Is 'Air-Sea Battle' Aimed at LaRouche's Four-Power Plan for Global Recovery?

by Carl Osgood

June 8—In a Nov. 14, 1996 article, "Ring Around China: Britain Wants War," (*EIR*, Nov. 21, 1996), Lyndon LaRouche warned that Britain's official policy, stated in a number of public utterances, was the breakup of China. He pointed to a number of British-inspired destabilizations underway at the time, including the Taliban operations in Afghanistan and Pakistan; the British campaign to overthrow the government of Myanmar; an attempt to induce Japan to perceive itself as taking political hegemony over the northern tier of China; and efforts by London and its U.S. Republican Party assets to destabilize the Korean peninsula (**Figure 1**). LaRouche warned that if Japan were to lose the markets for its high technology exports, it might be susceptible to being pushed into a policy "of stealing spheres of influence from neighbors," instead.

Then, as today, with his proposed Four Power proposal (U.S.A., China, Russia, India), LaRouche warned that the political-economic crisis could only be solved by collaboration among a number of states, including the U.S.A. and China. U.S. strategic policy, following the British line, assumes, however, that China is a potential future adversary of the United States. The Quadrennial Defense Review, released in February, 2009declares that "China's growing presence and influence in regional and global economic and security affairs is one of the most consequential aspects of the evolving strategic landscape in the Asia-Pacific region and globally." While there are great potential benefits from cooperation with China, "lack of transparency and the nature of China's military development and decision-making processes raise legitimate questions about its future conduct and intentions within Asia and beyond." Where does this British geopolitical insanity come from?

'Asia 2025'

In the Summer of 1999, less than three years after LaRouche issued his "Ring Around China" warning, the Pentagon's Office of Net Assessment (ONA) sponsored a study at the Naval War College, in Newport, R.I., that postulated a China that would be the focus of future strategic confrontation with the United States, whether it were strong or weak. "A stable and powerful China will be constantly challenging the status quo in East Asia," the report said. "An unstable and relatively weak China could be dangerous because its leaders might try to bolster their power with foreign military

FIGURE 1
Ring Around China

adventurism." The report, entitled, "Asia 2025," puts forward a number of "plausible" scenarios which raise particular strategic and operational issues that ought to be considered by the Defense Department, in large part, because of the geography of the Pacific.

The director of ONA was then, and is still today, one Andrew Marshall. Over the past decade or so, Marshall has been best known as the originator of the Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA), now considered a spectacular failure by the Army, the Marine Corps, and even U.S. Joint Forces Command. The RMA purported, through Information Age technology, to provide perfect knowledge of the battlefield, and therefore, to enable the perfect application of military power. That notion died in the dust of Iraq, where the Sunni insurgency often had better knowledge of the U.S. forces than vice versa.

This blatant failure has not, however, slowed Marshall down very much. Besides the failed RMA, Marshall is also well known for his antipathy towards China, an antipathy which dates at least from the end of the Cold War and apparently continues to this day. That antipathy is visible, today, through the development by the Air Force and the Navy of an operational concept called "Air-Sea Battle." The premise of Air-Sea Battle comes straight out of Asia 2025, the notion that China's ambitions have to be checked by American deterrent capabilities.

The problem, according to this view, is that China has developed anti-access/area denial capabilities, such as land-based anti-ship missiles and quiet submarines, that can hamper the ability of U.S. military forces to operate in the Western Pacific. If there were another Taiwan Strait Crisis (see below), an American aircraft carrier might not be able to operate safely, close enough to Taiwan to be effective, for example. Therefore, the Pentagon needs a new operational concept that can combine Air Force and Navy assets to create new capabilities to counter Chinese strategies.

Air-Sea Battle was formally kicked off in September of 2009 with a signed memorandum between Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Norton Schwartz and Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Gary Roughead. According to a Nov. 16 article in *Air Force Times*, the work is being done at the behest of Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, but is based on ideas generated by Marshall. A small team of Air Force and Naval officers are now at work to further develop the concept. "We're trying to present forces that are forces for stability and deterrence in the face of rapid militarization and advancing threats to U.S. power projection that could be destabilizing for everybody," says Tom Ehrhard, a strategist for Schwartz.

Marshall's Mafia Outside the Pentagon

Marshall doesn't just work from within the Pentagon, however. Over the years, he has indoctrinated hundreds of officers from all the services as they have passed through the ONA. Many of them have since left military service, and some of them can be found in a Washington, D.C. thinktank called the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments. The CSBA has become the outside-the-Pentagon advocate for a certain kind of strategic thinking, including for Air-Sea Battle.

