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THE NEW TRIANGLE: RUSSIA, JAPAN,
THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF
CHINA AND THE UNITED
STATES SECURITY ROLE.

Student essay

BY

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29 October 1975

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ABSTRACT

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The basic question is what role should the United States maintain as a peacekeeping force in East Asia over the next decade. The political, economic, military and cultural interactions between nations were examined toward identifying a plausible United States position. Data was gathered using a literature search and drawn on personal experiences and studies. The increased tension between Russia and Communist China over territorial, ideological, trade, and the development of natural resources affect area equilibrium and relate directly to United States interests in Japan and Korea. With the fall of South Vietnam, the United States position in the Western Pacific is reviewed toward reducing United States air and ground forces in the area. A strong United States Navy should remain as a show of force and to influence the interactions between powers. Withdrawing forces to United States protectorates and Hawaii will counter domestic economic and attitude pressures in the United States.



INTRODUCTION

East Asia is the only region where four major world powers; the United States, the Soviet Union, Japan and the People's Republic of China, come together in a panoply of settings which significantly impacts on United States security interests and strategic policy. The interactions between these major powers influences world peace, world trade, political stability, and the economic balance of each nation. The role which the United States should play in this area must be defined if an equilibrium between the triangle of nations, the Soviet Union, Japan, and the People's Republic of China, is to exist. Today, the United States faces a greater need to make sound major decisions with respect to its future Asian policies than ever before.

The recent collapse of South Vietnam and the resultant effects on United States foreign policy and existing treaties has placed the United States in a tenuous position. Treaties have been challenged including the demise of SEATO. One time close allies are questioning the validity of treaties, whether the United States will abide by the letter or intent of the document and the moral issues they encompass. Leases on military bases throughout the world, once considered secure and semi-permanent, are being terminated, or, at least, renewal negotiations are getting tougher.¹ These are with long standing allies.

The importance of this East Asian area to the world as a whole, and specifically to the United States, must first be recognized.

This region contains over half the population of the world. Each nation has its individual requirements to meet its socio-economic needs from raw materials, technical and industrial development, to consumer products. Equally important is the political nature and structure within each nation and the effects on mutual cooperation between nations. Thus the questions; can the nations of East Asia achieve political equilibrium and peaceful coexistence? Or, is the world faced with renewed aggression, subversion, and power struggles as exists in the Mid-East today? The statement, "It is in the best interest of the United States to. . .", is often heard in creating and justifying foreign policy. However, the "interests" of the United States are not clearly defined. Just thirty years ago, the United States was engaged in total war with the Empire of Japan; today, Japan is a strong ally. Nationalist China once had mutual goals with the United States; the defeat of Japan, and stopping the internal spread of communism. Today, they exist under the United States security umbrella on Formosa. For more than two decades, the People's Republic of China has replaced the Nationalist Chinese Government on Mainland China, and has been virtually closed to the outside world. [/] Détente, and its effects on East Asian affairs, affects each nation individually and collectively. Consequently, there is understandable concern both in the United States and elsewhere in the world as to our role in East Asia in the aftermath of the Indochina debacle. The role of the United States, as a peacekeeping force in East Asia over the

next decade must be defined.

THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

The People's Republic of China is the key to Asian affairs both for today and in the foreseeable future. It is a major world power possessing a nuclear capability: a skill achieved far sooner than Western World predictions. With their seat on the United Nations Security Council, the Communist Chinese have a direct voice in world peacekeeping measures. Yet, compared with other industrialized nations, it is an emerging country with a dense population and untold, untapped natural resources. The communist takeover in 1949, expelling Nationalist China to the islands of Taiwan, has once again united Mainland China. Today China is seeking a place in world affairs after centuries of internal strife and external exploitation.

Conversely, with its masses and growing nuclear capabilities, the People's Republic of China itself is a threat to peace. Since its establishment in 1949, Communist China has struggled continuously with internal and external problems: the consolidation and rebuilding of the country; the Korean conflict; the invasion of Tibet; border clashes with India and Russia; continued clashes with President Chiang's regime on Taiwan; internal power struggles; and the Red Guard uprising to name but a few. It is difficult enough to form valid judgments on future courses a nation may take in an open society where even the public is confused.

But it is infinitely more difficult in the case of a closed society where facts are locked behind the walls of the former Forbidden City.

