

trouble is taken to discuss the problem of accuracy (especially of the industrial census).

This is a beautifully-produced volume, but while enjoying the satisfaction of the excellent production and colour printing, there is that nagging sense as with most atlases that it is so neat and unambiguous that it is unreal. But of course the most difficult problem is the price, which will deter almost all individuals and most libraries. Why not produce a reduced version, with fewer maps and smaller format for a wider market? The potential must be considerable, for students, tourists and business people.

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Taiwan – Chine populaire: l'impossible réunification. By JEAN-PIERRE CABESTAN. [Paris: Institut Français des Relations Internationales, 1995. 201 pp. FF129. ISBN 2-10-002574-0.]

The sudden deterioration in relations between the PRC and Taiwan from the middle of 1995 focused the international spotlight on what is usually the least-noticed of the Asia-Pacific region's three potential flash points. Cabestan's book is therefore a timely one. Although written before Lee Teng-hui's June 1995 visit to the United States and the mainland's response (military exercises near Taiwan and the unleashing of fierce anti-Lee rhetoric), Cabestan's analysis stands up to the test of this latest twist in the evolution of cross-Straits relations.

The bright promise implicit in the growing pace of the "unofficial" dialogue across the Straits, the striking increase in economic links and a fashionable espousal of "Greater China" concepts have led to a belief in the inevitability of a slow and steady march towards unification, however defined. Cabestan goes methodically through the issues, point by point, and demonstrates why this optimism is misplaced. He begins, properly, by drawing careful portraits of the different political, economic and social environments on the two sides of the Taiwan Straits. Mainland China's impressive economic growth since the beginning of the economic reform process and the trappings of (relative) wealth in parts of coastal China hide the immense difference in economic level that still separates the two sides. As Cabestan observes, to reach an annual per capita GNP of US\$10,000 (a level passed by Taiwan three years ago), even taking the IMF estimates of the size of the Chinese economy, China would need to quadruple its GNP while maintaining its population at the current level. The evolution of a genuinely democratic system in Taiwan (albeit, as Cabestan notes, not without its blemishes) since the lifting of martial law in 1987 has, and will continue to, widen the gulf.

The twin processes of democratization and Taiwanization have, as Cabestan argues, done more than simply widen the gulf between the two societies. It has not been possible for some years to contemplate the party-to-party dialogue between the CCP and KMT that the former

insisted on for so long. At the same time, public pressure, used to good effect by the opposition DPP, has obliged the government to push ahead with its efforts to expand Taiwan's international space, even to renew its bid to join the UN. Cabestan points to the inevitability of this campaign, with the surprising thing being that the current policies entailed in the phrase "pragmatic diplomacy" took so long to evolve.

An analysis of the pace of cross-Straits negotiations, the growing economic interaction and the relative military balance between the PLA and Taiwan's armed forces leads to the key question: whose side is time on? There is no easy answer. Cabestan perceives two contradictory trends. In one, China's growing economic and political power threaten in the long term to eclipse Taiwan. In the other, democratic and prosperous Taiwan is more and more considered a state in all but name and is able to sell its case internationally. With modern armed forces, it is capable of defending itself (at least to the medium term), while its political system moves, if anything, further away from the mainland. Cabestan, sensibly, does not come out firmly in favour of one trend or the other.

His analysis of the former tends, however, to overstate the case with respect to the cultural pull of the mainland. It is doubtful whether many people in Taiwan feel obliged to look to Beijing as the "centre of the Chinese world" as he suggests (pp. 167–68). It is furthermore simply not the case, as he implies, that the figure of over five million visits from Taiwan to the mainland since the relaxation on such visits in 1987 can be equated to "one Taiwanese in four having visited the mainland" (p. 121). The statistic is for *visits*: as the average number of visits for Taiwan residents of mainland origin (particularly the first generation) is about three, and Taiwanese doing business in the mainland make frequent visits (20 is not uncommon), the absolute number of Taiwanese residents who have visited the mainland is more likely to be somewhere between a twentieth and a tenth of the population. Indeed, when talking to Taiwanese it is striking how few people have been to the mainland, and how few exhibit any interest in doing so.

The only other criticism I have of the work is the way it is marred in some places by errors of fact. For instance the DPP vote in the 1992 Legislative Yuan elections was not 36 per cent, as Cabestan asserts in two places (pp. 34 and 99), but 32 per cent. Taiwan's traditional puppet theatre is not *gezaixi* (p. 43), but *budaixi*; the former is the local opera. The current DPP chairman does not belong to the Formosa faction; if anything, he is closer to the party's New Wave faction (*xinchao*liu, not *xinchao* as Cabestan gives) (p. 35).

The strength of Cabestan's book is the writer's ability to take the reader through a complex set of issues in a way that demystifies and clarifies, without simplifying or distorting. As such, the work is a useful introduction to the subject for those unfamiliar with its intricacies, but there is also much here that will be of value to the expert. The work will be particularly valuable for francophone readers, as the range of material in French on this subject is limited.

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