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Moving West: The New Theater of Decision

William V. Kennedy

Faced with according priority to either of the two major theaters of operations during World War II—the Atlantic or the Pacific—the United States chose the Atlantic (and Europe). Despite the profound political and economic changes of the subsequent half century, that choice of priorities was never challenged at the top level of the U.S. Government until 13 January 1988 when then-Secretary of the Navy James H. Webb, Jr. declared in a speech to the National Press Club that “issues involving Asia are moving to the forefront of the world community. In 1986 the United States did \$219 billion gross trade in Asia, 75 percent more than its gross trade with the Atlantic nations.”¹

Those figures, of course, scarcely begin to describe the enormous engine of economic development that has been operating for more than two decades around the entire rim of the Pacific, an engine that has drawn American domestic politics, business, and population steadily westward. In larger political terms, most of the world population lives in Asia and the political assertiveness of that huge population is rapidly accelerating as economic progress is translated into improved health, education, and increased time to think and interact in the political realm. In terms of the American ideal of “one man or one woman, one vote,” the Asian population will reshape the world into something quite different from that which Western man has created and dominated for the past 2,000 years.

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It was Thomas Jefferson who first defined Europe as a vital U.S. interest in 1807.² The industrialization of Europe in the succeeding century reinforced that imperative, leading directly to U.S. intervention on the side of the Allies in World War I. Although our interest in keeping Europe out of the hands of a single hostile power was far more directly threatened in 1940–41 than had been the case in 1917, the United States was still engaged in a divisive internal debate over whether to intervene when the Japanese struck Pearl Harbor and when Hitler's Germany declared war on us, thereby deciding the U.S. course of action.

Largely because we continued to view East Asia and the Western Pacific through European eyes, i.e., the "Far East," we failed to grasp the fact that the conditions that had led to Jefferson's definition of Europe as a vital U.S. interest were replicated during the 1930s in Northeast Asia. Only in vague, fumbling terms did we begin to come to grips with the fact that Imperial Japan, combined with Manchuria, could one day produce a threat equal to or greater than any that might emerge in Europe. To protect those hazily understood interests we set ourselves up as an umpire in Asia, driving Japan, as has been aptly observed, "into a suicidal attempt to kill the umpire."

More than any other single strategic decision, Japan's attack on the United States, rather than on the Soviet Union, determined the outcome of World War II. The Soviets could not have survived such an attack. Consider what it would have taken to defeat a Nazi Germany and an Imperial Japan that had established a combined hegemony over Eurasia.

We were able to give priority to Europe because Japan lacked the means to threaten the North American continent, at least in the short term, and could not have done so even had it been victorious at Midway.

There was another significant reason for affording priority to Europe. Given the situation created by the Japanese—a Soviet Union with a secure Siberian bastion and a safe pipeline to American industrial resupply—Hitler's Europe offered an accessible, ultimately manageable target; Japan did not. It is very doubtful that we would have considered an attempt to conquer the Japanese home islands three years before the B-29 and four years before the atomic bomb, especially after what we had learned of the Japanese fighting spirit in the island campaigns.

In short, the unconditional victories we won in both theaters in World War II were less the product of our good strategic judgment than that of an enemy's mistake. We were lucky. It would be folly to depend on such luck in the future.

Unfortunately, our good luck in World War II blinded us to the fact that it was U.S. interests in Asia—not U.S. interests in Europe—that brought us into the war. Despite two intermediate Asian wars, in Korea and Vietnam, and the profound economic shifts Secretary Webb cited, we have continued

to act as if nothing has changed to disturb the “Europe-first” decision that we reached in 1942.

Indeed, we have sought to treat Asia as an addiction rather than a national interest. Witness the attempt by President Jimmy Carter in 1977 to “wash our hands” of mainland Asia by withdrawing the U.S. 2d Infantry Division from Korea. To this day most Americans writing and speaking on such topics do not realize that the role of the U.S. forces in Korea has less to do with Korea itself than with a Japan that may be precluded forever from sending forces back onto the peninsula, the security of which is vitally important to Japan,³ and with questions of nuclear armament in Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan. And in a United States that no longer teaches its children much of its own history, it is entirely too much to expect any understanding of how both the Soviets and the Chinese look at the 2d Division and the potential it represents in light of the last Russian attempt to gain control of Manchuria in 1904. Yet all of these factors had a powerful influence in forcing abandonment of the troop withdrawal decision.⁴ Retraction of that plan also put an end to the delusion that in the event of a war with the Soviet Union in Europe, the United States would be able to “swing” forces from the Pacific to the Atlantic and Europe.