Now a new chapter has been opened in relations between Communist China and the United States. President Nixon, on a televised broadcast on July 15, 1971, announcing his visit to Peking stated, ". . . there can be no stable and enduring peace without the participation of the People's Republic of China and its 750 million people". What were the elements that produced this change in relationships? First, the world could no longer ignore a major power of over 850 million people.² In the case of the United States, it was a desire to defuse the supercharged atmosphere poisoning relations between the two major Pacific powers. China, was at one time the focal point for United States policy in the Far East. This collapsed with the fall of President Chiang Kai-shek's armies on the China mainland in 1949 and resulted in a two-China policy. Relations with the new government on Mainland China were never actually established. Full support was given President Chiang on Taiwan. President Nixon at Guam in August 1969 indicated that the United States intended to reduce its military commitments in Asia and expected its Asian allies to carry the major burden of their own defense. This signalled Peking that the United States was amenable to limited withdrawals in the Pacific and was softening its position in the Far East requiring some understanding between Washington and Peking. First, the

United States would not make such a move if it endangered its allies. It should be noted this was in 1969 long before the collapse of South Vietnam. Second, the fact the Soviet Union was seeking to expand its influence throughout the Pacific area was a matter of mutual interest.

What are the interactions between the People's Republic of China and its two neighbors, the Soviet Union and Japan that would dictate a continued United States presence in East Asia? However deep and abiding their differences, the United States and People's Republic of China have one thing in common - a most serious threat to their respective interests from the Soviet Union. The United States has, until recently, been considered the leading military power in the world. However, the Soviet Union is rapidly catching up, and, to many, has already attained the number one position.³ The Soviet threat to the People's Republic of China is more complicated. Historically the two countries have been engaged in long standing border and territorial disputes. As recently as March 1969, border clashes broke out on the Ussuri River in the eastern border regions. Fears mounted worldwide that the Russians might be applying the "Brezhnev Doctrine",⁴ to Communist China. Though the crisis has subsided and negotiations are in progress, both continue to maintain massive military buildups in the area. Additionally, there exists the threat of a preemptive attack by Russia on the sinking nuclear complex to eliminate a possible attack on Russia's hinterland.

The Soviet Union has also expanded its influence throughout the world in what many feel are moves to contain Communist China both territorially and ideologically. Russian expansion into the Indian and Pacific Oceans and support for the new governments of Southeast Asia worry the Chinese who have always closely watched their borders.

The ideological struggle between the two communist powers is understandable when what is at stake is recognized: control of the world communist movement. This includes inheritance of the most powerful "fifth column" movements in the world; a global chain of overt and covert communist parties, fronts and other agencies that have penetrated the political, economic and military fabric of virtually every important country of the world. Recent reports, however, indicate the Soviet Union has informed China that it would like to normalize relations between the two nations.⁵ If achieved, this could affect relations between Washington and Peking as well as the world political balance. Russia obviously fears a United States-China alliance. They can be hostile to one, but not both.

Chinese relationships with Japan, however, are toward mutual economic reliance. Japan needs the natural resources China has to offer to maintain its industrial complex, while China requires the goods produced by Japan. Both countries have roots in classical Chinese civilization, but this is only a "heritage" for each today. Over the past century, each took a different course

under the influence of Western imperialism. Japan took the path toward incorporating modern technology and industrialization, while China disintegrated under internal strife. Jealousies and antagonisms persisted. Next came Japan's military intervention in China between 1937 and 1945 to suppress the Chinese anti-imperialist nationalist movement. During the ensuing struggle, the Chinese Communist Party secured a mass following in a common cause - the defeat of Japan. Thus, though common economic and trade bonds exist between the two, China is not anxious for Japan to once again become a military power. Conversely, Japan will undoubtedly support the United States in the event of Korean hostilities. Both China and Russia know this.⁶

After over two and a half decades of Mao control, the People's Republic of China still remains basically an agrarian nation; however, economic standards are steadily rising. China looks to the West for badly needed goods and credits. It has little gold or foreign exchange and its export market is limited by Western standards. Should the People's Republic of China manage to improve its industrial and economic situation through increased trade and technological exchanges, principally with the United States and Japan, it would be in a better position in the long term to extend its subversive activities in the pursuit of Mao's declared goal of a communist world controlled by the Chinese. This is one of the reasons the Russians are attempting to mend fences with the People's Republic of China.

In the final analysis, the People's Republic of China desires the United States to maintain a military presence in East Asia at least for the next decade for two specific purposes. First, to contain Soviet expansion, and, second, as a deterrent against the rearming of Japan.

