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THE NIXON DOCTRINE AND U. S. NAVAL  
STRATEGY

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11 February 1972

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USAWC RESEARCH PAPER

THE NIXON DOCTRINE AND U.S. NAVAL STRATEGY  
IN THE PACIFIC.

A Monograph

by

Commander George A. Aitcheson,  
US Navy //



US Army War College  
Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania  
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The United States is currently faced with the dilemma of trying to formulate a Pacific strategy which will permit an adequate projection of US power in the region while at the same time affording the means to concentrate on pressing domestic problems. As the Administration wrestles with the problem between withdrawal and involvement, an increase in naval power appears imminent in US Pacific strategy under the Nixon Doctrine. Naval power will continue to provide a multiple of strategic options desired under the lower profile called for by the Nixon Doctrine. It is also a means of projecting US power in the Pacific and directly influencing the balance of power in the region while reducing the danger of direct involvement overseas. Disturbing conflicts in the proposal for increased reliance on naval power are the declining status of US Navy ships in face of the rapidly increasing capability and threat of the Soviet Navy and our insufficient sealift capability. If the American people and the Congress do not exhibit the will to provide the means necessary to pursue an increased reliance on naval power, the United States may well find its capability to influence events in the Pacific region significantly reduced.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The problem of formulating foreign policy and in developing a supporting strategy is never a simple and straight-forward task. With the myriad of problems currently facing the United States, both at home and abroad, the task becomes even more difficult and complex. The American people are completely disenchanted with the war in Vietnam despite former President Johnson's assurance to the world that US patience was unending. The pressure on President Nixon and his administration to direct more attention and resources to the area of domestic problems continues to increase. Added to these problems are the spiraling inflation and current economic plight of the country which have resulted in the President's implementation of new and severe economic measures. These measures in turn have had wide-reaching effects, both here, within the United States and on the international scene. It is common in these times to be constantly reminded of austere budgeting and reduced defense spending. These are but a few of the pressing factors confronting us in the formulation of any future strategic concepts.

When we address the Pacific region, we are dealing with an area that has recently commanded a great deal of attention in US strategic thinking. Our attention has been focused on the Pacific primarily because of the dilemma over the war in Southeast Asia and the prospects of formulating a new strategic posture in the Pacific

under the Nixon Doctrine. Other significant events directing world attention toward the Pacific include the announcement of the President's forthcoming visit to Peking, United States recent differences with Japan, and the Peoples Republic of China's admission to the United Nations with their subsequent involvement in world political affairs. The emergence of a new power balance in the Pacific has also added a new dimension to strategic considerations in the region. No longer are events dictated to a major extent by two world powers, the United States and the Soviet Union. In the future, Japan, the economic giant of the area, is likely to determine the stability of the Far East more than any other country. China will also play a significant role in the future in determining the power balance in the region.

The cornerstone for the development of future US strategy is clearly the Nixon Doctrine. Marshall Green, Assistant Secretary for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, has said, "This doctrine is, after all, the key aspect of United States foreign policy today, especially toward East Asia . . ." It certainly appears that the most significant aspects of the Nixon Doctrine with regard to US foreign policy are directed toward Asia and the Pacific. The purpose of this paper is to examine the future role of the United States in the Pacific region within the context of the Nixon Doctrine. From this examination, the military implications arising out of US policies toward the Pacific community and the impact these policies will have on US Naval strategy will be determined.

When pursuing the problem of determining US strategic options, one cannot completely neglect making some reference to the growing number of American people favoring retrenchment. We can see from past history that it is not an uncommon occurrence for Americans to vacillate between involvement and disengagement in the world arena. It has happened at the conclusion of past wars and it should come as no surprise at this time when the United States is involved in such an unpopular conflict as the war in Southeast Asia. The pressures on the domestic scene, the weariness of the American public in being forced to shoulder world responsibilities, and disenchantment with the amount of dollars needed to meet defense needs are continually being expressed at all levels of American society. Perhaps it is a little early to conclude that the current trend toward isolationism or the "Fortress America" concept is of limited significance. There is still an element of doubt as to whether or not this movement toward withdrawal has reached its peak at this time, at least toward Asia.

Based on the premise that geographical security is no longer possible and my personal conviction that the United States will not move out of East Asia completely, the author remains pessimistic concerning the degree of curtailment the move toward isolationism will have on US strategy. A world which has diminished considerably in size with the advent of jet aircraft and advanced satellite communications, whose security has been reduced to minutes by intercontinental missiles, and a world in which all countries find themselves bound

more closely than ever through economic needs does not readily lend itself to isolationism. Regardless of the mood of the country, the United States cannot escape the reality of being a global power with global interests, including huge investments in Asia and the Pacific.<sup>4</sup> Despite those who feel we do not command the resources to move forward at home while sustaining our commitments abroad, and those who pronounce the future of Asia as being of little concern to the United States, we cannot at this time in history safely walk away from our commitments and interests in Asia and the Pacific. There appears to be no other viable course for the United States than to play a responsible role in the Pacific while continuing to grapple at home with the long agenda of unfinished business.<sup>5</sup> The conjecture and debate arise out of what type of strategy the United States should pursue in Asia and the Pacific.

