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MEMORANDUM

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NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

SECRET/SENSITIVE/EYES ONLY

ACTION

July 15, 1975

MEMORANDUM FOR: SECRETARY KISSINGER  
FROM: W. R. SMYSER  
SUBJECT: The Situation in Asia

*Handwritten initials and signature*

About a year and a half ago, I sent you a memorandum in which I said that the nations of Asia were adjusting well to the Nixon Doctrine and the different American presence.

It is a remarkable testimonial that this remains true, though not as much as before, even after recent events in Indochina.

Most nations in Asia apparently believe that revolutionary warfare of the Vietnamese model, like a car accident, is something that happens to other people. Therefore, they do not feel quite as discomfited by some of the "lessons of Indochina" as one might suppose they should.

On the other hand, they are worried about North Vietnamese expansionism, which they quite accurately regard as having been the principal determinant of events in Indochina. They are also worried about the danger of increased Russian and Chinese activity, though they still regard these in rather amorphous terms.

The crucial ingredient, in the future as in the past, is what the United States will do. Virtually every Asian Embassy in Washington is spending more effort on the Hill because they recognize the growing importance and growing independence of the Congress. But they still look principally to the Administration, not only because of past associations but because they believe that the Administration remains the center of policy-making.

Even those countries that are most concerned about our determination and our capacity to sustain an effort will still work with us largely because they see little other option. This may have elements of whistling in the dark but, from their standpoint, it seems the most reasonable course.

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DECLASSIFIED

E.O. 12958, Sec. 3.5

NSC Memo, 11/24/98, State Dept. Guidelines

By KAH, NARA, Date 1/17/00



The nations that have been most affected by events in Indochina have, of course, been those who have<sup>been</sup> most closely associated with us; e. g., Korea, Thailand, and the Philippines.

-- The Koreans remain most anxious to work with us because they see no other option (and, in fact, they have none until Pyongyang changes courses or until Peking and Moscow break loose from Pyongyang).

-- The Thai are unable to make up their minds between efforts at accommodation -- for which they would have to expel us -- or between a neutral formula -- for which they would need to keep at least some American backing. Since few of them see the problem in these terms they tend to vacillate and posture.

-- The Philippines are in the peculiar position of wanting a firmer commitment while reducing our overt presence. But their basic objectives are not hostile to our interests.

What is most noteworthy is that countries like Malaysia, Australia, and Singapore seem to be turning to us more than before, even after Indochina. One can adduce some complex reasons for this, which are not worth elaborating, and I suppose one might term it the "reverse domino" effect as countries that felt safe now begin to wonder.

### Policy

As for policy, I think we can set a fairly straightforward general course but the application will be tricky in a number of countries.

-- Generally, we clearly must stay and help those who want our assistance as they appear genuinely to do.

-- Thailand, I think we can and should ride with the storm and cut our forces, if necessary completely, so as to avoid providing cheap issues. The problem is to do it in a way that does not discourage our friends and to accompany our military departure with an increase in other forms of collaboration as well as in aid.

-- In the Philippines, I see no reason to keep sovereignty over the bases but I recognize the problems this might create for you in Panama.



-- In Indochina, I am in no hurry to proceed back though I think we should keep a mission in Laos as long as decently possible as a morale booster for the Thai.

-- In Korea, I think we are on the right course of making our concern shrilly known. But I see little beyond stalemate, unless and until Moscow and Peking change their attitudes. Bringing about such a change should be a major objective.

-- In Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia, the best we can do is to expand military aid. It is what they need and what they will appreciate.

-- As for the rest, our course is generally set and will probably work if we can keep control.

One specific recommendation is that we seriously consider having the President visit Manila, Jakarta, and Singapore on his way from Peking. I have discussed this with Brent and with Phil. I was against it until a month or two ago but have begun to change my mind for three reasons:

-- First and most important, the President does very well on these trips. They will help us in Asia, and will cheer over friends.

-- Second, the Chinese cannot really object because they want to keep us in Asia.

-- Third, it will reduce the pressures on him for immediate results, whatever they may be, in Peking.

I recognize the disadvantages, including the risk of over-commitment and the danger that a jealous opposition here will reduce aid money to undercut the President's impact. But I think we should study such a trip seriously.

RECOMMENDATION:

That you authorize the NSC Staff to prepare a study on having the President visit Manila, Jakarta and Singapore on his way back from Peking.

APPROVE \_\_\_\_\_ DISAPPROVE \_\_\_\_\_

