

# American Imperialism and its Domination over Asia

Refuting the Myth that China is becoming an economic super power

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*Who is going to dominate Asia? In the long term the answer is certain and clear – the people of Asia will dominate Asia. However, in the short term, before that truth becomes a reality, we need to carefully examine and analyze the current economic, political, and military situation in Asia in order to plan our strategy. To clearly understand the current situation, we first need to dispel some myths; that will be the first part of my talk today. The second part of my talk covers US imperialist interests in Asia and its strategy to maintain economic, political, and military hegemony in the region. The concluding part of my talk evaluates the real threat of American militarism and why we, the people, must and will prevail in the end.*

## I. Refuting the Myths

Myth One: China is becoming an economic super power that will soon surpass the United States and China has the military potential to challenge the US's domination over Asia.

In the last few years the United States has projected the image of China as a growing economic power that possess the military capability to threaten the US' long-term domination over Asia. This claim is used to justify the recent military buildup by the United States, and its efforts to firm up its military cooperation with its allies and other friendly regimes in this region as a strategy to contain China.

Despite the fact that the United States is losing its war in Iraq, Condoleezza Rice, the US Secretary of State, has been traveling extensively lecturing and keeping other countries in line to show that the US is maintaining its worldwide hegemony. A 2005 Singapore Business Times article entitled "Condi Talks Down to Europe, Asia" states:

Ms. Rice disparaged the Europeans for considering the lifting of an arms embargo on China – a move, she explained, that could threaten the delicate military balance in East Asia, as the US regards itself as the peacekeeper in the area and would look harshly on any European interference. "It is the United States, not Europe, that has defended the Pacific," she said. She then lectured the Chinese on the need to pressure the North Koreans, and told reporters that China could be "a positive influence in the region," adding, however, that it could just as easily become the region's biggest problem. (Antiwar.com, March 31, 2005, reprinted from Singapore Business Times, 2005)

Rice's statement indicated that the Bush administration intended to refocus its attention on Asia from the quagmire in the Middle East, and to put in place a strategic plan to contain China.

## Does China really pose serious threat to the US domination over Asia?

Despite China's fast GDP growth in the past one and half decades, China's GDP is still only about one-tenth of that of the United States. Moreover, China has developed the type of capitalism that has been dependent on foreign investment and foreign markets as its engine of growth. At the end of 2005 Bai Jing-fu, the vice-chair of a Research Center in the State Council [1], wrote a paper that showed the many problems the Chinese economy was facing. One problem was China's overdependence on the external markets as the source of its GDP growth. According to Bai 5.7% (or 60%) of the 9.7% GDP growth rate in 2004 was due to increased demand in the external market [2]. Not only that has the growth of the Chinese economy been so closely related to the growth of its exports, but also as much as 60% of those exports came from the direct investment of foreign multinationals. This shows the dependency of China's development on the international monopoly capital.

Additionally, the United States has been one of China's biggest markets. However, due to the large trade deficits the US has with China and with many other countries, the US has not paid for many of its imports. (Total US imports approximately double its total exports.) Instead, the United States has been handing over US government bonds as IOU's. More plainly put, it means that China has had to continuously loan the US money in order for the US to buy its products. While the US's debt to the world has lasted more than twenty years, common sense tells us that this cannot go on for too much longer. Moreover, China, which is still a poor country, needs its capital for its own development; using capital export as a way to sustain its GDP growth cannot be a sustainable and viable development strategy. Since China's capitalist reform began and especially since the 1990s global monopoly capital has exploited China's cheap labor, exhausted its natural resources, and polluted its environment. The United States has also siphoned large quantity of capital from China where tens of million Chinese people still do not have their basic needs met. How could anyone expect China to surpass the United States economically when its economy is so tightly controlled by those powerful multinationals – the majority of them are based in the United States?

While it is true that China's military budget has grown by double-digit rates for the past 17 consecutive years, and China has been modernizing its military hardware by buying updated weaponry from Russia, China does not have the capacity to challenge the United States militarily. According to information published by the Power and Interest News Report, the US Department of Defense estimated that while China currently has over 3,000 combat aircraft, only 100 of these are of the modern class bought from Russia recently. The same report said that the United States currently has more than 3,000 aircraft, all of which are modern. Additionally, the US naval fleet comprised of 12 large aircraft carriers, is unprecedented in its power. In addition to its overwhelming superiority in military weapons in every category, the US is also modernizing its military equipment at a faster pace than China or any other country in the world. The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute reported that China now spends \$40 billion annually on updating its military equipment, but the United States spends ten times that amount – a total of \$400 billion. The Power and Interest News Report states, "...such an unbelievably high rate of spending by the United States will guarantee that China will have the utmost difficulty competing for raw military power." It continues to say, "China also lacks the industrial edge to develop new technologies on its own, which explains it has acquired its most modern military equipment from Russia. The United States, on the other hand, is at the forefront of new military technology." (Power and Interest News Report, September 8, 2003)

