Thursday, March 14, 1968
11:30 a.m.

MR. PRESIDENT:

Carl Marcy forwarded to me this proposal for withdrawal from Asia, which, it is noted, Bill Fulbright "has seen."

I shall make a copy available to Sect. Rusk.

W. W. Rostow

Attachment
March 12, 1968

WALT:

I don't really expect the Administration to move toward withdrawal, but if it ever does, here's one approach which I have been kicking around since 1966.

Carl Marcy

P.S. No acknowledgement necessary!
A PROPOSAL ON VIETNAM

PROBLEMS

Two critical factors underly the U. S. dilemma in Vietnam:

First, Hanoi, and for that matter most other nations, do not believe that the United States will withdraw from Vietnam as President Johnson has promised. They cite the permanence of such installations as Cam Ranh and Sattahip in Thailand.

Second, the increasing commitment of U. S. men and materiel in Southeast Asia tends to make the struggle there an American war and nations in the area are not compelled to use their own troops and develop their own indigenous capacity to resist external aggression or internal subversion.

American policy should make it clear that the U. S. will withdraw from Vietnam at a time certain. U. S. policy should be designed to pressure such as Japan and India,
which in combination with Indonesia and other independent states in the area have more men and industry than China to erect their own barriers to potential Chinese aggression.

American policy now, however, has just the opposite effect. United States military construction and economic expenditures tell Asians that the United States is there to stay no matter what the President says. These acts also encourage Asian states to leave the job to the United States. (The Vietnamese want U. S. forces in the delta; Thailand wants U. S. helicopters and crews to chase guerrillas in Northeast Thailand; Japan is reluctant to re-arm; and India expects the United States to help if China moves on her border.)

United States policy assumes that U. S. interests demand resistance to aggression wherever it occurs and that it is necessary to contain China.
But it can also be argued that U. S. interests require that there not be a long-term, heavy deployment of American military power on the land mass of Asia and that threatened areas in Asia must themselves coordinate their defenses to counter any threat China may pose.

PROPOSAL

That the President, "more in sorrow than in anger" state the following:

1. The U. S. is virtually alone in supporting South Vietnamese resistance to aggression from the north.

2. The U. S. has felt this resistance to aggression was important to the future peace of the world -- that no nation should be permitted to violate the borders of its neighbor by direct or indirect aggression.

3. The U. S. has stated that it has no territorial designs and does not intend to maintain U. S. forces on the land mass of Asia.
4. Americans are now persuaded that the United States should not continue to carry alone the main burden in manpower and costs to repelling this aggression. Other important states on or near the borders of China do not view the danger as does the United States. Neither China's neighbors nor free-world states are taking steps to assist in the defense of South Vietnam.

5. The President is, therefore, taking steps (a) to prepare for the orderly withdrawal of U. S. forces to designated areas sufficiently large to accommodate refugees should they wish protection; (b) to cease search and destroy operations; and, (c) to cease further air attacks on enemy targets unless they threaten the areas still occupied by United States forces.

6. The United States will maintain its military presence in these areas for a period of not to exceed two years and will then withdraw completely.
7. The United States would be prepared to reconsider this decision only (1) if requested to do so by a majority of the Governments of SEATO plus the Governments of Japan, India, and Indonesia.

(2) if requested to do so by a majority vote of the General Assembly of the United Nations, or

(3) if requested to do so by a majority of the members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.