How, then, do we deal with the fact that our vital interests,⁵ in the most literal sense of the term, are now fully engaged in Northeast Asia at least to the extent that they have been traditionally engaged in Europe?

The Reagan administration sought to deal with that by returning, in effect, to the “two-and-one-half-war” strategy of the Kennedy administration whereby we presumably would be able to fight a major war in Europe, a major war in the Pacific and Northeast Asia, and a “half war,” say in Vietnam—all simultaneously.

The gross misassessment of required means, represented by that concept at its inception in 1961 and in its rebirth in 1981, is at the root of the deepening fiscal crisis in which the United States finds itself today. In short, we now have two overseas theaters of truly vital interest, yet we do not have the resources, fiscal or otherwise, to meet the security requirements these interests demand.

The *reductio ad absurdum* of the present strategic debate is to lump Japan and Western Europe together as allies who should bail us out of this problem by “doing more.” We could not begin to deal here with the enormous differences between our relationship with Japan and our relationship with Western Europe. But there are two aspects of those totally different, yet interdependent relationships that dominate:

- There is nothing Japan can do to assure its own security. Fewer than a dozen large-yield nuclear weapons could destroy Japan. Without a powerful U.S. military presence near at hand and backed by a full range of nuclear weapons, Japan would have no choice but to accommodate itself

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to one of the mainland nuclear powers. It is the vulnerability of that premier industrial society that compels the United States to assure that neither the Soviet Union nor China ever gain a decisive military or political dominance in East Asia.

On the other hand, Europe can assure its own defense. With a larger combined population than the United States, a combined gross national product nearly equal to that of the United States, an industrial base superior to that of the Soviet Union, a geographic depth that Japan lacks, and its own growing nuclear arsenal, Europe has the means to assure its own defense with minimal assistance from the United States.

- No military decision is attainable in Europe, at least not by the United States. The goal of NATO in the event of war is simply to restore the *status quo ante*.⁶ Neither European nor Canadian NATO members intend to launch the counteroffensive that would be necessary to defeat the Soviet Union. To make certain of that, NATO Europe and Canada have deliberately denied themselves the logistic establishment and the war reserve stocks necessary to mount a counteroffensive. The Soviets are assured, therefore, that no matter what the success or failure of an attack on NATO, their own sphere is secure. That is exactly the situation North Vietnam was accorded during the U.S. phase of the Vietnam war, and it is the situation the United States granted to North Korea during the latter phase of the Korean war. The effect is to issue a license for aggression without the risks which once burdened the aggressor.

The Soviets also doubt that they could gain a decisive victory in Western Europe. The accession of Spain to NATO has put out of reach a quick Soviet victory on the continent. The political security of their East European base is in doubt, and there is no assurance that the Soviet Army can perform as designed. The quip that the Russian Army will never make it beyond the first pornography shop in West Germany has its origins in the extent to which the Russian garrisons in Eastern Europe are sequestered, even from their supposed allies. Because Western Europeans understand those well-founded Soviet doubts, and because they perceive a growing divergence between U.S. and European interests, Western Europe is moving steadily toward an armed neutrality. Thus, in any war between the United States and the Soviet Union that does not threaten West European vital interests Europe will be neutral and will neutralize any U.S. forces stationed on its soil lest an attempt to use those forces elsewhere invite Soviet retaliation. The shadow of that is apparent in the denial of overflight and basing rights for U.S. resupply of Israel in time of war, in the denial of overflight rights during the U.S. attack on Libya in April 1986, in the subsequent *de facto* neutralization of the U.S. Air Force in the United Kingdom for any mission other than direct NATO defense, and in the less than flank speed with which our NATO allies joined in the current Persian Gulf patrol.

