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Forum for the Pacific Basin, Growth, Security and Community

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FORUM FOR THE PACIFIC BASIN. GROWTH, SECURITY, AND COMMUNITY. N.p., n.d. 270 pages.

Since the first tentative efforts to clarify the concept, the idea of a Pacific Basin has steadily won acceptance worldwide. Primarily because of sophisticated technology, the Pacific Ocean is now seen as bridge to be strengthened, instead of a barrier to be overcome as it has been regarded since the days of Columbus and Magellan.

Sponsored by four centers of research in Taipei, Tokyo, Seoul, and Philadelphia, a three-day conference was held in Taipei in the spring of 1980 to explore various problems of the region. Twenty-four scholars from various countries offered their views ranging from the basic norms to use to include (or exclude) a sovereign state from the Basin, to the persistent shadow of the military might and ambition of the world's major powers. The lack of unanimity regarding which countries form the rim of this Basin seems *at the moment* to have stymied the energies of thinkers and politicians. Nevertheless, the basic search is for peace, security, growth and community in the Pacific Basin, implicitly regarded as a more crucial section of the globe today than the Atlantic.

Significantly, the majority of scholars came from the host country, Nationalist China (nine); four came from the United States, and two each from Canada, Japan, and Indonesia. None came from the Communist bloc, although much of the concern centered around the menace of Soviet expansion into the Pacific.

The papers were grouped under five headings: Conceptual Schemes, The Major Powers, The Implications of Economic Development, Political and Diplomatic Relations, and Regional Cooperation. The Philippine representative, Enrique P. Syquia, spoke about the changing role of the United States in the western Pacific. Lessened American presence, he maintained, occasioned the present increase in Soviet presence now verified (four years after the conference) with the installation of a Soviet naval base in Vietnam.

Some readers may find that these discussions are now dated. That is not the point, at least in my opinion. Rather, it is how accurately these scholars have articulated the problems and the needs of the area. Everyone agreed that peace was the basic condition for any progress in the countries lining the Pacific Ocean. The trouble is that, to the Soviets and their allies, peace is such a prerequisite as to justify even the use of armed might to procure it. Quite a paradox!

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