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EDITORIALS

Do business, not politics

“CHINA IS COMING TO TOWN BUYING UP AMERICA.” Sensational and exaggerated as it is, such a portrayal of growing Chinese investment in the US reflects a reverse trend in investment between the two major economies.

A US investor investing in China no longer makes news, as it did 10 years ago. The latest deal in the spotlight is China's Dalian Wanda buying US movie theater chain AMC for \$2.6 billion.

China's foreign direct investment (FDI) in the US could cross a record \$8 billion this year, according to research firm Rhodium Group's recent report. The rising investments will not only provide more business opportunities for Chinese firms, but also create more jobs for local people.

The amount of China's FDI in the US has long been small. But with its economic scale rising rapidly in recent years, more Chinese investors are eager to test the waters in other parts of the world, including the most powerful economy.

Regrettably, their efforts have often been blocked by non-business considerations. The example often cited is China National Offshore Oil Corporation's thwarted attempt to buy Unocal in 2005.

US security considerations on the back of political bias are often behind such moves. Chinese complaints aside, some US research institutions have warned that such willful security checks will discourage foreign investment. The result: Chinese investment in the US has been seriously disproportionate.

Despite the fast increase in China's US-bound investment, only 0.7 percent of FDI into the US came from China in 2011, while China's FDI in the US accounted for only 2.6 percent of its total outbound direct investment.

Moreover, the growth in China's investment in the US, at 44 percent, was much slower than that in Europe (101 percent) and Japan (more than three times).

Few would think that the US could afford to lose Chinese investment to Europe and its other competitors, especially in these turbulent times. China's outbound direct investment reached \$60 billion in 2011 and by 2015, it could explode to \$150 billion, according to official estimates.

Many US-based Chinese companies have created jobs, products and services, not raised security concerns, for local communities. That's why political considerations should yield place to rational thinking when it comes to investment.

Lesson from protests

THIS MONTH SAW ANOTHER PROTEST AGAINST a pollution-related project on Saturday. This time, people in Qidong, Jiangsu province, demonstrated against a pipeline project to discharge wastewater from a paper mill in nearby Nantong city into the sea.

The local government announced the cancellation of the project on Saturday itself because of the residents' objection to the disposal of wastewater off the Qidong coast.

Early this month, residents of Shifang, Sichuan province, protested against the building of a molybdenum copper plant, and the local government cancelled the project.

What do we learn from the two incidents?

Had both local governments communicated and interacted properly with the local residents on the projects they had been planning, they could have avoided the embarrassment of facing demonstrations.

Maybe the environmental concern and worry of the two cities' residents were not totally based on informed judgment. Yet they still had enough reason to challenge the decision of the local governments because there are many precedents of projects earning revenue for local governments but causing serious pollution and trouble for residents. After all, local leaders have the responsibility of giving local residents full information about their governance.

Later, Shifang's top leader admitted regrettably that the local government had not had enough communication with residents, even though the onus of communicating with people lies with the government.

In fact, a local government's lack of concern for the will of residents in its decision-making process is dangerous, especially when people's awareness of their rights and interests is on the rise. The protests in the two cities prove that.

This awareness among people is good for healthy economic development of and social progress in not only a small region, but also the entire country.

Only by attaching enough importance to the will of the people and paying enough attention to their rights and interests can a government reduce the chances of making wrong decisions. And only by keeping the channels of communication open can leaders of a government know the grievances that people have.

The Qidong and Shifang demonstrations should teach local governments to build proper channels of communication and interaction with residents. This is also what a recent central government meeting decided. The meeting said the goal of maintaining social stability is to protect people's interests.

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CHINA FORUM | LIU QIANG

Better to be safe than sorry

China is strengthening its military to safeguard its sovereignty and territorial integrity, not to pose any threat to others

The international strategic landscape has been undergoing profound changes and moving toward a multipolar world since the end of the Cold War.

Despite the global financial crisis and relative decline in its overall strength, the United States is still the only superpower, and a shift in its strategic thinking, design and action still has a great impact on international security. The US' strategic eastward shift to Asia, in particular, is forcing the Asia-Pacific region to confront the most complex international security situation.

China, as an important member of the Asia-Pacific region, has proposed a new security concept featuring mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality and coordination, aimed at building a harmonious world. However, some countries have voiced concern over its rapid economic growth and moderate military buildup, necessary for national defense. Some still see China through the Cold War lens and are promoting the “China threat” theory. Containment and prevention are still their main strategy against China.

One of the most important purposes of the US' strategic shift to Asia is to contain China. This is proved not only by some of the US' strategic reports, but also by the conversations

and speeches of some senior US military officials.

Washington's involvement in territorial and sovereignty disputes between China and some of its neighbors has led to the formation of an alliance of sorts between some claimant countries and the US. Their aim is to confront China, which would dramatically reduce China's window of opportunity for peaceful development.

The current security environment for Beijing is the most complex and severe since the foundation of the People's Republic of China. As the world's largest developing country, China faces challenges to its national sovereignty because of the Taiwan issue and territorial (territorial sea) disputes, international terrorism, and the “three evil forces” of separatism, extremism and terrorism. Then there are challenges posed by the global financial and economic crisis to China's economic growth and the added pressures brought about by mounting “international responsibility” to resolve the Korean Peninsula nuclear issue, the Iranian nuclear issue, and climate change and other global problems.

Of late, Japan, Vietnam and the Philippines have been unwarrantedly challenging China's sovereignty over the Diaoyu Islands and other islands in the South China Sea. Disregarding China's rational and well-intentioned proposal, some of these countries are occupying China's islands and reefs,

carving up waters, and plundering its resources. This infringement upon its national interests is a serious challenge for China.