Is a war between the United States and the Soviet Union that does not immediately involve Europe likely or even possible?

It is the United States, not NATO Europe that the Soviet Union perceives as its major international antagonist. It is the United States that blocks or seeks to block Soviet influence throughout the world and in space. More fundamentally, it is the existence of American free institutions that threatens the internal authoritarian structure of the Soviet state. Indeed, so fundamental is that issue that American strategic thinkers such as Commodore Matthew Calbraith Perry⁷ and Homer Lea⁸ saw it as a potential cause of conflict long before the Communist "new class" took over from the czars. All of the actions of the Soviet Union proclaim a perverse confirmation of Abraham Lincoln's dictum that not only the United States, but the world, "cannot exist half slave and half free." The clearer it becomes to the Soviets that they cannot control the genies of nationalism and liberality that Mikhail Gorbachev has let out of the bottle, the more desperate will be the need to resolve the international competition with the United States in their favor.

The horror of modern weaponry, conventional no less than nuclear, is driving human society toward a system of world order that will model either Marx, Lenin, and their progeny or Jefferson and Lincoln. The Soviets understand that. Most of our strategic problems derive from the fact that we do not.

The fate of freedom in Europe will be determined by the outcome of the struggle between the United States and the Soviet Union, but the fate of Europe is no longer central to the outcome of that struggle. The fate of Japan and the related industrial centers of East Asia and the Pacific is now far more crucial.

The United States, however, is not perceived as the long-term threat to the Soviet state or more basically, Russian society. It is all too easy to read American society as chaotic, even degenerate to a degree whereby it is bent headlong on its own destruction. The Kaiser's Germany believed that, so did Hitler and Imperial Japan. A substantial part of the U.S. population holds this same view, and it would not be surprising to learn that the Soviets believe it.

It is China that is perceived as the long-term threat, to an extent that virtually every Soviet scholar in the West and every high-ranking emigré acknowledges to be an obsession. The means to control that threat, as defined in 1916 by the Russian Defense Minister, General Alexei Kuropatkin, is to control Sinkiang, Mongolia, and the northern half of Manchuria,⁹ thus both crippling China economically and establishing the buffer sought by Russia since the days of the Mongols. Czarist or Soviet, the Russian Government has sought to reach that line whenever Chinese weakness permits. It has

held the most crucial strategic segment, Mongolia—what Mao Tse-tung called the “fist in China’s back”—since 1922.

Success in securing the rest of the Kuropatkin line would change the balance of power in Eurasia and the world. It would put Japan in a Soviet hammerlock, leaving open to them no route other than that of accommodation, which, in turn, would signal to the rest of Asia and Western Europe that the tide had turned, perhaps irrevocably, in favor of the Soviets. Thus the United States would be forced to intervene on behalf of China.

If a weak China of some 400 million people was seen as a threat in 1916, what of a China of one billion and more inhabitants that now may be headed for superpower status in the next century?

From that perspective, time is running out for the Soviets. They have one, and only one, strength in Asia—military, the most transient power of all. What combination of fear born of internal Soviet instability, of opportunity born of internal Chinese disarray, or of the “now-or-never” mind-set that drove the Japanese Imperial General Staff in 1941, could lead to a grab for regional and world power in Asia?

Would a Soviet Union that is determined to settle affairs in Asia also attack Europe and thereby trigger U.S. nuclear response? If the Soviets did not attack in Europe, would NATO Europe come to China’s defense? There is a potential, clearly, for a major war in East Asia and the Pacific that would leave Europe on the periphery.

