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Conflicts Of The Past As Lessons For The Present

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U.S. RECOGNITION OF TAIWAN

IN THIS ISSUE

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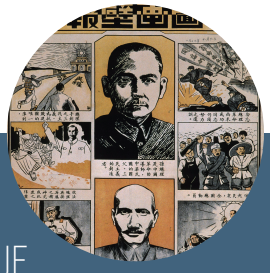

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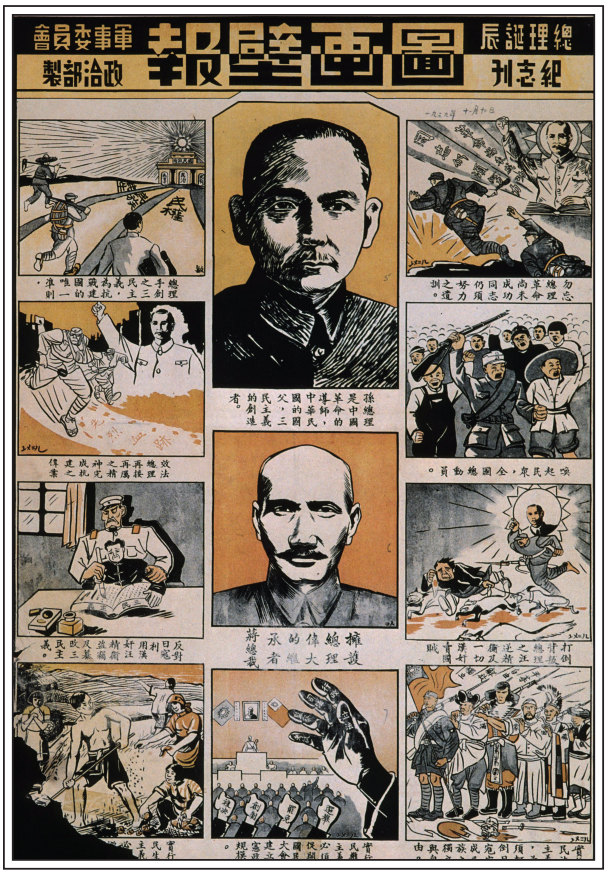
Taiwan: "The Struggle Continues"

By Gordon G. Chang



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"Reunification is a historical inevitability of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation," declared Beijing's Taiwan Affairs Office in May, promoting the idea that Taiwan will be absorbed into the People's Republic of China.

In history, however, there is nothing foreordained, predestined, or inevitable. Just ask Henry Kissinger.

When Chinese premier Zhou Enlai in July 1971 demanded the U.S. recognize Taiwan as "an inalienable part of Chinese territory," Kissinger, while in Beijing, decided not to anger his insistent host. "As a student of history, one's prediction would have to be that the political evolution is likely to be in the direction which Prime Minister Chou En-lai indicated to me," he said to the premier. "We will not stand in the way of basic evolution."

In short, Kissinger thought big China would inevitably take over small Taiwan, thereby removing a stumbling block to Sino-U.S. friendship. The Chinese apparently shared Dr. Kissinger's view of history's next steps. Due to their general alignment of views, the U.S. and China could come together to issue the Shanghai Communique of February 1972.

The American position evolved from that foundational document with, among other things, the enactment of the Taiwan Relations Act of 1979 and the issuance of the Third Communique of 1982 and President Reagan's Six Assurances of the same year. The result was that Washington today recognizes Beijing as the legitimate government of China, acknowledges that Beijing claims Taiwan to be part of the People's Republic, maintains that Taiwan's status is yet to be determined, and insists that any resolution of Taiwan's status have the support of the people of Taiwan. American policy, it is evident, still bears the hallmarks of Kissinger's "creative ambiguity."

"Ambiguity" pervades America's approach to Taiwan. Today, Washington's policy is said to be one of "strategic ambiguity," in other words, not telling either Beijing or Taipei what the U.S. will do. The idea is that America should keep Chinese aggressors guessing as to whether it will defend the island republic. The policy, despite lacking needed clarity, has obviously worked until now.

That policy, however, worked in an unusually benign period. During the latter stages of the Cold War, two Chinese leaders, Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping, looked to the U.S., Taiwan's protector, to keep the Soviet Union at bay. Beijing, therefore, considered an invasion of Taiwan to be out of the question. Moreover, their next two successors, Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao, needed U.S. money, technology, and geopolitical support. They were not about to upset an unusually favorable external environment by moving on Taiwan's territory.

