

The Academy of Political Science

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POLITICAL SCIENCE QUARTERLY

Volume 127 · Number 1 · Spring 2012

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Political Science Quarterly
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the region and increased the likelihood that the communists would decide to invade South Korea.

Similarly, the Soviet Union and the Peoples Republic of China (PRC) were also unclear in their responses to the U.S. landing at Inchon in September 1950. Both led to escalations of the war that might not have occurred had the alliances been better coordinated and had a clearer signal been given to the other side. Another problem with weakly coordinated alliances is that they can lead to competitive escalation among alliance members. Christensen shows that during the 1960s, China and the Soviet Union competed with each other in Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam. Had PRC–Soviet relations been more closely organized, aggressive escalations might not have occurred.

Yet Christensen also argues that sometimes tightly coordinated alliances can also lead to miscalculation. Christensen argues that the explicit U.S. intention of using Japan as the base for anti-communist diplomacy in East Asia led both Beijing and Moscow to overestimate Japan’s likelihood of using force in the region, leading Mao Tse-tung and Joseph Stalin to agree in 1950 that they would support each other in the event of Japanese aggression. Christensen also cites the example of the U.S. creation of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization in 1954. Christensen argues that this caused Mao to increase pressure on Taiwan, including artillery strikes, as a way of deterring the United States from formally concluding a defense pact with Taiwan.

Christensen’s book is an important contribution to the burgeoning literature on East Asian security. He provides a counterintuitive theoretical claim that alliance cohesion may be more stable than alliance disunity, and provides deeply researched evidence from the Cold War in East Asia to back up his claims. Careful, thoughtful, and always stimulating, this book will be an important addition to our understanding of historical and contemporary problems in East Asian security.

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China in 2020: A New Type of Superpower by Hu Angang. Washington, DC, Brookings Institution Press, 2011. 208 pp. \$32.95.

Writing about the rise of China and what this means for the rest of the world has become a cottage industry outside of China. Virtually all of these books, however, have been written by non-Chinese, not that one has to be Chinese to be able to understand contemporary China and engage in informed speculation about that country’s future and its implications for the planet. Nevertheless, the opinions and ideas of most Chinese authors on these subjects tend to be inaccessible to non-Chinese speakers. The Brookings Institution has done a great service by selecting some of the most interesting and influential Chinese intellectuals and translating their writings into English in its “Chinese Thinkers Series.”

China in 2020 is written by Hu Angang (no relation to China's head of state Hu Jintao), a professor at Qinghua University in Beijing. A leading intellectual and adviser to Chinese leaders, Hu has written extensively about his country's challenges. He provides fascinating analysis of China's current challenges and sketches out his own vision of the future. Hu is clear-eyed when analyzing the daunting problems faced by his country but dons rose-colored glasses when peering into the future. He is sober and comprehensive when cataloging these economic, political, demographic, technological, and environmental problems. But when he looks to the future, Hu is an incurable optimist. He assumes an important caveat—continued “social and political stability” inside China and astute decision-making in Beijing (p. 45).

Hu is hardly an impartial observer. However, it is precisely because the author is so involved in the lively debates within China about the country's future trajectory that this book is of great value to readers outside China. Hu's buoyant optimism about China will probably resonate with American readers. Convinced of “Chinese exceptionalism,” Hu believes that China is uniquely equipped to surmount its plethora of problems and arise as a shining beacon and powerful example to the rest of the world. Nevertheless, a degree of doubt emerges. Although at the outset, he writes confidently that “China will be a mature, responsible, and attractive superpower” and “by 2020, overtake the United States” (pp. 12, 23), by the final chapter, Hu appears less absolute about his prognostications, remarking that whether China becomes a superpower by 2020 “is a scenario still rife with uncertainty” (p. 157).

Hu uses statistics and careful analysis to examine China's political and economic development. Western-educated social scientists tend to assume that there is no alternative to such approaches, so when the author highlights “seeking truth from facts” as a “conceptual innovation” of Deng Xiaoping (pp. 32–33), readers may be puzzled that Hu appears to be stating the obvious. But as Brookings Senior Fellow Cheng Li explains in his interpretive introduction, Hu was among the first wave of students to graduate from college after the Cultural Revolution and was a Chinese pioneer in empirical social science research.

The diversity of views in China today means that Hu's opinions should not be taken as representative of thinking on any of the topics he examines. Indeed, they should be read as only one of many—albeit a very influential one—in a broad spectrum of views held by Chinese intellectuals (also noted by Li in his informative introduction). Moreover, readers should keep in mind that while the core of the book is taken from the Chinese language version of the same title published in 2007, it has been revised and expanded by Hu for a foreign audience. While this does not necessarily make the volume any less “authentic,” it does mean that Hu is focused on making his case to an international audience.

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