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EXCERPTS FROM UNOFFICIAL ACCOUNT OF PRESIDENT  
NIXON'S MEETING WITH REPORTERS AT GUAM, JULY  
25, 1969<sup>1</sup>

(NOTE.—Excerpts from an unofficial account of President Nixon's informal news conference today during his stopover on Guam. Mr. Nixon spoke for publication but stipulated that he not be quoted directly.)

MANILA, July 25.—The President said he had seen some speculation about changes in his itinerary and added that he had no present plans to go to Vietnam. But, he said, Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker will be coming to Bangkok along with the ambassadors from the other Asian countries that he will not be visiting, and he intends to have a conversation with him there, which will be apart from the conversation he will have with the other ambassadors.

There is also a possibility that Gen. Creighton W. Abrams will be able to go with the Ambassador Bunker to Bangkok for that meeting, Mr. Nixon said.

Now, insofar as this phase of the trip was concerned, and he said he would speak first to the Asian phase and then later and briefly to the Rumanian phase, he thought that the backgrounders and the general statements that have been made from the State Department had

<sup>1</sup> Congressional Record, July 28, 1969, pp. S. 8637-8640.

covered it pretty well. He thought what would be of greatest interest before questions is to give the perspective that he has with regard to Asia and America's role in Asia.

#### VISIT OF 1953 NOTED

He said his background here goes back a few years. It was in 1953 that he first visited this area. That trip was very, very extensive, with the usual four days in each country, a so-called state visit in each country. It provided an opportunity to meet the leaders, but more than that to know the countries in a very effective way.

In the 16 years that have passed, however, since that time, the changes have been very dramatic. He has returned to Asia on a number of occasions since then, and particularly to the countries that he will be visiting on this trip. Consequently, he has kept up with later developments and also, with the exception of Prent Agha Mohammed Yahya Khan in Pakistan, he knows each of the Asian leaders that he will be meeting and will be able to speak to them from that background.

Insofar as the general purpose of a trip like this is concerned, the President said he can understand some of the speculation to the effect that "why does a President of the United States think he learns anything by spending one day each in an Asian country?" Or, for that matter, as he did earlier, in a European country.

The answer is, and he might indicate what will be his general policy for the balance of his service in the White House, that he thinks a one-day trip is just as valuable as four days. In other words, if you take a one-day trip, and concentrate, as he does, on very little protocol, and a great deal of face-to-face conversation, an individual, in meeting the leader of the other country, will gain as much as if he stretched it out over a period of four days. He has been through both experience and, therefore, is somewhat knowledgeable in that respect, Mr. Nixon said.

#### SHORT PERIOD OF TIME

He feels, too, that when one considers the time that is available to a President in these periods, it is essential in order to cover all the ground that needs to be covered to limit, first, the amount of travel and the amount of time that is taken for each one of the stops. He mentioned that only as some of the reasoning that has gone into his decision with regard to covering a great deal of ground in a very short period of time: In this case, going around the world and, in the space of about eight days, after the moon shot, covering a number of countries.

Now, insofar as the individuals are concerned, having met all of these leaders previously, Mr. Nixon supposed the question could be raised, and with good reason, that once you know a leader, the contact with ambassadors would be sufficient. However, he has found in previous travels in Asia and in Europe as well, that as the situations change, it is vitally important to have a renewed contact with the leader in each of the countries involved, a renewed contact because his attitudes may change and in that way when the President reads,

as he reads day after day, the cables that come in from all over the world, he can have a much better understanding of what those cables mean—the nuances—if he has more recently had a direct contact, face-to-face with the individual involved, the individual leader involved.

That is one of the reasons why he is a great believer in visits of this sort, where they are consistent with and can be taken at a time that will fit in with other very demanding parts of his schedule.

Now, a word about what is a very consuming interest in Asia, the President continued, a consuming interest because it is one he has had for a number of years, and one that now, as he looks at the perspective of history, is even more imperative.

#### ROLE IN ASIA

The United States is going to be facing, he hoped before too long—no one can say how long, but before too long—a major decision. What will be its role in Asia and in the Pacific after the end of the war in Vietnam? We will be facing that decision, but also the Asian nations will be wondering about what that decision is, Mr. Nixon said.

