

**THE ASIATIC ARCHIPELAGO:  
HISTORY BEYOND BOUNDARIES**

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Buah dalima her pangfu pangfu  
Samajuga bijinya merah  
Jabgan tuan berpilis bangfu  
Samajuga daranya merah

The pomegranate has many partitions,  
But the feed is equally red in them all:  
Do not give an undue preference to a race of men,  
For the blood is equally red in them all.

Buah mamplum deri **Patani**  
Mafa fabiji de kulum rufa  
Tuan Iflam fasa Nafiani  
Sama fama menangung dufa.

Of all the Mangoes of **Patani**  
A ripe one is but a mouthful to a flag:  
You are a Moflem and I a Chriftian  
But we muft equally bear our own faults."

The Agenda for this International Symposium bravely calls for a return to the g boards and a reconstruction of our historical understanding of the region. It is a al debate to bring out the old Chinaware and break crockery. It is the fundamentals that the past can be correctly read, that the correct questions can be asked and the answers searched.

It is not the intention of this paper to present new evidence. That was done in a series previously and extensive research work organised by the Department Studies, University of Malaya. Each paper and academic exercise challenged the existing parameters of nation-states and that of the region. This paper will draw evidence from that collective body of knowledge.

In simple terms the region cannot simply be situated as a Unit World, within which are located the civilisations that it encompasses. This assertion itself violates the academic boundaries drawn for Session 1 of this International Symposium. Admittedly, the twentieth-century region was built on the nineteenth century, and it is suggested that this will shape the next century. The correct question is, on whose terms?

The nineteenth century is a century littered with colonial violations against Southeast Asia and the fixing of boundaries by European colonial powers as they carved up the region among themselves. The twentieth century is an extension of the nineteenth century. The first half of this century was one of nationalist liberation struggle against colonial domination. After World War II the colonial powers retreated to Europe. The second half of this century was one characterised by the building of nation-states within the region. It is precisely at the point of retreat to Europe that the victorious World War II Allied Powers of Europe and America coined the term Southeast Asia for the region, for their own interests.

After World War II, world affairs were discussed in general regional terms. The British Foreign Office, the Foreign Affairs Department of the United States, the Commonwealth Office and Brussels Powers established international organisations under the Atlantic Treaty, the Brussels Treaty and Council of Europe. These organisations referred to world affairs in regional terms.

Southeast Asia was placed in the region between South Asia and the far East. South Asia covered Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Nepal and Ceylon, and the Far East covered China and Formosa, Japan and Korea. "The Term 'South-East Asia' should therefore be used to cover Burma, Siam, Malaya, French Indo-China, the Philippines and British, Netherlands and Portuguese possessions in Indonesia (Eastern New Guinea being excluded both for ethnological incompatibility and because it falls in the Australian sphere)."

Since 1945, with the liquidation of European empires in Southeast Asia and Asia, the obsession of every nation-state of the newly independent state has been the construction of a Just, Democratic and Sovereign State. However, in the immediate postwar period, and more specifically in the 1960s and 1970s at the height of the Cold War, Southeast Asian Studies was guided, shaped and directed by international considerations outside the region. Within the region grew Burmese Studies, Thai Studies, Lao Studies, Vietnamese Studies, Malaysian Studies, Indonesian Studies, and Philippines Studies. This was the era of nation-state building within territorial boundaries. The themes followed the fashion of sponsors and funding agencies--that of land reforms, agricultural development, demography and environment, and human rights issues. There was little attempt to break the mind set cast in the Cold War. The creation of knowledge was built on the interests and considerations of others outside the region.

Ignored was the fact that there was a Southeast Asia in each and every one of the nation-states. Ignored was the Asia in each and everyone of the nation-states and that there was the globe in each and every one of the nation-states. Others outside the region operated in regional terms, while internally, nation-states were encouraged to build their national resilience. Southeast Asia in the

Cold War was held as the Balkans of the East and a potential battlefield.

There is an urgent task to rebuild our understanding of the region devoid of strategic and security concerns of other regions. Ironically, it is vital for researchers to examine the strategic importance of the region from within and explain why the region is globally so important that it is life-threatening to other regions.

