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A STUDY ON HANS J. MORGENTHAU’S ANALYSIS OF AMERICAN ASIAN POLICY: CHINA AND VIETNAM

by Ken Kiyono

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Preface

There are two kinds of American foreign policies. One is formulated from moral or philosophic points of view. The other is made from realistic points of view. While the former sounds plausible, yet it fails in its application. The latter sounds Machiavellian but it has a chance to be successful. Since the Second World War, the foreign policy of the United States has been based on this moral or philosophic points of view. Thus, she has tried to stop Communism everywhere in the world. However, this policy has not been successful especially in Asia. Against such a policy, Morgenthau proposes a realistic approach as an alternative. So in this paper, the writer would like to call your attention to some important points which Morgenthau has emphasized in his treatises.
I. Three Basic Issues

The writer would like to select three points, such as revolution, Communism and foreign aid out of many basic issues which the United States has faced in Asia. The analysis of these problems by Morgenthau is so important and instructive that policy-makers will learn a lot from it.

Revolution

Morgenthau considers the colonial revolution in Asia as a foregone conclusion of the teachings of the West. In his own words:

The moral challenge emanating from Asia is in its essence a triumph of the moral ideas of the West. It is carried forward under the banner of two moral principles: national self-determination and social justice.... The nations of the West taught the peoples of Asia by their own example that the full of development of the individual's faculties depends upon the ability of the nation to which he belongs to determine of its own free will its political and cultural destines and that this national freedom is a good to fight for: and the peoples of Asia learned that lesson. The West taught the peoples of Asia also that poverty and misery are not God-given curses that men must passively accept, but that they are largely man-made and can be remedied by man; and the peoples of Asia learned that lesson too.1

The United States of America, however, thinks of the revolution mainly from the military point of view. Thus she excludes herself from comprehending it and treating it with success. That chiefly military viewpoint has compelled her, in spite of her "better" information and "instinctive" priority, into an attitude almost indistinguishable from "a counterrevolutionary position per se." Nonetheless that seeming attitude renders her powerless from the very beginning as an upholder of "the revolutionary masses" in rivalry with other nations.2
Communism

Even though the United States has recognized in theory that Communism has not been monolithic any more and has now become poly-centric, yet in practice, especially in Asia, she keeps acting as if Communism were as monolithic a power as ever evenly menacing the United States' interests. The U.S. intervention in Vietnam is a case in point. She intervened in Vietnam to halt Communism, believing that she "knew a priori, without examining the concrete circumstances, what kind of Communist threat" she was confronting.³

That kind of "attitude of instinctive opposition" was certainly in turn two decades or so when "any inroads Communism made anywhere" were equivalent to an enlargement of the power of the Soviet Union antagonistic to the United States. "This attitude has become today not only intellectually untenable but also politically useless and even counterproductive."⁴

Now there exist various Communisms whose enmity to the interests of the United States relies upon the interests of each Communist government and party upon its relations to the Soviet Union and China, two great Communist powers of the world. The extent of their political and military enmity must be decided in each case through "the empirical examination of the facts." Moreover, the extent of enmity in particular case is not unchangeable but is liable to changes brought by policies of the United States and other nations.⁵

Therefore in order that the United States may be successful in dealing with Communism, she will have to do a two-fold task completely: first, a shrewd and certainly hazardous scrutinization of every Communist government and trend in terms of the interests it seeks and of its relations with other Communist governments and trends and second, the shaping of policies that
not only are proper to the sort of Communism confronted but also try to reduce to nothing the influence of Communism on the interests of the United States. 6

These principles must lead the United States in the conduct of her foreign policy toward not merely with Communist countries but also with "revolutionary movements" of the third world open to the influence of Communism. In dealing with those revolutionary movements of the third world successfully, the United States should be especially careful in discriminating whether or not revolutions are Communist-inspired and, if so, whether or not they are harmful to the interests of the United States. 7

Foreign Aid

There are two kinds of controversial opinions concerning foreign aid, which is assumed as "an instrument of foreign policy." While some peoples regard foreign aid as an objective in itself, having "within itself a justification" both surpassing, and free of, foreign policy. In this sense, foreign aid is the accomplishment of a duty which the few wealthy countries have toward "the many poor ones." Other peoples see "no justification for a policy of foreign aid at all." They consider foreign aid as a prodigal and unreasonable enterprise which is useless to the interests of the United States and those of the receiving countries. 8

