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POSTWAR INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS: PROBLEMS AND CONFLICTS IN ASIA

Professor Frederick J. Horrigan

**A lecture delivered to the
Naval War College
on 19 October 1967**

Professor Hartmann — thank you for the gracious introduction. Gentlemen — it is a pleasure to be here this morning. It is always an honor to receive an invitation to speak at one of our War Colleges. You know, I have often been sitting as you are now waiting for a lecture to begin or for the speaker to get to his point and I have asked myself at these times — what

should one keep in mind as he prepares notes for a War College address? I have come to believe that the lecturer should pose three questions to himself: What do I know that most of such a highly professional group doesn't already know? What can I say that they could not read in half the time from a more authoritative source? And finally — a key question — What can I con-

tribute to their understanding of the assigned topic that possibly would increase their capability in some future posts of responsibility to plan and implement U.S. national security policies? These introspective questions must operate as an essential guide for the selection of whatever remarks the speaker hopes to cover in the limited time he has available.

I might add to the above that all who take the platform should be more forthright in fully bringing out in advance the rather neurotic character of this enterprise of foreign affairs analysis. After all, we do peer out at the great blooming, buzzing confusion of the world from a tiny aperture and our human tendency is to impose a rationale and an order on the events we see, or think we see. It is a heroic endeavor, but one that has its limitations. This is especially true for the realm of prediction and prescription. If one is licensed by the Commonwealth to prescribe for disturbed and unmanageable human beings, he will not only be examined for his mastery of a body of scientific knowledge but in his training as well there will be a requirement, in some schools of medicine, that he undergo analysis himself to reduce the likelihood of bringing his unconscious biases and quirks of perception to the treatment of the patient. But when we diagnose the ailments of a disturbed, violent world and prescribe for sick nations, we are at liberty, both in fact and at law, to never lay bare for a moment our own sense of these limitations. An experience on an overseas trip several years ago helped me to establish the tone I would like to adopt during my talk this morning. In one of the African countries I was entertained along with other members of our group and, as established by convention, wore a name tag with "Dr." printed before my name. A lady of great girth and color-

ful local dress strolled over to where I was standing, fixed her eye on the tag and then on me and said, "Man, are you a healing doctor or a talking doctor?"

Well, gentlemen, I am a "talking doctor," but I can diagnose at least two syndromes to which a speaker on such a large topic as problems and conflicts in Asia may be susceptible. These are the Platte River syndrome and the Mother Hubbard syndrome. The first—like that famous Nebraska river—is a tendency to be an inch deep all the way and a mile wide at the mouth; the other group of symptoms, called the Mother Hubbard after those long, loose garments supplied by missionaries to Polynesian girls in the last century, is the compulsion to cover everything and touch on nothing. The plan I have, if time allows, is to treat this topic under four headings: (1) the reaction of our country to the rising scale of problems and conflicts in Asia and in this connection to set out the terms of the argument between the so-called "globalists" and "neoisolationists" over the future course of United States-Asian relations; (2) to touch on the deeply rooted problems of the area which transcend national boundaries and ambitions; (3) to highlight some outstanding feature of each Asian region which has a critical bearing on the kind of order that will eventually emerge in the area; (4) to conclude by formulating some knotty problems for U.S. national security policy that you may wish to consider during the coming academic year at the Naval War College.

The debate over American policy toward Asia takes its place in a context of a more general assessment of the nature of the contemporary international environment and a definition of our national interests around the globe. As I read the literature on the subject, the parties to the dispute share the view

