

Naval War College Review

Volume 19
Number 4 *April*

Article 3

1966

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Recommended Citation

Fifield, Russell H. (1966) "School of Naval Warfare: U.S. Objectives and Treaty Organizations in Asia and the Western Pacific," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 19 : No. 4 , Article 3.

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U.S. OBJECTIVES AND TREATY ORGANIZATIONS IN ASIA AND THE WESTERN PACIFIC

A lecture delivered
at the Naval War College
on 18 November 1965

by

Professor Russell H. Fifield

In an analysis of the American alliances in the Far East and Western Pacific, one should begin with a consideration of the strategic importance of the free countries of that area to the United States, and then turn to the objectives of Peking and Washington toward them. The forward strategy of the United States in the Pacific is based upon an attempt to keep a potential enemy as far away as possible from American shores. This forward strategy takes advantage of the location of a number of islands off the coast of Eastern Asia and of two peninsulas on the coast of Eastern Asia. These islands are Japan, Okinawa in the Ryukyus, Formosa, the Philippines, and by extension, Australia and New Zealand; the two peninsulas are Korea in the north and the mainland of Southeast Asia in the south. To this group one does not have to stress the relevance of sea power to the islands and peninsulas off or on the coast of Eastern Asia.

Southeast Asia, consisting of the mainland and insular countries from Burma to the Philippines and Indonesia, is now a storm center of the world. In terms of location its strategic importance cannot be denied. The acquisition of Southeast Asia by the People's Republic of China would provide a large buffer zone for its southern provinces; would place China in control of strategic gateways between the Pacific and Indian oceans; would enable Peking to regulate to its own advantage land, sea, and air routes throughout the entire region; would open the doors to India, Pakistan and Australia; and would seriously threaten the American position wherever it remained

in the Far East. A Southeast Asia, free from communist domination, is in the strategic interests of the United States. Washington seeks, therefore, to deny the area to the People's Republic of China, to keep open the water passageways for the use of world commerce, to be able to take advantage of local transportation routes and facilities if called upon for assistance in the event of an emergency, and to buttress its friends and allies in South Asia and the Southwest Pacific.

Another important aspect of the importance of the free countries of the Far East and Western Pacific is found in their natural resources—resources which are highly developed in the case of Japan, and underdeveloped in the cases of almost all the others. Japan today is the only industrialized nation in Asia. It has the fourth largest industrial complex in the world. Japan has the greatest reservoir of technological skill in the Far East. Next to Canada, Japan is the best customer of the United States, and the latter is Japan's best customer. Joseph Stalin once reportedly said: "With Japan we are invincible." Although the other countries of the free world in the Far East are not in the fortunate industrial position of Japan, the range of economic development is marked: Laos, for instance, is backward while Taiwan is making considerable progress in industrialization.

Certain strategic exports in world commerce of the underdeveloped countries should be stressed. In Southeast Asia rice is one of them; the traditional rice bowl of Asia is Burma, Thailand, and normally Viet Nam. This rice has been exported to various countries of the Far East, such as Japan in the past and India, and to the Philippines, Indonesia, and Malaysia. If Communist China could get control of this surplus rice, it would not only help its economy, but it would also be a means of putting pressure on countries in Southeast Asia and other states of Asia, which need the rice exports from Burma and Thailand. Another important export is oil, with over three per cent of the world's production coming from Southeast Asia, chiefly Indonesia and the rich sultanate of Brunei protected by Great Britain. About 15 per cent of this oil comes to the United States; very little, if any, goes to Communist China. Peking needs these oil supplies from Southeast Asia both in its military development and in its program of industrialization. Control of the oil would also be a means of exercising pressure on other countries who want to import it.

Another important export from Southeast Asia is tin, about 60 per cent of the world's supply coming from the region, chiefly

Malaysia, Indonesia, and Thailand. The United States imports a large amount of tin; Communist China, on the other hand, has a great surplus. There is presently no synthetic substitute for tin. Another export which one might mention is natural rubber; about 90 per cent of the output of the world comes from Southeast Asia. The United States imports considerable natural rubber from Malaysia and to a lesser extent from Indonesia while Communist China is also a customer. Synthetic rubber is now important but the demand on the world market is so high that there will, no doubt, be a need for both natural and synthetic rubber for many years.