Nevertheless, to the United States as well as other great nations, a policy of foreign aid is as essential as a foreign political and military policy in order to support her interests abroad. Thus since the end of the last war the United States has been giving foreign aid, yet she has to formulate a comprehensible "theory of foreign aid" which could supply principles of "judgment" for both the upholder and adversaries of a particular step. 9
Without such a theory, the American policy of foreign aid to Asia is being carried out. It is, therefore, conducted by the four incorrect standards. First, success and failure of foreign aid is decided not in terms of its political aim but in its own technological words: an economic step, for example, is defined not by political outcome but by its economic consequences. Second, the political goal of protection against Communism tends to be considered as military readiness itself; consequently, military, rather than political aims incline to supply the principles for American policy. Third, the United States tends to choose militarily friendly countries as receivers of foreign aid, which is thus militarily oriented. Fourth, American aid is usually given to the government in power and then it is kept in power as long as possible.\(^\text{10}\)

In these confusions in the American policy of foreign aid, the over-all aim of the Asian policy of the United States has been lost. In order to avoid this, the problem of foreign aid should be regarded as an integrant part of the political policies of the providing country, that must be formulated with respect to political situations—the influences upon the political situation—in the recipient country.\(^\text{11}\)

These analyses of foreign aid by Morgenthau, the writer sincerely hope, surely provide Japan with valuable lessons since Japan has now become an economic giant in Asia and has been expected to give aid to those underdeveloped countries, especially in Asia.


2) Hans J. Morgenthau, *The Impasse of American Foreign Policy* 3rd ed. (Chicago and London: The University of


4) Ibid., pp. 7–8.

5) Ibid., p. 8.

6) Ibid.

7) Ibid., pp. 8–9.


9) Ibid., p. 255.

10) IAPP., p. 266

11) RAP., pp. 271–272.
II. Confusions in China Policy

In this chapter the writer tries to analyse the China policy of the United States through Morgenthau's papers.

Since the so-called Open Door Policy was formulated in the end of the 19th century, the policy of the United States toward Asia has been basically the same policy as she has supported in Europe from the beginning of her history, namely, that of the balance of power. And the independence of China has been considered as the foundation of that policy.¹

Because of this, the United States antagonized from the very outset the efforts of Japan to realize a Japanese empire mainly at the expense of China. That antagonism began unsuccessfully in the shape of the Stimson Doctrine, that is, the non-recognition of territory acquired by force.² Moreover from the latter part of 1930s on, more severe operations carried out "that verbal expression" of this American antagonism until the last month of 1941 when Japan had to choose between further territorial aggression and war with the United States. Furthermore, during and right after the Second World War, the United States endeavored to make China strong and dependable to check Japan, thus re-establishing the balance of power in Asia. In expectation and advancement of this growth the United States "endowed China both legally and politically with the status of a great power."³

After the defeat of Japan the schism between Chiang Kai-shek and Mao Tse-tung, which had been inconspicuous during the war for the purpose of fighting the common enemy, Japan, became uncontrollable and changed into the civil war in spite of the great endeavor of the United States to reconcile them.⁴ It was in this period that "the confusion over the real issue obscured the thinking and frustrated the policies of the United States."⁵
When it became apparent that the Chiang's regime could not deal with the revolutionary condition as though assisted by American weapons and counsel, there were only two choices left for the United States. One was "military intervention" to destroy the Mao's armies and at the same time, suppress dissatisfaction perpetually. In order to carry out this scheme, the United States would have committed herself politically and militarily beyond measure. This plan was rejected. The other was the reconciliation of the United States to the inevitability of the Communist victory in China. The United States would have then adopted the proper course of action along this line.  

While the Communist regime of China has the same ideological basis, namely, Marx-Leninism as Moscow, in the process of rising to power, the former is little indebted to the latter and it will be able to keep itself in power without the support of the Soviet Union. In this way Chinese Communism is fundamentally different from those of Eastern European countries which the Soviet Union has helped to rise to power and stay in power. This basic difference permits the Chinese Communist government to act freely in international affairs and, in consequence, follow its own foreign policy which is decided by the traditional Chinese interests. These Chinese interests may or may not be identical with those of the Soviet Union and their policies may or may not be corresponding.  

