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REGIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

A lecture delivered
at the Naval War College
on 16 September 1958 by

Professor Edgar S. Furniss, Jr.

Captain Touart, Gentlemen:

It is indeed a pleasure to be back at the War College. I deem it quite a privilege to be invited to talk again, having inflicted one talk upon the War College last December.

I have a text for today, and I will begin by quoting it. It so happens that it comes from the lecture which I gave here last December:

But I question whether bipolarity really describes the international environment or whether action, on the basis of presumed bipolarity, in all instances increases national and international security. It seems to me that not only in the rise of neutral states but in such instances as Hungary, Suez, and the Near East, that bipolarity — as an operating premise — did not work.

Any discussion of regional associations ought to begin with this very basic problem: What is a “regional association,” and what is a “regional arrangement?”

Professor Norman Padelford wrote an article on *Regional Organizations and the United Nations* in which he had to begin with a definition, and here it is:

Broadly speaking, a regional arrangement in the sphere of international politics may be described as an association of states, based upon location in a given

geographic area, for the safeguarding or promotion of the participants. The terms of this type of association are fixed by a treaty or other agreement.

Ordinarily, the idea of a regional association embraces cooperation between more than two states or political entities and is not localized to the extent of dealing solely with one narrowly confined situation or question . . .

On the other hand, it does not usually extend to associations of states that are proximately global in their situation . . .

Regional arrangements may take a variety of forms ranging from an agreement that certain rules or principles shall apply in the relations among a group of states to the creation of an alliance or the erection of an elaborate organization with permanent institutions or organs.

I quote this definition not only because it is long, but because Padelford had great trouble with it. Notice the ambiguous words in this quotation — he says ‘broadly speaking’; ‘fixed by a treaty or other agreement’; ‘ordinarily, the idea’; ‘on the other hand, it does not usually extend.’ The problem, therefore, is that the term “regional associations,” or in other words what we are talking about today, is practically impossible to define in geographic, political, economic, social, or numerical terms.

One of the reasons why international lawyers and professors of international organization also find this subject difficult to define is because the United Nations does not come up with any definition which is officially accepted. Article 52 of the Charter, for example says:

Nothing in the present Charter precludes the existence of regional arrangements or agencies for

dealing with such matters relating to the maintenance of international peace and security as are appropriate for regional action, provided that such arrangements or agencies and their activities are consistent with the Purposes and Principles of the United Nations.

This, in old-fashioned logical terms, is a fine example of a circular definition when it says that nothing in the Charter shall preclude regional arrangements from existing, and that regional arrangements shall exist whenever they are consistent with the Charter and when their activities are appropriate.

A conclusion on this subject of "definition" which I think is important: if a region is everything that people say it is, therefore a regional arrangement is anything declared by its members to be consistent with the United Nations' Charter. All Western associations — the Inter-American System, NATO, and so forth — therefore contain this formal vow in their preambles, or in one of the Articles, saying that this association is consistent with the purposes and so on of the United Nations. This means it is so because they say that it is so, and it also means that there is no necessary hierarchy between the United Nations and a regional association; there is no set principle of which is first and which is second (as I shall proceed to point out).

Regional associations, then, are related to bipolarity (which I mentioned in quoting from the last talk I gave here in December) in that bipolarity (the opposition of the United States and the Soviet Union, perceived so soon after World War II) caused a retreat from the United Nations' system which, in terms of organization, took the form of regional associations. This escape hatch had been written into the Charter at the insistence of the Latin American delegates to the San Francisco Conference in the form of Article 51, saying:

Nothing in the present Charter shall impair the inherent right of individual or collective self-defense

if an armed attack occurs against a Member of the United Nations . . .

Article 51 was then used by Western countries to develop and coordinate their collective strength against the Soviet Union when it was clear that the Soviet Union would not permit the United Nations to become truly a World Security Organization.