The discussion of present and future US strategy will be directed initially toward the Pacific region itself and the forces at play. Significant aspects include the new power balance developing in the area among the United States, USSR, China, and Japan and the effect it will have on the region. This will be followed by an examination of the Nixon Doctrine, particularly regarding the Pacific region. Finally, with this background of the Pacific region and the intent of the Nixon Doctrine, a discussion of U.S. strategy and its impact on future U.S. naval strategy in the Pacific will be pursued.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER I

1. Marvin E. Gettleman (ed.), Vietnam: History, Documents, and Opinions (1970), p. 366.
2. George W. Ball, "Packing the Trunks for China," Newsweek, (27 September 1971), p. 56.
3. Marshall Green, "The Nixon Doctrine: A Progress Report," Department of State Bulletin, (8 February 1971), p. 1.
4. Maynard Parker, "Asia: How Stand the Dominoes," Newsweek, (27 September 1971), p. 53.
5. W.W. Rostow, "United States and Asia," Air War College Associate Programs, Vol. III (March 1971), p. 11.

## CHAPTER II

### THE PACIFIC REGION

When we think of the Pacific region in terms of US strategy, the subject can be approached from various avenues. There is an awareness on our part of the erosion in our present forward strategy. The US posture of overseas bases is dwindling from the demands imposed by the arising tide of nationalism in the region and from the budgetary constraints imposed by the current strains on the US economy. We also think in terms of the strategic importance of the area, of future prospects for the countries of the region, and possible future events evolving in the Pacific. In the final analysis, however, the dominant factors influencing Pacific strategy are the profound changes which the area has undergone during the last decade. The elaborate power balance now beginning to shape the politics of the Far East is a new balance involving not only the United States and the Soviet Union as global powers, but also the two most powerful nations of the region, Japan and China. <sup>1</sup> It is in terms of this new power balance that we will pursue our discussion of the Pacific region.

Several significant factors have contributed to the evolution of this new pattern. First is the open hostility between China and the Soviet Union which has played an important part in the conduct of their domestic and foreign relations. A second

factor which effects worldwide strategic thinking as well as the Pacific power balance is the development in strategic arms technology by China as well as the USA and USSR. This rapid advance in technology and weapons systems has added to the already large list of uncertainties concerning strategic decisionmaking. A third factor has been the reassessment of US policies and interests in the Pacific. Under the Nixon Doctrine, the United States seems to be drifting away from the emphasis on a large number of explicit commitments and instead, is seeking a position that will afford a greater choice between engagement and disengagement in certain events.<sup>2</sup> Other factors contributing to the evolvement of the new power balance are the recovery and development of Japan, the seating of China in the United Nations, and the latter's return to the international scene following the cultural revolution. As a result, there is a great deal of speculation concerning the prospect for changes in US policy.

The emergence of this more elaborate power structure is bound to add new dimensions to US strategic planning and to our conduct of foreign policy. It will be a difficult task to maintain a standoff among the four powers, and in the long run it may be an uncomfortable and difficult situation for everyone to live in.<sup>3</sup> We have already seen tensions rise in US relations with Japan. The consequences of a breakdown in political and security ties between the United States and Japan could be severe and as a result, drastically effect the strategic balance in the Pacific. Recent events are seemingly piling up, which, if not reversed, could conceivably nudge Japan toward

rearmament, including nuclear weapons. They are already very much aware of the growing Chinese nuclear capability and feel it poses a definite menace. As this capability continues to increase, the Japanese government is likely to experience more and more difficulty explaining to its people why Japan should not build nuclear weapons. <sup>4</sup> There is also a great deal of resentment by many Japanese politicians and a substantial portion of the public concerning the US-Japanese security treaty which they view as an unequal treaty. Particular disenchantment is expressed regarding the treaty's provisions for US bases in Japan which they feel are utilized to pursue American and not Japanese interests.

Washington's recent overtures toward Peking have created another sticky problem area in US-Japanese relations. These moves have created a great deal of suspicion on the part of Japan, particularly regarding the future impact on US relations with Taiwan. The Japanese feel if US intentions of defending Taiwan are lessening, the possibility exists they may well be next. All this is occurring at a time of US announced withdrawal of its forces from Vietnam. The reduction by the United States is looked upon by some as the beginning of a continual decline in US forces in the Pacific which will ultimately result in a reduction in the credibility of the American deterrent in the Pacific. If the United States does not maintain a strong presence in the Pacific and the feeling persists, Japan may see it in her interest to expand her military posture which would move her another <sup>5</sup> step toward nuclear rearmament.

Nothing would upset the prospects of stability and the strategic power balance in the Pacific more than the realization of a Japan rearmed with an offensive military capability, including nuclear weapons. Although the feeling of the majority of Japanese people is still against anything more than their present self-defense forces, public opinion polls show an increasing acceptance of a nuclear arsenal. The government meanwhile has proposed sharply increased military spending in the budget, effective in April of this year.<sup>6</sup> Still, the largest single factor influencing Japan against the need to fully rearm is assurance by the United States that our willingness to shelter Japan with the nuclear umbrella and to provide it with a secure defense is not weakening. Other factors of significant importance are the need to convince Japan of US intentions not to abandon our interest in the Pacific and of our intent to maintain a strong presence in the area. Additionally, an assurance by the United States that any US-Sino accommodation will not imply US abandonment of its friends and allies, particularly regarding Taiwan and South Korea, is also needed. Though press reports were not encouraging, it would be hoped that in Premier Eisaku Sato's meeting with President Nixon in January 1972, that these reassurances were made to Mr. Sato.<sup>7</sup> Remarks by Nobuhiko Ushiba, Japanese Ambassador to the U.S., indicate that President Nixon's assurances may not have been taken as seriously by the Japanese as we would have hoped, however.<sup>8</sup>