When he talked to Prime Minister John G. Gorton, for example, he indicated that in the conversations he had with a number of Asian leaders, they all wondered whether the United States, because of its frustration over the war in Vietnam, because of its earlier frustration over the war in Korea—whether the United States would continue to play a significant role in Asia or whether the United States, like the French before, and then the British, and, of course, the Dutch—whether it would withdraw from the Pacific and play a minor role.

This is a decision that will have to be made, of course, as the war comes to an end. But the time to develop the thinking that will go into that decision is now. Mr. Nixon said he thinks that one of the weaknesses in American foreign policy is that too often we react rather precipitously to events as they occur. We fail to have the perspective and the long range view that is essential for a policy that will be viable.

As he sees it, even though the war in Vietnam has been, as we all know, a terribly frustrating one, and, as a result of that frustration, even though there would be a tendency for many Americans to say, "After we are through with that, let's not become involved in Asia," he is convinced that the way to avoid becoming involved in another war in Asia is for the United States to continue to play a significant role, the President said.

#### UNITED STATES A PACIFIC POWER

He said that whether we like it or not, geography makes us a Pacific power and when we consider, for example, that Indonesia and its closest point is only 14 miles from the Philippines, when we consider that Guam, where he was presently standing, of course, is in the heart of Asia, when we consider the interests of the whole Pacific as they relate to Alaska and Hawaii, we can all realize this.

Also, as we look over the historical perspective, while World War II began in Europe, for the United States it began in the Pacific. It came from Asia. The Korean War came from Asia. The Vietnamese war came from Asia.

So, as we consider our past history, Mr. Nixon said, the United States involvement in war so often has been tied to Pacific policy or lack of Pacific policy, as the case might be.

As we look at Asia today, the President observed, we see that the major world power that adopts a very aggressive attitude and a belligerent attitude in its foreign policy, Communist China, of course, is in Asia, and we find that the two minor world powers—minor, although they do have significant strength as we have learned—that most greatly threaten the peace of the world, that adopt the most belligerent foreign policy, are in Asia—North Korea and, of course, North Vietnam.

When we consider those factors, we realize that if we are thinking down the road, down the long road—not just four years or five years, but 10, 15 or 20—that if we are going to have peace in the world, that potentially the greatest threat to that peace will be in the Pacific, the President said.

#### OTHER THREATS TO PEACE

He did not mean to suggest that the Mideast is not a potential threat to the peace of the world and that there are not problems in Latin America that concern us, or in Africa and, of course, over it all, we see the great potential conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union, the East-West conflict between the two superpowers.

But as far as those other areas are concerned, he said, the possibility of finding some kind of solution is potentially greater than it was in the Asian area.

Pursuing that line of reasoning a bit further, he said he would like to put it in a more positive sense: When he looked at the problems in Asia, he said the threat to peace presented by the growing power of Communist China, the belligerence of North Korea and North Vietnam, should not obscure the great promise that was here.

Mr. Nixon declared that the fastest rate of growth in the world is occurring in non-Communist Asia, Japan, in the last ten years, had tripled its G.N.P., South Korea had doubled its G.N.P., Taiwan had doubled its G.N.P., Thailand had doubled its G.N.P. The same was true of Singapore and of Malaysia.

The record in some of the other countries was not as impressive. But consider the Philippines, he said. The Philippines in 1953 was a major importer of rice. Today, as a result of miracle rice, it no longer had to import it. Some progress was being made in areas like that.

#### INDIA AND PAKISTAN CITED

The President mentioned India and Pakistan and the terribly difficult and traumatic experience they have had. Because of their conflict with each other, more than with the problems they have had from the outside that picture tends to be rather black.

But India's rate of growth as a result of two good crop years, and a reasonably good one this year, has been at 6 per cent, he said.

As far as Pakistan is concerned, Mr. Nixon said, they are emphasizing growth in manufacturing. They are growing at the rate of 10 per cent per year in manufacturing and from 1965 to 1970, their agricultural production will go up 21 per cent.

The poverty in these two countries, he said, strikes one with tremendous impact. But having seen what it was in 1953 and seeing what it was again in 1957, the amount of progress that has taken place, even in those countries where the rate has not been as high as others, was a very, very formidable thing to see, he asserted.

