Lasater, who has written extensively on Taiwan, particularly its security problems and its relations with the U.S., handles deftly the monumental change Taiwan has experienced in recent years and its implications both domestically and vis-à-vis China and the United States. He argues that Taiwan's impact on the United States will continue to grow, making it necessary for America to make adjustments. He notes that 1989 was a watershed year in that Beijing and Taipei took big steps in different directions in terms of democratization, with Beijing regressing after the Tiananmen Massacre and Taipei moving forward with a democratic election.

While the author sees good things in the increasing contacts between Taiwan and China—noting that Taiwan has a beneficial influence on China, playing the role of a model for both a market economy and democratic political development—he also sees difficulties insofar as democracy in Taiwan evokes ethnic divisions and proposals for independence. Though the United States is generally sympathetic about calls for self-determination, when it is translated into independence from China (though meaning the same thing), Lasater says, it may provoke Beijing and it violates Washington’s one-China policy.

Lasater anticipates, and favors, changes in U.S. policy that recognize and even encourage Taiwan to play a larger global role. He does not, however, favor any major shift in U.S. China policy. In the opinion of this reviewer, while this may be possible to manage, at least in the short run, it may present some real difficulties for the United States in terms of keeping a balance of power in the region, which America seems to perceive it can no longer afford and which Beijing apparently does not favor and may challenge. Similarly, it is difficult to see how Washington will be able to promote Taiwan internationally without undermining its own one-China ideal.

Lasater’s optimism seems to stem in considerable part from Beijing’s predicament: threatening or putting pressure on Taiwan plays into the hands of those calling for independence. Yet one must wonder if such logic will prevail during a future factional struggle (like occurred in China in 1983, 1986-87 and in 1989) or in a succession crisis. Lasater doesn’t give much space to assessing the matter of the Chinese leadership as a factor in U.S. Taiwan policy, which is a minor hiatus in an otherwise comprehensive look at a host of variables.

Readers will, of course, notice that some of Lasater’s assessments have been overtaken by time. That, however, is not Lasater’s fault; change is so rapid in Taiwan that even a year makes a big difference. Also, at the time he did his writing—1992—it was difficult to predict the Clinton Administration’s views on foreign policy—and still is.

U.S. Interests in the New Taiwan is well researched and well written. The author does a superb job in linking two topics that are not easy to link: change in Taiwan and United States foreign policy. Both his analysis and his recommendations need to be taken seriously.

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Many Americans assess the actions of the Japanese prime minister in the context of the American presidency. The belief that the Japanese prime minister has the same
capacity to deliver on his commitments as the American president has at times led to dashed expectations and a sense of being betrayed. The relationship between the United States and Japan is too important to be based on such faulty perceptions. Kenji Hayao’s work cuts through these misperceptions to provide us with a clearer vision of the factors that shape the influence on public policy of the Japanese prime minister.

Hayao’s book opens with a discussion of three types of leadership: political, technocratic, and reactive. Political leadership denotes a significant effort on the part of the prime minister to define policy goals and implementation mechanisms. Technocratic leadership refers to a situation in which the prime minister helps build a consensus around a general goal but defers to the bureaucracy to design policy and implementation specifics. Reactive leadership occurs when the prime minister responds to an already salient issue to facilitate its resolution without promoting any specific means or ends. Explicit within this discussion is Hayao’s contention that the Japanese prime minister’s leadership is typically reactive.

Chapters 3 and 4 present case studies to demonstrate that not even Japan’s most dynamic post-war prime minister, Nakasone (1982-1987), was able to significantly change the leadership role of the prime minister. Hayao’s examination of Nakasone’s educational and tax reform proposals results in three primary insights. First, Nakasone latched on to the issues more to promote his own political fortunes than to initiate a change in policy. Second, Nakasone’s success depended heavily on having close political allies in key positions who already strongly supported the proposed policy. Third, Nakasone was rarely able to overcome opposition within his own party and/or the bureaucracy.

Hayao seeks to explain the limited success of Nakasone and the generally reactive nature of the Japanese prime minister by focusing on four general factors: the process of selecting the prime minister, party politics, the prime minister’s relations with other governmental units, and the resources of the Prime Minister’s Office. In Chapter 5, Hayao recounts the path to the prime ministership by way of the presidency of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). Only after years of loyal service to the party, he contends, can one hope to aspire to lead the LDP and head the government of Japan. Hayao concludes that the selection process favors the low profile organization man over the charismatic innovator.

The tendency towards reactive leadership is reinforced, according to Hayao, by the factional divisions within the major parties, and the difficulty of cooperation across party lines. In Chapter 6, he notes in particular the need of the successful aspirant to placate the other faction leaders with money and positions in the cabinet. Thus the cabinet is not composed of the prime minister’s men, but rather his chief rivals or their representatives. In a similar manner the prime minister must face a legislative process in which the control of key committees is in the hands of rivals within his own party or the opposition parties.

In Chapter 7, Hayao attempts to explain the relative inability of the prime minister to extend his influence beyond the tip of the Japanese bureaucracy. Bureaucratic sectionalism is given as the primary reason. On the one hand a specific ministry may have ties to one of the prime minister’s powerful rivals, and on the other it may have ties to a segment of Japanese society that the prime minister dare not anger. In either case the prime minister’s options are limited. While a significant increase in the prime minister’s appointment powers would help, it would not solve the problem.

A useful breakdown of the structure of the Prime Minister’s Office is presented in Chapter 8. The structure itself would seem to give the prime minister access to the key