

Inventing an Enemy, Part I

July 27, 2014

How does America disengage itself from over a half-century of a continuous, all-encompassing emersion into the Cold War? How does America gear-down, and at the same time gear-up for another challenge? How do we re-adjust our gun sights to place in our cross-hairs an enemy bearing faint resemblance to the real enemy (WWII Germany), the overly assessed enemy (USSR), and completely imagined enemies of the past (Vietnam for example)? Presently, much of America's mental, moral, and military energy is being consumed conjuring up a war with an enemy that need not exist.

We are in the process of inventing an enemy of convenience, one we have been gradually cutting our military-industrial complex teeth on since 1949. It was that year that the Chinese Communist overthrew a Western-supported despot, Chiang Kai-shek. And since that time, America has viewed China with skepticism, because it practiced a form of Communism and was not fond of missionaries.

Notwithstanding, these un-American practices, the United States pushed China toward the back of its Cold War enemy closet. China was militarily and economically weak. It did not have the strength to ask, much less demand, a place on the stage of the world's main characters. After all, the country posed no danger to America's place in the world. America was the uncontested preeminent nation on earth, the lead actor in the play of nationhood superiority.

Times have changed. China is no longer weak. China is now asserting that it has a prominent place in the world. In the past, it was asking but now is demanding to be a principal actor.

But it is doing considerably less than what America has done on the world stage since the ending of WWII. It is building up its military. It is buying assets in other countries, and investing in these nations' infrastructures. But it has yet to invade a country. It has yet to proclaim non-contiguous land as part of China (with the exceptions of Taiwan and the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands, which it has had a hand in for centuries)

Time-and-again, the Chinese leaders openly say that China is going to have its just desserts. "Just desserts" are my words, written in English to convey an idea the Chinese espouse. Whatever the words uttered, China has let the world know it has become an economic giant and intends to become a lead player.

With a population of 1.3 billion people dwarfing the United States' 313 million inhabitants, with a recent history (since the early 1800s) of western world gross exploitations, China is silently going about getting its just due.

Might there be other reasons for China wishing to have its *just due* other than China's emergence as an economic powerhouse? I cite a few examples here:

- Revenge from the forced opening of China by the West, which humiliated China.
- Retribution for the West's Opium Wars, which exploited an internal problem.
- Payback for the West's support of anti-Communist Chiang Kai-shek during the Chinese revolution.
- Settling of scores for the West's opposition to the Chinese claim to Formosa (Taiwan).

- Reprisal for the West's continuous harangue about Tiananmen Square, while ignoring America's KKK lynchings, the cleansing America of native Americans, Kent State assaults, etc.¹
- The ignorant arrogance of pushing the North Korean army toward China's borders during the Korean "conflict," with the inevitable chaos of massive population disruptions of Koreans fleeing into China.

China leaders also claim China has no colonial aspirations. That is, China has no wish to annex Vietnam or other parts of the world. The country makes a good case for this assertion. In Henry Kissinger's *On China*, Mr. Kissinger describes that time-and-again--over millennia--China has withdrawn from conquered areas.² Granted, it has ventured out beyond its waters, but not often and not to append turf permanently.

During the time of the "The Era of Chinese Preeminence," Mr. Kissinger has this to say (text within brackets is from this writer):

As early as the Song Dynasty (960-1279) China led the world in nautical technology; its fleets could have carried the empire into an era of conquest and exploration. Yet China acquired no overseas colonies and showed relatively little interest in the countries beyond its coast. [During this time, Europe was beginning to flex its imperialistic muscles.] [China] developed no rationale for venturing abroad to convert the barbarians to Confucian principles or Buddhist virtues.³

A couple centuries later, the European powers colonized almost all the land and waters of the globe. England, Germany, France, Spain, Italy, Belgium, Sweden, Portugal, and the Netherlands (have I missed one?) declared various parts of the earth's turf to be theirs. Just before Columbus "discovered" America,

