

All need to re-examine their policies

On the 25th Anniversary of the Tiananmen Square Massacre, China should seriously reflect on its own responsibility for so much of its past suffering.

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Japanese atrocities and brutality toward China from 1937 to 1945 have been rightly and repeatedly condemned, and no one today would defend the Western colonization of China in the 19th century even if some scholars have made a cogent case that, ironically, it spurred China's modernization.

Nonetheless, despite China's strong preference for playing the role of victim and blaming others, most of the terrible suffering the Chinese have endured has been self-inflicted in a long history of bloody dynastic wars, domestic rebellions and conflicts with neighbors — most of which it initiated.

In the 20th century, in addition to the deaths and suffering caused by the Chinese Civil War between the Nationalists [Chinese Nationalist Party, KMT] and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), the evidence is now overwhelming that tens of millions of Chinese died as a direct result of the leadership of the CCP and its horrid policies.

When China insists that the US is responsible for Taiwan not having unified with the mainland, we should always ask if Beijing believes that Taiwan should also have endured the brutal tragedies of the Great Leap Forward (大躍進) and the Cultural Revolution, as well as the People's Liberation Army's (PLA) bloody advance into Tiananmen Square which gave the lie to the popular conviction prevalent before then that the PLA would never use force against its own people.

The reason why the CCP refuses to re-examine its actions at Tiananmen is fear that it would endanger its own legitimacy. This is spelled out in April 22 last year's "Notice from the Central Committee of the Communist Party (CCP) of China's General Office" (known as Document No. 9), that forbids anything that "undermines the history of the CCP and of New China."

This includes "claiming that the revolution led by the CCP resulted only in destruction; ...calling ... the Party's and New China's history a 'continuous series of mistakes'; and vilifying the Party's leaders," including denying "the scientific and guiding value of Mao Zedong (毛澤東) thought." All of this would be "tantamount to denying the legitimacy of the CCP's long-term political dominance."

The list itself reads like an indictment.

It is no surprise that Chinese journalist Gao Yu (高玉), who allegedly released this document, was arrested on May 13. She is of course only one of a large number of journalists and dissidents who have been arrested by the Chinese authorities in the run-up to the Tiananmen anniversary. Such a roundup happens annually, but this year the detentions and arrests appear to be far more numerous.

In fact, however, the CCP would gain legitimacy for its leadership, both domestically and internationally, if it accepted its responsibility not only for its successes, but also for the unnecessary suffering it has caused since it took power, a reality widely recognized outside of China.

While the CCP can be proud of China's economic progress over the last 25 years, it should admit that the degree to which China has succeeded since it opened up under former Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping (鄧小平) is the degree to which it has ceased to impose the ideology that gave the CCP its name and claim to leadership.

So long as the CCP cannot acknowledge this truth, it will remain guilty of the charge that its desire to preserve "stability" is really only a desire to preserve power for itself.

Despite China's enormous economic power and military strength, much smaller Taiwan is still a far greater

success story. Taiwan's transition from poverty to prosperity was also accompanied by an equally remarkable transition from dictatorship to democracy.

Despite all of its evident problems, of which no country is free, Taiwan still stands as the only fully free, democratic, and pluralistic Chinese society on Earth. As China eventually comes to terms with its past, so too should it look to Taiwan as model for its future.

The 25th Anniversary of Tiananmen is also an appropriate occasion for Taiwan and the US to reflect on the failings of their respective policies toward China.

After all, it was just after Tiananmen, when the flow of Western visitors ceased, that Taiwanese tourists and businesspeople rushed to the mainland to get discounted hotel prices and seize business opportunities.

Taiwan — along with Hong Kong — was therefore in the vanguard of initiating the People's Republic of China's (PRC) economic miracle with hundreds of billions of dollars in investments, business know-how and technology.

And it is Taiwan that continues on this same course to this day, even though economic data indicate it is a path producing diminishing returns as China increasingly competes in producing the high-tech products in which Taiwan has excelled.

It is Taiwan, along with the US and the West, which helped build the contemporary China that aims missiles at Taiwan, claims the entire South China Sea as well as Taiwan as its territory, steals Taiwan's military and industrial secrets, and aims to give the people of Taiwan the benefits of being governed by the CCP.

The past few years of Hong Kong's experience with "one country, two systems" should be more than sufficient evidence of how well that works.

Taiwan nonetheless shows little inclination or ability to alter the course on which it is set.

