Editorial

James I. Matray

Editor-in-Chief

jmatray@csuchico.edu

U.S. presidents never have formulated and implemented individual foreign policies in a vacuum. When scholars examine specific events in the history of American foreign relations it has not been uncommon that they have ignored the impact of unrelated challenges occurring in other parts of the world at around the same moment. Examples of U.S. leaders confronting two or more crises simultaneously in the nation's history are numerous. In December 1945, James K. Polk, for example, ignited a clash with Britain over the Oregon Territory when he announced the termination of the 1818 joint occupancy arrangement. By early the next year, fears grew that the two nations might go to war over the issue. At the same time, Polk was placing pressure on the government of Mexico to accept the Rio Grande as the border with the new state of Texas. While Britain and the United States reached a settlement in Oregon, Polk's provocation led to a war with Mexico in which it lost the northern half of its country. More than a half century later, President Woodrow Wilson sent U.S. forces into Mexico on 14 March 1916 to capture Pancho Villa following his raid on Columbus, New Mexico. Just ten days later, a German submarine torpedoed the French ship *Sussex*, wounding two Americans, eliciting from Wilson a threat to sever relations after another attack without warning. On 23 January 1968, North Korea seized the spy ship *USS Pueblo*, killing one American sailor and holding the rest of the crew captive. Just over a week later, North Vietnam and the Viet Cong launched massive attacks on South Vietnam in the Tet Offensive. These events provide just a few examples of how U.S. presidents often face serious crises at different places across the globe simultaneously that make far more complex the development of policies to advance and protect the nation's interests.

Sino-American relations provide many examples of this pattern of the United States struggling to develop effective policies when confronting concurrent challenges in world affairs. Early in 1898, for example, European powers and Japan were intensifying the pressure on China to grant each control over commerce and investment in its ports. Britain saw this as a threat to its long-standing dominant position in China and approached the United States with a

proposal for joint action to prevent spheres of exclusive interest in China. President William McKinley, however, demurred because at that time he was preoccupied with the crisis in Cuba that would lead in April to war with Spain. During World War I, Japan, on 7 May 1915, submitted to China an ultimatum demanding that it accept thirteen of the “21 Demands” providing it with extensive control over Chinese affairs. That same day, a German submarine sank the *Lusitania*, a British passenger ship, with 128 Americans aboard perishing. American demands for war commanded the attention of President Wilson, while Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan delivered a formal U.S. protest to Japan. Japanese aggressive behavior toward China continued during the interwar period as the United States wrestled with challenges both in Europe and Latin America. In 1927, the Coolidge administration fought with Mexico over denial of access for U.S. firms to subsoil oil rights, just as Chiang Kai-shek’s forces slaughtered Communist Chinese in Shanghai. President Franklin D. Roosevelt was reconsidering his initial praise for the Munich Agreement in November 1938 as Japan declared a “New Order in Asia” and renounced the Open Door Policy. Concurrently with these events, as Wu Lin-chun explains in the opening article of this issue titled “China and the United States: Business, Technology, and Networks, 1914–1941,” a significant number of American enterprises, technology, and related business organizations and engineering groups in China were engaged in vigorous activities to develop and modernize that nation.

Wu describes in detail the actions of the American Asiatic Association (AAA), the American Chamber of Commerce of China (AmCham), and the Association of Chinese and American Engineers (ACAE) in promoting economic growth and technological change in China in the interwar era. “American enterprises, technology, business organizations, and engineering groups in China,” he demonstrates, also “helped establish connections between Chinese and global markets ... until the Pacific War, when suspension of the networks occurred.” During World War I, U.S. businessmen looked to economic opportunities in China as an alternative to a Europe engulfed in conflict, resulting in the creation of the AAA and AmCham and initiating a process of expanding trade that by 1931 made the United States China’s largest trading partner. Meanwhile, American-educated Chinese returned home to become entrepreneurs in industry and banking, introducing modern production techniques and management methods. As American and Chinese businessmen worked to expand Sino-American trade, the U.S. government provided diplomatic and legislative support. Wu also shows how the interwar period witnessed the rising importance of Chinese scientists and engineers, beginning in 1919 with the founding