On the other hand, Japan cannot concentrate much longer on primarily an economic policy without taking a more prominent role in international politics. A political role will also be necessary to foster the international climate on which Japan depends.<sup>9</sup> The first test is likely to come on the development of a China policy. Japan perhaps will look closely in the near future to the prospects of expanded trade with China and also at increased diplomatic, financial, and trading links with Europe. Economic progress is likely to be made more rapidly than political moves because of deep-rooted differences over questions such as Taiwan and Korea. It is interesting to note there is no apparent pressure on the part of the United States to prevent Japan from developing its own China policy.<sup>10</sup>

Just as Japan will find it desirable to develop a more active China policy, they may also find it desirable to examine their relationship with the Soviet Union. In the past, the relationship has been marked by suspicious and territorial differences. But, just as bilateral ties between the United States and China may be necessary to maintain a position of strategic balance, Japan may find that a position of balance between China and the Soviet Union is likely to require links with both countries. If, for example, Japan feels the strong US Naval presence in the Pacific will be lessened, she may seek more normal ties with the USSR because of the rapid expansion of the Soviet fleet.<sup>11</sup> Just recently it was reported that Japan and the Soviet Union agreed to begin negotiations on a peace treaty which may signal the beginning of a closer relationship.<sup>12</sup>

As for US relations with China, it is unlikely they will experience any far-reaching change as a result of the President's visit to Peking. The number-one issue postponing diplomatic bargaining in earnest is that of U.S. support for Taiwan. Peking continues to insist that the United States stop regarding the Taiwan government as the government of China, and that we remove our bases from Taiwan. <sup>13</sup> Another aim of China is to be free from the ring of military bases they feel we have thrown around them since the Korean War. China continues to maintain a strong desire for US withdrawal from Vietnam and Korea, which have considerable meaning to them as buffer states. In spite of these deep-seated problems, China apparently feels it in its interest to seek some sort of accommodation with the United States. Although they do not approve of US actions in Southeast Asia, we no longer appear to be the focus of attention in what China considers the threatening triangle of US, Japan, and USSR. Ross Terrill, in an Atlantic Magazine article, <sup>14</sup> contends that foremost in Chinese minds is Japan and Japanese militarism. The United States, on the other hand, may hold some hope of convincing the Chinese to refrain from giving large-scale support to North Vietnam. We are beginning to realize more and more, however, that <sup>15</sup> China and the USSR do not have a great deal of control over Hanoi. What President Nixon's visit to Peking will do is to begin a dialogue that results from the shift in the balance of forces acting in the Pacific.

Concerning the USSR in the Pacific power balance, the United States will have to express caution in its dealings with China so as not to overly antagonize the Soviets. With territory stretching from Eastern Europe to the Pacific Ocean, USSR attaches much importance to its interests in the Far East. The USSR is not likely to stand idly by if events occurred which would harm Soviet interests in Asia and the Pacific. In the Sino-Soviet dispute, we do not necessarily seek an improvement in the rift, but neither do we desire to get involved. Any actions that could result in a large-scale Soviet buildup would seriously threaten US and free world security. We can also expect to see more and more competition from the Soviets in the Pacific power balance as they continue to increase their naval presence in the region. Hopefully, American overtures toward Peking will serve to an extent to hold the USSR in check and preserve a state of balance in the evolving power relationship in the Pacific.

Southeast Asia will continue to be a factor in Pacific strategy and to play an important part in the calculations of the major powers. The relationship of the big powers concerning this area has developed an intricate character. Peking seems to be softening its view of what it feels is US containment of China. It presently fears to a greater extent what it foresees as full encirclement by the USSR, consisting of the northern and northwestern borders and the Pacific

and Indian Oceans. Chou En-lai made this clear when he said,  
"Now Dulles has a successor . . . in our Northern neighbor."<sup>16</sup>

China at the same time fears complete dominance of Southeast Asia by Japan. They are uneasy over the combination of events comprised of US withdrawal from the area, Japan rapidly solidifying its economic position in Southeast Asia, and the concurrent evidence of rapid Soviet inroads into the area. Actually, with no established position to lose, the Soviets may have the most to gain from any new alignment in the area.<sup>17</sup> On the other hand, the countries of Southeast Asia fear dominance by any one of the major powers. In fact, the idea that Japan may one day add a strong political role to its economic dominance is frightening to most Southeast Asians.<sup>18</sup>

There are those who profess neutralism for Southeast Asia as the only reasonable course for those countries to pursue. While this may be the only "reasonable course," many writers contend that, because of prevailing circumstances in the emerging power relationship in the Pacific, Southeast Asia will not be left to its own desires regardless of what the United States does or does not do. Therefore, a continuation of American concern and presence in the Pacific is needed to maintain a degree of balance against the developing interests of the other major powers.<sup>20</sup>

There have been many reasons proposed concerning the need for continued US presence in the Pacific. In the final analysis, however, it would seem that the need for US presence and a continued

active role by the United States in the Pacific is clearly essential to maintaining the required strategic balance and security in the region under the new emerging power structure. Lack of meaningful US presence would result in:

1. Reduced US credibility concerning its security commitments and the American deterrence in the Pacific.
2. Japan moving toward rearmament, including nuclear weapons.
3. Upsetting the strategic balance and inviting dominance of the area by one of the major powers in the area.
4. Encouraging closer Soviet-Japanese ties, particularly if US Naval presence becomes doubtful in the face of the rapidly expanding Soviet Naval strength.
5. Encouraging Chinese expansionist moves in the Pacific.