Unfortunately, the following Chinese leader, the current one, has made taking Taiwan a priority. Xi Jinping, far more determined than his predecessors, has, accordingly, launched an assault on Taiwan's freedom, democracy, and sovereignty.

In October 2013, within a year of becoming China's supreme leader, he stated Beijing would not wait indefinitely to take over Taiwan. "We cannot hand those problems down from generation to generation," Xi said

to a Taiwan political figure on the sidelines of a regional meeting. In January of last year, he once again sounded the theme of inevitability by urging Taiwan's people to accept that their island "must and will surely be" reunited with the motherland. Some China watchers believe Xi, who serves as the chairman of the Communist Party's Central Military Commission, has promised the People's Liberation Army that he will take Taiwan by the time his rule ends. Others say he has pledged to absorb the island this decade.

Unfortunately, there are now factors pushing Beijing to act soon.

For decades, during the rule in Taiwan by the Kuomintang or Nationalist Party, Chinese communist leaders in the "mainland" were not under time pressure. Then, Taiwan's leaders maintained they would cross the Taiwan Strait, defeat the Communist Party, and again rule China, vindicating Chiang Kai-shek, who suffered defeat in 1949 in the civil war at the hands of Mao Zedong. Even today, Taiwan's formal name is the Republic of China. Taipei, in short, is only a temporary capital in the Kuomintang's view.

In a strange way, the Communist Party was comfortable with the KMT, as the Kuomintang is known. Both ruling groups felt Taiwan and the "mainland" were part of a single nation, China, and both considered themselves "Chinese." It also helped that the Communist Party and the Kuomintang shared Leninist roots.

The days of Beijing's comfort are over, however, because Taiwan democratized, Tsai Ing-wen sits in the Presidential Office Building in Taiwan, and her Democratic Progressive Party is riding a historical wave of its own. Her supporters by and large think their country is not China but "Taiwan."

This conception of two separate countries is grounded in self-identity, and Beijing can see that Taiwanese identity in the island republic is strong and growing stronger. For instance, a poll released in February shows 83.2 percent view themselves as Taiwanese-only. Only 5.3 percent of the population call themselves Chinese-only. The Taiwanese-only percentage has increased by more than ten percentage points in the last couple years.

In any event, people on the island have over time come to think of their society as separate and apart from China. And it is a society that inspires pride among its twenty-four million citizens. "Kissinger, who has never visited Taiwan, never understood the vitality of that beautiful island," Stephen Young, a former director of the American Institute in Taiwan, America's de facto embassy in Taipei, told me.

In short, Beijing must be seeing Taiwan slipping away.

The island is slipping away fast, and not only because of political and social developments inside the island republic. Deng Xiaoping originally developed the "one country, two systems" formula for Taiwan, but China imposed it first in Hong Kong. As Chinese leaders have violated promises and smothered Hong Kong, 1C2S, as the plan is known, has become poison in Taiwan.

"Today's Hong Kong, tomorrow's Taiwan" has become the rallying cry of young Taiwanese. The 1C2S idea has united most of Taiwan, including some in the modern-day Kuomintang, against Beijing.

The generally pro-China Kuomintang recently had a shot of recovering the presidency—until Beijing's recent meddling in Hong Kong got in the way. Last year, President Tsai, completing her first term as president, looked as if she would not even get her party's nomination for another run. Yet Beijing's attempts to impose an extradition bill, triggering large protests in Hong Kong, assured her the nomination, especially when she declared she would never accept 1C2S. In January, she won reelection in a landslide, capturing 57.1 percent of the vote in what was essentially a three-candidate race.

Taiwanese activists, who gravitate to the Democratic Progressive Party and its allies, are not content with Tsai's resounding victory, nor are they happy with a continuation of the status quo. "Taiwan is a country, but it is not normal," Mark Kao, who has been fighting for Taiwan democracy since the late 1970s, told me in May. He would like Tsai to declare "independence." By that he means change the name of the country to "Taiwan," drop outdated claims to mainland China, and "then fight like East Timor." "The struggle continues," Kao says.

At the moment, only fifteen nations recognize Taiwan diplomatically. If the island follows Kao's suggestion, would Taipei pick up recognition? And should Washington recognize Taipei as the capital of, say, a Republic of Taiwan?

