

# EXCURSUS 1

## Edward A. Olsen on CRABS, BIRDS, AND U.S. STRATEGIC PRIORITIES IN THE FAR EAST

At a recent seminar on China at Georgetown's Center for Strategic and International Studies, Dr. Gerrit Gong casually compared China's strategic evolution to a hermit crab between shells. The idea behind the analogy is that today China has shed an inadequate military shell and is moving toward a new one; however, until it crawls into that shell it will remain in a highly vulnerable intermediate stage.

The symbolism of the metaphor is impressive. China is indeed moving crab-like—slowly and deliberately—toward a new strategic home. Moreover, like a hermit crab, China's new shell cannot be too much larger than its old shell. This is simply another way of recognizing that the PRC military faces severe problems of incorporating advanced weaponry into its inventory. In strategic affairs, as in economic ones, China must cope with the problems of appropriate technology.

In contrast to the American preoccupation with China, most Japanese, while concerned about China, have no doubt about which Eastern country is most capable of entering the big time, politically or militarily. Already an economic superpower, Japan knows it could become a broad-based power when it decides to. The decision not to do so is a conscious one, leading an eminent Japanese theorist, Nagai

Yonosuke, to describe Japan as a *moratoriumu kokka*, a moratorium state.

This sense of Japan being in strategic suspension leads me to risk mixing metaphors by comparing China, the hermit crab, with Japan, the phoenix egg. Many foreign observers have characterized postwar Japan as an economic phoenix risen from the ashes of defeat. And there can be no doubt that this phoenix is a high-flying creature.

However, I would suggest that the Japanese phoenix is in fact a trinity: economic, political, military. In its economic form it long ago reached full feather and today is a highly valued addition to the Western aviary. It may at times tend to crowd the perch, but no one doubts its right to be there. The political phoenix also broke loose from its shell some time ago but seems to have a fear of flying. Instead, it periodically flaps its wings and struts around, looking about to see what sort of impression it makes.

That leaves one egg in the incubator, with the United States trying to control the thermostat. To date Washington has been cautious as it has turned up the heat. So far the military phoenix has barely begun to peck through the hard shell of constraints that encompass it. There is no doubt of a fully formed phoenix beneath that shell, but no way of knowing what sort of bird it will evolve into as it matures. There is a tendency among the Japanese to hope that their military phoenix will become a dove. Other Asians seem convinced that it will be an unreconstructed hawk, circling the Pacific in search of vulnerable prey. Neither seems probable because Japan has too much at stake to remain passive or go out on a precarious limb.

Many of the Americans who are urging that the heat be



*"It grabs and holds the consumer's attention,  
but what the hell's it advertising?"*

turned up seem to hope that the strategic phoenix will emerge as an odd hybrid: a cross between a parrot and a falcon. That is an unlikely combination, but it would fit Washington's objective of a Japan that echoes the United States yet has the strength and ferocity to strike a target on command. The genetic background of the Japanese phoenix probably precludes such a hybrid. My guess is that the phoenix will indeed be a hawk, but a chicken hawk. That is, it will be strong and capable but extraordinarily reluctant to exercise those resources. However, it will also be too powerful to countenance rote mimicry of the American eagle. The net result is likely to be a significant change in the pecking order of East Asian strategic affairs.

Looking to the future, one can be reasonably confident that each of the Japanese phoenixes will be high flyers, while the Chinese hermit crab will shuffle slowly between shells. No one should yet count out the plodding crab, nor rule out the fact that the Japanese phoenix might well make a crash landing. Nevertheless, Japan's strategic prospects are stratospheric, China's earthbound.

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## EXCURSUS 2

### Mark A. Bruzonsky on FOOL'S PARADISE IN THE MIDEAST

The resemblance was uncanny, haunting. It was as if one had been propelled a decade backward to another war, in another land, over far different issues.

Then it was the young Asian girl, arms in the air, fright in her eyes, napalm covering parts of her body, fleeing from the battles in which America was so painfully entrapped. That single picture came to symbolize Vietnamese suffering and American guilt.

Now, on page one of the *International Herald-Tribune* as I flew to Khartoum in mid-July, it was a young Lebanese girl, hands in the air, tears in her eyes, fleeing from the fighting between the Lebanese Army, backed by the U.S. and Israel, and Muslim fighters in Beirut.