FOOTNOTES

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3. Ibid., p. 67.
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7. John M. Lee, "Nixon-Sato Talks Disappoint Japan" New York Times, (16 January 1972), p. 8.
8. "Fears of a Great Unraveling," New York Times, (16 January 1972) p. 4E.
9. Robert Scott, "East Asian Speculation," Pacific Community, (October 1971), p. 16.
10. Halperin, p. 25.
11. Gebler, p. 66.
12. "Soviet and Japan to Discuss Peace Pact," New York Times, (28 January 1972), p. 4.
13. Ross Terrill, "The 800,000,000 Part II; China and the World," Atlantic Magazine, (January 1972), p. 48.
14. Ibid., p. 41.
15. Somsakdi Xudo, "Prospects for Security and Stability in Southeast Asia," Pacific Community, (October 1971), pp. 118-125.
16. Terrill, p. 41.
17. "As Power Lineup Shifts in a Key Part of the World," Atlantic, (11 October 1971), p. 66.

18. Maynard Parker, "Asia, How Stand the Dominoes," Newsweek, (27 September 1971), p. 53.

19. Shazali bin Shafie, "The Neutralization of Southeast Asia," Pacific Community, (October 1971), pp. 110-117.

20. Charles A. Fischer, "A View of Southeast Asia," Southeast Asia, (Winter-Spring 1971), p. 38.

## CHAPTER III

### THE NIXON DOCTRINE

President Nixon first announced the concept of his new foreign policy at a press conference on Guam in July 1969.<sup>1</sup> The announcement was generally hailed as a new approach toward the formulation of US foreign policy. When closely examined, however, the Nixon Doctrine appears to be an outgrowth of the course of events shaping the world rather than a new innovation on the part of the Administration. The international and domestic scene has changed considerably from that of the post World War II era. Our allies have recovered economically, and some, like Japan have even become our strongest competitors. Fissures appeared in the monolithic Communist bloc and a deep and serious rift has openly developed between China and the Soviet Union. US nuclear monopoly has been replaced by a new configuration of mutual thermonuclear deterrence. On the domestic scene, there has been a noticeable lack of public support for Vietnam, and an increasing demand on the Administration to direct more attention to domestic needs. The growing realization by the American public of the country's economic problems has resulted in the demand to curb defense expenditures. It would seem that these many dramatic changes on the world and domestic scene would have led to a foreign policy very similar to the Nixon Doctrine regardless of what administration was in Washington.<sup>2</sup>

The Nixon Doctrine as a basis for foreign policy is subject to the same degree of inherent vagueness found in any doctrine. There are still many gaps between the general principles and concrete issues which remain to be filled in by future actions relating to those principles. From the beginning, the Nixon Doctrine and policy statements following its announcement created confusion, particularly in the minds of our Asian allies.<sup>3</sup> The question of US withdrawal, the defining of a lower US profile, and the general conflicts in the meaning of the key elements have resulted in a growing debate concerning interpretation of the doctrine. Some have gone as far as to say that the doctrine is uncertain and unclear and while welcomed by some is unnerving to others and unclear to all.<sup>4</sup> Those areas concerning partnership and those defining US commitments have been singled out by Hans Morgenthau as being particularly ambiguous.<sup>5</sup> Being subject to interpretation, the doctrine will continue to take on new meanings through future actions and policy statements by the Administration. In the case of Vietnam, it is evident that future actions will determine just how the United States views this commitment and assesses it in terms of our national interest and that of the Republic of Vietnam.

The Nixon Doctrine has not escaped from political overtones and as such has been successful to a degree in telling the American people what they would like to hear. The doctrine affords some satisfaction to the "disassociates" favoring retreat into neoisolationism with its intent to shield the United States from direct involvements,

particularly in Asia. At the same time, the "containment" faction is satisfied to an extent with a policy which recognizes the strategic significance of weapons technology and force mobility as well as the concerted objective which places a greater burden for defense upon our partners in alliance. In a sense, the policy is an attempt to unite strange bedfellows during this period of transition from Vietnam involvement to the "era of negotiation" for peace.

The ambiguities in the Nixon Doctrine, its failure to define clearly our policy on present commitments, and its political overtones have caused conflicts in the past and will continue to do so in the future regarding interpretation. We continue to see examples of this. The President has assured the public that American involvement in the war in Vietnam is coming to an end. Just recently, however, the United States renewed its bombing of North Vietnam for five days in late December 1971. Some of the press contend the bombings were evidence of the fact that there will be an American war in Indochina for years to come. Others meanwhile are convinced that President Nixon is firmly and irreversibly committed to withdrawal of all American forces from The Republic of Vietnam. No doubt conflicts such as these support the idea that many areas of the Nixon Doctrine are so vague as to lend support to almost any foreign policy which the Administration would like to pursue.

