

constant diplomatic and military intimidation. Beijing's regular menaces have discouraged the island residents from supporting Taiwan's formal separation from China, but have helped to strengthen Taiwanese identity and have hardened the determination of political leaders to resist China's claim to the island.

Finally, a common pitfall that often plagues an edited volume like this is that the chapters lack thematic unity. This volume does not suffer from this weakness as much as one would expect, however, although a clear definition of national identity would certainly strengthen its cohesiveness. Overall, the editor and his colleagues have done an impressive job in explaining the transformation of individual and collective identities throughout Taiwan's history. As such, this book takes a significant step toward the understanding of the Taiwanese national identity and it deserves a place in any major library in comparative politics and international relations.

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The Perils of Protest: State Repression and Student Activism in China and Taiwan. By TERESA WRIGHT. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, March 2001. 232 pages. Cloth: ISBN 0-8248-2348-6, price: US\$45.00; Paper: ISBN 0-8248-2401-6, price: US\$17.95.

Teresa Wright's book, *The Perils of Protest: State Repression and Student Activism in China and Taiwan*, documents quite thoroughly two historic student protests in the development of postwar China and Taiwan. More than a decade after both movements ended, memories have faded and new eras have appeared in both places—characterized by the "prosperous" economy in China and by the "consolidated" democracy in Taiwan. The author's telling of the events, detailing the movements' day-by-day unfoldings, stirs memories of the tales of two cities—Beijing and Taipei—that

have been in the midst of political storms ever since the beginning of the demands for democracy in the early 1980s.

Subscribing to the political process model in social movement studies, Wright closely examines the political transformation both in reform-era China and in post-martial law Taiwan in the hopes of finding clues that would lead researchers to the explanations of the ebb and flow of both cities' student protests. The examination of the political contexts in both Beijing and Taipei is thus intended to make comprehensible the student behaviors during movements that, having to a significant degree shaped the protests, looked "irrational" at first glance. Wright sympathetically explores the students' hesitation, lack of trust, fear, weakness, and power struggles, and correctly contextualizes them within a history of state repression that would make a bitterly-staged finger-pointing and spy-guess game inevitable in any anti-government activity. Wright explicates that the decision to maintain the "purity" of the protest by segregating students from non-student citizens (a policy harshly criticized in both China and Taiwan for its failure to achieve city-wide mobilization) was actually the only "rational" option given the then widely-shared belief that the government would swiftly repress the protests had non-student participants joined the ranks.

The anti-climactic description of the abrupt conclusion of the Beijing student movement on June 4, 1989 is a reflection of Wright's style of storytelling. The "political opportunity structure" model directs her to focus on the political environment and the corresponding organizing problems, instead of aspects of the more sensational final crackdown—including tanks, machine guns, and death toll speculations—that featured prominently in press reports. This focus represents the author's theoretical strength in being able to overcome the moral burden often placed on researchers. Wright is thus able to freely travel into the world of collective action, a realm filled with tedious trivial things that in total make up a tremendously important outcome, digging into historical documents and survivors' testimonies—many of which have still been kept in the shadow even more than a decade after the events.

Perhaps ironically, this very theoretical strength also needs to be put under scrutiny. In the very end of this book, Wright points out that "the

'blame' for the movement's failure may lie not so much in the individual or cultural shortcomings of the protests, but rather in a political environment that rendered effective reform-oriented political protest close to impossible" (p. 137). Despite this disclaimer, Wright implies in the book that the radicalization of some protestors was to blame for the troubles that haunted the movements and undermined organization stability. The moral question thus returns. Wright's obvious preference for moderation and self-control actually comes from the influence of the political opportunity structure model, because radicalization means a rejection of negotiating and maneuvering over any thoughts on a political context. The martyrization of the movement (even though it is often, as Wright contends, an understandable response to an illiberal regime stemming from a kind of unbearable fear among its citizens) pushes the incident to a zero-sum game, and therefore brings to an end its historical mission as a social movement intended to win something of value out of chaos. Although one might not blame it for the movement's failure, the radicalization was definitely one of the dangers during the Beijing student protest, as the book's title suggests.

Wright's comparison with Taiwan thus represents an attempt to provide an example of a relatively successful protest in which the political environment is different. The unfolding of those two student protests, as Wright describes, reveals both the similarity and difference of the political environments in China and Taiwan during the late 1980s. For Wright, the similarity in the political opportunity structures is what makes the two events look so comparable in the beginning, while the difference explains why these two protests were blessed in different ways and why the legacies have varied. The difference is that Taiwan in the late 1980s was simply less repressive: the KMT government had moved further in the direction of liberation, and political control was more relaxed. Wright thus concludes: "As the findings of this book suggest, the political environment may have the most basic and profound impact on the character of a social movement" (p. 137).

It may be true that political context plays a key part in shaping a social movement, but Wright's view of this context as a spectrum ranging from "the most repressive, closed, and political penetrated environments to the

least" offers little but abstract classifications. One would be hard pressed to find a successful social protest in a repressive political environment, Wright contends, because a severely undemocratic regime leads to protest radicalization that in turn disrupts organizing networks, making negotiation impossible. Despite the book's richness, the complex relationship between political context and social movements in a situation like this is simply under-theorized due to political determinism.

Wright's study does raise questions that are important not only for students of social movement theory, but also for many participants in these protests. One query regards the historical assessment of the final dismissal of Taiwan's March 1990 student protest. As a former graduate student from Taiwan's Tsinghua University (清華大學, participants from which were portrayed as radicals in the book), this reviewer still strongly believes that the withdrawal from Taipei's Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall (中正紀念堂) on March 22, 1990 was a mistake (or at least undertaken too early). In fact, the night of the 21st was the most troubling given all the rumors, intimidations, and lack of vision this reviewer encountered on the square. The retreat meant a start of the abandonment of students' accountability as a whole for those influential occurrences that followed the protest. I was not surprised that the student movements lost steam altogether a year after another huge demonstration in Taipei spurred by the arrest of four dissidents—the so-called Dutaihui (獨台會, independent Taiwan society) incident. The immediate legacy of this event was widely believed to be the commencement of the "consolidation era" of Taiwan's democracy. Ironically, one thing I am very sure about is that the only chance we students as a whole had at grabbing the steering wheel—and forcing the island's democracy further down the road of justice and fairness—had slipped away once and for all. Wright suggests that the government's partial concessions to the student demands during the March protest made extreme actions look ridiculous rather than courageous (p. 128). This was true, yet certainly sad.

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