What I am saying is that there is a fundamental difference between the Organization of American States, which predated the Charter of the United Nations, and other regional associations coming after the (San Francisco) Charter. The difference is that the Organization of American States is a *collective* security system. By that, I mean that it has institutional procedures, including the use of force, for the settlement of *internal* disputes; that is, disputes between members of the regional associations. However, because of the bipolar world that followed World War II, other regional associations are military alliances which are externalized; that is, their purpose is not to settle disputes among their members but, as I said, to develop collective strength against an external enemy — whether it is the Soviet Union, Communist China, International Communism, or all three.

In order to make the point (as I did in the lecture last December) that bipolarity no longer characterizes the international environment, let me ask what is “bipolarity?” One of the best characterizations of it appears in the first edition of a book by Professor Hans Morgenthau called *Politics Among Nations*. In addition to being an excellent book, because it is well organized and coherently presented, it excellently illustrates the bipolar world in which he wrote. Here is what he says:

For the two giants which today determine the course of world affairs only one policy seems to be left, that is, to increase their own strength and that of their satellites. All the players that count have

taken sides, and in the foreseeable future no switch from one side to the other is likely to take place, nor, if it were to take place, would it be likely to reverse the existing balance of power. Since the issues everywhere boil down to retreat from, or advance into, areas which both sides regard as of vital interest to themselves, positions must be held, and the give and take of compromise becomes a weakness which neither side is able to afford.

Later on, he also says:

Imbued with the crusading spirit of the new moral force of nationalistic universalism and both tempted and frightened by the potentialities of total war, two superpowers, the centers of two gigantic power blocs, face each other in inflexible opposition. They cannot retreat without giving up what they consider vital to them. They cannot advance without risking combat. Persuasion, then, is tantamount to trickery, compromise means treason, and the threat of force spells war.

Well, this was the bipolar world. I am submitting (for you to argue with me about) that it no longer characterizes the world of 1958, or that it characterizes it only in part. Therefore, one of the major difficulties with regional associations is that they were developed for, and as a result of, the bipolar world; that they are everywhere having difficulty in adjusting to a world that is not that simple, and perhaps more dangerous.

There are, to be even more specific, a number of other reasons why regional associations fail, and I would like to give a little bit of attention to each.

One reason why regional associations fail is that some of them are not inclusive enough. Key participants are left out. In fact, there is a tendency in regional associations, because of the

bipolar world that they were developed to serve, for countries left out to become the key countries just because they were left out. Because these countries were not taken into the regional associations, they are the ones on which the Eastern enemy focuses.

This is not the case in one illustration, however. If you look at the Organization of American States, it is quite obvious that the famous "empty chair" in the Pan American Union which has been reserved for Canada, and still remains vacant, makes no sense in terms of regional organizations although it does make sense in terms of other factors. So here is a key member in any Western Hemisphere system which is left out.

Take some other examples. There is the famous South East Asia Treaty Organization, which does not cover a region at all. There is the Baghdad Pact, which, as we are all now well aware, left out some of the key countries in the Near East. In fact, one might argue that it left out the Near East itself. Even NATO was for a long time without West Germany, and it still has to get along without Sweden and without Spain. Although it is supposed to cover Algeria, it leaves out the two countries on either side of Algeria. So one problem, then, of regional organizations is that they have not been successful because they cannot be inclusive enough.

Another failing of regional associations is that they are not exclusive enough. The drive to accomplish what Morgenthau said had already been accomplished — namely, having every country choose up sides and be drawn in as a satellite to one or another of the great superpowers — has led to something which has been characterized as "Pactitis," or nominal regionalism, with only nominal members.

To take an illustration from another so-called "organization," the Arab League. Yemen and Libya are in the Arab League so far as nominal members, although the time may come when they become "actual" members.

A third failing of regional systems is the internal opposition between countries in the system and the inability of the system to settle those differences because, as I pointed out, it was not set up for that purpose. As time has progressed, some of these differences have become rather acute. The fact that the organization is externalized makes it difficult — if not impossible — to settle internal differences which sap the strength of the organization.

