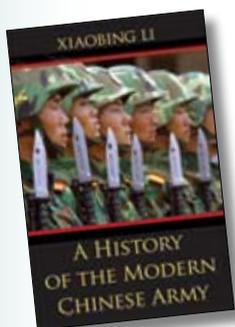


Off the Shelf

An article in this issue's Forum argues that it may be wise for the United States to find ways to achieve national objectives in cooperation with China rather than to assume an adversarial role. Whether one considers China as an emerging market, a strategic partner, an adversary, or all three, one thing is certain: the United States cannot ignore China, and as this issue's Forum shows, China is indeed on the minds of numerous strategists and policymakers. Because China will be a player in an increasing number of endeavors in the Asia-Pacific, U.S. military officers and national security policymakers need to avoid viewing the world solely through the prism of the war on terror and devote ample time to studying China and Asia-Pacific issues. As Admiral Timothy Keating points out, "Our outlook must be broad if we are to help the Asia-Pacific—fully 43 countries—achieve their potential."



A History of the Modern Chinese Army

by Xiaobing Li

Lexington, KY: The University

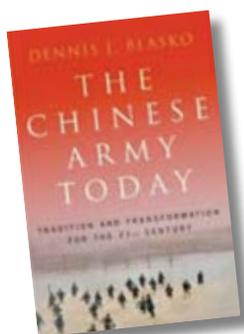
Press of Kentucky, 2007

413 pp. \$39.95

ISBN-13: 978-0-8131-2438-4

Professional reading about the Peoples' Liberation Army (PLA) should begin with this book. It not only chronicles the history of the PLA but also delves into the social and political influences on its evolution and provides a comprehensive picture of the PLA today. The detailed history and discussions about how and why changes have occurred in the PLA provide the basis from which to understand both the current actions of China as it pushes to modernize its military and overall Chinese strategic concerns. For example, Professor Li describes how the PLA, a formerly uneducated, peasant force, is in the midst of a transformation from a "labor-intensive" to a "technology-intensive" army. Witness the contrast between the PLA of decades past with today's modernizing force: In 1983, only "4% of the 224 top Chinese generals had some college credit hours," but since 1995, the PLA has been focusing on higher education and recruiting officers from universities with the goal of reshaping the PLA into a technologically advanced force capable of "winning the next war under high-tech conditions" (p. 2).

Li, a Chinese native and PLA veteran, made extensive use of recently available primary and secondary Chinese language sources in the exhaustive 10-year research for this book. His personal experience and native language abilities allow him to present an excellent examination of the PLA, which is enhanced by his ample inclusion of sources not readily available to Western researchers. He also adds value to his research by integrating "soldiers' stories" into the work in an effort to "move away from the conventional approach" to view Chinese soldiers as party pawns or simply lost in the "human waves" (p. 6). Li concludes that the PLA's modernization is a product of social and economic changes in China and that these changes are interdependent—thus, for China to successfully complete the modernization of the PLA, it must also achieve economic reform and sustain economic growth (p. 295).



The Chinese Army Today

by Dennis J. Blasko

Abingdon, Oxon, UK: Routledge, 2006

228 pp. \$42.95

ISBN-13: 9-780-415-77003-3

If you are looking for a concise, up-to-date volume on the PLA, this is the book for you. Lieutenant Colonel Blasko, a 23-year veteran of the Army during which he served as a military intelligence officer, Chinese Foreign Area Officer, and U.S. Army attaché to China and Hong Kong, is truly an expert on the affairs of the PLA. He puts all his expertise into this book, which contains accurate and concisely structured information about the current organization, order of battle, and capabilities of the PLA—as much as one can find in an open source publication. As the author states, the book "is intended to be a baseline for understanding the Chinese military and perhaps encourage future studies of issues only briefly mentioned here" (p. xi).