that some clear lines have now emerged from the struggles of the last several decades. They would agree, I believe, that there has been a measurable decline in the efficacy of political ideology nearly everywhere and that pragmatism has shown its hand in many areas of human relations formerly viewed ideologically. As a methodology for solving modern problems, it is, in short, a burnt-out case, at least for the present, and always excluding Communist China. Most agree also that today there is a new Europe, increasingly prosperous and confident, and again with one exception, General de Gaulle, not inclined to meddle with the rest of the world with any great emotional involvement or material cost to itself. I think there is a further measure of agreement that the penultimate dissolution of the colonial order and the worldwide conquest of nationalism, coupled with the resurgence of China as a major power complex for the first time in the history of the modern West, creates a wholly new set of problems for the international order. In relation to the less-developed countries, there is more and more a common appreciation and some apprehension that the scientific revolution is passing them by and that the gap between the two worlds of development is opening wider rather than closing. Finally, there is a large area of agreement that military blocs are loosening in their cohesion as participants review the costs and benefits of membership. So much for common perspectives.

Let us now turn to the definition of the threat and extent of U.S. commitment for further comparison of the views of the protagonists in the great debate. It is generally agreed, I take it, that the United States has emerged in our time as *the* world power in terms of strategic mobility. In 1967 the United States had more than 700,000

soldiers stationed in some 30 countries. We are a member of four regional defense groups and an associate member of another group. We have mutual defense treaties with 42 countries, are a member of 53 international organizations, and furnish military and economic aid to over 100 countries. This great effort has been made to meet a threat which, in the view of strategists over the past decades, was primarily an East-West confrontation in a bipolar world. Now it appears that this neatly structured threat is being superseded or perhaps simply enlarged by the growing possibility of a new kind of conflict along the axis of a North-South split among the nations of the earth. This new confrontation would find its rift not primarily on the basis of ideology but from the emergence of conflict between the industrialized Northern Hemisphere countries on the one hand and the poor, unstable, newer nations of the Southern Hemisphere on the other, where there is being marshalled an array of problems compounded of racial tensions, endemic poverty, and exploding populations that threaten them with a marginal existence and internal disorder for the indefinite future. In this view the greater danger to peace lies in a revolution-prone "third world" where the wrenching transition from colonialism to independence and the multiple tensions of modernization have been accompanied by situations of both organized violence and unintended civil disorder. Into this cauldron of virulent nationalisms and civil strife the great powers may be drawn either by doctrine or inadvertently, against their conscious will, even against the explicit definitions of their vital interests.

Now it is at this point that agreement on the estimate of the situation breaks down, and prescriptions for future policy diverge radically. That group

labeled neoisolationist would argue that in regard to most of the non-European world our vital interests are not at stake; that insofar as we do respond, we mistakenly continue to utilize means which were appropriate only in postwar Europe, i.e., military containment and economic aid; that we lack the sustained capability to project even our great power over such immense distances and to measure and control the responses of peoples of alien culture. In a word, their view is that a dangerous gap exists between what we would like to see happen and what we can reasonably hope to accomplish. Most of these criticisms focus today on the area of greatest U.S. involvement — Asia.

The other side of this argument has been carried by many advocates — both in government and private life. It is best I think, at this point, to let one of the most eloquent spokesmen for an activist Asian policy set forth the central propositions of that policy. Harold Kaplan in the 21 August 1967 issue of *The Department of State Bulletin* defines these fundamental propositions as follows:

First, that we are geographically and historically a Pacific power, with a vital interest in the independence and peaceful development of the Asian nations. This implies, of course, that we have an equally vital interest in preventing the domination of the area by a hostile power which — for whatever ideological or other reasons — might seek to organize the human and physical resources of Asia against us.

Second, that social and economic modernization can occur in underdeveloped societies under more rewarding and less destructive auspices than the Maoist formula of the “war of national liberation” and that we have an interest in demonstrating that the Maoist formula is not, in any event, an infallible road to power.

Third, that our situation in the world imposes extraordinary responsibilities upon us, particularly with re-

spect to the preservation of mankind from nuclear warfare. In Asia, as elsewhere, this means that people must come to expect, as a matter of course, that we will honor our commitments and keep our word, however onerous the cost may seem in a purely local context.

