

Long Time Coming

The Second Sino-American War

The first war between China and the U.S. (in Korea, from 1950 to 1953) was largely a war of rifles against jet planes. Both China and the U.S. are now preparing for a second war, over Taiwan and over who will be the hegemonic power in East Asia. If war breaks out, it will be unlike anything the world has seen.

Ben Seattle -- August 18, 2022 -- 820.749.pm

Posted at: <http://communism.org/node/4028>

1. What just changed in East Asia?

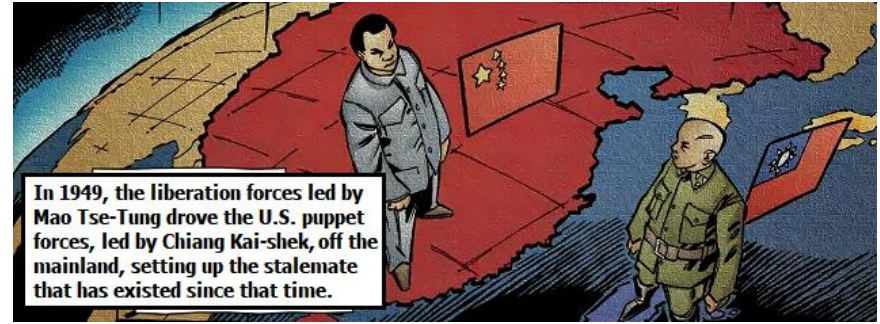
The United States and China have long been on a collision course in the Asia Pacific, centered around the strategic island nation of Taiwan. Taiwan is currently protected by the U.S., but China considers Taiwan to be a rebellious province, and is determined to reclaim it in the next decade or two. For more than ten years, China and the U.S. have been taking steps in the economic, tech, political and military spheres to prepare for a contest of strength, as each side engages in what are called "salami slicing" tactics [1] that slightly improve its position (ie: one thin slice at a time, at the expense of its rival) without triggering a war.

China's new tactic: "the noose"

This month, in response to the provocative visit to Taiwan by U.S. politician Nancy Pelosi, China took the wraps off its bold new tactic: a series of regular military exercises (which also function as partial and temporary blockades) surrounding the island nation on 6 sides--that can act like a noose. So far, the noose is relatively loose. However, these exercises will be repeated from time to time--and with each provocation by the U.S. and the Taiwan authorities--the noose will tighten.

A confusing situation for activists in Taiwan

The increase in tension and the threat of war in East Asia puts the working classes in Taiwan, China, the U.S. and other countries



During the "White Terror", from 1947 to 1949, the KMT murdered tens of thousands of Taiwanese civilians for things such as knowing how to read and write, in order to eliminate any possibility of resistance.

More than 140 thousand more were then thrown into squalid prisons where many met a slow death.

in a difficult and confusing situation. War between China and the U.S. could easily escalate into a disaster for all humanity, and must be struggled against. But we must also find ways to show solidarity with the workers in Taiwan--who are faced with the task of defending their hard-won democratic rights (including their right to independent political speech and organization) and their right to national self-determination, while being at ground zero in a fight between the rising and declining superpowers.

For what it's worth -- Caveat Lector

This essay consists of what I believe needs to be said. It represents my effort to provide perspective on these matters. Many readers may not like it. Others may find it helpful. It is a mixture of fact and opinion. It is not possible (much less practical) for me to footnote or document everything I say (although I have included a few references). Readers who require proof of every controversial statement are welcome to learn from the reporting of the Economist, the New York Times, Foreign Affairs, the Rand Corporation, Global Times--or the left press.

2. How did things get this way?

Taiwan has been part of China (according to some claims) since the days when the Roman empire was at its peak. In its long history, China has seen periods when it was weak and divided by outside powers and, as a result, suffered greatly. European civilization was the first to develop modern capitalism, technology and weapons, and wasted little time before looting and raping the rest of world, including Asia. In the 1600's, regions of Taiwan were ruled by the Spanish and the Dutch. In the 1800's, mainland China itself was carved up by outside powers like a melon. Japan grabbed Taiwan from China in 1895. Until Japan's defeat in 1945, Japan used Taiwan as a base for its invasion of China. For China, foreign military power on Taiwan is a bitter memory.

Taiwan becomes "unsinkable aircraft carrier" for U.S.

Four years later, in 1949, China liberated itself from the rule of the U.S. puppet Chiang Kai-shek, and the puppet KMT army retreated to Taiwan (which was protected by the U.S. 7th fleet--and regarded, in the words of General Douglas MacArthur, as an "unsinkable aircraft carrier"). The KMT massacred tens of thousands of Taiwanese civilians (and threw another 140,000 into squalid prisons, where many died) [2] for things like knowing how to read and write, in order to eliminate any possible sources of resistance. This was the origin on the current separation of mainland China and Taiwan.

