

# Dominion From Sea to Sea: America's Pacific Ascendancy

Bruce Cumings

## Dominion From Sea to Sea: America's Pacific Ascendancy

By Bruce Cumings

*Dominion From Sea to Sea* differs from my other books in that it does not have so much to say about Korea or East Asia. Obviously my books on the [Korean War](#) have Korean history as the centerpiece, and even my book of essays, *Parallax Visions: Making Sense of American—East Asian Relation*, is a Korea-centric examination of U.S. relations with China, Japan and Korea. Nevertheless, this new book could not have been written without the years of experience since I first landed in Seoul in 1967. East Asia's history in the modern period, and its relationship with the United States, gave me an *optic* that was indispensable for examining America's relationship not just toward East Asia, but to the world. It is an optic that differs radically from most American orientations toward the foreign.



### John Gast, American Progress, 1872

The vast majority of Americans who write about foreign affairs and foreign policy write from an Atlanticist or Europe-first perspective. It is simply assumed that cross-Atlantic relations are paramount, that they are the first priority, and that they always have been. In fact for 150 years from the revolution against the British down to Pearl Harbor, most Americans were uninterested in Europe, had more or less contempt for the British, and built the country by turning their back to the Atlantic and “facing West” across the continent. Of course, many American experts on international relations also write about U.S. relations with East Asia, but rarely with much discernment or deep knowledge. The best example of this is Henry Kissinger, a charter Atlanticist, whose three-volume memoir is very learned about Europe, but when it comes to Japan and China, one is a kabuki play and the other is “boxes within boxes.” Academic specialists routinely assume that theories derived from the European experience—like “realism”—can be applied to East Asia.

Paradoxically, the only intense period of Atlanticism in American history was the half-century from 1941 to 1991, when hot war and cold war bound America tightly with Western Europe. Since then relations have been reasonably good between the two sides of the Atlantic, of course, but it is not hard to find new difficulties (like how to handle the current financial crisis), or new groups emerging (like the “Tea Party”) that hark back to the anti-European tendencies of the pre-1941 period, which wholeheartedly condemned Europeans for their “despotism” in the 19th century, or

which condemn them for their “socialism” today. But Atlanticism still suffuses the worldview of the American foreign policy elite as well as many intellectuals, who assume that we share with Europeans deep values of democracy, equality, liberty, multilateralism, and the rule of law—especially, the world under the rule of law, exemplified by the United Nations.

None of this seemed to characterize East Asian-American relations when I first experienced them as a young man. I noticed American soldiers playing sports in the blue colors of the UN Command in Korea, but wondered why it was still in existence long after the Korean War had ended (and it still exists today). I noticed the obvious racism of most Americans toward Koreans, especially the adults who should have provided better examples to young people like me (I was then in the Peace Corps). I noticed the enormous Yongsan Garrison, occupied successively since the 1880s by the Chinese, Japanese and Americans—and noticed that I could walk merrily through the gates to get a good cheeseburger, while Koreans had to provide identification (in their own country). I learned that the overall commander of the huge South Korean military was an American—and that the singular Korean so many Americans seemed to like best was President Park Chung Hee, soon to make himself president-for-life. I did not find democracy, equality, or the rule of law—only liberty for Korean and American businesses to do what they liked. Things only got worse over the next twenty years (except for the rapid growth of the economy), until the Korean people took matters into their own hands and built an admirable democracy.

All this certainly did not reflect Atlanticism, nor did our relations with Japan (where American military bases were all over the country long after the war ended), or China and North Korea (which the U.S. sought to isolate by all means necessary), or the war in Vietnam. Instead U.S. relations with all of East Asia reflected

unilateralism, hierarchy, condescension, a failure to take any Asian leader seriously (except perhaps Mao Zedong, for the wrong reasons), and a pronounced belief in the efficacy of military force, leading to the militarization of the entire region—and the vast ocean called the Pacific.

In this book I explain why “Pacificism” would hardly be a good antonym for Atlanticism, since among other things it sounds like pacifism, and that is hardly my meaning. Military expansionism, beginning with James Polk’s invasion and dismantling of Mexico in 1846, was essential in the American march to the Pacific, bringing California into the union, as was Perry’s “opening” of Japan in 1853—a direct follow-on to the war with Mexico. Soon, however, the Civil War consumed Americans, and expansionism did not return until the war with Spain and the seizure of the Philippines. That experience of formal empire receded into the background of Americans’ consciousness, however, and isolation characterized the interwar period. It is 1941 that marks the beginning of the era we are still living in, when the U.S. became the policeman of the world, and the overwhelmingly dominant power in the Pacific.