Despite China's utmost restraint and best intentions to resolve the disputes in the South China Sea through peaceful negotiations, claimant countries such as Vietnam and the Philippines, are expediting efforts to unilaterally explore resources in the South China Sea and trying to internationalize bilateral disputes.

Backed by the US, and Japan and India to some extent, Vietnam and the Philippines are taking steps to strengthen their illegal control over the islands and accelerate their exploration and exploitation of energy resources in the South China Sea.

The South China Sea disputes involve China's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and major political, economic and military interests. Some countries are using China's good will and restraint as an opportunity to make profits. If China fails to take effective measures to warn countries that infringe upon its interests, it will become the biggest loser in the South China Sea disputes.

The South China Sea disputes have intensified because some claimant countries have changed their strategic thinking by reviewing the geo-strategic and economic value of the South China Sea.

China has sincerely proposed “shelving disputes and conducting

joint development” in the South China Sea. It has never said that it will resolve the territorial (including territorial sea) disputes forcibly. This fully demonstrates China's sincerity in promoting the new security concept it has advocated. But some countries have disregarded China's well-intentioned proposal and continue to challenge its national security.

If these countries take China's good will as weakness, they should know that when it comes to safeguarding national sovereignty and territorial integrity, no country would renounce the use of force, even if it is the last resort. This is the “iron law” followed by all states and this is why the US accords special priority to its military supremacy.

China's military strength may be rising because of its fast economic development, but it is still far behind the top military powers. Therefore, those who exaggerate China's military strength do so with ulterior motives. China's military buildup until now has not brought about any essential change in the world's military pattern. And this pattern will not change fundamentally in the next 10 to 20 years.

China has been modernizing its military to safeguard its national security, and its strategy is defensive in nature. The development of its military's strength will only contribute to regional and world peace, for China is an active contributor to world peace, not a trouble-monger. But that does not mean China will refrain from using force to defend its national sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Some Western countries, led by the US, have been using force to defend their national interests since the end of World War II. Ironically, they view China's military buildup as a threat, even though it has never used force to intervene in the internal affairs of other countries. It is high time that countries used to using force frequently to resolve issues of national interests reflected on the difference between their words and deeds.

Since its national security faces both real challenges and potential threats, China has the right to strengthen the military to safeguard its national security and legitimately use force to protect its national interests. Western countries are questioning China's defense policy and seeing it as a threat because they still suffer from Cold War mentality.

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ZHAI HAIJUN



HONG LIANG

Dress should show style, not too much skin

An innocuous message on Shanghai Metro's website advising young women to refrain from dressing too revealingly in the summer has stirred a storm of protests, alleging sexism on Internet forums.

Angry critics accused the subway operator of unfairly blaming the rise in petty sex crimes in subway cars on the way women chose to dress. They may have a point. But coming from Hong Kong, I am amazed by the very “casual” way Shanghai women, and men, dress not only for play but also at work.

Of course, businesses in Hong Kong have been following the example set by the government to promote casual dress in the work place. The objective of the exercise is to help save energy by cutting down the use of air-conditioning in the summer months.

But in Hong Kong, being casual has its rules. In the workplace at least, most people are fully aware that there

are unwritten dress codes they must observe.

Such awareness is apparently absent in Shanghai. In the morning on the commercial strip of Huaihai Road Central where my office is, you can see crowds of women going to work in shorts, the very short type, tank tops and flip-flops. Men usually dress a bit more formally. But you can still run into some in the elevator wearing T-shirts, knee-length pants and sandals, and they aren't couriers. In fact, most couriers wear their companies' uniform.

And then, you see people dress in the other extreme. There are women who go to work in the morning dressed like they are on the way to a punk concert, wearing gothic makeup that would make Johnny Depp in *Alice In Wonderland* look, well, normal.

I once discussed this with my colleagues, and they thought I was too old-fashioned. I thought so too until I read a story in Forbes magazine in

which the writer quoted Jacqui Stafford, fashion editor and corporate style consultant as saying: “At all times, whether you're the secretary or CEO, people will judge you in nano-seconds by what you're wearing.”

According to the experts interviewed in that article, shorts and flip-flops are a definite no-no in the office. But contrary to our agreed dress practice in Hong Kong, sleeveless tops are fine, provided, of course, you have the figure to pull it off, according to Stafford. The base line, she said, is “you want to show style, not too much skin.”

The same goes for men too. It's okay to wear T-shirts to work, as long as it is worn under a blazer. But fashion experts agree that a gold chain, or a necklace of beads worn by many Chinese men for good luck, makes the wearer look either too vain or vulgar.

According to the Forbes article, many corporations in the United States include office dress codes in

their staff manuals. When I was based in Singapore, I once ran into a visiting journalist from New York on the street. He was wearing a suit and tie, and sweating profusely under the tropical sun. He obviously had his standard to keep and I admired him for that.

I wore a suit and tie whenever I went for an interview when I was in Hong Kong. Every other reporter in the office did that too. As our editor used to say, we wanted to dress properly to show our respect to the persons we were going to interview, the newspaper for which we worked, and, of course, ourselves. We considered the dress code to be a discipline we couldn't do without.

I don't agree that the Shanghai Metro's message carries a sexist overtone. It is a piece of sound advice that should be heeded rather than derided. And perhaps it can help remind Shanghai enterprises to seriously consider introducing a formal dress code in the workplace.