Above all, after the fall of the former Soviet Union and the deterioration of Russia's nuclear weapons arsenal, the United States now monopolizes the nuclear offensive system. A recent Foreign Affairs article, "The Rise of US Nuclear Primacy", states: "The United States stands on the verge of attaining nuclear primacy. It will probably soon be possible for the United States to destroy the long-range nuclear arsenals of Russia or China with a first strike." Nuclear supremacy means, according to the authors, that the United States has a nuclear triad comprising strategic bombers, intercontinental ballistic missiles and ballistic-missile-launching submarines, and it has the ability to destroy all of an adversary's nuclear forces with a first strike. The extent of the US' nuclear triad means that if nothing changes, "... Russia and China- and the rest of the world - will live in the shadow of the US nuclear primacy for many years to come." (Lieber and Press, 43-44)

Therefore, as we shall see below, although China has extended its economic and political influence over Asia as well as beyond Asia and in some ways has begun challenge the economic interests of the United States, there is no way China can surpass the United States economically or pose any challenge to the United States militarily. However, the United States is going to continue to use the "China threat" to justify its military expansion in this region.

Myth Two: China as a super power will serve to counter-balance the United States and defend the interests of the Third World countries and their people.

China has portrayed itself as a benevolent power, asserting that its economic dealings with other Third World countries are based on mutual benefit. What China's current leaders do abroad is very much like what they do at home; they pretend that China is still a socialist country and that its policies are based on socialist principles. In the past China's foreign policy, as a socialist country, was based on the five principles of mutual benefit and mutual respect. China was able to champion these principles, because socialist economic development did not depend on outward expansion. In addition, during the socialist period China denounced its long history of imperial dominance over its neighbors.

However, since China began its capitalist reform twenty some years ago, the economic relationship between China and other countries has changed from one of mutual benefit to one that meets China's needs for increasingly rapid GDP growth. As a large country and fast growing capitalist economy, China has to compete for natural resources, for opportunities to export capital, and for markets to export its products. Since China has adopted an export-led growth strategy for capitalist development, its needs for energy and raw materials have expanded at a very fast pace. In using exports as the source of its economic growth, it also has to compete furiously for markets to sell its products. Since the 1990s, as the rate of export growth has accelerated, China's oil consumption increased 100% from 1990 to 2001 [3]. By 2005 China's oil consumption had surpassed Japan to become the second largest oil consumer in the world, second only to the United States. As late as 1992 China was still an oil exporting country - but by the mid-1990s, its oil imports accelerated to meet its more than 20% export growth. Oil imports doubled in merely five years, from 1998 to 2003, and increased another 40% in the first half of 2004. (Time Asia, October 18, 2004) In 2005 China consumed 300 million tons of crude oil, 123 million tons of which were imported.

According to some experts, at the current rate of consumption China's proven oil reserves will be depleted in 14 years, prompting China to begin a frantic search for oil all over the world. According to the Time Asia report, China has signed, or intends to sign, oil/gas deals with various countries in order to maintain a stable supply of oil and avoid buying all of its

oil at higher prices on the open market. These countries include Indonesia, Uzbekistan and other energy rich states in Central Asia or even geographically distant countries like Sudan, Ecuador and Columbia. In its quest for oil, China inevitably has come into competition with the United States and Japan, and also with South Korea and India, whose economies are also dependent on oil imports. China has also signaled its intentions to invest in exploration and development in other countries that have proven oil reserves. However, in doing so it also may get into territory disputes with other countries. In one recent case the China National Offshore Oil Corporation formed a partnership with the Philippine National Oil Company, for oil exploration near the Spratly Islands in the South China Sea. The sovereignty of Spratly Islands, however, has long been disputed by Vietnam, China, the Philippines, and Malaysia.

China's actions are like those of any expanding capitalist country in its search for natural resources, investment opportunities and for markets to sell its products. In addition to oil and other sources of energy, China also imports many other natural resources; for example, China is now the largest importer of copper and it also imports large quantities of iron ore and lumber from developing countries – from Asia to Latin America, and to Africa.