Today American power throughout the East Asian region continues to be structured by what I call an “archipelago of empire,” namely, the hundreds of military bases that still remain in place, long after the wars which gave birth to them. In the past fifteen years, however, and particularly after the Iraq War began, this East Asian pattern has been extended throughout the non-Western world: dozens of new bases in Central Asia, the Middle East and Africa; a pronounced unilateralism in foreign policy (particularly under George W. Bush); a quick resort to military force to resolve political problems (Barack Obama and Bush); and stunning disregard for the rule of law. If Bush invaded Iraq without provocation, drawing the condemnation of most of our European allies,

President Obama assassinates alleged enemies with impunity, and helped to topple the government in Libya by force under the guise of a “no fly zone.” Many of our enemies no doubt deserve what they get (like Osama bin Laden), but this also is a dramatic departure from the norms of international law. It is not, however, a departure from the norms of the expansionist current in American history, going back to Polk. In other words, what I first encountered in Korea and Japan many decades ago is increasingly the way that the U.S. operates on a world scale. I was very lucky to begin to intuit this position at a young age, thanks to Koreans and others who gave me a way to critically examine my own country—while “facing East” across the Pacific.

American expansion across the continent and then the Pacific immediately came up against people of color—first native Americans, then Mexicans, Chinese in the mid-19th century (early pioneers in the Gold Rush), and Japanese and Korean immigrants by the 1890s. Expansion across the Pacific was finally blocked only in our time, in the 1950s and ‘60s, by the aroused anti-imperialism of Koreans, Chinese and Vietnamese. Even today, half a century later, few American leaders have the experience and sensibility necessary to treat their counterparts in East Asia with the same equality, mutual respect, and open-mindedness that comes so naturally in our Atlanticist relationships. If these ideals of interaction are not quickly fostered across the Pacific, I am afraid the 21st century will be a very difficult one in East Asian—American relations.

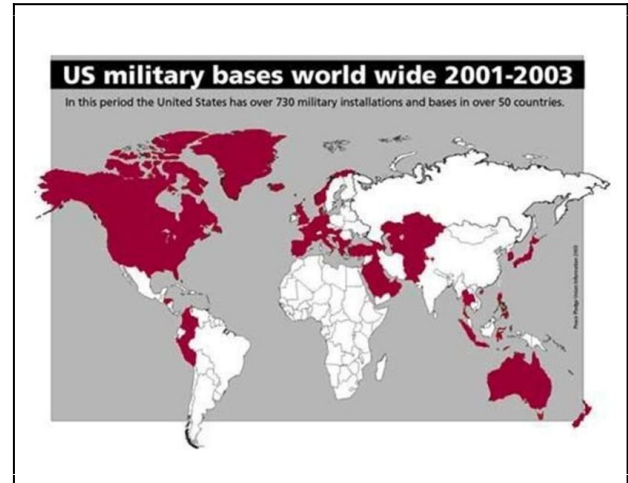
The following excerpt is from pp. 393-402 *Dominion from Sea to Sea*.

**Archipelago of Empire**

*The Archipelago*

In the second half of the twentieth century an entirely new phenomenon emerged in American history, namely, the permanent

stationing of soldiers in a myriad of foreign bases across the face of the planet, connected to an enormous domestic complex of defense industries. For the first time in modern history the leading power maintained an extensive network of bases on the territory of its allies and economic competitors--Japan, Germany, Britain, Italy, South Korea, all the industrial powers save France and Russia--marking a radical break with the European balance of power and the operation of realpolitik and a radical departure in American history: an archipelago of empire.<sup>1</sup> The military structure of the British Empire was a globe-girdling chain of strategic naval bases, like the one at Singapore; no one in his right mind imagined British army bases perched on the soil of competing industrial nations.<sup>2</sup> The maritime dominance of the American archipelago is far greater than the United Kingdom’s ever was, yet it also has vastly superior global air and land forces--and has bases almost everywhere.