What then, if any, are some of the guidelines for planning under the Nixon Doctrine? Clearly, the President is committed to

withdrawing troops from Vietnam. However, as this writer interprets the Administration's actions, there will be a residual of American ground forces left there for some time. There will also be a significant amount of air power remaining in the Pacific region, particularly for utilization in Southeast Asia. The bulk of this air power will be Naval Airpower, since it does not require large numbers of land-based facilities and equipment. Although the President recently announced a 70,000 troop reduction by 1 May 1972, he hinted earlier in his 2 January message that 25,000 to 30,000 men may remain in Vietnam. Secretary Laird, commenting on the latest troop reduction, pointed out that American air power would continue to be used to protect the remaining US forces. At the same time Defense Department sources conceded that some small American combat units would remain behind even though the South Vietnamese have assumed responsibility for the ground war in their country. From the President's recent speeches, it is also clear that US presence in Southeast Asia and future US policies concerning US withdrawal from Vietnam are tied to the POW situation. In the overall analysis, however, the author does not interpret the Nixon Doctrine as meaning the United States will completely withdraw and abandon the area, leaving a vacuum to be filled at this crucial time.

Under the Nixon Doctrine, the United States is committed to a reduction in defense expenditures while increasing our domestic priorities. The climate at home and the sagging US economy have

already resulted in reducing force levels. What the final force structure will be is still in question. It is certain, however, that the Army can look forward to fewer divisions, the Navy to a lesser number of ships, and the Air Force to fewer tactical aircraft and bombers.

On the political scene, the Nixon Doctrine seems to portray an awareness of the changing balance of power in the Pacific. It alludes to the fact that a new Asia is emerging, and each of the major powers of the region will be faced with difficult decisions in adjusting its policies to the new realities of East Asia. <sup>10</sup>

In summary, the Nixon Doctrine is a rather all-encompassing foreign policy which lacks specifics in some areas and possesses its share of ambiguities and contradictions. It does not escape the politician's touch in telling the American people what they would like to hear. While the doctrine is in earnest regarding a reduced presence in Asia, it does not intend for the United States to abandon an active role in the Pacific or turn its back on Southeast Asia. We are committed to allocating more resources for domestic needs, to a reduction in defense spending, and to lower force levels. Recent political moves point to an awareness of the new balance of power forming in the Pacific and the realization of the importance of maintaining a strategic balance in the area.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER III

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2. James A. Barber (CDR), "The Nixon Doctrine and the Navy," Naval War College Review, (June 1971), p. 6.
3. John O. Caswell (ENS), "The Changing Thai-United States Alliance: Implications for the Nixon Doctrine in Asia," Naval War College Review, (October 1971), p. 60.
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## CHAPTER IV

### CURRENT AND FUTURE STRATEGY

The framework of current US strategy in the Pacific does not afford the means for establishing many clear-cut views. Under the Nixon Doctrine there are many unanswered questions and many conflicts. At the same time there is little known concerning the true impact of the country's current economic, political, and social problems on US policies. As a result, the debate continues regarding current Pacific strategy. Indications are that the Administration is determined not to abandon Southeast Asia nor to ignore our major commitments in the Pacific. Meanwhile, the President is faced with the dilemma of trying to reduce the current US military posture overseas while at the same time seeking to maintain a presence in the Pacific sufficient to project US power and protect our interests.

Current US strategy evolved from the concept of massive retaliation during the 1950s which depended on nuclear superiority and from the strategy of flexible response pursued during the 1960s. It was during this latter decade that conventional forces were increased to a level which would permit a "two and a half" war strategy. That is, land wars could be fought simultaneously in Europe and Asia plus intervention on a lesser scale conducted elsewhere. Today, however, the United States no longer enjoys nuclear superiority, and as a result, our strategy consists of nuclear sufficiency. While the Administration attempted to find a balance between involvement

and disengagement, economic factors and domestic problems dictated a reduction in conventional forces. As a result the "2½ war" concept was replaced by the "1½ war" strategy which is contingent upon fighting only one major war, either in Europe or Asia. In conjunction with the reduction in conventional force levels, negotiation began to occupy a major position in current US strategy. The present Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) and discussions on MBFR are part of the strategy of negotiation. Another aspect of current US strategy is the realization by the Administration of the new power balance evolving in the Pacific. Washington's recent overtures toward Peking and the President's recent talks with Prime Minister Sato of Japan, during which an agreement was reached on the Okinawa reversion, reflect an awareness of the new Pacific power balance.

For the military planners, the guidelines under the current austerity program dictate smaller but more modernized and sophisticated conventional forces. Dominating strategic planning is the idea of an offensive nuclear capability sufficient to deter a nuclear strike against the United States or its allies. The reduction in conventional force levels is, of course, upon us. The latest manpower cuts will reduce the strength of the armed services close to the 2,000,000 level. Figures most frequently heard concerning future force structures include 13 Army divisions, 16 carriers for the Navy, three divisions and three air wings for the Marine Corps, and 21 tactical wings for the Air Force.

Before examining the options available for future US strategy in the Pacific, let us look at some of the more disturbing conflicts concerning the balance the Nixon Doctrine seeks to achieve. According to Marshall Green, Assistant Secretary for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, the intent of the United States in East Asia is to reduce our own military presence without creating unacceptable risks. He observes that our economic and military aid may have to increase to achieve this objective.<sup>4</sup> It certainly seems logical that a lower US military posture will go hand-in-hand with the need to increase our economic, and particularly, our Military Assistance Program (MAP). To me, a low military posture is synonymous with relinquishing power. The risk of creating a vacuum has to be countered by increasing the strength of our allies. The conflict here is in the recent actions of the Congress when they severely criticized our whole aid program, even threatening to cut our foreign aid completely.<sup>5</sup> They subsequently reconsidered, but the warning remains clear: aid, in general, is in for closer scrutiny and tighter control. Emphasis on the domestic side of the ledger and lack of public support appear to make a favorable response to increased funds for MAP questionable.