China's expansion into Southeast Asia started after the 1997 Asian crisis, and as a latecomer to the region, has been busy signing investment and trade agreements with many of these countries. At the 2004 annual gathering of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) in the Laotian capital, the ten ASEAN members signed a free trade agreement with China signifying a closer trade relationship. Both tariff and non-tariff trade barriers will be cut under this  $10 + 1 = 11$  free trade pact. It is the world's largest free-trade area covering 1.8 billion people and has provided even more opportunities for China to expand trade and investment ties with the ten ASEAN countries. In addition to the ASEAN-China Free Trade Agreement, China has also been negotiating bilateral trade and economic cooperation with individual Southeast Asian States. By the end of 2006, Southeast Asia's total trade with China will probably reach \$130 billion, which is close to the \$150 billion US-ASEAN trade in 2005. (Kurlantzick)

According to a BBC news report, trade between China and African nations increased 39% during the first 10 months of 2005. (BBC News, January 2006) In November 2006, China organized a large scale African forum in Beijing and signed 16 trade and investment deals worth some \$1.9 billion [4]. (Reuters Foundation, Alert Net, November 30, 2006) China's strong demand for natural resource imports was due to the tremendous volume of manufacturing products it has exported in more recent years. China is in direct competition with major imperialist powers-the United States, Japan, and EU in acquiring these natural resources.

It is true that China has expanded and will continue to expand its interests and influence in Asia and other parts of the world, causing the raising of alarms and strong reactions from the United States and Japan. However, by the end of 2004 the accumulated investment by Chinese companies in ASEAN was only \$1.17 billion [5], which was way behind the \$85.4 billion US investment in this region. According to the official Chinese news agency, Xinhua, China is now ASEAN's fourth trading partner after the United States, Japan, and European. However, as much as 60% of China's exports to ASEAN in 2005 were done by the foreign multinationals operating in China and most of the same multinationals also control ASEAN's exports to China. Therefore, in effect, closer trade relations between China and Southeastern Asian countries simply facilitate intra-company trading between global multinationals.

After the capitalist reform began and especially since the 1990s China as country has been exploited by the major imperialist powers. The very powerful few in China have linked their interests to the interests of global monopoly capital and together they have exploited China's workers and peasants and such exploitation has reached the unbearable point today. However, China as a country also behaves very much like other imperialist countries – only it is an imperialist country of a very much lower rank. In its searches for oil and natural resources, for investment opportunities, and for markets, China has signed trade pacts, investment deals, and other kind of economic cooperation — none of them are or can be based on mutual benefits. We cannot count on China to defend the interests of oppressed countries and their people.

## II. US Imperialism and its hegemony over Asia

The United States defeated Japan during World War II and consequently gained domination over Asia. During the Cold War era the United States maintained its domination over Asia through wars of aggression, first in Korea and then in Vietnam. The United States' hegemony in the world is closely connected with its domination over Asia.

In a 1998 Admiral Joseph W. Prueher, then the Commander-in -Chief of the US Pacific Command, spoke to a student audience at Fudan University in Shanghai. The topic was "Asia-Pacific Security and China." Prueher said that the United States has a responsibility to the region extending from the west coast of North America to the east coast of Africa – a region that includes 43 nations. He also said, "As a Pacific nation, our US economic, political and military interests in the Pacific are diverse and lasting. These interests drive our permanent and active involvement in the region..." The admiral asserted that US trade with this region amounted to over \$500 billion per year, which was approximately 35% of total US trade and double the US trade with Europe. Moreover, he said that Asia was important to the United States militarily, and five of the seven US mutual defense treaties were with Asia-Pacific countries. The admiral also wanted to assure the audience that "the United States has regarded its dominance over Asia as permanent and would not let it be challenged by anyone."

Since the collapse of the former Soviet Union, the United States has become the sole superpower, and it has done everything in its power to maintain its hegemony. In 1992, the Defense Planning Guidance (DPG) was drafted under the supervision of Paul Wolfowitz, who has recently become the President of the World Bank then served as the deputy secretary of Defense under Dick Cheney. The DPG established the United States' strategy of maintaining its military hegemony in three major areas. First, the US will pursue a policy that will prevent any state from developing military capabilities equal to or greater than its own. Second, the US will carry out preemptive strikes against states that develop new military capabilities that might eventually endanger the United States and its friends or allies. These preemptive strikes are to be carried out before there is any imminent threat. The last part of the DPG insists that US officials and military personnel are immune to prosecution by any international war crime tribunals. (Excerpts from DPG, New York Times, March 10, 1992; Monthly Review, January 2006) This near final draft of the DPG was leaked to the press and caused strong reactions from U.S allies, because it warned that both Germany and Japan as potential military powers that could one day match the US, and emphasized that they should never be allowed to present that challenge.