#### ASIA'S THREAT AND HOPE

So, what he is trying to suggest is this the President said: Look at Asia. It poses in his view, over the long haul, looking down to the end of the century, the greatest threat to peace of the world, and, for that reason, the United States should continue to play a significant role.

It also poses, he said, the greatest hope for progress in the world because of the ability, the resources, the ability of the people, the resources physically that are available in this part of the world, and for these reasons, we need policies that will see that we play a part and a part that is appropriate to the condition that we will find.

One other point he made very briefly was that in terms of this situation we must recognize that there are two great new factors which you will see, incidentally, particularly, when you arrive in the Philippines—something you will see there that we didn't see in 1953, to show you how quickly things change—a very great growth of nationalism, nationalism even in the Philippines, vis-a-vis the United States, as well as other countries in the world. And, also, at the same time that national pride is becoming a major factor, regional pride is becoming a major factor.

The second major factor, he went on, is one that is going to have a major impact on the future of Asia, and it is something that we must take into account, Asians will say in every country that we visit that they do not want to be dictated from the outside. Asia for Asians. And that is what we want and that is the role we should play. We should assist it, but we should not dictate.

At this time, he said, the political and economic plans that they are gradually developing are very hopeful, we will give assistance to those plans. We, of course, will keep the treaty commitments we have.

#### VISIT TO RUMANIA

But as far as our role is concerned, he said we must avoid that kind of policy that will make countries in Asia so dependent upon us that we are dragged into conflicts such as the one that we have in Vietnam.

This is going to be a difficult line to follow. It is one, however, that he thinks, with proper planning, we can develop, he went on.

He said he would just answer some of the speculation about Rumania by pointing out that this trip to Rumania is not directed

toward the Chinese or toward the Russians, but toward the Rumanians, Mr. Nixon said.

He said he did not believe that the President of the United States should be able to accept an invitation to visit a Western European country, but should automatically have to decline an invitation to visit an Eastern European country.

Mr. Nixon said that this was an era of negotiation rather than confrontation. It would be more difficult, of course, to develop the communication with Eastern European Communist countries than with Western European countries, but he thought it was time that a beginning be made.

He said he would have discussions of bilateral issues with President Nicolae Ceausescu, the problems of Europe, East-West relations.

But this trip under no circumstances, he said, should be interpreted as an affront to the Soviet Union or as a move toward China.

The President said he hoped that if the trip worked out it would set the stage for more openings of this type with countries in Eastern Europe where it would be mutually beneficial to the United States and the other countries involved.

The President was asked, on the question of United States military relationships in Asia, a hypothetical question: If a leader of one of the countries with which we have had close military relationships, either through SEATO or in Vietnam, should say, "Well, you are pulling out of Vietnam with your troops. We can read the newspapers. How can we know you will remain to play a significant role as you say you wish to do in the security arrangements in Europe? What kind of approach would he take to that question?"

The President replied that he had indicated that the answer to that question was not an easy one—not easy because we would be greatly tempted when that question is put to us to indicate that if any nation desires the assistance of the United States militarily in order to meet an internal or external threat we will provide it.

#### ON COMMITMENTS, TWO POINTS

However, he said he believed that the time had come when the United States, in its relations with all of its Asian friends, should be quite emphatic on two points: one, that we would keep our treaty commitments; our treaty commitments, for example, with Thailand under SEATO. And, two, that as far as the problems of international security are concerned, as far as the problems of military defense, except for the threat of a major power involving nuclear weapons, that the United States was going to encourage and had a right to expect that this problem would be increasingly handled by, and the responsibility for it taken by, the Asian nations themselves.

He said he believed, from his preliminary conversations with several Asian leaders over the last few months, that they were going to be willing to undertake this responsibility. He said it would not be easy. But if the United States just continued down the road of responding to requests for assistance, of assuming the primary responsibility for defending these countries when they have international problems or external problems, they were never going to take care of themselves.

He added that, when he talked about collective security for Asia, he realized that at this time it looks like a weak reed. It actually was. But looking down the road—he said he was speaking now of five years from now, 10 years from now—he thought collective security, insofar as it deals with internal threats to any one of the countries, or insofar as it deals with a threat other than that posed by a nuclear power, was an objective that free Asian nations could see and which the United States should support.