In Planet Earth's history there are five Oceans: the Arctic, Antarctic, Pacific, Atlantic and the Indian. It is the Indian Ocean and her family of seas that is the civilising Ocean. Europe and America are relative newcomers in world history. Asia is the centrepiece of world history. There is continental Asia with the Arabs of the Arabian Peninsula, the Indians of South Asia, the Chinese of East Asia and the Malays of the Asiatic Archipelago. The Arabs of Asia, the Indians of Asia and the Chinese of Asia met the Malays of Asia in these islands. The Asiatic Archipelago is the gatekeeper of the sea lines of communication between the Indian Ocean and the China Seas. Within the Asiatic Archipelago are numerous seas, straits and islands. There is no other parallel geographical configuration on Planet Earth.

The challenge confronting researchers beyond boundaries is to comprehend this vast span of islands, straits and seas stretching 3,000 miles on either side of the equator. The Asiatic Archipelago of 27,000 islands covers three lime-zones. The Euro-centric model of an archipelago is that it is an extension of a continent and consists of islands surrounded by seas. This dominant view was strategically sponsored and campaigned for by Europe and America, and various Conventions of the International Order adopted their resolutions. The diametrically opposite argument is that the Asiatic Archipelago is an aquatic civilisation containing islands. Through an intricate web of networking patterns, over the centuries riverine kingdoms nurtured the 'aquatic civilisation', in the sense that they exercised power and authority over the whole conduct and operations of the seaborne commerce as well as the regulation of interaction between the upland, lowland and coastal economics. These 'riverine kingdoms' also fostered the rise and development of humanistic-oriented cultures using the benign aspects of seaborne trade as a catalyst. It is this fundamental understanding that will unlock and open the doors of our understanding of the region.

Writing at the turn of the nineteenth century, Thomas Raffles, scholar and administrator, noted:

I cannot but consider the Malayu nation, as one people, speaking one language, though spread over so wide a space, and preserving their character and customs, in all the maritime states lying between the **Sulu** seas, and the southern ocean, and bounded longitudinally by **Sumatra** and the western side of Papua or New Guinea.

He researched extensively their maritime traditions and institutions and selected the Maritime Code of Malacca as having similarities with the others in the archipelago. The Malacca Code unites the seas and land in an archipelagic sense. After stating the circumstances under which the code was drawn up, the preamble reads:

Therefore, as the laws of the sea are established, as well as the laws of the land, let them be observed, in order that whatever is undertaken may be properly regulated. Let these laws be followed towards all countries; in as much as the laws of the sea, which relate to the sea only, and the laws of the land, which relate to the land only, are defined; because those of the sea cannot interfere with those established on shore.

If these laws are attended to, no one can question the authority of the **Nakhodah**, for as the Raja is on shore, so is the Nakhodah at sea. This authority has been conferred by the Sultans of the land, upon all **Nakhodahs**, in order that they may administer the laws on board their respective vessels. Whoever does not admit this authority offends against the law.

In the mid-1850s, Alfred Russel Wallace, the naturalist, observed from the distribution of animal life that:

[the] Malay Archipelago includes the Malay Peninsula as far as Tenasserim and Nicobar Islands on the west, the Philippines on the north, and the Solomon Islands beyond New Guinea, on the east. All the great islands included within these limits are connected together by innumerable smaller ones, so that no one of them seems to be distinctly separated from the rest.

In the aquatic world of seas, straits and islands the foundations of state power and source of wealth are the control of resources and manpower, shipping and routes and trade, commodities and markets. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the centres were at Aceh, Patani and Kedah; Johor-Rhio-Lingga; the kingdoms of Java; Bugis-Makassar on the island of Sulawesi and the Taosug on the Sulu Archipelago; and Brunei on the side of Borneo facing the South China Sea. The features of all these clusters were intermarriages among members of the ruling families; no boundaries across seas; power and wealth drawn from control of resources from the forest, agriculture and marine and manpower; routes and shipping and commodities and markets. Each cluster of kingdoms was multilateral in trade and diplomatic relations; multicultural in housing diaspora and even pan-Asian in its markets. Europeans initially entered through the Atlantic Ocean as trade partners in the intra-Asian trade network. There were no real boundaries to speak of.

