

THE UNITED STATES MOVES ACROSS THE PACIFIC

*The A. B. C.'s of the American Problem
in the Western Pacific and the Far East*

By KENNETH SCOTT LATOURETTE

*D. Willis James Professor of Missions
and Oriental History
and Fellow of Berkeley College
in Yale University*

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PREFACE

The entrance of the United States into World War II by way of the Pacific rather than the Atlantic has deep significance. The fateful December 7, 1941, was not an accident. It came in consequence of a long chain of events which go back into the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Through them the United States had become increasingly committed to active participation in Far Eastern affairs. The policy through which the United States was drawn into the conflict then in progress in China and the western Pacific was not the work of any one man, administration, or political party. It represents a trend which is as old as the westward movement of the American frontier. Through it the United States has assumed continuing responsibilities in the Far East such as she has never been willing to undertake in Europe or even in the Americas south of the Caribbean. The trans-Pacific trend of her frontier was accelerated and rendered irrevocable by the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and Manila. Upon the United States fell a heavier proportion of the burden of defeating Japan than of overcoming Germany. Upon her will devolve more of the task of postwar settlements and the maintenance of peace in the Far East and the western Pacific than

in Europe. For untold generations to come the United States is to be entangled in the affairs of the East of Asia and its adjacent islands to a much greater extent than in Europe and possibly than in South America. Few Americans are even dimly aware of the implications of the trans-Pacific trend of their history. None can yet know the full consequences. When a partial comprehension of the significance of what has happened dawns upon them, many will wish to withdraw. The course of history will be against them. The United States may temporarily pause and may even seem to be making progress toward extricating herself. If she does, the overwhelming probabilities are that she will not permanently succeed. For better or for worse the United States is in the Far East and is there to stay. For an indefinite number of years ahead she will be more rather than less deeply involved. The great question is not whether the United States should pull out of the Far East. She will not. The real issue is what procedures the government of the United States shall pursue in that region.

It is the purpose of this little book to say something about the facts and the problems so briefly suggested in the preceding paragraph. First of all we will rapidly sketch the course of history which has brought the United States to its present deep involvement in the Far East. We will next outline the main factors in the Far Eastern situation with which the United States will have to deal in the years immediately ahead. Finally we will venture some suggestions as to what should be the main features of American policy in the Far East.

Strangely enough, not a little of what we are here saying has not been said before. There has been slight or only superficial appreciation of the fashion in which the course

of her history has conspired to push the United States ever farther across the Pacific and into the Far East, and, accordingly, of what is entailed for the future of the United States, the Far East, and the world as a whole.

A few of the experts have partly sensed it, but none has gone to the pains to point out the manner in which, on the basis of our entire course in the Far East, the United States has become inextricably enmeshed in that region. Still less have they pointed out that this fact, together with conditions in the Far East, is almost certainly to divert for many years to come our major attention and energies from Europe and Latin America to the western Pacific and the East of Asia.

No one of us is wise enough accurately to forecast future events. We should, however, be able to discern the main drift of history, from it to perceive more clearly the problems which will concern us in the decades immediately ahead, and thus to have some degree of wisdom in modifying, so far as we are able, the Far Eastern policies of the United States.

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CHAPTER I

The Far-Eastward Drive of the United States

The growing participation of the United States in Far Eastern affairs has been closely associated with one of the oldest, most constant, and most powerful factors in the American history, the westward moving frontier. Indeed, the prominence of the United States in the Far East is in large part the outcome and in some degree the cause of this westward drive. Because of that association American activity in the western Pacific and the Far East assumes peculiar, almost ominous significance. It presages growing rather than declining American responsibilities in that area. It explains the portentous fact that the United States entered the second world war of the twentieth century not by way of the Atlantic, as in the first of the world struggles of the century, but by way of the Pacific.

