

## Normalization and Pacific and Triangular Diplomacy

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### Recommended Citation

Gaston J. Sigur, *Normalization and Pacific and Triangular Diplomacy*, 5 Md. J. Int'l L. 9 (1979).  
Available at: <http://digitalcommons.law.umaryland.edu/mjil/vol5/iss1/8>

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## CHAPTER II.

### NORMALIZATION AND PACIFIC AND TRIANGULAR DIPLOMACY

*Gaston J. Sigur\**

In discussing Pacific and triangular diplomacy in mid-1979, the present period must be placed in historical perspective. After the communist victory in China in 1949, Mao Tse-tung signed a treaty of alliance with Joseph Stalin. In military terms, this treaty was directed against a rebirth of Japanese militarism and those allied with it, *i.e.*, the United States. For its part, the United States negotiated a security pact with Japan which brought the two former enemies into a close cooperative relationship.<sup>1</sup>

Now, almost thirty years later, the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China (P.R.C.) are in a state of confrontation. Soviet and Chinese propaganda organs severely attack each other. The Soviet Union maintains large and menacing military forces along the Chinese border. Only a couple of months ago, the Chinese officially notified the USSR that they would allow the treaty of alliance signed in 1950 to lapse.

The development of the U.S.-Japanese security arrangement has been quite a different matter. A somewhat limited and narrow security pact has become the foundation of a broad and deep alliance structure. The foreign policies of both the United States and Japan in the Asian and Pacific regions are based upon the economic, political and security ties that bind the two countries into as firm a relationship as major nation-states have ever had in the modern world.

With the communist states in disarray and indeed, at one another's throats, and with the U.S.-Japan alliance still flourishing, despite serious economic differences (as Prime Minister Ohira's May, 1979 visit to Washington showed), one might assume that all is well in the Pacific and East Asia and that the United States can rest with its Japan connection as the cornerstone of its policy. The United States, however, has little to be complacent about and should instead be concerned about recent developments, possible trends and potential explosions.

The United States faces, in part, difficulties of its own making. Premier Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore was quoted in the *Asian Wall Street Journal* of February 24, 1979 as having said the following:

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1. Security Treaty, [1951] 3 U.S.T. 3329, T.I.A.S. No. 2491.

In the East-West contest, the apparent American inability to influence great events and anticipate grave crises gives people [in the Pacific] the impression of aimlessness. The cumulative effect of instances of apparent American loss of control in the direction of events leads her friends to pessimism and her enemies to adventurism.

These comments of Premier Lee go to the very heart of one of the most troubling aspects of international affairs today — the perception of the United States, one of the two great world powers, as vacillating, indecisive and uninformed, with an inadequate global strategic plan. Events in recent years, including the U.S. defeat in Indochina, the plan for removal of U.S. ground forces from Korea and the seeming impotence of the United States to protect its interests in the Persian Gulf area, have tended to give this perception of American helplessness.

The manner in which the United States negotiated and agreed to diplomatic normalization with the P.R.C. led to further questions about American credibility. While very few, if any, world leaders opposed the U.S. establishment of formal relations with Peking, the view of many was expressed by the Philippine Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Carlos Romulo. General Romulo implied that while U.S. diplomatic recognition of the P.R.C. was inevitable, American guarantees to its allies in Asia and elsewhere were in serious jeopardy as a result. In other words, it was not the final goal which was questioned, but rather the way in which it was reached and the concessions made to reach it.

The United States is a superpower whose every action is watched and carefully monitored by all other nations. While many people in the United States have been obsessed with the limitations of power, American leaders must spend more time considering the responsibilities of power. As a global power, the United States must be concerned with what happens in our world, in particular that which might alter the rather precarious existing balance of power. When the United States does something or does not do something in one part of the world, repercussions may occur in places far removed from the area of action. This is not to say that the United States should be the world's policeman. President Carter and his chief foreign policy advisors have exerted too much effort in denying such a role for our country. The United States has never served as a policeman for the world, but the wiser and more strategic minded of our leaders know that responsibility of a global nature cannot be avoided by the world's greatest power.

The United States should use its power carefully, cautiously and in ways that enhance its negotiating position, in particular with the Soviet Union and the P.R.C. If we exhibit weakness in attempting to reach agreements on economic, political or security matters with either of the two great communist

nations, it will only lead to intransigence on their parts, to confusion as to what U.S. objectives really are, and to misjudgment as to U.S. capacity and willingness to stand by its friends and allies. The steadfastness and reliability of the United States becomes ever more critical given steady Soviet military buildup, in both conventional and strategic terms.