of the ACAE. Members worked on public infrastructure projects and with U.S. societies in distributing technical literature. After 1928, the Nanjing government hired these engineers, who followed the U.S. model in achieving industrial standardization and constructing water conservancy projects. China also gained membership in international commercial and engineering associations. Wu insightfully argues that the unprecedented role that Chinese-American exchange organizations played in the postwar transformation of China's business and technology shows how "modern China deemed Americans to be useful partners" in its pursuit of domestic development.

Wu explains how in September 1939, the outbreak of World War II in Europe escalated chaotic conditions in China during the Sino-Japanese War to the point that "the ACAE no longer could carry out its general activities" and stopped publishing its journal. Nazi Germany's attack on Poland created, of course, much greater distress for Roosevelt and his advisors, who, over the next more than two years, faced a cascade of simultaneous crises both in the Atlantic and Pacific. Following several months of inaction, Nazi forces invaded Norway and Denmark in April 1940 and then Belgium and the Netherlands. Concurrent with German conquest of France, Japan sent its forces into northern Indochina and Thailand. Congressional isolationism limited Roosevelt's options to providing access for Britain to buy American goods, but he had a freer hand in Asia and imposed economic sanctions on Japan. A year later, Secretary of State Cordell Hull would make plain to Ambassador Nomura Kichisaburo that only Japan's retreat from seized territories would restore normal trade relations, doing so just a week after the USS *Niblack* dropped depth charges on a Nazi submarine in the first hostile action between U.S. and German forces during World War II. On 4 September, a German submarine launched a torpedo toward the USS *Greer*, which responded with depth charges. With the United States essentially at war with Germany, Hull just 6 days later formally rejected Nomura's proposal for a meeting between Roosevelt and Prime Minister Konoye Fumimaro to resolve the differences between the two countries arguably removing the last barrier to the Pearl Harbor attack. Meanwhile, U.S. intelligence services had been monitoring German and Italian espionage activities, but Bryan Hayashi examines instead the surveillance of Japanese Americans in Hawai'i in the second article of this issue titled "Frank Knox's Fifth Column in Hawai'i: The U.S. Navy, the Japanese, and the Pearl Harbor Attack."

Hayashi reexamines what Secretary of Navy Frank Knox meant when he "declared a week after Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor that fifth columnist activities were partly responsible for the success of Imperial Japanese forces." He presents evidence and analysis disproving the claim of prior historians that

Knox was a racist who was “targeting all Japanese Americans or Japanese nationals.” Hayashi quotes newspaper reports on the speech at the time to demonstrate that Knox was “referring to a small number of Japanese Americans” and this was not “evidence of racial antipathy towards all Japanese regardless of citizenship.” Knox also followed advice from his admirals who minimized the number of fifth columnists, approving internment of less than one percent of Japanese in Hawai‘i. Hayashi describes how the Japanese Consul-General’s office enlisted Japanese in Hawai‘i “who voluntarily and without pay gathered information from ... public libraries and newspapers.” U.S. investigators at first fixated on these *toritsuginin*, but soon identified those Japanese Americans actually involved in espionage who Yoshikawa Takeo, the consul general’s secretary, had recruited because they had “dual citizenship, sharp minds, excellent recall for minute details, and their own automobiles to carry out the surveillance task.” U.S. authorities arrested over two hundred of them, which satisfied Knox, who, while aware of a sabotage threat, “would not exaggerate it to divert resources away from the battlefield.” He was determined to destroy “Axis ideational and social structures,” not race. “Knox’s unwillingness to elaborate on his 15 December fifth columnist comment,” Hayashi persuasively concludes, “reflected not only ... his desire to ‘play ball’ with the U.S. Army’s program to win over Japanese Americans in Hawai‘i, but also [that he] no longer viewed every Japanese resident in the United States, regardless of citizenship, as a national security risk due to their ‘race.’”