That contrast is momentous. It is evidence of a progressive shift in the orientation of the United States. Traditionally the United States has looked toward Europe. It was from Europe that she derived most of her population and

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the essential elements of her culture. It is with Europe that she has had her major economic ties. She is part of the Occidental world, of which Europe is the historic center. During the colonial period what later became the United States was automatically drawn into those European struggles in which Great Britain was a belligerent. After its independence the new nation strove to keep aloof. Indeed, that reluctance to be engulfed in the maelstrom of European politics has been one of the persistent features of the national mind. Yet the United States has become involved in every general European conflict, first that waged to restrain Napoleonic France, then that to curb the Germany of Wilhelm II, and latterly that to defend Europe against Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. Presumably had there been no Pacific complications she would sooner or later have joined in active belligerency against Germany and Italy. However, for her, fighting began first in the Pacific and with Japan. Upon the United States devolved a larger proportion of the load of defeating Japan than of bringing Germany and Italy to the dust. By a probability which is almost a certainty, the United States will have to assume more responsibility for maintaining peace in the Far East and the western Pacific than in Europe. Europe will long remain prominent on the American horizon. However, western Europe is clearly a waning element in the world. The events of the present century have so impoverished its leading nations that they will not soon if ever hold again the dominant position which was theirs in global affairs in the century between 1815 and 1914. Never has the United States poured out in Latin America blood and treasure comparable in amount to what she has expended in the western Pacific. The horizon of the United

States is moving westward. So far as can be seen, it will continue to do so. The currents which have brought about the shift have been operating for over a century and a half and are running ever more strongly in that direction. Few Americans yet appreciate the significance of what has been taking place before their very eyes. None can foresee fully all the consequences. The United States has been pursuing a course from which there seems to be no probability of withdrawal. Here is a glacier-like movement which cannot be turned back. Or, to change the metaphor, here is a Greek tragedy. Actions have already been taken, indeed, were begun decades ago, the major outlines of whose denouement are, because of them, so inescapable as to be almost inevitable. The outcome cannot but affect profoundly the United States, the Far East, and the world as a whole.

The main stages of the westward movement of the United States are among the most familiar facts of American history. It is their bearing upon America's Far Eastern future which is usually ignored. They can be sketched rather rapidly. In 1783, by the treaty which ended its war of independence, the United States had its western boundary at the Mississippi River. Twenty years later, in 1803, the Louisiana Purchase carried the border a great leap westward. Not all the boundaries were definite, but it was clear that the United States now touched the crest of the Rocky Mountains. Approximately fifteen years later, in 1818, joint occupancy with Great Britain of the Oregon country brought the United States indisputably to the Pacific, even though as yet not in sole possession of land along that ocean. Less than thirty years later, in 1846, the termination of joint occupancy gave the United States the better part of the Oregon country, that south of the forty-ninth parallel.

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Slightly less than two years later, in 1848, the settlement of the Mexican War through the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo transferred to the United States title to New Mexico and California. Thus, in the 1840's, slightly more than a half-century after Great Britain had acknowledged her withdrawal from the Empire, the United States had achieved a westward expansion about twice the east-west width of her original domain and had acquired a broad frontage on the Pacific. In 1867, a little less than two decades after the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, the purchase of Alaska from Russia still further expanded the Pacific littoral of the United States. Indeed, the Pacific coast of the United States was now longer than its Atlantic coast. Only the narrow Bering Strait separated the United States from Asia. Since the Aleutians came with Alaska, the United States had moved beyond the continent into the Pacific itself. In the following decade, in 1878, the United States stepped into the mid-Pacific by the acquisition of a coaling station at Pago Pago, in Samoa. While the partition of the islands and full acquisition of the island of Tutuila in the group did not occur until 1900, the United States had taken another long stride westward. The year 1898 saw the annexation by the United States of Hawaii, the crossroads of the Pacific. It also witnessed the placing of the American flag over the Philippines. The United States had become a Far Eastern power.

While the facts catalogued in the last paragraph are among the most obvious in the record of the United States, it is seldom realized how closely intertwined they have been with the trans-Pacific extension of American interests and influence. With occasional pauses the United States has been increasingly prominent in the Far East. The earlier

stages of that activity were intimately associated with the westward movement of the territorial possessions of the United States. For more than four decades after 1898, except for the zone of the Panama Canal, the United States did not make fresh acquisitions of land on its Pacific borders. This was the longest gap in over a century and a half in westward expansion by the addition of territory. However, in the years when annexation seemed to have ceased, the movement of the United States into the Far East was greatly and progressively augmented. More and more the American government concerned itself with Far Eastern affairs and took initiative in them. Although in a modified form, westward expansion was continuing. It is to this story that we must now turn, and in somewhat less summary fashion than we have dealt with the more familiar one of territorial advance.