Korea: the first Sino-American war

China and the U.S. soon came to blows in Korea, in 1950, where China bloodied the U.S. army and fought the U.S. to a stalemate, in spite of a vast difference in technology. MacArthur wanted to respond by using nuclear weapons against China, but China stood firm and, instead, Truman fired MacArthur. U.S. bombing killed up to one fifth of the population of North Korea [3].

Nixon-Mao and the US-China Alliance

50 years ago, in 1972, Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger visited Mao Tsetung and Chou En-Lai in Beijing, and the U.S. and China created a defacto alliance against their mutual enemy at the time,

the Soviet Union, and more-or-less agreed that the status of Taiwan would be left ambiguous, to be determined later. Both sides understood that this meant that things would eventually be determined by the relative strength of China and the U.S.

The first several decades of the alliance were profitable for both countries. The Soviet Union collapsed in 1991 and broke apart into Russia, Ukraine, and other countries. China provided cheap labor to Western countries, and China industrialized with the help of technology and capital from the U.S., Europe and Japan. The economies of both the U.S. and China grew. By some estimates, the economy of the U.S. is now five times larger than it was in 1980, while the economy of China, which grew much faster, is now more than 50 times larger.

China is now more-or-less the equal of the U.S. in terms of the size of its economy, and has become the manufacturing center of the world and the main trading partner of most countries. And China's military is now more-or-less the equal of the U.S. military in the East Asia region--and growing fast. Taiwan has also grown, and is now the world's main source of the most advanced computer chips used in both cell phones and military equipment.

The end of the alliance was inevitable

The period of stability in US-China relations lasted until a little more than 10 years ago. As China's power grew, strategic thinkers in the U.S. recognized it was time to see it as an emerging imperialist rival and adversary, and strategic thinkers in China recognized it was time to become more assertive. Taiwan was a can that both sides had, for decades, been kicking down the road. But there comes a time when you run out of road.

The status quo that has existed for decades is now collapsing--not so much because of the "salami slicing" tactics that each side is using to improve its position--but because of the simple and inevitable fact of uneven growth. It is really as simple as that.

China is no longer weak in comparison to the U.S. In a world that is based on imperialist power and imperialist logic--where all

countries are ruled, essentially, by the need for the long-term expansion of their capital [4] -- this means that both China and the U.S. must scramble, as fast as they can, to get ready for war.

Although neither side wants war, China has made clear that it is determined to retake Taiwan--and that it believes the U.S. has neither the ability to stop it--nor the stomach for a real fight. China's assessment is most likely correct. If not--and if the U.S. persists in attempting to stop China from retaking Taiwan--then it is hard to see how war can be avoided.

3. Is Taiwan like Ukraine ?

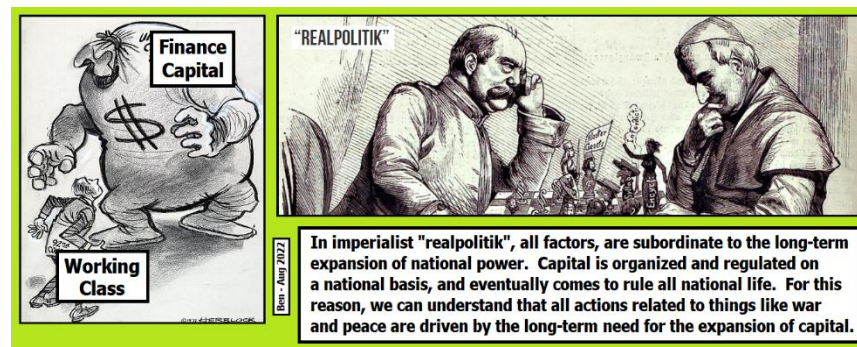
There are many geopolitical similarities, as well as differences, between Russia's current invasion of Ukraine (and attempt to "recover" Ukraine and absorb it into Russia) and China's efforts to reclaim Taiwan. Both Taiwan and Ukraine are strategically located independent nation-states allied to U.S. imperialism that are threatened by much larger authoritarian (ie: single-party) states of which they were once a part.

Magnitude: China's economy vastly bigger

One of the key differences between Taiwan and Ukraine concerns magnitude: the size of the Russian and Ukrainian economies (added together) is probably around \$1.5 trillion, while the economies of China and Taiwan (added together) is around \$15 trillion (ie: 10 times bigger) and roughly the size of the economy of the U.S. Other statistics (such as population, trade volumes, military budgets, etc) give us a similar story. The bottom line is that China is way bigger and more important in nearly every way.

