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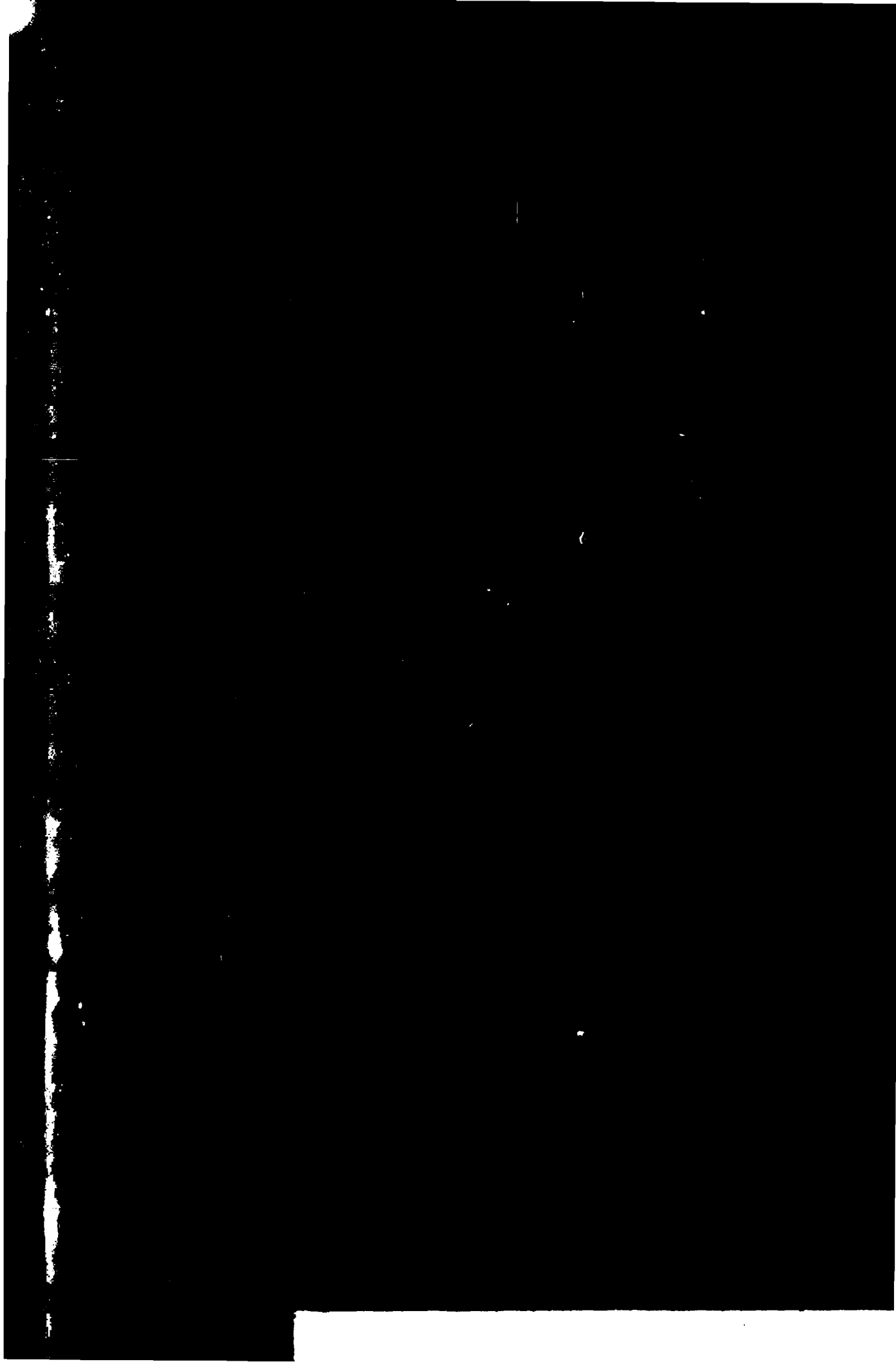
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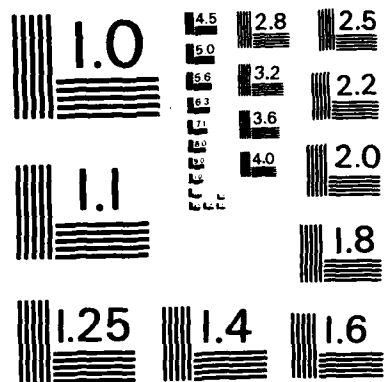
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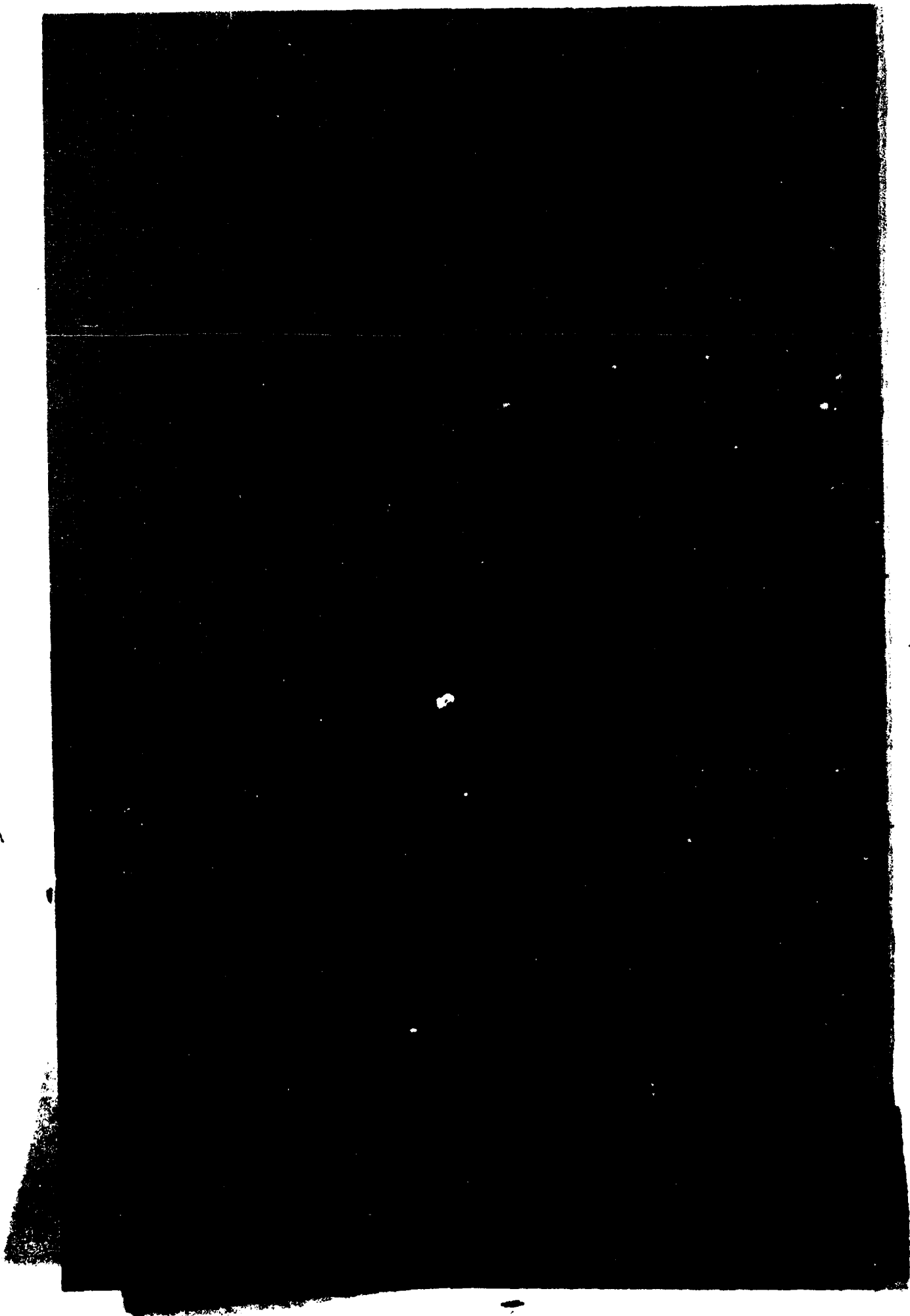
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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE		READ INSTRUCTIONS BEFORE COMPLETING FORM
1. REPORT NUMBER R-3133-AF	2. GOVT ACCESSION NO. AD-A243768	3. RECIPIENT'S CATALOG NUMBER
4. TITLE (and Subtitle) The Lessons of Coalition Politics: Sino-American Security Relations		5. TYPE OF REPORT & PERIOD COVERED Interim
		6. PERFORMING ORG. REPORT NUMBER
7. AUTHOR(s) Jonathan D. Pollack		8. CONTRACT OR GRANT NUMBER(s) F49620-82-C-0018
9. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME AND ADDRESS The Rand Corporation 1700 Main Street Santa Monica, California 90406		10. PROGRAM ELEMENT, PROJECT, TASK AREA & WORK UNIT NUMBERS
11. CONTROLLING OFFICE NAME AND ADDRESS Requirements, Programs and Studies Group (AF/ RDOM) Ofc, DSC/R&D And Acquisition Hq USAF, Washington, D.C. 20330		12. REPORT DATE February 1984
14. MONITORING AGENCY NAME & ADDRESS (if different from Controlling Office)		13. NUMBER OF PAGES 132
		15. SECURITY CLASS. (of this report) Unclassified
15a. DECLASSIFICATION/DOWNGRADING SCHEDULE		
16. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT (of this Report) Approved for Public Release; Distribution Unlimited		
17. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT (of the abstract entered in Block 20, if different from Report) No Restrictions		
18. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES		
19. KEY WORDS (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number) USSR Security China Foreign Policy		
20. ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number) see reverse side		

