"FAREWELL THE TRANQUIL MIND": SECURITY AND STABILITY IN THE POST-VIETNAM ERA

by

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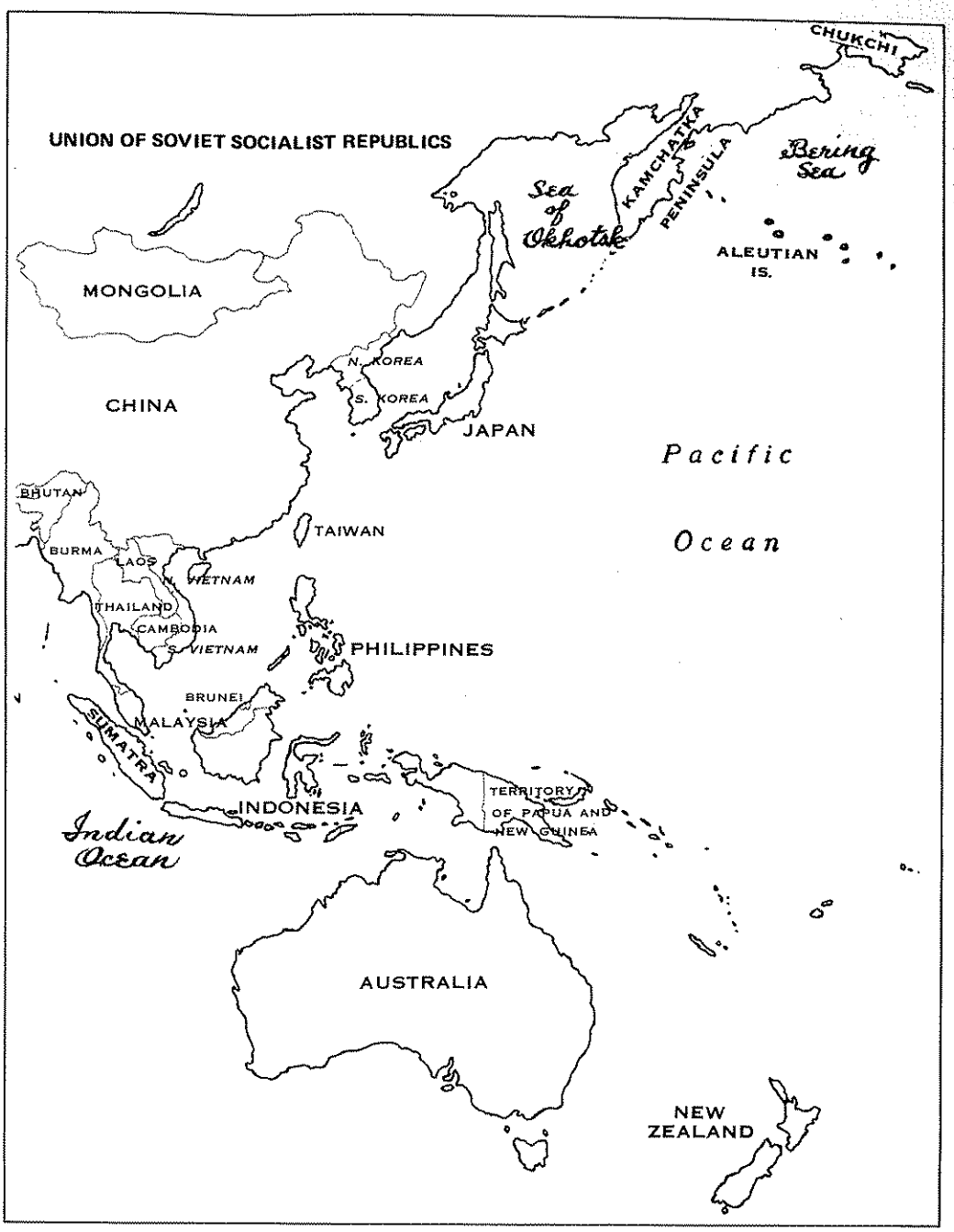
The Vietnam War has now passed into history. Though the outcome of that war was anything but satisfactory to many Americans, it is probably safe to say that the war's end brought a qualified sense of relief to the broad generality of America's citizenry. For they were apt to feel that a solution—any solution—to what had come to be seen as an insoluble problem was better than no solution at all. But the sense of relief attendant upon peace-at-last in Vietnam has proved to be cruelly shortlived. The destabilizing effects of events in Vietnam have been illustrated most dramatically and immediately in Cambodia and Laos, both contiguous to Vietnam, but the reverberations were felt as far away as Europe and are still registering deep in the bedrock of state deliberations. Hardly were the last American evacuees from Saigon safely aboard off-coast rescue vessels in the South China Sea before the voices of trimmers were raised in those states of Southeast Asia and elsewhere which had to that time availed themselves of the spacious comfort of America's protective umbrella.