THE FAR EAST DRAWS THE UNITED STATES WESTWARD

In the very year, 1783, in which the Treaty of Paris closed the War of Independence and gave the United States the Mississippi River as its western boundary, Robert Morris, leading financier of the Revolutionary cause, was laying plans to send ships to China. The first vessel to carry the Stars and Stripes to that empire was not actually sent until early in the following year. In the succeeding years voyages of American ships to China rapidly increased. The United States, now by her own choice outside the British Empire, was deprived of much of the lucrative market which she had enjoyed when she was within the walls erected to make of that empire an economic unit. Yet, no longer kept

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out of the south and east of Asia by the monopoly of the British trade in that region given the English East India Company, Americans were free to dispatch ships to China. The urge for new markets and the opportunity at Canton, the one port in the Middle Kingdom then open to Westerners, led to the rapid growth of American commerce through that city. This fact in itself helped to turn American eyes to the Far East. China held a glamour possessed by few others of the early foreign markets of the young republic.

In connection with the China trade there developed a commerce in commodities obtainable in the Pacific which brought ships from the eastern seaboard to the west coast of North America and to the islands of the Pacific. These contacts had no small share in attracting the United States to the Pacific and in drawing her into territorial ambitions and acquisitions along its borders. The United States was then poor in the precious metals. She produced few goods which the Chinese wanted. For the tea and silk of China her merchants must needs pay in silver and of this they had little. For furs, however, there existed in that empire a seemingly inexhaustible demand. These, it was early found, could be obtained through trading voyages along the northwest coast of America and by sealing voyages in the Pacific. It was the *Columbia*, a ship engaged in the northwest trade, that discovered the river which bears her name. The earliest claim of the United States to the west coast, the disclosure of the *Columbia*, was acquired as an incident of the China trade.

Early in the nineteenth century the westward expansion of the United States and the Far East again became intimately and causally connected through John Jacob Astor.

That merchant prince, then engaged in the fur trade, conceived the daring project of a chain of fortified trading posts which would stretch across the vast area west of the Mississippi to the mouth of the Columbia. From there his ships would carry the accumulated pelts to Canton. Financially the project was a failure. Yet the creative imagination which had tied the American advance into the West with the Far East had profound significance. It was prophetic of the fashion in which dreamers who had the capacity to translate their far-ranging visions into reality would regard the westward march of the United States as not stopping with the east coast of the Pacific.

The collection of cargoes for the China market was the chief source of the initial interest of Americans in Hawaii and in other islands of the Pacific. In the 1790's and for a generation or more thereafter, scores of American ships ranged the northwest coast and the islands of the Pacific collecting materials for the Canton merchants. A large proportion spent more than one season in the Pacific and many wintered in Hawaii. It was mainly with furs that they filled their holds. To furs was added sandalwood, for that had a ready sale in China. *Bêche-de-mer*, prized by Chinese gourmets, was also obtained in the Pacific. This commerce did not lead to American territorial claims in most of the islands which it touched. Yet it helped to familiarize Americans of the Atlantic seaboard with the distant Pacific, it connected interest in that region with China, and it initiated the steps through which, in 1898, the Hawaiian Islands became a part of the United States.

On the heels of American commerce came American missionaries. The new horizons opened in the Pacific and China attracted the newly awakening concern of the churches of

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the United States for the peoples of other lands. It was through Polynesian youths brought by traders to the United States that American missionaries first entered Hawaii. It was a deeply religious New York merchant in the Canton trade who gave financial assistance to the first American missionaries in that port. In the missionaries and their constituencies additional ties were created which drew the United States into the Pacific and the Far East.

Diplomatic activity followed merchants and missionaries. In the fore part as in the latter portion of the nineteenth century Great Britain was the leading commercial power in the Far East. She took the initiative in forcing open the doors of China. Yet for a time the United States was a serious competitor for the China trade. In the 1830's Edmund Roberts led an expedition which touched at a number of countries and which obtained treaties from Siam and Muscat. The United States did not join in either the war of 1839-1842 or the war of 1856-1860 in which Great Britain, in the latter struggle aided by France, constrained China to enter into treaty relations. However, she was not averse to sharing in the fruits of the victories and after each conflict obtained a treaty with China which conceded to her all, except territory, which had been won by the successful belligerents. Indeed, her first treaty, that of 1844, added the initial elaboration of the principle of extraterritoriality.