The Soviet Union is now a global power and thinks, more and more, in global terms. This holds true in both the balance of power sense and ideologically. Soviet diplomats see the tie between policy actions taken toward Japan and China, for instance, and action taken in Europe or Africa. The Soviet Union does not forget that the chief protagonist on the world stage is the United States. One high-ranking Soviet official said to me some time ago that the Soviet Union is not worried about China by itself, but rather a China backed and supported by the United States. This statement reveals the priorities of Soviet foreign policy.

The primary Soviet foreign policy objective in Asia today is the containment of China. The implementation of this policy can take many forms, including the use of military force and certainly, the threat of such force. It also means that the Soviet Union will do everything in its power to forestall the formation of a U.S.-Japan-China entente. Conversely, it may lead the Soviet Union to seek some kind of accommodation with China on the issues that deeply divide them.

The Soviet Union maintains its military pressure on China today. As has been said, Soviet armies are poised on China's borders with conventional and nuclear weapons. The Soviet Union has sent massive amounts of modern war material to Vietnam, following the Chinese attack on Vietnam earlier in 1979. Additionally, the Soviet Union has warned China that any further military action against the Hanoi regime risks the danger of Soviet retaliation against China. This support would be given in accordance with terms of the Soviet-Vietnam Treaty of Alliance signed in November, 1978,<sup>2</sup> just prior to the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia.

The Chinese have been remarkably successful up to now in their dealings with Japan and the United States. In the summer of 1978, Tokyo and Peking signed a Treaty of Peace and Friendship<sup>3</sup> and in October of the same year Teng Hsiao-ping travelled to Japan for the exchange of ratifica-

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2. Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation, Nov. 3, 1978, Soviet Union-Vietnam, INT'L LEGAL MATS. 1485 (1978). Article 6 of this treaty states that "[i]n case either party is attacked or threatened with attack, the two parties signatory to the treaty shall . . . take appropriate and effective measures to safeguard peace and the security of the two countries." *Id.* at 1487.

3. Treaty of Peace and Friendship, Aug. 12, 1978, China-Japan, 17 INT'L LEGAL MATS. 1054 (1978).

tion. The Treaty contained the anti-hegemony clause insisted upon by Peking, but vehemently opposed by Moscow.<sup>4</sup>

During the initial euphoria brought on by the signing of the treaty, Japanese commentators dwelled on the common cultural heritage of the two countries and of the complimentary nature of their economies. The Chinese put aside the enmities of the recent past and spoke of the years of friendship to come. A wave of good feeling seemed to have swept over both countries. Japanese businessmen dreamed of a never-saturated Chinese market and of eternal profits. The Chinese were more restrained and exhibited increasing caution during 1979 in making deals with Japan's multinational companies for technological assistance. The question of how China is to pay for such assistance is obviously a major one.

While China clearly needs Japan's help immediately, China's leaders are probably thinking in longer terms about Sino-Japanese ties. China's alliance with the Soviet Union went sour for a number of reasons, the most important reason being the subservient role that China had to play in relation to the status of the USSR as a superpower. While unequal at present, the Japanese-Chinese relationship is more equal than that between the USSR and China in the 1950s and more equal than that between the United States and China can ever be. In the future, China and Japan could develop a kind of partnership, with China providing the military strength and Japan the economic assistance. Eventually, China would become the "senior partner" or "elder brother." This is not necessarily a realistic assessment of what may develop between China and Japan, but rather an assessment of what China's leaders may be contemplating.

In the case of the United States, China not only envisages more American contributions to her modernization programs, but also sees the United States as a counterweight to the Soviet Union. China needs American friendship in order to bolster her own safety vis-à-vis the USSR, as well as to assist her in efforts to strengthen relations with America's allies. The United States is indispensable to China if China's current foreign and domestic policies are to prosper and mature.

Since the late 1950s, Sino-Soviet relations have deteriorated. China has accused the Soviet Union of territorial imperialism against China's borders, or seeking hegemony in the Pacific and Asian region, and of revisionism as regards Marxist-Leninist doctrine. Certainly, China bridled in the decade of the 1950s at playing second fiddle to the Soviet Union in the communist

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4. The Japanese received a concession from Peking, however, by insisting on a provision stating that the treaty does not affect the relations of either contracting party with third countries.

world, and indeed, globally, and at being denied nuclear secrets and nuclear wherewithal by the Soviets.

Sino-Soviet rivalry has assumed many forms and shapes over the past twenty years, indicating how pronounced and dangerous the struggle within the communist world has been. In the military area, China has developed a nuclear bomb capability not nearly equaling the Soviets', but certainly sufficient to severely damage a number of Soviet cities. Chinese conventional armaments leave much to be desired, but population may count for something and China certainly far outscores the Soviet Union in that department. There have been skirmishes along the long border between the USSR and China, with casualties fairly heavy in some encounters. In third world areas, China and the Soviet Union have tried to outdo one another in wooing the hearts and allegiance of both revolutionaries and more moderate leaders.