With respect to the elaborate edifice of mutual security pacts erected by the United States and over 40 allies since World War II, the least we can conclude at this point is that it has been weakened as a result of Vietnam and that it demands shoring up. But it is possible to go further: one can now argue rationally that a categorical treaty obligation by the United States—namely, that an attack upon its ally is to be considered the equivalent of an attack upon itself—will not in the foreseeable future be taken at face value by America's security partners. Whichever view one chooses, it seems undeniable that despite the blessings of present peace on the battlefields of Vietnam, the manner of that war's termination will tend in a variety of ways to disturb the tranquility enjoyed elsewhere. More to the point, the problems of America's security planners have been vastly complicated, and it may be that some of these problems will ultimately prove as intractable as that posed by Vietnam itself.

During the continuing and progressively rancorous domestic debate of the 1960's and early 1970's over US involvement in the Vietnam conflict, the arguments of the war's opponents came finally to coalesce in a set of assumptions, premises, and conclusions that are now quite familiar. Indeed, many of these propositions have hardened into articles of faith for large segments of informed opinion. With certain qualifications, most of the arguments against US involvement in Vietnam lend themselves automatically to use against any future commitment of American forces in behalf of a beleaguered ally, particularly if that ally is distant and lacking in resources manifestly vital to American security. Furthermore, having been burned so



excruciatingly in Vietnam, Americans can be expected during the years immediately ahead to recoil instinctively from substantive involvement in hostilities, even when according to every objective indicator their security can best be served by resort to arms. The *Mayaguez* reprisal by US forces off the coast of Cambodia in May 1975 can hardly be taken as a fundamental reaffirmation of American resolve, for it was but a calculatedly flamboyant gesture, lacking the risk of a broad commitment.

So far as US security planners are concerned, they must grapple, and grapple dispassionately, with the noninterventionist arguments well before the event. For only in

doing so can they be expected to attend prudently to legitimate US security interests on one hand, while avoiding on the other hand steps that could potentially lead to another Vietnam debacle. This article examines the major propositions of the noninterventionist rationale to see whether they constitute the basis for a sound US limited-war strategy over the next few decades, particularly with respect to Southeast Asia. Of major interest will be the extent to which these propositions promote the prospect for peace with security.[1] To the extent they do, so much the better. But where they do not, we shall need to face that fact squarely. Let us look at the main noninterventionist propositions separately, recognizing of course that most of them are closely interrelated.

It is historically inevitable that colonial influence be expunged from the Asian continent; so let the United States make its exit gracefully now. According to the argument from historical inevitability, such Western presences as those of the Americans in South Korea, Taiwan, and Indochina, the British in Hong Kong and Singapore, and the Portuguese in Macau represent the last vestiges of Western imperialism in Asia. Hong Kong and Macau will, of course, continue to live under foreign flags so long as it suits the purposes of the People's Republic of China, but sooner or later the westerners will be swept from the periphery of Asia into the sea by the indigenous inhabitants of Asia. The essence of good strategy therefore becomes the process of attuning policy to historical imperatives.

An argument from historical necessity is always hard to refute, for refutation or confirmation, lying in the future, is inaccessible to all present observers save the prophets. And the prophets among us are notoriously difficult to identify before the event. In military matters where capitulation is being contemplated, an argument from historical inevitability is pernicious because it provides a seductive rationale for those who would shrink from paying the cost in blood and treasure that security demands. It simultaneously soothes the conscience and paralyzes the will to resist. Furthermore, those who forecast the inevitability of defeat thereby put their reputations as seers on the line. They then have a stake in seeing defeat come to pass, and the defeatism they hasten to sow conduces to self-fulfilling prophecy.

But so far as the advisability of American involvement in the security of Southeast Asian states is concerned, we can avoid the argument from necessity by pointing out that it begs an important question. For it assumes that American commitments in behalf of the security and stability of allies in the area constitute a colonial presence. We may properly deny such an assumption. So long as an ally, acting in its capacity as a free and independent state, enters willingly into a security pact with the United States for purposes it deems advantageous to itself, that ally is thereby submitting to no status that can properly be termed "colonial."

There is one sense, however, in which an argument from inevitability has a legitimate claim to the attention of defense analysts. Suppose, for example, that the comparative military power projectible into a particular area of contention by the United States and an enemy is such that the odds for US defeat in the area are overwhelming. In this case, faced with a present empirical reality rather than a speculative reading of historical drift, planners might well conclude that hostilities should be avoided. On the other hand, even where a clear-eyed formulation of the power

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equation presaged US military inferiority over the longer term, American interests might best be served by the commitment of military force in behalf of local, short-range objectives.