An element of strategic importance to the free world in the Far East and Western Pacific is population. It is very difficult to determine exactly how many people there are in the arc of countries from Burma to Japan. A figure of 350 million can be given with over 100 million Indonesians, and almost 100 million Japanese. If these 350 million people should fall under the control of communism, especially of the Peking brand (and that would be the type which would probably take over if communism triumphed), the effects of this shift upon the other peoples of the free world would be momentous.

Another aspect in the strategic importance of the free countries of the Far East at the present time arises from the fact that Peking and Hanoi are using some of them as a laboratory to test their concept of "wars of national liberation." Viet Nam is a case in point. If this concept succeeds in Viet Nam, Thailand will be the next testing ground; and quite likely other parts of the free world will experience "wars of national liberation." As for the United States, it has made major commitments to many free countries in the Far East. Its credibility is at stake. If the United States reneges on these commitments, faith in its word would greatly diminish, not only in other parts of Asia outside the Far East, but also much nearer home in Latin America and the North Atlantic.

In the light of the strategic importance of the free countries of the Far East and Western Pacific to the United States, the objectives of Peking and Washington become more meaningful. No foreigner can be exactly sure what Peking intends for free Asia, but three objectives may be advanced. One goal is to create buffer zones near key provinces of Communist China. These buffer zones should preferably be under communist regimes, but if they are not yet, Peking will settle temporarily for regimes which are strongly

neutral. North Korea and North Viet Nam today are buffer zones to key parts of China, North Korea vis-à-vis Manchuria, and North Viet Nam vis-à-vis Yunnan and Kwangsi. Burma, a neighbor of China in Southeast Asia, one might say, is vehemently neutral at the present time. There is some evidence to indicate that if the United States should attempt through ground forces to move into North Viet Nam, as the United States attempted in the Korean War to move north to the Yalu River, Communist China might intervene with millions of so-called "volunteers."

Another objective of Communist China—and this is publicly stated—is to force, probably short of all-out conflict, the withdrawal of American presence in the Far East. Additionally, one of the key targets for mainland China, of course, is Taiwan. Peking is constantly dwelling on the need for the unification of China, and by unification it means the acquisition of that very strategic and important island off the coast of Eastern Asia.

A third objective of Communist China in the Far East is to establish the paramountcy of Peking throughout the area. The model is not to add new provinces to China; rather the model is to create new North Koreas and new North Viet Nams. To some extent it is a substitute of Japan's New Order in Greater East Asia before and during the Pacific War.

What are American goals toward the free countries of the Far East and Western Pacific? One of the chief objectives focuses upon the effort to help them maintain their independence—to help them exercise, as President Kennedy would say, "freedom of choice." This effort involves assistance in establishing stability in the countries in a framework of social change and in establishing security in them—security from subversion within and security from aggression without.

One might state that American objectives towards the free countries of Asia focus on the effort to prevent the spread of communism. Or one might say, they focus on helping the Asians meet the "revolution of rising expectations." Whatever terminology is used, one gets back to the idea that the United States is trying to help the free countries maintain their independence through the promotion of stability and security.

The American alliance structure in the Far East reflects these considerations. First of all, these alliances came into being within a period of just a few years—1951 to 1954. Since then no partner

has denounced his pact; on the other hand, no recruit has been found. In retrospect, the alliances reflect three historic sequences of events. The oldest goes back to the Spanish-American War, when the United States acquired the Philippines from Spain. Since then Washington has had close relations with the Filipinos whether under the dependency, the Commonwealth, or now the Republic. The Philippines constitutes a special case in the relations of America with the countries of the Far East. It is rather significant that Ferdinand Marcos, when he was president-elect of the Philippines, held a press conference and indicated that his country wanted to retain the large American bases in the islands. He has shown interest in sending a small number of Philippine troops to South Viet Nam.

Another sequence of events which helps to explain American alliances in Asia today arises from the Japanese peace treaty at San Francisco. In connection with it, alliances were concluded in 1951 with four island countries off or related to the coast of Eastern Asia—Japan, the Philippines, and Australia and New Zealand (ANZUS). These alliances obviously were reflective of American sea power in the Pacific. As for the Japanese peace treaty itself, three basic considerations were involved. In 1949 China had gone communist; a few months later Peking had intervened in the Korean War; and the Japanese for their part had earned their peace treaty.

