

STRATEGY PART II: Looking Ahead

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STRATEGY

PART II: Looking Ahead

By Samuel Eliot Morison
Rear Admiral USNR (Ret.)



Last month Adm Morison recounted the growth of Grand Strategy in the Pacific from 1775 through WWII. In this concluding article he charts a course over troubled seas that lie ahead.

✪ WITHIN THREE YEARS AFTER THE ALLIED victory over Japan in August 1945, there developed a completely new situation in the Pacific.

Several areas in Southeast Asia which before WWII had been under the control of American and allied powers, achieved independence. These were British India, Pakistan, Ceylon and Burma (followed in 1958 by Malaya), the Philippines, Dutch Indonesia and in 1954, French Indochina. These countries have a combined population of 631,000,000.

At the present moment there is nothing left of colonial empires in Southeast Asia and the western Pacific except British Hong Kong and North Borneo, Portuguese Macao and half Timor, and Dutch New Guinea. All these, especially New Guinea, are vulnerable. Australia and New Zealand have held firm and are not yet threatened.

As a consequence of these political upsets, two stabilizing power factors in eastern Asia have been wiped out—the Indian Army and the Japanese Navy. The Indian Army, originally trained by the British, and which prior to WWII was a major deterrent to any power drive from the north or east, is no more. And as the Indian Navy does not yet amount to much, this leaves another power vacuum in the Indian Ocean for us, or the Reds, to fill.

The chief political weight in the new balance of power was the complete overrunning of the Chinese mainland by the communist regime of Mao Tse-tung—600,000,000 Reds added to the 250,000,000 of the U.S.S.R. and its European satellites. Our ally Chiang Kai-shek and the Chinese Nationalist Government were relegated to Formosa, the Pescadores and the little islands Quemoy and Matsu. Together these political changes constituted the greatest upset in the Pacific situation in modern times.

The rapid demobilization of American armed forces

was another factor in the disintegration of our situation in the Pacific. "It was not a demobilization, it was a rout," said Gen George C. Marshall to me; or as Gen Albert C. Wedemeyer put it, "America fought the war like a football game, after which the winner leaves the field and celebrates."

We didn't even stop to tear up the goal posts! The hysterical cries of "Bring the boys home!" will be remembered.

The final factor is the development of new weapons based on atomic fission—atomic and hydrogen bombs which can be delivered by air power, ballistic missiles which can be fired from land bases or from ships. The use of these in any new general war threatens to wipe out civilization.

Now, what has been, or should be, American Grand Strategy in the face of this major upset? What have we done, and what can we do, to prevent the further extension of Communist control from the mainland of China into Japan, Formosa, and the new independent states of Southeast Asia, without risking a mutually destructive WWII?

The Truman administration, in 1946, adopted the policy of containment all along the line, except in China. We helped organize NATO in 1949, in order to have sufficient ground, air and naval forces in Europe to deter the Russians. We intervened in Greece to prevent its being overrun by Russian-supported Communists, as the Balkans already had been overrun. By diplomacy we saved Iran from the Russians. We gave Japan and the Philippines enough military, economic and financial support to hold firm—the Pacific counterpart to the Marshall Plan in Europe. We have extended economic, financial and military aid to the British succession states, and to neutralist Indonesia. And, although we failed to stop Mao Tse-tung from winning the Chinese mainland, we took prompt action when

"Pacific Strategy" is Adm Morison's rewriting of his article on the same subject which appeared in "Oregon Historical Quarterly" Mar '61.

Communist North Korea and Communist China attempted to overrun South Korea in 1950. We not only intervened ourselves, but persuaded the United Nations to enter that war on our side, so that we were helped by important contingents from Great Britain and Turkey, and by smaller ones from Colombia and other United Nations.

At great cost and after a three years' war, the communist forces were thrown back, and a cease fire was concluded along the 1945 dividing line of latitude 38° north. Otherwise our position in Japan, and Japanese independence, would have been at the mercy of a communist bridgehead in South Korea.