Southeast Asia falls within the "area of influence" of the People's Republic of China (and possibly the USSR); the United States should thus leave it alone. Let us be clear about the extent to which the term "area of influence" has application today and in the years immediately ahead. The entire world is the oyster certainly of Soviet Russia and the United States, and is rapidly becoming so for China. Russia exports its ideology through national Communist party apparatuses on a global scale and has extended its naval power not only into the two great oceans flanking the United States, but into the Mediterranean Sea and the Indian Ocean as well. In addition to its obvious influence in Southern Asia, China has become a potent political force in Africa and has long been the principal ideological ally of Albania. The United States has security arrangements with nations in all the world's seven continents save one, Antarctica, and provides military assistance to 51 countries. Its global concerns follow in substantial measure from economic realities. The United States is already dependent upon foreign sources for 37 percent of its petroleum needs, and by 1980 the figure is likely to grow to over 50 percent.[2] The successful example posed by the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries has inspired attempts by other raw-material producing countries to organize similar cartels in copper, tin, bauxite, chrome, and additional strategically important resources.[3] Now lacking self-sufficiency in a broad range of vital economic resources and commodities, and heavily reliant upon the continued independence and accessibility of its trading partners, the United States must predicate efforts to establish and maintain influence largely upon the demands of its survival and well-being, regardless of where on the earth's surface such efforts extend.

Thus, far from a static division of the world into nationally assigned areas of influence, the dynamics of international relations today are marked by competition among the big powers for influence through all the major geographical areas. Whether the United States should contend for influence in Southeast Asia, or anywhere else, is determinable by answers to two questions: Does it have the power to do so? Is it in its interest to do so? We can be sure that America's enemies in the world arena will govern their conduct according to the same rules.

The United States should never fight a land war on the Asian mainland. This hallowed precept obviously embodies a wise general guide to strategic conduct, but construed as a categorical absolute it inhibits the evolution of realistic and comprehensive strategic thought on the subject of Asia. This is true not because any military planner in his right mind wants the United States to become involved in hostilities on the great land mass of Asia, but rather because the forbidding unthinkability of such a notion leads to lack of hard reflection on certain contingency situations that could conceivably face planners before the turn of the century.

By barring only land war, the proposition leaves open the possibility of air and sea war. Let us therefore hypothesize a military contingency of such momentous implications for American security as to mandate the commitment to hostilities of sizable US air and naval forces, for example, an attack by China across the Sea of Japan and Korean Straits against Japan, accompanied by a simultaneous thrust by Chinese and North Korean forces southward into South Korea. The United States has bilateral defense treaties with both Japan and South Korea in which it declares that an attack on either "would be dangerous to its own peace and safety and [that] it would act to meet the common danger in accordance with its constitutional provisions and processes."[4] The first thing to note about such a contingency is that US land forces, the Eighth Army in Korea, would be involved in hostilities from the moment that Communist forces crossed the truce line. If, despite the best efforts of US naval and air forces, the

Chinese succeeded in establishing an invasion force in northern Japan, sound strategy might dictate an enveloping action by American and South Korean forces across the Korean truce line and northward to the Manchurian coast. Thus, from the beginning American forces would be involved in land battle on the Korean Peninsula and, to avoid the defeat of Japan, might later be compelled to expand that land battle northward into the mainland.

Of course, today it is doubtful if not impossible that China, despite its possession of the world's third largest navy,[5] could launch a successful amphibious assault across a Sea of Japan defended by the US Seventh Fleet, but one cannot discount such a possibility a decade or two hence. The point of the foregoing analysis is that war, especially as it is likely to be waged by the United States in certain areas in which it has defense commitments, will not always divide neatly into exclusively aerial and naval dimensions. True, it is perfectly acceptable to plan a combined effort in which the United States would supply air and naval support for an ally which provided the land forces. But it is always necessary to consider the real possibility that the ally's land forces would prove insufficient to the task and demand augmentation.

In the final analysis, a perceived national interest is either worth defending by force of arms or it is not. If, having decided that a particular interest in Asia is indeed worth fighting for, the United States then proclaims to the world that it will fight with ships and planes alone, its enemies will almost certainly in time maneuver to victory by capitalizing upon America's self-imposed tactical rigidities. The appropriate question with which planners must deal becomes not whether land war in Asia is to be proscribed, but rather whether those present US treaty obligations worthy of continuation are realistically supportable in the presence of such a constraint.

The United States is a Pacific power, not an Asian power. Though this proposition has been uttered with increasing frequency and solemnity in the last four years, it is doubtful whether the borders of American power can or should be so sharply delineated. If the adherents of the proposition mean that the North Pacific does not actually touch the Asian mainland because of the interposition of the Sea of Okhotsk, the Sea of Japan, and the East and South China Seas, that is a mere quibble, for in any true strategic sense the North Pacific tides wash the shores of Eastern Asia. It is difficult to understand in what sense one can say the United States has not chosen to play the role of Asian power when it has the Eighth US Army stationed in South Korea, when it has bilateral defense treaties with South Korea, Japan, the Philippines, and Taiwan, and when it has security ties with Thailand as well as the Philippines through now moribund SEATO.[6]