Moreover, the traditional goals of the Soviet Union in Asia have often been at variance with the traditional goals of China. The Soviet Union cannot watch without great anxiety the economic and military growth of Communist China; for if the accomplishments of modern science should be added to the huge population of Communist China, it would then become the strongest nation in the world, outshining the Soviet Union. Thus the Russian government
is fearful of losing its leadership of Communist countries to China.  

However the United States did take neither of the two choices left to it, or instead, it took both of them, following them sometimes concurrently, sometimes one after the other, but always irresolutely and inconsistently. These kinds of policies of the United States were based on two false and naive suppositions concerning the nature of Chinese Communism which were prevalent among the policy-makers of the United States. One was that the Chinese Communists were considered as "agrarian reformers at heart using Marxist slogans without believing them." The other was that "the Nationalist regime" was regarded as "an efficient and reliable machine of government."  

The shock of China's intervention in the Korean War and American domestic politics caused the United States stray into "a policy of counterrevolution per se." The United States has, therefore, ignored the Communist regime in the mainland of China as the lawful government of China and has refused "its right to represent China in the United Nations," while the United States has abided to acknowledge the Chiang regime as the only legitimate government of all China and has provided it with "political, economic, moral and military support," promising its very being through the deployment of American armed forces.  

From this policy the United States has finally made two corollaries; "the policy of isolating China and the policy of peripheral military containment." The former has failed because the United States could not obtain the cooperation of her allies especially in trade and the United States could not make the Chiang regime strong enough to return to the mainland. The latter has failed because the threat which the United States faces in Asia is not primarily military but political and cultural in nature and military containment, therefore, is impertinent to that threat and
may even be counterproductive."

The failure of these policies has brought the United States to the present impasse in her China policy.

Morgenthau draws five conclusions from his analysis of the China policy of the United States and proposes them as bases of a new China policy.

First, the policy of peripheral military containment on the Asian mainland ought to be gradually liquidated.... Second, both the policy of isolating China and the policy of ending that isolation are essentially irrelevant to the issue at hand.... Third, since the expansion of Chinese power and influence, threatening the Asian and world balance of power, proceeds by political rather than by military means, it must be contained primarily by political means.... Fourth, we ought to be clear in our minds that if we should continue the present policy of the peripheral military containment of China, we will find ourselves in all likelihood, sooner or later, at war with China.... Fifth, the ultimate instrument for containing China is the same that has contained the Soviet Union: the retaliatory nuclear capability of the United States....

II

1) ANFP., pp. 193-194.
3) ANFP., p. 195.
5) RAP., p. 359.
6) Ibid.
7) Ibid., pp. 359-360.
8) Ibid., p. 360.
9) Ibid., pp. 360-361.
10) Ibid., p. 361.
11) ANFP., pp. 195-204.
12) Ibid., pp. 205-206.
III. Similar Confusions in Vietnam Policy

In this chapter the writer would like to examine what the United States has learned from the past failure in its policies toward China through Morgenthau's analysis.

While the United States regarded the main issue of the war in Indochina, which the Geneva Agreement ended in 1954, as the expansion of Communism, Communist China considered it as an undertaking of the extension of power and control of Communism. Even though the United States did not assist France in order to keep French power in Indochina, yet the United States took the war as "part and parcel of its over-all strategy of containing Communism throughout the world."\(^1\)

From a precisely military standpoint, the Vietminh armies were so powerful at that time that they could have with ease occupied the whole area and have successfully driven the French out of Indochina. Then why did the Communists consent to open a conference? And why did they make substantial concessions to France and the West? It appears to Morgenthau that the answers to these questions will provide people with "an inkling of the place that South Vietnam holds today in the over-all world situation," especially from the American point of view and her interests.\(^2\)

These are possible answers:

First, Communist China seeks in Asia the same political and military goal as the Soviet Union in Europe. It is to eliminate American influence from the mainland of Asia. A complete military victory over France in Indochina might have brought in the vigorous intervention of the United States remaining as "a military power within the traditional sphere of influence of China." Secondly, the Communists duly expected under the then existing condition that Ngo Dinh Diem, puppet of the United States could not control the confusion and thus South Vietnam would be sooner
or later absorbed by North Vietnam.  