In 1953, the Communists probed at another point, French Indochina. Here the French government had fiddled around fruitlessly with attempts to set up French protectorates under native princes. Some of the military advisers of the Eisenhower administration, notably Adm Radford, favored US intervention in Indochina as in Korea. It is too early to say that they were wrong. But the president and Mr. Dulles declined to intervene. The Indochinese question was compromised by diplomacy at the Geneva conference of 1954. By that agreement the Communists retained control of North Viet Nam, but France, Russia and other powers recognized the independence of South Viet Nam, Laos, and Cambodia. This created three more weak succession states to support, by financial, economic and military aid, against communist fifth columns or direct aggression. Laos went to the Reds in 1960-61 without either the Eisenhower or the Kennedy administration intervening, and it now looks as if South Viet Nam were slipping.

Mutual Security Treaties

But don't forget that the British managed to suppress the communist rebellion in Malaya, and in 1958, granted independence to the old Federated Malay States, retaining a protectorate over the tip end of the peninsula, at Singapore.

As a diplomatic means to contain Communism in the western Pacific we have negotiated two mutual security treaties, the ANZUS (i.e., Australia-New Zealand-US security treaty) ratified in March 1952, and the more important SEATO (the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization), which was signed in November 1954. ANZUS was really brought about in order to persuade Australia

and New Zealand to ratify a peace treaty with Japan. SEATO includes the three ANZUS powers, together with the United Kingdom, France, Pakistan, the Philippines, and Thailand. Canada is not a party. SEATO obliges all signatory states to help each other in case of aggression: with the important reservation by us that this must be a communist aggression. SEATO members are willing to consult and consider bringing the alliance into effect in the event of other aggressions, such as of India against Pakistan. SEATO is the Pacific counterpart to NATO. It maintains a secretariat and a planning group at Bangkok and a permanent consultation group consisting of the ambassadors of the signatory powers of Thailand. It is a live organization, and has some good basic plans for dealing with all anticipated emergencies.

What Are We Trying to Control?

SEATO, however, differs from NATO in that neither we nor any of our allies in the Southeast Asia organization have significant armed forces for waging a general war in the treaty area, and in that there is no permanent command structure and no standing military organization, such as NATO maintains in Paris.

Now, what is our present overall Grand Strategy in the Pacific, and what will it be in the event of a new communist aggression? Defining strategy again as the comprehensive direction of power for the purpose of exercising control, we must ask, just what are we trying to control?

We are trying to protect and preserve the present *status quo* in the western Pacific—namely the independence of the SEATO powers, of Japan, of Korea, of Formosa, and of the neutralist states as well.

We are trying to do this mainly in two ways: by stabilizing the governments of Japan and the newly independent states through financial, economic and military aid; and by maintaining such naval and air control of the Pacific as will enable us at very short notice to rush forces to the defense of any state or area that is threatened by the Reds.

The stabilizing process is effected partly by economic assistance, helped by military missions. Economic and financial assistance helps these states in their fight against poverty, a recognized seed bed for Communism. The military missions, by training and furnishing



Military missions like this Marine helilift for Thai soldiers build pride and patriotism of our allies.



BGcn O. R. Simpson, 3d MEB commander, in front of his headquarters at Udorn, Thailand.

modern non-nuclear weapons to armed forces of these countries, enhance their pride and patriotism, give them the power to repel local raids or Red rebellions, and make them in every respect better allies.

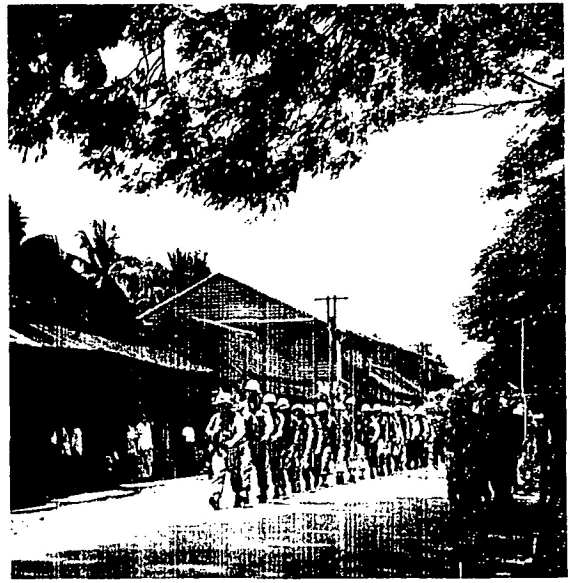
The control of sea communications through the Pacific and Indian oceans by the United States Navy is a "must". No other force can do it. The British haven't got this control. Britain has largely concentrated her now badly diminished navy in home waters. This, and her loss of control of the Indian Army, are equivalent to the famous withdrawal of the Roman legions from Britain by the Emperor Honorius in 410 A.D. At that time there was no power to take Rome's place, and Europe entered the dark ages. We, unhappily the inheritors of the roles of Rome and Britain, must act firmly to prevent another dark age.