JAPAN

Japan has emerged since World War II as a world leader due to its spectacular economic success combined with a relatively high degree of efficiency in meeting the political and social problems of an advanced society. It thus becomes a matter of concern to the United States how Japan uses this economic success and the direction in which their political and social institutions take. The most divisive issue in Japanese politics since the end of World War II is whether Japan should align itself with the United States and the Free World or with the Communists (their close neighbors), or, attempt to retain a strict neutralism between the two. Japan's history of authorization and totalitarian rule, as well as those of the extreme left today, all indicate that the democratic and liberal institutions formulated by the United States may not be securely established. Basically, there are three principal points of conflict for which Tokyo seeks solutions: defense, economics, and relations with People's Republic of China and Russia.

First, Japan's defense relationship with the United States has

given its security since World War II and, before abandoning it, they would have to make a massive defense effort of a magnitude they have shown little desire to undertake. The United States - Japan Security Treaty serves both nations well. Japan provides the United States essential bases on territory of one of the world's economic superpowers. For Japan, with its "no war" Constitution, the United States guarantees a defensive umbrella of conventional and nuclear weapons. Protected as such, Japan can concentrate on economic and industrial development. To Japanese officials, two requirements exist in military relations with the United States: a visible American naval presence and assurances that other United States forces will be available in a crisis. American bases and military influence, with the inevitable possibilities for political friction, call for continuance of tact and tolerance on both sides.

The desires of many Americans to see Japan assume a full defensive posture or even participate in a broader defensive role, must be tempered by an understanding of past and present political conditions in Japan. On the other hand, the United States - Japanese Security Treaty serves as a stabilizing force in Asia. Both the Russians and Communist China view it as forestalling each other's expansion and for any unilateral Japanese military buildup.

In the economic field, direct trade with the United States is the backbone of the Japanese economy. Japanese businessmen

still think of the over 850 million Chinese as potential customers just as do American businessmen. But Japanese firms are well aware that the United States market is a reality and far more attractive than those in Mainland China. China on the other hand could use Japanese know-how in developing its natural resources and industries. But the system devised and operated by the Chinese Communists is too restricted, and offers limited returns to Japan.

Conversely, Japan is cooperating with Russia in developing Siberia.⁷ The Siberian Development Project (the Tyumen Province oil fields and the natural gas fields of Yakutsk) agreements were entered into with Russia jointly by both the United States and Japan. This could result in increased tensions between Russia and the People's Republic of China. In Japanese thinking, United States participation is vital, not just from an economic view in providing funds and technology, but represents an essential degree of assurance against a possible Russian default in the agreement, and to deter any Chinese reaction that Japan has entered into bilateral collusion with Russia. The People's Republic of China has already shown displeasure in that the proposed Tyumen Project pipeline will run close to the disputed Sino-Soviet border areas. This also will assist in colonizing and industrializing Siberia, and provide assured fuel supplies for Eastern Soviet forces. The Japanese see no retaliation on the Communist Chinese part, at least so long as the United States is involved. This, however,

may affect United States-People's Republic of China relations. Japan, more than any other nation, needs the oil supplies available from Siberian sources to maintain its industry. Recently, Japan has begun trade negotiations for oil from Mainland China.

Japanese relationships with the People's Republic of China are primarily concerned with trade. On the political scene, Japan is well aware of Peking's ultimate design to convert Japan to communism - Chinese style. To do this, Japan, under Chinese influence, must break the ties between Washington and Tokyo. As an alternative, China would like to neutralize Japan thereby eliminating a possible threat to Peking's security until further political gains can be made. With its great technological know-how, Japan is the only Far Eastern country capable of eventually obtaining enough military strength to defend non-Communist Asia. The Chinese know this as do other Asian nations.

Relations with the Soviet Union have been touched on previously in the area of trade and the Siberian development projects. The two continuing problems as seen by the Japanese is the refusal of Russia to negotiate the return of the two large southern islands in the Kurile chain taken after World War II, and, second, the growing presence of the Soviet Navy in Pacific waters. Japan is in the middle, squeezed between the two major communist powers with each vying for dominant world control. In such a tenuous position, she must placate both.

• Therefore, the continued United States presence in East Asia

is desirable to the Japanese.