Geography: harder to invade, but harder to supply

As an island nation with lots of mountains, Taiwan would be far more difficult to invade. Ukraine has a lengthy border with Russia and is mostly flat. The other side of being an island is that Taiwan would be far more difficult for the U.S. to resupply. Also Taiwan is only 100 miles from major Chinese cities and military bases, while it is nearly 7 thousand miles from Los Angeles. The U.S.



has military bases near Taiwan, but in a war they could be put out of action.

4. Is there an alternative to "realpolitik"?

In comparing Taiwan to Ukraine, we need to make a clear and fundamental distinction between:

- (a) realpolitik (ie: might makes right, and the only interests that count are the interests of the powerful) and
- (b) the interests of the working class and oppressed.

Most articles and analysis (including, unfortunately, those by many trends on the "left") simply ignore (or only pretend to be concerned about) the class interests of workers as an international class which has no country, and which extends solidarity to workers everywhere. However, the interests of the workers as a class are the starting point and the key to:

- (a) cutting through the bullshit and mystification on issues like this--and
- (b) understanding how we can take effective action--against war and for democratic rights--rather than be playthings in the hands of one or another imperialist power.

Only class politics can cut through the bullshit

Here (from a facebook thread) is a good description of the kind of bankruptcy that most of the shallow or social democratic "left" has fallen into:

"no problem is solved by mystifying the issues. In particular, conflating opposition to imperialism with supporting one imperialist power against another has already been shown to result in three different and conflicting but wrong positions on Ukraine - support Russia, support NATO or refuse solidarity with the Ukrainian resistance in the name of opposing 'both sides'."

Self-determination needed to overcome distrust between workers

From ancient times to the modern day, the main tactic of ruling classes everywhere has been divide-and-rule. If the oppressed are kept busy fighting amongst themselves--they will not have time or energy to think about overcoming their oppression. Hence, divisions along racial, ethnic, national or religious lines are used by ruling classes to incite one section of the oppressed against another.

In response, the working class has developed the principle of self-determination, in order to overcome national distrust and build international solidarity. The principle of self-determination holds that the peoples of any region that have a common territory, economic life and culture must have the right to determine their own destiny.

This means that the people of Ukraine must have the right to be independent from Russia (if that is what they want) and similarly,

the people of Taiwan (or Hong Kong) must have the right to be independent from China (if that is what they want).

The sentiment in Taiwan at this time is overwhelmingly in opposition to becoming integrated with China in the way that Hong Kong has--where workers have no real political rights and are left feeling that they are under the thumb of a police state. The main factor in this, according to one article I have read, is the experience of the many Taiwanese who have spent time working in China.

This means that we must find ways of expressing real solidarity with, and supporting, the democratic aspirations of Taiwanese workers.

The need to avoid becoming a pawn

Things get more complicated when one imperialist power attempts to co-opt efforts to gain or defend national independence as part of its rivalry with another imperialist power. Since the principle of self-determination emerges from the needs of workers to overcome distrust along national lines--then it also becomes necessary to avoid being used as a pawn by one imperialist power to oppress the population being ruled by another.

Where and how to draw the line?

Where and how to draw the line between defending national independence, on the one hand, and on the other hand becoming a pawn in the hands of a rival imperialist power--can be confusing, and requires careful consideration and understanding of the weight of many factors, but the distinction is often made on the basis of who has the initiative.

In other words, it is necessary to support the Ukrainian resistance to Putin's invasion and recognize the right of the Ukrainians to get arms from any source, including NATO--but this is not the same thing as supporting ground or air forces under U.S. or NATO command being active in Ukraine--much less Russia. There is also the need to figure out to how to avoid becoming dependent on NATO in such a way that independent action is not possible.

Similar considerations would apply to Taiwan.

We need productive public discussion and debate

I am hardly an expert on these matters, so I will leave it at that, other than to add that what is helpful and needed, to untangle issues like this, is productive public discussion and debate that draws on the knowledge and insight of activists who are committed to a class-based perspective based on international solidarity. There is no substitute for this.

Which forces will support the Taiwanese workers?

Ultimately, the forces that will support the working class in Taiwan will be the working classes in China, in the U.S. and elsewhere. How the mutual support and solidarity between the different sections of the international working class will be made visible and effective remains a problem to be solved. We will need to find ways to unite with our class brothers and sisters in other lands. I am hopeful that eventually efforts in this direction that make effective use of social media will be better organized.

We need to keep in mind that it is not only the workers in Taiwan who do not want to live in a police state--the same also applies to the workers in China--where the authorities routinely detain or arrest activists and dissident journalists by using the catchall accusation of "picking quarrels and provoking trouble". Moreover, at this time, the workers in every country on earth live under the rule of an exploiting class that represents only the interests of capital--and which is steadily making everything worse: increasing insecurity while threatening humanity with war and even steadily destroying our planet. All this must (and will) be swept away.