Take the example of the Arab League. The sole reason for its existence is, of course, the destruction of Israel. It was split wide-open by Iraq joining the Baghdad Pact and by the conflict between Iraq and the resurgent Egyptian Nationalism led by Nasser. This conflict may well be on the way towards solution, or it may not; but if it is, the solution is hardly favorable to Iraq.

NATO also has its problems in Iceland and in Cyprus — internal disputes which are certainly considered behind the scenes of the organization, but without institutional procedures and compulsions for their settlement.

Regionalism also has run into difficulty because it is supposed to set up a system for military defense against Communism, but has failed to settle such military questions as, for example: How to find local defense sufficient in strength to resist determined attacks?

For example, in the South East Asia Treaty Organization the purpose of the regional system is not to create a defense line and announce it to the world, but to serve the purpose of creating self-contained and self-sufficient regional defense. In the connotation of Soviet presumed attack, this has proved to be relatively impossible. It involved such related issues (which I do not have time to treat here) as that of deterrence versus local strength — the danger of the former and the futility of the latter — military questions which perhaps are impossible to resolve.

Another military question closely related to this that causes difficulty for regional organizations is: How to meet local attack without the conflict degenerating into a general war? This fear of progressive deterioration of any armed conflict, however it starts and whoever is responsible, is sometimes greater than the fear of attack itself. As a consequence, such States as India and Burma become positively neutralistic and determined to remain outside associations.

Another question which regionalism has to confront is the opposite of the one which I have just been discussing: Regionalism is military defense, but what does the region do when military issues are not relevant?

Problems other than military problems inside the alliance make the defense structure precarious, as, for example, the situation in Iceland or the situation in France. Internal subversion, not external attack, may knock a State out of the regional organization altogether, as we found in the case of Iraq. Here are examples where the crucial questions are not military defense against military attack but are nonetheless disrupters of the alliance pattern.

Finally, under this general heading there is a question which regional organizations have difficulty in answering: Co-ordinate responsibilities versus exclusive control, or, to put the question simpler, who is in charge here? This, as you know, is a question for Western alliances. Maybe it is an increasing question for the Eastern alliances, also — particularly in the Sino-Soviet relationships. So far as the West is concerned, we are dedicated to what may politely be called a “political fiction”; that is, an equality of commitment among all the members of our Western alliances and equal responsibility in discharging this commitment — not equal power, but equal responsibility, or at least a hierarchy of responsibility.

To other States, as key members of these alliance structures, we have to make concessions to this “political fiction.” But, ob-

viously, this cannot go all the way, as has been shown time and time again within the political structure of NATO itself. Where noises are made in Western Europe to make NATO a really tight-knit political organization, based upon some kind of presumed hierarchy of responsibility, what comes out of Washington is usually a lot of silence. Sometimes the Secretary of State is frank enough to say (as he did before one NATO meeting) that there are some questions which we will not submit — and have no intention of submitting — to NATO, however it is organized. This is a clear indication of the limit to the concessions which we can make to this “political fiction.”

On the other hand, for the other countries in the alliance the concessions are never enough because of the residue of power which is left uncontrolled. In their relationship to the United States, then (with a few exceptions), what these countries desire is precisely what we cannot give them: namely, co-ordinate responsibility and an ability to determine what the United States will do and will not do.

To take one example of this: the National Assembly in France, after the 1957 NATO Council meeting, was debating the question of U. S. missile bases on French soil. There, as is usual in the French National Assembly (or perhaps in any political assembly), there was a lot of irrelevant and hysterical political demagoguery. Foreign Minister Pineau quickly put a stop to this, however, when he got up and declared that the question of whether there should be missile bases in France was a false one. He said he found it extremely significant that some members of the opposition felt insecure, not when the Soviet Union was powerful enough to shoot directly at France, but when France was secure enough to shoot directly at the Soviet Union. He also said that the real question is not concerning putting missile bases in France, but is: “Who is going to control those bases and who is going to control the use of the weapons that are put on the bases?” Regard-

ing this question the Foreign Minister said that France intends to reserve and maintain its position.