THE SOVIET UNION

Détente, to the Soviet Union, means seeking a stabilized peace in the West in order to concentrate their efforts on the East. The Russian leadership sees a hostile "horde" of over 850 million Chinese menacing their border, laying claim to roughly 600,000 square miles acquired by the Romanov czars. The Chinese nuclear successes threaten the very heartland of Russia; Moscow and other industrial centers. The Chinese, on the other hand, see détente as a shifting of Russian military power from the West to the East. Russia, on the other hand, is separated from the United States by thousands of miles while they share a common and disputed border with Communist China. Thus, America constitutes a lesser threat to invasion than does the People's Republic of China. The United States interests are in support of free world nations such as Western Europe and Japan. Should a conflict emerge between the Soviet Union and Communist China, the United States would undoubtedly not take sides. Rather, the United States would seek to prevent either country from taking advantage of such a situation against our allies; South Korea and Japan.

In Southeast Asia, both the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China had and continue to have vital interests. However, it appears that North Vietnam, a strong proven military state, is more closely tied to the Soviet Union. To this extent,

the Soviet position strategically is strengthened on China's southern flank while China's is weakened. It is doubtful though that the nations of Indo-China are ready to allow any foreign bases on their soil or political intervention for the foreseeable future. Reconstruction aid, yes; but military or political sanctions will not be given to foreign powers.

As previously discussed, Siberia is proving to be a bonanza in natural resources for the Soviet Union. The development and population increases in the area will continue to be a festering sore on China's frontiers. To develop the area, the Soviet Union urgently needs modern, specialized equipment and technology from the West to cope with the legendary temperatures and climatic conditions in Siberia. This requires hard currency and presents a problem to the Russians. Russia has little hard currency and relatively few consumer goods of interest to the West by which they can obtain it. Weapons are another matter. Russia, to obtain foreign currency, seeks sales with countries having ready cash. Consequently, Russia is entering into negotiations for trading natural resources, principally natural gas and oil, for the technology and equipment they need. Such negotiations are directed at Japan. These are long term negotiations as Western nations are rightfully suspect and reluctant to depend on the Soviet Union for needed energy sources. Japan thus desires United States backing before entering into agreements with Russia.

In summary, the Soviet Union is presently at a standoff with the People's Republic of China. She is continuing to maintain strong military forces in East Asia and is increasing her naval strength in the Pacific. The strong push to exploit Siberia's development is looked on by Moscow as the answer to their problems. Détente with the United States would also free Russian resources for Siberian expansion and Chinese containment.

THE UNITED STATES

United States interests in East Asia are centered around security treaties with Japan and South Korea. Both countries have strong economic, trade, and political ties with the United States. Each has emerged, following devastating wars, as a democratic show place to the world. The United States' stand here, as in Western Europe, directly influences all other free nations.

Critical to the question of peace and stability in East Asia is the United States' resolve to help defend South Korea. Soon after the fall of South Vietnam, invasion rumblings were heard from North Korea. Fears rose of another possible invasion of the South. This has not materialized based on the United States' reaffirming its position and intentions to intervene in the event of hostilities.⁸ Important also is the fact a United States backed South Korea is vital to Japan's security. Historically, invasion routes to Japan pass through the Korean Peninsula.

The People's Republic of China looks unfavorably on United

States' moves toward détente with Russia. Rather than peace, they see increased tensions and possible confrontations with Russia as Russian interests and resources are turned eastward toward the development of Siberia and further threats to their borders. Fear rises in Peking that the United States and the Soviet Union are dividing the world into spheres of influence at the expense of other nations. Equally, the Russians fear improved United States-Chinese relations are designed to squeeze them out. The Communist Chinese are at a disadvantage by not having full diplomatic relations with the United States as does the Soviet Union. The People's Republic of China must remove its cloak of isolationism and open its doors to political, economic and cultural exchanges before full world recognition can be attained.

On the American domestic scene, the country is deeply engaged in an economic war: growing inflation and unemployment. The American people are turning inward, possibly toward isolationism, asking, "When is it our turn?", "Why must we continue to support the world?". This is a dangerous political mood. A withdrawal of United States forces in East Asia would leave a vacuum which either the Soviet Union or Communist China would seek to fill heightening the prospects of open hostilities. Thus, priorities must be established to reach a balance between foreign policy and domestic requirements.