In addition to the survey of today's PLA, Blasko describes its continuing modernization and transformation program. In a matter-of-fact approach, he deftly puts the PLA and its capabilities into realistic perspective without ignoring the significance of the PLA's modernization. He effectively exorcises the "China rising" bogeyman by putting the scope of China's modernization into perspective. One example of this is in his description of how the PLA will fight. Blasko explains that China's current campaign to transform and modernize the PLA will not reap a significant improvement in capability in the near term: "While the PLA has a general vision of how it wants to employ its forces in future conflicts . . . it is likely there will be a gap between what the PLA strives to do and what it actually can accomplish for some time to come" (p. 93). Also, in the concluding chapter, Blasko cites the PLA leadership's own assessment that it will take another 10 to 20 years to reach "advanced world standards." He cautions, however, that the effectiveness of China's military modernization cannot be judged by foreign standards and that the Chinese leadership remains "committed to military modernization as part of the nation's strategic development plan" (pp. 182–183).

Blasko states that he wanted to write "the type of book [he] would have liked to have read before becoming a U.S. Army attaché to China" (p. 2). He has achieved his goal.

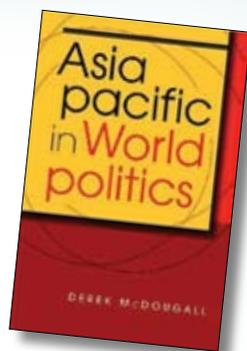
Asia Pacific in World Politics

by Derek McDougall

Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2007

371 pp. \$59.95 (\$24.50 paperback)

ISBN-13: 978-1-58826-194-6



Dr. McDougall, an associate professor of politics at the University of Melbourne and an expert in the international politics of the Asia-Pacific and regional security issues, presents an excellent introduction to current international politics by the major players in the region. Focusing on the United States, China, and Japan, *Asia Pacific in World Politics* examines the relationship between these countries as well as the ongoing conflicts over Taiwan and North Korea and the changes occurring in Southeast Asia.

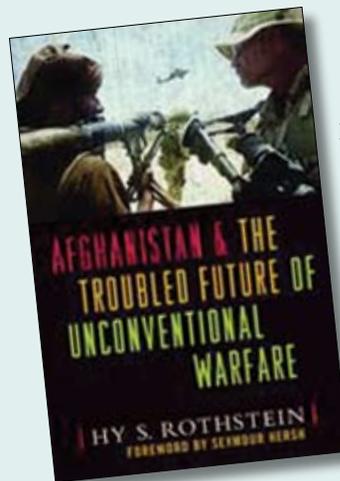
Surprisingly, this is not an Australia-centric perspective on international politics (evidenced by treating both Australia and Russia as “other key regional actors”) and does not approach issues from a single national perspective. McDougall says, “The underlying assumption is that to understand the dynamics of international politics in Asia-Pacific, one needs to focus first on the interaction of states and, in particular, on the interaction of its major powers” (p. 25). He draws on realist, liberal, and cultural approaches to international politics and notes that his methodology includes “a strong emphasis on the role of states, but not to the exclusion of other actors” (p. 5). Accordingly, he devotes an entire chapter to describing the roles of some prominent international organizations in the region—valuable information, considering that U.S. military commanders will inevitably have to deal with them during any conceivable operation in the future.

McDougall concludes by reiterating that past is prologue and that although “there can be wild cards, such as the collapse of the USSR or September 11 . . . a focus on the key factors affecting the most significant actors in the region does provide a good starting point” for predicting the future in the Asia-Pacific region (p. 327).

Other recently published titles recommended for additional reading about China's military, geopolitical, and security issues in the Asia-Pacific region:

- Bolt, Paul J., and Albert S. Willner, eds. *China's Nuclear Future*. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2006. 221 pp. \$52.00.
- Dillon, Dana R. *The China Challenge: Standing Strong against the Military, Economic, and Political Threats That Imperil America*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2007. 213 pp. \$24.95.
- Kane, Thomas M. *Ancient China on Postmodern War*. Abingdon, Oxon, UK: Routledge, 2007. 193 pp. \$120.00.
- Lewis, John Wilson, and Xue Litai. *Imagined Enemies: China Prepares for Uncertain War*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006. 362 pp. \$60.00.
- Sutter, Robert G. *China's Rise in Asia: Promises and Perils*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005. 297 pp. \$76.00 (\$26.95 paperback).
- Tsang, Steve, ed. *If China Attacks Taiwan: Military Strategy, Politics and Economics*. Abingdon, Oxon, UK: Routledge, 2006. 215 pp. \$125.00.