Beijing would launch a tirade and surely threaten war over American diplomatic recognition, but it is unlikely to take on the United States, especially if Washington inked a mutual defense treaty with the new Taiwan republic.

America has an interest in recognizing Taiwan. For one thing, Washington's current policy is unsustainable. As China historian Arthur Waldron of the University of Pennsylvania told me a few years ago, President Reagan, unlike others around him, understood that Kissinger had announced "a blueprint for a house that could not be built." Simply stated, Nixon's adviser could not build an enduring relationship with Beijing and at the same time maintain American credibility in the world and honor American values.

Beijing has been unrelentingly attacking American values and democracy in recent months, and the U.S. cannot afford to allow Xi Jinping to take over any democratic state, especially one as important as Taiwan.

Moreover, for more than a century the United States has drawn its western defense perimeter off the coast of East Asia, and Taiwan sits at the center of that crucial line, at the intersection of the South China Sea and East China Sea. It is not "the turd in the punchbowl of U.S.-China relations" as an American admiral was reported to have said; it is "the cork in the bottle," as Admiral Ernest King termed it. Taiwan helps keep China's navy and air force confined to the country's peripheral areas. At a time of increasing Chinese territorial aggression, Taiwan's role in anchoring America's western defense perimeter is critical.

Furthermore, Americans should view Taiwan as more than a complication in relations with Beijing, Kissinger's view of the island. "We need to see this new and vibrantly democratic Taiwan in its own right and its own light, and not always perceive it as a sensitive subset of U.S.-China relations," Gerrit van der Wees, who teaches Taiwan history at George Mason University, told me recently. "Of course, one has to clearly consider repercussions from the Chinese side, but these don't always need to come front and center."

One American president had the foresight to adopt the right approach. "I call for a detailed program of specific guarantees to our friends and allies on Taiwan," said Ronald Reagan in 1979. America, he argued, should have "a long-range program with clear and unmistakable language; one which will earn and retain the support of the American people and which will help to restore the trust and confidence of the world in an America which once again conducts itself in accordance with its own high ideals."

Reagan's ideals, unlike those of history student Kissinger, are ones Americans understand, and they are realizing that accommodation with a belligerent China is neither possible nor desirable.

The United States, therefore, should immediately put an end to notions of Chinese rule over Taiwan, for the benefit of that island but also for itself. "Reunification," despite what Chinese leaders say from time to time, is not "a historical inevitability."

Gordon G. Chang is the author of *The Coming Collapse of China, Nuclear Showdown: North Korea Takes On the World*, and the just-released *Losing South Korea*. Chang lived and worked in China and Hong Kong for almost two decades. He is a columnist at the *Daily Beast* and also writes regularly for *The National Interest*. Chang has given numerous briefings at the National Intelligence Council, the CIA, the State Department, U.S. Strategic Command, and the Pentagon. Chang frequently appears on CNN, Fox News Channel, Fox Business Network, Bloomberg, CNBC, and MSNBC, and PBS. He is a regular co-host and guest on The John Batchelor Show. He has served two terms as trustee of Cornell University.

Image credit: Poster Collection, KO 40, Hoover Institution Archives.

Recognize Taiwan

By Seth Cropsey

On 12 May, New Zealand foreign affairs minister Winston Peters stated that his nation will support Taiwan's inclusion in the World Health Assembly at the organization's meeting the following week. The Assembly governs the World Health Organization, the international body tasked with fighting pandemics like COVID-19. China has excluded Taiwan from the WHA since 2017, after participating in sessions as an observer since 2009.

Today, Taiwan has conducted one of the world's most effective COVID-19 containment campaigns, limiting cases to under five hundred, and deaths to just seven. Taiwan's experience would be invaluable in fighting the pandemic in other contexts—it has boosted production of PPE and sanitizer by leveraging indigenous private industry and developed a broadly noninvasive tracking system that has isolated exposed individuals. Any balanced evaluation of the facts would result in Taiwanese admission to the WHA to leverage its lessons and apply them globally.

The complication, of course, is that the Republic of China is a liberal capitalist democracy with a standard of living equivalent to any Western state, whereas the *People's Republic* is a tyrannical oligarchy that brutalizes its own citizens and brooks no political dissent. A Taiwan with full access to international institutions and broad global recognition presents an alternative to Maoist totalitarianism, or "Socialism with Chinese Characteristics" as current ruler-cum-emperor Xi Jinping has rebranded it.