The austerity in the budget and the reduction in defense spending raise questions. Just how sufficient will the US posture be if we pursue our objective of reduced force levels consisting of more modern and effective weapons systems and a highly trained all-volunteer Army?

The US Navy has been experiencing trouble with Congress over the cost of the F-14 program. The number of airplanes originally scheduled for the Navy has been cut significantly and there are those in Congress who are active in attempting to scuttle the program entirely. <sup>6</sup> Concerning the status of our naval forces, one only has to read Janes Fighting Ships to see that the US Navy is lagging behind the Soviet Union. The rapidly expanding Soviet naval strength and the excessive age and declining numbers of US Navy ships have been well documented. Yet the forecast for modernizing and increasing the US fleet to a level commensurate with that of the Soviet Union is bleak. The Army is also having difficulties in procuring weapons systems. Their Main Battle Tank was recently cancelled and the Cheyenne helicopter program continues to be plagued with political and cost problems. Meanwhile the Air Force F-15 program is likely to incur cost over runs and the B-1 bomber program continues to move ever so slowly. <sup>7</sup> There may be some hope as a result of the President's recent State of the Union Message during which he revealed plans to ask for an increase in defense spending and additional funds for research and development. <sup>8</sup> In the search for balance between domestic and defense spending the question still remains regarding our future capability to adequately project US power in the Pacific, or anywhere for that matter.

There are other considerations impacting on US strategy aside from the conflicts evident in the Nixon Doctrine. For the doctrine

to work, our allies in the Pacific must continue to grow in strength and stability if they are to assume more of the burden for their own defense. There has been a great deal of progress in the area, particularly in countries such as South Korea, Taiwan, Okinawa, and Thailand. There are signs that Australia may be ready to assume a larger role in the area and Indonesia, once on the verge of bankruptcy, has made a complete turn-around and is now prospering. The most questionable area remains South Vietnam. How successful the Vietnamization program will be is still in question. When and to what extent the South Vietnamese can assume the burden for their own defense and successfully contain North Vietnam's designs for dominance of all of Vietnam and perhaps Southeast Asia remains to be answered.

There has been some progress made in the area of regional cooperation. Examples of regional groupings include the Asian and Pacific Council (ASPAC), the 5 Power Agreement, and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). These organizations could conceivably be the nucleus for future larger organizations in the Pacific, but this seems unlikely in the near future. Regional organizations are progressing slowly, and their role in collective security in the region appears minimal for sometime to come.

A strategic option that continues to be studied and proposed consists of US withdrawal to Guam and the Trust Territories of the Pacific Islands (TTPI). Supporters of this "Fallback" strategy

point to the central Pacific location of the TTPI and their potential<sup>9</sup> to support military requirements throughout the western Pacific.

The growing doubt about the viability of US bases overseas further supports the fallback theory. There are, in fact, a number of factors which favor utilization of Guam and the TTPI as the logistical position to move our line of defense in the Pacific. There are those who feel it is quite feasible and this strategy is continuing to be studied.<sup>10</sup> There seems to be an overriding consideration of the geographical aspects of the proposal, however, and an assumption that these territories can be readily utilized for basing. Careful consideration of all the factors, particularly UN influence, political status negotiations, and the cost of island basing,<sup>11</sup> make the use of the TTPI as a fallback position questionable.

As we ponder a future strategy for the Pacific, then, let's review some of the factors constraining that strategy. There is the trend toward retrenchment, the dim prospects of a sufficient MAP program to support the Nixon Doctrine, reduction of force levels, and the declining status of US forward bases. We are aware of the new power balance evolving in the Pacific and skeptical of regional movements concerning security affairs. The "Fortress America" concept of strategy is impractical since it would reduce US presence in the Pacific to an unacceptable level, and the author is extremely pessimistic with regard to utilization of the TTPI for a fallback

strategy. It is quite obvious that the United States cannot continue to play indefinitely the role of world policeman as the costs are too high. Given these types of parameters, how can the United States project its power and what should our Pacific strategy consist of in the future?

Looking at the Pacific area, there is an awareness of the enormous distances and number of strategic straights and passages making up the region. Hanson Baldwin refers to Pacific strategy as a strategy of great distances and narrow straights.<sup>12</sup> Reflecting further on the Pacific region, we try to envision a strategy which the United States could pursue with the monies available, given the current budgetary constraints. We also think of the domestic pressures against involvement overseas, particularly regarding future ground wars in Asia, and we are reminded of the arguments for strategic elements such as flexibility and mobility. This brings to mind such common current terms as low profile, reduced visibility, and an over the horizon presence. These thoughts appear to add up to what is essentially taking place to a degree today under the Nixon Doctrine.