A Cure for Lebanon

Remember that Red China is there, on the eastern verge of the Pacific. We are 6,000 miles away, and the only way to apply our power over there is the time-honored method, control of the ocean. Advanced bases are useful but not essential. We must have means to continue a war if our advanced bases are captured, as they were by the Japanese in 1941-42, or destroyed, as many seem certain to be, by ballistic missiles. Such means exist in our possession of a powerful Navy and Air Force. We must be prepared at short notice to "pile in" when one of our allies is threatened. SEATO's ground forces will be useless without the aid of air and naval implementation. This must largely come from us.

The Air Force, the Army and the Navy agree that we should maintain conventional forces in readiness to apply to limited wars like Quemoy, or the affair in Lebanon. The Air Force couldn't have cured the Lebanon situation with an atomic bomb, or even with conventional bombs.

The Air Force can't operate their big jet bombers from grass and dirt airfields, and Greece raised objec-



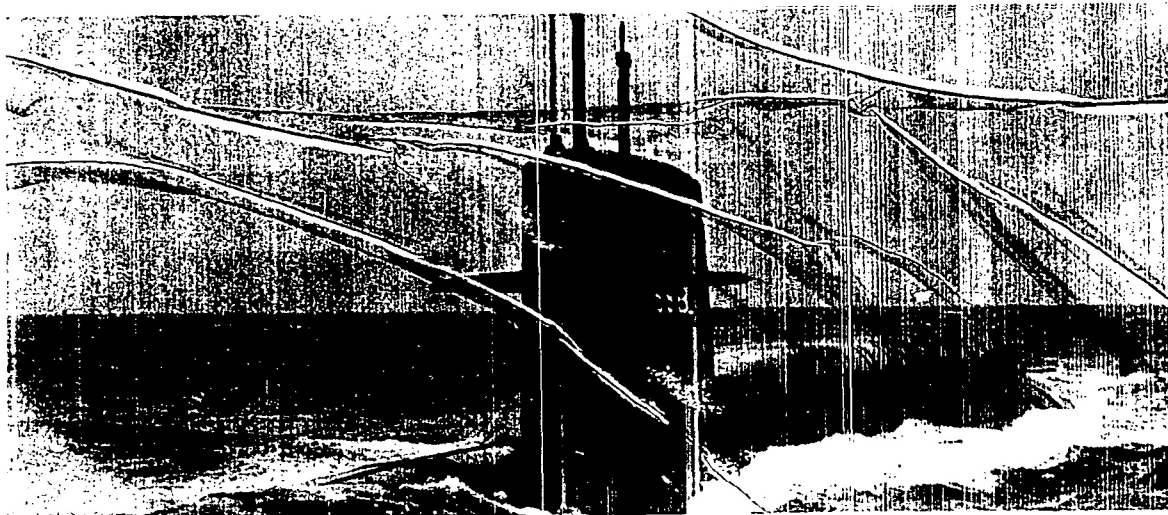
Citizens of Nong Hong, Thailand watch 3d MEB's 3/9 returning from field exercises.

tions to their flying over that country to reach the Middle East. At long last, after 20 years, the Air Force leaders have come around to recognizing the value of the Navy's aircraft carriers, which supported the Lebanese operation very effectively. And reflect on this fact: one of our modern supercarriers (*Forrestal* class) packs as much destructive power as the entire Navy expended in WWII.

But the major deterrents on both sides are nuclear weapons. From 1945 to 1958, these were atomic bombs dropped from planes; soon it will be the big missiles. The Army has developed "Jupiter" and the "Minuteman", the Air Force "Atlas" and "Titan," and the Navy "Vanguard" and "Polaris". These deterrents have not prevented some 12 to 15 small wars since 1945, in which neither side could or would use them. Will they deter anyone from starting a major all-out war?

