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Review of Foreign Policy VIII - U.S. and Far East

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REVIEW OF FOREIGN POLICY - VIII
THE UNITED STATES AND THE FAR EAST

Mr. President:

This is the eighth in a series of statements on the international situation and foreign policy which I have been presenting since the beginning of the session. The nature of these discussions should now be clear to the Senate. I shall proceed, therefore, directly to the subject which I propose to consider today. My remarks will concern the situation in the Far East.

In recent months, there has been little discussion of American policy with respect to that region. Occasionally press reports remind us that a representative of the President has been carrying on conversations with the Chinese Communists in Geneva during the past year and that these conversations continue. They remind us, too, that the guns still fire sporadically in the Formosa Straits and that Communist forces still confront us across the 38th Parallel in Korea.

What these reports tell us, in short, is that there is neither peace nor war in the Far East. There is only a precarious balance between the two. It is not a static balance. It is a balance that shifts towards one or the other, towards peace or war with the constant flow of developments in the Western Pacific.

If we were mere spectators, we could afford to turn our attention from this situation as we have been doing these past few months. We could
afford to wile away our time in a discursive debate on the definition of neutralism, attempting to draw a precise distinction between nice neutralism and not-so-nice neutralism. We are not, however, mere spectators. For better or worse we are deeply involved in the Far East. What our policies do or do not do profoundly affects the shifting balance, towards peace or war, in that region.

That is why, Mr. President, I turn to the Far East in my remarks today. It seems to me of the utmost importance that the Senate explore the question of where we stand in that region and where we are headed. In raising this matter, I am fully aware of the difficulties which are involved. The problems that beset us in the Far East are complex and dangerous in the extreme. In dealing with them, moreover, we carry an added weight. We bear the scars of issues which a few years ago drove damaging wedges of division deep into the political life of this country.

The difficulties in the Far East, however, will not become less complex, less dangerous, if we pretend they do not exist. Nor will they wait for solution on the healing of political scars of the past.

How long, we may well ask ourselves, will the inexorable flow of developments in the Western Pacific permit us an escape of evasion? In my opinion, Mr. President, not for very long, perhaps not even until after the election. That is why I believe it is in the vital interests of this country to begin now to face the facts in the Far East, to face them honestly and to face them without partisanship. The future of this country beyond the present generation may well depend on our willingness and capacity to do so.
These facts, on the whole, are vastly different from those which characterized the Far East ten years ago, five years, or even a year ago. They are, moreover, facts whose implications in many instances are not yet entirely clear. Nevertheless, we must make a start. We must begin to break through the mist of obscurity which has settled over the situation in the Far East. Only as we succeed in doing so can we even hope to develop our policies in a manner which will be understood by the people of the United States -- in a manner which will serve their interests.

The overriding fact in the Far East is that of Communist China, the colossus of over 500 million people ruled by the totalitarian dictatorship in Peking. We cannot close our eyes to it. It is there, Mr. President. Communist China may be an authoritarian reality but it is, nevertheless, a reality.

We do not have a clear picture of what goes on inside that vast and enigmatic core of Asian communism. If the Executive Branch has such a picture it has not been made public. I suspect that, in fact, neither this government nor that of any other Western nation possesses a detailed grasp of the actual situation on the Chinese mainland.

What we have are scattered fragments of information. Returning travellers note that the flies have been banished from Peking, or the sparrows from Canton. We hear of the harrowing experiences of refugees and repatriated prisoners. We get echoes of an uprising in Tibet or Yunnan.

The picture is far from complete. What we do know, however, the reports we have, tell of mass executions, mob trials, sporadic revolts, and
monstrous oppression. They tell of an incessant and intense activity in every realm of life. They tell of a new China fed on a mixed diet of militant nationalism, pro-Sovietism and seething hatred of America. They also tell of a rising power, an expanding industrial power, a ruthless political power and a military power unequalled in modern Chinese history.

