

# Events Favor 'Low

By Edwin O. Reischauer

Now a University Professor at Harvard, Reischauer served as U.S. Ambassador to Japan under Presidents Kennedy and Johnson.

WHEN WE LOOK across the Atlantic, we may find elements of uncertainty and change in our foreign policies, but when we look across the Pacific, everything seems in doubt.

The outcome of the Vietnam war is still unknown; the reaction of the American people to this outcome is even less clear; developments within China are an enigma, and China's role abroad is uncertain; our chief alliance—with Japan—seems more threatened than our European ties, and the future of the 850 million people in the Indian subcontinent and the other noncommunist lands of South and East Asia is quite incalculable.

Worst of all, we are not agreed on the underlying concepts for our transpacific policies. While the conceptual basis for our transatlantic relations needs some refining, our whole approach to Asia must be rethought and reconstructed almost *de novo*.

## Fear of New Hegemony

AMERICANS HAVE COME to assume that, as a nation, we have immediate, vital interests in the transpacific area, and in the past three decades we have fought three major wars in defense of these interests as we saw them. It is accepted as a truism that we are a Pacific as well as an Atlantic power.

For most of our history, however, we saw no interests sufficient to justify large-scale wars in Asia. It was not until the early 1940s, when a rapidly modernizing, industrialized Japan threatened to establish hegemony over the whole of East Asia and this possibility became coupled with a threat of Nazi German hegemony over Western Europe, that we saw our vital interests menaced and became engaged in our first major transpacific war.

We came out of that war with the dream that continued cooperation with the Soviet Union and the emergence of a friendly China as the dominant transpacific power would give East Asia stability. We soon awoke to the unreality of this concept and saw ourselves

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facing instead the threat of a new hostile hegemony in Asia.

First we saw this as hegemony by an expanding, Moscow-dominated, international Communist movement, which, by gaining control over the vast "Third World," might tip the balance of power decisively against the "Free World."

The victory of the Chinese Communists over the Nationalists was seen as part of this threat, and the Korean war fitted the pattern. Seen in this light, the stopping of a clear, conventional aggression in Korea was necessary to the defense of vital American interests.

The Vietnam war, despite its origin as an anticolonial, nationalist revolution, was also seen as part of the threat of Communist hegemony in Asia, though carried out by subtler techniques of subversion and proxy warfare. Our involvement was based on this view and on the assumption that, unless this wave of indirect aggression were stopped at the dike we were manning in Vietnam, it would spread widely over Asia.

In the course of the war, our concept of the source of the threat has shifted from a supposedly unified Communist movement to a resurgent, neo-imperialist China; but the fear of hegemony by



a hostile power over the half of the world's population that lives in East and South Asia is unchanged.

### An Empty Threat

**T**ODAY THIS WHOLE conceptual basis for our transpacific policies is in serious doubt. If the threat of hegemony is real, then we probably cannot stop it by the methods we have adopted.

We have found ourselves less able to suppress internal subversion and fight a guerrilla war in an Asian country than we had assumed. Far from preventing the flood waters of communism or Chinese domination from spreading by manning the dikes in Vietnam, we have become so deeply mired there that we could not meet similar challenges elsewhere in Asia without first extricating ourselves from Vietnam.

The war has also proved far more costly to our worldwide position than we had ever imagined, and the divisiveness it has caused within our body politic much more disruptive.

The early ending of the war has become a national imperative. Even if we are able to achieve this on terms satisfactory to us, the popular reaction against the war at home and abroad would probably preclude similar involvements in other Asian countries in the foreseeable future.

The threat of hegemony by any power over Asia, however, is empty, as the Vietnam war has shown. Vietnam may be a less-developed country, but it is no power vacuum.

An Asian people, inspired by nationalism and armed with the techniques of guerrilla warfare, is no longer weakly susceptible to domination by foreign military forces. The Japanese army discovered this truth in the late 1930s in China. We and the French and Dutch had to relearn the lesson after the war.

The old imperialism is dead, and there is no room for new forms of imperialism. Asian countries cannot be controlled from abroad, even through communism or any other ideology.