There is nothing new about the preceding description of Europe as an increasingly peripheral region rather than the center of the world stage. The trend has been apparent for at least a decade, and the Europeans, possibly excepting Margaret Thatcher’s Britain with its nostalgia for the imperial past, are generally very happy about it. But an America that still considers Asia to be the “Far East,” still thinks of Europe as its cultural and spiritual home. This was illustrated on the MacNeil-Lehrer Public Television news program in two extensive discussions of the emergent Pacific vs. Atlantic debate in February 1988. The discussants were exclusively Caucasian and just as exclusively Europe-oriented. Asia and the Pacific were plainly intruders in such company—admitted only in the form of a short film clip from Secretary Webb’s 13 January National Press Club speech.¹⁰

Because of our culture’s European focus, the United States did not recognize until 1960, long after its origination, that the relationship of China and the Soviet Union was that of antagonists rather than of allies.¹¹ Had we understood the centuries-old roots of that antagonism it would not have taken so long to understand the enormous leverage afforded us by that relationship, no matter what the momentary degree of hostility or limited reconciliation between China and the Russian empire—under whatever name or government—at any given time.

The status of the Soviet Union (or any government in Moscow) as a world power rests upon its position in Asia, not its relatively landlocked base in Europe. Yet the Russian strategic hold east of the Ural Mountains is precarious. Neither the czars nor the Soviets have succeeded in populating Eastern Siberia. Of particular importance is the anchor of Soviet power in Asia, the Pacific Maritime Province, almost all of which occupies territory claimed by China.

In the centuries when China was content with its own company, what is now the border region as well as Siberia itself were of little importance except as matters of imperial pride. However, to a billion Chinese with rapidly rising expectations, Siberia, with its space and enormous storehouse of raw materials, is a prize of incalculable value. In its present position of relative military weakness, Chinese diplomacy has sought only to have the treaties by which Russia gained control of the Maritime Province and other borderlands acknowledged as "unequal." The Soviets fully understand that such acknowledgment would be a license for repossession whenever the means to do so become available.

The central importance the Soviets ascribe to the Maritime region can be seen from the concentration there of 27 of the 50 Soviet divisions on the entire 4,000-mile frontier. The Soviets are affirming, by their troop dispositions, that defeat in the Soviet Far East would be tantamount to losing Siberia, thus, General Charles de Gaulle's long view of a time when there would be a *Europe des Patries* "from the Atlantic to the Urals."

At present, as concerns the United States, the essential strategic relationship is this: reinforcement of the Maritime Province and its outlying isolated dependencies of Kamchatka and the Kuriles is limited by climate, terrain, and distance from the industrial and agricultural base of Soviet power in Eastern Siberia and Russia. The United States, on the other hand, has an unlimited capacity for deployment of military power so long as it controls or can establish control of the North Pacific. In that relationship lies the means to control Soviet military behavior worldwide at a cost that would enable us to compete in the international and domestic U.S. markets with our allies.

In short, the North Pacific and Eastern Siberia constitute the only areas in the world where superior U.S. forces, existing or obtainable within the present Department of Defense budget, can gain mastery of an area of vital interest to the Soviet Union, that is, the Maritime Province, and thereby put a tether on Soviet military power worldwide. Simultaneously, it is the only area where the United States has an inherent strategic advantage in conventional forces. That effectively reverses the situation in Europe and elsewhere whereby the onus for the first use of nuclear weapons is unavoidably on the United States and its allies.

These advantages are not so many plums to be picked from the strategic tree. We have so neglected the inherent advantages we enjoy in the North Pacific that only a few Soviet battalions could drive us back to the shores of mainland North America. As was demonstrated by the Japanese incursions into the Aleutians during World War II, a massive effort would be required to dislodge the invaders, delaying for months our ability to exploit our inherent, but neglected, potential for superiority. The basing of the U.S.S. *Nimitz* carrier battle group at Seattle will begin to change that situation, but much more needs to be done.

In the brief moment he had to bring a Pacific strategy to national attention, Secretary Webb was careful to avoid describing it as a "maritime" strategy.¹² Although he did not spell out the role of land forces, he made plain that a joint effort would be required.

The weakness of the "Maritime Strategy," published by Mr. Webb's predecessor, John F. Lehman, Jr., in January 1986,¹³ was that it was all too plainly a "Navy" strategy, designed first and last to underpin the 600-ship fleet that Mr. Lehman thought, mistakenly, he had irrevocably committed the country to build and maintain. Nowhere under that strategy could even the most resounding U.S. victory have so threatened a Soviet vital interest that a war could be terminated on terms favorable to the United States and its allies, least of all in the Norwegian Sea-Kola Inlet Region where the Lehman version of the strategy focused. Indeed, we once had been in control of both Murmansk and Archangel (in 1918-19), with U.S. and Allied forces deep in North Russia and were generally victorious without achieving even the most minimal objectives of the combined force.