Thirdly, North Vietnam longed to take possession of "the Mekong delta intact." Finally, the Soviet Union had just changed its policy from "the cold war of position into the cold war of maneuver, which was to be decided not in Southeast Asia out Europe." At that time France held so important a position "in the over-all struggle for power in Europe," and the success of the so-called European Defense Community depended upon the attitude of France. Thus the Soviet Union must have harbored the hope to keep France from joining that community by making concessions to France in Indochina. For whatever reasons, France did not join it.  

The policy of the United States toward Vietnam reminds the writer of the American policy toward China which ended in disaster. Had the United States not learned from the disastrous experience in China? Just as the popular displeasure for the Chiang regime had been felt anywhere in China in the end of the civil war, the kind of displeasure was pervading among those liberal and intellectual groups of people in South Vietnam. Nonetheless the United States kept supporting the Diem regime until its fall in 1963, by reason that the Diem regime was the only available government in South Vietnam against Communism and the political and military insecurity was caused by Communist aggression.  

At that time the United States had two alternatives concerning her policy toward South Vietnam. One was to execute political and social reforms which had been very much needed in order to restore peace and order, and the other was to pursue a military solution. Even though the need for such reforms seemed to have been acknowledged by some high officials of the government of the United States, yet it was not realized in actual political action in Saigon. Thus the United States took up the latter alternative,
namely "a purely military solution." This policy is based on the so-called domino theory in Eisenhower-Dulles era. According to this theory, the acquirement by a Communist nation of any part of region, irrespective of "its size and location" was regarded as a disaster that "signaled the beginning of the end for the free world." It followed from the theory that if South Vietnam surrendered, the rest of Indochina would surrender. It had as its logical result the principle that the United States had to "commit" her armed forces to defend any region that might be endangered by Communist countries. In this principle originated "the indiscriminate policy of alliances" of the United States, giving her military aid to any nation which was eager to receive it. Thus the policy of the United States toward Vietnam had been dominated by her military consideration. It seems to the writer that even the present policy is based mainly on the domino theory.

It should be remembered that just as Mao Tse-tung had come to power in China with little help from the Soviet Union, so Ho Chi Minh came to power in Vietnam with little help from Communist China. Moreover, China was the traditional adversary of Vietnam. If the United States had let Vietnam alone, Ho Chi Minh would have pursued the policy of protecting Vietnam from the influence of China. The attitude of the United States, however, forced Ho Chi Minh to "become the leader of a Chinese satellite," until his death.

Here again the United States which has been much influenced by her military consideration, fails to pursue an appropriate policy to the then existing condition. In this way, it seems to the writer that the United States has not learned anything from the past and bitter experience in her China policies and her policy toward Vietnam is the repetition of those of the past.
III


2) Ibid., pp. 26–27.

3) Ibid., pp. 27–28.

4) Ibid., p. 28.


6) Ibid., p. 33.

7) Ibid.,

8) Ibid., p. 68.
IV. How to Avoid Such Confusions

Morgenthau maintains that the foreign policy of the United States in this century has inclined to go to and fro between "an indiscriminate isolationism and an equally indiscriminate internationalism or globalism." While these opposite attitudes are apparently associated with completely opposite foreign policies—total "involvement here, total abstention there"—yet they have the same supposition "about the nature of the political world and the same negative attitude toward foreign policy correctly understood." Between them there is no middle course of shrewd differentiations, complicated selections and delicate handlings, that is the appropriate realm of foreign policy.¹

Both of them reject the presence of precedences in foreign policy which are determined by a hierarchical order of interests and attainability of power to sustain them. Thus, both the isolationist and the internationalist think that American power is self-sufficient to defend and enhance the national interest of the United States either in total isolation or total world-wide commitment.²

Furthermore, this overconfidence in their power which blinds them of reality of politics, changes the complicated and distinguishing mode of political thinking into "a simple approach," that in its simpleness is corresponding to the simpleness of their conception of politics — the moral campaign. In the isolationist's sense, this moralism endeavors to defend "the virtue of the United States" from evils of the power politics in the world. On the other hand, in the contemporary internationalist's this seeks to defend "the virtue of the free world" from Communism and to make a new world in that that goodness will be able to prosper.³ After the Second World War the foreign policy of the United States has mainly been based on this kind of moralism.
In fact, the moral campaign against Communism originates in the so-called Truman Doctrine which President H. S. Truman expressed in his message to Congress of the United States March 12, 1947. He stated that the problem between the United States and the Soviet Union must be comprehended not as the contest between two powerful nations but "as a struggle between good and evil, democracy and totalitarianism," and in order to win this contest the United States must aid Greece and Turkey. In its positive sense, it declared that the United States would defend "free democratic nations everywhere in the world" against any subversion and aggression. In its negative sense, it announced that the United States would contain the Soviet Union everywhere in the world. Thus, in its connotation, the Truman Doctrine became applicable everywhere in the world.

