

Obama's Pivot to Asia: Can China Contain America?

By [John V. Walsh](#)

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"Can America Contain China?" it is often asked in the West. But given America's endless wars and assaults on the developing nations of the world, the question ought to be, "Can China Contain America"? Or at least, can China restrain the U.S. from doing more damage in East Asia and perhaps elsewhere in the developing world?

Last week Obama went to Beijing for the Asian Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit as the representative of the West and its centuries old grand project in East Asia. And what has that project been? History tells us that the West with its missionaries and soldiers, Obama's predecessors, bathed the region in suffering and bloodshed there – from the Opium Wars on China, to the war on the Philippines, to the nuclear bombing of Japan, to the assault on China's Maoist Liberation movement, to the Korean and Vietnam wars and the bombings that laid waste Laos and Cambodia, as well as the bloody CIA coup in Indonesia and the military assault on the Korean movement to overthrow the Park dictatorship.

And that thumbnail history merely recounts the Anglo-American contribution to the European rape of East Asia. For centuries, every two bit Western European power with a little bit of advanced military technology was in on the plunder in the Western Pacific.

Obama went to East Asia to say (in substance only): "We are not finished yet. The Indispensable Nation must dominate everywhere. We departed when the Vietnamese humiliated us and drove us from the neighborhood. But we are back. We are pivoting."

Even before Obama departed the U.S., his "pivot" to the Western Pacific has for the most part come a [cropper](#) because the U.S. is nostril deep in the swamp of the Middle East, thanks to the Israel lobby, and because the U.S. has driven Russia into an embrace with China by engineering a fascist-enabled coup in Ukraine. True to form, just before climbing aboard the imperial 747 bound for Beijing, Obama could not resist wading a little deeper into the Middle East swamp and dispatched another 1500 ground troops to the killing fields of Iraq.

On the eve of the APEC summit, the Russia-China connection came alive as Presidents Putin and Xi closed a [major petroleum pipeline deal](#) that will bring into China the supply of natural gas that the U.S. has managed to deny Europe by its coup in Kiev. This pipeline, the so-called Western or Altai line, is the second from Russia to China, the first one having been agreed upon last May, with much fanfare. These land routes provide China with abundant petroleum resources that [cannot be interdicted at sea](#) by the massive U.S. Navy. This enhances the security of the Middle Kingdom in the face of the pivot. Thus, the deal goes far beyond symbolism. With it the American naval behemoth becomes less relevant as an instrument of U.S. dominance, although it is not one wit less burdensome to the U.S. taxpayer for that.

The talk at APEC was all about economics, which is going to determine the shape of the world to come. China's economy is now slightly larger than that of the U.S. in terms of Purchasing Power Parity and on its way to become the equal of the U.S. in absolute terms within a decade. China relentlessly pursues economic growth and the overall stability that it demands. What did Obama have to offer? There he was peddling his Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade deal, which is to include Japan and 10 other Pacific nations but to exclude China. He says with a straight face that its purpose is not to contain or isolate China although that is precisely what it is designed to do. The TPP, however, is not making much headway, because it is written in secret by and for U.S. corporate and financial monoliths. Other countries will not take the TPP bait if there is little or nothing in it for them.

Some Western commentators saw the Free Trade Area of the Asia Pacific (FAATP) as a Chinese riposte to the TPP. But although China pushed hard to move the FAATP forward at the APEC meeting and won approval for it among all 21 attendees, it is not a new idea, nor even a Chinese idea. It was there from the beginning when APEC was created in 1989, [according to Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien](#) who praised China for pushing for the next step to realize the pact, which is a study that will take two years. Lee said that when the FAATP is finally created, it will benefit all countries in the region and be one of the largest free trade areas in the world.

Similarly China has taken the lead in forming the [Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank \(AIIB\)](#), which will provide capital for badly needed investment in the region. The need for investment is estimated at \$8 trillion; China has put in the first \$100 billion and will host the headquarters in Beijing. The bank was formally inaugurated in October just a few weeks before the APEC meeting and included 21 countries: China, India, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Brunei, Cambodia, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Laos, Myanmar, Mongolia, Nepal, Oman, Qatar, Sri Lanka, Uzbekistan, and Vietnam. Australia, Indonesia, South Korea did not join despite the interest they expressed a year earlier – a [turnaround that was due to U.S. pressure](#). It is hard to believe that the U.S. is not trying to isolate and weaken China, that is, “contain” it by yanking other countries out of an arrangement that would benefit them.

But whatever the U.S. may attempt at this point, China has sufficient military strength to repel an attack by the West – although not to launch one. With that and its economic strength, China should be able to provide to the world alternatives to the diktats of the West. The BRICS may be the first sign of that. And China's economic and infrastructure projects in Asia extending all the way to Europe herald a new and welcome multipolar world as outlined [here](#).

In summary, the U.S. is busy in many corners of the world bombing, sanctioning and generally sowing misery and discord – most especially in the Middle East. In East Asia it has so far been pursuing a policy of isolating China and building military alliances against it. China, in contrast, has been busy getting rich and encouraging others to do the same. The U.S. is all guns, and China is all butter. Which is better for humanity?

John V. Walsh can be reached at john.endwar@gmail.com.

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