China has spent considerable time and money to keep North Korea closely by her side. Both Chairman Hua and Vice Premier Teng have visited Pyongyang in past months and China recognizes Kim Il-sung's government as the only legitimate one on the Korean peninsula. Kim Il-sung has responded to Chinese efforts with warmth and support, but he has been careful not to go too far in his backing of the various Chinese postures adopted against the Soviet Union. Nonetheless, it seems clear that his sympathies lie with Peking.

The most salient feature of Soviet foreign policy everywhere on the globe is its reliance upon military power. This is especially true in Asia, where Soviet political and economic strength is transparently weak. Perhaps this explains, in part at least, Soviet policy toward Japan. Western observers have great trouble in understanding why the USSR assumes such a blustering and belligerent tone in its dealings with the Japanese. The explanation may be that since Japan is so closely allied to the United States, Moscow cannot challenge this alliance with any hope of success. Therefore, the only way to present a credible Soviet policy to Japan is to flex Soviet military muscles on the chance that Japanese leaders will become sufficiently intimidated to respond favorably to Soviet initiatives in the economic and political realms.

The build-up of the Soviet Pacific fleet which continues at a rapid pace contributes greatly to Japan's concern about its security. In recent months, the Soviet Union has increased its military forces on the Northern Islands that Japan claims as Japanese territory. Soviet use of former U.S. military bases at Cam Ranh Bay and Danang in Vietnam have led to protestations from top officials in Tokyo. There are, however, indications that the Japanese would like to halt the downward spiral of Soviet-Japanese relations. Nevertheless, the Northern Islands issue remains the major sticking point and so far, the Soviets have not taken into consideration Japanese sensitivities and national pride in their foreign policy actions.

Moscow keeps correct, but relatively cool, ties with North Korea. The Pyongyang regime's affinity towards China does not sit well with the USSR. The Soviet Union, however, remains the chief supplier of armaments to the North Koreans and provides economic assistance to the Korean communist regime. Recently, the Soviets have increased their unofficial contacts with South Korea, but Moscow still holds to the position that there is but one legal government on the Korean peninsula and that is the one headed by Kim Il-sung.

In the past two or three years, the P.R.C. has adopted a highly active foreign policy. This has entailed a strong and virulent anti-Soviet propaganda campaign, a move toward better relations with the United States and Japan in particular, and the industrialized world in general, and efforts to play upon the discord among communist states. This latter element has led to visits by Chairman Hua Kuo-feng to Yugoslavia and Rumania.

The Chinese leadership, represented most forcefully by Vice Premier Teng Hsiao-ping, has stated in bold terms that it intends to modernize China during this century. The so-called four modernizations—modernization of agriculture, industry, science and technology, and the armed forces—have become the central theme of Chinese domestic policy. In the international sphere, this means that China must have the support of the great industrial powers if she is to even begin to accomplish the goals she has set for herself.

With Vietnam, however, China has moved, or has been moved, into a policy of military confrontation. Chinese support to North Vietnam in its war against the South was heavy and continuous. In fact, in the latter period of the Vietnam War, China provided more assistance to Hanoi than did the Soviet Union. It was not long after the war ended, however, that an estrangement began to develop between China and Vietnam. This estrangement became more and more pronounced in succeeding months and years. The historical antagonisms between the two peoples which were relatively dormant during the Vietnam War years began to reappear. The Vietnamese were particularly disturbed—externally, about Chinese support of the Pol Pot regime in Cambodia and internally, about the monopoly of wealth in the southern Vietnam area by overseas Chinese. Most importantly, however, China and Vietnam are in a contest for influence and power, especially in the Indochina region and in Southeast Asia as a whole. Additionally, the Chinese refer to the Vietnamese as the Cubans of Asia, *i.e.*, surrogates for Soviet imperialism.

The deterioration of relations between Hanoi and Peking accelerated during 1978 and following the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia in December of that year, some punitive action by China against Vietnam became likely. Following Teng Hsiao-ping's visit to the United States, Chinese forces moved in February, 1979, as Teng said, "[in order] to teach

Vietnam a lesson." The Chinese attack was limited in scope and confined to the Vietnamese-Chinese border region. Little more could have been done without risking major Soviet intervention. The Chinese calculated well the limits of Soviet restraint.

At present, China and Vietnam are in a state of uneasy peace. Peace negotiations began in Hanoi following the Chinese withdrawal of its forces from Vietnamese territory (all or most, depending upon which version of the withdrawal one accepts, Peking's or Hanoi's), but the struggle between the two communist powers, with the Soviet Union staunchly supporting Vietnam, goes on. Resistance to Vietnamese armies in Cambodia is not yet over and Laos could explode at any time. It would seem that this is the first chapter of armed struggle in the Indochina peninsula.