Finally, our problem in Asia is not that the course we are pursuing may lead us into conflict with mainland China. That conflict exists, and our present concern is how best to reduce, contain, and finally end it. In other words, our problem is so to manage our conflict with mainland China that the chances of a world conflagration can be minimized and the possibilities of peaceful development for China herself, as well as for the nations which must live on China's periphery, can be preserved.

I have asked you to bear with me in this brief review of the pro and con over foreign policy objectives because I believe that such a résumé is useful background for a discussion of more specific problems and conflicts. Moreover, these arguments suggest the extent to which strategic planning for the entire Afro-Asian area may be affected by the outcome of this domestic debate in the coming year.

At this point I would like to introduce my second proposition for your consideration, which is that conflicts in Asia and, indeed, in the rest of the underdeveloped world find their roots today and probably even more in the future in conditions that superficially cannot be described as political or as elements of foreign policy. I refer, of course, to the by now familiar catalog of ills which affects most of mankind outside the developed West: high mortality rates, rudimentary hygiene, undernutrition, small per capita consumption of energy, illiteracy, static agricultural production, and an unchecked population growth that eats away the marginal gains in economic growth. In the last hundred years, I am told, the

share of the rich countries in world production has leaped from 60 percent to 85 percent, while the poor lands' share has fallen from 40 percent to 15 percent. I have no greater appreciation than you do, I am sure, for lectures which cite statistics. These heavy facts are at best more congenial to textbooks and official reports than to a late morning talk. Nevertheless, I should like to reiterate a point I touched on earlier, namely, that the fruits of the scientific and technological advances are not reaching the poorer countries in such a manner as to help them solve their problems. Precisely what effect the widening gap between the rich lands and the poor lands will be, we can only surmise. No one had quite realized until recently what a tremendous gulf separates the various worlds of development. The Western-oriented world, for example, in which we would include Japan, the Republic of South Africa, Israel, and the Commonwealth countries of Oceania, accounts for only 20 percent of the world's population but with its 700 million people produces a G.N.P. of \$1,100 billion — about 60 percent of the world's wealth. In the era of transitional politics we can only be certain that this disparity will sooner or later be converted into a politics of violence with broad implications for the foreign policy of the United States.

As we turn now to the southern flank of Asia, the role of India in the creation of a stable balance of power in the area is affected both by its definition of national security requirements and its mammoth internal development problems. As India moves into the third decade of its independence, it faces two major problems in maintaining the integrity and security of the state. The first is to insure its security from either Chinese Communist attack or conflict with Pakistani or, in the worst case scenario, from concerted action by its

two hostile neighbors. The second is maintenance of the unity of the Indian national state by vigorous opposition to internal, fragmenting forces such as communalism, linguistic secession, and disruptive regionalism. I have no way of knowing how high on the scale of national security objectives is control of the Indian Ocean by Indian power or by elements not hostile to it, but it is certainly one of the critical issues for the next decade. If the British presence east of Suez is withdrawn, what immediate problems are suggested by the vacuum left in this extensive inland sea of Afro-Asia? Not until the most recent defense cuts did it finally become clear that the dominance of the littoral of this sea by British power was in a state of dissolution. What other force, if any, is available to lend stability or exert power in this area? India's grave internal problems and preoccupation with the security of its land frontiers suggest that its attention and available resources will be focused there rather than on security arrangements in the Indian Ocean. Closely associated with what India sees as the primary threat to its security, the baseless hostility of China, is the question of whether India should attempt to develop and produce nuclear weapons. Pressures to "go nuclear" will undoubtedly be a persistent feature of the defense debate over the coming years. The pronuclear views of some elements in the Indian Army and conservative parties are a matter of record. Arguments are made that such a development would increase the prestige of the central Government, bolster India's status among Afro-Asian countries, and provide a deterrent against some combination of hostile forces possessing nuclear weapons. A search for alternative arrangements to achieve security without severely taxing India's economy will proceed until some decision is made. This perfectly understand-

able concern with nuclear policy is, of course, portentous for the kind of Asia that will emerge from our own troubled times. We might return to these two strategic variables — the future of the Indian Ocean and nuclear proliferation in the South Asia region during the question period.