—R. E. Henstrand



Afghanistan and the Troubled Future of Unconventional Warfare

by Hy S. Rothstein

Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute

Press, 2006

218 pp. \$26.95

ISBN-13: 978-1591147459

Reviewed by

JOHN D. BECKER

The global war on terror seemed to be perfectly tailored for U.S. Special Operations Forces (SOF). After years of resourcing, training, and experience in low-intensity conflicts and operations other than war, SOF should have been able to shift focus to a new set of enemies: terrorists, militias, and insurgents. Yet that has not proven to be the case—or so argues Hy Rothstein in this excellent study, in which he proposes that the U.S. military is not able to wage unconventional warfare despite significant investment in special operations capabilities. He reached this conclusion by looking at imperatives from the literature on organizational theory and military innovation that are relevant to unconventional warfare as illuminated by U.S. military operations in Afghanistan.

Organized into six chapters, with a foreword by Seymour Hersh, the study opens with an assessment of the current U.S. capacity to conduct unconventional operations. Beginning with operations against the Taliban in Afghanistan after the September 11 attacks, Rothstein notes that while special operations played a key role in the war, the strategy the United States employed was essentially a conventional one—a war of attrition. Using Northern Alliance Afghan forces in conjunction with U.S. Special Forces and airpower, the coalition forces attacked and destroyed

the Taliban military, leading to the disintegration of the existing Taliban state.

What happened next became the problem. Remnants of the Taliban went underground and started engaging in unconventional warfare. The United States, however, did not change its strategy. It continued to fight a war of attrition and use SOF more as conventional forces. The result was that the United States managed to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory.

Rothstein next turns his attention to definitions and history. Specifically, he addresses the issues of what constitutes *special operations* and *special operations forces*. Special operations are defined variously as ambiguous, smaller-scale conflicts; lesser, but messy, politically charged situations that often straddle an uneasy peace and not quite a state of war; and ill-defined, constantly shifting forms of conflict. Special operations forces are seen as playing the gamut of roles from shooters to social workers. While conventional forces can easily conduct many of these military operations other than war or stability and support operations, Rothstein argues they cannot and should not be used in all special operations.

Rothstein then moves to theory, which provides the necessary context of the problem posed. Central to his analysis is contingency theory, which

acknowledges that *change* is the only certainty in the world and argues that changes in technological, social, economic, and political environments, globalization, and ecological well-being are making us rethink the way we adapt to change. This adaptation applies to organizations as well as individuals, and managing this change requires a different approach by each of them. In stable competitive environments, relatively simple and mechanical organizations are enough for success. However, in a rapidly changing and unpredictable environment, organizations need to be flexible, dynamic, innovative, and able to renew themselves to be successful.

The use of contingency theory seems exceptionally well suited for dealing with the chaos-based, post-Cold War world. In fact, although Rothstein does not say so, the notion of contingency theory appears to be a handy tool for managing chaos theory. Chaos theory, in general, looks at how simple actions can generate complex outcomes that could not be predicted by just looking at the acts themselves. The most popular image is that of the butterfly effect: a butterfly flapping its wings in Beijing can produce hurricanes in Miami. In the international arena, the analogy is that a terrorist attack in New York City can result in regime changes in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Rothstein concludes by looking at the implications from Afghanistan, with recommendations as to what needs to be done to reap the benefits from the substantial capability that exists in U.S. SOF. These recommendations include setting up a separate service for unconventional warfare forces, with its own personnel, promotion, and training systems, and

letting it bypass the Joint Chiefs of Staff to coordinate with other governmental agencies. Finally, this unconventional warfare force would be based not on force structure but rather on world dynamics. As a result, it may take months or years before unconventional warfare forces are successful.

Interestingly, these conclusions come after the Department of Defense's 6-year transformation of the military under former Secretary Donald Rumsfeld. The shift to a lighter, more lethal force was one of the goals of the Bush administration, and even with these mandated changes, transformation efforts have failed. The point that administration leaders, including the military leadership, appear to have missed is that these kinds of transformations require more than simply shifting technology; they require corresponding shifts in military mentality and culture.