The President was asked whether, when speaking of internal threats, he included threats internally assisted by a country from the outside, such as we have in Vietnam?

#### INTERNAL THREAT IN THAILAND

The President replied, that generally speaking, it was the kind of internal threat that we do have in the Asian countries. For example, in Thailand the threat was one that was indigenous to a certain extent to the northeast and the north, but that would not be too serious if it were not getting the assistance that it was from the outside. The same was true in several of the other Asian countries, he said.

The President was reminded of his hope that his meeting in Rumania would open the way to other meetings involving Eastern Europe. Was it his hope that he would eventually be invited to Moscow to talk with the Russians, perhaps within the next six months or so?

The President replied that as far as any meeting with the Soviet Union was concerned, summit meeting, he had stated his position previously. He thought it would be well to restate it.

He did not believe that any summit meeting with the Soviet Union was useful unless a subject of major interest to both powers was to be discussed with some promise of finding a solution or at least making progress on that particular problem.

He said he believed, for example, as he looked over the history of summitry with the Soviet Union, that while, in all administrations, we had had the best of intentions, summitry had not been particularly helpful. He said this with regard to the spirit of Geneva, the spirit of Camp David, the spirit of Vienna and the spirit of Glassboro.

#### MEETINGS WITH SOVIET UNION

He felt that where the Soviet Union was concerned, for example today, there were three major areas where a summit meeting could be useful. If, for example, the time had come when we could make a breakthrough in the Mideast, and a summit meeting with the Soviet Union would play a significant part, he thought that could be considered.

The second area, Mr. Nixon said, is in the field of arms control. He said he had a long discussion with Mr. Smith just few days ago, just before leaving, the day before leaving. As far as arms controls are concerned, at this time, the place and the forum in which the discussion should take place is at the ambassador level. There may come a time when a summit meeting may be the device that will make the breakthrough that we need to make in arms control.

Then at the top of the list he placed the problem of Vietnam where, if a summit meeting would serve a useful purpose insofar as Vietnam is concerned, naturally we would welcome that opportunity. That poses, however, Mr. Nixon said, a very significant problem because, whether the Soviet Union can be of assistance in Vietnam is somewhat dependent on its evaluation of whether such assistance should be so publicly provided as a summit, of course, would indicate.

The President was asked, as a background to his thinking on Vietnam, even though it is not to be a major subject of discussion, whether he could tell what sort of reports he had received from Gen. Earle G. Wheeler about the prospects for additional replacement of American troops, and on the question of whether the fighting had eased to the point where we can make some de-escalation move ourselves.

The President replied that he would rather not comment on that at this time. If, after his conversations with Ambassador Bunker and possibly with General Abrams, he feels that some comment would be appropriate, he will make it then. But he should correct one impression that he should not have left, and that is that Vietnam will not be a major topic for discussion. In each of the Asian countries he is going to raise with the Asian leaders the question of the extent to which they would be willing to participate in the international supervisory bodies for elections in South Vietnam and for the policing of ceasefires, provided we are able to get any kind of acceptance on the part of the North Vietnamese and the Vietcong on his proposal of May 14.

He believes, for example, Mr. Nixon said, that the international supervisory bodies, which Mr. Thieu has also agreed to, should primarily be made up of and come from Asian nations and the Asian nations that he visits will all be interested in this subject. He wants to get their views on that.

#### ISSUE OF WITHDRAWAL

The President was asked whether he anticipates in that connection that during his talks with the Asian leaders he is going to have to spend any significant amount of time perhaps convincing them that his plan for withdrawal of American forces from Vietnam will pose no threat to their security.

The President replied that one of the reasons for this trip is to leave no doubt in the minds of the leaders of non-Communist Asia that the United States is committed to a policy in the Pacific—a policy not of intervention but one that certainly rules out withdrawal, and regardless of what happens in Vietnam that we intend to continue to play a role in Asia to the extent that Asian nations, bilaterally and collectively, desire us to play a role.