Of course, one might object that the point is not whether the United States has in fact chosen to play the role of Asian power, but whether it *ought* to play such a role. A determination in this matter will depend on answers to the familiar questions, Is it in America's interests to do so, and does it have the power? With respect to power, few objective observers doubt that, given the will, the United States with an annual gross national product rapidly approaching 1.5 trillion dollars has the physical potential to generate and project sufficient power anywhere in the world to defend its interests. But there is perhaps less agreement as to what constitutes those interests. This point will be addressed at greater length subsequently, but in the meantime we can gain a clearer picture of the stakes involved by pondering such questions as whether the United States can ever afford to be callous to the fates of Asian nations like Japan, now one of the world's top three or four industrial powers, or India, the world's most populous non-communist nation, or Indonesia, the world's fifth most populous nation and now the principal oil producer in the Far East;[7] whether the security of Australia and New Zealand can be dissociated from events in the Southeast Asian archipelago, whose southern tip in New Guinea lies less than 100 statute miles north of Australia's Cape York; and whether the United States can ignore the

security of the narrow and strategically vital Strait of Malacca separating Malaysia and Sumatra, through which run the world's sea lanes connecting the Pacific and Indian Oceans.

America's strategic orientation should be toward Europe, not Asia. Western Europe and, by extension, the Middle East do indeed form the present predominant loci of American overseas security concerns. But this is by no means to say that the security of the United States is immune to developments in the other half of the globe, nor even to say that the North Atlantic Treaty will always serve as the fundamental expression of American mutual defense strategy. The fact is, much as it is to be deplored, that the gap between the military power of the European NATO nations and those of the Warsaw Pact is widening in favor of the latter. Mindful of detente, plagued by recession and lingering inflation, and frustrated by twenty years of Cold War tension and confrontation, the NATO allies of Western Europe have failed to summon the collective will and resolve to match the step-by-step accretions of power enjoyed by the Warsaw Pact forces east of the Elbe. American defense analysts thus no longer find unthinkable a neutralized Western Europe, intimidated, emasculated, and shorn of its dignity and freedom of action.[8] If, despite America's best efforts to lend succor and encouragement, the nations of Western Europe should resign from the Cold War and drift piecemeal into a state of *de facto* neutralism, or, what is worse, if they should tilt leftward, the United States will find itself scratching desperately for security partners in a world grown alien and aloof. On the basis of any prudent analysis of strategic needs over the long term, it is desirable for the United States to move toward the establishment of a US-Canadian-Japanese-Australian axis while continuing its traditional efforts to maintain a strong NATO.

Communism as a monolithic force is a myth. According to the upholders of this proposition, the gradual spread of communism among Free and Third World nations is no threat to the United States since communized nations, divided by their individual nationalist and economic aspirations, will be unable to act in concert in a manner inimical to American security. It is to be hoped that those who find little threat in the progressive erosion of the world's anti-communist regimes are vindicated by history. But in the meantime, US security planners will need to operate on the common-sense assumption that in a hostile world it is better to have ideological friends than foes. The secession of Red China from the Soviet bloc to establish a rival power center within the Communist world is often hailed as proof that the Communist movement lacks monolithic cohesion.[9] In granting this point, however, US security planners cannot necessarily take comfort from it. The task of defending Vietnam, for example, was ultimately made far more difficult by the rivalry of Russia and China in the area, with each striving to outdo the other in terms of military aid to North Vietnam so as to solidify its own influence in Southeastern Asia and polish its repute for staunch anti-imperialism in the eyes of the Third World. This rivalry is likely to continue if not intensify as the focus of exported Communist insurgency shifts to Thailand, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Indonesia.

But whether such proves true or not, it will be little consolation to the United States to witness the progressive expansion of two huge Communist power blocs, united at least in a common implacable hostility to the economic and political systems of America. Today 1.4 billion human beings, roughly 35 percent of the world's population, are governed by Communist regimes in 17 countries constituting about a quarter of the world's land area. This compares with the situation 30 years ago at the close of World War II when only five countries (USSR, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, and Mongolia), having 7 percent of the world's population and 18 percent of its land area, were subject to Communist rule.[10] If the present trend is not arrested, it is reasonable to anticipate a world at the turn of the century in which its non-communist

inhabitants are a beleaguered minority. In such a world, no extraordinary degree of monolithic coordination need be visualized, either between or within the two great Communist power blocs, to produce a picture of an increasingly isolated United States, weakened economically by impaired access to world markets and to increasingly scarce raw materials, and diminished as a political force in world affairs by the steady shrinkage of nations and peoples sympathetic to its leadership.

