execution of suspected traitors" (p. 114). Missing is identification of the specific leaders/elites that gained or asserted control of the organization, how they manoeuvred to co-opt or build alliances with leaders of those organizations and, then, how they manipulated the behaviour of the organizations. This pattern of interchanging organizations for the leaders in charge of the organizations re-emerges repeatedly during Guo's examination of Hua Guofeng's, Deng Xiaoping's, Jiang Zemin's and Hu Jintao's relationships with security organizations following Mao's death.

On the positive side, Guo has made excellent use of memoirs published by participants that provide unique insights into historical events, as well as into the organization, evolution and functions of various security and intelligence agencies involved. These personal recollections, often by individuals victimized, then rehabilitated, shed light on the more narrow, time-specific details of the organizational history while feeding into the description of the broader evolution of the various agencies. This is useful in describing developments during the early days of the People's Republic through the Cultural Revolution, particularly as various elites crossed swords and lost to Mao's machinations.

Overall, my assessment is that Guo does not succeed in producing a readable examination of China's security system. The reader must know the subject associated with the Chinese military, intelligence and security apparatuses well, then review carefully the sourcing and accompanying analysis, and work hard to find the diamonds therein.

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Democracy on Trial: Social Movements and Cultural Politics in Postauthoritarian Taiwan
YA-CHUNG CHUANG
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Among Chinese societies, Taiwan has been the only one to witness peaceful power transfer by election, and yet its democratic experience receives contrasting appraisals both abroad and domestically. For authoritarian rulers in China and Singapore, Taiwan exemplifies the negative lesson of empowering people, since it seems to be synonymous with political instability, prolonged decision-making and economic inefficiency. NGO activists in Hong Kong and Malaysia and liberals in China, on the other hand, look favourably at Taiwan's vibrant civil society, which has brought about progressive reforms. At home, there is a pervasive sense of ambivalence among average citizens, who cherish their political freedom and yet resent overtly partisan politicking. While a solid Taiwanese national identity is on the steady rise (from 17.6 per cent in 1992 to 57.5 per cent in 2013, according to the Election Study Center, National Chengchi University), the political landscape is relentlessly fissured by the power struggle between pan-blue and pan-green camps.

Democracy on Trial is a timely reflection on Taiwan's trajectory from the lifting of martial law in 1987 up to the present day. While political scientists and sociologists use opinion polls, indicators and statistical data on civic organizations and protest events to measure the health of a political regime, Chuang, who comes from the anthropological background, offers a bottom-up and experience-near "ethnography

of Taiwanese democracy" (p. 3). Rather than assuming a fictionalized observation point from the outside, Chuang writes as an engaged activist and participant scholar. The book is written primarily on the basis of his field observation which has lasted more than a decade. Conventional scholarship focuses on the actual working of political institutions, and is occasionally concerned about their economic performance and the state–society relationship. *Democracy on Trial* broadens the analytical scope by incorporating the topics of movement activists' interpersonal ties (chapter two), everyday world of TV and radio audiences (chapter three), intellectuals' debates (chapter four), ethnic activism (chapter five) and urban neighbourhood (chapters six and seven).

Cultural anthropology has long bidden farewell to the notion of positivistic ethnography and the possibility of realistic representation. Following this trend, this book seeks to understand Taiwan's recent political history through the personal stories of a number of actors, including the author himself. The narrative is intimately biographical as well as autobiographical, and frequently sprinkled with conceptual reflections from the cutting-edge cultural theories, as expected in the contemporary ethnographical works. *Democracy on Trial* offers an intellectual challenge to the readers who might prefer objectivist language and a more structuralistic approach. However, I find the author justified in adopting this unorthodox method. This book does not aim at measuring Taiwan in the Freedom-House-style indexes, nor does it seek to assess its "quality of democracy" or classify its "political culture." Instead, it is intended as a thick description of how ordinary people experience democracy in their daily milieu. In some places, this unique approach generates insightful observation. In documenting the great 18 May 1997 protest, Chuang demonstrates that the unprecedented mobilization was made possible by the overlapping personal webs forged in the heyday of student activism, rather than the NGO's organizational strength.

