IMPLICATIONS OF THE NEW U.S. ADMINISTRATION FOR EAST ASIA: A CHINESE VIEW

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edefining China-U.S. relations

Chinese officials were worried about the dance shift in the view of China-U.S. relationship from a hope of constructive strategic relations to a type of strategic competitor, it has clearly divided a line between itself and the Clinton Administration in dealing with China. Honestly speaking, when President Jiang and Clinton met in October in Washington, and declared to build together a constructive strategic partnership toward the 21st century, there was no issue more important than the reversion to dynasty independence from U.S. missile defense system deployment. To China, the U.S. missile defense has heightened tension and increased the probability of being safe if the U.S. steps in China’s domestic affairs. Not only does China see the U.S. missile defense has harmed China, its campaign declaration of “defending Taiwan” bodes ill for Sino-U.S. relations. During the Presidential campaign, George W. Bush has made a commitment to the aid of Taiwan’s security. He has even repeated this commitment since assuming the Presidency. Given White House’s decision of arms sales to Taiwan this spring, Washington’s relationship with Beijing may have been further deteriorated.

Looking from Beijing, such three issues – redefine strategic relations, transfer of advanced conventional weaponry to Taiwan, and determined development and deployment of missile defense system – have already exposed their relations to significant pressures. In the following, this article will briefly analyze the impact of these issues on East Asia security, with a particular focus on Sino-U.S. relations.

DEFINING CHINA-U.S. RELATIONS

Given this estimate, U.S. Congress has made a law that declared, “Missile defense is the U.S. national policy”. President Clinton approved research and development of missile defenses. The reality, however, has been off the track for a long time. The U.S. has not been able to develop a national missile defense system. Given China’s strong opposition, Washington has decided not to equip Taiwan with Aegis-class destroyers, a platform of Aegis radar system that can detect attack missiles, coordinate and command the battle. The Bush Administration has stated that the U.S. would sell submarines to Taiwan and that China has reasons to suspect the U.S. to abuse its own right of security. Seeking security of one’s own while depriving security of the others is not a selling logic, and obviously will meet opposition.

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With this background, it is unlikely China would sit idle with America building up missile defense and revising/abolishing ABM.

The stepping up of the U.S. weapons sale to Taiwan reflects the hardliner position of the Bush Administration of its first few months. Consequently this stance will be viewed negatively by Beijing, which views their relations too much simplistically. Sino-U.S. relations are more complex than simply a strategic competition or a strategic collaboration can indicate. Both sides recognize each other as a strategic partner. China and the U.S. possess unique characteristics, and the U.S. cannot catch up with China’s strategic deterrence, and risking their bilateral relations as the defense system is perceived to embolden the pro-independence force in Taiwan. Missile defense is also viewed to promote a sense of strategic deterrence, and Washington has been forced to negotiate with Beijing on the missile defense issue. However, the U.S. has not been able to develop any missile defense system. Given China’s strong opposition, Washington has decided not to equip Taiwan with Aegis-class destroyers, a platform of Aegis radar system that can detect attack missiles, coordinate and command the battle. The Bush Administration has stated that the U.S. would sell submarines to Taiwan and that China has reasons to suspect the U.S. to abuse its own right of security. Seeking security of one’s own while depriving security of the others is not a selling logic, and obviously will meet opposition.

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