The history beyond boundaries of the Asiatic Archipelago is the interplay between markets and resources extracted by manpower at the production end and between the commodity trade carried by sea through trade routes. This is the unchanging theme of the material conditions of the archipelagic history. The rise and fall of kingdoms are the control or loss of control over markets, manpower, resources, commodity trade and shipping routes.

There were kingdoms that controlled strategic straits and thus dominated trading passages of vessels. There were those that were built on agriculture but, by the very nature of the island world, had access to the seas and trade. And there were those that thrived on the extraction of marine products and yet others on forest produce for distant markets.

In the last 500 years, the economic basis of the Asiatic Archipelago turned on several historical moments. The fifteenth century continued the period of the domination of strategic sea routes; the extraction of marine and forest produce, and the cultivation of spices by the Malay peoples for international markets. This was followed by an Islamic Age of trade and commerce, in which the archipelago became an extensive central market where east and west traders came for exchange. However, it was the third and more recent shift that introduced fixed boundaries.

The third shift started at the end of the eighteenth century when the East India Company acquired the island of Pulau Pinang and shortly afterwards Singapore (1819) and Malacca (1824) and Labuan (1842). The difference was that previously the East India Company and the Dutch authorities would enter into treaties with the kingdoms and established a trading station in the immediate vicinity of the royal capital. The new process initiated by the East India Company was the acquisition of near-deserted islands from the local authorities as ceded territories as part of its seaborne empire that spanned the globe. From these ports the East India Company extended control over the markets and shipping and trade routes. It was from this vantage point that they penetrated inland towards the production bases, controlling the extraction of resources, the overland transport of these goods, the political entities and eventually, by treaty engagement, the introduction of indirect and direct forms of colonial administration. In the mid-nineteenth century the intra-Asian trade had given way to a Euro-Asian trade pattern based on bilateral trade.

There were two other treaties that had serious consequences in the Asiatic Archipelago. The first was the 1824 Anglo-Dutch Treaty, which drew the rough boundaries between the Dutch and British spheres of influence. The former controlled passages into the Indian Ocean through the Straits of Sunda, Lombok and Ombai. The East India Company held the inner curve of the Straits of Malacca and the Straits of Singapore. The second treaty was the Anglo-Siamese Treaty of 1826, which settled the overland route across the Isthmus of Kra between the Andaman Sea and the Gulf of Siam.

In many ways, the mid-nineteenth century was a historical watershed in the aquatic world. This period should be considered seriously as marking the third shift. The China market collapsed because of internal conditions in China. Britain, which had participated in the China trade, looked for oilier resources that could serve the markets of industries Europe. The first resource was **gutta percha**, which was required for the insulation of underwater telegraph cables. Tin was also in demand in European markets as that region industrialised. Pepper, gambier, coffee and coconut shifted the earlier economic foundations from marine and jungle resources towards a land-based economy. The transport of commodities over long distances also changed from wind-driven vessels to coal-driven steam vessels. The control over the seas by the Malay kingdoms was challenged by superior technology coming out of the European industrial revolution. It was towards the end of the nineteenth century that rubber was first cultivated for European markets and soon spread to cover vast areas of the main islands of Southeast Asia. Palm oil cultivation was another twentieth century process that spread over the countryside.

British interests in the Straits of Malacca moved rapidly into the Malay Peninsula after the mid-19th century. In the 1870s, Britain secured her interests over the rich tin bearing Sultanates of Perak, Selangor and Negeri Sembilan. By the second decade of the next century Britain won treaty engagement with the Malay Sultanates of Kedah, Perlis, Johor, Trengganu and Kelantan. The expansion of rubber, and to a lesser extent, palm oil plantations and mining concerns spearheaded by Chinese, British and Japanese capital is a feature of that century. The production of commodities for European markets was dominated by non-Malay capital. The demographic and geographical distribution of population of the Malay Peninsula changed dramatically. New urban centres emerged which marginalised the older royal court trading centres. Ipoh and Taiping overshadowed Kuala Kangsar in Perak. Kuantan replaced the royal town of Pekan in Pahang. Kuala Lumpur in Selangor superceded Kelang. The west coast of the Malay Peninsula became the centre of gravity for change eclipsing the position of the east coast Malay Sultanates facing the South China Sea that had earlier participated in the China trade.

