



Response to "What Really Happened to the Hoyas in Beijing" by Joseph A. Bosco

Joseph A. Bosco [boscoja@gmail.com] is a National Security consultant. He recently retired from the Office of the Secretary of Defense, where he held numerous positions including China Country Desk Officer.

Victor Cha, my esteemed former Georgetown and government colleague, offers his eye-witness account of the recent Bayi Rockets-Hoya basketball fracas to correct "factual errors and misinterpretations" in the reporting. [PacNet 49, "What Really Happened to the Hoyas in Beijing," August 31, 2011]

Except for omitting the Chinese chair-throwing and kicking/stomping of a downed Hoya (both clearly shown in the game videos), his description of the incident tracks with mainstream media accounts of the outrageous behavior of Chinese players, officials, and some fans.

As for the "misinterpretations" of the events, the blatantly biased officiating is explained this way: "[O]ther NCAA teams playing in China like Duke experienced similar problems. Unfortunately, that is what you get when you play in China."

Unfortunately, that is what the world gets in virtually all realms when it deals with today's China. Scorn for the notion of fair play and respect for the rules of the game is evident in a range of China's dishonest and dishonorable behavior: unfair trade practices; currency manipulation; intellectual property theft; proliferation of nuclear and missile technology and materials; environmental degradation; undermining of international development standards on transparency, accountability, and labor; support for other lawless regimes; baseless claims of sovereignty in the global commons; interference with freedom of navigation and overflight; and, of course, violations of human rights.

In his latest book, *On China*, Henry Kissinger writes that China accords no legitimacy and feels no obligation toward an international system it had no part in creating. Apparently, that applies to basketball as well since, no Chinese were present when the game was invented in Western Massachusetts (during the Sino-Japanese War), as far as we know.

Victor's assessment that "In the end, this was a scrap between youthful athletes, not between countries" is only half right. Georgetown's amateur players were representing their school and the United States as sportsmen and ambassadors of good will, nothing more. The professional People's Liberation Army team, however, had a different agenda.

We have seen the PLA's strident aggressiveness before. On two occasions a decade apart, Chinese generals have threatened nuclear attacks on U.S. cities in the event of a US defense of Taiwan. Though China scholars assured us this was

just military bravado and not a reflection of official Chinese policy, the generals were promoted, not fired.

When a reckless and hostile Chinese fighter pilot downed a US EP-3 reconnaissance aircraft in international air space and was killed, the government hailed him as a national hero. The unlawful detention of the American plane and crew was attributed to local PLA assertiveness rather than Beijing's direction.

Incidents of Chinese naval interference with other countries' ships and planes in the South and East China Seas, we are told, are purely decisions of local commanders and ship captains, not part of a pattern of aggressive Chinese behavior. We all know China's rise is purely peaceful.

Is the PLA becoming a rogue military? More likely, it reflects what even Kissinger now concedes is a strong and growing "triumphalist" strain among Chinese strategic analysts who envision an inevitable military conflict with the United States. Such thinking also happens to serve the interests of a Chinese Communist Party whose rule lacks political legitimacy. Rabid nationalism is often a cure-all for such regimes, though it seems finally to have failed China's Libyan ally.

Victor is right that the direction of US-China relations will not be determined by the outcome of a sporting event. After all, Mao cited the barrel of a gun, not a bouncing ball (let alone democratic consent) as the ultimate source of political power. But the conduct of those PLA players on the court reflects how they will behave at their duty stations and that should be worrisome to all of us.

PacNet commentaries and responses represent the views of the respective authors. Alternative viewpoints are always welcomed.