The United States is not the world's policeman. This glib, catchy declaration is still heard frequently, though its time of greatest currency was in 1969 and the period following when American spokesmen of both political persuasions were propounding versions of what came to be known as the Nixon Doctrine, the declaration that the United States would no longer fight the wars of its allies, but rather would confine its efforts to helping allies to help themselves. There was the subsidiary notion that American aid in the future would be conditioned on the willingness of the ally to wage a vigorous defense in its own behalf. One aspect of the proposition that the United States should not act as the world's policeman is irreproachable. It would indeed be foolhardy for the United States to dissipate its energy and resources by attempting to quell every civil rebellion or factional uprising occurring within the Free World. On the other hand, as we have already seen, it would be even more foolhardy for it to stand idly by while through the ruse of proxy war Soviet Russia and China aggrandized their own power centers by subverting one by one the non-communist nations of the world. Much as the United States would ideally like to abdicate its role as global activist, much as it would like simply to live and let live, it cannot afford to do so as long as the world is inhabited by nations with designs on the sovereignty of their neighbors and there is no other "policeman" sufficiently powerful to call such nations to account.

So far as US insistence on maximum effort toward self-defense by its allies is concerned, it is naturally useful as a means of exhortation to remind allies that it is after all their necks on the chopping block. But in the privacy of their strategic councils, America's leaders will want to remind themselves occasionally that the necks of America's own citizens are also on the chopping block, else the rationale for maintaining the defense commitment is itself faulty. The unfortunate fact is that US interest in the security of an ally will be largely independent of that ally's alacrity in defending itself. To cite a hypothetical example, if, while preserving its defense obligations under the Rio Treaty, the United States granted to the State of Panama sovereignty over the Canal Zone, the fact that Panama might subsequently resist armed Communist encroachment in the Zone only timorously or half-heartedly would nowise lessen the determination of the United States to honor its Treaty commitment. Why? Because loss of the Canal would be perceived by the United States as a direct and palpable threat to its security. Americans would not cavil over the matter of their ally's fighting spirit, for they would not be seeking rationalizations for reneging on a solemn pledge.

The United States should not support despotic or corrupt regimes among its allies. This admonition, often heard in connection with ex-President Nguyen van Thieu of South Vietnam and President Park Chung Hee of South Korea, presents a difficult problem for planners, since it is based upon purely moral rather than security imperatives. Presumably, upholders of the proposition would implement it on moral grounds even if it could be demonstrated that to do so would undermine American security. With respect to corruption within the ruling circles of an allied country, several considerations counsel against allowing such charges to enter as major determinants of policy. In the first place, corruption, though easy to allege against a national leader, is difficult to prove. Second, even when the objective facts are well established, it is often impossible to tell whether what is perceived as moral laxity by Americans is not rather an

expression of differing traditional mores within a country that is culturally and religiously distinct from the United States. Finally, there is the vexed problem of hypocrisy, the question of whether Americans are themselves of sufficiently high moral tone to justify denial of assistance on moral grounds to any ally fighting for its survival.

Moving to the subject of so-called despotic regimes, in the interest of fairness we shall want to give credit where credit is due, recognizing the faltering but nonetheless substantial strides toward representative government that were achieved in such a country as South Vietnam. But more important than that, we must recognize the insuperable obstacles to the implementation of Western-style democracy in a nation under siege. From the vantage of life in a free and secure country, it is seductively easy to demand impossible standards of an ally in its elective processes and societal liberties. The duty of the government is after all to govern: to maintain seats of public administration, to provide a secure environment for the people, to maintain communications and routes of movement, and to guarantee the continuance of commerce. Since capitals, villages, hamlets, roads, and bridges do not move, but rather are fixed points which must be defended in place, it becomes extraordinarily difficult to maintain order and security in the face of a mobile and elusive guerrilla force which can mass against and neutralize targets on a piecemeal basis, thereby gradually paralyzing the processes of government.

The foregoing is an oft-told story and need not be further elaborated here. But what adherents of the proposition under discussion appear not to understand is the impotence of Western-style democratic government in the face of the appalling menace of such large-scale guerrilla assault. Consider the following tableau, repeated with variations numberless times during the Vietnam War: At night a Viet Cong company surrounds a small isolated hamlet and demands to see the hamlet chief and his family; they brutally murder and dismember the oldest son before the chief's eyes and announce that if cooperation is not in the future forthcoming, they will return and do the same to each of his remaining children. How *does* government combat this sort of terrorist onslaught against the very fabric of its existence? The answer, if there is an answer at all, will consist at least in the formation of a disciplined government that is tightly and responsively organized from top to bottom. Furthermore, the police and security procedures mandated in a terrorist environment are, we may as well recognize, incompatible with the norms of a freely elected officialdom and an open society. Much the same can be said when the guerrilla war evolves to the stage of conventional war that prevailed in South Vietnam in 1974-75, when the country was subjected to inordinately heavy pressures by regular enemy forces on multiple fronts.

Thus, in a policy determination on the matter of aid to an ally, the governing criterion must continue to be whether America's own security is ultimately enhanced. It will be remembered that in World War II, when US forces were faced with the menace of Adolf Hitler's panzers, few Americans were too squeamish to welcome the notorious Joseph Stalin as comrade-in-arms. To insist upon a security-oriented course, however, is not to condone corruption or despotism. On the contrary, trading on the influence that attends the extension of military and economic aid, Americans may be able, where appropriate, gradually to nudge the ally in the direction of freer or more honest government. Such would seem to be possible today in the case of the authoritarian South Korean regime, though Americans should recognize the futility of ever attempting to transfer intact their Western notions of representative government to an oriental nation struggling in a political climate volatilized by the menacing Chinese colossus lying only 120 miles to the west. Even if it proves unwise or impossible to remake allies in its own political and ethical image, the United States should take comfort in honest awareness of the far worse despotism that would attend Communist victory.