The third sequence of events which accounts for the American alliance system in the Far East arises from developments in Indochina. The French were gradually beaten by the Viet Minh of Ho-Chi-Minh in the jungles and swamps of Viet Nam. The battle of Dien Bien Phu proved to be the climax; and the French went to the Geneva Conference of 1954. The Geneva settlement consolidated the position of the Democratic Republic of Viet Nam and afforded opportunities for greater communist expansion in Indochina. The United States under President Dwight D. Eisenhower and Secretary of State John Foster Dulles was eager to devise a scheme which might halt the spread of communism in Southeast Asia. The efforts ultimately led to the Manila Pact with SEATO in September 1954.

United States obligations under SEATO represent a revolution in American policy toward the Far East. For the first time America assumed obligations to defend a large part of mainland Southeast Asia. This step might, and in the end did, involve the commitment

of substantial American ground forces. What the future holds is uncertain.

The formal pattern of American alliances in the Far East and Western Pacific is bilateral and multilateral. The alliance with Japan in 1951 was revised in 1960 and continues until 1970. A bilateral pact was made with Korea in 1953 at the conclusion of the Korean War. Another bilateral treaty, this one with Taiwan, was concluded in 1954, also as a basic consequence of the Korean War. The alliance with the Philippines in 1951 was bilateral but the one with Australia and New Zealand multilateral. The largest multilateral alliance is SEATO whereby three Asian countries—Pakistan, Thailand, and the Philippines—and five Western states—America, Great Britain, France, Australia and New Zealand—assumed commitments. In a protocol, the mantle of SEATO protection was extended to Laos, Cambodia, and South Viet Nam.

One other alliance in Southeast Asia should be mentioned although the United States is not a party. This alliance exists between Great Britain and Malaysia. Originally signed in 1957 in connection with Malaya's independence, it was extended in 1963 upon the birth of Malaysia to all territories of Malaysia.

Having sketched the formal pattern of alliances, one should consider some of their significant aspects. Basically they represent an attempt to deter aggression on the part of the communists by indicating to them that if they march into a treaty area, the parties to the alliance will defend it. There are some scholars who maintain that in 1914 if Germany had known it would have to fight Russia, France, and Britain, all together, Berlin would have put sufficient pressure on Austria-Hungary so that war would not have broken out. Peking may well believe that in the event of open aggression, like North Korea's invasion of South Korea in 1950 or Hitler's invasion of Poland in 1939, America's alliances in Asia would be honored. However, if one examines the terms of these alliances, there is room for considerable flexibility; the United States, for instance, acts in accordance with its constitutional processes. The commitments under the Far Eastern alliances are not as ironclad as those under NATO. Another interesting aspect is that some of the alliances are unequal. For instance, if the United States is attacked, Japan is under no obligation to help it. On the other hand, if Japan is attacked, the United States has to assist.

Significantly, the aggression against which Washington acts to implement its SEATO military obligations must be communist. The other partners in SEATO are obligated to help the victim in both communist and noncommunist attacks. In ANZUS, however, the United States has not qualified aggression. The pact could presumably be invoked not only in the case of Japanese attack, but also in the case of Chinese Communist or Indonesian under certain circumstances. If, for instance, the Australian units in Malaysian Borneo were attacked in force by Indonesian troops, the Australians could legally invoke ANZUS if they so desired.

The definition of treaty areas is a significant aspect of America's alliances in the Far East and Western Pacific. If Peking were to cause the implementation of all the pacts, it would have to attack in several directions. The treaty area in the American alliance with Japan is just the four main islands of Nippon; that with the Republic of Korea is South Korea and American dependencies in the Pacific. The treaty area with the Republic of China includes only Formosa and the Pescadores; it does not include the offshore islands of Quemoy and Matsu although it extends to American dependencies in the West Pacific. In the American alliance with the Philippines, and with Australia and New Zealand under ANZUS, the treaty area includes the metropolitan territories of the countries and any islands they have in the Pacific. In SEATO the treaty area covers the general area of Southeast Asia and the Southwest Pacific and specifically the territories of Pakistan, Thailand, and the Philippines; it excludes, though not by name, Formosa and Hong Kong. As already indicated, the SEATO treaty area embraced Laos, Cambodia and South Viet Nam in a protocol.