5. Will the U.S. and China go to war?

If so, how bad will it be?

"We should remember the history of World War I. Not one of the leaders who entered that war would have done so if he had known what the outcome would be like."
-- Henry Kissinger



Photo (1910) shows (starting with back row, left-to-right) the kings of Norway, Bulgaria, Portugal, Germany, Greece, Belgium, Spain, Britain and Denmark.

On the eve of destruction -- Photo of European kings shortly before the first world war. They had no idea what they were getting themselves into. By the time it was over, 15 million people were dead, and workers' revolutions had broken out, or were about to break out, in Russia, Germany and Hungary.

The first questions many have when considering the potential of a war between the U.S. and China are:

- (1) how likely is this to actually happen?
- (2) could it escalate to the use of nuclear weapons?
- and,
- (3) just how bad could it be?

All three questions can be answered with just three words: "nobody really knows". People have opinions. People have hopes. But nobody really knows. This reminds us of how European leaders sleptwalked into the first world war, without having any idea of what they were getting themselves into. By the time it was over, 15 million were dead, and workers' revolutions had broken out, or were about to break out, in Russia, Germany and Hungary.

Kissinger's warning

Henry Kissinger has warned that a war with China could be "catastrophic" and "worse than the world wars that ruined European civilization". More recently, he said "the United States should not by subterfuge or by a gradual process develop something of a 'two-China' solution, but that China will continue to exercise the

patience that has been exercised up until now". This July, he added that the actions of the U.S. have brought it to "the edge of war" and appear to be motivated more by domestic politics than by "any concept of how this is going to end or what it's supposed to lead to". It is not reassuring when Kissinger (a notorious war criminal whose actions in Cambodia helped ignite the genocide there) is concerned that things are going too far.

One area where the U.S. military is ahead of China is in nuclear weapons. The U.S. could kill hundreds of millions of Chinese, while China could "only" kill dozens of millions of people in the U.S. This is supposed to give the U.S. "leverage" in a confrontation--but this is criminal insanity.

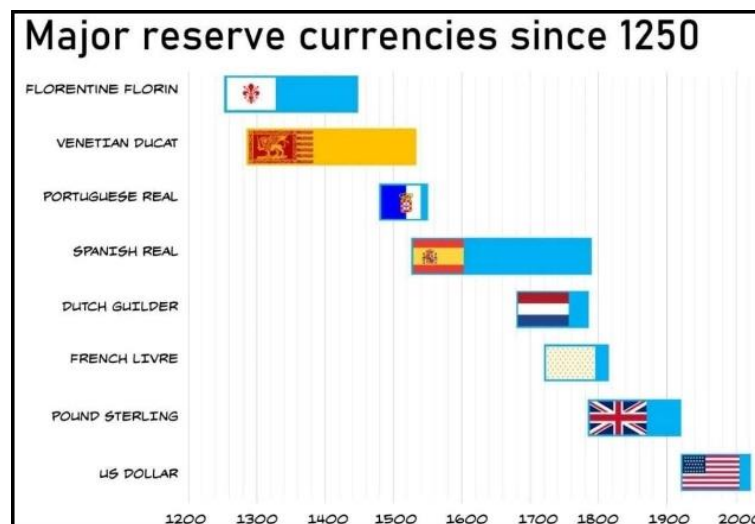
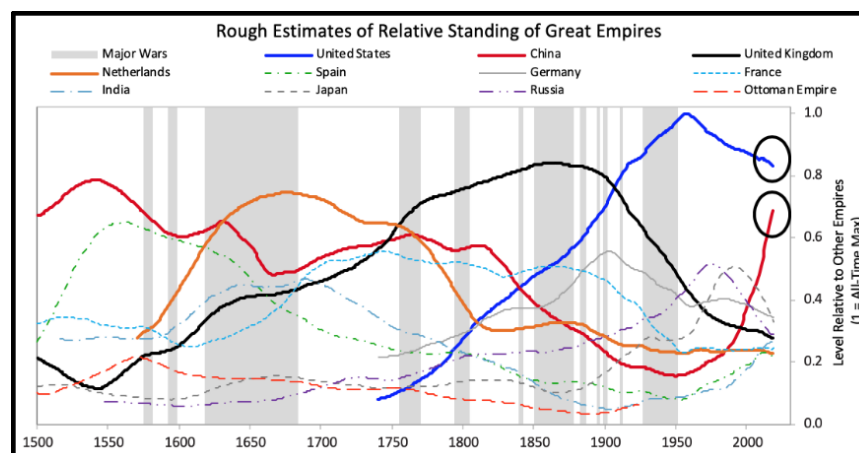
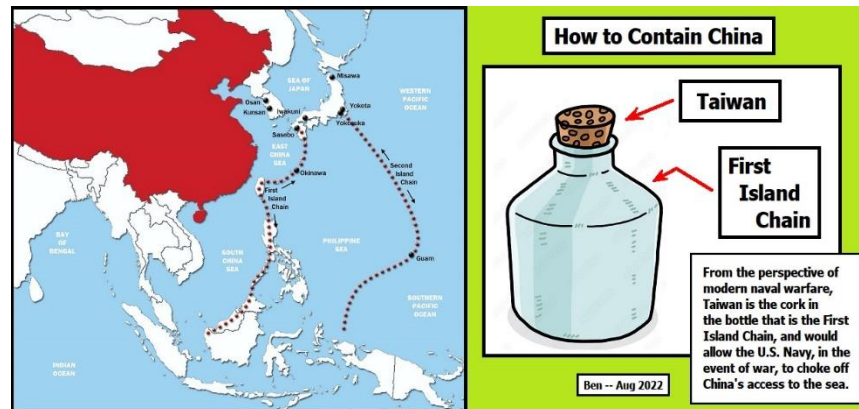
Taiwan is "the cork in the bottle"

