

How ‘Geopolitics’ Is Isolating America

by William Jones

June 12—U.S. Defense Secretary Ashton Carter’s “show of force” at this year’s Shangri-La Dialogue of defense ministers from around the world, in Singapore June 3-5, was a non-stellar performance. He upbraided China for its actions in the South China Sea, where China is building lighthouses and other useful facilities, claiming that by such actions, China was “isolating itself,” and “jeopardizing” its participation in that “principled security network” which the United States is intent on building in the Asia-Pacific region.

It is something of an idle threat, as that “network” is based on the traditional Cold War alliances of the United States in the region, and is targeting China and Russia. It is somewhat like Br’er Fox inviting Br’er Rabbit into his lair. But the conflict in the region is by no means a kind of “Thucydides trap” between a rising power and a hegemonic power, as is being widely touted. It is, rather, a conflict between the choice of two different directions that mankind may take as it moves forward in the 21st Century.

Looking back over the last two decades, we can detect two clearly distinct roads traveled. We have in Europe and in the United States, in particular, the unfolding of the worst financial crisis in centuries. The London-New York financial system—which virtually hijacked the Rooseveltian vision for the Bretton Woods System right after Roosevelt’s death in 1945—is in a state of advanced collapse. People are just waiting for the next shoe to drop.

In Asia, however, there is clear motion toward economic development, propelled primarily by China’s success in bringing 600 million people out of poverty within two decades, an achievement previously unknown in world history. The

newly-minted Belt and Road project of Chinese President Xi Jinping and the development of new financial structures associated with it—aimed solely at promoting infrastructural investment in the developing as well as the developed world—have created a great wave of optimism among the mass of mankind, especially those living below the equator, who hitherto have had little to say in giving direction to the world. While China has its own economic problems—contingent on the fact that its development has integrated it more closely into the faltering London-New York system—China is intent, to a large extent, on revamping that system in such a way that it can provide prosperity for the vast numbers of humankind.

Nations Kow-tow to U.S. but Join with China

Secretary Carter was really in la-la land when he claimed that the growth in Asia was the result of the military presence of the United States in the region since the end of the Second World War. Growth in the Asia-Pa-



DoD photo by Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Tim D. Godbee

Here, Defense Secretary Ash Carter (left) prepares to address the 15th International Institute for Strategic Studies Asia Security Summit in Singapore, June 4, 2016, as the Obama Administration attempts to encircle and contain China.



China seeks a new basis for international relations with its Belt and Road initiative, based on building infrastructure projects globally.

cific region during the last three decades, while the United States has been totally focused on launching new wars in the Middle East, has been unprecedented, thanks to China's efforts to lift the 600 million people out of poverty, becoming the world's second major industrial producer in the process. The growth of China has fueled the growth of the entire region, and the initiation of the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road by President Xi Jinping is intended to make regional development a permanent feature.

While Europe and the United States are still suffering the deleterious effects of trying to sustain the unpayable debt bubble, China, in collaboration with India, Russia, and other countries, is attempting to chart a new direction with the establishment of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the BRICS New Development Bank. And the majority of the countries of the world, which have been the greatest victims of the financial crisis, are experiencing a new wave of optimism about their future.

Until the launch of the Obama "pivot" to Asia—which has brought half of U.S. naval fire power to the Asia Pacific in an attempt to prevent China from asserting *any* of its legitimate territorial claims in the South China and East China seas—the Asia-Pacific region was doing quite well. Carter's latest gambit, his attempt

create a veritable NATO-like structure in the Pacific aimed at China and Russia, is only the latest stage in this outright policy of containment.