We also were ashore at the same time in Eastern Siberia, our prime purpose being to block Japanese hegemony. We succeeded in that. Had we failed, the world would be a different place. That we achieved our purpose in the East but shared in the Allied failure in the West is instructive.

Webb rejected, at least implicitly, the Norwegian Sea focus in favor of a Pacific focus and addressed, as Lehman had not, the implications for U.S. land forces. In place of "forces dedicated to static defensive missions," Webb said, we must have "forces . . . free to deploy and to maneuver, to concentrate at a crisis point and project military force at that point, without the necessity of negotiating base rights or the unavoidable involvement in local conflict that such base rights imply."¹⁴ Only in Alaska do we enjoy such a luxury.

By "static defensive missions" Webb was describing the vast U.S. commitment in Central Europe of not only five near-full-strength division equivalents, but also a buildup toward six additional divisions worth of tanks, armored personnel carriers, artillery, and so forth, held in prepositioned sets (POMCUS) for troops to be airlifted from the United States.

Because he had been Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs before his appointment as Secretary of the Navy, Mr. Webb was keenly aware that even if those six additional divisions found their arrival airfields and the stored equipment intact and in friendly hands, major combat elements of all six divisions would consist of National Guard and Reserve units that have never attained that state of pre-mobilization readiness required by the present deployment schedules.¹⁵ And, as we have seen earlier, no matter how successful those forces might be in combat, they would achieve nothing beyond driving the Soviets back to starting positions wherein they could nurse their wounds and try again. Any American administration that contemplates such an outcome after grievous loss should reflect on the political disasters suffered by the Democratic Party as a result of the self-imposed Korean stalemate in 1952 and following the collapse of will that occurred after the Tet offensive in 1968. With a shift to a Pacific strategy, such problems would not arise.

Other than the 2d Division in Korea, there would be no requirement for stationing major U.S. Army combat forces outside the United States, making possible the deactivation of most of the five active division equivalents now in Europe. A saving of almost equal proportions would be realized from the dismantling of most of the huge American family support system now maintained in Europe.

The task of clearly establishing U.S. superiority in the North Pacific could be met within the present U.S. defense budget if the European troop level were reduced to the extent here proposed. By concentrating the U.S. Marine Corps and supporting amphibious shipping in the Pacific with at least eight carrier battle groups and all of the battleship surface action groups, it also would be possible to assure that the United States could make the initial lodgments on the Kamchatka Peninsula and elsewhere along the Siberian coast in order to implement the strategy. This would require shifting the First Marine Division from Camp Pendleton, California to Fort Richardson, Alaska, and shifting the Second Marine Division from Camp Lejeune, North Carolina to Camp Pendleton.

The overall goal is neither war-fighting nor war-winning. It is deterrence, achieved by clearly indicating to the Soviet leadership that any aggression against U.S. and allied vital interests in Europe or the Middle East will be met by an attack on what the Soviets consider to be their most vital interest today—after the defense of the Russian motherland from nuclear attack—their relationship *vis-à-vis* China.

That assurance of deterrence cannot be achieved simply by gaining lodgments on the Siberian coast, or even by closing down the extraordinarily important base at Petropavlovsk on Kamchatka.¹⁶ Only by a threat to isolate and destroy the 27 Soviet divisions now garrisoning the Maritime Province can we convince Soviet leadership that a major act of aggression will cost

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them their hard-won Pacific domain—their status as a world power—and allow a developing China unlimited access to the Siberian storehouse at their backdoor.

A major advantage of the proposed North Pacific strategy is that it provides the time needed for U.S. mobilization and post-mobilization training of Guard and Reserve Forces. If the United States insists on retaining a central role in European defense, time for this preparedness will be irrevocably lost.