Let me shift now to another regional organization, the Organization of American States. This is a collective security arrangement which includes the possibility of the use of force against internal disputes. Yet, Latin American countries are scared to death to invoke the use of force against internal disputes within the Hemisphere because most of the force has to come in one way or another from the United States. They do not want to invoke the military assistance of the United States because that constitutes "intervention," and they are much more scared of intervention than of internal disputes. The proof of this is that immediately after the war the issue was fought out directly when Uruguay, which was afraid of Argentina, proposed the principle of "collective intervention" when there were disputes within the Hemisphere. This meant intervention by military force on a collective basis. Not only did the Pan American Union, at the insistence of almost every other Latin American State in the Hemisphere, throw this proposal out but it also went on to reiterate and, in fact, to strengthen — at an almost absurd length — the contrary principle of "nonintervention" in the internal affairs of the State for any reason whatsoever.

There are difficulties, fallacies and faults in any system, including regional organizations. What makes the faults crucial, however, is the declining belief in the threat of an imminent Soviet attack (whether rightly or wrongly) within Europe. I call your attention to a brief dispatch from Washington in *The New York Times* of September 13, beginning:

Secretary of State Dulles said today some countries are 'growing a little bit tired' in the East-West struggle at a time when the Communist bloc is putting on new pressure.

The reason why they are 'growing a little bit tired' is not just the passage of time. It is their belief that the questions involving East and West are now essentially not military.

Bipolarity, then (to return to the point with which I began), really does not describe the international situation. There have been the neutralist, formerly-dependent countries in the Near East, in the Far East, and in Africa which have not only risen to statehood but to prominence in the international scheme of things. This throws in complications which are not settled by saying, as Morgenthau says, 'all the players that count have taken sides,' or by saying that if one shifted from one side to the other it would not matter very much anyway.

The failure of regional systems to adapt themselves to the international environment as it has changed since 1948 is revealed in a dramatic return to the United Nations' system from which regional organization was a retreat. I cite two instances here.

One is Suez, which was a failure for both NATO and the Arab League — a different type of failure for each of them, but a failure for both nevertheless. It was a failure of internal settlement on the part of NATO in the disputes between Britain and France, on one hand, and the United States on the other. It was a failure on the part of the Arab League in coping with its external enemy that created the situation — namely, Israel. In this situation what was left was what the United States immediately did — namely, to return to the United Nations' system. As you know, the United Nations was called upon to form an international police force to remove the contestants from the area. Many countries never got over the shock of seeing the United States and the Soviet Union voting together and working together in the United Nations to bring this solution about. This is dramatic evidence of the limitations of the bipolar concept. But the same basic problem remains in the Near East, perhaps in an exaggerated form, of settlement on a realistic basis.

The second illustration of the return or flight back to the U. N. is the situation in Lebanon and Jordan, which, of course, is a failure of the Baghdad Pact because it did not cover the real issue. The United Nations was used as a forum for the return of the Arab League to the supposed noninterference basis, or non-interference of one member in the internal affairs of another. The Secretary General was supposed to supervise and gain acceptance for the removal of foreign troops from the area — again a rather significant parallel to the Suez case because here, also, Western troops were involved.

Both of these reversals represent a crashing defeat for Western diplomacy, which may be catastrophic. The Suez case illustrated fundamental divisions within the West — moral and ideological bankruptcy of two governments within the Western system. The latter move, however much we want to justify it as necessary in the circumstances, by that very token indicates the bankruptcy of previous policies adopted within that area.

These crises, then — together with the present Formosan crisis — suggest, to me at least, the urgent need to re-examine what the basic units which are involved in international politics can and cannot do. Of course these units are the nation, the United Nations, and the regional organization.

Just because some countries returned helter-skelter, pell-mell to the United Nations in two recent crises does not mean that the United Nations is so effective, either, at settling conflicts between East and West. It is still just about as impotent in the bipolar world as it was back in 1946, when Western countries developed regional organs to protect themselves from this impotence of the U. N. Although the Indians did render assistance to the development of the Korean truce, this may represent an exception.