However, Dean Acheson, Secretary of State, under President Truman made his speech before the National Press Club January 12, 1950, in which he reduced the generalities of the doctrine in proportion to the national interest of the United States and "the power available to support it." The antithesis between the declared principle and the actual application of it was conspicuous. And this trend continued and was even marked under the Eisenhower Administration. Under it the moral campaign against Communism took the form of alliances such as the Baghdad Pact and the South East Treaty Organization which were concluded for the purpose of containing Communism in the Middle East and Asia.

Under the Kennedy Administration, the contrast between pronouncements and actual policies began to be less conspicuous. The United States became more realistic in discriminating various shades of Communism and formulating its policies accordingly. In this way, the campaign fever yielded to realism. Under the Johnson Administration, however, the campaign zeal was newly enhanced. President' announcements and formulated policies were
almost in unison. Thus the United States began to stop Communism everywhere in the world by her armed forces.  

This is a grave alteration. It brings out three basic questions of "intellectual and practical importance": first concerning the aim of foreign policy when it applies not only to an enemy but also to antagonistic "political movement" going across national lines; secondly concerning "the bearing of" the movement of international Communism upon the American national interest; thirdly concerning how to dispose of the revolutions which Communism might take over.  

To these questions Morgenthau derives answers from historical facts. There are two occasions in history which gave the answers to these questions. One was that when England was confronted with revolutionary France, William Pitt, the British Premier applied the principle of the national interest, that was "security" of England. The other was that when the European kings were menaced by "liberal revolutions" after the wars of Napoleon on one hand and by Russian imperialism on the others, Lord Castlereagh, the English Foreign Secretary was against the Russian extension and "refused to oppose or support liberal revolutions per se." Thus both Pitt and Castlereagh protected the national interest of England.  

Finally while a foreign policy which is formulated against the global "political movement," Communism, mixed "the sphere of philosophic or moral judgment with political action and for this reason it is bound to fail." A foreign policy which is made within "narrow limits, defined by the interest at stake and the power available," has an opportunity to succeed. A foreign policy that is, on a global scale, made against revolutions and subversions caused by Communism, transgressed "those limits" in three respective points. First, even the strongest country has the limited "resources"; secondly, "the task such a foreign policy sets itself
is unending”; thirdly, the assault on a specific revolution as part of a global, “anti-revolutionary campaign” is destined to have global “repercussions.”

In order to make “a sound foreign policy,” the United States must understand “the bearing” which a specific Communism in a specific nation has upon the American interests without resorting to “moral and philosophic opposition to Communism as such.”

In conclusion Morgenthau states:

Such a policy would make the highest demands on the technical skill, the moral stamina, and the political wisdom of our government, but it is the only one that promises at least a measure of success.

IV

1) VUS., p. 81.
2) Ibid.
3) Ibid., p. 82.
4) Ibid., pp. 82–83.
5) Ibid., pp. 83–84.
6) Ibid., p. 84.
7) Ibid., pp. 84–85.
8) Ibid.
9) Ibid., pp. 87–88.
10) Ibid., p. 88.
11) Ibid., p. 90.
Conclusion

In this paper the writer tried to point out some important errors in American foreign policies after the Second World War which Hans J. Morgenthau has ably indicated. Those errors have brought the United States to the present impasse in Vietnam.

In process of foreign policy-making, policy-makers tend to rely mainly on plausibly moral or philosophic judgment and to try to solve problems accordingly: those policies toward China and Vietnam are the cases in point. Thus the United States has endeavored to stop Communism everywhere in the world as if she had limitless power and inexhaustible resources.

In order to avoid these errors, Morgenthau urges, the United States should cut the indiscriminate involvement down to the size of her national interest and power available to support it. The writer believes that this proposition will provide policy-makers in Japan with valuable reminder when they formulate foreign policies.