

KEEP AN EYE ON CHINA – AND TRY NOT TO BLINK

By Don Feder

While the world watches the rise of Hamas – the latest instance of the religion of peace on the march – and other troubling developments in the Middle East, we need to keep an eye on China.

China poses a challenge that is, in many ways, uniquely scary.

At this time, no Moslem state has nuclear weapons. None have, or are likely to have, a modern, high-tech military or a booming economy that can be harnessed to military expansion.

The People's Republic has all of the above. Recent developments bring the coming crisis into dramatic relief.

Last week, China's Ministry of Public Security promised to "strike hard" against rural unrest. "For considerable time to come, our country will be in a period of *contradictions* within people, high crime rates and complex struggles against *enemies*," the official enigmatically announced.

Translation: "There are people who actually resent getting screwed over by Beijing. Said counter-revolutionary elements even put their own interests above those of the party. Let's escalate the campaign against external enemies to divert the attention of the masses."

The Ministry also disclosed that there were around 87,000 “mass incidents” (a Marxist euphemism for protests, demonstrations and riots) last year -- up 6.6% from 2004.

Most of these *mass incidents* were sparked by rural land grabs and developments associated with unrestrained industrialization.

On January 16, the village of Panlong in Guangdong Province exploded. As many as 10,000 riot police were deployed. At least 60 villagers were wounded and a 13-year-old girl was killed. In 2003, officials appropriated land in Panlong, ostensibly to build a superhighway. The protest occurred when villagers learned the truth – that the land was being taken for chemical and garment factories.

In December, a mini-massacre occurred in the village of Donzhou, where residents demonstrated against a decision to locate a coal-fired power plant in their midst. As many as 30 were killed when security forces fired into the crowd,

Lenin once famously remarked that you can't make an omelet without breaking eggs. China's paradoxical economic miracle (capitalist expansion led by communists) has come at a price: China is the most polluted nation on earth. (The World Health Organization reports that, worldwide, seven of the 10 most polluted cities are in China.) The much-vaunted prosperity of Shanghai, Beijing and Shenzhen has bypassed rural areas completely.

The PRC is riding the waves of seemingly boundless prosperity. On January 11, the government announced that its trade surplus *tripled* (that's right, increased by 300%) in 2005. In 2004, China's trade surplus was \$32 billion. Today, it's \$102 billion. The nation's exports climbed to a record \$762 billion. On average,

China's economy has grown by almost 10% a year for the past 30 years – unprecedented in modern times.

But the Chinese miracle is built on factory wages of 30 cents an hour, pollution so bad it can choke you in some parts of the country, and the dispossession and exploitation of farmers.

China's surging economy has meant more than cheap clothing and furniture to the rest of the world.

On January 25, the Pentagon announced a major naval redeployment to the western Pacific. When it's completed, 60% of our submarine fleet will be in these waters.

A Pentagon spokesman admitted the re-deployment is a response to Chinese military expansion – a 13% spending increase in 2005, 11.6% in 2004 and 17.6% in 2003. (Those are the figures Beijing admits to; actual increases probably are much higher.)

China has had double-digit growth in military appropriations for 17 years. In Congressional testimony last year, Pacific fleet commander Admiral William Fallon called it “unprecedented” and “proceeding quite rapidly.”

Even the usually unflappable Japanese are starting to sweat. In late December, Japan's foreign minister, Taro Aso, said China's military growth is “becoming a considerable threat.”

An article in *The New York Times* (October 24, 2005) summarized the situation in ominous detail: “Experts say China has been steadily building up its strategic and conventional capabilities and preparing to project its influence into the western Pacific. Fifteen years ago, experts say, China had a bare-bones military: basic capabilities, but nothing sophisticated or top-of-the-line.”

But after 17 years of relentless weapons acquisition, the People's Republic has "a sophisticated modern military: a massive submarine fleet, an air force stocked with fighter jets, the newest Chinese-developed technology in missile defense, satellite surveillance, radar, and interception – including the ability to fire nuclear-tipped intercontinental ballistic missiles from submarines anywhere in the Pacific Ocean." Not to mention 2.3 million soldiers.

In a June 4, 2005 speech in Singapore, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld asked the obvious question: "Since no nation threatens China, one must wonder: Why this growing investment? Why these continuing and expanding arms purchases? Why these continuing robust deployments?"

The one-word answer: Taiwan. China intends to have the island, and its 23 million people, and its industrial base and its strategic location, regardless of the cost.

In its latest we're-ready-to-start-World War-III-if-we-don't-get-exactly-what-we-want pronouncement, last November the deputy chief of staff of the People's Liberation Army again reminded us: "We will never compromise on this. Taiwan is an issue to be settled among us Chinese (*he means by those Chinese sitting on the Politburo*). Taiwan separatism is a threat. We absolutely oppose Taiwan independence and Taiwan separatism."

China is preparing to challenge the U.S. militarily over Taiwan, and to defeat us if it comes to a war. That's the ultimate objective of ICBM acquisitions, fighter jets, a submarine fleet and double-digit increases in military spending.

As a bonus, Beijing's emphasis on Taiwan creates the external enemy it needs to redirect the smoldering discontent which surfaces from time to time in rural riots.

“Taiwan must be reunified,” China's rulers tell its people. “It's part of our homeland. It's a matter of national pride. Wicked separatists on the island are plotting independence, abetted by American imperialists. This must not be allowed!”

Of course, if the West acquiesces on Taiwan, it will find itself confronted by the next demand. (Like Hitler prior to World War II, there's always the next demand and the next demand -- until it's time to invade Poland.)

China's booming economy drives China's massive military expansion, which in turn is directed toward the conquest of a free people.

What the protestors in Panlong want, the Taiwanese already have – a government that's responsive and accountable, a government they control, a government that weighs a chemical factory or a coal-fired power plant against the human costs of industrialization.

Taiwan could be a model for China. Instead the communists have turned it into a future casus belli.