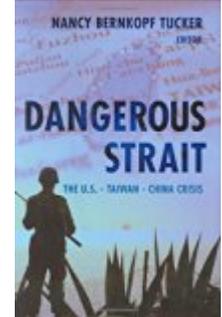


**Nancy Bernkopf Tucker, ed.** *Dangerous Strait: The U.S.-China-Taiwan Crisis*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2005. xii + 272 pp. \$41.50, cloth, ISBN 978-0-231-13564-1.



**Reviewed by** Qiang Zhai

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In Taiwan, 2008 is a presidential election year. Alongside the presidential poll, the pro-independence Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) is pushing plans to hold a referendum on whether the island should join the United Nations under its own name. Mainland China has reacted by condemning the DPP effort as an attempt to promote Taiwan's independence and by urging the United States to restrain Chen Shui-bian, Taiwan's lame-duck president. The renewed tension between Beijing and Taipei poses a serious challenge to Washington and threatens to destabilize East Asia and make the Taiwan Strait "dangerous" again. To understand the historical context of the Taiwan Strait crisis and to develop solutions on how to avoid disaster, there is no better place to start than the timely and well-researched collection of essays edited by Nancy Bernkopf Tucker. In addition to an extremely useful introductory chapter on the main findings and conclusions of the contributors, the volume includes seven well-crafted essays covering the history of Taiwan's democratization process, emergence and development of the Taiwanese independence movement, role of Lee Teng-hui in Taiwan's political evolution, eco-

conomic interactions between Taiwan and mainland China, Taiwan's defense reforms and military modernization program, U.S.-Taiwan security cooperation, and Washington's policy of strategic ambiguity toward the Taiwan Strait standoff between Beijing and Taipei.

Shelley Rigger applies political scientist Larry Diamond's theory on democratic consolidation to her examination of Taiwan's democratization process. According to Diamond, a regime must accomplish three tasks to consolidate a new democracy: democratic deepening, political institutionalization, and regime performance. Judging by Diamond's standard, Rigger points out that there are both strengths and shortcomings in Taiwan's democratization. She argues that Taiwan's democracy has performed well on democratic deepening but unsatisfactorily in the areas of political institutionalization and regime performance. She concludes that, despite the weaknesses in Taiwan's democratic consolidation, there is no evidence that the population on the island is prepared to jettison democracy and restore authoritarian institutions.

The growth of the Taiwanese independence movement is the subject of Steven Phillips's chapter. According to Phillips, a half century of Japanese domination laid the foundation for much of the dispute between the Taiwanese and the nationalists. The authoritarian rule of Chiang Kai-shek's government alienated the Taiwanese and spurred their separatist tendencies. The Republic of China's increasing international isolation following President Richard Nixon's visit to Beijing in 1972 cast doubts about the regime's credibility and legitimacy and raised uncertainties about the island's future. Although during much of its existence the Taiwanese independence movement remained a "disorderly" and "faction-ridden" coalition without international support, it "is nevertheless stumbling toward success today" (p. 68).

Combining his personal knowledge about Lee with careful scrutiny of the record, Richard Bush addresses the issue of the role of Lee in the rise of the separatist movement in Taiwan. As chairman of the board and managing director of the American Institute in Taiwan, Bush had close contact with Lee. He argues that Lee as president did not object to unification in principle, but opposed unification on Beijing's terms. Lee's basic approach to unification included three elements: "within the context of a unified China, the governing authorities in Taipei possessed sovereignty and were essentially equal to the government in Beijing; Taiwan had the right to play a significant role in the international community; [and] Beijing's growing military capabilities and its refusal to renounce their use was an obstacle to reconciliation" (p. 90).

T. J. Cheng discusses the nature of the economic ties between Taiwan and China as well as their implications for the island. He rejects the term "economic integration" in describing the economic relationship across the Taiwan Strait, because "economic integration is a goal-driven process that nation-states legally commit to and consciously promote" and that condition does not exist between Taiwan and China (p. 94). Cheng

characterizes the economic interaction across the Taiwan Strait as asymmetric, because Taiwan has grown more dependent on China for export and investment opportunities. He contends that "the high cost of replacing Taiwan's investment and suspending trade with Taiwan" shield the island against Beijing's political manipulation and create mutual dependency (p. 104). "Asymmetric economic interdependence," Cheng concludes, "does not seem to give Beijing leverage to coerce Taipei, nor does it necessarily turn Taiwan businessmen ... into a pro-unification force" (p. 94).

Michael Swaine's chapter investigates the basic goals of Taipei's defense reform and modernization attempts, and it assesses the achievements to date and the remaining issues confronting the realization of those goals. He demonstrates that Taiwan's military leaders have responded to the demands of transforming a party army into a national defense force and of accepting civilian control and the oversight of the legislative branch of government.

Taiwan remains the most sensitive and disruptive issue between China and the United States. The last two chapters by Michael Chase and Nancy Tucker examine the triangular relationship among Beijing, Washington, and Taipei. Chase traces the evolution of security cooperation between Taiwan and the United States and highlights the frequent disagreement between them over weapons procurement and threat perceptions. Reconsidering the debate concerning Washington's longstanding policy of strategic ambiguity in the Taiwan Strait, Tucker asserts that "the conditions under which the policy was devised still pertain and that it would be a costly mistake to jettison it" (p. 14).

In sum, all the essays in this volume are of high quality. They should be read by everyone concerned with peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait.

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