The domino theory is dead. During the course of domestic debate on the Vietnam War, perhaps no pro-war argument advanced by government apologists was subjected to greater scorn and derision than the domino theory, according to which it was predicted that the fall of Vietnam would topple other nearby non-communist governments and destabilize the prevailing political order of the area. Despite its thorough discrediting by anti-war pundits during the 1960's, however, events in the wake of the capture of Saigon by Communist forces on 29 April 1975 have largely vindicated the main outlines of the domino theory. Cambodia's fall was concurrent with South Vietnam's, and Laos in an only slightly less clear-cut manner came tumbling after.[11] But more disturbing were the electric effects felt in Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines, Japan, Australia, and even West Germany. President Marcos of the Philippines was most candid in his public statements of all the national leaders: "Closer links with the Communist states are [now] the only way to ensure our security and survival."[12]

Though perhaps a good bit of the indignation and apprehension expressed by US friends will abate with time, it is certain that their suspicions of America's reliability as an ally have been heightened and that American influence will be diminished to a perceptible extent as allies seek accommodations with China. Knowing that in the final crunch the United States is capable of reconciling itself to the defeat and communization of an ally, the leaders of the non-communist nations of Southeastern Asia and elsewhere will naturally seek to placate the large Communist powers who pose a threat to their existence. That friendly leaders should react in this fashion follows from the homely axiom of human nature that when your big brother leaves town you make peace with the neighborhood bully. In the light of history, we know that Communist expansionism can never be placated, that it can only be resisted; but when the underwriter of a small nation's resistance intimates that he is prone to default, the small nation's only realistic hope for survival becomes accommodation with its powerful enemy, even when such accommodation will ultimately entail essential loss of independence through satellitism. Less than a month following the Communists' triumphal march into Saigon, President Marcos flew to Peking to establish diplomatic relations with China; Premier Kukrit of Thailand visited Peking shortly thereafter. A dispatch describing the conversation between Chairman Mao and President Marcos was chillingly ironic: after the *de rigeur* disavowal of any aggressive intent toward the Philippines, Chairman Mao is quoted as saying, "We are one family now."[13]

Since the domino theory will continue to be tested in the years ahead, it is important that its operation and the claims in its behalf be clearly understood. To the extent that the image of a falling domino implies an event of linear, instantaneous, mechanical inevitability, it is misleading. Perhaps the analogy of a spreading inkspot is more accurate, but even it is inadequate because it fails to picture the overleaping potential of cause-and-effect, whereby one country's fall to Communist aggression can trigger a political and ideological reorientation in a far distant state. It therefore seems best to abandon argument from analogy altogether, and concentrate instead on concrete analysis of the various proximate consequences that are likely to attend a small ally's fall.

Of such consequences, the first and most obvious is the instant replacement of a friendly border with a hostile one for any US ally contiguous to the defeated country. With the communization of Cambodia and Laos, for example, Thailand will find potential enemies in place of friends along about 1,400 miles of border, much of it in mountainous and jungle terrain ideal for infiltration. With its borders thus exposed, and with expanded opportunities for hostile bases and sanctuaries beyond those borders, the problems of Thailand's defense are immeasurably complicated whether the attacking forces prove to be indigenous or not. A second consequence of an ally's demise is that it permits a shift of priorities to a new target by the Communist powers who export

insurrection. Since the resources that Soviet Russia and Mao's China can allocate to "wars of national liberation" are finite, the successful conclusion of one such war naturally makes possible the reinforcement of similar campaigns elsewhere. The final consequence has mainly to do with psychological factors. We have already discussed the alarming shock-effects in foreign capitals that register immediately, but there are also likely to be other effects, slower and more subtle in their transmission, but ultimately more dangerous in their impact. The successful subversion of an American ally by Soviet Russia and China further emboldens the Communist powers and confirms them in their historical aims. It adds to the plausibility of their trumpeted claim that they represent the wave of the future, and it weakens the resolve of America's friends as well as the thus far uncommitted states who sit as spectators to the great ideological power struggle in progress. It reinforces the view of US impotence in the face of a determined adversary and the unreliability of its pledges, and it creates one more enemy, adding yet another hostile voice to the growing community of nations who are antagonistic to American interests.

In sum, whether we want to speak of a domino effect or not, we can fairly conclude that security developments throughout the non-communist world are intimately related; and that, when the United States finally accedes to the forcible communization of an ally whose independence it had guaranteed, the development will tend to be destabilizing, increasing the vulnerability of other allies and enhancing the odds for their own eventual fall.