This is an American realm with no name, a territorial presence with little if any standing in the literature of international affairs. The preferred strategy since Hay’s Open Door was nonterritorial, whether in gaining access to imperial concessions in China a century ago, or in the postwar hegemony connoting a first-among-equals multilateralism: American preponderance but not dominance, a usage of hegemony consistent with its original Greek

meaning in Thucydides or the ancient Roman imperium that also connoted nonterritorial power.<sup>3</sup> But hegemony and imperium sound equally inappropriate to most Americans: they sound like we run a colonial empire, as if we were England or Japan seventy years ago. We don't. But we do run a territorial empire--the archipelago of somewhere between 737 and 860 overseas military installations around the world, with American military personnel operating in 153 countries, which most Americans know little if anything about--a kind of stealth empire, "hidden in plain sight" as Kathy Ferguson and Phyllis Turnbull put it,<sup>4</sup> one part of which can occasionally be closed down (like U.S. bases in the Philippines in 1992) but which persists because it is politically and culturally invisible, at least to Americans.

The postwar order took shape through positive policy and through the establishment of distinct outer limits, the transgression of which was rare or even inconceivable, provoking immediate crisis--the orientation of West Berlin toward the Soviet bloc, for example. That's what the bases were put there for, to defend our allies but also to limit their choices--a light hold on the jugular, which might sound too strong until Americans ask themselves, what would we think of myriad foreign bases on our soil? The typical experience of this hegemony, however, was a mundane, benign, and mostly unremarked daily life of subtle constraint, in which the United States kept allied nations on defense, resource, and, for many years, financial dependencies. This penetration was clearest in the frontline cold war semi-sovereign states like Japan, West Germany, and South Korea, and it was conceived by people like Kennan as an indirect, outer-limit control on the worst outcome, namely, orientation to the other side--what John McMurtry calls "determination by constraint": it simultaneously constrains and leaves a significant degree of autonomy.<sup>5</sup> The aggressors in World War II, Japan and

Germany, were tied down by American bases, and they remain so: in the seventh decade after the war we still don't know what either nation would look like if it were truly independent. We aren't going to find out anytime soon, either.

In an important interpretation Robert Latham calls this structure the American "external state" and views it as a central element of liberal world-order building. The "free world" connoted a realm of liberal democracies and authoritarian client states. It was Acheson's liberal order, and it also led to a vast global militarization (by the 1960s encompassing 1.5 million American troops stationed in hundreds of bases in thirty-five countries, with formal security commitments to forty-three countries, the training and equipping of military forces in seventy countries), a phenomenon often treated as an unfortunate result of the bipolar confrontation with Moscow.<sup>6</sup> In another sense our troops in Japan and Germany are also their external state because without the bases they would have to rearm dramatically.

This permanent transnational military structure has not gone from victory to victory. Since 1950 the United States has fought four major wars--Korea, Vietnam, the Persian Gulf, and Iraq--and has only won one of them (at this writing). But outcomes have little impact on the archipelago's permanency. Win, lose, or draw, the wars end but, the military no longer deflates and the troops no longer come home (with the exception of Vietnam: and had we been able to stabilize South Vietnam, they would still be there). The United States won a decisive victory in 1945, but the troops did not come home then, either: some 100,000 troops remain in Japan and Germany, just as the stalemate in Korea left 30,000 to 40,000 there.

The Korean War was the occasion for building a permanent standing military and a national security state where none had existed before, as containing communism became an open-ended, global proposition. A mere decade later

President Eisenhower could say that “we have been compelled to create a permanent armaments industry of vast proportions,” employing 3.5 million people in the defense establishment and spending more than “the net income of all United States corporations.” That was from his farewell address; less remembered is Ike’s final news conference where he sounded just like Mills by remarking that the armaments industry was so pervasive that it affected “almost an insidious penetration of our own minds,” making Americans think that the only thing the country does is produce weapons and missiles.<sup>7</sup> When Western communism collapsed it appeared for a few years that a serious reduction in the permanent military might occur, but “rogue states” kept it going and then the “war on terror” provided another amorphous, open-ended global commitment.

This archipelago is the clearest territorial (and therefore imperial) element in the American position in the world, and it has its domestic counterpart in a host of home military bases and industries that serve defense needs, and in a highly lucrative revolving door where generals retire to become defense industry executives and industry executives take furloughs to run Washington agencies. (In 2001, for example, George W. Bush appointed Peter Teets, chief operating officer of Lockheed Martin, to run the National Reconnaissance Office--by far the best-funded intelligence agency; meanwhile the former NRO director, Jeff Harris, took a job with Lockheed Space Systems.)<sup>8</sup> Yet this archipelago is one of the most unstudied phenomena in American life. Although millions of Americans have inhabited these bases, their global landscape is so commonly unknown that its full dimensions almost always come as a surprise to the uninitiated (or to the initiates themselves: according to two eyewitnesses, when he arrived at the Pentagon in 2001 Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld was surprised to learn that Korea still held 40,000 American

troops).