In January 1969, the United States was fighting a far less popular war when Richard M. Nixon became president. Despite his focus on ending the Vietnam conflict, however, he also faced other concurrent challenges around the globe that distracted his attention. For example, on 15 April 1969, North Korea shot down a U.S. intelligence aircraft, causing Nixon to consider military retaliation before adopting a restrained approach. That he had extended the Vietnam War into Cambodia a month earlier with Operation Menu, a secret bombing campaign, surely dissuaded him from possibly igniting another war. Nixon’s annoyance over North Vietnam and the Viet Cong maintaining bases in Cambodia led him to order U.S. and South Vietnam forces to invade the country in late April 1970. Causing him frustration simultaneously was the Soviet Union providing Egypt with an air defense system to supplement access to advanced warplanes and artillery, resulting in Nixon ending postponement of allowing Israel to buy U.S. jet fighters. In February 1971, South Vietnamese troops invaded Laos to cut the Ho Chi Minh Trail, only to retreat in disarray when North Vietnamese forces counterattacked and inflicted massive losses upon them. This evidence that the policy of “Vietnamization” was failing arrived as Nixon

was monitoring similarly distressing developments in Chile, where President Salvadore Allende, who the United States tried and failed to prevent from gaining office, was busy enacting a series of socialist-inspired reforms. During these first three years of his presidency, Nixon concurrently worked to manage competition between three U.S. allies over oil exploration rights in the South China Sea, which Kuan-jen Chen describes in this issue's third article titled "Fishing for Oil: Natural-Resource Management between the United States and Maritime East Asia in the 1970s."

Chen examines the competition between Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan over the right to claim ownership and exploit oil reserves under the seabed of the East China Sea beginning in 1969. The U.S. government became involved because the three nations turned to American oil companies that had cutting-edge exploration techniques and financial power. In 1970, Chiang Kai-shek proposed suspending questions about sovereignty over the Diaoyudao/Senkaku islands to reach an agreement to "survey, research, and explore" opportunities to exploit jointly these natural resources. Japan enthusiastically organized a committee with each of the other two nations to arrange terms for collaboration. The People's Republic of China (PRC) interceded to ensure the failure of this cooperation, first prohibiting trade with any Japanese businesses having dealings with Taiwanese or South Korean companies. Beijing also started to intercept U.S. ships navigating in Chinese territorial waters. Fearing a military confrontation, the United States, as it moved toward reconciliation with the PRC, pressed U.S. oil firms to enact a moratorium on their contractual obligations to South Korea and Taiwan. Seoul and Taipei protested and threatened in April 1971 to cancel the concessions they had given to the American oil companies. The PRC's entry into the United Nations that fall removed Taiwan from its seat at the "chess game." After unrelated delays, Japan and South Korea signed the Northern/Southern Part Agreements in 1978. With Taiwan no longer a player in the arrangement, Beijing's protests fell on deaf ears. In this "power game over natural resources management," Chen persuasively concludes, "oil reserves were never the issue, but instead ... actual concerns of these players" about sovereignty, local interests, and security were "behind their diplomatic language," thus providing a "historical lens to understand the contours of the shifting geopolitical structure in 1970s maritime East Asia."

Readers may be disappointed that this is not the promised theme issue with the tentative title "The Korean War Prisoners Choosing Neutral Nations: Their Global Odyssey from China and Korea to India and then Latin America." Dr. David C. Chang, faculty member at Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, was to guest edit the publication of three articles that authors

presented in March 2019 at the Association of Asian Studies Conference in Denver, Colorado. Regrettably, it has become necessary to postpone publication of these essays until the next issue. The editor-in-chief welcomes the receipt of proposals for future theme issues.