While in general the United States should go the whole way for an ally, South Vietnam was a legitimate exception. This view appears to support the broad principle of security within the framework of mutual defense, but demurs on the inclusion of South Vietnam with the claim that the situation there was unique. The Vietnam War, it is argued, was basically an expression of Vietnamese nationalism; the United States should learn to "discriminate" among the various manifestations of war and not meddle where it has no business.[14] One is tempted to inquire what business Soviet Russia and China had meddling in this "nationalist" war, but no useful purpose would be served by continuing that debate here. The point is rather to register a caveat: faced with the prospect of another dirty war on the other side of the globe and haunted by the ugly memories of Vietnam, Americans may find it well nigh irresistible to "discriminate" so finely and ingeniously that they are permanently relieved of fulfilling any foreign defense obligation. Given a lack of stomach to stand firm, the rationalizations and pretexts will quickly follow. If, for instance, the plea of nationalist-inspired revolution in the territory of an ally can absolve the United States of a commitment to come to its ally's defense—when that "revolution" is actively sponsored and supported by a Communist power—then the prospect for many US allies is indeed bleak. For relatively few of them in the underdeveloped world are entirely free of small but potentially expansible pockets of insurgent activity.[15]

Intervention in foreign wars such as that in Vietnam promotes division and conflict within American society; the news media, by exposing to public scrutiny the true facts, finally forced the war's end, thus ending the source of national discord. Much has been written in this self-congratulatory vein by members of the news media. Whether their role was indeed salutary, and whether the "true facts" were their own special province, history will decide. But certainly we must concede the enormous internal dissension generated by the war. We must grant too the decisive impact of the news media upon public opinion and thus upon the nation's resolve to wage war. It is probably no exaggeration to say that, given time, the American media joined in common conviction can defeat any prolonged American military involvement they oppose. This notion should not be surprising, considering the effectiveness in molding public opinion of

such techniques as the artful selection and packaging of news, the employment of polemical documentaries, editorials, and columns, and the video projection of the carnage and horror of the battlefield into the American family living room. To many, it is a chilling and sobering realization that an extragovernmental institution composed of a relatively small number of persons, the collective media, possesses the power to frustrate an initiative taken in the name of national defense by the country's duly elected authorities. Obviously no American military planner can or should attempt to change this fact of life, and the problem therefore becomes how best to assure the nation's security in the face of it.

Realizing of course that sincere effort and good faith on the part of the military can never provide assurance of media support, or even objectivity, we can nonetheless isolate three principles that should provide the best hope of achieving at least the trust of the media as well as the public. The overriding principle is obviously for the military to be correct in its estimates and sound in its judgments leading to recommendations of armed action. The commitment of US forces to hostilities is a grave act in this dangerous world, and it should be taken only when American security is at stake, when appropriate military power is available for timely accomplishment of the mission, and when measures short of force have proved inadequate. Furthermore, the rationale for the use of force should be clearly explicable to the American people, whose sanction will ultimately be required. The second principle, just as obvious, can be stated as a brief injunction to those members of the military services who deal with representatives of the media: on all matters one is permitted to speak about, adhere uncompromisingly to the truth so far as it is known, even when the truth is embarrassing or unpalatable. And finally, uniformed military leaders, particularly those at the highest echelons, will need to avoid insofar as possible the public role of Administration apologist for the war effort, since this task generates enormous pressures to place an unrealistically optimistic face on such imponderables as anticipated costs, casualties, and duration of hostilities. In the proper councils, of course, senior military leaders will be consulted on likely future war developments. Asked for their best estimates, they will need to supply responses that are candid, honest, and intelligently qualified.[16]

There remains for discussion one final important implication for defense strategy of the news media and their impact on public opinion. It seems clear that in any prolonged, attritional conflict between democratic and totalitarian societies, conflict devolving finally to a contest of national wills, the democratic society is at a grave disadvantage. In the oligarchic regime of North Vietnam, for instance, national war decisions are formulated by a small group of determined and ruthless Communist ideologues who are insulated both from the pressure of public opinion, since they control the organs that shape such opinion, and from the moral imperatives that necessarily weigh in the thinking of Western leaders. Whereas, in the United States the waging of war for prolonged periods rightly depends in the final analysis solely upon the consent of the people, whose opinions are subject to the varying tide of events and to the manner in which those events are publicly pictured. No society, given a free choice, is likely to choose to wage a long, costly, bloody, obnoxious war, especially when the war's link to the society's security is subtle and indirect. In the future, therefore, the expected duration of the military involvement will necessarily be a major determinant for US planners in both the decision whether to commit forces to war and how to wage the war. For public support, though often enthusiastic in the beginning, is indeed perishable.