There is a military-industrial complex, and certain firms are closely identified with this archipelago because they helped to build it: Bechtel for example. But it is difficult for outsiders to assess how things work, as Mills suggested, and easy to overestimate their influence. When the Bechtel Group sent Caspar Weinberger and George Shultz to serve in the Reagan administration, it was hard not to see a California conspiracy in the works: presumably power was now shifting radically west. In fact, Bechtel happily slurped at the federal trough for decades on a thoroughly bipartisan basis; John McCone, after all, was Kennedy’s CIA chief, and Bechtel’s candidate in 1980 was not Reagan but Texas Democrat John Connally. Furthermore, George Shultz had no respect for Weinberger going back to the Nixon administration when Shultz ran the Office of Management and Budget and Weinberger was his deputy; Shultz routinely bypassed Weinberger to get advice from Arnold K. Weber, a former colleague from the University of Chicago. Shultz was a savvy and unpretentious Henry Kissinger for one Republican administration or corporation after another, leaving Washington in May 1974 to run Bechtel as Nixon’s imminent impeachment loomed, then coming back when Reagan asked him to be secretary of state.<sup>9</sup>

Long before George Shultz shifted from Washington to Bechtel and back, John McCone was an individual paradigm of the nexus between national security and industry--linking high position in Washington with Bechtel, defense firms, major oil companies, and vast construction projects in the Persian Gulf. He was one of the first westerners to join the establishment, and he was a charter member of the military-industrial complex with extraordinary staying power. After getting an engineering degree from Berkeley, he moved up to executive authority at Llewellyn Iron Works in Los Angeles, which provided steel

fittings for the Boulder Dam. In 1937 he formed B-M-P in Los Angeles, specializing in the design and construction of petroleum refineries and power plants for installation throughout the United States, South America, and the Persian Gulf. After the war began his company built and managed the air force's modification center in Birmingham where B-24 and B-29 bombers were fitted out for combat, and through an affiliate called Pacific Tankers, he operated an extensive fleet of oil tankers for the U.S. Navy. By the 1950s a very wealthy man, he was the second largest shareholder in Standard Oil of California. During the cold war he held one sensitive post after another. He was a special assistant to then Secretary of Defense James Forrestal in 1948, undersecretary of the air force in 1950, head of the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC), and subsequently director of the CIA under both Eisenhower and Kennedy. Just at the time McCone became director of the AEC (a position that led Dwight Eisenhower to include him in the National Security Council), his friend Kenneth Davis left his position as director of reactor development at the AEC to go to work for Bechtel.<sup>10</sup> Bechtel, Shultz, Weinberger, and McCone are about a structure of state and corporate interests and a conservative Republican style of politics and business, a rightward-leaning ostensibly laissez-faire industrialism that hews closely to the state: but that has been true since the Six Companies built the Hoover Dam. And then there are all the Democrats who are part of the same elite, with liberal inflections.