This study assesses the efforts of the United States and the People's Republic of China (PRC) between 1978 and 1983 to develop a security coalition opposing the expansion of Soviet power in Asia. The expectations generated by the major breakthroughs in Sino-American relations during the late 1970s vastly outstripped the results. The shifts in Chinese security strategy revealed evidence of exaggerated expectations and mutual misperceptions between the U.S. and China, but no clear links between internal leadership alignments and the PRC's foreign policy orientation. The Soviet military buildup in Asia, although not oriented exclusively against the PRC, directly threatened Chinese security, and along with the Soviet political posture toward China helped limit Beijing's disagreements with the U.S. Because the prospects for highly developed security ties were so limited, the U.S. continued to stress the indirect benefits enjoyed through improved Sino-American relations. Beijing seems likely to collaborate with the U.S. in the future and the U.S. can contribute to the further development of Sino-American security ties.



R-3133-AF

The Lessons of Coalition Politics

Sino-American Security Relations

Jonathan D. Pollack

February 1984

A Project AIR FORCE Report
prepared for the
United States Air Force



APPROVED FOR PUBLIC RELEASE: DISTRIBUTION UNLIMITED

PREFACE

This study is part of a larger Rand project on "U.S. Security Policy in East Asia and the Implications for the Sino-Soviet-U.S. Triangle in the 1980s," undertaken for the National Security Strategies Program of Project AIR FORCE. The project is exploring the problems and prospects of security cooperation among the United States, Japan, and the People's Republic of China (PRC), and examining how different levels of Sino-U.S. and U.S.-Japanese defense cooperation might affect the Soviet political and military posture in Asia.

Other studies in the project include:

Harry Gelman, *The Soviet Far East Buildup and Soviet Risk-Taking Against China*, R-2943-AF, August 1982.

Harry Gelman and Paul Langer, *The Future of Soviet Policy Toward Japan*, R-3111-AF, forthcoming.

Harry Gelman and Norman D. Levin, *The Future of Soviet-North Korean Relations*, R-3159-AF, forthcoming.

This study should be of interest to Air Force planners concerned with U.S. defense interests and requirements in East Asia and the Pacific and to policymakers concerned with Chinese policy calculations toward the United States. It also seeks to clarify U.S. security relations with the PRC and examine the effects such relations may have on U.S. relations with Japan and other U.S. allies in Asia.

This report reflects information available as of February 1984.



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SUMMARY

Between 1978 and 1983 the United States and People's Republic of China (PRC) attempted to develop a security coalition opposing the expansion of Soviet power in Asia. This coalition-building effort encompassed four basic objectives:

- To develop informal but regular means of policy coordination that would permit parallel U.S. and Chinese actions on security matters of common concern;
- To impede the Soviet Union's occupation of Afghanistan and Vietnam's occupation of Kampuchea and to deter further Soviet advances in the Third World;
- To establish a framework and guidelines for the transfer of military and dual use technology from the United States and its allies to the PRC;
- To define a security rationale for Sino-American ties that would strengthen bilateral relations and permit greater cooperation on regional security concerns in East Asia.