He said he thought that some reassurance was needed because Vietnam is on the minds of all the Asian leaders. He believes incidentally, that he will not have difficulty in providing that reassurance because, from the report that he did get from General Wheeler, he was told that the troop withdrawals have been accepted by the

Thieu government and by the military in South Vietnam with not only very good grace, but that they have responded very effectively in meeting their own requirements, in handling their own defense. He thinks that he can give some reassuring comments to those Asian leaders who might raise the question, Mr. Nixon said.

#### DECLINES TO SPECULATE

The President was reminded that he mentioned that he felt that perhaps five years or ten years from now the Asian nations could collectively take care of their regional security problems. What is our policy to be in the meantime, he was asked, if a Vietnam type situation does occur?

The President replied that he would rather not speculate about one occurring. Each of these countries poses an entirely different question. He would simply say we are going to handle each country on a case-by-case basis.

But attempting to avoid that creeping involvement that eventually simply submerges you, he knows that we can learn from past experience and we must avoid that kind of involvement in the future.

The President said he could put it this way: he recalled in 1964 some advice that he got from Mohammad Ayub Khan, who was then the President of Pakistan. This was before the United States had any significant troop commitment in Vietnam. Mr. Nixon asked him what his view was as to what our role should be. He said: "Well, the role of the United States in Vietnam or the Philippines, or Thailand or any of these countries which have internal subversion, is to help them fight the war but not fight the war for them." That, of course, is a good general principle, one which we would hope would be our policy generally throughout the world, the President said.

The President was reminded that the last time he met with reporters he mentioned that it was his hope that we might be able to withdraw all our combat troops, ground combat troops, in South Vietnam by the end of next year. In the light of that, he was asked if he had any plans for withdrawing the troops that we now have, or some percentage of them, from Thailand, and could he tell what he is going to tell the Thais about that?

#### WILL TELL THAIS FIRST

The President replied that he would tell the Thais first. But it is, of course, a proper question, he said.

He is reviewing not only our civilian personnel abroad, where he announced a cut a few weeks ago, but our military personnel abroad, including Thailand.

This is a matter, however, which will be discussed with the Thais, but it would not be appropriate to make any announcement as to what we were going to do until we have discussed it.

The President was asked whether in looking at the situation in post-Vietnam, and in countries other than Vietnam, it seemed to him that in terms of our military strength, the military men that we put into these other countries to help them, or military assistance or eco-

conomic assistance, that in Asia, generally, we would have more or less of this type of assistance and aid in the years down the road than we have now.

The President replied less, if he got the question correctly, would there be more or less of military type of assistance?

He was asked about both in military and nonmilitary, since there are really two parts to this assistance problem, the economic part and the military part. Did he see us having a greater expenditure and a greater involvement in those respects or a lessened involvement as we look down the road?

The President replied that the military involvement, the military assistance, the military aid program and the rest, and particularly the commitments of military personnel, that that type of program would recede.

#### ECONOMIC AID STRESSED

However, as far as economic programs are concerned and particularly those of a multilateral character—and here he had some new ideas that he will be expanding on in the months ahead—he would say that the level of United States activity would be adequate to meet the challenge as it develops, because it is very much in our interest in terms of economic assistance, economic assistance through loans and other programs, to help build the economies of free Asia, Mr. Nixon said.

For example, the President pointed to what has happened to South Korea, what has happened to Taiwan, what has happened to Thailand, what has happened to Japan. All of them now, or virtually all, are on their own feet, at least from an economic standpoint and are very good customers of ours.

#### PACT WITH THAILAND

The President was asked about quite a bit of speculation in the papers lately—both here and in Washington and in Thailand—as to whether or not there exists some sort of secret defense arrangement between the United States and Thailand.

Could he shed any light on the existence or nonexistence of such a thing and whether we have any similar arrangements with any other countries that might commit us beyond what his hopes might be?

The President replied that there is no secret defense agreement with Thailand. We, of course, have the SEATO treaty. We will keep our commitments under that treaty. We had the Rusk-Thanat communique, which simply spelled out the treaty.

We will, of course, keep our commitments set forth there as well, Mr. Nixon said.

But as far as any secret commitments are concerned, we not only have none in any of these nations, he will make none—and incidentally, he told Senator J. W. Fulbright that the other day, too.