Overall, Chuang succeeds in presenting a contextually rich picture of real-life democracy. For example, for Yongkang residents engaged in neighbourhood activism in Taipei city, democracy has been experienced both as an opportunity and a risk (chapters six and seven). The waning of authoritarian control allowed them to launch a grassroots initiative to preserve their environment and build an egalitarian and participatory sense of belonging. However, political rivalry in local elections and the drive to commercialize the area for tourism created unexpected internal conflict, which eventually eclipsed shared community identity. Also noteworthy is the prominent role of females in organizing their community and their attempt to redesign the public environment according to the vision of "collective motherhood." The emergence of new gender relations on the agenda of Taiwan's democratic experiment has been easily neglected.

This book challenges received wisdom in a number of places. Media has been long blamed for exacerbating polarized partisanship; yet the author finds TV talk shows and underground radio stations have helped to "normalize a talking public." It would have been better if Chuang had expanded his observation on new media, such as blogs, online forums and social media, which have played such an important role in recent political mobilization. Chuang rightly sees the politics of indigenization (*bentuhua*) not merely as ethnic conflict or partisan struggle, but also as reverberating within the debates of intellectuals and movement activism. The pursuit of an indigenous identity is richer and more reflective than a nationalistic project. Although Chuang salvages the progressive and democratic potentials of *bentu* convincingly, the book misleadingly uses the derogatory term nativism (for being anti-foreign) as an equivalent with indigenization.

Rejecting naive triumphalism and picky pessimism, this book presents a nuanced understanding of Taiwan's democracy as tentative, experimental and reflective. The book concludes with a nice reflection on the China factor. Whether Taiwan's political freedom will be squeezed by an increasingly hegemonic China, or its experience will be a lodestar to inspire a challenge to communist domination, remains to be seen; democracy is essentially on-going and unfinished. *Democracy on Trial* is highly recommended for those who are interested in deeper meanings and daily experiences of democracy, in Taiwan and elsewhere.

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The Great Rebalancing: Trade, Conflict, and the Perilous Road Ahead for the World Economy
MICHAEL PETTIS
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Michael Pettis is a former Wall Street banker, Latin America specialist and hedge-fund manager. Currently a finance professor at Peking University, he has become over the last few years one of the most sought after commentators on the Chinese economy in the Western media. Pettis's most recent book commendably avoids turgid academic language and should be readily understood by non-specialists. It is a highly readable summation of the many complex ideas on the global economy that he has been disseminating in interviews and through his blog since arriving in China some ten years ago.

The Great Rebalancing is divided into nine chapters, beginning with an exploration of the root causes of the 2008 financial meltdown. The next two chapters are a theoretical exposition on the long-term impact of international trade imbalances, and the many forms of trade intervention that exist. Chapter four recapitulates how the Chinese economy has come thus far; to what extent its development model can be considered historically unique, and why both internal and external imbalances mean it will not be able to sustain high growth rates any longer. Chapters five and six broaden the scope of discussion with an ambitious prognosis of the Eurozone crisis, how it is linked to China, and where the blame for it lies. Chapter seven reinforces Pettis's advice throughout previous chapters to look at the "real" economy rather than at the financial one in pursuit of solutions: international trade imbalances created by domestic investment incentives result in Chinese, Japanese and German overproduction; by the same token, they drive up commodity prices and create bubbles in "quarry" economies like Australia's and Latin America's.

The last two chapters are much bolder than one might expect to find in more academic books, since Pettis explicitly ventures a prediction about the directions the RMB, Euro, Yen and US dollar will take over the next few years, and precisely how the EU, Chinese and Japanese economies will fare against the US economy in relative terms.

Popular literature has to some extent come to associate the global financial crisis with greedy Wall Street bankers and neo-liberal under-regulation. It has similarly cast Greek profligacy as the bane of the Eurozone. For Pettis, however, the real culprits destabilizing the global economy are – it would appear – China and Germany. Both, according to him, are pursuing pro-employment policies that lower the cost of