in variety and breadth of topics what it may lack in cohesion and focus. Yet it does provide persuasive evidence that the PLAN is substantially expanding its submarine force—apparently making

subs rather than aircraft carriers the “centerpiece” of its development.

Contributors are generally in agreement that “hard” evidence about what the PRC is developing is still rather spotty. Where evidence is solid the news is bracing, though hardly surprising. It suggests that the PLAN is rapidly building and buying naval capabilities with the concerted aim of deterring the United States—particularly from action in the waters surrounding Taiwan—and, in combat, of significantly damaging American assets. Although that story pertains to far more than the proliferation of nuclear submarines, the book explains how integral China’s evolving undersea capabilities are to that mission. Questions remain, though, about whether the PRC also intends its submarines to be deployed as part of a strategic retaliatory force—a far more menacing, though equally unsurprising, ambition.

Threaded throughout this volume is a debate about what Beijing’s increasingly assertive maritime doctrine means for the United States. While some contributors make evident the colossal technical and operational obstacles that the PLAN still faces in mastering the arts of submarine warfare, others caution against complacency. Andrew Erickson and Lyle Goldstein assert that Beijing’s program to develop nuclear submarines may offer “one of the best single indicators of whether or not China has ambitions to become a genuine global military power.” Rear Admiral Michael McDevitt, U.S. Navy (Ret.), observes that although the PRC is taking considerable strides toward the implementation of a more robust maritime strategy and appears to have the economic resources to continue along that path,

the United States also has the resources to maintain its formidable advantages over an evolving PLAN, if Washington remains determined to use them for that purpose.

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Walton, C. Dale. *Geopolitics and the Great Powers in the Twenty-first Century: Multipolarity and the Revolution in Strategic Perspective*. New York: Routledge, 2007. 160pp. \$125

C. Dale Walton, PhD, is a lecturer at the University of Reading, in the United Kingdom, specializing in strategic studies and foreign policy.

Over the past half-century the field of geopolitical studies has been void of scholarly works at the (Sir Halford) Mackinder and (Nicholas) Spykman level of inquiry. However, Walton’s *Geopolitics and the Great Powers in the Twenty-first Century* is a work of such foresight and ambition that it just might stand in such company. Unlike most of his fellow classical realists, who tend to limit their prescriptive endeavors to sensible warnings—or at best general policy recommendations—Walton pushes the prescriptive and predictive potential of history to its limit (in some cases possibly over the limit) as he uses history to formulate specific strategic guidelines for the making of policy in the future. Walton effectively merges the lessons from the past with the post-Cold War political, demographic, technological, and cultural patterns to explain the most likely geopolitical context of the near future.