The Straits of Malacca in the twentieth century became the centre of gravity for the Asiatic Archipelago. Javanese labour poured into either side of the Straits as wage labourers in the plantation sector or as smallholder-settlers. Banjarese from the southern shores of Borneo made their presence felt on the west coast of the Malay Peninsula and the east coast of Sumatra as agricultural colonisers over padi fields. Bugis peoples continued to find their way into the Malay Peninsula as they had done through the centuries.

On 17th March 1824, the Anglo-Dutch Treaty was signed. Under the clauses of the treaty, Britain exchanged with the Dutch its possession of

Bencoolen on the east coast of Sumatra for the Dutch possession of Malacca on the west coast of the Malay Peninsula. Furthermore, both sides drew their spheres of influence along the Straits of Malacca and Straits of Singapore. Britain agreed to stay north of the mid-straits, while the Dutch confined themselves to the south side. In effect, this meant that the Dutch were confined to the outer gates of the Asiatic Archipelago. Britain, on the other hand, took the inner and shorter route through the Straits of Malacca and Singapore that linked the Indian ocean with the South China Sea. The consequences were extensive, as it created the international boundaries that still exist today in the aquatic world of islands. Ruling families across straits that were tied with each other at the level of social and political Relations through marriages, customs and religion were severed. At the level of economics, the drawing of the Dutch and British spheres of influence broke the seabased foundations of the Asiatic Archipelago. The boundary in the straits was marked by a series of lighthouses built and maintained by the Indian Act, No. 6 of 1852. The Horsburgh lighthouse was constructed in 1851 on Pulau Batu Puteh at the eastern entrance of the Straits of Singapore. The Raffles lighthouse was completed in 1855 on Coney island, the southernmost island of the Island of Singapore and its Dependencies. Finally, the 1868 Screwpile lighthouse on the One Fathom Bank marked the mid-straits line of the Straits of Malacca.

On either side of the line, Britain and the Dutch set out to sign treaty engagements with each of the native rulers within their spheres of influence. The earlier treaties dealt with trade matters, at least for much of the first half of the nineteenth century. The second half of that century was marked by direct entry into the economic production bases of the Malay kingdoms. The most dramatic example was the Pangkor engagement of 1874 with the Perak Sultanate, followed closely by agreements with the Sultanates of Selangor and Negeri Sembilan. In the 1880s the Sultanate of Pahang was brought under British protection and in the early decades of the twentieth century the process was completed with the incorporation Perils, Kedah, Kelantan and Trengganu on the northern part of the peninsula and Johor on the southern lip of the peninsula. On the island of Borneo, the Sultanate of Brunei was dismembered with the parcelling out of Sarawak to the Brookes and Sabah to the Chartered North Borneo Company.

The boundary settlement on the north part of the peninsula had its effective beginnings with the Anglo-Siamese Treaty of 1826. Under this treaty, the Sultanates of Kedah, Kelantan and Trenggau were regarded as part of the Siamese sphere of influence, but British traders had free access into these markets. Throughout the nineteenth century, the Kingdom of Siam had effective control over all overland trade routes on the Isthmus of Kra. Its southern boundaries on the peninsula were marked by the sultanates of Perak on the west coast and Pahang on the east coast. It was only after the Anglo

Siamese Treaty of 1909 that the Malay Sultanates of Kedah, Perils, Kelantan and Trengganu were transferred to Britain and the boundaries of British Malaya were extended northwards.

A much longer-drawn process occurred in the outer are as the Dutch authorities, through treaty engagements, brought sovereign and independent rulers under their domination. A similar process was experienced by independent rulers through the expansion of the Spanish empire in the Philippine archipelago. Colonial boundaries were drawn by European powers through treaties, engagements, agreements and other instruments, and the Malay *masif* was reconstituted by means of survey maps. The Malay *masif* knew no fixed territorial boundary type of arrangement. This type of ownership of vast territories and inland seas was an alien concept to the Malay *masif*.

