



## Asian Dominoes That Don't Exist

**Joseph Kraft**

"PEOPLE who don't believe in the domino theory haven't talked to the dominoes," goes one of the sacred texts of the Vietnam war lovers. But Secretary of State William Rogers has just been talking to the dominoes during an Asian tour.

In country after country he has sought action that would make it easier for the United States to continue as protector of the Pacific. Not one government has even met him halfway. And if his trip has succeeded in anything, it has been in exposing the domino theory as a pernicious self-delusion.

Consider first South Vietnam. The Secretary's hope was to get some sign of support from President Nguyen Van Thieu for President Nixon's new emphasis on a negotiated settlement of the war. But the Thieu government uttered no public word in support of negotiations.

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INDEED, far from obliging the Secretary, the Thieu government used the occasion of his visit to jack up American aid commitments to South Vietnam. The United States has agreed to increase aid to Saigon by another \$100 million, with special provision for supplying more food and more housing to South Vietnamese troops. And anybody who knows anything about Vietnam knows that no small part of those funds will be going into the pockets of the generals who rule the country.

Then there is Thailand. That country is a member of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization and has received billions in

American military aid over the past two decades. So there was some responsibility to meet Secretary Roger's plea for Thai military action to support the beleaguered Cambodian regime against Communist assault.

But when the call came, the Thais developed a tin ear. Their forces were required to meet local Communist insurgents. Bangkok would be willing to trade some Cambodian units and to form others among Thais of Cambodian extraction. But that, of course, would require more money from the United States.

Lastly, there's Japan. Rightly or wrongly, the Nixon administration has been pressing Tokyo to limit voluntarily sales of wool and synthetic textiles to the United States. The Japanese agreed to a year's limitation, but the talks broke down when the United States insisted on a long-term understanding.

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THE PATTERN that emerges from these encounters is not one of Asian countries concerned about an external danger to the point of making accommodations for the protecting power of the United States. On the contrary, the Asian countries involved are looking after their own interests in the narrowest sense.

Instead of making special efforts to help the United States shoulder the defense burden, they use each occasion to pressure more out of Washington in the way of money and diplomatic concessions.