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From: Sullivan, Jacob J <SullivanJJ@state.gov>
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A good piece – a polished version of his blog post from immediate after the trip.

By WALTER RUSSELL MEAD

The U.S. has quietly set up a bipartisan Asia policy that may be as influential as the Marshall Plan and NATO.

While the world has been obsessing over America's decline and its supposedly foolish interventions in the Middle East, the United States has quietly established a bipartisan Asia policy that may well be as influential on that continent as the Marshall Plan and NATO were in Europe.

At its core, the policy encourages Asian powers to get rich by participating in the most open trading system in the history of the world. In exchange for commitments to abide by that system's rules, countries such as India, Vietnam, Indonesia and China would have the opportunity to industrialize and to help shape the future of the global economy.

To some, this might appear like reckless philanthropy. Why should the U.S. facilitate the rise of powers that might one day become dangerous rivals? There are two underlying calculations.

The first is that countries busy getting rich are unlikely to seek to overturn an international system that facilitates their prosperity. This was the case with both Germany and Japan after World War II, and the U.S. hopes the same will be true for India and China.

The second calculation is that as countries deepen their participation in the global system, they become increasingly dependent on it. Hitler and Tojo learned the hard way what it meant to fight major wars without secure access to the resources and capital required.

The more China trades in world markets, then, the more hostages it places in American hands. China's domestic economy, overseas investments, energy resources and raw material supplies—and, therefore, its political stability—all depend on its continued access to the world's sea lanes.

Moreover, the U.S. faces something different in Asia than the "inexorable rise of China" described by so many analysts. Consider a historical analogy. Germany in 1910 was a single rising power in a neighborhood of decline populated by France, Austria-Hungary, Russia and the Ottoman Empire. That was an inherently unstable balance of power. In Asia today, China is not a single rising power in a continent of decline.

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David Klein

Japan may not be going from strength to strength, but India, Vietnam, South Korea and many of their neighbors are industrializing and growing rapidly thanks to their participation in the global system. U.S. policy in Asia is built on the understanding that investing in this new balance of power can reduce any challenge a stronger China might otherwise pose.

Beginning with the Clinton administration, which ended the trade embargo with Vietnam in 1994 and normalized relations a year later, the U.S. has been deepening its relations with key Asian countries. U.S. engagement with India, Indonesia, Japan, Mongolia, Australia and Singapore is deeper and broader today than it was at the end of the Cold War. This engagement is economic in all cases, military in most. President George W. Bush even signed a nuclear-cooperation agreement with India in 2005, despite the cost of complicating relations with Pakistan.

This poses a strategic dilemma for Beijing. If it doesn't push back, the new U.S.-centered Asian system will continue to develop. But if it tries to block the system, it may frighten its neighbors into an even closer American embrace.

In the last two years, China chose to assert itself by stoking disputes over strategically vital (and perhaps energy-rich) areas of the South China Sea. This alarmed its neighbors, and in turn the Obama administration engineered a dramatic diplomatic revolution that will likely serve as the foundation of the region's security architecture in Asia for some time to come.

On his November visit to Australia, President Obama announced that U.S. Marines will be based in the northern city of Darwin, close enough to the South China Sea to reassure the neighborhood, but far enough away to limit the provocation to China. At the same time, Prime Minister Julia Gillard announced that Australia would begin uranium sales to India. And last week the State Department announced that Japan, India and the U.S. held the first of a series of trilateral security talks on Asian and global issues.

Also in recent weeks, Japan announced that it was purchasing F-35 fighters from the U.S. and joining negotiations to establish the Trans-Pacific Partnership, a U.S.-backed free-trade initiative covering the Asia-Pacific region. China is currently excluded from the initiative but could be invited in later.

India, Japan and the U.S. are also assisting the junta in Myanmar as it seeks to distance itself from China's suffocating embrace. Shortly after Myanmar canceled a major hydroelectric project intended to sell power to China in September, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton visited the country, Japan lifted a ban on aid, and India announced that it is helping Myanmar build a new port.

The U.S. isn't developing an Asian alliance on par with NATO, and at this stage U.S. policy there falls well short of containment. The goal isn't to drive China in on itself and force regime change, as the U.S. intended with the Soviet Union. The goal, rather, is to deter Beijing from mounting a quest for regional hegemony while holding out the option of greater participation in the international system.

Depending on China's response, the U.S. and the other members of the emerging entente are free to move toward either a closer or a more competitive relationship with Beijing. If reason prevails in Beijing, the road is open to long-term institutional and cooperative economic integration in the Pacific.

This approach to Asian economic and security policy predates the Obama administration and is likely to survive it. While Republicans and Democrats, liberals and conservatives might argue over emphases and priorities within this general strategy, the broad lines of a sustainable American policy in Asia are clear, and they're supported by everyone to the right of Dennis Kucinich and to the left of Ron Paul.

The Obama administration, like its predecessors, has moved to produce an Asia policy that is in line with the highest traditions of American statesmanship. Realistic, humane, forward-looking and enlightened, America's approach to Asia offers Asians as well as Americans the best available chance to create a Pacific Century worthy of the name.

Mr. Mead is a professor of foreign affairs and humanities at Bard College and editor-at-large of the American Interest.

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