Significantly it was the United States and not Great Britain or Russia, the other two most interested Western powers, which opened Japan. The project had been afoot since the 1830's. Indeed, in that decade an attempt had been made, under private auspices, through the *Morrison*. It was not the *Morrison* but Perry and his expedition which succeeded in effecting the initial halting departure of Japan from her isolation. The imagination and the firmness which

brought about this consummation consciously linked the enterprise with the westward expansion of the United States. It was in 1853-1854 that Perry made his successive visits to Japan and obtained the first treaty between that country and a Western power. Within the preceding ten years the United States had acquired California and sole title to the Oregon country south of the forty-ninth parallel. Gold had been discovered in California and the rush of settlement was well under way. Traffic to the west coast was in part going across the Isthmus of Panama and projects were in the air for the further development of that route. In the official instructions to Perry the conclusion was drawn that the westward movement of the United States had brought that country nearer to the Far East. The statement was made that "the consequences of these events have scarcely begun to be felt" and that "no limits can be assigned" to the "future extension" of the intercourse of the American people with the peoples of the east of Asia.

These words were prophetic. The conviction expressed by them became an integral part of the American dream. They have been fulfilled far beyond what the writers could possibly have foreseen.

In the convention negotiated by Townsend Harris in 1857 and especially in the commercial treaty obtained in 1858 the United States continued to lead other Western nations in drawing Japan into the stream of the world's life.

INITIAL AMERICAN RESPECT FOR THE TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY OF FAR EASTERN NATIONS

It is important to note that in the initial decades of American activity in the Far East there was a minimum use

of force. The United States did not share with Great Britain either of the wars by which the latter blasted open the doors of reluctant China. Nor did she acquire land as did Great Britain, France, Russia, the Netherlands, and Portugal. In this pacific, non-annexationist policy Americans were not unanimous. Perry was prepared to unleash his cannon if the Japanese proved truculent. He also advocated the acquisition of extensive footholds, including some on Formosa, the Ryukyu Islands, and the Bonin group. He wished these to be commercial, non-fortified establishments, but they were clearly to be territorial possessions. In the 1850's Peter Parker, long connected with American diplomacy in China and in 1855 appointed commissioner or minister to China, advocated the establishment of a protectorate over Formosa, at that time part of the Chinese Empire. Neither Perry nor Parker had the support of their superiors. In general the government of the United States was averse to that kind of involvement in Far Eastern affairs.

Moreover, in a number of ways it became apparent that in the second half of the nineteenth century Americans were disposed to respect the territorial integrity and, so far as possible, the administrative independence of the peoples of the Far East. In the 1860's, Anson Burlingame, after serving as United States minister in Peking, accepted an invitation from the Chinese government to head a diplomatic mission to the Western powers and became an advocate to them of the policy of permitting China to work out her own problems with the minimum of foreign interference. He wished co-operation between China and Western nations on the basis of equality and on that principle obtained an agreement with the United States which in its wording was more generous than any document which

he was able to induce European governments to grant. The United States returned in full her portion of the indemnity levied upon Japan for the attack on foreign ships in 1863 in the Straits of Shimonoseki. Earlier than any other of the major powers, she was willing to assent to the surrender in Japan of extraterritorial privileges and the tariffs fixed by formal agreement with foreign governments and thus to restore to that country the full sovereignty which had been compromised by the earlier treaties.

Whether except for the British navy the United States would have been able to attain her purposes in the Far East with so little use of force and without acquiring bases is not certain. It is clear that her treaties of 1844 and 1858 with China, long the foundation of her diplomatic relations with that country, were negotiated in the wake of British arms. Obviously, too, the fact that the British had recently forced open the doors of China made the task of Perry easier, for the better informed Japanese knew that if they did not yield peaceably to his overtures they would have to deal with the more aggressive Great Britain. Moreover, when Townsend Harris was negotiating with Japan for the agreements which are associated with his name, Great Britain and France were defeating the Chinese armed forces and Russia was pushing forward her boundaries into the Chinese Empire. Harris employed with marked cogency the argument that if Japan did not yield to the pacific overtures of the United States she might find herself overwhelmed by European powers. If there should come a time, as there did in the twentieth century, when British might could not be depended upon as effective in the direction in which the United States desired to move, the latter country either would have to retreat or would itself have to employ armed force.