The President was asked to give an evaluation of Red China's economic-political capability of inspiring further wars of liberation in the Asian nations. Are they able to continue that?

The President replied that Red China's capacity in this respect is much less than it was five years ago, even ten years ago. Because of

its internal problems, Red China is not nearly as effective in exporting revolution as it was then. He thinks a pretty good indication of that is the minimal role that Red China is playing in Vietnam as compared with the Soviet Union, the President remarked.

Three years ago, Red China was furnishing over 50 per cent of the military equipment, the hardware, for the North Vietnamese. Now it is approximately 80-20 the other way around, he said.

#### PROBLEMS WITHIN CHINA

There may be other reasons for that coming about, and part of it is that Red China has enough problems within.

Another point he would make in that respect that bears on this: How things have changed since 1953, in country after country that he visited—and he was in every one that we are visiting here and all the others as well. The ones that Secretary William P. Rogers is going to visit on his trip—among most of the intellectual leaders and among many Government leaders, there was a real question as to what was the best path for progress, a question as to whether Communism, as it was developing in Red China, a Communist system was a better way to progress, or whether a non-Communist system was the better way.

Now, Mr. Nixon said, one of the significant developments that has occurred over these last 16 years, with all the bad things that have occurred, including the war in Vietnam, has been that that situation has reversed itself. The appeal of the Communist philosophy, for example, in Pakistan, in India, in Indonesia, in Japan, in any one of these countries, is less today than it was 16 years ago, 10 years ago, 5 years ago.

On the other hand, he would have to say that the effectiveness of subversive activities in many of these countries has not abated to the same extent. It can be on the upsurge. But as we look at the whole of Asia today, it is significant to note that what we have going for us more than anything else is this enormous rate of growth in non-Communist Asia as compared to Communist Asia. You compare Hong Kong with Communist China, you compare Taiwan with Communist China, you look at Japan with 100 million people, with a greater G.N.P. than China with 700 million people. Looking clear around the perimeter, from Japan through India, we find that free Asia's record of growth is a very significant factor in affecting the thinking of those who have to make the determination as to which path they are going to take, Mr. Nixon said.

#### NO MORE VIETNAMS?

The President was asked, when he said that the United States was going to continue to play a major role in Asia and that this was one message that he intended to take with him on this trip, whether another message was that there would be no more Vietnams.

The President replied that certainly the objective of any American administration would be to avoid another war like Vietnam any place in the world. He recalled he had said it and so had his opponent, Mr. Humphrey, during the campaign—that we should develop a policy that would avoid other Vietnams.

Mr. Nixon said it was very easy to say that. But he said that to develop the policies to avoid that was taking an enormous amount of his time and that of his associates.

But what he said he could do was to learn from the mistakes of the past. He believed that we have, if we examine what happened in Vietnam, how we became so deeply involved—that we have a good chance of avoiding that kind of involvement in the future, he said.

#### TROOP WITHDRAWALS DISCUSSED

Mr. Nixon was asked whether he intended to make it clear to the Asian leaders that if the lull in Vietnam continues, he would announce a substantial withdrawal of United States forces in August.

The President replied that he would not make any announcement, and no decision on, troop withdrawals on this trip, and of course, he would not make any disclosures of plans in that respect to Asian leaders prior to the time that he had discussed it with the government of South Vietnam and then made the announcement jointly.

That is one of the matters, he said, that he still had under study, under consideration, that he would be discussing with Ambassador Bunker, that he did discuss with General Wheeler and that he might discuss with General Abrams.

#### TACTICS IN VIETNAM

The President was asked whether there is also a pending question as to whether his administration will change its policy of maintaining maximum military pressure on the enemy in Vietnam?

The President replied that he had been re-examining, since the time his administration came into office, our military tactics in Vietnam, and one of the subjects that he has discussed at great length with General Wheeler and General Abrams has been the character of our commitment and the tactics that should be used. He defers, naturally, to military men as to the conduct of a war because they are more expert than he is in this field, he said.

However, when we are in the process of negotiations, then military tactics become part of the negotiations and, therefore, we are re-evaluating our tactics in Vietnam, having in mind the fact that we have a parallel action going along in the negotiating field, the President said.

If we have any changes in this respect, he will, of course, announce them, he added.