One should not expect any ruling party in Taipei to replace the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in Beijing and govern China as a single political unit. But the Taiwanese model provides a strong argument for a federated system within Chinese territory. Hong Kong could reclaim its semiautonomous status, with the individual and political liberties Hong Kongers were afforded for nearly a century. Muslims in East Turkestan could live without fear of targeted persecution, organizing their affairs without Beijing's unsleeping eye and heavy hand. The CCP loses its legitimacy if the Chinese people more broadly realize that an alternative system—neither explicitly Western nor Maoist—could offer them greater freedom than the current model without sacrificing prosperity or stability.

Hence the Beijing government's paranoia about, and antipathy towards Taiwan, and its attempts to isolate it from the international system. Since 2016, the PRC has bribed Taiwan's formal diplomatic partners down to fifteen. In Europe, only the Vatican recognizes Taipei over Beijing. In Africa, landlocked Eswatini is Taiwan's only friend. Paraguay is its only ally in South America—the remaining twelve nations are small Central American states or islands. Taiwan does maintain an "Economic and Cultural Representative Office" in most Western European states, parts of Asia, the U.S., Canada, Mexico, and elsewhere. Nevertheless, 120 states and affiliated territories lack any formal or informal diplomatic contact with Taiwan. Seven EU members, and eight NATO members, do not recognize Taiwan.

The latter point asks the question—how can the U.S. invoke NATO's Article Five in an Asian contingency over Taiwan, a nation with whom over a quarter of NATO members do not have diplomatic relations, and none of which recognize?

The United States engineered Beijing's international recognition between 1969 and 1972 because of a specific confluence of strategic circumstances. Henry Kissinger, national security adviser at the time, identified increasing friction between China and the Soviet Union that had functionally split the communist bloc in two. By "opening" to China, Kissinger and President Richard Nixon hoped to smooth American extrication

from Vietnam and tilt the geopolitical balance in the West's favor by mitigating the importance of Asian contingencies and truly surrounding Moscow with hostile states. To this end, the U.S. facilitated the PRC's United Nations recognition in 1971, and ultimately recognized Beijing over Taipei in 1979.

The Sino-American strategic partnership did facilitate American goals throughout the 1980s. President Reagan's military buildup pressured the Soviet Union on multiple fronts, while a tacit Sino-American entente exposed the USSR's Asian flanks and cut it off from its greatest potential ally. But by 1989—even before the Berlin Wall fell—it became apparent that the Soviet Union was nearing collapse. Nevertheless, Western policy makers denied the Beijing regime's ruthlessness even after the "moderate" Deng Xiaoping murdered three thousand pro-democracy protestors, many of them students, at Tiananmen Square. A broad bipartisan and transatlantic hope developed that integrating China into international economic institutions and increasing trade ties would prompt market reforms, which in turn would drive social and political liberalization and democratization. In a postmodern age, financial wizardry and commercial attraction would transform an erstwhile international pariah into a liberal member of the global capitalist supply chain.

Hope is a questionable foundation for foreign policy. This proposition was incorrect in every respect. The CCP has neither liberalized nor democratized, instead obfuscating its control of nominally private entities, creating a robust surveillance system backed by a 1.5-million strong internal army, and conducting a military buildup reminiscent of the twentieth-century's fascist and imperialist powers that caused the greatest loss of life in human history.

The strategic conditions that validated the West's recognition of Beijing have evaporated. The CCP shows no intention of "triangulating" against Russia—and while Moscow likely fears Beijing's ambitions, it has been content to nibble upon Europe's carcass. COVID-19 has demonstrated the Beijing regime's duplicity and malice. No government of this sort deserves American recognition, let alone a controlling stake in major international economic, public health, and political institutions.

The United States would send a strong international message by moving to recognize Taiwan. This decision will enrage the CCP. But by recognizing and legitimizing an autonomous or independent Taiwan, the U.S. can bolster Taiwan's clearly anti-Beijing Pan-Green Coalition, while encouraging their political opposition, the Pan-Blue Coalition, to reexamine its hopes of accommodation with the PRC. Moreover, by making various forms of economic and political assistance contingent upon certain standards—perhaps the establishment of unofficial relations with the Republic of China, or in certain circumstances formal diplomatic recognition—the U.S. can begin to curb Beijing's international network of client-colonies.