The Army and Air Force have put their money on the ballistic missile launched from land bases. What defense is possible against the use of missiles by our potential enemies? On the other hand, most of their bases beyond the Iron Curtain are concealed or mobile. But they know very well where ours are, because the location of every new one is announced in the newspapers. The intercontinental ballistic missile will have a maximum 30-minute flight instead of the bombers' seven to eight hours. It cannot be recalled as an air attack can, as the Japanese Pearl Harbor striking force would have been if we had thrown in the sponge in time. The ICBM is very small, compared with a bombing plane, and far more difficult to detect with radar. Means to deflect it are being worked on, but it is doubtful whether an enemy ICBM can be deflected or pre-exploded in time to prevent massive destruction.

Here is where the Navy comes in. With control of the oceans and improved anti-submarine warfare we can prevent Russian launching vessels from getting within range, yet effect optimum destruction while escaping destruction ourselves. This can be done by



Strength for the second half of a hot war: missile carrying submarines like USS George Washington.

nuclear-propelled submarines equipped with the Polaris missile.

Polaris has a solid propellant, which makes it far more economical and compact than most of the missiles of the Army and Air Force which use liquid propellant. Several nuclear-propelled submarines, carrying 16 Polaris each, are now in commission. Eventually the Navy plans to have 45, half of which will be continuously at sea.

And other missiles can be mounted on surface ships. Some already are on cruisers, such as *USS Long Beach*.

The advantage of ship-mounted missiles over land-based missiles is that no enemy can know where these ships are at any given moment. They aren't going to tie up to buoys off enemy coasts. They will be mobile, exceedingly so, and stealthy, but provided with calculating machines that will enable them to pin-point a target as easily as a bombarding battleship did during WWII. But our cold war adversaries probably know the location of every one of our land bases, and they are certainly capable of knocking out all bases in Europe in the first half of a hot war. Missile carrying ships on the other hand, exploit the one advantage that the free nations have—control of the seas—over the Eurasian heartland. If we keep our maritime heritage intact, no enemy can prevent us from selecting our floating launching positions at will.

We have now reached the stage where our deterrents are being moved on board ship, as a signal to the Russians that a pushbutton war of ICBMs, while it may do us irreparable damage, will expose them to even greater destruction.

So, let's go along with the Navy, which has adopted a new slogan:

Move deterrents out to sea

Where the real estate is free

And where they are far away from me!

I would not urge that bombing planes and other conventional weapons be taken from us. It is dangerous not to have a variety of weapons. That was brought home to us the hard way in the Korean War. If it hadn't been for the Marine Corps and Navy carrier-based aircraft, which some Army and Air Force fanatics

wished to suppress at the end of WWII, our ground forces in Korea would have had no effective air support whatsoever.

We must also remember that defense of the free world is not merely a matter of more and more expensive and deadly weapons. It is also a matter of economics, politics, and ideology. We cannot keep allies or win friends by a selfish economic policy dictated by local or industrial pressure groups.

As an example of what the Navy can do to make friends for the United States, take the recent errand of mercy to Ceylon. The American ambassador to Ceylon, at the end of December 1957, broadcast an appeal for help from the Singhalese government for assistance, following severe floods which rendered 100,000 families homeless. Vice Admiral Beakley, Commander of the Fleet at Yokosuka, Japan, picked up the appeal and after consulting CNO and the governments concerned, directed the carrier *Princeton*, then in the South China Sea 2,000 miles from Ceylon, to the Indian Ocean. She picked up a medical team and supplies at Singapore, flew in food and medicine by her helicopters. Escorting destroyers set up inoculation centers in Singhalese harbors. The Americans arrived days and

Defense of the free world is not all missiles and might—it also takes people with a knack for winning friends. The author reminds us that Marines and the Navy are old hands at just that.

weeks ahead of the Russian and Chinese teams, who attempted to do the same thing, and this had a highly favorable effect on public opinion throughout east Asia. The Navy has even set up a politico-military policy division to take care of such emergencies as they come up—an important recognition that humanitarian missions are as much a part of modern Grand Strategy as military missions. There is now no part of the world which the US Navy cannot reach in a few days with a rescue mission. Even as I write this, news comes in of planes from a US carrier delivering food and medicine to flood-ravaged British Honduras. —>

Now, a few tentative conclusions about Pacific Strategy. Like all strategy, this should not be haphazard, but carefully thought out. It must be comprehensive, including military, political, and economic factors. Our strategy should not only be firmly based on knowledge, but flexible in practice, to meet changing situations—or to counter new moves of our potential enemies. It cannot be localized in the Pacific but must be worldwide in scope, since Russia, with China, is a two-ocean power like ourselves. Successful strategy will take into account the many possible enemy counteractions, and try to prevent or control them; for “control . . . is the essence of strategy; control being the element which differentiates true strategic action from a haphazard series of improvisations.”