This is because the maritime phase of the strategy would require a minimum of three to six months to complete—the minimum time required to mobilize and train Army National Guard and Army Reserve combat arms battalions, particularly for the demanding climate and terrain of Eastern Siberia.¹⁷ This would permit the echeloning of Army units, beginning with active units in Alaska and extending back to the local armories, visibly able to exploit the Marine landings.

The harsh Siberian weather and terrain operate to American advantage and to Soviet disadvantage. It is the one area on the Soviet strategic periphery where their huge preponderance of armored strength cannot be brought to bear, partly because of the terrain, partly because of logistics. It is important to recall that Soviet victory over a greatly weakened Japanese Kwangtung Army in 1945 was won *south* of the Trans-Siberian Railroad on terrain that favored armored formations, with generally unimpeded access from the railroad, and under Soviet air supremacy. The terrain north of the railroad is entirely different, generally precluding massed armored operations, rendering support from the railroad extremely difficult, and with a paucity of airfields that limits tactical air power as well. A 15-carrier U.S. battle fleet supported by land-based U.S. air power in the Aleutians and the long-range Tomahawk firepower of the four battleship surface action groups would be essential in order to gain and maintain air superiority for the U.S. assault forces.

A U.S. Army configured for major operations in Eastern Siberia would be, essentially, an airmobile army, the principal elements of which are already in existence and the larger concept well advanced.¹⁸ Its mission would be to isolate the forces now concentrated in the Soviet Far East and assure their destruction by preventing effective relief or reinforcement from European Russia. Although the Soviets also have airmobile forces, they have a far more difficult overland logistics problem than that which confronts the sea-based U.S. forces. All other things being equal, the battle would turn on command and control, technology and, above all, logistics—all areas in which the U.S. Army has been superior thus far. The technology for large-scale operations in the North Pacific and the Arctic and sub-Arctic has been available since World War II and is growing steadily.

Unlike the logistical nightmare we now face in the Atlantic, with the need to ferry additional heavy armored units across in the face of the Soviet submarine threat, virtually all assault elements of the Army forces that would be needed to achieve dominance in Eastern Siberia are air transportable, many of them in their own aircraft. Once ashore, those forces must be resupplied by sea. The Soviet submarines and other naval forces required to oppose that effort must come out of Petropavlovsk, the capture or neutralization of which would be first priority for U.S. amphibious forces. And, the only alternate route for the Soviets would be one of the straits through the offshore island chain where they would encounter American attack submarines and minefields. Thus the naval situation that led to the Russian naval disasters of 1904–05 has not changed.

The Soviets would find themselves confronted with a mirror image of the situation that will confront us so long as we insist on believing that Europe is the theater of decision. That is, they would be tempted to counter superior U.S. conventional forces by resorting to low-range nuclear weapons. We and our NATO allies are inhibited from the use of such weapons which would inflict certain destruction on Western Europe. The Soviets in Eastern Siberia would be even more inhibited from initiating a nuclear campaign that would insure virtually instantaneous destruction of the thin infrastructure they have painfully constructed in East Asia over three centuries, a campaign that would, at best, only delay the threatened assault. They could, of course, risk the Russian heartland by opening a nuclear attack on the United States. But if first use were a viable option, certainly they would have resorted to nuclear warfare during the aggression that triggered the American response in the North Pacific.

Although it cannot be assumed that China would actively engage on the American side, it is well to keep in mind that the 27 Soviet divisions in the Soviet Far East are there because of China. U.S. forces would be coming in on the rear and flanks of those Soviet forces, a situation China would observe with intense interest. Even if they were to win a total victory, the Americans would eventually go home and the Chinese would remain. No one needs to explain to the Soviets the eventual result of such a vacuum of power.

We must also consider the implications of such a victory. How would we and, in particular, Japan view a China in control of Asia from the North Pole to the Himalayas and from the Urals to the Pacific? The question virtually answers itself. Everyone, not least of all the Soviets themselves, would benefit from a progressive government that could abide the opening of the entire Soviet Union to the free interchange of ideas, labor, and investment. That must be the hoped-for outcome of any system of deterrence against Soviet aggression. But if war is inevitable, and Soviet power in Asia is defeated, the expansion of a Chinese empire to replace the Russian in

Siberia would clearly be unacceptable. Some supra-national system would be needed.