For the present I would like to move along the rimland of Asia to highlight one or two matters connected with Southeast Asia that you might profitably consider during your studies this year. Undoubtedly, other lecturers will discuss this area in more detail, but as part of my mission here this morning to raise questions I would recommend two major features of the Southeast Asian region to your attention. The first is that Southeast Asia comprises 10 separate states and nearly 250 million people who are by no means "Southeast Asians." Regional identity and cooperation are only now beginning to appear in a region which has been described as a place on the globe where certain groups of people, holding very little in common, live contiguous to one another. These diverse peoples, so particularistic in their historical experience, religion, language, and ethnic composition have for centuries formed a sort of "low pressure area" in world politics and because of this lack of unity represented an attractive objective for strategic and economic penetration by outside powers. To be sure, there have been some very encouraging initiatives toward regional cooperation, but the past dies hard, and this history is essential to an understanding and appreciation of the long road that must be traveled before a genuine regional identity can develop that, in turn, can support collective security and broad economic cooperation. The direction of this growth, as I say, has been toward this goal in the past 5 years and hopefully it will continue.

Another development in the region which I would like to bring to your attention is the surfacing of what might be called a second generation of nationalism led by younger and more pragmatic men for the most part and concerned with a different order of problems than their predecessors. The old style leadership, forged in the heat of the struggle for independence, was given to striking attitudes and adopting postures. Sukarno and his counterparts throughout the Afro-Asian world often continued to shadowbox after the decision was announced — with tragic consequences in the case of Indonesia. This second generation of leadership having to come to power in an independent country, is now turning its energies to the task of building a nation. The internal threat of communalism rather than the beastliness of the colonialists has top priority on their agenda. From this generation may come the inspiration for regional cooperation in cultural, educational, and economic affairs that could serve as a target for the aspirations of the young people of the Southeast Asian countries.

The extent to which Japan will play a role in the growing involvement of Asian states in each other's destiny is the subject for rewarding speculation. Japan's economic growth has now made her the world's third industrial power. She has achieved a mature working democratic order and is beginning to reassert her interests in the affairs of her Asian neighbors through joint action to further the development of the entire region. This reviving self-confidence and assertion of leadership in economic cooperation offer the possibility that Japan's enormous potential may in time help shape a prosperous and secure environment in Asia.

As I come into the final section of my prepared remarks, I would like to

draw out of the score of problems and potential conflicts, four items that we can label as knotty problems for study and reflection. The first of these is the unresolved problem of Communist China's capabilities and intentions, particularly the latter. In terms of military capabilities she will soon have a tactical nuclear capacity and the strongest conventional force in Asia. Her current emphasis on "peoples' wars" asserts a potential threat to every non-Communist state in Asia. Whether or not a foreign policy based on ideology, nationalism, and xenophobia remains a permanent complement to a Communist regime in Peking no doubt depends on the outcome of the domestic struggle for power. I do not need to underline before this audience the tremendous task of managing this continuing problem in the years ahead.

A second kind of problem which may develop in Asia over the next decade is the temptation by one of the parties to a regional dispute to turn to nuclear weapons development with the intent of using the bomb as a threat to a rival or antagonist in regional disputes. We have tended to minimize the potential political leverage of nuclear weapons to resolve disputes since they have more or less frozen the status quo in the central balance of power and have at the other extreme been irrelevant to low-level conflicts. But this does not exhaust the possibilities of their political effectiveness in one or more of the bitter regional disputes. Each of us can think of several regional conflicts where escalation to nuclear war would have had incalculable consequences. The problem presented to the world by hostile regional powers armed with nuclear weapons, outside the constraints of an alliance system, and with inexperienced command and control of such weapons is a dismaying possibility of the future.