CSBA director Andrew Krepinevich, a retired Army officer, and alumnus of Marshall's ONA, wrote, in a report released early in March 2010, that the Air-Sea Battle effort "should (and appears to) focus on the rising challenge to the US military's power projection capabilities, which take full expression in China's rapidly developing anti-access/area-denial (A2/AD) capabilities, and Iran's similar (albeit far more modest) capabilities…." Krepinevich argues that, unless China and Tehran divert from their current courses of action, "or Washington undertakes actions to offset or counterbalance the effects of their military buildups, it is practically certain that the cost incurred by the US military to maintain access to two areas of vital interest will rise sharply, perhaps to prohibitive levels, and perhaps much sooner than many expect." This is a direct echo of the Asia 2025 study.

In May, CSBA released another report, entitled "Air-Sea Battle: A Point-of-Departure Operational Concept." The principle author of the study is Jan van Tol, a retired U.S. Navy captain and veteran of two tours in Marshall's office. At the May 18 public event releasing the report, Krepinevich complained that the U.S. is losing its monopoly in precision warfare (this is blamed on globalization) and that, therefore, the military balance is shifting against us. The Chinese, he said, "are looking for a gradual shift in the military balance that results in the Finlandization of East Asia." He traced this shift back to the 1995-96 Taiwan Strait Crisis, when the U.S. sent an aircraft carrier into the Strait, and the Chinese had no capability for countering it. Since then, the Chinese have watched and learned from what the U.S. has done in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The U.S., he said, is faced with a strategic choice: Either we acquiesce to this "Finlandization," or we look for ways to offset what the Chinese are doing.

The report notes that the only state with a long-term potential for posing a serious challenge to U.S. power is China. It complains that China is not transparent enough about its own strategic intentions and that this is exacerbated by the fact that China is the only great power that still hasn't embraced democracy. "Given these considerations, it becomes imperative to assess how the US military might sustain its ability to successfully project military power in the region in order to defend US interests and protect its friends and allies. This is key to maintaining the stable military balance that has preserved peace in the Western Pacific for a generation while also enabling China to enjoy a period of unprecedented peace and prosperity."

While the report denies that the Air-Sea Battle concept implies that a future war with China is inevitable, its authors nonetheless regard China as a power to be handled by the controlled application of U.S. power, even if that application never rises beyond deterrence. Such a balance-of-power doctrine is a strictly British Imperial notion that flies in the face of the American military and diplomatic tradition stemming from the republican outlook that is the basis of the U.S. Constitution.

The Chinese Respond

Some may think that the Air-Sea Battle concept is just that, perhaps with little chance of ever being applied, but such scenario-mongering has real world consequences. The Chinese People's Liberation Army recently turned down a request from Secretary Gates to visit China. The ostensible reason was the latest U.S. arms sale to Taiwan, an offer of $6.4 billion made by the Obama Administration, in January. The reasons for the strain in U.S.-China military relations runs much deeper, however. This was indicated by a tirade by Rear Adm. Guan Youfei, during the U.S.-China Strategic Economic Dialogue meeting in Beijing May 24. According to the June 8 *Washington Post,* Guan accused the U.S. of being a "hegemon" and of plotting to encircle China with a ring of strategic alliances.

U.S. officials dismissed Guan's accusations as an "anomaly," but a look at the strategic map since Sept. 11, 2001, tells a different tale. Since then, the U.S. has invaded Iraq and Afghanistan, established a military presence in Central Asia and Pakistan, vastly upgraded military relations with both India and Singapore, sought military re-entry into the Philippines, and increased the level of its military activities elsewhere in the Pacific. All of this does, indeed, resemble a ring of strategic alliances aimed against China.

The Air-Sea Battle concept is the latest phase of the British "Ring Around China" that LaRouche warned against back in 1996. The British Imperial objective is to maintain its failed London-centered monetary system at all costs, and prevent the coalescing of any combination of powers that might replace it with something else. They fear a U.S.-China collaboration precisely because such a relationship between the U.S. and China, as the anchor to the Four-Power arrangement including India and Russia, as LaRouche has put forward, is the strategic combination that can defeat British Imperialism.

Ring Around China

Brits Attack Multiple Targets in Asia

by Mike Billington

June 10—British imperial policy in a time of crisis, as is the case with empires throughout history, is to pull every string, and activate every asset in a targeted region, to create as much chaos and disruption as possible, in order to undermine any effort of these nations to unite in a common defense of their sovereign interests. Thus, we see Asia today being subjected to a series of explosive disruptions and potential military mis-adventures, in a recurring pattern of a "ring around China," all of which can be traced to British geopolitical instigation. Lyndon LaRouche compared these British operations to a serial rapist, who not only attacks his victims, one-by-one, but terrorizes the entire population in the process.

In the past months, while the U.S.-British war in Afghanistan was being escalated into a murderous "surge" to protect the opium trade, as part of the British opium war against Russia (see the article in this issue), the fol-