

Americans Should Really Understand the Taiwan Issue

Mainstream and Organic Views

Dr. Wordman

American people are proud citizens better versed in American history (The American Revolution and Independence (1776) and her own democratization process: The States grant white male land owners voting rights in 1789, free black male lose right to vote in some States 1792-1838, property qualification dropped for white men 1792-1856, women allowed to vote from 1920, all native Americans granted right to vote, 1924, Chinese immigrants granted the right to citizenship and voting right, 1943, adults 18-21 granted right to vote, 1972) than in foreign relations and global conflicts. The reason may be that there were never wars or foreign invasions occurred on the continent of the United States. Americans went to foreign wars generally out of patriotism, serving the country and the military and supporting the government's foreign policy, interpreted under national security consideration. The engagement of the U.S. in global conflicts prior to WW II and WW I were limited and constrained, it became full scale during WW II making the U.S. the strongest nation in the world as a result. Post WW II, when the spread of Communism flamed to threaten the capitalistic established nations and societies in the first half of the twenties century, the U.S. raised the flag to resist Communism and led the world to fight any Communist country. The American citizens generally accepted that doctrine whole-heartedly but rarely had learned the deep issues involved in the global conflicts, for example, the Korean War (6/27/1950 – 1/31/1955), the Vietnam War (2/28/1961 – 5/7/1975) and the Gulf War (8/2/1990 – present).

Korean War was an anti-Communist war but it evolved into a global conflict of nuclear threat not so much as a threat of Communism. It was obvious, Communist country fared poorly in economical development. The North Koreans finally realized that no suppression could hide the fact that South Koreans live with nearly 20+ times higher per capital GDP than their northern brothers. Now the South Korea and the North Korea are seeking a peaceful settlement, would the American government encourage that or reignite another Korean War to remove the nuclear threat? Wouldn't it make more sense to work with NK, SK and all their geopolitical neighbors together to resolve the nuclear issue by peaceful dialogue?!

Vietnam War was another bitter war; many Americans lost their lives for it, again under the flag of anti-Communism. The U.S. sort of inherited the Indochina regional unrest like a hot potato created by colonialism and the Japanese invasion. The U.S. picked her support and created South Vietnam waving the flags of democracy and anti-Communism but in the end giving in to nationalism that the local people wanted their way of life because of their history, culture and their will of self-governance with no foreign interference. After the war, North Vietnam and South Vietnam are united; perhaps still having conflicts with her neighbors, but Vietnam is striving in her own way of focusing on economic development. Ironically, the U.S. is now considering enticing Vietnam to become one of her strategic partners for her anti-China Policy. Does that make sense?

The U.S. has given up her national draft policy, that is, every eligible citizen (18-25) must serve in the military to meet the call of duty in case of war. As the Vietnam War drew to a close in 1973, the Selective Service announced the cease of draft calls after Richard Nixon, a

conservative Republican, won the Presidential election over Senator George McGovern of S. Dakota, a Democrat and outspoken opponent of war. The present voluntary army system means that the military service has become a professional career which will respond to any duty of war called upon by the Pentagon under the Commander of Chief, the President.

We all knew how George W. Bush started the Iraq war with false information. Subsequently, there are debates of withdrawal from the Middle East from Bush through Obama and now to Trump. But the Gulf War debate had never reached the level like the Vietnam War debate. The simple reason is the draft system. It has become apparent; the President of the U.S. and the Congress must be prudent in managing global conflict and especially careful in initiating any war and the American citizens must raise their understanding of global conflicts so that the citizens can impose their understanding and will onto the elected officials to conduct foreign policies and make sensible war decisions. Citizens must realize that the career military system would not offer the nation a debate process about a war (where the entire nation participates) like a draft system would (since every family has a stake in it).

Recently, the U.S. confronted the “China Competition” by initiating a trade war to reduce trade imbalance. This measure itself can be understood by American citizens (to apply pressure to our trade partners to make them to trade fairly, to open up their markets and to stimulate American industry and corporations to focus on US economy). However, what is not understood by American people is the ever growing anti-China attitude based on national security argument, same arguments similar to previous ones which led to Korean War, Vietnam War and Middle East Wars. In those wars, the American citizens were led to war with no deep understanding of why and whether or not the war was justified. The recent development of US-China Conflict seems to have more issues than the trade imbalance. One issue showing possibility of war is the Taiwan issue. The Taiwan issue was a seven decade old Chinese domestic conflict elevated to the global stage because of geopolitical conflict in Asia, recently heightened by the US Pivot to Asia Strategy. Similar to Korea and Vietnam, the Chinese domestic division was triggered by Communism, thus the U.S. was involved (supporting Taiwan and opposing the Mainland). The involvement of the U.S. should have been ceased when President Nixon signed the Shanghai Communiqué (1972) confirming Taiwan is a part of China and later reinforced by President Carter by formally recognizing PRC as the sole legal entity representing China and severed the official diplomatic relation with Taiwan (1979).

The American people should really understand the Taiwan issue to avoid another mistake of creating a war in Asia involving American military for no benefit. China regards Taiwan as a domestic issue, hoping to resolve it peacefully. The American people should try to understand the issue from Taiwan, China and the U.S. perspective. One article published in World Journal (9/5/2018), by Su Qi, a former Secretary of Taiwan’s National Security Council, offers such a perspective. On the crucial issue, whether Mainland China would use military force to unite Taiwan and whether the U.S. would interfere with military force, Su states: Based on historical facts, China has not engaged in any military conflict after the Cold War; her wars were taking place only at peripheral regions of her national border, over sovereignty issue, nothing to do with Communism. He further points out that China’s war management generally goes through three clear phases, a warning period, then surprise attack and quick ending and withdrawal, meaning a rational behavior.

Su reemphasizes that whether (or not) the Taiwan Strait would break out into a military conflict depends on the behavior of the Taiwan government. Whether a conflict will escalate into a war would depend on the U.S. and whether the war would become serious would depend on China's decision. At the moment, Taiwan's current administration is marching onto an anti-China path mimicking the U.S. despite of Mainland China's friendly gesture and generous offering in trade and benefits to Taiwan. The U.S. currently seems to be using the Taiwan issue to antagonize China by passing the Taiwan Travel Act, dedicating a big building for the American Institute in Taiwan (US Representative in Taiwan) and encouraging Taiwan to buy more US arms and develop submarines, all challenging the redline of the Mainland China raising probability of war. As American citizens, we must ask: Why do we want to trigger a war in Taiwan Strait? What will we gain? What did we learn from the Korean and Vietnam wars? Should we seriously rethink of our present and changing China Policy?!