Some are motivated by preference, others by the belief that they have no other choice and others only drift.

Most simply hope to preserve the status quo (which is changing everyday). Certainly it is also the case that China mostly gives Taiwan no alternative.

Taiwan therefore continues to be incorporated by the mainland.

Meanwhile, Chinese United Front officials freely visit Taiwan, while Taiwan academics who have apparently offended China are denied entry even into Hong Kong.

On this 25th anniversary of Tiananmen, the US should also reflect on its responsibility for helping to create the threats China now poses.

Beginning with World War II, there have been two principal foundations for the US' relationship with China.

Since President Franklin Roosevelt's invitation to Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek (蔣介石) to attend the Cairo Conference in 1943, the first has been the geostrategic argument that a good US relationship with (an ideally democratic) China would stabilize Asia, ensuring peace and prosperity, and help to keep the Chinese and Russian empires from collaborating against US and Western interests.

With the exception of Ronald Reagan, every US president until Clinton relied on this argument.

With the signing of the Sino-Russian energy deal, it is now clear that the final nail has been driven into the coffin of the geostrategic argument.

The seizures of territory in the Crimea and the South China Sea, and the threats to eastern Ukraine, are intrinsic to common imperial ambitions.

Russia and China vote with one another in the UN Security Council or abstain; they take the same positions on most global issues; and Russia sells arms and energy to China.

The PRC's announcement of its East China Sea Air Defense Identification Zone on Nov. 23 last year, the continuing standoff between China and the Philippines over territorial rights in the Scarborough Shoal and the recent May 2 placement of an oil-drilling rig in what Vietnam regards as its Exclusive Economic Zone, have increased regional tensions.

It has become increasingly clear that China aims to control not only the resources, but also the sea lanes of all the waters in the East and South China Seas.

Along with control of Taiwan, all nations on China's periphery would once again be reduced to the status of tributary states to an imperial power.

The second US argument for improving relations with China, at least since President Clinton, has largely been economic. Both Chinese and US corporations have benefited.

Continuing aggressive Chinese cyberespionage on a massive scale, however, is now also undermining the economic argument, especially as China continues to move up the value chain where intellectual property is the greatest business asset.

On balance, autocratic China has clearly gotten the better part of the bargain in its relations with democratic US and Taiwan.

It is high time for the US to re-examine its policies toward China and Taiwan. To a small extent, that is already happening with recent more robust statements by President Obama, US Secretary of Defense Hagel and General Martin Dempsey, chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff.

We have also seen more responses to China's increasingly aggressive posture from Japan, Vietnam and the Philippines.

The US needs to do more, however, to help Taiwan, our democratic partner and friend:

First, the US should do more than repeat the mantra of praise for "peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait" as if this were sufficient in itself as a policy.

As critical as continued peace and stability are, we have other values also worth repeating more frequently in connection with Taiwan, including democracy and the right of free people to decide their own fate, peacefully and without coercion.

Second, the US should actively assist Taiwan in becoming less economically dependent on China. Taiwan has profited enormously from China's growth over the past 20 years, but it is unlikely to be able to continue dining much longer only at that table. The US should more visibly promote and engage in efforts to bring Taiwan into the Trans-Pacific Partnership and, failing that, do whatever it can to reach bilateral economic and trade agreements, including a bilateral investment agreement.

Third, in view of the new regional security challenges, the US needs to incorporate Taiwan in its strategic planning for Asia and do more to help Taiwan bolster its own defenses, including helping it acquire submarines. This is important not only to Taiwan, but also critical to US interests.

Fourth, the US should promote and do more to support US university educations for Taiwanese students. As the number of mainland students in the US rises dramatically, the number of Taiwanese students is precipitously dropping. Taiwan needs to continue to serve as a model in the West for what Chinese society can and should be, and Taiwan needs articulate English-speaking students to represent that model.

Fifth, the US should recognize and trumpet the success of Taiwan, its transition from poverty to prosperity and from dictatorship to democracy, and its significance as the only fully free Chinese society on Earth.

What the US failed in some cases to help other countries achieve at much higher cost has already been achieved in Taiwan. Needless to say, Taiwan must want and support these efforts as well.

Taiwan needs to make much greater efforts to build substance into its relationship with the US.

It needs to take steps to integrate its economy more broadly with other economies in the region and beyond. And it needs to undertake political, economic and military reforms that will enable it to sustain and build on the success it has already achieved.

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