The expectations generated by the major breakthroughs in Sino-American relations during the late 1970s vastly outstripped the results. Despite shared security concerns, Sino-American relations were severely strained during 1981 and 1982. China's leaders sought to establish a position independent of both superpowers, leading China to emphasize its differences with the United States and to limit closer cooperation. The PRC again labeled the United States a "hegemonic power" and resumed criticisms of the U.S. military presence in the West Pacific, including Korea. Beijing also became more equivocal in its support of the Japanese defense buildup and the U.S.-Japan Mutual Security Treaty and sought to diminish tensions with the Soviet Union through the initiation of vice ministerial negotiations in the fall of 1982.

Several factors explain China's strategic reassessment of the early 1980s:

- A perception that the United States lacked credibility and consistency in its dealings with China;
- A belief that the United States was not willing to implement its commitments on the Taiwan question and on technology transfer to the PRC;

- Mounting differences between China's strategic orientation and that of the United States, in particular Beijing's dissociation from U.S. policy in the Third World;
- China's effort to establish a non-confrontational security environment so as to focus efforts on internal economic construction;
- A perception that the Soviet political and military threat to China was less pressing than in the late 1970s.

The absence of established mechanisms and procedures for security collaboration also complicated any incipient arrangements and understandings in this area.

Internal differences within the Chinese leadership were not the critical determinant in China's movement away from the United States. The shifts in Chinese security strategy revealed exaggerated expectations and mutual misperceptions between the United States and China, but no clear links between internal leadership alignments and the PRC's foreign policy orientation. Despite Deng Xiaoping's advocacy of Sino-U.S. security ties, his early airing of differences with Washington reduced his vulnerability to domestic critics, and prevented any erosion in his internal power position during the period of deteriorating U.S.-China relations. Chinese leaders (including Deng) had very little flexibility on the Taiwan issue, especially when Beijing judged U.S. actions in violation of the PRC's understandings of the terms of normalization. Although factional rivalries and domestic policy debate continued to place limits on China's relations with the West, they were not central to this process.

In view of the limited accomplishments in U.S.-PRC security relations, Soviet fears of an incipient Sino-American-Japanese alliance proved highly exaggerated. Despite the shared security concerns among Washington, Beijing, and Tokyo, none of these states sought formal, binding security arrangements with the other two. China and Japan were both wary of fully developed security ties with each other, and China remained reluctant to limit its freedom of action with regard to the United States. Soviet warnings about the dangers of a Sino-American-Japanese military alignment in East Asia nevertheless furnished a convenient rationale for Moscow's continuing military buildup in the region.

Although not directed exclusively against the PRC, the Soviet military buildup in Asia directly threatened Chinese security, and along with the Soviet political posture toward China helped limit Beijing's disagreements with the United States. The steady increase in the deployment of SS-20s east of the

Urals and the augmentation of Soviet conventional military power in East Asia sustained awareness of the need for a security dialogue between the United States and China and between Japan and China. Despite modest improvements in Sino-Soviet interstate relations during 1982 and 1983, Moscow did not modify its attempt to counter and encircle China, and did not offer Beijing incentives to seek more than an atmospheric improvement in relations. For fear of isolating the PRC in the face of continued Soviet pressures, the Chinese leadership could not excessively antagonize leaders in Washington.

Sino-American security relations provided tangible security gains for the PRC:

- They greatly diminished China's previous isolation and vulnerability in relation to Soviet power;
- They reduced the likelihood that Moscow would attempt to coerce or intimidate China;
- They enabled China to concentrate its manpower and financial resources on pressing agricultural, industrial, and scientific priorities;
- They helped defer "quick fix" allocations to the defense sector that would have provided little added security to China;
- They increased the availability of advanced technology from the West vital to China's long-term defense modernization objectives.

The United States continued to stress the indirect benefits of closer Sino-American relations and of China's concern about the growth of Soviet military power in Asia:

- China kept large numbers of Soviet and Vietnamese forces committed along its northern and southern borders;
- Positive Sino-American relations helped limit U.S. military requirements in the Western Pacific;
- China generally supported the U.S. political and military presence in the West Pacific;
- China generally supported a larger Japanese defense effort;
- China greatly diminished its support for revolutionary movements in Asia and elsewhere;
- China supported U.S. policy in other areas of common interest.