Another interesting aspect of the American treaty system in the Far East and Western Pacific is the limited organization to implement it. This stands in contrast to the edifice set up under NATO and under the Organization of American States. SEATO is an exception, but even at its headquarters in Bangkok, only a relatively small number of officials are employed. The other alliances call for consultation of officials from time to time.

If one only read the several treaties under discussion, the marked multiplicity of motivation in membership would not stand out. Although a common denominator was necessary for signature, behind this common denominator was a multiplicity of reasons. In broader dimensions America's allies in the Far East and Western Pacific could not sign, in 1951-1954 when alliances

were being made, one big multilateral treaty. They disagreed with each other so much that a piecemeal approach to security was necessary. And comparable circumstances obtain today. In concrete terms why, for instance, did Thailand or Pakistan or Australia sign the Manila Treaty in 1954? Ever since 1950, Thailand wanted an alliance with the United States, preferably like the American alliance with the Philippines. For a long time, it has been pointed out, Washington was opposed to commitments on the mainland of Southeast Asia. In 1954, Thailand saw in SEATO a means whereby it could have an alliance with America. Pakistan, for its part, has long been motivated in foreign policy by apprehension over the intentions of India. Pakistan thought by joining SEATO it would be able to strengthen its position vis-à-vis India. Karachi objected strongly to the fact that Washington restricted aggression to communist under the Manila Pact. As far as Australia was concerned, Canberra joined SEATO partly to tie down the United States in a commitment to mainland Southeast Asia.

Many changes are now occurring in Asia and throughout the rest of the world which are greatly affecting alliances. A few should be stressed. Since the alliances signed between 1951 and 1954, the polarization of power has become modified on this planet. The Soviet Union and the United States are still the two super-powers of the world, but their power is less pronounced vis-à-vis certain of their formal allies. Communist China today is much stronger than it was a decade ago; West Germany and Japan have risen from the ashes of defeat. The alteration in the polarization of power is causing moves toward greater independence in various countries around the world. France, under General Charles de Gaulle, is reacting to the changing power equation.

Another world development affecting alliances is decolonization which will soon be history. The areas which have not yet received independence are to a large extent the Portuguese colonies. With the emergence of a large number of new countries in the world, the international pattern is changing. Many more voices are heard in world affairs; many more variables are present—all affecting the pattern of alliances.

Decolonization has led to conflicts of interest among a substantial number of the newly independent countries. Fighting between India and Pakistan in South Asia, and Indonesia and Malaysia in Southeast Asia are cases in point. The strife between Cambodia and Viet Nam, or Cambodia and Thailand, reflects

centuries of rivalry submerged during the colonial period. Decolonization has clearly complicated alliance patterns.

Another current development affecting alliances is the attitude of neutralism among most of the new states. There are many voices in the United Nations and other world councils who are speaking in neutral terms. Although neutralism is expressed in almost as many ways as there are neutral countries, the effect is basically the same.

To be specific, world changes are reflected in the split between Peking and Moscow at the present time, a split that probably cannot be repaired or papered over. Only if the issue is escalated to the survival of Communist China would Moscow possibly come to the defense of Peking. Another major conflict of interests is that between Peking and New Delhi. Who could have predicted this development a few years ago, when the Indians were exclaiming that Chinese and Indians are brothers? In the other direction, the rapprochement between France and Communist China, and that between Pakistan and Communist China, are specific world developments of great importance.

Against this background what evaluation can be made of America's alliances in the Far East and Western Pacific? At the very beginning it should be noted there has been no overt aggression like the beginning of the Korean War, or like Hitler's invasion of Poland, in a treaty area since the alliances were made. In this respect they have played a very important role. If the alliances had not been in existence, Peking and Hanoi might have been tempted to take greater chances, and possibly a general war might have ensued. This point alone justifies the alliances America made in the Western Pacific and Far East between 1951 and 1954. Another point should be stressed—these alliances provide a legal framework today for American military action, when and if needed. If such a framework did not exist, a substitute would be necessary.

Although the alliances may well have stopped overt aggression in the treaty areas, the communists have changed their tactics. Peking and Hanoi have moved towards indirect aggression in the Far East by means of "wars of national liberation." The alliances here described are not effective in dealing with indirect aggression. Just how does one write a treaty and put in effective clauses against subversion? There is no treaty of alliance anywhere in the world where the authors have found an ironclad formula of dealing

with indirect aggression. The League of Nations, or even the United Nations, was or has been unable to define direct aggression, let alone indirect aggression. The United States has tried in the Far East, especially in Viet Nam, to devise effective means of counterinsurgency. A while ago there were perhaps more authors on the subject than readers, but still no author has found the needed formula.