...between 1405 and 1433 China launched one of history's most remarkable and mysterious naval enterprises: Admiral Zheng. He set out in fleets of technologically unparalleled "treasure ships" to destinations as far as Java, India, the Horn of Africa, and the Strait of Hormuz. ...At each stop on his journeys, he formally proclaimed the magnificence of China's new emperor, bestowed lavish gifts on the rulers he encountered, and invited them to travel in person or send envoys to China. ...yet beyond declaring China's greatness and issuing invitations to a portentous ritual, Zheng displayed no territorial ambition. ...he claimed no colonies or resources for China...⁴

The remainder of Kissinger's discourse follows this theme of self-imposed isolation. Compare the history of China's performance to that of the Europeans and to a lesser extent,

¹ The magnitude of the Chinese government's heavy hand at Tiananmen Square could be likened to that of the American government's hand at Kent State. The point rarely discussed in Western media is the fact that the Chinese leaders believed this demonstration might spread and imperil the regime. What would Uncle Sam do if Uncle was fearful of becoming an ex-Uncle? Chinese government actions were overkill (so to speak), but the leaders of this movement were dead-set on revolution.

² Henry Kissinger, *On China* (New York: Penguin Books, 2012), 8-12.

³ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 9.

America. Frankly, if I were a China and followed the history of the West, I would be arming myself to the teeth.

Does this history mean China will perhaps do an about face? For certain, it is fierce in controlling its turf and land surrounding its borders. But my take is that China wants to be left alone to ply its trades, to build its wealth, to eventually overtake the United States economically. The facts indicate that China does not want a war.

Keep in mind: China has no troops in Iraq, Afghanistan, and scores of other places where America puts its foot. Why? Because it lacks the religious and democratic missionary spirits. It is not dedicated to bring Chinese quasi-Communism to the world's masses. Its credo---and I add, *thus far*---is to leave others to their own devices. And I also add: just as long as China becomes a dominant economic presence.

China is far too smart to contend with America militarily. In the long run, China is gearing toward a war consisting of economic and financial assaults. And in the *long-run*, if America continues to think the deployment of Marines in Okinawa is going to affect the balance of power in the world then America is breathing-in those new Colorado airs.

The ascension of China need not lead to a military war with China. It is rather fantastic that I believe I must write this last sentence, that it should be obvious to all. But it is not. The trends are obvious.

In the long run, America can win the economic war. China's once low labor costs are rising. America's rapid exploitation of shale gas technology is changing the energy/economic structure of the world. America's superior technological corridors (Silicon Valley, Boston, Austin, etc.) with 3-D printing are shifting the scales.

In spite of Neo-cons' saber-rattling babble, the competition with China does not have to be a military war. Economic competition between the United States and China need not have a winner. So what if one or the other has a greater GNP per person? As long as each country is taking care of its citizens and its citizens are secure and prospering, the focus should be on how to kill a competitor's product, now how to kill the competitor.

Rose-colored glasses? Fatuous illusions? Possibly, because I am skeptical of humans ever rising above our primal fear of one another. Nonetheless, I will not give way on the basic idea that America has developed a disturbing habit of wanting to fight someone else's battles, or inventing a reason for its own battle. In the meantime, a warm war against China is continuing to heat-up.

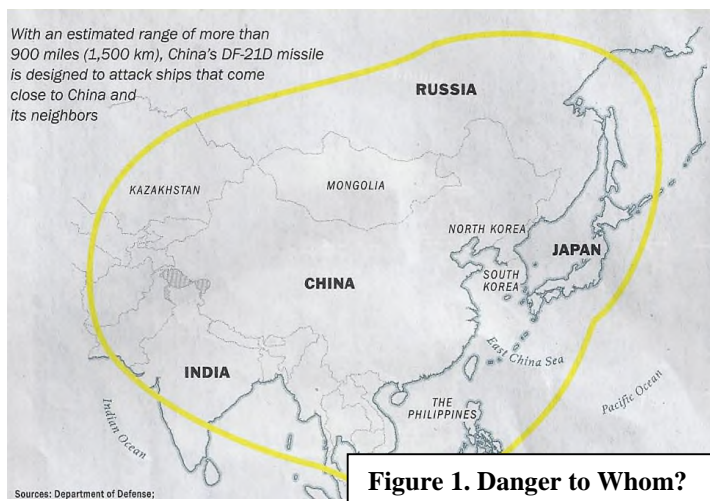
There are many examples of this warm war, some I have described and placed on my blog. For now, this week *Time* magazine published a four-page article that provides another example.⁵ Here are three quotes from this article, with my comments in brackets:

Since 2010, Beijing has deployed a new kind of land-based ballistic missile with the potential to change the balance of power in a volatile and vital part of the world. The Dong Feng-21E missile is what Andrew Erickson of the U.S. Naval War College called a Frankenweapon, a marriage of several existing military technologies that together could transform war.

Dozens of U.S. and Chinese officials declined to discuss the weapon, saying it is too sensitive. [Therefore, it appears the public will not be able to understand Mr. Erickson's disturbing thought about technologies that "could transform war."]

⁵ Mark Thompson, "In China's Sights," *Time*, July 28, 2014, 31-34.

[The U.S. Navy is] deciding whether to send warships within range [of the missile] or stay back and risk looking weak. [Risk looking weak? American ships routinely cruise the South China Sea, a few hundred miles off the China mainland.]



How dangerous to the United States is this relatively new weapon? Can it reach America's west coast or the nation's capital? Are the warheads nukes? What is it designed to destroy?

Borrowing an illustration from the *Time* article, Figure 1 shows the range of DF-21D. It flies about 900 miles. It is designed solely as a means of defense of China's coastal waters.

Nonetheless, the *Time* article makes the statements cited

above. The reason for the alarm? These missiles are beyond the range of U.S. Navy carrier attack planes, notably the F-35, which, according to the magazine, has a range of 700 miles. Thus, America might not be able to defend its ally Japan if Japan and China go to war over 1700 acres of uninhabited rocks in the South China Sea. (See "A Question of Belligerence" in this series.) *Time's* assertion is that China's Dong Feng-21E has upset the balance of power in an area over 6,000 miles from mainland USA and a few hundred miles from mainland China.

The concern is the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands, the 1700 acres cited above. They are being claimed by Japan, China, and Taiwan. The islands have attracted little attention until recently when it became known that the surrounding area might have mineral resources underneath the waters, and there might be abundant fish swimming around the islands.

Reviewing one of *Time's* claims: the balance of power has shifted in a "volatile and vital part of the world." Vital to whom? Do you see the United States inside the yellow circle in Figure 1? As stated, the U.S. is located over 6,000 miles away from the range of the Dong Feng-21E.

However, four of America's Cold War allies: Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and parts of the Philippines fall under this new threat. And that's the rub. Under these alliances, America must come to the aid of a country if it becomes embroiled in a war.

I favor alliances. I favor coming to the aid of an ally *if* the ally is in danger. However, if the ally chooses actions that are not in its vital interests that lead to war, I believe it insane for another ally to rally to a non-vital cause.

I do not consider the dispute about these islands vital to Japan's welfare. Do you? Do you want the U.S. to send-over the Marines if Japan and China begin a war over the islands? Do you want our planes to bomb China and shoot down any incoming Chinese missiles being fired within a few hundred miles from the Chinese mainland? It could happen. Here are more quotes from the *Time* article:

Some U.S. Navy officers believe China is preparing “to conduct a short, sharp war to destroy Japanese forces in the South China Sea, followed with what can only be expected, a seizure of the Senkakus.” This claim was made by Captain James Fanell, the Pacific Fleet’s top intelligence officer to a Navy gathering in San Diego in February.

Obama said during an April visit to Tokyo...that the U.S. commitment to Japan’s control of the islands is “absolute.”

Some of my readers may think me a pacifist with my writing these warm war articles. Those who know me personally know better. I favor the current defense budget. Even more, I have no illusions. America is in long-term danger from Islamic terrorists.