There are many competing (and shallow) explanations for the gathering storm in East Asia. But there is actually a single simple explanation that stands above all others. The practical aspects of modern naval warfare mean that Taiwan is "the cork in the bottle" that U.S. imperialism is attempting to use to "contain" China. This bottle is the "first island chain". In the event of a war, the U.S. navy would use this to choke off China's access to the sea. China cannot escape this containment except by taking Taiwan.

And China has become too powerful to keep contained.

That is why China is willing to go to war, if necessary, to regain Taiwan. China obviously prefers to avoid war, which could easily escalate quickly (modern military technology heavily favors the side which strikes first, and strikes as hard as possible). War could easily devastate the economies of China, East Asia and even most of the world. But China is China, and it can not be contained.

U.S. imperialism also has a powerful motive for attempting to hang on to Taiwan: it is attempting to postpone or avoid the loss of its status as the dominant power in East Asia. Once the U.S. loses control over Taiwan--then other things are likely to happen, one after the other, like a row of dominoes.



But the last time the U.S. was concerned about falling dominoes--it got into a war in Vietnam. That did not turn out well.

Ray Dalio's book on the changing world order

Ray Dalio's excellent book "Principles for dealing with a changing world order" explains that the world is going through a major change of a kind that tends to happen approximately once per century:

- (a) the Dutch pushed the Spanish aside to become the major world power
- (b) then Britain pushed the Dutch aside
- (c) then the U.S. pushed the British aside
- (d) now it is China's turn.

There are fundamental economic reasons for these things related to a gradual buildup and accumulation of debt that leads to a collapse of credit. As the U.S. is pushed aside, the dollar will lose its status as the world's reserve currency, and the value of U.S. capital markets will likely fall. This may be the great fear that now threatens to plunge the world into a terrible war.

The demographic argument

Many analysts in the U.S. believe that China's power will soon peak for demographic reasons (ie: a rapidly shrinking and aging population) [5]. For this reason, these analysts believe that if the U.S. can hang on to its predominant status for a few more years, it will be able to maintain its current hegemony. There is certainly some truth in this argument--but I regard it as mainly wishful thinking on behalf of a declining empire. I find Dalio's argument to be far more solid.

Driving off the edge of a cliff

A war between China and the U.S. is not inevitable, but with every passing year we can see it getting closer. China's propaganda arm, "Global Times", posted a cartoon showing U.S. politicians disregarding warning signs and driving off a cliff. I have been following this story with great interest since Nixon went to China, and that is what I see in my mind every day when I read the news.

China is winning the information war

China's propaganda is clear, consistent, easy to understand, created on a daily basis, and in large quantity and (more so than the propaganda of the U.S.) is based on the kind of truth that people can easily see.

Here is an example of one of its consistent themes: China creates what people need while the U.S. mainly creates trouble.

Ben -- Aug 2022

Zhang Meifang 张美芳
@CGMeifangZhang · Follow
China government official

The #US makes war. #China makes most everything else. Who exactly is leading the world in the right direction? #GDI #SDG #BRI #sharedfuture

3:09 AM · Aug 6, 2022

Propaganda image from China's "Global Times" showing U.S. politicians disregarding warnings and driving off a cliff

Splitting China from the global supply chain for semiconductor chips

6. Who is winning the information war?

There are various forms of war. Dalio's book talks about trade and economic war, technology war, geopolitical war, and capital war. These usually start up before things escalate to military war. The U.S. and China have already started these lesser forms of war. For example, the U.S. effort to comprehensively choke off China's ability to manufacture advanced computer chips, by splitting off China from all stages of the world's associated supply chains, is now called "ka bozi" (translated as "strangulation") and is widely discussed on the Chinese internet.

