

U.S. Exploits 5-Month-Old Korea Incident To Dominate Asia-Pacific

US must not try to check China's rising power

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The United States made a lot out of the Cheonan incident by making use of joint exercises to re-control the situation in Northeast Asia. It also took advantage of the subtle attitudes of the ASEAN Regional Forum and some ASEAN countries and greatly played up the so-called "threat" to speed its return to Southeast Asia.

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South Korea and the United States kicked off their 35th annual Ulchi Freedom Guardian joint exercises, one of the most important military exercises, on Aug. 16. About 30,000 U.S. troops are taking part, a more than two-fold increase over previous years.

The U.S. Defense Department also announced earlier that the nuclear-powered aircraft carrier USS George Washington would take part in the military exercises to be held on the Yellow Sea.

Superficially, the United States' behavior seemed to be some kind of super-tough response to the sinking of the Cheonan that killed 46 South Korean sailors in March. However, in light of the country's recent display off the South China Sea, the escalating actions appear to be more a strategic show of strength rather than just a reaction to one particular incident.

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In recent years, U.S. dominance in the Asia Pacific region and its maritime hegemony in the West Pacific region have both obviously declined. Frictions are appearing between Japan and South Korea and North Korea seems to be headed on a nuclear road of no return.

Cooperation mechanisms in Asia have been strengthened. The China-ASEAN Free Trade Area has been built and negotiations for a China-Japan-South Korea free trade area are underway. Regional integration is also in the works.

Particularly, China's influence in the Asia Pacific region has risen sharply.

All of these factors have created a sense of urgency for the United States.

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At present, how to observe the situation calmly is of the utmost importance.

First, the United States’ tough attitudes shown on the Yellow Sea and South China Sea were no longer as confident and calm as ever before, but [exhibited] a strategic sensitivity and psychological anxiety showing that it was eager to be the first. It reveals the United States’ special mindset of maintaining the respect of its military strength after its economic strength suffered heavy losses.

So far, the U.S. government still insists on maintaining active and comprehensive cooperation with China. And from its official reports, such as the U.S. National Security Strategy and Quadrennial Defense Review Report, the United States’ strategy toward China has not undergone a fundamental shift.

The United States’ hard power, as demonstrated by its display on the Yellow Sea, should be noted. However, China’s rising soft power, which can be seen in its strong economic and cultural ties with Asia-Pacific regions, is equally noteworthy.

China will firmly adhere to the road of peaceful development and work for realizing the win-win relations with its neighboring countries via economic and cultural interactions. The strategy is welcomed by its neighboring countries.

In the South China Sea area, the United States appears to be aggressive and its military relations with some countries are steadily improved. Though some ASEAN countries are elated by the United States’ intrusion, others have great concerns.

As long as China unswervingly pursues a policy of playing the part of the good neighbor by guaranteeing the security and prosperity of bordering countries, the United States cannot contain China.

The development of Sino-U.S. relations has always been accompanied with friction, collision, contests and struggle. So China should respond calmly while firmly safeguarding its own security and interests and prevent interference with the overall strategy because of misjudgment.

Translator: Zhao Chenyan

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