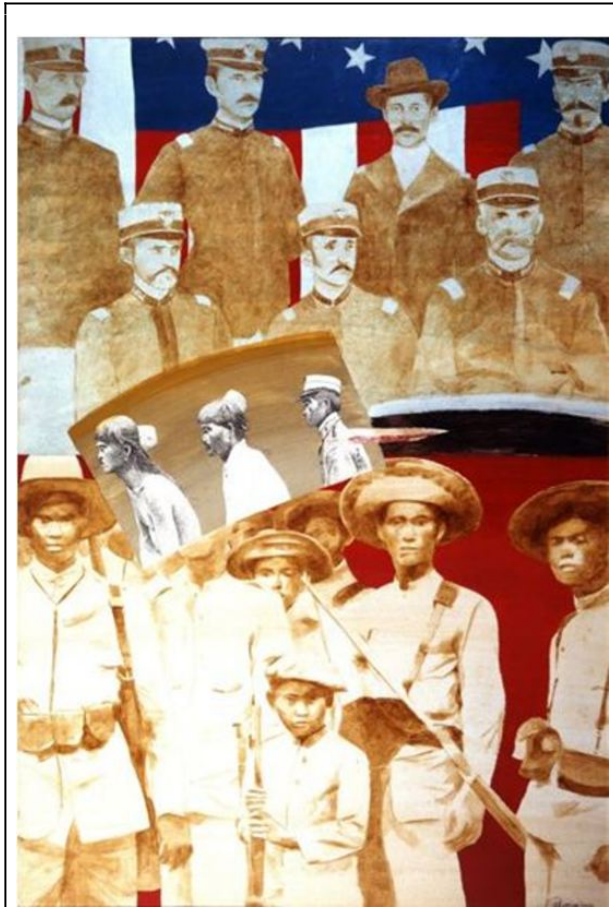
### *A Waxing and Waning Military*

Until 1950 Americans never supported a large standing army, and the military was a negligible factor in American history and culture, apart from its performance in wars. The Constitution itself "was constructed in fear of a powerful military establishment," the constituent states had their own independent militias, and only the navy seemed consonant

with American conceptions of the uses of national military force. Americans loved victorious generals like Washington, Jackson, Taylor, Grant, and Eisenhower enough to make them presidents. But after the victory, the military blended back into the woodwork of American life. The army reached 50,000 during the war with Mexico, then dropped to about 10,000 soldiers, 90 percent of them arrayed against Indians in the trans-Mississippi West at seventy-nine posts and trailside forts. The military ballooned into millions of citizen-soldiers during the Civil War and the two world wars, but always the army withered within months and years of victory--to a 25,000-soldier constabulary in the late nineteenth century (at a time when France had half a million soldiers, Germany had 419,000, and continental-nation Russia had 766,000), a neglected force of 135,000 between the world wars, and a rapid (if temporary) shrinkage immediately after 1945. Likewise the navy declined quickly after the Civil War in spite of American prowess in ship technology, with the Asiatic Squadron retaining only five or six dilapidated gunboats. A permanent gain followed each war, but until 1941 the American military remained modest in size compared to other great powers, not well funded, not very influential, and indeed not really a respected profession. Military spending was less than 1 percent of GNP throughout the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth.<sup>11</sup>

The nineteenth-century American military was hardly a negligible fighting force. It was small but effective, flexible, worthy to its main task--fighting Indians--and capable of almost immediate expansion because so many citizens were virtual automatic patriots and also adept with weapons. This was a democratic army drawn from a male population the vast majority of whom owned a rifle, a core strength that enabled it to inflate and deflate rapidly. It was posted around the country and along the frontiers in small forts, but its extraordinary decentralization was also an asset in fighting

skirmishes and even guerrilla wars with Indians.<sup>12</sup>



**Ben Cabrera Mural**

Of course, the nineteenth-century army was configured to fight overmatched Indians and to defend a continent that no one was likely to attack; two oceans provided their own security. By the time Indians were pacified, most Americans couldn't figure out a further use for it: around the old army general of the 1890s "in his neatly disheveled blue uniform," C. Wright Mills wrote, "there hang wisps of gun smoke from the Civil War." A few officers sought to fashion a military that could be used to extend American power abroad--always to the west or across the Pacific, with afterthoughts about Central America but never Europe. Until the 1940s none succeeded. Captain Arthur MacArthur (Douglas MacArthur's father) authored his "Chinese Memorandum" in 1883,

arguing that "a commanding and progressive nation" would only materialize when "we secure and maintain the sovereignty [sic] of the Pacific," but his memo was unread by anyone except his underlings until discovered in the archives a hundred years later. For Army Chief of Staff Hugh L. Scott, the army was "little more than a national constabulary" before the war with Spain.<sup>13</sup>

McKinley-Roosevelt Secretary of War Elihu Root reorganized the army, raising its strength to 100,000, and in 1912, as we have seen, the War Department created a colonial army for the Philippines, Hawaii, and the Canal Zone, which, although often understaffed, lasted until World War II and created a "cadre of semipermanent colonials" (in Linn's words) with much Pacific experience. They volunteered for two years in the Philippines or three in Hawaii and often repeated their tours of duty. In 1903 Douglas MacArthur graduated from West Point--having finished first in his class for three of his four years and achieving a merit rating topped only by Robert E. Lee. Soon he arrived in the Philippines with the Third Engineer Battalion and after two years became aide-de-camp to his father, Arthur. Douglas had an epiphany on a 1905 tour of military installations in Asia: here in the Orient was "western civilization's last earth frontier"; he convinced himself that American destiny and indeed "the future" were "irrevocably entwined with Asia and its island outposts."<sup>14</sup> But MacArthur quickly settled into the unhurried, idyllic life of the Pacific Army. Then came Pearl Harbor and instantaneous national mobilization to over 8 million in uniform, but again Truman shrank the military: the army had 554,000 soldiers by 1948; the navy's budget of \$50 billion in 1945 slipped to \$6 billion, and the air force watched most of its contracts get cancelled (aircraft industry sales dropped from \$16 billion in 1944 to \$1.2 billion in 1947). Defense spending fell to \$13 billion a year, or about \$150 billion in current dollars.<sup>15</sup>