Of particular interest is the online war of ideas, in which China and the U.S. compete on social media. The social and political weight of public opinion, as expressed on social media and elsewhere, is rapidly increasing, and is likely to have a huge impact on the ability of both sides to fight a protracted military war.

U.S. imperialism discovered the impact of public opinion during the war it waged in Vietnam--when the popularity of the antiwar movement in the U.S. led to its soldiers in Vietnam shooting their officers and the disintegration of its army.

It looks to me like China is kicking butt in the war of ideas. China creates clear, compelling and consistent propaganda (articles and cartoons) on a daily basis. The propaganda from U.S. media, on the other hand, is poor, confusing, and increasingly at odds with the events that are unfolding in front of people.

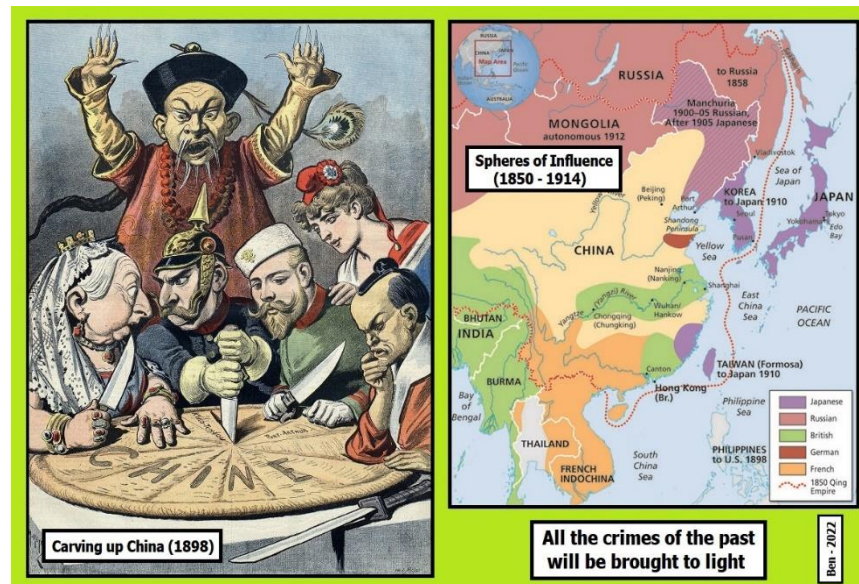
China's line:

China's line--as directed toward the populations in East Asia is simple: the U.S. is the troublemaker in East Asia. The U.S. is "here today and gone tomorrow". China makes things that people need--such as products and infrastructure, while the U.S. mainly makes trouble. China makes countries wealthy, while the U.S. destroys the countries (like Iraq, Afghanistan, etc) it is supposedly attempting to help--then leaves to make trouble somewhere else.

For example, one of the Chinese articles I read about Indonesia said that while the U.S. efforts to keep China down are no more permanent than gum stuck to one's shoe--the high-speed rail system that China is building in Indonesia will be around long after U.S. troublemaking is forgotten. It looks to me like readers in the region will see a lot of truth to this kind of argument.

The U.S. line:

The U.S. line, in comparison, appears to be scattered and incoherent. Biden, for example, claimed that he had nothing to do with Pelosi's decision to go to Taiwan. Really? Pelosi got to Taiwan with the assistance of a U.S. aircraft carrier, which provided an armed escort. Biden (who of course is the commander in chief of the U.S. military) had nothing to do with this? A Chinese commentator was asked, in response to this, whether he thought that Biden was stupid or was only pretending to be stupid. He replied that it was both: because if the best you can do is to pretend you are stupid--your credibility will be zero.



Skillful combination of military actions with propaganda

China's new tactic of staging military exercises that may disrupt shipping in the region in response to U.S. provocations has both a military and propaganda dimension--and both, in my opinion, are effective. No one in the region wants to see the increased tension and disruptions. At the same time--it will likely appear to many that this trouble is mainly flowing from U.S. actions.

7. What does it look like when worlds collide?

"The past is never dead. It's not even past"
-- William Faulkner

The quote (above) from Faulkner is one of my favorites. It means that events in the past still influence the present and the future. This is a deeply materialist perspective, and is related to a principle in physics that information cannot be destroyed, as well as the popular saying that "nothing is ever lost".

We are shaped by the same forces that shaped events of the past--and these events leave us all kinds of traces, or clues as they echo in various ways, from one thing or person to another. Many of

these clues can eventually be put together, like the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle, or the fragments of a fossilized dinosaur bone.

What is the relevance, readers may ask, of bringing up this kind of philosophy in an article dedicated to the prospect of war between the world's superpowers?