The United Nations is passing out of control of the United States and the West with the rise of the uncommitted states. As our Western friends — particularly the French — point out, ap-

peasement of these uncommitted states in the U. N. is ineffective because of the rise of Nationalism, which gave birth to them, and because of the anti-Colonialist and anti-Western orientation which caused that Nationalism. Hence, one of the reasons why the U. N. is ineffective is because these States have something positive, selfish and nationalistic that they want to do, aside from making the United Nations' system work: they want to continue to put pressure on the West, on the Colonial Powers.

On the other hand, the nation — as a unit — is obviously just as unable as it was to win security for itself against its potential or its actual enemies. Added to the limits of the capabilities which we all recognized after World War II, there has become the equally well-recognized danger of the military technique in use — or, in fact, in nonuse.

Walter Millis, in *Arms and Men*, concludes by saying:

By 1956 there appeared to be almost no way in which the deployment of military force — which means men armed with murderous weapons, whether Roman short swords or high-powered artillery or hydrogen bombs, for the slaughter of other men — could be brought rationally to bear upon the decision of any of the political, economic, emotional or philosophical issues by which men still remain divided. This is the great and unresolved dilemma of our age.

Hence, the problem which all statecraft must be involved in — of assessing the ingredients of national power and coordinating them in a consistent expression of national policy — is more difficult than ever because the nation, as a unit, cannot withdraw into isolation. On the other hand, complete commitment is likely to wind up in equally complete destruction.

I am supposed to be talking about “regional systems,” so let me return to them in the light of the difficulties which the U. N. and the nation — as units in the international environment — con-

front. What I am suggesting here is that regional systems likewise need to be re-examined, and that their re-examination points to the following procedures which might be used.

In the first place, I think that there has been for a long time an obvious need to promote interdependence within the areas — primarily economic interdependence, but also social interdependence and diplomatic interdependence. Multilateral diplomacy is a useful adjunct to bilateral diplomacy and even a useful substitute for it, as the procedures within NATO have at times demonstrated.

Another need for change within these regional associations is, as I have been repeating again and again, local settlement of local differences. This is what regional systems were supposed to do; this is their role as envisaged by the United Nations. It was envisaged because it was recognized that there is a need to take the burden off the U. N.; that the U. N. could not and should not get involved in every dispute between every country everywhere in the world. Regional associations should use regional instruments to prevent local disputes from becoming international issues and from threatening the peace of the world. These institutional relationships should also be used to prevent disputes from arising in the first place. (We obviously do not know how many disputes might have arisen between countries in NATO had it not been for the development of multilateral diplomacy and political association between the countries involved).

A third use for regional associations (and I hope that I am building these uses one on the other and sort of outward) is as steps toward international consensus. All agree — Eastern countries, Western countries, and the in-between world — all agree that Nationalism is a disease — an atavistic disease. The leaders produced by Nationalism in the in-between world recognize that they are riding a tiger, and that they may wind up inside. President Nasser has revealed this quite frankly in some interviews to Western correspondents, and President Bourguiba of Tunisia has revealed it even more frankly.

Well, what can one do about it? Some countries which are still dependent want to skip the national sovereignty stage altogether, such as countries in Africa now joined with France. They envisage a regional system with France on the basis of their local autonomy as a way of creating interdependence — not national independence, but interdependence of peoples. Other countries are anxious to pass beyond the stage of Nationalism, such as European countries, to a stage where there is so close a dependence between them that one can no longer separate out the independent ingredients of national policy. Others want to do it on a sort of *ad hoc* basis — which represents the in-between world — in order to try gradually to get beyond this stage. These are steps, then, toward an international consensus or agreement on something other than the differences and the disputes which mark international relations.