Mr. President, if we do not comprehend fully what transpires within Communist China, we can nevertheless observe the impact that this new Asian force has already made outside its borders. The Peking regime has been recognized by about 25 nations. It has a mounting international influence, particularly in Asia, as was clearly indicated at the Bandung Conference last year. It is exerting an increasing control over huge Chinese communities in such Southeast Asian cities as Bangkok, Singapore, and Djakarta. It has an expanding trade, particularly with the countries to the south, a trade which was initiated with barter of raw materials and food but which is now spreading to include a flood of low-priced consumer goods of Chinese manufacture.

In the military realm, the nature of the Peking regime is already too evident. We have seen how, with the support of the Soviet Union, this new power rapidly enveloped the China mainland, how it rolled into position for an invasion of Formosa, how it spilled over into Korea and how it made its presence felt in Northern Indochina.

Not only in military matters, but in other ways, Peking has aligned its policies with those of the Soviet Union. The latter has supplied the Chinese Communists with ideological guidance, diplomatic assistance, and other aid.
Most of all, the Soviet Union has provided the implements of war and destruction. The Chinese people have paid dearly for this assistance. They have paid for it with the products of their land, with the sweat of their labor and even with their lives.

Whether the present upheavals in the Soviet Union will have a significant influence on the Moscow-Peking alignment remains to be seen. Certainly, recent developments in Europe suggest that possibility. What the repercussions may be in China, however, is another matter. Those with the penchant will find in this question a wide field for speculation. At this point it would be well, in my opinion, to acknowledge frankly that we do not know.

Speculation, however interesting it may be, ought not to divert us from the immediate realities which confront American policy in the Far East. As I have already noted, the most formidable of these realities is the existence of a powerful and hostile regime in Peking. We are still faced with the hostility of that regime, regardless of what inner changes may be taking place in world communism. This hostility confronts us most directly in the Korean and Formosan situations.

In both, the peace of the Far East and perhaps of the world still hangs in dangerous balance.

Korea remains divided today at the 38th Parallel as it was in 1945, and there are no signs of a permanent peace in that country. It is true that an armistice concluded in 1953 stilled the guns along this dividing line between the Communist world and the free nations. How long will this tenuous truce, this
uncertain truce, continue to hold? The Communists in North Korea have circumvented the terms of the cease-fire. The truce was supposed to freeze the military situation. But the Communists have gone on augmenting their military forces, particularly their air strength. A Neutral Nations Commission charged with supervising the armistice to prevent violations has been crippled by the non-neutrality of the Polish and Czech members. It has now been forced to terminate its activities. The desire of the Koreans for unification -- and it is an understandable desire -- was exhausted by the recent bloodletting. Now it is rising again, rising to a level of impatience.

In these circumstances how can anyone talk glibly of peace in Korea? Any incident along the 38th Parallel could touch off a renewal of the conflict. If full-scale hostilities are resumed, this country will not avoid their impact. We are deeply committed by word and action to the preservation of a free republic of Korea and two divisions of our armed forces remain in Korea to sustain that commitment.

In Formosa, a situation of comparable danger exists.

It is time to set the record straight with respect to that situation. We have had more words than wisdom in this matter, more press agentry than policy-making. It is no wonder that the American people and others are confused as to our purposes and policies.

Let us get one point straight once and for all. This country has never had any desire to possess the island of Formosa. The Communist propagandists who have made these charges know that they are wholly false. They
know that had such been our intention we were in a military position at the end of World War II to realize it. It was not our intention then; it is not our intention now.

This country does, however, have legitimate interests in the fate of Formosa, interests by right of the sacrifices we made in World War II and by right of the sacrifices made in carrying out a United Nations decision to stop aggression in Korea. We have the right to expect that the status of that island is not such as to establish a springboard for eventual aggression against other free nations and ourselves in the future. We have a right and an obligation, along with other nations, to see to it that the people on the island -- people who were once ruled by a Japan which was defeated by us -- to see to it that they are not as a consequence of that defeat subjected to a blood bath through no cause of their own.

How were we to safeguard these interests and discharge these responsibilities in the light of events on the Chinese mainland after World War II? From 1949 on, Formosa became a target of invasion of the Chinese Communists and a refuge of the Government of Chiang Kai-shek. Were we to permit that invasion especially at a time when we and others were faced with an aggression in Korea?