What is Lost in Snow Comes Forth in the Thaw

Near the beginning of this article, I noted that the U.S. bombing in North Korea killed one fifth of the population there. This simple fact remains unknown to most people today--but it is real, and may be better known in that part of the world--and it helps us understand what imperialism is like--and what it is capable of.

There are countless similar terrible crimes of the past that are largely unknown today--but which are destined to become much better known. Some believe that the truth about all of these terrible crimes will remain dead, buried and forgotten. But it appears to me that all this knowledge will be coming back--with a vengeance--and will eventually shape public opinion--and become as important in war as any bullet, bomb or missile.

Collision ahead

Knowledge of the many crimes of colonialism, and imperialism--and all the things that have been done to hold back humanity--will be knocking at our door. Why? Well, for starters, the social media worlds of China and "the West" appear destined to collide. In the long run, it will be increasingly difficult for the ruling class of each side to conceal from its population the basic truths from the other.

Transparency in China

The Chinese people, for example, will learn about the enormity of the great famine, the massacre of thousands in Beijing in June 1989, as well as the inspiring actions of hundreds of thousands in Hong Kong in 2019 and 2020. People in the West will increasingly learn about the ugly history and actions of their own rulers. Already, the ruling class in the U.S. is frightened by TikTok--which is owned by China and would be more difficult to control than Facebook or Twitter. China's rulers have an effective

Transparency will be increasing as the impact of social media increases

The impact of social media is doubling every decade

social and political impact

2000 2010 2020 2030 2040 2050 2060

Feb 2021

Transparency will impact like Theia

As the revolution in communications unfolds in this century, popular struggles will lift the fog of ignorance about everything important, bring forth political transparency, and make visible all the knowledge that has been concealed from the working class and oppressed.

proto-Earth

Theia

4.5 billion years ago

Before end of this century

Rule of Capital

Transparency and the end of ignorance

Result of collision:
The Earth-Moon system

Result of collision:
Rule of the working class, followed by classless society

All over the world, our ruling classes keep us ignorant. They flood their countless media platforms with escapism and empty sentimentality and saturate us with their divide-and-rule propaganda.

This will change as class conscious activists recognize the need to create politically conscious communities based on transparency and democratic principles, and learn how to use social media platforms with skill and determination.

Ben 2022

and sophisticated system of online censorship, which is largely accepted as necessary by its population. But we will see how well this holds up over time.

Transparency in the U.S.

And this is not the end of it. The secret algorithms used by the major social media platforms in the U.S. are extremely manipulative in what they show us and (even more important) how they restrict the ways we can interact with one another--but a new generation of social media platforms are being developed which hold promise to do away with secret and manipulative algorithms and return power to the people who use these platforms.

The raw material of consciousness

The emergence of transparency is a story in and of itself--and will be as important to humanity as the story of the catastrophe that

may be unfolding in East Asia. Transparency is the raw material that the proletariat will use to make itself conscious as a class, as well as the weapon that it will use to defeat its class enemy. I see all this as a collision of worlds that appears to be inevitable, like the collision 4.5 billion years ago between proto-earth and Theia.

Humanity has entered the century of information war.

8. Does the proletariat have a role in history?

What can we do about all of these things?

Class independent politics cannot exist without clear ideas

From the time that the modern working class emerged in the wake of the industrial revolution more than 200 years ago, it has largely been relegated to the margins of history. The working class "stormed heaven" during the Paris Commune, in 1871, and held power for about two and a half months, before being crushed. The working class stormed heaven again, in 1917, and held power for several years, before being suffocated in difficult and confusing circumstances in the period after Lenin died. And there were other efforts, although there still remains much confusion about all this.

There was (and is) so much confusion that modern China is today characterized as "socialism with Chinese characteristics" by the shallow and social democratic wing of the left, when China would be far more accurately described as "capitalism with Chinese characteristics", or even "Chinese imperialism", as China clearly meets the criteria described by Lenin in his 1916 book "Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism": the economy is based on (1) monopolies and (2) the export of capital.

The confusion about China, and especially the fact that it is considered a form of "socialism" by the bankrupt "left", is a double confusion and a double lie.

The first confusion leads naive activists to think that China's actions deserve support when they do not--much as the bankrupt

"left" has supported the butcher Assad in Syria, and the fascist Putin, as (supposedly) "anti-imperialist".

The second confusion concerns the word "socialism" itself--which originated as a description of a society run by the working class--but has now been prostituted a million times over and used to describe either: (1) efforts to create a "kinder and gentler" version of capitalism or (2) a police state society based on permanent martial law and the suppression of the right of workers to engage in independent politics.