Rothstein's position is controversial, and critics could argue that it is simply reflecting his own background—30 years in Army Special Forces—with all its requisite biases and prejudices. Yet if we look at that position objectively, we have to agree that the current solution is not working. Using conventional forces, even with the recent surge of additional U.S. forces into Iraq, has not reduced the bombings or the use of force against American troops.

If we accept contingency theory as the best way to approach conflicts such as Iraq or Afghanistan, we must look for what works. Trying different tools, approaches, and methodologies is how one solves problems. Continuing to use the military in same way, as a sledgehammer, will not get the job done against unconventional enemies. **JFQ**

Lieutenant Colonel John D. Becker, USA (Ret.), is on the faculties of the University of Denver Graduate School of International Studies, the Norwich University Diplomacy program, and the University of Phoenix Online MBA program.



Buying Military Transformation: Technological Innovation and the Defense Industry

by Peter Dombrowski and Eugene Gholz

New York: Columbia University Press, 2006

189 pp. \$45.00

ISBN: 978-0231509657

Reviewed by

NADER ELHEFNAWY

A shift toward network-centric warfare (NCW) means changes in not only doctrine and tactics but also technology, especially the information technology needed to realize the concept. Peter Dombrowski and Eugene Gholz's book *Buying Military Transformation* looks at what such technological change will mean for the American defense industry. Specifically, it focuses on the question of whether the Defense Department will need to look beyond established firms such as Northrop Grumman and General Dynamics for systems appropriate to the new doctrine.

Dombrowski and Gholz focus on institutional politics and procedures and draw on not only numerous interviews and discussions they conducted with officials in the government, military, and defense industry, but also scholarly literature. Where the latter is concerned, the authors use as their theoretical foundation Harvard business adminis-

tration professor Clayton Christensen's concepts of "sustaining" and "disruptive" technological innovation (discussed in his book *The Innovator's Dilemma* [HarperBusiness, 2003]). Sustaining innovations improve the performance of established products in traditional ways. Disruptive technologies set up new standards and, in the process, tend to overthrow established products. A car using a more efficient internal-combustion engine to get more miles per gallon of gas would be an example of a sustaining innovation. A car that uses a hydrogen fuel cell, rendering the miles-per-gallon question moot, is an example of a disruptive one.

Large companies heavily invested in established products tend to concentrate on sustaining innovations, while disruptive innovation tends to be the province of start-ups. Many technologies needed to realize NCW, particularly the information technology (IT) underlying the concept, are widely held to fall into the disruptive category. This situation raises the question of whether the Defense Department needs to look beyond the "Old Economy" contractors, which it is accustomed to dealing with, toward IT-oriented "New Economy" firms, such as Cisco Systems, to get the required equipment.

The authors' principal contention is that the case for such a radical reorientation

of procurement practices is overblown for two reasons. The first is that the next generation of weapons systems will be far less radical than the hype surrounding transformation suggests, as they demonstrate with three case studies of acquisition programs: the Littoral Combat Ship, unmanned aerial vehicles (unmanned aircraft systems), and communications systems. The second reason they offer is that the established defense contractors have key advantages as suppliers that make a turn to other producers undesirable.

Dombrowski and Gholz argue their first point quite successfully. The history of military technological acquisition suggests a future of incremental changes of previous designs rather than “clean sheet” approaches. Moreover, many of the demands of NCW doctrine represent changes of degree rather than kind, as the case of the Littoral Combat Ship demonstrates. NCW calls for fast, stealthy warships, but navies have always sought fast ships, and there has long been a premium on stealth as well. Additionally, given long practice, political uncertainty, and the continuing value of versatility and survivability in weapons systems, the old preference for high-performance, multipurpose warships remains a strong factor in design. In contrast with the patrol-craft-like “streetfighter” vessels envisioned by some futurists, the 2,500-ton Littoral Combat Ship is a successor of today’s frigates. This reflects a lower real-world premium on disruptive technology, and a correspondingly greater place for the sustaining technologies that established defense contractors specialize in.