However, and ever so gradually but surely, I see more-and-more of the media and politicians lay claim that China is increasingly becoming an enemy. It’s subtle, but keep an eye on it. You’ll likely pick it up, too. Here are other quotes from the *Time* article with my comments within brackets:

At times, U.S. and allied officials say, China behaves almost as if it wants to start a fight. In 2001, a Chinese J-8 fighter flew into a U.S. Navy EP-3 spy plane off the Chinese coast, killing the Chinese pilot and forcing the damaged EP-3 to land at a Chinese air field, where the 24-member crew was held for 11 days. [What would the reaction in America be if a Chinese spy plane ran into an American fighter off the coast of America? The aftermath would be a media frenzy about Chinese war mongers. There would be Congressional hearings, with somber politicians denouncing the aggressive Chinese. The military-industrial complex would begin salivating about additional funds being allocated for the protection of liberty.]

The cruiser U.S.S. *Cowpens* almost collided with a Chinese warship that cut across its bow in the South China Sea. [What would the reaction in America be if a Chinese warship was found sailing in the Gulf of Mexico? See the paragraph above.]

Figure 2 is an illustration taken from the *Time* article. It is another example of China upsetting the balance of power...not in the Gulf of Mexico, nor in the Baltic, nor in the Med. Nor anywhere on earth’s waters but the South China Sea. The South China Sea is so named because it is near China.

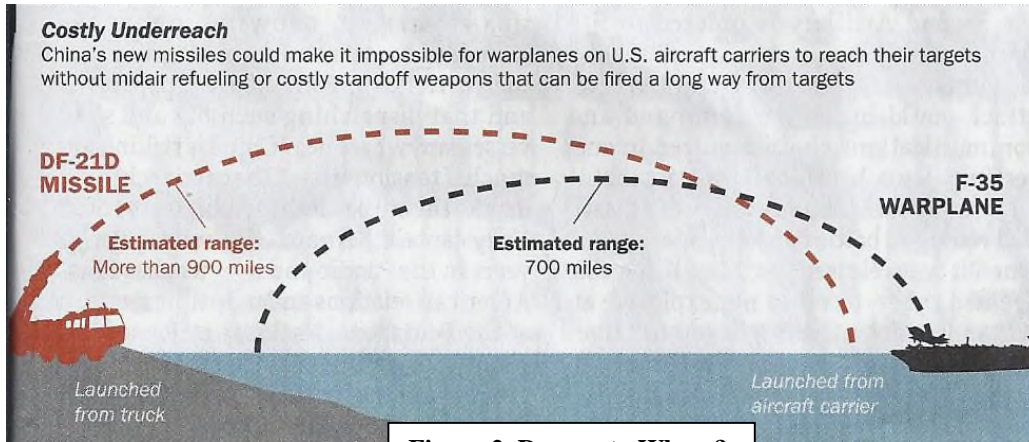


Figure 2. Danger to Whom?

Like the United States, China has its share of chicken hawks. I suspect China's chicken hawks are similar to those in America. They are posturing patriots who are always up for a fight as long as someone else puts on a uniform to do the fighting. I have grown weary of these armed-chair warriors, but some of their rantings on the television talk shows are alarming.

Keeping an Eye on Matters

Make no mistake, the Communist Party that runs China is despotic, corrupt, and cruel. It jails protesters. It is increasingly playing a power game against the West.

Furthermore, the Peoples' Liberation Army (PLA) yields considerable influence in China's politics and like the Pentagon, looks to expand its power. We are aware that China's leaders are repressive of freedoms that the western world takes for granted. I emphasize that China is not the guy wearing the white hat.

If China sails an aircraft carrier armed with nukes into the Gulf of Mexico and positions itself a few hundred miles from New Orleans, I will be the first to pull out my saber. I'll head for the local Navy recruiting station and sign-up for the Gray Frogmen. After all, such a flagrant display would indicate China is behaving like America. And that's frightening.

In the meantime, I suggest we Americans ease off the drama-queen saber rattling about an enemy that does not (yet) exist. If we do not, we just might get what we wished for. We might invent one. For the past decade or so, that is the road we have been traveling in regards to China.