Rhetorically, however, recognition of Taiwan would send a powerful political message. The past forty years of American—and Western—China policy has failed. The Beijing regime is no more tolerable in 2020 than it was in 1950, or 1989: it is, however, far richer as it continues to build a military equal to its global ambition. Taiwan is democratic, prosperous, and free. Not all nations are equal, despite the pretentions of the UN General Assembly. Recognizing Taiwan presents a rare opportunity to align American values at home and interests abroad.

Seth Cropsey is a senior fellow at Hudson Institute and director of Hudson's Center for American Seapower. He began his career in government at the Defense Department as assistant to Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger and subsequently served as Deputy Undersecretary of the Navy where he was responsible for the Navy's opposition to defense reorganization, development of the maritime strategy, and naval special operations. In the Bush administration, Cropsey served as acting Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations. Cropsey served as a naval officer from 1985–2004. His articles have been published in *Commentary*, *Foreign Affairs*, *The Weekly Standard*, *The National Interest*, the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Washington Post*, and other national journals.

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Taiwan

By John Yoo and Robert Delahunty

As the confrontation between the United States and China intensifies, Taiwan will occupy a pivotal place. Since becoming the site of the exiled Nationalist Chinese government after the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) conquest of mainland China in 1949, the island state has become a flourishing and prosperous liberal democracy boasting the twenty-first-largest economy in the world.

But considering Taiwan to be an integral part of China, the CCP has announced its intention of incorporating Taiwan by 2049. As part of the Carter administration's recognition of the CCP as the government of the mainland, the U.S. endorsed a One China policy, while leaving the terms of the eventual unification to China and Taiwan themselves. Thus far, Taiwan has repelled the CCP's unwelcome embrace.

Rather than bend to China's pressure on Taiwan, the United States should consider rebuilding its military and political ties to the island. Taiwan, which General Douglas MacArthur once called "an unsinkable aircraft carrier," occupies a vital strategic position in the region. Not only does it sit 100 miles off the Chinese mainland, but it is also 200 miles from the Philippines, 700 miles from Japan, and 900 miles from Vietnam. Taiwan plays the forward position in the "first island chain" (running from Japan, through the Ryuku Islands, the Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia, and on to Australia) that can hem in the Chinese Navy if it seeks to break out to deeper Pacific waters.

Conversely, allowing the CCP to possess Taiwan would inflict a serious strategic blow to the United States. Beijing would gain an advanced economy, a base for its thousands of ballistic missiles, and a deep-water port from which to project power into the midst of America's regional allies. The CCP could easily control the sea lanes through which passes one-third of the world's shipping, threaten the ability of the U.S. Seventh Fleet to operate, and make military assistance for Japan, Korea, and Vietnam difficult.

But Taiwan has equal importance as a political, social, and economic symbol of a free Chinese people. Nothing in China's long history or experience requires that it must fall subject to a brutal one-party dictatorship. Taiwan, together with Singapore and (before the CCP took it over) Hong Kong, proves that an authentically Chinese society rooted in Confucian traditions can live side-by-side with a constitutional democracy that protects individual rights and free markets. Taipei, not Beijing, can serve as the model for a future unified and democratic China.

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic only highlights the differences between Taiwanese democracy and the CCP's authoritarianism. A mass of evidence shows that Beijing covered up the outbreak, suppressed researchers and doctors who tried to raise the alarm, and even allowed travelers from Wuhan to fly to the rest of the world even while quarantining them within China. By contrast, Taiwanese officials closely monitored the outbreak on the mainland, quickly shut off travel, and instituted a strict testing and contact tracing regime. In a country of twenty-three million, the Taipei government has limited the coronavirus to only 440 cases and seven deaths. Taiwan, not the CCP, has proven itself as a reliable, transparent partner for international cooperation in facing the world's deadliest problems, from global pandemics to North Korea's nuclear weapons. If a free, democratic

regime ruled the mainland, it would benefit not only the people of China but also the rest of the world.