Since 1949, moreover, the people of Formosa have depended heavily on the policies of this country for their safety and well-being. American assistance has made possible a great improvement in their living conditions. It has trained, equipped, and sustained armed forces for their security. American military power has served to forestall an invasion of the island and to prevent
the widespread death and devastation among the Formosan people which would have accompanied such an invasion.

At the outbreak of the Korean conflict in 1950, an Executive Order interposed the Seventh Fleet in the Formosan Straits to inhibit a spread of the Korean aggression to other areas in the Far East. The action served its purpose. A measure of tranquillity settled over the Formosan area. For three years there were no attempted invasions. Then in 1953 this situation was suddenly altered by new Executive Orders and bombast. We have seen the result. The threat of Communist invasion once again intensified. By 1955 it had reached such a point that the Executive Branch no longer felt able to handle the matter alone. The President found it necessary to seek Congressional support for desperate measures to save Formosa. We are now back where we were in 1950, except more deeply and inextricably enmeshed than ever before in a situation which hovers on the brink of war.

The reversal of policy in 1953 would have been understandable if this Administration, unlike its predecessor, was not bent on preventing an extension of the war in the Far East beyond Korea. As far as I can see, however, this Administration has desired to prevent such an extension. Otherwise, it would not have negotiated a truce in Korea. Otherwise, it would have supported Chiang Kai-shek's aspirations to liberate the mainland which it has not done. Otherwise, it would have ordered a bombing beyond the Yalu which it has not done. Otherwise, it would not be negotiating with the Chinese Communists in Geneva as it has been doing for the past year.
It seems to me that the policy which this Administration is following with respect to Communist China does not differ in principle with that of its predecessor. The words may be different. The postures may be different. The substance is the same. Our present course is a policy that is neither peace nor war but a policy of the in-between. It differs in one respect from the previous policy. It gambles more recklessly with the risk of full-scale war in the Far East.

We may either applaud or deplore this state of affairs. The one thing we cannot do is to close our eyes to its actuality. Nor can we ignore the fact that history suggests that relations among nations in a state of hostility do not remain suspended indefinitely on a razor's edge. Sooner or later, they veer towards one or the other, towards greater conflict or towards closer relations.

I do not know what will emerge eventually from this anomalous situation with respect to Communist China. As I have already noted, the policies and attitudes of this government as well as those of Peking will profoundly influence the outcome. So, too, will circumstances around the rim of the Asian mainland.

In our policies we have counted heavily on the close relations which we have maintained with Japan and the Philippines since the end of World War II. We have counted on these two nations and others to work with us for the preservation of peace, for mutual defense against aggression in that region.
These relations with the free nations of the Far East cannot be expected to flourish of their own accord. They require a constant toning which can be supplied only by perceptive and creative foreign policies. We have seen in the last few weeks how the lack of such policies can give rise to serious strains in a relationship as close even as that of the United States and the Philippines. The clumsy handling of the question of sovereignty over American military bases in that country threatened to undermine in a moment years of constructive effort and the provision of extensive assistance. Fortunately, the Executive Branch has acted, however belatedly, to correct this ineptitude.

If strains can develop so quickly in relations with the Philippines, how much more likely are they to appear in our ties with other Asian countries, ties which are of more recent date and as yet largely untried.

The fact is, Mr. President, that strains have appeared elsewhere. They have appeared most significantly with respect to Japan. The Japanese have not yet developed their own defense forces. There is nevertheless a growing resentment in Japan against continued dependency on the United States for defense. The Japanese are also beginning to press for a return of the Bonins and Okinawa. These strategic islands are presently held by this country but their ultimate status was left uncertain in the Japanese treaty. The Japanese show signs, too, of a gathering impatience with restrictions on their trade with Communist China. They are maintaining these restrictions in accord with the United Nations embargo but they have seen other nations ignore or circumvent them.
While Japanese-American relations are undergoing strains, Japan is preparing to resume negotiations with the Soviet Union looking to a treaty of peace and the restoration of diplomatic relations. There were such negotiations in the past but they ran into the hard wall of Soviet intransigence. As is evident elsewhere in the world, however, Soviet policies are shifting rapidly and there is no reason to assume that they will not change with respect to Japan.