Central to all these treaty engagements was the process of controlling the straits, seas and islands which translated in material conditions into the control of resources and manpower at the level of production and trade and routes at the level of markets. In the case of the Anglo-Siamese Treaty of 1826, the Kingdom of Siam secured the once important overland routes across the Isthmus of Kra. In the nineteenth century these routes diminished in importance with the arrival of superior shipping technology that used the Straits of Malacca. However, the Isthmus of Kra was an important resource and manpower base for marine, forest and mineral extraction for international trade. The Anglo-Dutch Treaty of 1824 divided the great Asiatic Archipelago between two spheres of influence. European powers controlled the gateways of the Indian Ocean into the markets of the inner seas and that of the South China Sea: the Dutch in the Indonesian islands; the British in peninsular Malaya and that stretch of North Borneo; the French in Indo-China; and the Spanish in the Philippine archipelago. The Atlantic powers colonised the island gatekeepers and their trade and traders, resources, manpower and markets.

In this historical epoch, the evidence of the breakdown of an aquatic-based civilisation is most dramatically illustrated by the "acts of piracy". Many of the nineteenth-century colonial records contain data on the suppression of "piracy". It was only with the arrival of the steamships and the extensive use of firepower that the seas were claimed by Europe.

On land, the records contain data of the confinement of these kingdoms within defined territorial boundaries. In each instance of dispute between neighbouring kingdoms it was based on the contest for resources, manpower, routes and markets. Thus, Kedah and Perak disputed the Krian plains, and the former eventually was awarded the claim. Pahang and Johor in the 1860s disputed offshore islands that were strategic in navigation. Pulau Tioman, Pulau Aur, Pulau Tinggi on the east coast of the Malay Peninsula were important islands for trade routes into the South China sea. In 1868, Britain

awarded Tioman to Pahang and islands to the south of it to Johor. From Johor records, the "loss" was explained as a dowry prize given by Johor to Pahang on the occasion of a marriage between the two kingdoms. In the 1880s, Johor claimed the strategic islands of Natunas, Anambas and Tembilan in the South China Sea. However, Britain declined to support this claim since the Dutch-backed kingdom of Rhio-Lingga had reached treaty engagements with the local rulers of these island groups, placing them under Rhio-Lingga jurisdiction.

In the nineteenth century, the kingdom of Trengganu, which was once centralised in Kuala Trengganu as an emporium leading into the South China sea trade, reorganised itself and secured its resource and manpower bases by incorporating neighbouring rivers into the Sultanate of Trengganu. Thus the chiefs of Besul to the north and Kemaman to the south were defeated in battle and marriages were arranged between the victorious and vanquished to settle the differences. In other river systems, the Sultan merely assigned the river system to a branch of his family. The nineteenth century saw the appointments of family members over his territories. In the early stages, they stayed at the royal capital and administered their districts through representatives. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, they shifted their presence to the districts to secure the resources, manpower, trade and routes.

In the kingdom of Johor, the nineteenth century saw an influx of population. The Temenggongs and later Sultans of Johor invited local leaders of the Asiatic Archipelago to open the land for participation in trade. Bugis from Rhio-Lingga, Javanese from Java, and Banjarese from Borneo were given defined territories for their **anak buah** (followers) to cultivate the land. The Chinese leaders drawn mainly from Rhio-Lingga and Singapore were awarded **surat sungai** to open pepper and gambler plantations. Within the broad confines of the state and territories of Johor, boundaries were drawn for the pursuit of economic gain.

In the parcelling of the Asiatic Archipelago, the role of the Settlement of Singapore and its Dependencies should not be underestimated. On 2 August 1824, the rulers of Johor ceded to the East India Company the island of Singapore and all islets, straits and seas within ten miles of the main island. The Settlement was the only fixed boundary for much of the nineteenth century. A dispute with Johor arose over islands in the Straits of Tebrau and this was resolved in 1927 when the Settlement of Singapore retroceded islands north of the mid-Straits of Tebrau back to Johor.

The more significant story of the Settlement of Singapore was how, with fixed boundaries, its port dominated resources and manpower, trade and routes and markets in the Asiatic archipelago. The key to the understanding of the making of modern Singapore is the development of the infrastructure of the port of Singapore. In the first half of the nineteenth century, its port was one of many other river ports in the Asiatic Archipelago. Shipping was determined by

the winds and sailing vessels would call on the nearest port depending on the circumstances. However, towards the end of the nineteenth century steamships arrived and the port of Singapore provided coaling depots. Singapore authorities imported and stored coal for steamships. Singapore port became one of several coaling stations in the Asiatic Archipelago and stayed ahead of the competition. Coal was obtained from Britain, Japan, Australia, Indochina, Sarawak, Labuan and India. The coaling depots were at Victoria Dock, Kings Dock, and Empire Dock.