The postwar history of Asia, particularly the determined stand of Communist Asians—Chinese, Koreans and Vi-

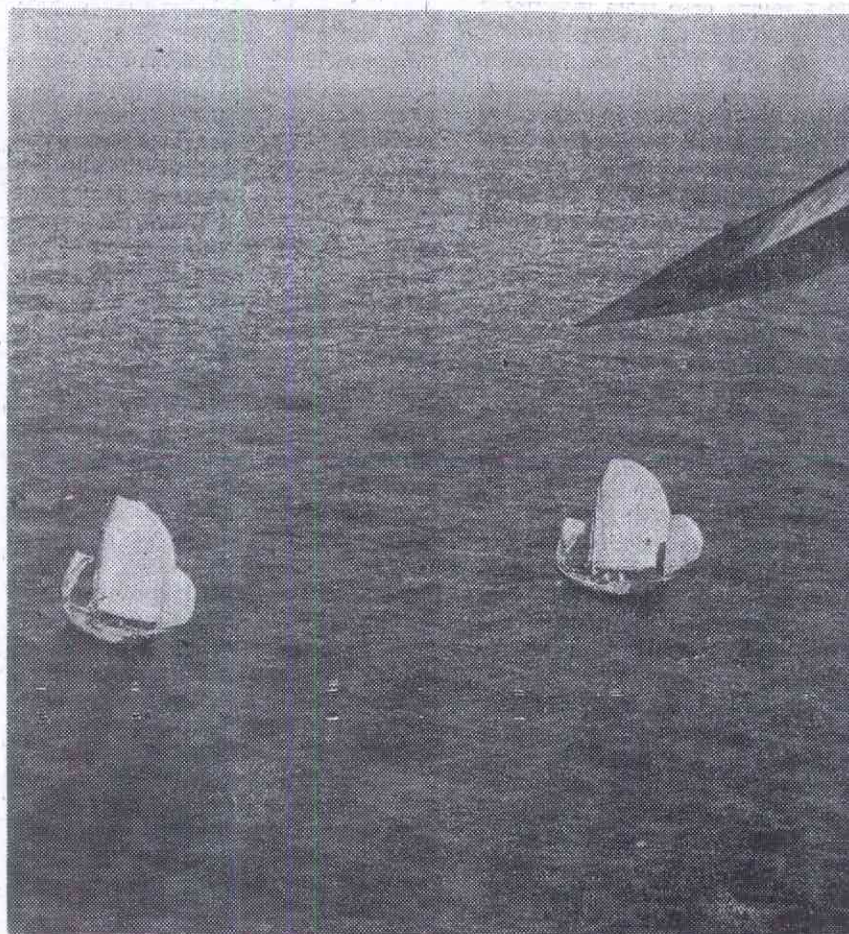
etnamese—against any foreign domination, shows that nationalism runs much deeper than political ideologies. There is no reason to believe that neo-imperialists, whether they be international Communists or Chinese, can dominate other Asian nations any more successfully than we, the Japanese or the French.

Nor would control over the less-de-

veloped nations of Asia, even if possible, give the controller increased power. These countries are for the most part deficit areas economically, draining rather than enriching a nation that tries to dominate them.

Even though they are capable of generating great military strength within their own borders, this strength cannot be marshaled by outsiders. Nor do they have the industrial capacity to permit them or their dominators to project what power they have far afield. External control over less-developed nations in Asia would tend to weaken rather than strengthen the controller.

Thus we find the major objective of our past policies toward Asia, as epitomized by our involvement in Vietnam, impossible to achieve and unnecessary in any case. It may be true that the development of a hostile hegemony over Asia would be against our interests, but in this age of rampant nationalism this threat is only a remote one and therefore should not dominate our policies. We are in need of a new concep-



*Seventh Fleet planes always take a close look at Chinese junks.*



tual basis for our transpacific relations.

## A Balance of Forces

**A** MULTILATERAL balance of forces in Asia seems far more probable than any sort of hegemony and is fully compatible with our own interests. The achievement of this positive objective should be the major thrust of our efforts rather than the negative policy of preventing hegemony.

We can perhaps best contribute to this outcome by consciously avoiding the polarization of power in Asia between ourselves and China and by helping to strengthen the other elements of a multilateral balance of forces.

We need also to distinguish clearly between immediate and long-range interests. Our frantic efforts to stop the supposed threat of hegemony made all problems in Asia seem to be matters of immediate concern. With this threat properly downgraded, our interests in the less-developed countries of Asia, including China, will be seen to be for the most part long range. Their trade and products are not vital to us; nor could they individually or collectively constitute any grave threat to our national interests in the near future.

Over the long run, however, the situation is very different. These countries hold half the population of the world. As distances shrink, and relations between all countries become closer and more fully integrated, and technical skills, including nuclear capabilities, spread, as inevitably will happen, this vast mass of people will come to have increasing impact on our own well-being.