If, despite everything, war were thrust upon us, the U.S. North Pacific offensive would be the hammer. On a North-South axis, China, whether or not initially engaged, would be the anvil. Ultimately, on an East-West axis, NATO, whether or not initially engaged, would be the anvil. In neither case could the Soviets afford to leave those frontiers undefended. The Soviets have shown no disposition to place themselves in that uncomfortable position. Politically astute, they can be counted on to recognize that a defeat in Asia of the dimensions described would stir nationalistic and irredentist hopes in Eastern and Western Europe, not least of all in West Germany. Indeed, they would have to fear such hopes in the Soviet Union itself, in the Ukraine and in Central Asia, which could threaten demolition of the entire Soviet system.

The purpose of the proposed North Pacific strategy is to force the Soviets to look into that abyss should they ever consider attacking Western Europe or China, or moving in force into the Persian Gulf, the latter a region that, as we should know by now, is beyond the U.S. and Allied capacity for direct defense.

In summary, under the present Europe-centered U.S. strategy, the vital interests of the United States and its allies are at risk everywhere, while those of the Soviet Union are not, save in terms of strategic nuclear warfare. Nowhere, Europe included, can U.S. and Allied vital interests be defended against a major attack except by immediate, or nearly immediate recourse to nuclear weapons. The same allies who depend upon the U.S. worldwide defense structure, ruthlessly exploit the financial burdens imposed by that structure to gain economic advantage over the United States throughout the world, and within the United States itself. The alternative strategy proposed here would place at risk a Soviet vital interest other than one that would necessarily trigger a strategic nuclear response. It would shift the burden of deterrence from nuclear to conventional forces. It is supportable below the present level of defense spending, thereby contributing to recovery of the U.S. competitive position.

Even without the Soviet military challenge we would be required to make such a shift of strategic emphasis, for it is in the economic furnace of the Pacific and Asia, not in a Europe of steadily declining influence, that the future of our world is being forged.

Thus, the issues that led to Secretary Webb's resignation after an all-too-brief 10 months in office did not involve just the immediate question of how long 16 old frigates were to be retained in commission. At root were much more profound questions of national direction and strategy. The "point man" always has run great risks, but nothing worthwhile happens without him.

Notes

1. James H. Webb, Speech, National Press Club, Washington, D.C.: 13 January 1988.

2. "We especially ought to pray that the powers of Europe may be so poised and counterpoised among themselves, that their own security may require the presence of all their forces at home, leaving the other quarters of the globe in undisturbed tranquility." Letter to Thomas Leiper, 21 August 1807, quoted in Hans J. Morgenthau, *A New Foreign Policy for the United States* (New York: Praeger, 1969), p. 160.

3. Whether or not that view is shared along the Washington Beltway, it is the universal Japanese view, expressed to the author by soldiers, academics, diplomats, journalists, and ordinary citizens during extensive interviews in Japan and elsewhere, 1975 to the present.

4. Beginning with the announcement to the Joint Chiefs of Staff in January 1977 of the intent to withdraw the 2d Division and then to the reversal of that decision in Spring 1979, the author was a participant in the actions that led to the reversal (see, *inter alia*, "Yankee, Don't Go Home," *Army*, March 1977, pp. 14-18). All of the factors cited played a part in bringing about the reversal, reflecting for the most part arguments advanced through all possible private and public means by Japan, and privately by China.

5. The term "vital interests" is a mischief-maker. No one in the U.S. Government or journalism ever refers to "major" or "minor" interests, implying that "all" our interests are "vital." That derives from the failure of the Government to define the terms. Lacking such a guide, the term "vital interest" is used here in its literal sense: that which pertains to the survival of the United States and its free institutions.

6. The defensive strategy is founded in Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty (Washington, 4 April 1949) whereby "the member nations must take steps to *restore and maintain tranquility*" [emphasis added]. (NATO Handbook, Brussels 1986, p. 18). This has been consistently interpreted as requiring military action only sufficient to restore the frontiers existing at the opening of hostilities. That, in turn, is the root of the deep, but papered over, doctrinal divide between the counteroffensive U.S. Army and Air Force AirLand Battle Doctrine and the military doctrine of the European and Canadian NATO members.

