

Claims over victory in Pacific war are hollow

Written by James Wang 王健

Thursday, 05 March 2015 07:15

Acting on the Cabinet's instructions, the Ministry of National Defense is planning activities to mark the 70th anniversary of China's war of resistance against Japan.

The emphasis will be on the idea that the government of the Republic of China (ROC) played the leading role in the war, in case people have a different impression. Some Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) legislators have also called on the ministry to organize a military parade as a way of vying with China for the right to talk about the "victorious resistance."

China wants to flaunt its military might and proclaim its rise on the world stage. In its foreign policy, it seeks to suppress Japan's global status, while at home, it fans the flames of nationalist sentiment. This lends some purpose to its commemorations.

On the other hand, for the anachronistic "Republic of China" to make a song and dance about resisting Japan has no purpose in foreign policy and does not strike a chord with the Taiwanese public. Therefore, devoting resources to proclaiming the ROC's "historical contribution" is wasteful and rather silly.

During the war, the KMT and the Chinese Communist Party each had their different aims. Since neither had the strength to control the whole country, each defended its own half. The biggest contribution to Japan's defeat came not from China, but from the US.

The KMT claims that it won the war of resistance and "restored" Taiwan to Chinese sovereignty. However, back in the day, then-US secretary of state John Foster Dulles stated plainly that it was by virtue of US power that Taiwan was recovered from Japanese possession.

The US declared war on Japan because of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, and it was only after the US declared war that then-ROC president Chiang Kai-shek (蔣介石) summoned up the courage to declare war also. The US followed an island-hopping strategy that took it closer and closer to invading the main islands of Japan, with two US atom bombs finally forcing Japan to surrender.

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Meanwhile, Chiang's contribution merely consisted of bogging Japan down with a strategy of no war, no peace, no surrender and no retreat.

The US called the Japanese surrender Victory Over Japan Day, or V-J Day for short. It marks not only the end of the war in the Pacific, but also the end of World War II. However, after the war, the US and Japan became allies, so the US only commemorates the attack on Pearl Harbor and does not make a big show about a victory that was brought about by two atom bombs.

It is undeniable that Chiang's government led the war of resistance against Japan, but now the KMT wants to vie with the Chinese government as to who made the biggest historical contribution. To do so in Taiwan, which played no part in that resistance, is quite nonsensical.

Chinese President Xi Jinping (习近平) has reportedly invited Russian President Vladimir Putin to review China's commemorative parade. The Soviet Union only declared war on Japan after the US dropped the atom bombs, taking the opportunity to seize Japanese industrial equipment from Manchuria. It did help the older generation of Xi's Communist Party to defeat Chiang in northeast China, but it made no other contribution to the war against Japan.

There is no need for the US to celebrate V-J Day, because its major role in defeating Japan is undeniable, but the two rival Chinese parties keep arguing over who made the biggest contribution to a victory that was not won by them. Such is the ingrained nature of Chinese politicians.

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Translated by Julian Clegg

Source: [Taipei Times - Editorials 2015/03/05](#)