

Containing China in new cold war

Written by Paul Lin 林

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On Monday, the US and South Korea held their second joint military exercise in a month. The scale of the drill outstripped that of the first drill, held late last month, by three times. Despite both Chinese and North Korean threats, the US and South Korean insistence on the drills was a response to North Korea's alleged sinking of the South Korean Cheonan warship. It was also a reaction to China's recent claim that the Yellow Sea and the South China Sea are part of its core interests.

North Korea denies responsibility for the sinking, and China pretends to remain neutral. However, the North launched its invasion of the South 60 years ago with Chinese and Soviet backing, but China covered up its support with lies and has never admitted or apologized for its backing. How, then, can we possibly believe China's denial and profession of neutrality today?

The Korean War should not be forgotten because it was the first war in which the communist camp tried to expand their influence by force after World War II, and the free world successfully beat them back. It also marked the beginning of the Cold War era.

To block the communist expansion, NATO developed an integrated military structure in Europe and the East Asian region developed the "crescent-shaped" island chain defense line consisting of South Korea, Japan, Taiwan and the Philippines. However, the two were unable to join up and form a single defense line against communism because China made every effort to co-opt India, Indonesia, Burma, Pakistan and Ceylon (Sri Lanka). In 1955, China called the Asian-African Conference in Bandung, Indonesia, to form a third international force. Meanwhile, China and the Soviet Union were to various degrees inciting Middle Eastern countries against Western democracies.

After the Soviet leader Joseph Stalin died in 1953, China and the Soviet Union started to fight for dominance of the international communist movement, and their discord could not be resolved during the 1960s. Later, the Soviet Union tried to use the chaos of the Cultural Revolution to tame the arrogant former Chinese leader Mao Zedong (毛泽东).

This led to the Sino-US cooperation in the 1970s. Finally, the Soviet Union collapsed in the late 1980s, partially because its national strength was consumed by the arms race against the US.

The Chinese Communist Party is extremely tricky. After the Cultural Revolution ended, it pretended to be an ally of the West.

In the 1980s, former Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping (邓小平) ordered the party to keep a low profile, and in the 1990s, then-Chinese leader Jiang Zemin's (江泽民) US policy of "increasing trust, reducing trouble, promoting cooperation and demoting confrontation" duped Western democracies into offering Beijing economic assistance.

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In the 21st century, especially after financial crisis struck in 2008, the true face of the “Chinese empire,” described by China expert John Tkacik, then started to gradually show.

For example, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao (温家宝) was overbearing and arrogant toward US President Barack Obama at an international conference, saying that the Chinese army would lay down the rules for the US. Eventually, the US Department of State and the Pentagon gradually synchronized their views on the issue.

China’s toughness did not scare the US, but it did frightened its neighbors, and South Korea, Japan, the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and India clearly hoped the US would stay in Asia. Even communist Vietnam hopes so.

As a result of China’s domestic crackdown on Muslims, Middle Eastern countries have also distanced themselves from China. Mongolia, which shares its southern border with China, has become a democracy. Former Soviet countries are also transforming into democracies and they are increasingly cautious about China. Russia no longer sells advanced weapons to China and the operations of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization have ground to a halt.

China is no longer contained by a crescent-shaped defense line, but it is now completely surrounded. The only exceptions are Myanmar and Iran, which adopt a firm anti-US stance. However, the domestic situation in both those countries is relatively unstable. Today, a new cold war between China and the US has replaced the old one between the US and the Soviet Union.

China is not unaware of the current international situation and that is why Chinese President Hu Jintao’s (胡锦涛) adviser Zheng Bijian (郑碧坚) has reshaped China’s “peaceful rise” into “peaceful development.”

However, Jiang and Hu, who both tried to curry favor with the Chinese military to bolster their power, have spoiled it with luxury and pleasure. In terms of economic development, totalitarian rule is causing social tensions to increase steadily. The question is, will the multinational corporations will stand by the totalitarian rulers for their own economic benefits once China descends into turmoil?

Although Sun Yat-sen (孙逸仙) was notorious for cooperating with the Russians and suppressing provincial autonomy, he said in a famous remark that the global trend toward freedom and democracy was going forward with great strength. Those who follow the trend will survive; those who do not will perish.

Which side should President Ma Ying-jeou (马英九) and the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) take? From a long-term perspective, Taiwan’s path is twisted, but our future remains bright.

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TRANSLATED BY EDDY CHANG

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