Seizing the Initiative

China Sees U.S. Going After Asia Next

BY IRVIN BAXTER JR.

It is not far fetched to think that China or North Korea may take confrontational actions against the U.S. as a result of the opportunity created by the war in Iraq.

It had been thought that China's new president, Hu Jintao, would not carry forth with the hard line and aggressive policies of his predecessor, Jiang Zemin. Not so. In fact, Hu may end up presiding over Beijing's eventual takeover attempt of Taiwan, a move certain to elicit an immediate "whatever it takes" response from the U.S. military.

Earlier this year, Chinese President Hu Jintao said that Beijing will be paying more attention to global developments, a euphemism for what China regards as ugly American imperialism and unilaterally. Hu said that China must make "good preparations before the rainstorm" and that it should "be in a position to seize the initiative."

Seize the initiative? What initiative?

In the past, the Chinese Communist Party has let it be known that some form of confrontation with the U.S. is inevitable. In light of the Iraqi war, they are now convinced that this conflict could come earlier than expected, and indeed be their window of opportunity. In March, a committee headed by Hu, the Communist Party's secretive Leading Group on National Security, has been holding meetings to discuss ways for China to handle the Iraqi crisis.

In particular, Beijing has been stating that it sees the war in Iraq as America's first attempt in earnest "to build a new world order under U.S. domination." Furthermore, it is understood that after Iraq, Washington will soon turn to Asia and begin efforts to "tame China." The most alarming development in this regard is Hu's belief that the U.S. will take on North Korea, China's ally, as early as this summer.

Beijing's "keep a low profile" strategy no longer seems like a viable strategy. According to a recent CNN report from Hong Kong, an unnamed senior Chinese diplomat expressed that Beijing should be adopting a more proactive if not aggressive policy to thwart U.S. aggression. The official also stated that hard line factions in the People's Liberation Army are advocating that China should provide weapons to North Korea to help defend herself from an expected American missile strike at its nuclear facilities.

Independence referendum for Taiwan

Meanwhile, Beijing's Taiwan Affairs Office is reacting vehemently to a possible independence referendum that may soon be proposed in the Taiwan parliament. Such a referendum, according to mainland China's Taiwan Affairs spokesman, would be illegal, invalid, doomed to failure, a violation of international law, and a move certain to lead Taiwan to the brink of disaster.

"All the Chinese people should stay alert for the attempt by a handful of pro-independence members to promote Taiwan independence and split the motherland," said spokesman Zhang Mingqing.

The drive toward Taiwanese independence has been loud and steady since 1999 in spite of a consistent stream of promises from Beijing that such a move would mean war. Four years ago, the pro-independence DPP adopted a resolution stipulating that any altering of the island's status quo would have to be decided through a referendum by all of Taiwan's citizens and not by an executive decision by the island's elected officials.

Since then, the island elected DPP leader Chen Shui-bian to its presidency, and now after three years at the helm, the dreaded referendum is for the first time actively being considered.

India, Pakistan test missiles

Concurrent with the war in Iraq and tensions brewing in the Far East, intense hostilities between India and Pakistan have flared up again. Pakistani-trained Muslim terrorists massacred 24 Hindus in the India-controlled disputed province of Kashmir.

As both nations defiantly conducted illegal missile tests during the first week of the U.S.-led war in Iraq, the conflict appears to be on the same course as it was last year when twice the two nuclear-armed countries came to the hairy edge of all-out war.

With U.S. forces pinned down in Iraq for the foreseeable future, North Korea, China, India and Pakistan may never find a better time to carry out their declared intentions concerning their neighbors. These powers, with their combined populations of 2.6 billion, could create a sure formula for igniting World War III.