In the early twentieth century oil, specifically diesel, replaced coal on the more efficient vessels. This time Singapore emerged as the only port of consequence that stored oil. Petroleum depots were built on Pulau Sebarok, Pulau Uban, Mount Faber, Mandai and Normanton. The competition was eliminated to one of domination. In cost-saving terms, the Straits of Malacca and the Straits of Singapore became the shortest route between the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea.

The nineteenth century, too, experienced significant shifts in trade patterns. What was once an intra-Asian multilateral trade emporium was transformed to a bilateral Asian-European trade pattern. Consequently, the resources brought out to the markets were also transformed. The intra-Asian trade was characterised by low volume and high value goods extracted from forest and sea. The new trade pattern was bulk in volume and low in value. This was reflected in the nature of commodities, volume, value, origin and destination of products. Coal, oil, tin, rubber, palm oil and rice were the new market commodities. The new commodities required extensive labour supply that was readily obtained from the continent of Asia, India and China, and from the island of Java. The port of Singapore was geared to cater for the change in commodities - both raw materials and human cargo.

At the turn of the century, extensive plans were executed to dredge a deep-water port at Singapore to create its berthing, docking and storing facilities. The deep-water boat basin of Keppel Harbour was constructed. The layout of Singapore port was an impressive demonstration of high technological investment in infrastructure. The causeway and the rail and road links brought the bulk commodities from the mainland peninsula and, more significantly, the re-export through Singapore port of commodities required on the peninsula mainland. A more significant commodity in the twentieth century was petroleum. The control of the supply and flow of petroleum allowed capital investments from Singapore trading houses to dominate the resource base of the peninsula.

There were other infrastructural developments that gave Singapore the competitive edge. Underwater telegraph cables linked Singapore with Europe through India. They linked Singapore with Java, Australia and Hung Kong

markets. The system started operation in the 1860s and by the early decades of the next century Singapore was connected with the worldwide wireless telegraph network.

The shipping and port facilities of Singapore suffered inadequate water supplies. Sungai Seletar, Singapore's longest river was only nine miles long. Its main reservoirs were at Seletar, Pierce, MacRitchie, Kallang and Whampoe. The much-needed water supply for the expanding domestic and shipping sectors was obtained across the causeway from Johor. The Singapore Municipality reached renewable water agreements with the State of Johor in 1927. Electricity was generated through the coal-driven St. James Power Station, opened in 1927 with 12,000 KW. It was located within the Harbour Board area and fed the main government and military installations. The routes, access to resources, shipping and trade were heavily defended. Singapore since its inception was fortress Singapore. The immediate defence of Singapore, and ultimately the defence of routes, resources, shipping and trade of the Asiatic Archipelago, were organised here. Defence plans were constantly updated with changes in shipping and military technology. The port was the centre of steam-powered gunboats that tamed 'piracy'. Singapore was the centre from which the entire Opium War campaign to open the China market was launched. Virtually every hill on the island of Singapore was fortified. In 1927 the Sembawang Naval Station became operational to defend British interests in the Asiatic Archipelago and the China markets. This was the highwater mark of the Atlantic age. European colonial powers controlled and dominated Euro-Asian trade through bilateral relations.

The presence of industrial Japan in the Asiatic Archipelago must be explained in the above light. They looked for resources to feed their industrial machine and markets to sell their finished products. In British Malaya their entry into resource extraction was closely monitored and in some instances, such as palm oil, even prohibited. At the level of the market, their finished products competed with goods from mainland China, and events in East Asia resulted in boycotts by Chinese merchants who dominated the retail and wholesale trade. On a larger scale, their competitiveness in shipping and trade threatened the economic interests of the United States of America, which represented the Pacific age.