While the Vietnamese are a fiercely independent people who will not willingly give up their independence of action, they are presently reliant, to some degree, on the Soviet Union. This reliance involves the importation of Soviet weaponry and technical assistance and most importantly, Soviet assurances that Moscow will act if Peking goes too far against Hanoi in military terms. For China, the attitude and potential actions of the Soviet Union are central to her own plans and policies. Peking must exercise the most critical judgment in this regard, for the success or failure of her efforts in Southeast Asia may rest upon it.

While it is most likely that the Soviet-Chinese confrontation will go on ebbing and flowing over the course of time, a possible agreement between these two great communist powers cannot be ruled out. One may assume, in fact, that there are leadership elements in both countries which are desirous, at the very least, of some easing of tension in Sino-Soviet relations. This could mean some minor territorial adjustments and an agreement to disagree over ideological and hegemonic issues. In the long run, a more comprehensive settlement of differences could be embraced.

The conflicts within the communist bloc are one set of dangers to peace and stability. Another, not totally unrelated, exists in the Korean peninsula. On both sides of the 38th parallel, large and modern conventional military forces are amassed. These forces, especially those in North Korea, are in a state of readiness. A danger of conflict breaking out between North and South Korea constantly exists.

The economic disparity between the two Koreas is a matter of concern. In the south, the Republic of Korea has accomplished almost a miracle of economic progress. This is a testament not only to capable leadership in economic development and to the hard work of the South Korean people, but also to the free enterprise system. This strong economic base can be used to support an increasingly independent military capability by South Korea in the years ahead. As Kim Il-sung and his associates look into the future, they

can only see a more powerful Republic of Korea relative to their own strength. A time of uncertainty as to North Korean intentions toward the South is in evidence now and will continue to be for some time to come. While it is improbable that either China or the Soviet Union would counsel in favor of an attack by Pyongyang against Seoul, it is not out of the question that Kim Il-sung may think "either now or never" and act unilaterally. This would become a stronger possibility if U.S. ground forces were totally withdrawn from the Republic of Korea.

What we see, therefore, in the Pacific and East Asian regions today is an area with potential for military outbreaks, of various dimensions, at several key spots. Given these uncertainties and dangers, the United States must pursue a policy of maintaining—and if necessary, building her military strength in the region—if she is to fulfill the objective of doing everything possible to preserve peace and stability in the area. But unilateral military might is not sufficient and should be coupled with the closest relationship with Japan in economic, political and security terms. If the United States recognizes the responsibilities of power and keeps the U.S.-Japanese alliance as the cornerstone of U.S. policy, then the dangers of conflict will recede in Asia and the Pacific and the opportunities for peaceful settlement of differences will grow.

How has the U.S.-Japan alliance operated in practice? On the economic side, the United States and Japan have both greatly contributed to the development of the free nations in East Asia. Korea owes much to Japanese and American investment, bank loans and other economic ties. Additionally, both the United States and Japan have made the financial commitments to the Asian Development Bank which have done so much to spur Korean development.

The United States and Japan have granted diplomatic recognition to the P.R.C., but have retained close economic and cultural ties with Taiwan. In the case of the United States, the government, thanks to Congressional action, has also emphasized that the United States would view with grave concern any attempt by the Peking government to forcibly bring Taiwan under its control.

While Chinese designs and Vietnamese plans (with Soviet backing) are in the forefront of today's thinking on Southeast Asia, there is a stabilizing force in the area which hopefully will grow and become more influential in the future—the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). ASEAN has confined itself mainly to economic and political issues and has not yet concerned itself with matters of military security. If Premier Lee Kuan Yew of

Singapore has his way, however, a military-type alliance might yet emerge from the ASEAN relationship. However it develops, ASEAN is assured of strong U.S. and Japanese support.

As the United States works in tandem with Japan in providing aid and support to non-communist states in Asia, it must, at the same time, seek to reach agreements with both the Soviet Union and China. To reach agreements with Moscow and Peking is not easy, but one thing is sure — there can be no successful agreements if the United States does not negotiate from a position of strength.

Also, the United States should not try to play off one great communist nation against the other. If the United States does try, it may find that it is the one played. The United States, after all, has legitimate and pressing reasons for wanting better relations with both Moscow and Peking, but it does not want to join with one against the other. The United States already has major allies and there is no reason to shift from them. The U.S.-Japanese alliance in Asia, bolstered by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in Europe, are, so far, the only effective means devised by the United States to cope with problems of war and peace in the world. New relations with either the USSR or with China cannot take the place of these proven instruments of safety and security.