The third knotty problem we may wish to examine is the consequence for U.S. strategy and force commitments of what appears at this time to be the imminent withdrawal of a substantial British presence east of Suez. I cannot conceive of any problem facing the United States that would be more pertinent this year to your deliberations here at the Naval War College. I was in the United Kingdom this past summer and came away with the distinct impression that there is a deep-seated instinct in some sectors of British public opinion to "opt out" of its irritating and expensive residual responsibilities in Afro-Asia. There is certainly enough discussion in statements presented to Parliament by the Secretary of State for Defence to this effect, so that it hardly puts this observation in the category of news. Nevertheless, I sense, perhaps mistakenly, that the currents of opinion supporting this move are deeper than the official statements allow, and I would not be surprised to see more and more pressure in the direction of further reduction of these commitments. One friend put it this way:

You see (old chap) the British attitude toward their role in the world has a lot of old-fashioned ideas ingrained in it, naturally enough. For example, the old nonsense that the Orient begins at Calais. Or the rather dark view of the doings of Europeans in general. And our deep suspicion of giving up a jot of our precious sovereignty. Frankly, there has been little spontaneity in our approaches to closer relationships with these countries. However, every modern current of technology, of defence planning and budgeting, and of politics as well is flowing the other way. Perhaps we are still trying to solve 20th century problems with 19th century attitudes. Perhaps we should just chuck the whole lot and help shape the environment in which we live --- the European world. And cultivate a European personality to go with it.

The British are asking themselves the question: Are we still a world power? a major power? or a European power? To which of these three roles shall we adjust our pride, our capabilities, and our responsibilities? In going home to Europe from which this island people came, there seems to be a sense of relief. A world role today, they say, is not just disagreeable and thankless but is appalling in cost. They cite the figures for maintaining one British soldier east of Suez today — £10,000 compared to £800 prior to World War Two. So what ties remain to keep them out there — in the cold, so to speak? The Commonwealth? The Commonwealth has been evolving in any case, and individual members who are strong want to go their own way. Others, if weak, represent a potential burden. How far and how fast the reduction of the international role of the United Kingdom will proceed, I do not know. But I do hazard a guess that the statements suggesting staged withdrawals and moderate cuts in defense spending are definitely optimistic and while hoping for the best, we should prepare for the worst. The worst, in my view, would be such radical reductions as to present a danger to the world and perhaps to the United Kingdom itself.

The very last point I wish to make this morning is that we had best be prepared to live in a world of revolutionary violence and study this phenomena with some greater sophistication than has been the case in the past, in academic as well as Government groups. What kind of volatile combination do landless peasants, ambitious colonels, embittered tribesmen, and hungry slum dwellers provide as rebels against an established order? Has a lid been taken off a virtual Pandora's box from which long subdued tribal, ethnic, and religious hatreds will erupt in violence? What is the connection be-

tween anticolonial wars, tribal wars, wars of nation-states to determine regional hegemony and ideologically inspired coups and social revolutions?

My time is up, and I would close with a verse from the Old Testament, if you will permit me, that seems to sum up our modern dilemma. In the Book of Proverbs, chapter 26, verse 17, there is this thought: "He that passeth by and meddeth with strife belonging not to him is like one that taketh a dog by the ears." So I would ask you in this year ahead to ask yourselves — what strife belongeth to us? At what cost? And for what purpose?

I know it is going to be a good year for you. I am happy that you have asked me to come. And I hope I have raised some issues for your consideration.

BIOGRAPHIC SUMMARY



Professor Frederick J. Horrigan holds a B.A. from DePauw University, and an M.A. and a Ph.D. from Indiana University.

Professor Horrigan, who served with the U.S. Navy in World War II, has been a Research Associate at

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Professor Horrigan is the author of "Local Government and Administration in Thailand," his Ph.D. dissertation; "Provincial Government" in *Problems and Politics and Administration in Thailand*; and various articles and book reviews.