As early as 1918, the Ambassador of Britain to Japan telegraphed from Tokyo to London warning that Japan posed a military and economic threat to British interests in the region. After the 1923 Washington Conference, Singapore was chosen as the naval base of British imperial interests in the Asiatic Archipelago and Japan was identified as the enemy. Japan was the threat to western civilisation in the Asiatic Archipelago as she could control its resources, manpower, routes, trade commodities and markets. The industrial base of the United States was vitally and overwhelmingly dependant of

Southeast Asia. Cut off its trade routes with island Southeast Asia and the United States will wage war for its survival. Conversely, Japan also perceived the western powers as a threat to her, because she was heavily dependent on Southeast Asia for raw materials and markets for her industries. Long before World War II, Japan actively courted Southeast Asia with its concept of the Co-Prosperity Sphere.

In 1940 the United States' Army and Navy Munitions Board classified 14 strategic materials not available from domestic sources. These raw materials were so closely linked with the modern industrial structure that the whole trend of economic life would be disrupted without them. The 14 products were chromium, coconut shell char, manganese, manila fibre, mercury, mica, nickel, quartz crystal, quinine, rubber, silk, tin, and tungsten.

The Far East, especially Southeast Asia and India (whose exports were often shipped through Southeast Asian waters), supplied the most important of these materials. Chromium came from the Philippines; manganese - required for steel making - India and Southeast Asia accounted for 114 of U.S. manganese imports in 1940. Manila fibre - essential for marine cordage, oil well cables and construction work - the entire world supply came from the Philippine islands; quinine - cure for malaria - all imported from the archipelago. Tin was described as a strategic metal of many uses. The Netherlands East Indies and Malaya were the major producers - 90% of US imports. Rubber was extreme strategic importance - almost as strategic as powder explosives is to strategy. 98% of its imports of rubber from Malaya and Netherlands East Indies. The production of 100 tanks requires one million pounds of rubber, 66,000 pounds of chromium, 53,000 pounds of manganese and 3,500 pounds of tin.

Island Southeast Asia possessed the greatest deposits of raw materials wealth. This was understood by the United States. Its raw materials, manpower, routes, trade and markets were vital concerns for the Pacific power. The influential American Council of Foreign Relations' extensive study of trade flows came to the conclusion that:

The United States could not live bottled up in the Western Hemisphere alone. 'A longer-run maintenance of power by the Western Hemisphere or, more specifically, the United States certainly requires the preservation of the Pacific area and the countries of the far East,' one major analysis of trading blocs concluded in 1941. Conned groups coined a term for the 'living space' needed by the United States: the 'Grand Area'. They defined it as the amount of the world the United States can defend most economically, that is, with the least readjustment of the American economy'. It included Great Britain, the Western Hemisphere, and Southeast Asia. The latter region was deemed 'more complementary with the United States .... than any other important area of the world'. The group study concluded that it is essential to keep Japan from dominating Southeast Asia.

The Japanese military and industrialists read correctly the 'Grand Area' of the world. In a brilliantly executed military manoeuvre Japan encircled the Atlantic-Pacific military combination in the seas, straits and islands of the Asiatic Archipelago. The first foothold was on the Indo-Chinese peninsula and then in a fanlike strike cut off the colonial powers from the Indian and Pacific oceans. On the western flank, the Japanese Imperial Army raced across the Isthmus of Kra and scaled the northern entrance into the Straits of Malacca. The southern entrance was closed with the fall of Singapore. On the southern flank of the Asiatic Archipelago, they throttled the Straits of Sunda and Lombok with the capture of Palembang and Surabaya. The eastern flank of the Asiatic Archipelago was secured by driving out the Americans from the Philippine islands. Japan for a brief moment militarily secured the 'living space'.

Asia lost its initiative in world affairs with the arrival of the Atlantic age. Asia lost it again after World War II when the retreating Atlantic powers passed the responsibility for the 'Grand Area' of Asia to the Pacific. The victorious United States recruited Japan and Korea and, through its Atlantic allies Australia and New Zealand, and all acted in concert during the Cold War. The nineteenth and twentieth century history of the Asiatic Archipelago was shaped and directed by others beyond its boundaries.

Scholars in the Asiatic archipelago should recognise that geography is permanent, nay, it is destiny. They should return to the drawing boards and examine resources and manpower, capital and technology, communication and routes and commodities and markets. Except for resources that are permanent, the rest are permanently in a dynamic state of movement in space and time.

**Notes:**

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