



China Says It Will Remain Neutral if U.S. Retaliates Against North Korean First Strike

Communist China's state-run *Global Times* ran an editorial on August 10 stating that if North Korea launches missiles that threaten U.S. soil (presumably Guam) first and the United States retaliates, China will stay neutral. While it was that statement that quickly made headlines around the world, there was another side of the coin mentioned in the editorial:



If the U.S. and South Korea carry out strikes and try to overthrow the North Korean regime and change the political pattern of the Korean Peninsula, China will prevent them from doing so.

The editorial did not suggest what means China might take to "prevent" a U.S.-South Korean military operation against Pyongyang. It made no threats.

The editorial, instead, went to great lengths to portray China as the sole moderate force in Asia, trying to position itself between two reckless sabre-rattling nations. Its wording suggested that China was the epitome of moderation amidst a tense crisis in the Korean peninsula.

Among the phrases used in the editorial suggesting that the United States and North Korea are equally guilty for the tense situation in the Korean peninsula:

- "The US and North Korea have both ramped up their threatening rhetoric."
- "The Pentagon has prepared plans for B-1B strategic bombers to make preemptive strikes on North Korea's missile sites."
- "North Korea issued plans to fire four intermediate-range missiles to land 30-40 kilometers from Guam and claimed it would finalize the plan by mid-August."
- "In the near future, it would be highly sensitive if US B-1B fighter jets fly over the Korean Peninsula or North Korea launches missiles in the direction of Guam."

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The editorial speculated (probably correctly) that the possibility of war between the United States and North Korea is very low because both sides prefer to use strong rhetoric to achieve their objectives instead of engaging in a hot war. The writer then goes on to say:

The real danger is that such a reckless game may lead to miscalculations and a strategic "war." That is to say, neither Washington nor Pyongyang really wants war, but a war could break out anyway as they do not have the experience of putting such an extreme game under control.

Considering that the United States and the Soviet Union engaged in four decades of tense exchanges and stand-offs during the Cold War, without a shooting war ever breaking out between the two



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superpowers, the above statement that the United States lacks experience in keeping major geopolitical tension under control is obviously false.

However, during the Cold War period, the United States was not free from war by any means. U.S. troops participated in the Korean War for three years (1950-1953) and in the Vietnam War for 11 years (1964-1975).

It would be an exercise of extreme hypocrisy for China to suggest that U.S. involvement in either Korea or Vietnam was attributable to “lack of experience” in getting its game under control. For the fact of the matter is that China was an active participant in both of those wars. China supported the invasion of South Korea by Pyongyang on June 25, 1950, and later that year, in October, mass Chinese forces crossed the Yalu River and entered the war.

China was also a major player in the war in Vietnam. Starting in 1950, China extended diplomatic recognition to communist North Vietnam and sent weapons, as well as military advisors to assist the communist Viet Minh in its war with the French.

In the summer of 1962, communist Chinese leader Mao Tse-tung agreed to supply Hanoi with 90,000 rifles and guns free of charge. Starting in 1965, China sent anti-aircraft units and engineering battalions to North Vietnam to repair the damage caused by American bombing, man anti-aircraft batteries, rebuild roads and railroads, transport supplies, and perform other engineering works. This freed North Vietnamese army units for combat in the South. China also sent the North Vietnamese 320,000 troops and annual arms shipments worth \$180 million. The Chinese military claims to have caused 38 percent of American air losses in the war.

Therefore, both wars were considered to be Cold War-era proxy wars, with the two major communist powers at the time, the Soviet Union and China, supporting their surrogates in Korea and Vietnam who were fighting against countries backed by the United States.

In its editorial, the *Global Times* attempted to convey the message that China is a paragon of moderation almost to the point of being pacifistic — perhaps the most neutral nation east of Switzerland. (“China opposes both nuclear proliferation and war in the Korean Peninsula,” it wrote.) Though it expresses concern that the provocations between North Korea and the United States may escalate into a shooting war, they ignore the fact that North Korea is China’s surrogate, unlikely to do anything without China’s approval.

If China opposes war in the Korean Peninsula, that represents a major about-face since the last time war broke out in Korea — 1950 — when hoards of Chinese troops crossed the Yalu River and entered the war.

The *Global Times* editorial is an excellent public relations piece, but it serves the interest of China at the expense of the truth. China will never remain neutral in any conflict between Pyongyang and a Western nation. History shows us otherwise.

Photo of Chinese aircraft carrier group: <http://www.afpbb.com/> via wikipedia

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