Future strategy under the Nixon Doctrine appears to emphasize a maritime strategy, at least in some respects. The phrase "lower profile" frequently quoted as part of the doctrine indicates increased reliance on naval power. Accepted truths of sea power include its characteristics of flexibility, maneuver, and economy and concentration of force. At the same time, the successful performance of general

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purpose forces is largely contingent on these axioms. The President's recent announced intentions to ask for additional defense funds of \$900 million to improve our sea-based deterrent and \$2 billion additional for the Navy budget with emphasis on new ships, indicates the Administration's awareness of the need to increase the capability of US Naval power. The Administration and members of Congress have also expressed their growing concern over the rapid expansion of the Soviet Navy which quite likely influenced the President's request for more funds for the Navy. Meanwhile, strategic considerations, and perhaps the desire to exert political bargaining pressure in the SALT negotiations, have speeded up the development of the Underwater Long Range Missile System (ULMS) program. The President also disclosed that the Navy would receive the largest money boost in the fiscal 1973 budget. It appears, then, from recent budgetary announcements that the Administration intends to increase the emphasis on naval forces.

Before continuing, let us examine some of the advantages of naval power. Significant capabilities are its flexibility and mobility. Ships can be moved with ease without having to extensively relocate fixed facilities. We have seen examples of this in virtually every crisis since World War II. A notable incident was the successful resolution of the Cuban missile crisis in 1962. In the Jordan crisis of 1970, the President effectively used naval power and

probably used it instinctively. Naval forces also afford the advantage of reduced dependence on overseas bases. They are capable of sustained operations on forward stations for long periods of time through mobile logistic support. In the Vietnam conflict, our aircraft carriers operated "around the clock" for well over a month at a time on many occasions. Nuclear submarines, of course, can operate extensively at sea, unsupported by shore bases. Also important from the standpoint of the Nixon Doctrine is the fact that naval forces do not involve the same pressures toward involvement that exists when US forces are physically present

in an area of crisis. Another unique advantage of naval power is its capability of concentrating power at a specific place and at a given time. Granted, advanced technology and weapons systems have made all targets more vulnerable. Naval power, however, lends itself to the concept of dispersal and mobility, therefore complicating the enemy's problem of targeting. At the same time, it offers the advantage of concentration when desired.

Thus far we have concentrated on the conventional war aspect. If total war comes, it means that the fundamental task of our military strategy in deterring nuclear war has failed. Our naval forces play a significant role in seeing that we do not fail in this task. One of the important factors in deterring a nuclear

attack is an awareness by the potential aggressor of our capacity to survive an initial attack and maintain the capability to strike back. To maintain this second strike capability, there are strong arguments for placing additional emphasis upon sea-basing strategic weapons systems. These arguments include:

1. Sea basing of strategic systems directs any attack against these systems seaward, rather than against the US land mass itself.

2. Sea-based systems are more survivable than equivalent land-based systems. (Consider the problem we face in trying to counter Soviet submarine-based missile systems.)

3. Because of their mobility, basing deterrent missiles at sea complicates the defensive problem for any potential opponent. For example, retaliatory strikes against the Soviet Union from continental United States must come through a relatively small corridor of about 32 degrees. This reduces the ABM defense problem for the Soviets considerably.<sup>18</sup>

Although it is not mentioned nearly as frequently as the SSBN submarine, the aircraft carrier gives the US Navy an increased nuclear capability and is a significant factor in the overall US nuclear capability. All Navy attack aircraft and the vast majority of the fighter aircraft are capable of carrying at least one nuclear weapon with yields up to fifty times that of the Hiroshima bomb.<sup>19</sup> Integrating the aircraft with the ship results in a versatile weapons

system. The somewhat limited range of the aircraft is compensated by the cruising range of the aircraft carrier. Additionally, carrier-based aircraft weapons systems provide commanders with all the necessary elements of airpower in any degree desired. The carrier also exploits the advantages of mobility. The USS Enterprise for example is capable of sustained speeds in excess of 30 knots and of steaming 350,000 nautical miles without refueling.

If the Navy is to experience an expanded role in the low level posture of the Nixon Doctrine, the amphibious task forces take on added significance. Frequently this unit is the only structured formation offering tactical and logistical integrity of elements utilizing Marines ashore. It affords the option of landing Marines ashore in a sensitive area without signifying occupation or imminent hostilities. The amphibious task force is equally effective in the conduct of large-scale operations as well as combat activities of a modest nature. The options afforded by the amphibious forces are impressive when you consider the Lebanon landing. An unbroken line of communications was established from Norfolk to Beirut, over 5000 miles of ocean. During the operation, no borders were crossed and there was no impingement of sovereign rights.

There are numerous other facets of naval power which can be called on to project US power. The naval blockade and mining are capabilities which can be effectively utilized. Although the naval

blockade has not been used since World War II, it was one of the primary options considered during the Cuban missile crisis. It still has a valid place in strategic options today. The tactic of mining is an effective means of denying the enemy access to supplies. Think, for a moment, what impact the mining of Haiphong harbor would have had on North Vietnam's logistical lifeline. We should not fail to mention the Navy's capability for shore bombardment, launching missiles, conducting anti-submarine warfare, and for conducting interdiction and reconnaissance activities. An often neglected element of strategy is the ability to portray strength. Naval power is readily available and easily deployed throughout the Pacific. An aircraft carrier with its air wing complement aboard is an impressive sight when it goes into port. It is a relatively simple and effective means of signifying American strength and US interest in a particular area of the world.