The DPG did not get approval as the official US military strategy, but the US continued to find ways to assert its sole super power status in the post Cold War era. During the 2000



campaign Condoleezza Rice, as an advisor to George W. Bush [6], wrote an article in Foreign Affairs. The summary of the article states:

With no Soviet threat, America has found it exceedingly difficult to define its “national interest.” Foreign policy in a Republican administration should refocus the country on key priorities: building a military ready to ensure American power, coping with rogue regimes, and managing Beijing and Moscow. Above all, the next president must be comfortable with America’s special role as the world leader.

In this article Rice explained that China could develop to become a potential threat to the US domination in Asia and that the US should put policies in place to contain China. After George W. Bush became the President in 2000 and Rice became his National Security Advisor, she and other cabinet members went to work on “building a military ready to ensure American power” including a strategy of containing China. Then, the 9/11 terrorist attack on the United States in 2001 diverted the attention of the Bush administration, and subsequently it declared a universal, unilateral, and protracted global war on terrorism. (Some claim that since Rice’s attention had been so focused on Asia, she missed the many obvious signs of the impending attack.) When Bush announced its war on terrorism, he named Iraq, Iran, North Korea, as countries, which composed an “Axis of Evil”. The so called “Axis of Evil” countries were in fact what Rice called “rogue regimes”. Beginning with invasions and occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq, the US has been able to use the September 11th attacks and its war on terror to justify the expansion of US militarism worldwide and mark whichever sovereign states they choose as targets of anti-terrorism.

After the 2000 elections the White house was occupied by key figures that helped drafted the 1992 Defense Planning Guidance; the terrorist attack in 2001 provided the opportunity to carry out the major provisions in the DPG. The US invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2003 followed closely the strategy spelled out in the 1992 DPG, including the “preemptive” strikes on sovereign nations. Neither Afghanistan nor Iraq had any military capability to challenge the United States military superiority, nor did any possibility exist for them to threaten the security of the United States. However, the US was able to use its hegemony to perpetuate the “weapons of mass destruction” myth as a successful justification. The invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, however, set an important precedent that the US will not hesitate to act unilaterally with its superior military power on any country, if it perceives its interests are being or might be threatened in any way.

In order to achieve what the Pentagon called “Shock and Awe”, the US carried out the invasion of Iraq by first bombing the country and its infrastructure to smithereens to show the overwhelming power of US military might. During the first two weeks of the US invasion, it was not a war fought by two sides; Iraq was defenseless against the weapons of mass destruction that the US unleashed. Now more than three years later, and after the deaths of tens of thousands Iraqi civilians, even Tony Blair has had to admit recently that the invasion of Iraq has been a total failure.

The Iraqi War put the Bush administration on the defensive; it has no way out without admitting defeat. As mentioned earlier Rice has been traveling all over the world to prove that the empire is not in any way vulnerable. She has also succeeded in getting the Bush administration to refocus its attention on Asia and reaffirm the US’ strategy to engage in a coordinated, systematic effort to contain China from expanding its power and influence. In February 2006 the US Defense Department issued its Quadrennial Defense Review. This review named China among the emerging and major powers as having the greatest

potential to compete with the United States militarily. Following this review, in early March, Commander-in-Chief of the US Pacific Command, Admiral William Fallon testified before the Senate Armed Services Committee and said that the QDR has set the defense strategy and its military posture for the next 20 years: to have a “greater” military presence in the Pacific Ocean. Also, the US is planning to boost military integration with allies in that region in order to deter emerging and major powers. (TMC Net News, March 7, 2006) This shows that the US intends to target China as a military threat in order to carry out its military expansion in Asia, even though China has no military capability to become a threat.

