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From: Sullivan, Jacob J <SullivanJJ@state.gov>
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FYI

From: Patel, Nirav S
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America is back in the Pacific and will uphold the rules

By Tom Donilon
Financial Times Op-Ed
November 28, 2011

One of the greatest challenges that faces every American president is to ensure that events of the day do not become cascading crises that crowd out the pursuit of our nation's long-term strategic priorities and interests.

This has been particularly true over the past three years, when the US has confronted a daunting array of challenges: global financial crises; the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan; terrorist threats; direct challenges to global nuclear non-proliferation regimes; and the still unfolding, events across the Middle East and North Africa.

Even as we have dealt with these dynamics, President Barack Obama has pursued a rebalancing of our foreign policy priorities – and renewed our long-standing alliances, including with Nato – to ensure that our focus and our resources match our nation's most important strategic interests.

On his recent trip to Asia Pacific, the president made it clear that the centrepiece of this strategy includes an intensified American role in this vital region. The security, prosperity and human dignity that the US and our allies seek in the region requires that the rights and responsibilities of nations are upheld. Nations must play by the same rules.

Security in the region requires that international law and norms be respected, that commerce and freedom of navigation are not impeded, that emerging powers build trust with their neighbours, and that disagreements are resolved peacefully without threats or coercion. In Asia Pacific, this requires that the US maintain and enhance a strong network of allies and partners.

During his trip this month, the president met leaders from every US treaty ally in Asia, and many of our partners, to reaffirm our unwavering commitment to regional security. At the East Asia Summit in Bali, the US president laid out guiding principles for dealing with challenges such as maritime security, including in the South China Sea.

Most significantly, the president outlined our future defence posture in the region – a presence that is more broadly distributed, more flexible, and more sustainable. The first manifestation of this strategy is the rotational deployment of Marines and aircraft to Australia, which will contribute to the security of sea lines that are vital to the global economy.

It is clear that America will have to make cuts to our defence budget over the next 10 years. Despite this fiscal constraint, the president outlined a strategic decision while in Canberra – reductions in defence spending will not come at the expense of Asia Pacific. There will be no diminution of our military presence or capabilities in the region.

As it has been for decades, our network of alliances and partners will remain the foundation for the region's prosperity. As part of an open international economic order, nations must play by the same rules, including trade that is free and fair, level playing fields on which businesses can compete, intellectual property that is protected everywhere and market-driven currencies.

We continue to make progress towards building a seamless regional economy that upholds best-of-class norms and rules, including common principles for market-driven innovation. At the same time, America is working closely with eight regional economies to realise a Trans-Pacific Partnership, an ambitious, high-standard trade agreement. Other nations that seek to share in this model and its benefits will need to meet the same high standards, including on matters of intellectual property, labour and state-owned enterprises.

Finally, Asia Pacific will be more secure and prosperous when nations uphold the values that are universal. It is no coincidence that our closest allies in the region are strong democracies. Our common values are a fundamental source of strength, which is why America partners with growing democracies such as Indonesia.

By elevating this dynamic region to one of our top strategic priorities, President Obama is showing his determination not to let our ship of state be pushed off course by prevailing crises.

By strengthening the international rules that must be the foundation of our shared future – and by ensuring governments abide by these rules – each of our nations will be more secure and more prosperous.

The writer is President Barack Obama's National Security Advisor

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