

Clinton Sounds a New Tone in U.S. Foreign Policy

by William Jones

Feb. 25—Hillary Clinton chose Asia as the destination for her first trip as Secretary of State, on what will, no doubt, prove to be a very busy travel schedule. The choice was by no means arbitrary. Asia represents the greatest concentration of the world's population, which, within the next few decades, will become one of the most important production centers in the world. In addition, the U.S. relationship with China is fast becoming the most important bilateral relationship of the 21st Century, something that Secretary Clinton had earlier noted.

And, in light of the present financial blowout, China remains one of the key players, designated by Lyndon LaRouche as one of the four key countries, along with the U.S., India, and Russia, agreement among which, would be the *sine qua non* for crafting a new fixed-exchange-rate financial system to replace the bankrupt Anglo-Dutch system now in a state of advanced disintegration. LaRouche, therefore, applauded the decision by Secretary Clinton to make Asia her first foreign travel goal.

Prior to visiting China, Secretary Clinton would also be touching down in Japan, South Korea, and Indonesia, introducing herself and the Obama Administration to the leaders of these countries, thereby reasserting the active presence of the United States in the Asia-Pacific region.

In contrast to the Bush Administration, which left it largely to Treasury Secretary Hank Paulson to “manage” the U.S.-China relationship, thus assuring a cheap labor venue for American manufacturers, the Obama Administration seems keen on raising the level of the relationship to that of a multifaceted partnership, involving all areas of political, economic, and strategic significance for both nations, and for the safety and security of the region.

Reassuring Old Allies

The Japanese leg of her trip was extremely important. With the emergence of China as a major economic power in the region, many Japanese politicians have felt that the United States, eager to cement ties with China, was prepared to abandon the traditional U.S.-Japan Security Alliance that had been a mainstay of U.S. policy since the 1960s. Clinton's choice of Japan as her first stop was a clear signal to the Japanese leadership that the U.S.-China relationship was not viewed by the U.S. as a zero-sum game. Japanese Prime Minister Taro Aso had indicated a desire to be the first world leader to be invited to the Obama White House, and on her visit to Tokyo, Clinton extended, on President Obama's behalf, an invitation to Aso to visit the White House on Feb. 24.

From Tokyo, Clinton traveled to Indonesia, where



U.S.S State Department

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton holds a press conference with Indonesian Foreign Minister Hassan Wirajuda in Jakarta, on Feb. 18.

she held talks with her counterpart, Foreign Minister Noer Hassan Wirajuda, and with President Susilo Yudhoyono. The Clinton visit to Indonesia, the largest Muslim nation in the world, sends a signal to Muslims everywhere that the Obama Administration is engaged in attempting to resolve the crises in Southwest Asia, and elsewhere in the Muslim world. While in Indonesia, Clinton agreed to have the Peace Corps return there, and renewed the Fulbright Scholarship program to bring young Indonesians to the United States for their higher education. The two leaders also discussed a mutual effort to develop a new policy toward Myanmar, relying more on regional cooperation than on economic sanctions, which have proven a failure.

While in Indonesia, Clinton also met with the Secretary General of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) where she indicated that she would be attending this year's ASEAN Regional Forum, which Secretary Condoleezza Rice avoided last year. Clinton also announced that the administration will sign the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia, which the Bush Administration refused to sign, because

of the Treaty's adherence to the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of signator nations.

Straight Talk

As the Secretary departed for her Asia trip, there were indications that North Korea was preparing a Taepodong missile launch, a move that would represent a major provocation, the test in 1998 having sent relations with North Korea into the freezer. Responding to these reports, Clinton commented such an action by the North Koreans would be "very unhelpful." One of the major topics that she would be discussing with her counterparts in Japan, South Korea, and China, would be how to get some forward-motion in the stalled Six-Party Talks. In response to reporters' questions, Clinton noted that the North Koreans had been in the process of dismantling their plutonium program, in accord with the 1994 agreement negotiated under the Clinton Administration, when the Bush Administration, discovering an as-yet unproven North Korean uranium program, decided to abandon the 1994 agreement. That decision, Clinton said, led to the North Koreans restarting their plutonium program, which allowed them to produce enough plutonium for several weapons.

Secretary Clinton also sent a clear message to North Korea that U.S. efforts were being closely coordinated with the South, and that if Pyongyang wished to improve relations with Washington, it would have to end its belligerent attitude toward Seoul.

Clinton also commented on what might occur after the passing of North Korean leader Kim Jong-il; rumors of his ill health had been circulating for some time. When State Department officials and members of the news media protested, since any talk about Kim Jong-il's demise was considered taboo, Clinton rejected the criticism. "To worry about something which is so self-evident is an impediment to clear thinking," she said. Some observers admired her candor as a breath of fresh air in the somewhat stultified atmosphere of international diplomacy.

More hackles were raised among the human rights mafia when Clinton declared that she wasn't going to let "human rights" and the Tibet controversy prevent the United States from making progress on security and economic issues with China, a policy that has in prac-



One highlight of Secretary of State Clinton's visit to Japan was her visit to the Shrine of the Emperor Meiji, shown here. Appropriately, the Meiji Dynasty was a key force for Japan's modernization, inspired by the American System.

tice been followed by most U.S. administrations, but which hasn't been stated so directly. "Maybe this is unusual," Clinton said, "because you are supposed to be so careful that you spend hours avoiding stating the obvious, but you know, that's just not productive, in my view."

Clinton was also keen on using her own celebrity status to great benefit for American foreign policy, bringing the much-touted "public diplomacy" to a much higher level. She held a town meeting with students from Tokyo University, talking about everything from gender equality to nuclear energy. In Seoul, she had a similar event with students from the prestigious Ewha Women's University. In China, she held a meeting with a women's group, and spoke with a group of NGOs involved in projects in China.

Broadening the U.S.-China Relationship

The final, and most important stop on Clinton's Asia tour was her visit to Beijing. Her arrival was eagerly anticipated, as it would be the first time that Chinese leaders would have contact with the new Obama Administration. On the two-day visit, the Secretary met

with Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao, and President Hu Jintao. Arriving in Beijing on Feb. 20, Clinton was also able to announce that the U.S. and China would begin military-to-military discussions this month, an important element in the bilateral relationship, which had been cancelled by the Chinese side in October, because of the decision of the Bush Administration to sell Taiwan more sophisticated weapons systems.

Clinton was also keen on assuring Chinese leaders that the Obama Administration was prepared to tackle the global economic crisis, and that they should therefore remain confident that the U.S. economy would recover. China is presently the biggest holder of U.S. Treasury bills,

a matter that has subjected them to some criticism domestically because of the decline in the value of the dollar and in the return on Treasury bills. Speaking at a joint press conference with Foreign Minister Yang, Clinton said, "I appreciate greatly the Chinese government's continuing confidence in United States Treasuries. I think that's a well-grounded confidence. We have every reason to believe that the United States and China will recover, and that together we will help to lead the world recovery."

The two sides agreed to engage in a strategic and economic dialogue, the details of which will be worked out in the coming weeks. While U.S.-China relations during the Bush era had been handed over to Paulson and the Treasury Department, Secretary Clinton indicated that henceforth, relations would be built on a much broader basis, and that Treasury would be only one of several voices making themselves heard in the area of China policy. Clinton also invited Foreign Minister Yang to come to United States on March 9 to continue their discussions, and to begin mapping out a strategy for the upcoming G20 economic summit in London in April.