“War,” wrote Adm Mahan, “cannot be made a rule of thumb; and any attempt to make it so will result in disaster.”

The Matching Game

You may well feel that the outlook is grim, and I believe it is serious, but far from hopeless. On the one hand we have an ever increasing spiral of matching billion-dollar weapons for multi-billion-dollar weapons and the possibility of an outbreak of general war, with such massive destruction as to set civilization back perhaps a thousand years. As a natural optimist, I hope and pray that we may find a peaceful way out of this dilemma. As an historian, I know that we cannot foretell the future from the past, because we cannot predict the forces, not imponderable or unperceived, which will enter the calculating machine of the future and influence the solution.

There is hope that in due time, maybe 30 years, maybe 100 years, the communist regimes of Russia and China will slough off their fanaticism, give up their ambition to turn the whole world Red, and become respectable members of the United Nations whose word can be relied on. Peaceful coexistence is possible if the other side gives up hope of subverting us, as we have long since given up hope of subverting them. All that is necessary to bring about this state of things is a realization by the communist rulers that their power has finite limits, beyond which, if they venture, they and their system are liable to massive destruction. When and if they reach this point in their thinking, we may be able to have a disarmament agreement which will be faithfully kept, and will free us of this terrible burden and fear. Instead of beating swords into ploughshares and spears into pruning hooks, we shall be installing atomic reactors in domestic electric light plants, and using our ballistic missiles to power tourist trips to the moon.

US ♀ MC

“Modern Grand Strategy”

The word came in an alert from CinCLantFlt, via chain of command, to MAG-26. “Be prepared to send eight HUS-1 helicopters to Pensacola, Florida . . . and report to the Captain of the USS Antietam for use in a relief operation . . .” Hurricane Hattie had hit British Honduras.

Less than two hours later the order came to launch. Scheduled ETA aboard Antietam: 0600 the following day. It was 1700. Three pilots were assigned to each aircraft to reduce fatigue (many of us had already completed a normal flying day—four hours airborne). Two crewmen went with each ‘copter, along with aircraft spares that might be needed. Remaining gear, and personnel, were flown into Pensacola by R4D.

The 700-mile all-night flight started at 2000. Strong headwinds enroute were coupled with heavy fog once we reached NAAS, North Whiting Field. Landings aboard the carrier were finally completed by 1115.

Two days later, we saw what “Hattie” had done. Aside from the leveled towns and villages, rising flood waters created more problems . . . no drinking water . . . food almost nonexistent . . . the threat of disease approaching epidemic stages. Bodies were being burned to reduce that probability. At the former resort town of Belize, the stench of death and destruction hung like a mist over the rubble. It was apparent that relief would have to be extensive and thorough. In addition to HMM-264 detachment, Antietam’s relief team consisted of 15 HO4S ‘copters from Ellyson Field, Florida, 50 doctors and 73 corpsmen from the School of Aviation Medicine, four nurses from USNH, Pensacola, and an eight-man sanitation team.

On the first day of relief operations Marine helicopters flew 30 hours, lifted 17,000 pounds of food, water and medical supplies. The HUS lifting capability was really tested during the final two days of shipboard operations, when a total of 48,250 pounds went airborne.

The next day Antietam departed. HMM-264, joined by six doctors, went ashore. These were truly “operations in the field.” Refueling by hand and a shortage of spare parts were two of the more vexing problems. Only by stripping-down another aircraft were ground crews able to maintain availability—which stood at an amazing 89% during the stay ashore.

As operations started ashore many areas had not received any aid since Hattie hit. Persons living in outlying areas were in their seventh day with virtually no food. To achieve thorough coverage, all information was relayed back to the Joint Mission Center at Stanley Airport, where representatives from the US Army, Navy and Air Force were working with their counterparts from the British Army and Navy. It was an extremely smooth operation.

Thirteen days after they’d boarded Antietam enroute to Honduras, the Marine detachment was headed home—this time on USS Ft. Snelling. Accumulated flight hours: 466.6; total weight lifted: 209,050 pounds. With them they carried the memory of a grateful people whose plea had been answered.—1stLt N. L. Headley