

Cold War Corpse: A Commentary on the U.S. Defense Department's Report on the PLA Military Strength

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The essence of the recently published "China's Military Strength" in the United States contains only one word: threat. It is by all means a resurrection of Cold War thinking. It is correct to say that ever since the beginning of the Bush Administration, the Sino-American relationship has been mixed with clouds and sunshine. This report by the Pentagon has undoubtedly added, without any basis, another "dense cloud." Let us unveil the cover of the "China's Military Strength" report and see what real issues it truly reflects.

First, it is yet another step of America's implementation of its global strategies, especially the strategy to contain China.

While the United States implements its global strategies, one pronounced problem in Asia and the Pacific region it faces is the Taiwan problem. The basic American policy is "no unification, no independence," making Taiwan an unsinkable aircraft carrier for the U.S. so that America can impede China for the longest time. The U.S. is unwilling let an emerging China break the balance of power in Asia and the Pacific that they've built. The U.S. believes that in order to contain China, one of the most effective measures is to build an image of "a China threat," pointing the finger at China for any instability in Asia so that the American case "to use Taiwan to contain China," and "to use Asia to contain China" can be made.

Secondly, the Pentagon report reflects the tendency that the hawks' Cold War thinking is still influencing American strategy.

"Cold War Thinking" has appeared as the trademark of the American hawks, represented mostly by the U.S. Defense Department officials. They exert direct impact on the Bush Administration's defense policy.

In deciding the objects of the national security strategy, the hawks believe they must establish a clearly defined competitor, and through propagating the so-called threats from the nemesis, focus the government's resources in certain specific directions, and finalize the objective as demanded by the national security strategy. Furthermore, they believe the U.S. presently does not have a strategic competitor in its own class, except for some regional strategic competitors, most noticeably Russia and China. China still keeps its socialist system, while Russia has wholly accepted westernization. In particular, due to the Taiwan issue, there exists the possibility of direct military confrontation between

China and the United States. Therefore, the U.S. is convinced that China is the major source of threats to the U.S. and has become the major opponent.

Thirdly, The Pentagon report sets out a marker for strengthening the U.S. military alliance with the Taiwan region.

This is to create enough public awareness for the establishment of the Theater Missile Defense (TMD). It also provides an excuse for the escalation of military cooperation between the U.S. and Taiwan. Recently, the U.S. conducted an equipment update on the F-16 fighters in the Taiwan military, including the replacement of the military computer part MMC3000 with the more advanced MMC3051, thus enabling the Taiwan fighter jets to directly connect themselves with American aircraft, Naval ships and the space information system, greatly enhancing the Taiwan military's information warfare capability. This substantial upgrading of military cooperation between the U.S. and Taiwan is a serious development of U.S. unilateral infringement upon the basic principles for the Sino-American relationship as set up by the two countries when they established diplomatic relations.

The "China threat" conspiracy behind the Pentagon's "China's Military Strength" will never meet its intended goal. This report has caused debate even within the U.S. government between the doves and the hawks. According to reports, the U.S. Department of State and the National Security Council have concluded that some parts of the report are not appropriate, and requested that the Pentagon revise them. This has caused some ill feelings between the groups and caused a delay in its final publication. This indicates that the usefulness of this "corpse" is limited. As to whether China is a threat to the world or to the U.S., the American Secretary of State Powell several days ago clearly stated his opinion. Powell said, "We are very clear that China is modernizing its armed forces. We believe what's important is that China is participating in the international community, especially participating more and more in the international economic community and is enjoying the benefit of trade. By engaging in trade and creating wealth, most of the wealth will be used to benefit the Chinese people, raise their living standard and their future expectations for their children and families. We also know that part of the wealth will be used to modernize China's military forces. This itself is not reason for fear, as long as China's military modernization does not represent any new strategic targets, does not represent any threat to the region." Who is right, who is wrong, there will be a fair judgment in the world.

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