There is still a place (and this is another assistance which regionalism can recognize and can perform) for regional organizations to provide a balance of imperfect and ephemeral security between the East and West. If bipolarity is not sufficient to describe international environment, it still describes an unfortunately large part of it. Let me see if I can add a little bit to what regional organizations can do, aside from building up military power.

Each of these bipolar giants fears an attack from the others if it were left alone and without allies. The pathological fear of the Soviets, and the determination that they showed in the case of the Hungarian revolt to use any and all means, regardless of the impact upon other people, to hold on to their satellites in Eastern Europe is a symptom of this pathological fear. I submit that it is quite clear also that Americans are afraid of being alone in an unfriendly world. Collective systems or regional systems provide some sense of security, a sense of “togetherness.”

But there is more to it than that. There is a value in association — each assumes the mitigating influence of the allies on the leader of the bloc, or the reverse. By that I mean that within a regional system — built up, to be sure, to advance military power

against an external enemy — each one of the countries may soften or mitigate the action of the leader of the bloc in given situations, and each one recognizes that this may well operate. One of the things that both Eastern and Western leaders are certainly afraid of is the accidental or the unforeseen in a situation where the accidental or the unforeseen may provoke totally destructive war. What regional systems do is to develop some kind of order or institutional process for the prevention of the accidental or the unforeseen. This is certainly a contribution not to be minimized.

Take an example of that. The French asked the American Government to intervene by airpower to rescue Dienbienphu. Apparently, from what we read in the public press, the American Government or a majority within the American executive were in favor of doing just that. As far as the East was concerned, this was an unforeseen — and, therefore, a highly-to-be-feared and opposed — development. Our allies, for better or for worse, provided in this case a mitigating influence on the leader of the bloc. It may also be true (although we do not have very much evidence here) that the same can be said of the Eastern bloc. As the Communist Chinese appear to become *the* Eastern country most willing to take risks in the international system, it may be that the Soviet Union exerts a restraining influence on the Chinese, and the other way around. We also have believed in times past that Poland, in the Warsaw Pact or in its bilateral relationship to the Soviet Union, likewise exerted a mitigating influence upon Soviet behavior.

It is likewise true — or it ought to be true — that the leader of the bloc can prevent irresponsible action in the part of one of its dependencies or one of its co-ordinate states within a security system. This is the role which the United States could not perform in the Suez crisis.

Regional systems are supposed to (and may ultimately) contribute to the preparation of some kind of settlement of issues between East and West. After all, this was the purpose of Western associations: to prepare the way for some kind of satisfactory

settlement with the Soviet Union on issues which divided the world. By that I do not mean appeasement, and I do not mean surrender. I mean recognition, implicitly, by both sides that each is not going to be able to destroy the other; that each has to live with the other, because living with the other is preferable to the only alternative that can be seen.

Regional organizations, then, may have a place — and a very large place — in preparing for this kind of tentative reaching out towards solution of particular issues.

Again to return to the case of NATO. It has become very well established in approaches between East and West that on the Western side the approach has first been co-ordinated within the North Atlantic Treaty Organization; if it had not been, there would have been all hell to pay. For example, take the disarmament talks in London. When it appeared that Mr. Stassen was getting a little bit too close a little too frequently with his Soviet counterpart, the Secretary of State intervened — with the overt and enthusiastic approval of the French — to remind Mr. Stassen that there was a common Western position on the issues of disarmament which divided the East and West.

So that one may look optimistically on regional associations, despite the difficulties which they have encountered. They may perform a useful purpose in the kinds of questions which *are* relevant to the international environment twelve or thirteen years after the formation of the United Nations' Charter.

Thank you!

BIOGRAPHIC SKETCH

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Professor Furniss received his A. B. degree from Yale University in 1940. He was a Social Science Resident Council Fellow there in 1946 and 1947, and received his Ph.D. degree from the same institution the following year.

He was appointed Assistant Professor of Political Science at Princeton University in 1947, serving in that capacity until 1955, when he became Associate Professor — a position which he currently holds.

Professor Furniss is the co-author of *American Foreign Policy*.