If the Soviet Union means to have diplomatic relations with the Japanese, they have much to offer. There are islands to the north of Japan which may be returned. There are valuable fishing concessions in the waters off Soviet Asia. There are important trade and economic concessions. There is membership in the United Nations long sought by Japan and long denied by the Soviet veto. There are, finally, Japanese prisoners of World War II still held in Soviet Siberia to be returned.

Mr. President, I believe this country would be well-advised to expect the restoration of Soviet-Japanese relations in the near future. It is coming and it is probably coming soon. So, too, is the likelihood of a sharp expansion of Japanese trade with the Asian mainland.

These developments are to be anticipated in a Japan which must literally fish and trade on a vast scale to survive in peace. The Japanese are compelled to search where they can for opportunities to do both. They can find, they have found, many opportunities for trade with free nations. Increasingly, however, their efforts in that direction begin to run into the political reality of the adjustments which free nations have to make in their own economies if they
are to accommodate Japanese trade. To put the problem bluntly, how far are the free nations prepared to go in admitting imports from Japan?

We had better face the fact that the Communist nations of Asia are in a position to offer significant opportunities to Japan for trade and fishing as well as other economic concessions. If they make such offers sufficiently attractive, as sooner or later they may be expected to do, the Japanese are going to take them.

The development of increasing Japanese economic contact with the Asian mainland need not in itself constitute a cause for alarm. The danger lies in the possible political repercussion of this development. It seems to me that adverse consequences in this respect can be held in check by intelligent policies on the part of this country, Japan, and other free nations.

I am not suggesting a competition of concessions with the Soviet bloc to hold Japan to our side. A Japan which could be kept in that fashion is not worth the keeping. What I am suggesting, however, is that we recognize that the present alignment of Japan with the free nations requires more than pious statements for its preservation. It requires action, mutually beneficial action, in the economic realm, in the cultural realm and in matters of military defense.

If there is an absence of intelligent policy directed to this end, we shall live to see the ugly consequences of the failure. We shall live to see a Japan in headlong flight into the Communist orbit or embarked once again on some form of militarist totalitarianism of its own.
I do not mean to suggest, Mr. President, that these dangers are imminent. They are there, nevertheless, in the background. They do not provide any greater cause for complacency over the safety and welfare of this country than does the ambivalent situation with respect to Communist China.

Nor are present circumstances much more reassuring elsewhere in the East. I have already covered the situation in Southeast Asia in a previous statement in this series and I shall not take the time of the Senate to go over the same ground today.

I should like to emphasize, however, that American relationships throughout that area are in serious need of repair, goodwill tours of the Vice President -- which I highly approve of in principle -- notwithstanding.

We had one more evidence of neglect of these relations just a few days ago. The former King of Cambodia, in Moscow, linked his country's future closely with that of Russia. We have no one to blame for this turn of events except ourselves. It was apparent last year that despite the vast efforts which this country was making to help the Cambodian nation through the first years of independence, our relations with that country were deteriorating.

In my report on Cambodia to the Foreign Relations Committee last October I noted:

The aid programs, if properly administered can be helpful ... and of lasting benefit to both countries. It seems to me essential, however, to emphasize that unless great caution and restraint is exercised in administering American assistance it will produce not only an inexcusable waste of American funds but serious dislocations in Cambodia. Aid can act to the benefit of our relations with that country but
it can also act to their detriment; it depends on how the program is handled. I recommend that the Executive branch review carefully the extent of all our activity in Cambodia. It has grown rapidly in the past year, as has the number of official Americans in Cambodia, and size in either case is not the measure of what best serves this nation's interest.

Was such a review, a full scale review of our activities in Cambodia ever undertaken? Not to my knowledge, Mr. President. Instead, a situation obviously bad months ago was allowed to go on deteriorating while millions of dollars and numerous officials were poured into Cambodia. We see the consequences. Now there will undoubtedly be a review -- but the damage has already been done.