SUMMARY

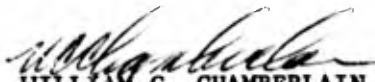
United States Asian interests are being guided today by the Nixon Doctrine and the affirmation that the United States will remain a Pacific power. However, the doctrine also provides that the responsibility for the peace and stability in Asia should fall to a much greater extent on Asian countries themselves. No longer should these countries expect an assured input of United States military forces to counter aggression, notwithstanding United States security commitments to the region. There is a dichotomy between the maintenance of these commitments and the diminishing United States military presence. In the past, the United States presence has been a stabilizing factor as well as visible evidence of the United States intent to meet its commitments. Should the collapse of South Vietnam be interpreted as a lack of resolve, interactions could result in a power struggle to the detriment of United States interests and to area stability. As a positive step in reducing tensions, the United States and the People's Republic of China have moved toward normalization of relations, particularly in economic and political terms. While this is stabilizing in terms of broadening People's Republic of China relationships in the community of nations, explosive potentials are also created between Russia, Japan, and the United States. Russia distrusts United States-People's Republic of China cooperation and is continuing its incursions into the Indian and Pacific oceans as a means of Chinese containment. The Sino-Soviet ideological split

and territorial disputes aggravate tensions in the vying for regional supremacy. China thus welcomes improved relations with the United States as a counterbalance to Russian thrusts and as added opportunity for improved economic development through increased trade with the West. Continued United States involvement in the region provides a restraining influence on Japanese militarization and the acquisition of weapons capabilities to support Japanese economic needs. Soviet-Japanese cooperation in the Siberian Development Project has increased the People's Republic of China's concerns over the balance of power, but United States cooperation in the project has tempered these concerns. The United States has been and continues to be a significant catalyst in maintaining stability and guarding United States interests through its restraining influence on Japanese rearmament, Soviet expansionism, and Chinese militancy, thus providing for the maintenance of sea lanes of communications and an environment which supports economic development and trade expansion.

The United States should continue those actions necessary to the maintenance of the balance of power in East Asia principally by increasing economic and political influence while simultaneously sustaining reductions in military strength. The United States is being forced to withdraw its Asian bases to a new eastern defense line since the fall of South Vietnam. Major American bases will be relocated to island protectorates in the Western Pacific with Hawaii as the anchor. To maintain an equilibrium

between the three East Asian powers and to protect its interests, the United States should maintain strong naval forces in the area for the protection of sea lines of communications and a show of force. Both ground and air forces should be withdrawn and employed as quick reaction forces. Such moves will reflect favorably on the domestic economy by reducing the "gold flow" and improving the balance of payments deficits.

The American public and Congressional attitudes reflect this need to devote more resources toward domestic requirements and to limit involvement in foreign outlays and conflicts. Americans are tired of funding a United States presence in countries shouting "Yankee go home", of playing the role of world policeman, and supporting others at the expense of the American taxpayer. If the United States should respond to these domestic pressures and withdraw from East Asia, can it afford to have another power fill the void? Thus, if the level of stability now being enjoyed is essential, and is to continue into the future, it would appear that the interests of the United States would be best served by maintaining a United States influence in the region, so long as that influence is not expanded to the detriment of domestic needs.


WILLIAM C. CHAMBERLAIN
Colonel, FA

FOOTNOTES

1. "Don't Try Pressure, Allies Told," The Atlanta Constitution, 24 June 1975, p.1.
2. "The People's Republic of China", Commanders Digest, Department of Defense, 29 November 1973, p.9.
3. "Soviet Surge: Hard Fact That We Have to Face," US News and World Report, 18 August 1975, p.26.
4. The "Brezhnev Doctrine," pronounced by the Soviet chairman following the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia on 29 August 1968, proclaimed the right of the Soviet Union to intervene whenever it considered the established party system of another communist country to be endangered.
5. "China Says Soviets Want to Make Up," The Atlanta Constitution, 5 October 1975, p.1.
6. "Washington Whispers," US News and World Report, 20 October 1975, p.8.
7. "Out of 3 Decades of Turmoil - A New Asia Emerges," US News and World Report, 14 January 1974, p.38.
8. "American GI's Still Key to Korea Defense," US News and World Report, 30 June 1975, p.60.

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15. "Soviet Surge: Hard Fact That We Have to Face," US News and World Report, Vol. LXXIX, 18 August 1975, p.26.

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17. Wakezumi, Kei. "Japan's Role in a New World Order." Foreign Affairs, Vol. 51, January 1973, pp. 310-326.

18. "Washington Whispers." US News and World Report, Vol LXXIX, 20 October 1975, p.8.

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