If the present great gaps in living standards and opportunities between them and us persist, producing growing resentments on their part, a time may come when a world divided between privileged and underprivileged nations will be in as serious trouble as is a city or country today which permits great discrepancies of opportunity between its citizens. Our chief interest in the less-developed countries of Asia, thus, is in their long-range growth into more prosperous, stable and satisfied members of a world community.

By contrast, we have immediate, vital interest in Japan. It is the third largest industrial unit in the world. Its 100 million people produce two-thirds as great a gross national product as the billion and a half other people of East and South Asia combined. It is growing economically far more rapidly than the rest of Asia as a whole—indeed, roughly twice as fast. As a consequence, our relations of mutual benefit with Japan are far greater than with the rest of Asia and will continue to be so well into the future.

And because of geography and Japan's great potentialities, our relations,

both military and political, with most of the rest of the transpacific area are heavily dependent on the nature of our relationship with Japan. Friendship and close cooperation with Japan, as with Western Europe, are therefore matters of immediate, as well as long-term, concern to the United States.

## No U.S. Master Plan

**W**E HAVE LESS CONTROL than we once imagined over developments in the transpacific area. Our role there can be no more than marginal—to try to help desirable trends and inhibit undesirable ones.

There can be no American Master Plan for Asia. Outside of the field of economic aid, a lessened role actually may be more helpful than an increased one.

China's relationship with the outside world will be determined fundamentally by the attitudes of the Chinese

themselves, their success in handling their domestic problems, and the attitudes other Asians develop toward them.

Our efforts at building an encircling alliance against China and maintaining a close-in line of containment have probably done more to stimulate Chinese aggressiveness than to contain it.

The chief contributions we can make toward inducing China to move in a desirable direction are to relax our psychological and military pressures, reduce the political polarization in Asia between China and the United States, open doors for reconciliation so that the Chinese can come through them when they are ready and, in the meantime, encourage the Japanese and others to establish such contacts with the Chinese as will help them adjust to the outside world and find their place in a multilateral Asian balance of power.

In the other less-developed countries of East and South Asia, it is primarily their own nationalism and skills in meeting their domestic problems that will determine their success in avoiding external domination and developing the strong economies and healthy societies they all yearn for.

Our economic and technological aid and that of Japan and other advanced nations can, of course, be of help. In most cases, however, military alignment with us, by increasing strains in a country's relations with China, may threaten its security more than it aids it. In no country can we ourselves maintain internal stability, nor in most cases would it be in our interests to do so if we could.

Our military role can be only marginal—to preserve the freedom of the seas, to maintain insofar as possible an external environment of stability and to serve as a reserve force to discourage blatant aggression.

Our defense relationship with Japan, our huge trade with it and the budding partnership between us in facing the problems of Asia are all matters of immediate, vital concern to us, but their future will be determined in large part by Japanese attitudes over which we have, at best, only an indirect influence.

All we can do is minimize the specific strains in our relationship, particularly those in the touchy defense field, modify our own transpacific policies in ways which reduce Japanese doubts about them and show understanding of Japanese sensitivities toward what they feel is our undue influence over their country.

## A 'Low Posture'

**O**UR OVERALL transpacific objective should be to reduce the political polarization that has involved us in a disastrous war, keeps alive mutual

fears of hegemony between us and the Chinese and contributes to unhealthy tensions throughout the whole area.

To help achieve a multilateral balance of power, we should strive to increase the relative influence of other powers in the area and in this sense reduce our own. A larger Japanese role would be one essential element. The further development of India and the other countries of the area as healthy independent entities, some of them perhaps banded together regionally for added influence, would be important. A greater Soviet and Western European presence would be desirable.

If these other elements of a multilateral balance emerge, the alleged threat of Chinese hegemony would recede even further and the political polarization of the area between China and the United States would gradually fade away.

All of these policies suggest the desirability of a lower profile in the American transpacific presence than has been characteristic of the past two decades. A better term might be the Japanese phrase "low posture."

We cannot control the vast forces of Asia; we can only seek to understand them and then, when necessary, attempt to redirect their thrust. We must move with the dominant forces, such as nationalism, not against them. Again to adopt a Japanese metaphor, we should approach the problems of Asia in judo style, not trading blow for blow with the forces of Asia but so adapting our stance as to let these forces work for us.