

When will the United States launch a productive policy toward Asia?

by Daniel Sneider, Asia Editor

It is no secret that there has been a continuing dispute within the Reagan administration over U.S. policy toward China, a dispute which figured in the ouster of Alexander Haig. It is a better-kept secret that in reality the United States has *no* policy—no official policy toward China and no policy for relations with all of Asia, which comprises almost two-thirds of humanity.

In his final days as Secretary of State, Al Haig was rushing to gain presidential approval of a draft between the United States and the People's Republic of China (P.R.C.) to resolve the issue of the U.S. ties to the Republic of China on Taiwan, including the question of continued U.S. arms sales to the Taiwan regime. The P.R.C. has been threatening "grave consequences" if the United States does not agree to end arms sales to Taiwan, recognize the sovereignty of the Peking regime over the island, and terminate even semi-official ties between Washington and Taipei maintained under the Taiwan Relations Act.

How much to give Peking?

Under the impetus of Peking's threats, the State Department has been conducting negotiations with the Chinese over the past months. Vice-President Bush's spring visit to China was part of that process, and talks have continued under the direction of Ambassador Hummell in Peking.

Haig and the State Department were simultaneously negotiating with the White House. Drafts of a final joint communiqué with Peking—called by some "Shanghai II" (the first Shanghai communiqué was issued at the conclusion of Richard Nixon's first visit)—have been flowing from State to the National Security Council. According to various sources, two principal formulations were offered as alternatives. The more extreme formulation agreed to a specific date for cutoff of arms sales to Taiwan (the administration had already offered the concession of withholding advanced systems, particularly certain aircraft, to Taiwan) and to some acknowledgement of Peking's sovereignty over the island. The "lesser of the two evils" agreed to an eventual termination of sales in principle, with no specific date, and an agreement to meanwhile merely supply parts for systems already sold to Taiwan.

According to all accounts, Haig was prepared to go as far as Peking wanted. Haig's argument was essentially the same geopolitical one which has motivated the U.S.-P.R.C. link since the Kissinger days: the dubious proposition that the strategic weight of the P.R.C. as a *de facto* military/political ally against the Soviet Union outweighs all other considerations, including U.S. commitments embodied in U.S. law to Taiwan.

The State Department's problem was that the White House simply preferred to put off a real decision. The word from the top, filtering through to State from Donald Gregg on the NSC, was "go slow." The President, under pressure from Haig on one side and from conservatives, like Sen. Barry Goldwater warning against a "sellout" of Taiwan on the other, kept sending back the drafts in search of other "options." The word from National Security Adviser William Clark was that a way should be found to satisfy Peking *and* to avoid any abandonment of Taiwan. Already the President had refused Taiwan's demands for purchase of advanced fighter aircraft to replace their F5E tactical fighters, built under a co-production agreement with Northrup. That agreement expires soon, and the administration is faced with a November deadline for notifying Congress that it wants to renew the agreement.

Certainly the removal of Haig, the number-one booster of the U.S.-P.R.C. alliance, creates a new situation regarding China policy and policy toward Asia as a whole. George Shultz is said by sources close to him to favor an "even-handed" approach on the P.R.C.-Taiwan dispute. According to one source, citing a discussion during a visit to Taiwan in Schultz's capacity as Bechtel president, Shultz favors maintaining the status quo concerning Peking, and opposes any overt abandonment of U.S. commitments to Taiwan.

Looking beyond China

Unconfirmed reports from conservative circles, however, are that a draft has finally been sent to Peking, accompanying a letter to Deng Xiaoping. Those sources say the draft contains the "lesser-evil" formulation, agreeing to an eventual "termination" of arms sales, and that the President "signed off" on the formulation. This may be less than what Haig wanted, and also less

than what Peking wants, but it reveals the real problem: the lack of official policy toward Asia—a situation which has permitted the Global 2000 advocates of mass depopulation within State to disgrace the United States by advancing the cause of the monstrous Khmer Rouge and Chinese Communist Party, which share their hatred of growth and industrial civilization.

The State Department, whose senior ranks are almost entirely dominated by Sinophiles schooled in the Henry Kissinger approach of utter adoration for Han Mandarin culture, has been able to push through its pro-Peking policies due to the absence of alternative policy conceptions from the White House or any other source. “Going slow” in pursuit of a pragmatic desire to “have your cake and eat it too” is *not*, repeat *not*, a policy alternative.