7. "The people of America will . . . extend their dominion and their power, until they shall have [reached] the eastern shores of Asia. And I think too that eastward and southward will her great rival [Russia] . . . stretch forth her power to the coasts of China and Siam: . . . Will [they meet] in friendship? I fear not! The antagonistic exponents of freedom and absolutism must thus meet at last, and then will be fought the mighty battle on which the world will look with breathless interest; for on its issue will depend the freedom of the world." Address before the American Geographical and Statistical Society, 6 March 1856. Quoted by Richard O'Connor in *Pacific Destiny*, (Boston: Little Brown, 1969), p. 114.

8. Russian imperialism and its import for the United States, China, and other Pacific nations is discussed in *The Day of the Saxon*, 1913, and was to have been examined in greater detail in *The Swarming of the Slav*, left incomplete at the time of Lea's death. *The Day of the Saxon* was republished by Harper, New York, in 1942 at the urging of the late Clare Booth Luce.

9. "As for China, the danger menacing Russia in the future from that Empire of 400,000,000 people is not to be doubted. The most vulnerable point on the Russian border, as 800 years ago, will be the Great Gateway of the Nations, through which the Hordes of Chinghiz Kham invaded Europe. So long as Kulja will be in Chinese hands, the protection of Turkestan against China will be a matter of great difficulty and will require considerable military force. It is impossible to leave this gateway in the hands of the Chinese. The alteration of our frontier with China is absolutely imperative. By drawing the border line from the Khan Tengri range . . . in a direct line to Vladivostok, our frontier will be shortened by 4,000 *verst*s and Kulja, Northern Mongolia and Northern Manchuria will be included in the Russian Empire." Confidential report to the czar from General Alexei Kuropatkin, quoted in Prince Andrei Lobanov-Rostovsky, *Russia and Asia*, (Ann Arbor, Mich.: George Wahr, 1951), pp. 255-256.

10. Webb, speech.

11. As late as 1972, Central Intelligence Agency officers working the Sino-Soviet conflict told the author that they were still being denied promotion because their findings appeared to jeopardize the status of their Europe-oriented chiefs. Joseph C. Harsch, in *The Christian Science Monitor*, 25 February 1988, says that as of 1969, Richard Allen, then a principal assistant to the National Security Adviser, Henry Kissinger, still refused to believe that the Sino-Soviet split was genuine.

12. Webb, speech.

13. Lehman, John F., Jr., "The 600-Ship Navy," in *The Maritime Strategy*, a supplement to the U.S. Naval Institute *Proceedings*, January 1986, pp. 30-34.

14. Webb, speech.

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15. The most extensive study, mostly unclassified, conducted to date, of the U.S. Army National Guard and Reserve readiness potential (*The Army Study of the Guard and Reserve Forces (U)*), U.S. Army War College, June 1972 concluded that the maximum peacetime potential for combat maneuver (infantry and armor) battalions, assuming the most ideal conditions (which have never existed and do not exist now) would be "entry into but not completion of advanced unit training at the end of each [active duty] annual training period." That is, approximately six weeks short of completion of battalion-level training. That nothing has changed is indicated by published remarks of Major General Robert E. Wagner, "U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command," *Army Times*, 29 September 1986, p. 3.

16. Petropavlovsk has been described by the then-Chief of the Soviet General Staff, Marshal Nikolai V. Ogarkov, as "the most significant military installation . . . in the Soviet Union." *The New York Times*, 10 September 1983, p. 5.

17. See 15., *supra*.

18. The concept was developed in the 1960s by U.S. Army aviators who looked toward "a war fought one foot above the ground" in self-contained airborne vehicles. The 6th Combat Brigade, Air Cavalry, at Fort Hood, Texas, is the current expression of that concept. In an address to the British Royal United Service Institution in 1983, the late General F. M. von Senger and Etterlin, then-Commander in Chief, Allied Forces Central Europe, proposed reorganization of all NATO land forces on the 6th Air Cavalry Brigade model.