It should be clear, Mr. President, from the quotations I have just read that when I suggest that our relations with Southeast Asia are in need of repair, I am not suggesting bigger aid programs. I am suggesting, as I have suggested many times, and as the Committee on Foreign Relations will now undertake, a full-scale reappraisal of the existing aid programs. I am suggesting less pique and more perception in dealing with the Asian countries. I am suggesting a better coordination of the statements and activities of the Executive Branch affecting those countries. I am suggesting that we wake up to the fact that Communist penetration of this region -- commercial, diplomatic and ideological -- is deep and it is increasing and that its success is due in no small part to the ineffectiveness of our policies and the way they are being administered.

Mr. President, I noted at the outset the difficulties in holding to an effective course in the Far East. It seems to me high time, however, that this government faces up to the difficulties.
The foreign policy of this nation for the Far East or any region cannot be based on glib catchwords and slick phrases. If it is to serve our interests, that policy must grow out of a comprehension of our national interests in the Far East. These interests, as I understand them, lie in a peace which satisfies the reasonable needs of security of this country against aggression. They lie in a flourishing commerce and in scientific, cultural and religious ties which can enrich our lives.

None of these interests can be pursued in a vacuum, in isolation. We cannot have the security of peace in the Far East, alone. We obviously cannot have commerce there, alone. And obviously, we cannot have scientific, cultural and religious ties, alone.

We can, in short, pursue our interests in the Far East only in concert with others. We can do so only if there is a reciprocal desire for intercourse on the part of others and a willingness to adjust the attitude and policies of all to make this intercourse possible.

That is not presently the case with China. We have had only a continuous hostility emanating from that source ever since the Peking regime came to power and we have replied inevitably in kind. The Chinese Communists have bullied and browbeaten. They have inflicted thousands of unnecessary casualties on the forces of this country and others by their intervention in Korea. They have scourged and villified the good name of the United States. They have turned the sentiments of the Chinese people against us, sentiments built on a century or more of friendly contact.
I do not say that the attitude of China towards the United States will never change. Those of us who have lived through World War II and the fantastic changes of the past few years should know by now that there are few "nevers" in the relations among nations.

I do say, however, tangible evidence of change in China does not now exist. I do say that unless the Koreans have an opportunity to achieve their unity and independence in peace, such evidence does not exist. I do say that unless it is clear that the status of Formosa can be determined without the bloodletting which a Communist invasion would inflict on the people of that island, there is no evidence of change.

If the Executive Branch does have such evidence growing out of its year-long conversations with the Chinese Communists in Geneva, then the time is rapidly approaching when it should so inform the American people. If it does not, we may well ask why these conversations are being continued.

I think it is time, too, for the Executive Branch to make clear that we do not retaliate on the entire Chinese people, the hostility which the Peking government directs at us. The ties, the deep ties, which once linked the people of this country with the people of China -- religious ties, cultural ties, commercial ties -- can survive this period of separation enforced by the Peking regime. They will survive, however, only if the words and actions of this government make it clear that we wish them to survive.

If we are estopped from our historical contact with the Chinese people at this time, we are not prevented from reinforcing our relations with the rest of
Asia. In a sense, that is what we have been trying to do. That is the logic of the defense treaties with Japan, the Philippines and other nations. It is the logic in the vast aid programs. It is the logic of the information program.

And, logically, too, it is time to find out why these policies are not working as they should, why, as in Cambodia, they are producing effects opposite from which we hoped they would produce. It is time for the Executive Branch to reassess these programs and the way they are being administered. It is time for the Executive Branch to review carefully its diplomatic practices and personnel in the Far East. It is time for that branch to wake up to the existence of strains in our relations with many nations in that area and to adjust our policies to reduce these strains. It is time for new measures which will strengthen the ties between ourselves and Asian nations.

Ten years ago, Mr. President, this country was welcomed with a deep and genuine enthusiasm throughout Asia, from Korea to Australia, from the Philippines to Afghanistan. Year by year the welcome has become more strained. Despite vast efforts, the welcome is now a grudging one in some countries; in others it is no welcome at all. It is time, Mr. President, to ask ourselves why. Even more important, it is time to find out why.