The focus on the Taiwan issue obscures what is really under dispute. Whether Taiwan existed or not, the United States would still be faced with an array of circumstances compelling it to determine what American national interests are in Asia, particularly East Asia, and to face the necessity of choosing clearly between the *national* interest, and that of the P.R.C.

A glance at the region reveals that while Haig was fiddling in Peking, U.S. relations with Japan have been set afire by the anti-growth trade warriors at the Commerce Department (with a supporting role now played by the Justice Department). This is part of a familiar pattern—since Kissinger sat at the feet of Chou En-lai in 1972, Japan, once the pillar of American policy in Asia, has been relegated to the back burner, and lately to the status of a virtual adversary. Only one senior State Department official, Senior Deputy Assistant Secretary Thomas Shoemith, has any depth of knowledge of Japan, and it has become an unwritten rule that the Assistant Secretary must be a “China man.” At NSC, East Asia policy is looked at by Donald Gregg, a CIA man who knows Japan and Korea but is considered a China Card enthusiast (which may be why he is moving over to join the staff of Vice-President Bush), and, as of July, by Gaston Sigur, formerly director of the Sino-Soviet Institute at George Washington University. Though Sigur’s appointment was considered a concession to conservative opponents of the China policy, he is a “lightweight” in Washington policy circles.

Apart from Japan, perhaps the most important litmus test in coming months of whether Haig’s departure will mean anything for the creation of a real Asia policy, will be found in Southeast Asia. The standard State Department press-release formulation of U.S. policy is that “we support ASEAN,” the Association of South-East Asian Nations (Thailand, the Philippines, Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia)—particularly in the dispute between ASEAN and the Indochinese countries following the Vietnamese-backed overthrow of the

murderous Pol Pot regime in Cambodia.

There is an appearance of a unified position—against Vietnam—on the part of ASEAN, the United States and the P.R.C. in this dispute. In reality, the ASEAN approach differs from China’s. Put in simple terms, ASEAN seeks to negotiate a political agreement with Vietnam over Cambodia and the future status of relations among all the Southeast Asian nations. To this end, ASEAN has kept alive the Khmer “resistance,” including backing the unholy and untenable alliance of Prince Sihanouk (China’s frontman), the Pol Potists, and former Premier Son Sann’s miniscule forces against the Cambodian government of Heng Samrin. For most of ASEAN these are bargaining chips to be dealt away in a prolonged diplomatic game in which eventually ASEAN must reach some accommodation with the Indochinese countries (see *EIR*, July 20).

Peking’s goals are totally different. Its rulers seek the reimposition of Pol Pot rule in Cambodia, and are prepared to make only cosmetic concessions to ASEAN’s desire for a negotiated path to prevent ASEAN from making a deal with Hanoi. As clarified in recent conversations by this writer with ASEAN diplomatic sources, many in ASEAN, like the Indonesians, see China as the real threat to the region and would oppose Peking’s desire to militarily destroy Vietnam.

Diplomacy for what?

The real problem is that the United States, which proclaims its support for ASEAN, has linked up with China. This was manifest at the U.N. conference on Cambodia last year, when, with U.S. support, Peking blocked an ASEAN resolution clearly opposing a Khmer Rouge return to rule. Eventually, ASEAN will seek a way out of its impasse with Vietnam and reach an agreement. China will then put forward its opposition. What will Washington do?

The administration needs not only to halt its backing in the U.N. for a universally acknowledged perpetrator of genocide, the Khmer Rouge, and its allies, but also to formulate the principles of an active Asia policy that would go beyond the current quest for largely imaginary chips against the Soviet Union. Such an undertaking requires reflection on the tradition of Gen. Douglas MacArthur, the great sponsor of modernization, education, republican government, and economic development in Asia, and the enemy of feudalism—whether Japanese or Chinese “communist”—and colonialism—whether official or unofficial. An American diplomacy premised on mutual pursuit of capital-intensive trade and investment would find itself quickly superseding the dead ends and dilemmas perpetuated under Alexander Haig and his Global 2000 policy coaches. Such a policy must be pursued in concert with our best ally in Asia, Japan.