The PRC's broad foreign and security policy posture continued to favor the United States and Japan. During 1983 Beijing sought to limit the damage to relations with Washington and Tokyo caused by the tensions of 1981 and 1982. China tried to protect those

aspects of its relations with both states (especially economic ties and technology transfer) vital to its stability and security and resumed its security dialogue with the United States, leading to the September 1983 visit of Secretary of Defense Weinberger to China, the January 1984 visit of Premier Zhao Ziyang to the United States, and a Chinese invitation for President Reagan to visit China in April 1984. In addition, Beijing made a major effort to strengthen political and economic ties with Japan, culminating in the visit of Party General Secretary Hu Yaobang to Japan in November 1983 and a Chinese invitation for Prime Minister Nakasone to visit China in March 1984.

These developments indicated the importance of the United States and Japan in Chinese policy calculations, but they did not signal Chinese interest in formal security arrangements with Washington or Tokyo. The Chinese believed their security needs were better served by informal security linkages that allowed for policy coordination, information exchange, and technology transfer. Beijing sought to avoid actions with the United States that the Soviet Union might consider provocative, but it also wanted to test the limits of U.S. policy on technology transfer, even as China's leaders continued to hold out the prospect for improved Sino-Soviet relations.

Beijing's willingness and capability to collaborate with the United States rested on five principal considerations and will continue to do so in the future:

- A perception of mutual or parallel U.S. and Chinese security interests;
- The PRC's assessment of the credibility and consistency of American policy;
- The judgments of the Chinese leadership about the strengths and liabilities of the U.S. administration in power;
- The Chinese leadership's evaluation of the state of U.S.-Soviet relations;
- The stability of the Chinese leadership.

The United States can most effectively contribute to the further development of Sino-American security ties through:

- Implementation of symbolic steps that testify to China's strategic importance and policy independence;
- Facilitation of technology transfer to the PRC in areas of expressed Chinese interest;
- Devising procedures and institutional arrangements for more regular exchanges with the PRC defense establishment;

- Exploring opportunities for Sino-American cooperation on matters of common political and security concern (for example, responses to the Soviet military buildup in East Asia and enhancing stability on the Korean peninsula);
- Seeking more harmonious political relations that would permit a sustained dialogue on U.S.-PRC security cooperation.

Despite the repeated difficulties in establishing a more predictable basis for U.S.-China security relations, both states continue to share interests and needs. Sino-American security collaboration can therefore be expected to grow slowly; and destabilizing changes in U.S.-China relations that would undermine the security interests of the United States and its friends and allies in East Asia will be less likely.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Rand colleague Harry Gelman conceived the larger project, collaborated extensively on the design of this study, and offered numerous criticisms and suggestions of an earlier version of the report. His patience in awaiting the final results exceeded all reasonable limits.

Frank Fukuyama and Alan Platt's careful reading of an earlier version of the manuscript contributed greatly to improving the final report. Richard Solomon was also very helpful in refining my understanding of the Sino-American security relationship. Anna Sun Ford and Janice Hinton provided willing and able research assistance at various stages of this project.

The comments of William Perry, Under Secretary of Defense during the Carter administration, clarified my understanding of Sino-American defense cooperation during the latter half of 1980. Several readers in U.S. Air Force Intelligence (AF/IN) and other former or present officials provided insights on a non-attributable basis.

Harry Harding of the Brookings Institution and Lyman Miller of the Foreign Broadcast Information Service have been supportive sounding boards for my speculations and have lent greater precision to my ideas in progress.



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I. SINO-AMERICAN RELATIONS ASIAN SECURITY

INTRODUCTION

Between the spring of 1978 and the fall of 1980, the People's Republic of China (PRC) attempted to devise political and institutional mechanisms for its role in national security policy. These efforts built upon intermittent dealings on security issues initiated during the Ford administration and propelled by the recognition of security needs and interests. The steady augmentation of U.S. power in Asia and the heightening of Soviet power and activity in the Third World in the 1970s challenged U.S. security interests. Enhanced collaboration with Japan, in conjunction with a major expansion of Sino-Japanese economic relations, countered Soviet efforts to encircle China and afforded China important new opportunities for economic and technological advancement.

The prospect of close relations with China as well as with the United States presented an unparalleled opportunity to improve the U.S. strategic position in East Asia. The degeneration of Sino-Soviet relations, manifested principally by the Soviet Union's support for the Third World, had cast doubt on the American commitment toward Beijing and Moscow. The development of Sino-American security ties appealed to the Carter administration as a useful response. China's departures from the doctrinaire technological policies of the Maoist era furthered its technological developments. The political ascendance of Deng Xiaoping and his resounding victory at the Third Plenum of the Party's Eleventh Central Committee in December 1978 portended a far-reaching political, economic, and strategic shift. With the United States, China, and Japan informing the expansion of Soviet political and military power.

