

India's role in frustrating the coup attempt in the Maldives; former Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's visit to China; the Sino-Soviet summit; India's trade rift with Nepal which healed following the democratic revolution in Kathmandu; and, of course, the Sino-Indonesian decision in July 1990 to restore diplomatic ties.

A future volume in the series to which the publication belongs — South Asian Studies — can address these, and other developments, not so much to present yet another history but to offer an analysis of the trends in a region whose destiny is going to be crucial to Asian stability as a whole. Of course, if the winds of change that have swept away the East European regime finally arrive in China, historians might find it difficult to keep pace with the creation of history.

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***The United States and the Defence of the Pacific.* By Ronald D. McLaurin and Chung-in Moon.** Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1989. 353 pp.

In early 1990, U.S. Defence Secretary Dick Cheney declared that the Bush Administration would slash the number of U.S. forces in the Far East by 12,000 troops over the next three years, 5,000 of which would come from forces stationed in the Korean peninsula; while the rest would come from Japan and the Philippines. We are thus in a period where the lessening of superpower tensions, re-emergent nationalisms, talk of American "declinism" and domestic economic problems have forced U.S. policy-makers to reconsider the role and structure of their armed forces world-wide. In this respect, one can hardly fault the timing of the authors of this book for they offer much food for thought and discussion on an issue of relevance to all states in the Asian-Pacific region.

The first section of the book provides an introductory discussion of U.S. national interests and overall defence posture in the Far East. The authors are quick to highlight the central role that maritime power plays in the national military strategy of deterrence, forward defence and coalition warfare (p. 38). This theme of naval supremacy continues in the next section where the authors delve, very competently, into the technical details of the force structure and deployment patterns of the Pacific Fleet. The focus of the inquiry, however, is so skewed towards naval force roles

and configurations (a total of 34 pages) that the discussion on the corresponding structure and organization of the army and air force appear paltry by comparison (a combined total of 21 pages). But perhaps this is understandable, given the authors' declared observation that it is the U.S. Navy that is the cornerstone of U.S. Pacific strategy. Elsewhere in the book, the authors cogently discuss some major issues and problems facing the military in general, like the diminishing overseas basing network, inter-service strategic lift shortfalls, and bureaucratic rigidities, among others (see pp. 293–302).

Most readers not of an overtly military or technical bent will find Parts Three and Four of the book the most rewarding. Here, McLaurin and Chung roll up their sleeves and plunge into the mass of complex issues that plague relations between the United States and its allies in North-east Asia, Southeast Asia, and Oceania. To their credit, they succeed in clarifying three main points: first, the United States is a Pacific power by virtue of historical, political, economic, security and social linkages with the states in the region (p. 7). Hence, the United States wants to remain a Pacific power, and is unlikely to unplug itself from the region as some alarmists would have us believe (p. 290).

Secondly, because of these linkages, the U.S. security commitment to the Pacific is taken seriously by its policy-makers. McLaurin and Chung do acknowledge, however, that the Pacific still plays second fiddle to the European theatre in terms of strategic priority (p. 279), due to the latter's even closer historical ties to the United States. Nevertheless, because of the "interactive importance" of the Pacific theatre (p. 280), in the sense that it is a vital link in the global defence network, U.S. officials are cognizant of the fact that if the Pacific were lost, the ability to reinforce operations in the Persian Gulf, whose oil is vital to Europe, will be severely curtailed. Thus, the Pacific is important both as an end in itself and as a means of supporting the American world-wide defence network.

Therefore, (and this is point three) the real issue is not whether the United States will remain a Pacific power, but "what kind of Pacific power" (p. 290). How will the United States overcome the very real budgetary and political constraints it faces and maintain its continued commitment to the region? The rather familiar refrain of "burdensharing" is put forward and this theme is used by the authors to link together the discussions on the problems underlying U.S. relations with, first and foremost, its Northeast Asian allies (Japan and Korea in the main, and to a lesser extent, the People's Republic of China, Taiwan and even Hong Kong and Macao); its Southeast Asian friends (mainly the Philippines and to a lesser extent, the remaining ASEAN states); and finally, the ANZUS partners in Oceania (Australia and New Zealand). McLaurin and Chung also recognize

the growing importance of the Central and South Pacific islands by devoting a helpful section to an overview of U.S. relations with states like Fiji, Papua New Guinea, Kiribati and others.

Perhaps a significant blemish on an otherwise important contribution to the literature is the authors' rather inelegant, conservative assumption of a fairly monolithic threat consensus among the United States and its myriad Pacific allies. At one level, one wonders if their rigid assessment of the Soviet threat is still valid: for instance, they make a lot out of the Soviet facilities at Cam Ranh Bay (p. 26), but the Soviets have, since late 1989, significantly scaled down their forces at the base. Moreover, the authors too readily dismiss Gorbachev's peace initiatives since Vladivostok (1986) as old-fashioned Soviet 'subtleties' (p. 308). Is this necessarily the case? To a certain extent, a common fear of Soviet might does rally the allies around the American corner, but the authors tend to over-emphasize this and gloss over the serious discrepancies in local threat perceptions, especially among the Northeast and Southeast Asian allies (see, for instance, pp. 171-72 and 203). These differences are likely to be exacerbated as the states continue to reassess the Soviet threat, and other threats are seen to emerge and assume greater importance (for instance, the ASEAN states' fear of the naval might of China, India, and even Japan). It is a pity that the authors did not discuss in greater detail the impact of differing and, at times, even cross-cutting intra-alliance threat perceptions on the cohesiveness of the Pacific defence network.

Another drawback in the book is the authors' rather facile treatment of the impact of "domestic dissensus" on U.S. relations with its Pacific allies. They note that the present complex multi-stage decision-making process involves not only the executive and legislative branches but also multiple interest groups, resulting in policy that "lacks continuity" and hence credibility (p. 307). Since the authors concede that this internal wrangling may well pose "the greatest threat to US defence co-operation in the Pacific" (*ibid.*), surely a more integrated and in-depth consideration of the issue is warranted.

When one looks at the totality of the effort, however, it can be said that the authors have produced a fairly comprehensive, informative and readable piece of work which may be useful to both advanced undergraduate and graduate students of the U.S. military in general and U.S. defence policy in the Pacific in particular. It is a welcome entry to the existing field of literature and deserves wide readership.

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