There are differences, of course, in the backdrops of these two photos. But the human misery is much the same; and American complicity is undeniable and escalating, although its precise nature is unclear.

No doubt inter-Arab sectarian struggle in Lebanon—as elsewhere in Arabdom—is largely indigenous and only partly stimulated by Israeli involvement in regional affairs. Still, last year's Israeli invasion of Lebanon has altered the very character of Lebanon's misery, transforming the conflict through a brutal assertion of Israeli hegemony that had American acquiescence. Furthermore, the U.S. aid and encouragement that buttress Israel's imperial aims, if sometimes reluctantly, have escalated dramatically since the Reagan administration took office.

There can be no real doubt that, at minimum, it was an American wink that preceded the Israeli invasion and an American nod that allowed the occupation to continue. Moreover, it is American involvement that today both masks and legitimizes Israel's hold on southern Lebanon despite a multitude of protestations last year that it would withdraw quickly from all Lebanese territory. And so long as U.S. Marines maintain their uneasy presence in Beirut, such pic-

tures as that of the terrified girl should have a desperate symbolism for Americans.

The Reagan administration-inspired "peace treaty" in Lebanon has now revealed itself to be hardly more than a temporary public relations fix through which the current Washington players may have hoped to sneak by next year's November election. It now appears an excuse for installing U.S. Marines as "peace-keepers"—though, in truth, they have always been partisans.

The "treaty" could in fact be termed a farce but for the magnitude of the dangers it holds. Having at first conspired in Israel's assertion of force in Lebanon, and then having no effective policy (and perhaps not even the desire) to stand up against Israel's relentless absorption of the West Bank in blatant violation of the Camp David arrangements, the Reagan administration has acted meekly at best. Some would say contemptuously, and others would add duplicitously.

Secretary of State Shultz, in effect, chose to cooperate with rather than confront the Israelis. But in return, and against American pleadings, the Israelis have moved their forces out of the major fighting zone, and Washington has become the protector of the Phalange/Maronite government. Unable to make real progress in solving Lebanon's problems or pushing forward the badly conceived "Reagan Plan," Shultz used subterfuge and diplomatic magic. He proclaimed a peace treaty that was in reality a plot by those who had conspired in war—Washington, Jerusalem, and the Phalange in Beirut—totally excluding Israel's actual enemies, the PLO and Syria. By doing so, he exacerbated tensions already existing between Lebanon's Christian, Druse, and Shiite communities, creating the conditions for a renewed civil war and for the American military intervention that began in mid-September.

These misguided efforts Shultz has sold to an often-gullible press and a befuddled public as an American accomplishment. But all the while Lebanon suffers de facto partition, the West Bank heads for the point of no return, and a Syrian-Israeli arms race threatens a wider war—this one with direct Soviet and U.S. involvement a more serious possibility than ever before. Even more ominous is the increasing U.S. military role. Between the time of writing this piece and its appearance in print, the likelihood of a major clash involving American arms will probably grow—a clash that may well be viewed as Washington doing Israel's bidding and Washington asserting its power against the Muslim world.

While American involvement further escalates the tragedy of Lebanon, it should be recalled that the Reagan administration has utterly failed in its responsibilities to push for full implementation of the Camp David Accords, including the "legitimate rights of the Palestinian people." It has been unable to assert American national interests ahead of Israeli imperial designs. And it has seriously eroded U.S. credibility throughout the Middle East, weakening a number of key client regimes—especially those in Cairo, Riyadh, and Amman. Trapping ourselves in Lebanon will hardly help the situation.

The Reagan-Shultz team has brought us to a diplomatic fool's paradise in the Middle East and could be heading us toward a major explosion, pitting American-backed Israeli and Phalange forces against Soviet-backed Syrian and Muslim armies. We are in the eye of the hurricane, impotent in our meek pretense that the worst is over. The only reasonable policy is to refuse to be drawn further into the Lebanese civil war on the side of the Phalange and Israelis and to return to the role of peace-maker in the Arab-Israeli dispute, building on the progress achieved at Camp David by firmly refusing to allow Israel to absorb the West Bank and cast itself as regional superpower.