

# 'World War III Could Start from Here'

by William Jones

Jan. 29—President Obama's Made-in-London decision to "pivot" U.S. military might from Southwest Asia to the Asia-Pacific region continues to generate great uncertainty and anxiety in the latter region, and especially in China, which is the prime target of the redeployment. The new military arrangements being worked out with the Philippines and Japan are just some of the points that are causing concern in Beijing, which is no doubt prepared to use its economic, and if necessary, its military might, to counter threats to its national interest.

Nor is it only the Chinese who are alarmed. In a Jan. 24 article, the influential Indonesian daily *Jakarta Post* expressed fear of the submarine build-up in the Pacific, by the Americans, Chinese, and others, and concluded: "A minor spat among two nations could escalate into a multilateral dispute through the interconnectedness and interdependence of nations in the region. Unless they are careful and exercise restraint, World War III could start from here."

### Arming the Neighborhood

U.S. strategy is based on the new military Air-Sea Battle doctrine, emphasizing naval, manned and unmanned air, and cyber warfare capabilities, combined with the build-up of the military might of U.S. partners in the Asia-Pacific region. One of the first to jump on board was that old British naval bastion, Singapore, which has agreed to berth U.S. naval vessels. Negotiations have been held with the Philippines to permit U.S. warships and military aircraft to utilize Philippine ports and air bases, supposedly on a temporary basis, although the existing rotating deployment of 600 U.S. Marines involved in counter-terror operations in the southern Philippines has become almost a fixture of the landscape. Any increase in the U.S. "boots on the ground" could provoke an uproar among the local pop-

ulace, intensely protective of their independence. Demonstrations have begun, protesting the planned agreements.

A new military relationship between Japan and Vietnam is also being fostered in the context of this new anti-China entente. In a visit to Japan last October, Vietnamese Defense Minister Phung Quang Thanh requested a tour of the *Makishio*, a submarine of Japanese Submarine Flotilla No. 1. The first of six Kilo-class Russian-made submarines, which Vietnam purchased in 2009, will be delivered in two years. Most of the Asia-Pacific nations, with the encouragement of the United States, are also planning to increase their submarine fleets. The floor of the western Pacific is going to become a very crowded place if this continues.

The United States is also gearing up its cooperation with allies South Korea and Japan, and is intent on bringing Japan into a trilateral relationship with India, what one Indian analyst labeled a new "Triple Entente." India, which has, over the years, developed more extensive ties with its Chinese neighbor, is being courted by the U.S. to take part in this entente. Well aware of its own strategic interests in the region and the necessity of maintaining friendly ties with China, India has been rather cool toward the U.S. overtures.

### China Bides Its Time

All of this has not gone unnoticed by Chinese leaders and military planners. They have responded initially by pursuing an active diplomacy with the United States, in an attempt to preserve stable relations despite the increased tension, and perhaps with a view of better fathoming the real intent behind the new U.S. strategy. Several high-level military delegations from China have been in Washington this month, and Chinese Vice President Xi Jinping, who is being groomed to take over this year as Chinese President, will be traveling to Washington on Feb. 14 for meetings with President Obama and others at the White House and State Department.

The diplomacy, however, should not obscure the fact that China is also preparing for the eventuality of a more hostile environment in the region as a result of the U.S. "pivot." One example involves the Philippines, which has already toughened its position in negotiations with China over a disputed maritime region, now that the Manila government feels that it has the full

backing of the United States. In response, the Chinese are now considering punitive measures against the Philippines, perhaps reducing their considerable investments in the country. A Jan. 30 op-ed in the Chinese newspaper *Global Times*, often a forum for official government thinking, notes: “Well-measured sanctions against the Philippines will make it ponder the choice of losing a friend such as China and being a vain partner with the U.S.”

## Response in the Region and Beyond

Comparing China to a “rising Germany” in the pre-World War I period is the most popular analogy you will find in the writings of many Anglophile U.S. “China-bashers.” The decision to build a strong German navy at the beginning of the 20th Century became the pretext for London’s preparing to go to war to maintain its naval superiority. While it is not clear what China is doing or will do to meet the challenge from the United States militarily, the threat is foremost on the minds of Chinese leaders today.

But China has powerful allies. Russia, which has also been targeted by the Obama Administration for “regime change” and saber-rattling, as a nation still outside the “fold,” has considerably strengthened its strategic and economic relations with China during recent years. And with the increasing moves by the Putin-Medvedev leadership to implement their plans for development of the Far East and the Arctic, the Pacific region of Russia has become of paramount importance.

The global implications of this relationship with Russia has not been lost on China’s political thinkers. An editorial on Jan. 20 in *Global Times*, which has been widely disseminated to many other newspapers and websites, stated: “For Beijing and Moscow alike, ties with the U.S. have been stressful. But in both countries, an increasing number of people now advocate a Moscow-Beijing ‘alliance.’ The two do have countermeasures against the U.S., and they are capable of deterring U.S. allies. If they are really determined to join hands, the balance of power on many world issues will begin to shift.”

Even among the countries the Obama Administration considers its partners in this undertaking, few are willing to venture too far down this path. While not averse to the presence of U.S. military forces in the region, most Asian-Pacific nations have had rocky rela-

tions with the United States in the past. Vietnam still bears the scars of its long war with the U.S. Indonesia, which is also being courted to join the Anglo-American “club,” views the U.S. decision to station 2,500 Marines in Darwin, Australia as a potential threat to them as well. If the United States begins to behave as a regional hegemon, these “partnerships” will quickly fray.

Many U.S. military professionals have also expressed their deep skepticism about trying to isolate China in this way. Speaking at a maritime conference in San Diego on Jan. 26, Vice Admiral John M. Bird, director of Navy Staff and former commander of the Seventh Fleet, warned of mistaking the way the Chinese view U.S. actions. “We fall victim at our peril when we try to apply our mindset to them,” he warned. “For example, our idea of deterrence is their idea of containment. We want to deter access denial; but they don’t see it that way.”

Addressing the same conference, Vice Adm. Ann E. Rondeau, USN, president of the National Defense University, claimed that China is going through its own “vertigo” on how to interact with other nations as a world leader. One People’s Liberation Army general, she said, referred to a strategic trap in which China and the United States may soon find themselves. She called for new scholarship on China, so that the United States can better understand the country it is dealing with.

China has turned to diplomacy to allay the fears of smaller neighbors over its rapid economic growth, sent high-level delegations to the Association of Southeast Asia nations, upgraded Mekong River cooperation, and, in many cases, such as with Vietnam, stepped up military cooperation. Such diplomacy has served Beijing well ever since the “reform and opening up” policy was initiated 30 years ago. China succeeded in breaking out of its years of relative isolation in the region only through a long internal struggle, and with some remarkable diplomacy; the entire Asia-Pacific region has benefited immensely from it.

The financial collapse which the world is now undergoing requires close cooperation around the type of fixed-exchange-rate agreements as proposed by Lyndon LaRouche, initially among China, India, Russia, and the United States. This would then become the basis for a new international credit system, which could revive the world economy.

That is what Obama’s controllers in London are trying to avoid, with a drive toward war.