All this is not to say that naval power is the only element essential to US strategy in the Pacific. Although we call for sea power to be accentuated under the Nixon Doctrine, our ground forces and shore-based tactical air power remain essential to support a stable balance of power in the Pacific. The Nixon Doctrine clearly indicates a reluctance to ever commit US ground forces to Asia again. We cannot guarantee, however, that this will never occur. A maritime concept lessens the rigidity and entanglements of a

continental strategy, but it cannot insure against insurgency and aggression. The United States must be careful the next time, however, to choose the right time and the right circumstances if we are to intervene with ground forces. Highly trained and efficient ground troops readily deployable will always be needed. Sea and air power can devastate and to some extent deny, inhibit, and blockade, but it is ground power that ultimately controls the land

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area. As we mentioned earlier, the Nixon Doctrine is open to interpretation. As a result there are those who foresee a larger role for the Army in supporting deterrence, flexible response, and collective security under the Nixon Doctrine. 23 It is the author's contention that the facts point to the need to accentuate the role of naval power as a basis for future strategic planning; however, land and air power are essential elements of national power and will remain an important part of US strategy.

In order to utilize the optimum capability of the seas, it is necessary that we have the capability to transport troops and supplies as the contingency dictates. Sealift is the key to sustaining any prolonged confrontation. The Vietnam conflict pointed out once again that the major portion of material goes by sea. Here we see a conflict since our sealift capability has been beset with many problems in recent years. Our Military Sealift Command (MSC) fleet of approximately 98 ships must be supplemented by the US Merchant

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Marine which in turn has dwindled to its lowest number in 30 years. Meanwhile, a large number of our National Defense Reserve Fleet ships has been mothballed while a number of those remaining are suffering from old age. The Air Force's huge C5-A transport which is being relied upon heavily to increase our airlift capability and compliment our sealift is experiencing cost overruns, development problems, and a reduction in numbers from that originally scheduled for delivery to the Air Force. Problems have also stemmed from the Defense Department's plan to consolidate the sealift command within the Military Traffic Management and Terminal Service (MTMTS) which reports to the Secretary of the Army. The plan has met with stiff opposition within the Pentagon and from other agencies within the Executive Branch. As a result the issue continues to remain  
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unresolved.

There may be a ray of hope for our sealift with the Administration's actions to begin a 10-year, 300-ship construction program to modernize the Merchant Marine under the Maritime Administration's supervision. Perhaps for the first time in years, the sealift prospects look a little bit brighter. Whether or not the program will receive full support and will provide the necessary lift capability in time remains to be answered.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER IV

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## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY

The future appears to portray an increased role for the US Navy in the Pacific under the Nixon Doctrine. The vast area of the Pacific Ocean with its strategic straits and narrow passages lends itself to naval strategy with its inherent elements of flexibility and mobility. Naval power will continue to provide the United States with the capability to use the seas for its own purposes and, if needed, deny their use to the enemy. As our reliance on overseas bases continues to diminish, we can look for more dependence on deployed naval units. These units will provide the capability for both concentration and concealment of force. Deployed naval units offer the advantage of maintaining a strong US presence in the Pacific without the need for stationing large numbers of personnel and equipment on land bases. Naval bases will continue to be needed, but to a considerably lesser extent than the present posture of US bases overseas.

Naval power will continue to provide the United States with a multiple of strategic options desirable under the lower profile called for by the Nixon Doctrine. Power can be projected ashore by the Navy/Marine Corps team comprising our amphibious forces. The attack aircraft carrier will continue to provide a significant presence in the Pacific and will insure US influence in the region.

The Navy's capability of mining harbors and rivers with sea and air elements provides additional strategic options for consideration. The naval blockade is an effective strategic option that still has applicability in this age of modern warfare.

An increased dependence on naval power offers advantages other than multiple strategic options. It is also a means of projecting US power in the Pacific and directly influencing the balance of power in the region without requiring the basing of large numbers of troops in foreign countries. Utilizing naval power will reduce the dangers of direct involvement overseas while permitting the option of carefully selecting the time and place of any future US intervention. With the adverse mood of the nation concerning defense spending and toward direct involvement in Asia, an increased reliance on naval power appears eminent.

This is not to conclude an insignificant role is proposed for the Army or the Air Force. Tactical air will continue to play an important role in future strategy. It is a valuable asset in projecting US power. It appears, however, that the presence of the Air Force in the Pacific will be reduced as the tide of nationalism continues to rise in the area and exerts strong pressure on the United States to give up more of its bases. The Army's presence in the Pacific is decreasing under the Nixon Doctrine and will continue to decrease. As a result, the Army will have to be prepared for rapid

deployment to any area where it is determined their presence is needed. In the final analysis, if the need arises and intervention is deemed appropriate, it is manpower that will control the land. With the limited funds available, however, the United States cannot pursue any longer all the strategies desired. The national will and economy will not permit pursuing a strategy which affords equal assets to all the services. An increased role for the Navy appears to be the most appropriate solution for formulating strategy during these trying times of seemingly unsolvable problems.

The disturbing element in this proposal for an increased reliance on naval power is the declining number of Navy ships and the large number of old ships still in active service. While the US maritime capability is on the decline, the Soviet Union is rapidly expanding its naval power and continues to project its naval presence on a large scale throughout the world. At the same time we are faced with an insufficient sealift/airlift capability which adversely affects our capability to rapidly deploy ground forces to forward areas. If the Nixon Doctrine is to be capable of projecting US power abroad, of carrying out US commitments in the future, and of affording the capability to blunt the thrust of an aggressive and expansion-minded enemy, it will have to have the means to do so. Whether the American people and Congress have the will to provide the necessary funds remains to be seen. If the capability of the US Navy is not increased in numbers and technology, the United States may well find itself relegated to the role of a lesser power in the Pacific.

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