The result of this double confusion, simply put, is that as long as these bankrupt ideas have influence, those activists who do not know any better will not have the ability to understand anything important: (1) they will not be able to show solidarity with or support the struggles of our class brothers and sisters who are fighting for their democratic and national rights, and (2) they will not be able to either understand or explain to anyone that the working class has an alternative to joining coalitions or alliances based on "lesser evil" politics.

We must overcome our isolation

Today, activists who are not chained to bankrupt, shallow, social democratic or "lesser evil" politics -- are largely isolated from one another and from the working class itself. What we need--in order to overcome this isolation and to develop and popularize the clear ideas we need to be effective--is to build communities based on political transparency, principled, open and democratic behavior and a clear focus on the things that are most important.

That's all folks. I welcome discussion and feedback. I am on facebook as "Ben Stevens" and would love to hear from you.

Ben Seattle
#NoWarWithChina

(continued on next page)

9. Notes and references

More by Ben:

Here is an essay I posted in February 2021: "The Coming War between the U.S. and China" (Chapter 7 of a collection of essays) <http://communism.org/node/4021/#7>

Notes:

[1] Salami slicing tactics

(ie: a phrase widely used in articles about the US-China rivalry)

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salami_slicing_tactics

[2] The KMT's White Terror in Taiwan (1947 - 1949, etc)

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White_Terror_\(Taiwan\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White_Terror_(Taiwan))

[3] <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/new-evidence-north-korean-war-losses>

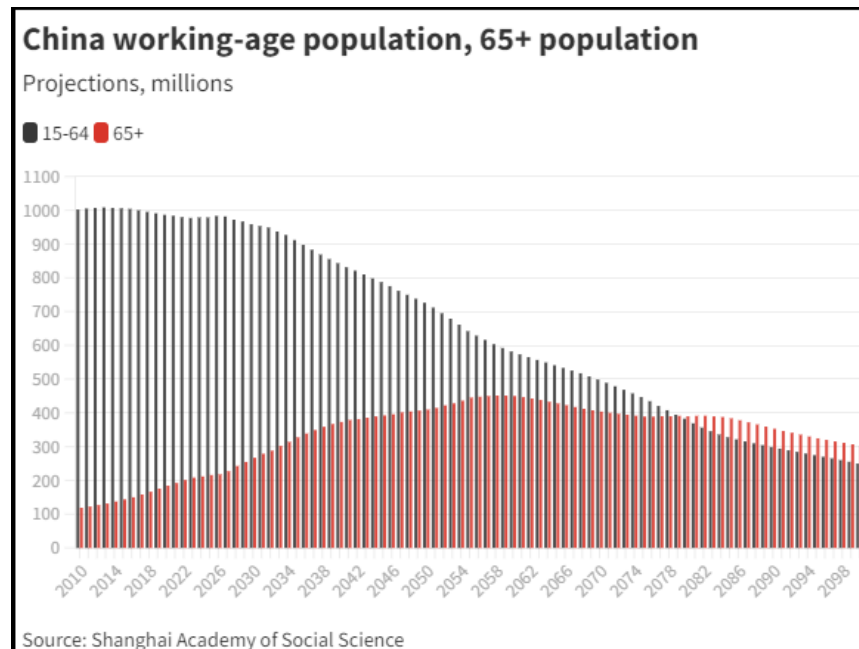
[4] Many readers may see things differently. I recommend Lenin's 1916 book "Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism", where Lenin shows how the evolution of capital has reached a point where all the modern industrialized countries are essentially ruled by finance capital in one form or another.

Lenin also shows that it is the inevitably uneven growth of the various imperialist powers that leads to the need for a redivision of the spheres of influence in the world, since this division is based on strength. And the only real test of strength--is war.

[5] China - demographic dividend vs demographic decline

One of the biggest factors in the increase or decrease in the wealth and power of any country is the ratio of the working age population (which creates wealth) to the elderly population (which needs to be supported by younger workers). When this ratio is high--the country's wealth grows like a weed. When this ratio is small--it is the opposite: stagnation and decline with higher labor costs as the population shifts to care for the elderly.

In 1978, the median age in China was 21 years, and this was a big factor in China's rapid rise. By 2050, the median age may be over



50 years. China's working age population is expected to decrease by 240 million by 2050, while its elderly population is expected to increase by 200 million during the same period (see chart). Later this century, China is expected to have more retirees than active workers. This is shaping up to be a huge crisis for China.

YouTube videos worth watching:

► Will China Invade Taiwan Next?

(a much better than average YouTube video, illustrating what I have called the "cork in the bottle")

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p6sCsOdqXQw>

► China's basic plan (in which 10 or 20 years is compressed into two minutes) is illustrated in this scene from the popular movie "Tombstone" where Kurt Russell confronts Billy Bob Thornton:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z8T6twc5MHU>