The same TMC Net news report also reported that the United States plans to expand its bilateral military cooperation with Japan and also to expand that bilateral military cooperation into a trilateral agreement to include South Korea. Japan, of course, has been the most trusted ally of the United States since the end of World War II; Japan has relied on the United States to guarantee its security, because the Japanese Constitution, established during the US occupation, forbids Japan from setting up its own military outside of a small force for national defense. However, the conditions surrounding those restrictions have been changing rapidly. The function of Japan’s Self Defense Force (SDF) has been redefined in the past few years under Japan’s Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi. In his testimony, Fallon said that Koizumi has demonstrated “exceptional leadership” and has guided the SDF through “significant change.” The changes included sending ground troops to Iraq and helping the US war in Afghanistan by refueling vessels to the Indian Ocean. Admiral Fallon further testified that Japan and the United States agreed in October 2005 to step up integrated and joint operations between Japanese Self-Defense Forces and US military forces. This integration includes “intelligence sensors, communications networks, information systems, missile defenses, undersea warfare and counter-mine warfare capabilities.” Fallon further said, “These actions clearly show the willingness and capability of the government of Japan to deploy the SDF regionally and globally in support of security and humanitarian operations,” (TMC Net News, March 7, 2006)

In the meantime South Korea and the United States already agreed in early 2006 on the so-called “strategic flexibility” in military cooperation. The next step is for the United States to expand its bilateral military integration with Japan to include the South Korea into a trilateral cooperation, so that the US armed forces in South Korea can engage in missions outside the Korean Peninsula. (TMC Net News, March 7, 2006)

In addition to the expansion of US presence in Asia, the US’s strategy to contain China also includes forming alliances with countries in South Asia in general and with India in particular. In a testimony before the House International Relations Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific in June, 2005, Dana Robert Dillon, a senior policy analyst at the Asian Studies Center of the Heritage Foundation said, “Among the most appealing changes brought by the end of the Cold War is the flourishing American relationship with the billion and half people of South Asia.” According to Dillon, India is the “greatest under-exploited opportunity for American foreign policy.” He further added that United States and India share two common concerns: terrorism and China’s emergence as a world power. Dillon thus suggested to the Subcommittee that as part of its global strategy of countering the growing influence of China, the United States should help India develop its economic competitiveness and its military capability.

Dillon added that the renewed US-India defense cooperation has been the most positive development [7]. Now the United States has restored all conventional “nil-to-nil” cooperation with India. The US also began cooperation with India on the civilian use of

nuclear power under the auspices of the Next Steps in Strategic Partnership (NSSP) program. Dillon also added that the United States should continue to help India become a friendly strategic partner and to help " India to possess a deterrent that would inhibit Chinese adventurism in the region."

US imperialism regards its domination over Asia as its right and it allows no other nation to challenge it. In the name of freedom and democracy, the US protects its economic interests by its military might. The US regards Asia as an important integral part of its vast empire and its domination over Asia is closely linked to its global hegemony. Let's not have any illusion that the US imperialism can be somehow reformed or modified. It will always behave in the most savage and barbaric way.

### III. The Real Threat of American Militarism

At the end of World War II the United States came to dominate Asia and launched two major aggressive wars in our region. Both the Korean War and the Vietnam War were part of its overall strategy of containing communism. In the name of fighting communism, the US used brutal force in the two aggressive wars and caused the deaths of millions of people and tremendous destruction to Asia. The heroic people of Korea and Vietnam fought back the aggression and won. In solidarity China helped both countries to win their wars of liberation.

People in Asia have suffered wars of aggression, not just in the past several decades during the domination of the United States, but actually for the past several centuries. As far back as the colonial days, the Western powers competed for a piece of Asia - England, France, Germany, Spain, Portugal, The Netherlands, the United States and other minor powers from the West all engaged in carving up parts of Asia for colonization, followed by Japan's efforts to make all of Asia its empire. Japan invaded China and other Asian countries years before it provoked the United States into war. But ordinary people in Asia, Japanese people included, are just like people everywhere in the world. They want to live in peace, and they are tired of all the wars imposed on them.

We are now at the beginning of the 21st Century. On the one hand as the capitalist economic crisis has deepened, the imperialist powers will be competing with one another more fiercely for resources, for investment opportunities, and for markets. On the other hand, the US has further expanded its military forces in Asia targeting China as its potential threat. The possibility of another war in Asia is again real. We, of course, are all too familiar with the real destructive power of the US military machine to kill people and in destroying countries. No one can underestimate the real power of weapons of mass destruction that the US possesses, and the willingness of the US to use them on innocent people. We, the people, have to do everything to prevent the war from happening. International solidarity among peace loving people is the only way to defeat imperialist war and plunder. However, we also know that even though the United State may still launch another war against the will of people, it can never conquer a country by deploying its weapons of mass destruction. The US could not conquer the people of Korea, nor the people of Vietnam, just as it cannot conquer the people of Iraq. Military power, no matter how strong, can never conquer the people's desire to be free and their love for peace. The US military power, although a real and dangerous tiger, is also a paper tiger, and it will have no other way out but to surrender before the real power of people.

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