Buying Military Transformation is less successful when it argues that the ability of the established defense contractors to work with the military to meet

its technological needs is irreplaceable. The authors emphasize the close relationship between the military Services and established defense firms, which they insist enables a better understanding between the firms and their clients. However, they offer little evidence that this close relationship actually has that effect, which is especially problematic given the disagreement on this point. Many critics see aspects of that close relationship (such as the “revolving door” between the Defense Department and defense contractors) as corrupting the acquisition process, causing the Defense Department to take what industry wants to sell it rather than producing a symbiosis in which industry better satisfies real military needs. Even those convinced of the basic validity of transformation at times “ask whether the acquisition system is fundamentally broken by pork barrel incentives and outright malfeasance,” as the authors acknowledge in a promotional interview on their publisher’s Web site.

The book’s failure to seriously acknowledge such concerns is a glaring weakness, given its otherwise close detailing of much of the acquisition process. In addition, the book overreaches in its claim to offer a comprehensive theory of how militaries change, given its narrow historical and methodological focus. Nonetheless, it offers a great deal of insight into an important but underexamined area of the transformation debate and puts recent defense acquisition in perspective. This makes *Buying Military Transformation* well worth the time of readers interested in the nuts and bolts of the development and manufacturing of the coming generation of military technology. **JFQ**

Nader Elhefnawy has published widely on international security issues. He holds a BA in international relations from Florida International University.



NEW Titles from NDU Press



Strategic Forum 227

The Country Team: Restructuring America's First Line of Engagement

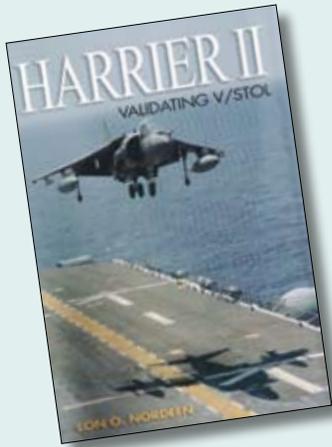
U.S. Embassy staffs—our Country Teams—are ideally positioned as the first lines of engagement to face the unprecedented challenges to U.S. national interests overseas. Yet effective interagency collaboration is often a hit-or-miss proposition, due to diluted authority, antiquated organizational structures, and insufficient resources. In this study, veteran diplomat Ambassador Robert B. Oakley and coauthor Michael Casey, Jr., argue that it is time to reinvigorate the Country Team’s role in achieving U.S. national security objectives. They propose that the team be reconfigured as a cross-functional entity with an empowered single leader for all agencies—the Ambassador. The team’s makeover must be holistic, to include new strategy and planning approaches, decisionmaking procedures, personnel training and incentives, and flexible resource allocation.

INSS Special Report

China's ASAT Test: Motivations and Implications

In January 2007, China tested a direct-ascent antisatellite (ASAT) weapon, hitting one of its own weather satellites in low Earth orbit. To examine the motivations and implications of the test, National Defense University’s Institute for National Strategic Studies convened a panel of China and space experts with a range of policy viewpoints. In this Special Report, Phillip C. Saunders and Charles D. Lutes summarize the views of these experts, adding their own analysis of the relevant policy issues. They urge U.S. officials to consider initiatives to convince China to forego further ASAT development, as well as several technical and military measures to mitigate or deter an operational Chinese ASAT program. While persuading Beijing not to pursue such weapons, Washington must balance its broader relationship with China against the need to maintain access to space for military and commercial purposes.

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Harrier II: Validating V/STOL

by Lon O. Nordeen

Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2006

210 pp. \$28.95

ISBN: 13-978-1-59114-536-3

Reviewed by

JON M. DAVIS and DAVID H. GURNEY

First, a disclosure: both reviewers are Harrier pilots and former Harrier squadron commanders. We know all the people cited in the acknowledgments and lived much of the later history that the author captures. Our objectivity is limited to the realities that neither of us knows the author and that we were unaware that the book had been written until the U.S. Naval Institute solicited our review.

Lon Nordeen's assertion in his preface that the scope of the book is limited to the history of the Harrier II program is not accurate in a strict sense. In fact, the first 40 pages of the book do a creditable job of addressing the salient elements of the Kestrel (the experimental predecessor of the Harrier) and AV-8A Harrier histories leading up to the requirements and political support that produced the Harrier II against long odds. Moreover, the author covers this prehistory adroitly, superbly reinforcing his thesis that, to a greater degree than most modern aircraft programs, the Harrier II owes its existence to underdog visionaries: a handful of experienced aviators and many nonaviators, especially

Marine infantry officers who desperately needed the kind of support the Harrier would provide.