Washington should reconsider whether to welcome an independent Taiwan back into the common defense of free nations from a rising China. The U.S. can also promote the recognition that Taiwan, not the CCP, is the true heir of four thousand years of Chinese civilization. The CCP seeks to absorb a Taiwan whose very existence preserves the memory of the Chinese past. Taiwan's survival keeps alive the memory of the CCP's failures against Japan (the Communist Army fought only one major battle against the Japanese) and the horrors of Mao's Great Leap Forward (Frank Dikotter estimates about forty-five million died) and Cultural Revolution. The CCP wants to obliterate all recollection of its appalling past. But the real interests of the Chinese people, and of the world at large, require clear-eyed recognition of the CCP's often disastrous impact on Chinese history. Unless the CCP is forced into an honest confrontation with its past, its paranoia about the outside world and its resistance to an open society in China will only grow.

POLL: Should the U.S. now recognize Taiwan?

- ☐ It's too dangerous: China might invade Taiwan.
- ☐ Why ally with a country we can't defend?
- ☐ We should bundle Taiwan into an alliance of frontline anti-China free nations.
- ☐ The U.S. should step up its armament of Taiwan.
- ☐ Taiwan should be beneath the U.S. nuclear umbrella.

JOHN YOO is a visiting fellow at the Hoover Institution, Emanuel S. Heller Professor of Law at the University of California–Berkeley School of Law, and a visiting scholar at the American Enterprise Institute. His most recent book is *Defender in Chief: Donald Trump's Fight for Presidential Power* (St. Martin's, 2020).

ROBERT DELAHUNTY is the Le Jeune Professor of Law at the University of St. Thomas in Minneapolis and a former official in the U.S. Department of Justice and the White House.

Discussion Questions

1. Should the U.S. now recognize Taiwan?
2. Could Taiwan repel an invasion from the mainland?
3. Would Japan or South Korea come to Taiwan's aid?
4. Does the killing of Hong Kong democracy bolster or deflate Taiwanese resistance?
5. Which of China's neighbors does the U.S. need to defend, and which are impossible to do so?

Suggestions for Further Reading

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- Shelley Rigger, *Why Taiwan Matters: Small Island, Global Powerhouse* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2013). https://rowman.com/isbn/9781442204805/why-taiwan-matters-small-island-global-powerhouse-updated-edition


IN THE NEXT ISSUE

The Status of the EU

Military History in Contemporary Conflict

As the very name of Hoover Institution attests, military history lies at the very core of our dedication to the study of "War, Revolution, and Peace." Indeed, the precise mission statement of the Hoover Institution includes the following promise: "The overall mission of this Institution is, from its records, to recall the voice of experience against the making of war, and by the study of these records and their publication, to recall man's endeavors to make and preserve peace, and to sustain for America the safeguards of the American way of life." From its origins as a library and archive, the Hoover Institution has evolved into one of the foremost research centers in the world for policy formation and pragmatic analysis. It is with this tradition in mind, that the "Working Group on the Role of Military History in Contemporary Conflict" has set its agenda—reaffirming the Hoover Institution's dedication to historical research in light of contemporary challenges, and in particular, reinvigorating the national study of military history as an asset to foster and enhance our national security. By bringing together a diverse group of distinguished military historians, security analysts, and military veterans and practitioners, the working group seeks to examine the conflicts of the past as critical lessons for the present.

Working Group on the Role of Military History in Contemporary Conflict

The Working Group on the Role of Military History in Contemporary Conflict examines how knowledge of past military operations can influence contemporary public policy decisions concerning current conflicts. The careful study of military history offers a way of analyzing modern war and peace that is often underappreciated in this age of technological determinism. Yet the result leads to a more in-depth and dispassionate understanding of contemporary wars, one that explains how particular military successes and failures of the past can be often germane, sometimes misunderstood, or occasionally irrelevant in the context of the present.

Strategika

Strategika is a journal that analyzes ongoing issues of national security in light of conflicts of the past—the efforts of the Military History Working Group of historians, analysts, and military personnel focusing on military history and contemporary conflict. Our board of scholars shares no ideological consensus other than a general acknowledgment that human nature is largely unchanging. Consequently, the study of past wars can offer us tragic guidance about present conflicts—a preferable approach to the more popular therapeutic assumption that contemporary efforts to ensure the perfectibility of mankind eventually will lead to eternal peace. New technologies, methodologies, and protocols come and go; the larger tactical and strategic assumptions that guide them remain mostly the same—a fact discernable only through the study of history.

Hoover Institution, Stanford University
434 Galvez Mall
Stanford, CA 94305-6003
650-723-1754

Hoover Institution in Washington
The Johnson Center
1399 New York Avenue NW, Suite 500
Washington, DC 20005
202-760-3200

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