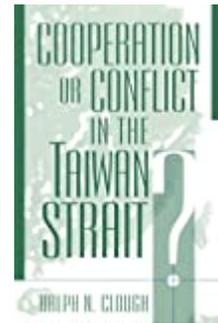


H-Net Reviews

in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Ralph N. Clough. *Cooperation or Conflict in the Taiwan Strait?* Asia in World Politics Series, Samuel S. Kim, editor. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1999. xi + 155 pp. \$57.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8476-9325-2.



Reviewed by Jing Zhao (US-Japan-China Comparative Policy Research Institute, San Jose, USA)

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“They tried to compensate for their lack of access to top executive branch officials by cultivating members of Congress and their staff, governors and members of state legislatures, officials of important U.S. cities, and key media decision makers. They invited large numbers of national and local political figures to visit Taiwan (Bill Clinton made four visits while governor of Arkansas). They strengthened Taiwan’s links with American universities and think-tanks, sponsored a large number of academic conferences at which Taiwan’s problems were sympathetically discussed, and hired public relations firms to spread favorable publicity about Taiwan and to lobby members of Congress.” (p. 23)

This is the general background regarding the Taiwan issue that appeared in American-based publicity. It is natural to see that in the U.S., the study of the Taiwan issue, including this book under review, also unnaturally favors one side of the strait. Thus, among so many propaganda-propelled publications repeating almost the same tone, is this book worth reading or reviewing?

This book does not list the 1972 Sino-American Shanghai Communique, in which the U.S. acknowledges “that all Chinese on either side of the Taiwan Strait maintain that there is but one China and that Taiwan is part of China” and declares that “the U.S. government does not challenge that position.” Nor does the book introduce the

contents of the 1982 Sino-American Joint Communique in which the U.S. agrees to reduce and, ultimately, stop arms sales to Taiwan. The author may have reasons to ignore these two documents and emphasize the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA), adopted by the Congress in 1979. However, these two documents are always regarded by the Chinese government as well as the Chinese people, as the political basis for Sino-American relations.

This fact is vital in helping Americans understand China’s determination to unify Taiwan, regardless of any possible consequences from a military conflict with the U.S. Only “accepting the reality that PRC leaders have a legitimate interest in Taiwan’s future” (p. 114) is not enough. The author’s biggest assumption (chapter 7) is that once the U.S. military intervenes, the international world will follow the U.S. This shows that the author lacks knowledge of Japan and other East Asian countries. Japan is far from ready to engage against China for any reason.

As for the origin of the Taiwan problem, the book misleads readers, claiming “Chinese military intervention in the Korean War convinced most Americans that the PRC was serving Soviet purposes in furthering the spread of international communism.” (p.17) “Participation in wars in Korea and Vietnam convinced most Americans that the leaders of China and the Soviet Union were

promoting a global movement that threatened the American way of life.” (p.21)

This small book, written by a former director for Chinese affairs in the Department of State, introduces “shifting emphases in the U.S.-PRC-Taiwan relations” (Chapter 2); discusses Taiwan’s policy changes under Lee Teng-hui and the rise of the DDP which advocates Taiwan independence (Chapters 3 - 6); and considers how “to prevent the development of a crisis in the Taiwan Strait in which the United States would be compelled to choose between allowing Taiwan to be subjugated by military force or intervening with the U.S. forces to prevent it.” (p.115)

Actually, the book starts with “Cornell Alumnus Attends School Reunion” (Chapter 1), ends with “Lee Teng-hui’s Six Points” (Appendix 2) and “Excerpts from Lee Teng-hui’s Inaugural Address, May 20, 1996” (Appendix 3); and the frequency of the appearances of the word “Lee Teng-hui” is only less than that of “PRC,” “ROC/Taiwan” and “United States.”

It is reasonable for the author to spend most pages introducing “voices of the 21.3 million people,” because he can easily access these voices directly from Lee Teng-hui to Taiwan’s businessmen but from the mainland side, he can only hear one voice through a middle-level channel. As a convenient comparison, how many American people have a chance to hear any voice from Chongqing’s thirty million people? (While most Americans never do not even the name, Chongqing was ROC’s capital during the war against Japan’s invasion.) This is the point of the Taiwan problem: 98 percent of people are excluded from the issue by Washington, Taipei, and Beijing’s regimes. The author heavily weighs the moderating influence of investment and trade across the strait to drawing the two sides together. This is a commonly accepted sense, and the book, from the Washington and Taipei sides, clearly

demonstrates how the Jiang Zeming regime, which came to power by the Tiananmen Incident in 1989 and serves the interest of the newly formed capitalist class (including that from Taiwan), other than the Chinese people, has lost the battle on Taiwan. Today, the Jiang regime cannot bring the new Taipei regime to the negotiation table based on the “one China” principle even though Wang Daohan, the chairman of the Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Strait (ARATS), said that “one China” stands for neither the PRC nor the ROC (p.98). The only purpose of Lee Kwan Yew’s visit to the new ROC “president” was to transmit Jiang Zeming’s message: “Please do not let me labeled the next Li Hongzhang. No Chinese leader can count on survival if that happens.”

As mentioned above, this timely book is more suitable for relevant business people who need a brief guide on current Taiwan Strait affairs for the next one or two years. However, I recommend my that colleagues teaching at China’s universities to introduce this book to their graduate students for the following reasons: compared with those propaganda and commercial writings (such as *The Coming Conflict with China*), this book explains the U.S. official policy and new situations in Taiwan briefly, properly (and also hypocritically) without fiction; compared with those strategists who like to talk about China but even cannot read Chinese (such as Brzezinski), the author is a China specialist who served for thirteen years in mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan, and this book uses first-hand Chinese material (mostly from Taiwan, though). In general, this book is more worthy of a reading by Chinese in the mainland than by Americans.

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