One thing Washington has done—which should be stressed—is to deny to the communists the use of the sanctuary. In perspective this step may be one of the most significant developments in the current Indochina War. The communists used Manchuria as a sanctuary in the Korean War, and Yugoslavia, Albania and Bulgaria as sanctuaries in the Greek War. For many years they were using North Viet Nam as a sanctuary vis-à-vis the Viet Cong in South Viet Nam and the Pathet Lao in Laos. They have been denied, at least in terms of air power, the use of this sanctuary.

What is the future of American alliances in the Far East and Western Pacific? History gives few instances where a large multilateral alliance in peacetime has ever gone to war. The big alliances have come into being during times of war—the coalitions against Napoleon, the allied and associated powers against Germany in World War I, and the United Nations against the Axis in World War II. In terms of today, do world developments indicate that states which are now allied are moving toward nonalignment? Or does the evidence indicate that these countries are moving toward a shifting of allies? Are America's alliances around the globe becoming obsolete or are alliances simply being altered in terms of membership?

Two considerations—one of power and one of the maturity of states—argue against the obsolescence of alliances. If one looks at the so-called great powers in this century, from 1900 on to the present, there has only been one of them throughout the greater part of the period that has tried to preserve its isolation and be nonaligned, and that one, of course, is the United States. If one looks at the so-called world powers today, no matter what index used, there is only one that does not have formal allies, and that is India. Even here, New Delhi is not neutral when Communist China is concerned, although it is neutral in the disputes between Washington and Moscow. But if one thinks of the United States, Great Britain, France, West Germany, Japan, China, the Soviet Union, and India as perhaps the leading

powers today, they are aligned in one way or another. It may well be that as countries become leading powers they tend to make alliances. That would seem to be the evidence of this century. In another respect it is significant that most of the small countries who have had their independence for many years are allied. They make up most of the membership of NATO and of the Organization of American States. In Southeast Asia, for instance, Thailand—which is the only country not to lose its independence in the area—is an ally of the United States. Quite possibly small states, as they become more mature and as they acquire more experience, become less conscious of their newly won freedom and are more eager to align themselves with other countries.

For many years to come, there will need to be a counterweight to the power of Communist China in Asia. What this counterweight should be is debatable. At the present time the United States is the only country which is willing and able to provide it. If the United States should disengage in the Far East, Communist China, in the course of time, would establish its paramouncy throughout the whole area. But in longer-range terms this counterweight should not be maintained by white men from the West. It should be a function of the Asians themselves. There is a possibility (this is still remote in time) that Japan and India may be willing and able to provide the needed counterbalance to China in Asia. If this development takes place, the United States could then move into the background. There is also the possibility that the Soviet Union, in the years ahead, may be willing to help provide a counterbalance to the power and ambitions of Communist China.

In conclusion, the American alliance system, in the Far East and Western Pacific, has played, and still is playing, an important part in United States security policy in the area. At the same time no present viable alternative exists to the current alliance pattern. Nevertheless, the alliances are in flux, not because allies are generally turning towards neutralism, but because some are seeking new partners as a consequence of developments on the local and global scene.

BIOGRAPHIC SKETCH

Dr. Russell H. Fifield (Ph.D., Clark University; LL.D, Bates College) is Professor of Political Science, the University of Michigan. As an authority on the governments, politics and the international relations of the Far East, Dr. Fifield has authored *Woodrow Wilson and the Far East*; *The Diplomacy of Southeast Asia, 1945-1958*; and *Southeast Asia in United States Policy*. He has served the State Department as a Specialist in Historical Research, a Foreign Service Officer, and as a Consultant. Additionally, Dr. Fifield was Professor of Foreign Affairs, the National War College, during the 1958-1959 academic year. Professor Fifield has been the recipient of the following Fellowships: Rackham (the University of Michigan); Fulbright Research Professor, University of the Philippines, 1953-1954; Guggenheim Fellow, 1958-1959; Council on Foreign Relations Fellow, 1959-1960; and most recently, Research Fellow, St. Antony's College, Oxford University, 1963-1964.