The book's strength lies in its insights from the program, production, and policy angles. From a pilot's perspective, however, the descriptions of the Harrier are necessarily anecdotal. Unique vertical/short takeoff and landing (V/STOL) aerodynamic considerations, such as intake momentum drag, yaw roll coupling, and negative stability between 30 and 90 knots, are mentioned without explanation to the uninitiated reader. The author compares the mishap loss rates of the AV-8 to those of the F-4 and F-8 but does not expand upon this thorny issue; nor does he underline the fact that tremendous operational innovation was supported by limited developmental spending. Modern critics of the F-35 series Joint Strike Fighter lament the compromises necessitated by myriad requirements of numerous buyers, but at the other end of the spectrum lie single-Service airframes such as the Harrier, which suffer from shoestring budgets borne by a single primary customer facing competing requirements.

The only minor weakness of Nordeen's book is a byproduct of its strength. The author quotes a veritable who's who of V/STOL advocates but lacks counterpoint from the Harrier's many critics, whose complaints, whether balanced or not, needed more attention to offer a robust history. Along these lines, one can take

issue with Nordeen's emphasis on the term *V/STOL* itself. Although the Marines procured a V/STOL attack aircraft, it was used from the beginning as a short takeoff and vertical landing (STOVL) machine and developed operating concepts and tactics, techniques, and procedures to employ it almost exclusively in the STOVL realm. A book with the subtitle *Validating V/STOL* should probably incorporate a stronger examination of V/STOL's shortcomings. While a more in-depth discussion of the evolution of the AV-8A might be desirable, the author made it clear that the AV-8B was his focus. The AV-8A employment concept from a V/STOL platform optimized for short-duration, short-range missions is very different from STOVL operations and the strategic agility afforded by austere land or small-deck sea bases enabling long-range, long-dwell, precision strike operations at a high sortie rate from those bases. The evolution to a STOVL capability has brought the U.S. Marine Corps and joint forces the agile and multipurposed fixed-wing strike capability required for operational maneuver from the sea.

Finding 2,000 feet of asphalt or grass, room on a ship's deck, or space for a square of steel matting to land a light jet with a 30-foot wingspan generally is not difficult. In fact, the Harrier has added a strategic agility to Marine tactical air that is unsurpassed by any other tactical air platform. In many ways, the V/STOL moniker caused more problems than it was worth because Harrier detractors persistently claimed that the Marines never used it that way. True; in fact, the Armed Forces rarely employ weapons systems exactly as envisioned during requirement validation because contextual elements change, and in adapting, they learn how to use them better, as the Marines did with the Harrier. We argue that the Harrier II did not validate V/STOL—but it

did so in spades for STOVL. The STOVL Harrier provided a high-performance, offensive air support capability that enabled expeditionary air support from amphibious platforms and austere forward sites. There is a good reason why the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff identified the Harrier II as one of the three critical weapons systems employed in Operation *Desert Storm*. This reality informed the STOVL requirements of the much heralded F-35 Lightning II.

In the final analysis, Lon Nordeen does an excellent job of chronicling the history of the Harrier II from the perspective of advocates and operators who believe—as we do—that the AV-8B represents a conceptual triumph that has significantly altered the evolution of tactical aviation. There are a handful of errors in the book (primarily in the appendices), but they are insignificant and far outweighed by authoritative narratives sprinkled throughout the text and found in no other book. Through his heavy reliance on Harrier Program Office regulars, Nordeen has produced an accurate history, but one that gives short shrift to the experiences of partner nations (most notably the United Kingdom) and to the innovation and evolution of the operating forces. All Harrier pilots and tactical aviation aficionados will enjoy this volume, an engaging and tremendously informative read that is destined to be the source cited in footnotes and first-hand accounts long into the future.

JFQ

Brigadier General Jon M. Davis, USMC, is Deputy Commander, Joint Functional Component Command, Network Warfare. Colonel David H. Gurney, USMC (Ret.), is Director of National Defense University Press.