The American military was still not a significant factor in national life before NSC-68 announced the answer to how much “preparedness” the country needed, thus closing a long American debate: and in mainstream Washington, it has never returned. Isolationists, of course, got blamed for the lack of military preparation in 1941, but the debate about America’s role in the world and what kind of military it should have is as old as the country itself: was it a republic or an empire? During the Korean War the United States was spending \$650 billion on defense in current dollars, and it reached that maximum point again in the early part of this new century—a sum greater than the combined defense budgets of the next eighteen ranking military powers in 2009.

#### *A Pacificist Orientation to the World*

Ever since General Douglas MacArthur issued General Order Number One on 15 August, 1945, excluding Allied powers from the occupation of Japan (except in fig-leaf form), dividing Korea at the 38th parallel and Vietnam at the 16th parallel, and seeking to unify China under Chiang Kai-shek’s rule by requiring Japanese soldiers in China to surrender to Nationalist forces, American decisions have shaped the basic structure of international relations in the East Asian region. The only part of that military division that did not hold was China, and after the Communists cleared the mainland in 1948–49 a new division took place: that between Taiwan and the People’s Republic of China (PRC), as the Seventh Fleet moved into the Taiwan Strait. MacArthur ruled Japan as a benevolent emperor, while the Korean War resulted in a vastly deepened division of Northeast Asia: a heavily fortified demilitarized zone replaced the 38th parallel and remains to this day a museum of the defunct global cold war. For a generation China was excluded from the postwar global system by its own radicalism, and by American blockade and war threats. The archipelago of bases was the coercive structure that locked in the American

position in the North Pacific, offering a diffuse but palpable leverage over allies. The United States had bases all over Western Europe, too; the difference was that unlike Europe, no NATO existed nor any ally capable of independent action. No one really cared whether the Japanese or Koreans or Filipinos or Chinese on Taiwan supported such policies, Americans just went ahead more or less as they pleased. The archipelago of empire in East Asia completely neutered the Pacific rivalry between Japan and the United States that occupied the half-century before Pearl Harbor. An outgrowth of World War II and Korea, this extensive base structure now persists into the current century as if nothing had changed.

In 1947 George Kennan and Dean Acheson developed a strategy for Japan’s revival: both understood that Japan was the only serious industrial power in Asia and therefore the only serious military threat; Kennan wanted it again to be a strong military nation, to re-create the turn-of-the-century balance of power in East Asia, but Acheson was shrewder in shaping a Japan with its industry revived and integrated into the American realm, an engine of the world economy and an American-defined “economic animal”—but one shorn of its prewar military and political clout. This occurred coterminously with the emergence of the cold war and deepened dramatically as Japan benefited tremendously from America’s wars in Korea and Vietnam. Successive administrations wanted Japan to “share burdens” in the defense of the Pacific, but because any enlargement would be done under the American security umbrella, Japan’s leaders resisted all but foot-dragging and creeping rearmament, through incremental defense increases. Today the country still recalcitrantly spends less than 1 per cent of its GNP on defense, and it is still impossible to imagine another Admiral Togo building great aircraft carriers or another Admiral Yamamoto putting nuclear submarines in the water. Japan remains entirely open to the permanent stationing of American “land, air,



and sea forces in and about Japan,” in the words of the United States–Japan Security Treaty; the treaty also gave the United States the right to use the armed forces it stations in Japan in any way of its choosing--and it did so in Korea and Vietnam.<sup>16</sup>

