

tative of China as a whole, which is 70 percent rural. The “vast majority” of Chinese, Metzger maintains, have no interest in free political activity.

Stability, notes Scalapino, “has a strong appeal” to the many Chinese worried that a change in regime might bring chaos. “Chinese authorities will continue to defend their regime by insisting that the

most meaningful freedoms for their people lie in the economic and social realms—a better livelihood, better education, and more social services. This will not be acceptable to exponents of democracy, but it will have considerable appeal nonetheless.” For China, he and many other scholars believe, democracy remains “a distant prospect.”

## *Israel's Ebbing Martial Spirit*

“Israel's Revolution in Security Affairs” by Eliot A. Cohen, Michael J. Eisenstadt, and Andrew J. Bacevich, in *Survival* (Spring 1998), International Institute for Strategic Studies, 23 Tavistock St., London WC2E 7NQ England.

Fifty years after its founding, Israel is more secure than ever against conventional military attack. But the spread of ballistic missile technology in the Arab world and changing attitudes in Israeli society are undermining the “nation in arms” approach to national security that has defined the Jewish state's character.

Egypt and Israel's other immediate Arab neighbors may still be worrisome at times, but the gravest threat (besides terrorism), contend Cohen and Bacevich, both of the Nitze School of Advanced International Studies in Washington, and Eisenstadt, of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, comes from Iran, Iraq, and Libya. They “do not share a border with Israel but . . . appear bent on acquiring a capability to strike Israel directly,” the authors observe. “Cruise or ballistic missiles tipped with chemical, biological or nuclear warheads are the likely weapons of choice.” For Israel to maintain a technological edge will require a “small, elite, and professional” military establishment, not a costly, cumbersome mass army. “Indeed, without an unlimited defense budget,” they write, “high technology and large numbers of people and equipment appear to be mutually exclusive.”

To opt openly for a “slimmer and smarter” force would be to challenge the cherished Israeli belief that virtually every youth, male and female, should serve in the army. “Actual practice, however, has begun to differ from this ideal,” Cohen and his colleagues observe. “Without fanfare—indeed without acknowledging that it is departing from past practice—the army is adopting a system of *de facto* selective service,” raising

the mental and physical requirements for active duty. Currently, some 17 percent of eligible males are exempted from service, and an additional 15 percent get early discharges for various reasons. (The surplus in the conscript pool is at least partly due to the influx of Russian immigrants since 1990.) The term of service for female draftees has been reduced from 24 months to 21, and even at that, only 50 percent of eligible women serve.

With Israel's economy booming (gross national product has grown an average of six percent per year since 1990), and with the nation's survival not appearing in immediate jeopardy, many young Israelis, including some of the “brightest and best,” now have their eyes on private enterprise, not the Israel Defense Forces, and on self-realization, not self-sacrifice. The authors discern “a growing tendency among draft-eligible Israelis to contrive physical or psychological excuses to avoid military service.” Among reservists, a 1996 report found absenteeism at 20 percent in some combat units and twice that in some noncombat ones. In a survey that same year, half of Israeli men said they would not do the demanding reserve duty (obligatory service until age 54, with active training typically amounting to a month each year) if it were not compulsory.

Cohen and his colleagues do not expect Israel to create an all-volunteer force or to cease relying on seasoned reservists. But over time, they think, a system will emerge that provides different “tracks” for different folks. The average soldier, for instance, might undergo basic training followed by reserve duty, while volunteers (perhaps encouraged by monetary incentives) would

stay on active duty for a period after basic training. Career-oriented professionals, meanwhile, would have renewable, long-term contracts. The principle of nearly uni-

versal service would thus be retained, but the mass citizen army—rendered unaffordable by expensive high-tech weapons systems—would not.

## *Miss Thailand's Many Meanings*

"The Ideology of Miss Thailand in National, Consumerist, and Transnational Space" by William A. Callahan, in *Alternatives* (Jan.–Mar. 1998), Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1800 30th St., Ste. 314, Boulder, Colo. 80301-1026.

When the young women in a beauty contest strut their stuff, high national politics is usually the furthest thing from anyone's mind, on stage or off. But the history of the Miss Thailand pageant tells a different story, suggests Callahan, a lecturer in East Asian politics at the University of Durham, in England.

The pageant got started in Siam (as Thailand was then known) in 1934, after two years of political turmoil that left Siam's king in exile and a new democratic constitution in place. The new government inaugurated the "Miss Siam" beauty pageant as part of a "Constitution Festival," in the hope, Callahan says, of promoting "modern, Western ideas—constitution, progress, civilization, nation—against the 'traditional' Thai absolute monarchy." The first Miss Siam was awarded a crown engraved with an image of the constitution.

Starting in 1938, with the invading Japanese at war in China, the pageant's government sponsors increasingly emphasized nationalism rather than constitutionalism. The Interior Ministry's pageant office vowed to produce a "Miss Siam who is as beautiful as the beauty queens of other countries."

Though interrupted by World War II, the Miss Thailand Pageant (as it became known after the country's name change in 1939) was revived in 1948

and held almost every year until 1957, when a military coup brought an end to the constitution, its festival, and what might be termed Miss Thailand's governmental phase.

In 1961, however, the Los Angeles-based proprietors of the Miss Universe Pageant came looking for "Miss Thailand," and persuaded a local organization to convert its annual beauty contest into a new national pageant. It survived until a massive student uprising for democracy brought the curtain down on the shameful "meat market" in 1973.

But only for a time. "After 12 years in mothballs," Callahan writes, "Miss Thailand was resurrected" in 1984 as a wholly commercial venture, sponsored by Colgate Palmolive and others. Not only is the contest a U.S. import, he observes, but so are some of the Miss Thailands! Miss Thailand 1988 had earlier reigned as Miss Teen California; all grumbling about that ceased when she went on to become Miss Universe.

"Neither the Thai government nor the Thai public seem to mind having U.S.-raised women representing them in international competitions," Callahan notes. To him, this suggests that "nationalism, like 'beauty,' is not a natural category, but one constructed and reconstructed for various purposes—political, military, economic, and otherwise." Nationalism, it seems, is in the eye of the beholder.



*Miss Thailand is crowned Miss Universe 1988. She had come to America at age two and only returned to Thailand for the pageant that year.*