Carter exuded confidence that he had most of the Asia-Pacific countries on board this policy, and while many of the countries in the region may be somewhat nervous in the face of a country the size of China developing so rapidly, they have also understood the significance of that growth for their own development. They have joined almost without excep-

tion in the Chinese-initiated AIIB, and there is great interest in being part of the Belt and Road project for regional development. China's ambitious space exploration program has also created a tremendous amount of enthusiasm among a generation of leaders who have only a vague memory of the U.S. Apollo program. It is, of course, difficult for many countries to directly counter the United States when it demands cooperation, due to the U.S. ability to bully and coerce. Rather than show any affinity with U.S. intentions, which will ultimately result in nuclear war, they kow-tow to the United States on the ill-fated TPP while at the same time joining with China in a real development program.

Rooseveltian 'Community of Common Destiny'

President Xi Jinping has also called for the creation of a community of common destiny, harking back to what Franklin Roosevelt intended his United Nations to become. This idea also has a great appeal today as the developing nations of the world now feel the potential of their own power, as a formerly developing country, China, takes its place as a major world power. In his speech at Shangri-La, responding to Carter's bombast Admiral Sun Jianguo, Deputy Chief of China's Joint Staff, made a very incisive observation about U.S.

policy in the region and in the world: “We are not isolated today and we will not be isolated in the future,” Sun said. “Actually, I’m worried that some people and countries [i.e., the United States] are still looking at China with a Cold War mentality and prejudice. They may build a wall in their minds and end up isolating themselves,” he warned.

The cheap gimmick of another draconian “free trade” agreement like TPP pales into insignificance the light of what China is doing with the major infrastructure projects in connection with the Belt and Road Initiative. China’s proposal is all-inclusive and aimed against no one, in contrast to Carter’s NATO-like proposal, which targets China and Russia. Aware of the political and cultural diversity in the Asia-Pacific, China is setting down no fast and hard “rules of the road” that these countries must follow in working out their development strategies, but only considers the effects of the investment on the lives of the people concerned.

The recent perpetration of wars and random killings—by drone and otherwise—by the Bush and Obama Administrations has done much to tarnish the luster that the post-war United States had for many of these countries. And while countries may give some lip-service to U.S. demands, given the power of the United States to threaten and coerce, they know where their real interests lie—in preserving peace, harmony and development in the region, all of which would be mortally threatened by the outbreak of war.

Ironically, the direction of the New Silk Road Initiative may well revive in the Western nations those principles which allowed them previously to develop to their greatest potential. Western Europe is already getting a sense of this and is eagerly collaborating with China on the Belt and Road.

Return to an Industrial Policy

But this collaboration can only be successful if the nations reject the insanity of trying to prop up this unsustainable financial bubble known as the London-Wall Street system and return to the traditional notion of a government-directed industrial policy as a commitment of the nations to develop themselves.

If that were done, it would help reverse the obvious decline of the West. We could turn to rebuilding our na-



Xinhua

Chinese President Xi Jinping (left) announced his Belt and Road initiative while on a 2013 visit to Kazakhstan. Kazakhstan President Nursultan Nazarbayev (right) shown here during that visit.

tions, rebuilding livable cities, and developing more advanced technologies. We could fill the potholes, rebuild our roads, our highways, and our railroads. Our people could again view the future with hope, not despair. No doubt China would be willing to contribute to that effort, as it has already indicated in President Xi’s repeated invitation to President Obama to join the project of building infrastructure for humanity.

Rather than preventing China from building high-speed rail networks here, we in the United States should be encouraging it, to help bring hope again to our continent. And we should drop the hopeless task of attempting to encircle China with a Great Wall of naval containment, a policy that can only lead to war. Let us encourage China to negotiate its territorial claims with its neighbors as China itself wishes to do. Or else, let us just stand aside and let the parties themselves resolve the issues.

Would it not be best to end this era of bloody “geopolitics,” which has been so devastating for the United States and for the world, and to join with China, with Russia, with India, and with the rest of the world, in a project of economic development to make this world a suitable home for humanity, and to raise our sights to the firmament above to launch a program for expanding mankind’s reach into the universe beyond, which is the ultimate home on which our existence depends?