The long-term result of this American unilateralism in East Asia may be summarized as follows: it was an asymmetrical hub-and-spokes system in which the noncommunist countries of the region tended to communicate with each other through the United States, a vertical regime solidified by bilateral defense treaties (with Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and the Philippines) and conducted by a State Department that towered over the foreign ministries of these four countries. The countries of the East Asian region might as well have been “hermit kingdoms” vis-à-vis each other, if not in relation to the United States: China didn’t talk to Taiwan or South Korea; not even personal mail passed between the two Koreas; both Koreas hated Japan; and Japanese diplomacy looked to the United States, Europe, and Southeast Asia--but not to its near reaches. Each of them became semi-sovereign states, deeply penetrated by American military structures (operational control of the South Korean armed forces, U.S. Seventh Fleet patrolling of the Taiwan Strait, defense dependencies for all four countries, military bases on their territory), and incapable of anything resembling independent foreign policy or defense initiatives. The only serious breach in this system has been the rise of China, which put Taiwan in the shade of American concerns: but this change, too, owed as much to Richard Nixon’s opening to China as to anything the Chinese leadership did; Nixon, Kissinger, and Carter unceremoniously dumped Taiwan and the American treaty commitment to it. Of course, Japanese leaders have contributed to the continuing divisions of the region by failing to reckon seriously with their aggression against their neighbors, quite in contrast to Germany. But that, too, was originally

something encouraged by American policy, the Japanese leaders it supported, and the very soft peace Japan got in the late 1940s.

The postwar settlement thus remains the determining mechanism in explaining why East Asia, when compared to Europe, has so few multilateral institutions and mechanisms of cooperation and conciliation today, and even fewer through most of the postwar period. There was and is no NATO. There once was a SEATO (Southeast Asia Treaty Organization), but it never amounted to much, never spawned a NEATO, and died after two decades. There was a rump Marshall Plan (the ECA or Economic Cooperation Administration, which aided South Korea and Taiwan from 1947 onward). Like the Marshall Plan in Europe, the ECA was superseded by the revival of the advanced industrial economies--in this case the only one in the region, Japan. Nothing like the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) emerged, the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) was remote, and the theoretically all-inclusive United Nations was essentially an American operation in East Asia (as if anachronism, even atavism were the name of the game, U.S. troops in Korea still sit under the blue flag of the 1950 United Nations Command). There is a modest alphabet soup of Southeast Asian international organizations--ASEAN, APEC, ARF--but none of these groups deploy the power and influence of a single American carrier task force, and even if they did, their tradition is one of mutual respect, never-ending consultation, and nonintervention in each other’s affairs--even the affairs of a human rights nightmare like Burma. Even where you might expect to find multilateral organizations--in the financial, monetary, and economic realm, given the economic strength of the region--cooperation “remains extremely limited, at least by European standards.”<sup>17</sup> Here too, the United States dominates.

China’s turn outward since the 1970s

expressed the way in which economic forces in the region have eroded and bypassed cold war boundaries, bringing former adversaries back into contact--but primarily through business contacts and pop culture, not through multilateral institutions. If the first phase of the cold war emphasized security considerations and divided the region, and the second phase exemplified the ascendancy of economic development and accelerated regional integration, it is important to remember that both these tendencies occurred primarily because of basic shifts in American foreign policy and the resulting pressures on East Asian states. Contemporary obstacles to deeper integration in the region also trace back to Washington (although not only to Washington). Later we will have occasion to examine how contemporary American policy toward the entire world increasingly seems like a redirection of the Pacific pattern of unilateralism. But that very pattern was also the elaboration of a century-long practice of moving and facing West, with allies absent and little concern for what the people in the way of that advance had to say. (If there is a precedent it certainly isn't Atlanticism--Central American interventions bring us closer, but they were often part and parcel of Pacific expansionism.)<sup>18</sup> General Order Number One, the seven-year occupation of Japan, and the security structures that still hold sway in the new century were, in this sense, Douglas MacArthur's way of paying homage to his father--Pacificism, American-style.

Bruce Cumings is chair of the History Department at the University of Chicago. Author of *The Origins of the Korean War*, he has also written for the *New York Review of Books*, the *New Left Review*, the *London Review of Books*, and the *Nation*. He is an *Asia-Pacific Journal* associate. His most recent book, from which this is drawn, is *Dominion from Sea to Sea: Pacific Ascendancy and American Power*.

*Recommended citation: Bruce Cumings, 'Dominion from Sea to Sea: America's Pacific Ascendancy,' The Asia-Pacific Journal Vol 10, Issue 7 No 1, February 13, 2012.*

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>In May 1966 de Gaulle said he wanted "full sovereignty [over] French territory" and so asked Washington to take American forces and bases home. See Johnson (2004), 194.

<sup>2</sup>I am indebted to Patrick Karl O'Brien for discussion on these points, and for his paper, "The Pax Britannica and the International Order, 1688-1914," presented at the Osaka University of Foreign Studies Workshop on Global History, November 22-23, 1999.