If accepted as guides to future policy, the noninterventionist propositions discussed on the foregoing pages would tend toward a fundamental reorientation of the approach to security employed by the United States over the past 30 years. That is to say, they effectively counsel retrenchment from a globalist stance to a regionalism of indeterminate scope, but in any event one far

less ambitious and expansive. We have already seen reasons to doubt that America's security and continued economic well-being can be so easily divorced from events in far areas of the earth's surface. But for the sake of argument, let us assume that to escape the risks and burdens of global responsibility the United States does in fact withdraw into some kind of politico-economic regionalism. And let us also assume that in behalf of the territorial integrity of this region the United States finally resolves to stand firm against further forcible Communist encroachment. On what will follow, the voice of precedent speaks loud and clear: most assuredly militant communism will challenge that resolve sooner or later, and Americans will then face the prospect of war again.

As President Truman said of the fighting in Korea, "Freedom still costs blood." Let us hope that regardless of where their national interests and means dictate the stand be made—in Asia, in the Hemisphere, or wherever—Americans this time prove willing to stay the course.

NOTES

1. For recent defenses of the main implications of the noninterventionist approach to US foreign policy, see Earl C. Ravenal, "Via Route 1, or Foreign Policy Rd., to Defense Budget Ave.," *The New York Times*, 4 September 1975, p. 35; and Richard Holbrooke, "Escaping the Domino Trap," *New York Times Magazine*, 7 September 1975, pp. 16-17, 93-96, 98-99. Mr. Ravenal proposes a foreign policy and defense budget "independent of Soviet initiatives." Mr. Holbrooke, arguing that America's containment policy in Asia is outdated, would instead seek stability in the area through a delicately manipulated Sino-Soviet-US power balance. Though convinced of the need to defend Japan, he is less than clear on a proper American response in the face of Chinese- or Russian-sponsored subversion of such countries as Thailand, Indonesia, and the Philippines. Nor is he clear as to how a US policy to participate in the defense of Japan, or of any other Asian country, differs essentially from a policy of containment.

2. The figures on US petroleum use were cited by President Gerald Ford in a televised address on 27 May 1975. Reported in *The New York Times*, 28 May 1975, p. 20.

3. C. Fred Bergsten, "The US Now Must Deal With the Other Cartels," *The New York Times*, 1 June 1975, p. 4, sect. 4.

4. Japanese Treaty, signed 19 January 1960; Republic of Korea Treaty, signed 1 October 1953.

5. Fox Butterfield, "China Has Built Big-Power Navy," *The New York Times*, 10 August 1975, p. 6, sect. 1.

6. With the fall of South Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos to Communist forces, and with the emerging ascendancy of China in the area, Premier Kukrit Pramoj of Thailand and President Marcos of the Philippines have begun to picture their countries' military affiliations with the US as liabilities. SEATO's ministers, meeting on 24 September 1975, agreed to "phase out" that organization in view of the "new realities of the region" ("Ministers Agree on Phase-out of SEATO," *The New York Times*, 25 September 1975, p. 22).

7. A production capacity approaching 3 million barrels of crude per day is projected for Indonesia by 1979. See "Indonesia," *Britannica Book of the Year 1975*.

8. For a sobering view of Western Europe's vulnerability to neutralism, see Arnaud de Borchgrave, "Europe: Sliding, Sliding, Sliding?" *Newsweek*, 26 May 1975, pp. 47-48. A detailed description of comparative military strengths in Europe can be found in *The Military Balance, 1974-1975* (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1974), pp. 11-26, 95-102.

9. The Titoism of Yugoslavia is also frequently cited in discussions of Communist states wishing to pursue nonaligned paths in international affairs. For analyses of Yugoslavia's positions on various Cold War issues, consult Hayward R. Alker, Jr. and Bruce M. Russett, *World Politics in the General Assembly* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1965), pp. 299-304; and John C. Campbell, *Tito's Separate Road: America and Yugoslavia in World Politics* (New York and Evanston: Harper & Row, 1967), pp. 73-94.

10. "Can Line Be Held Against Communists in West Europe," *US News & World Report*, 2 June 1975, pp. 24-25.

11. The Communist-led Pathet Lao officially assumed control of Laos on 23 August 1975 with the subjection of Vientiane Province, the last of the provinces to be "liberated." See David A. Andelman, "Final Vientiane Take-over Announced by Pathet Lao," *The New York Times*, 24 August 1975, pp. 1, 20, sect. 1.

12. As quoted by William Buckley, "Dominoes in Southeast Asia," *The Evening News* (Newburgh, N.Y.), 22 May 1975, p. 6A.

13. "Mao Welcomes Marcos and His Family," *The New York Times*, 8 June 1975, p. 3, sect. 1.

14. A good statement of the view that the US must learn to "discriminate" can be found in Bill Moyers, "Last Reflections on a War," *Newsweek*, 21 April 1975, p. 100.

15. Joseph Lelyveld, "Other Nations Have Insurgents at Work," *The New York Times*, 11 May 1975, p. 3, sect. 4.

16. For a brief treatment of military-media relations in the post-Vietnam era see Major General Franklin M. Davis, Jr., USA Ret., "The Military and the Media: A Proposal for a Cease-Fire," *Army*, 24 (September 1974), 16-20.