<sup>3</sup>Peter J. Katzenstein, *A World of Regions: Asia and Europe in the American Imperium*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005. 2.

<sup>4</sup>The number changes frequently; these are Defense Department figures in Chalmers Johnson, *The Sorrows of Empire: Militarism, Secrecy and the End of the Republic*. New York: Henry Holt, 2004, 4-5, and Johnson, *Nemesis: The Last Days of the American Republic*. New York: Henry Holt, 2006, 5-6. See also Kathy E. Ferguson and Phyllis Turnbull, *Oh, Say, Can You See? The Semiotics of the Military in Hawai'i*. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1999, xiii.

<sup>5</sup>McMurtry quoted in Daniel Little, *The Scientific Marx*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986, 53-54; see also p. 58.

<sup>6</sup>Robert Latham, *The Liberal Moment: Modernity, Security, and the Making of the Postwar International Order*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1997. Marx referred to nineteenth-century colonies as "the state externally." See Karl Marx, *Grundrisse: Foundation of the Critique of Political Economy*. New York: Vintage Books, 1973, 264.

<sup>7</sup>Eisenhower quoted in Michael S. Sherry, *In the Shadow of War: The United States since the 1930s*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995, 233-35.

<sup>8</sup>Johnson (2004), 79-80.

<sup>9</sup>Laton McCartney, *Friends in High Places: The Bechtel Story: The Most Secret Corporation and How It Engineered the World*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1988, 167-68, 170, 177, 178-79, 213-14.

<sup>10</sup>U.S. Senate, Committee on Armed Services, 87th Congress, January 18, 1962, "Nominations of McCone, Korth, and Harlan" (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1962), 35; Joint Committee on Atomic Energy, U.S. Senate, 85th Congress, July 2, 1958, "Nomination of John A. McCone to be a Member of the Atomic Energy Commission" (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1958), 2-18, 56. I am indebted to Meredith Jung-en Woo for these sources.

<sup>11</sup>C. Wright Mills, *The Power Elite*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1956, 175-76; John D. Unruh, *The Plains Across: The Overland Emigrants and the Trans-Mississippi West, 1840-60*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1979, 201, 210; Marcus Cunliffe, *Soldiers and Civilians: The Martial Spirit in America, 1775-1865*. Boston: Little Brown, 1968, ch. 1; David M. Pletcher, *The Diplomacy of Involvement: American Economic Expansion Across the Pacific, 1784-1900*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2001, 119; E. J. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire, 1875-1914*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1987, 351; Sherry (1995), 5.

<sup>12</sup>Walter LaFeber, *The American Age: United States Foreign Policy at Home and Abroad Since 1750*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1989, 11; Ira Katznelson in Katznelson and Martin

Shefter, *Shaped by War and Trade: International Influences on American Political Development*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002, 90-92, 98-99.

<sup>13</sup>Mills (1956), 179; Brian McAlister Linn, *Guardians of Empire: The U.S. Army and the Pacific, 1902-1940*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997, 6, 52.

<sup>14</sup>Linn (1997), 53, 62-65; Fred Anderson and Andrew Cayton, *The Dominion of War: Empire and Liberty in North America, 1500-2000*. New York: Viking, 2005, 342-43.

<sup>15</sup>Russell F. Weigley, *History of the United States Army*. New York: Macmillan, 1967, 475, 486, 568; Gerald T. White, *Billions for Defense: Government Financing by the Defense Plant Corporation During World War II*. University: University of Alabama Press, 1980, 1-2.

<sup>16</sup>Howard B. Schonberger, *Aftermath of War: Americans and the Remaking of Japan, 1945-1952*. Kent Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1989, 259, 269; Bruce Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War, II: The Roaring of the Cataract, 1947-1950*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990, 45-58.

<sup>17</sup>Katzenstein (2005), 35, 136-37, 219-20.

<sup>18</sup>Greg Grandin is right to locate some of the roots of George W. Bush's unilateralism in Reagan administration interventions in Nicaragua and Guatemala, with John Negroponte, John Bolton, Elliott Abrams, and other neoconservatives playing important roles. See Grandin, *Empire's Workshop: Latin America, the United States, and the Rise of the New Imperialism*. New York: Metropolitan Books, 2006, 5-6. But these interventions were little different from the multitude of similar episodes going back to the war with Spain, and all of them were subordinate to the more important Pacific and East Asian involvements.