The Sino-American security relationship was born of necessity and political opportunity, but it subsequently encountered the rocks of domestic politics, bureaucratic resistance, divergent perspectives, and intractable bilateral policy disputes. Chinese began to assert that their long-term interest

served by standing somewhat apart from Washington rather than aligning closely with it, even if these changes exposed China to renewed political and security risks. At the same time, U.S. security policy in East Asia concentrated on enhancing U.S. collaboration with Japan and the Republic of Korea, relegating Sino-American security ties to a lower priority on the U.S. policy agenda.

During 1983, both states seriously attempted to repair the political damage caused by the stresses and strains of the previous two years. They again acknowledged their overlapping security interests, in particular during Defense Secretary Weinberger's visit to the PRC in late September. But it remained very difficult to convert these shared interests into political and institutional mechanisms for defense collaboration, let alone operational military ties. Serious differences over the Taiwan question, the persistence of debates and uncertainty in both political systems over the propriety of collaborative security relations, and a substantial gap between the theory and practice of defense technology transfer all continued to impede the development of a more extensive security relationship.

The uncertainties in U.S.-China relations during the early 1980s also complicated Sino-Japanese relations. Japanese policymakers voiced concern about the stability of the PRC's long-term policy directions and goals, conveying to Beijing that a deterioration in Sino-American relations posed a threat to Sino-Japanese relations as well. China's dissociation from the United States and simultaneous overtures at improving Sino-Soviet relations renewed concerns in Tokyo that Chinese collaboration with the West represented a tactical expedient rather than a fundamental shift in policy. To counteract these developments, Japan and China redoubled their efforts at political and economic cooperation during 1983, culminating in the visit of Party General Secretary Hu Yaobang to Japan in November, his first visit to a non-communist state.

Despite these efforts, the political uncertainties among Washington, Beijing, and Tokyo caused renewed concern about the stability of the East Asian security environment. Notwithstanding Japan's status as China's leading trading partner and an underlying commitment in both political systems to further accommodation, each country remained ambivalent about the other's long-term security objectives. For much of the 1970s, the PRC had openly advocated an enhanced defense capability and role for Japan, deeming such steps imperative in the face of the growing Soviet military presence in Northeast Asia. This included Chinese support for the U.S.-Japan Mutual Security Treaty, one of the most important benefits deriving from Sino-American rapprochement. However, China's movement toward a more equivocal relationship with

the United States included renewed Chinese criticisms of the U.S. military presence in Northeast Asia. As leaders in Tokyo voiced support for broadening Japan's national defense responsibilities, the Chinese grew more equivocal in their support of U.S.-Japanese security ties and expressed renewed concerns about the Japanese regional defense role.

If the late 1970s were marked by a sense of expectancy and opportunity over the prospects for a Sino-American-Japanese partnership in East Asia, the early 1980s suggest a more modest appraisal. All three states recognized that the repeated airing of differences in Sino-American relations and Sino-Japanese relations posed dangers to their political and security interests. The uncertainties in U.S.-PRC ties were particularly damaging because they disrupted the emergent commitment of Washington and Beijing to coordinate their opposition to the expansion of Soviet power.

Throughout the late 1970s, Moscow had warned that an incipient Sino-American-Japanese security entente posed a severe danger to Soviet security. Such concerns inflated the prospects for security collaboration among the three states (especially between China and Japan) and they provided a justification for the steady augmentation of Soviet forces deployed in Northeast Asia during the late 1970s.¹ It is doubtful that the prospect of fuller collaboration among Washington, Beijing, and Tokyo would have deterred Moscow from undertaking these measures, but the lack of credibility and continuity in U.S. dealings with Beijing diminished Soviet concerns about possible responses to their actions.

Although the Soviet Union was far from uninterested in the evolution of U.S.-PRC relations in the early 1980s, it played only the most marginal of roles in the deterioration of Sino-American ties. The Soviets benefited by the deceleration of U.S.-Chinese security dealings during this period, because Moscow no longer had to weigh the effects of Soviet actions on U.S.-Chinese cooperation as heavily. The October 1982 initiation of Sino-Soviet consultations at the vice ministerial level was also symptomatic of Beijing's diminished emphasis on collaboration with the United States and an effort by the PRC to avoid entanglement in mounting U.S.-Soviet tensions. Sino-Soviet relations experienced modest improvement during 1982 and 1983—including higher levels of trade; greater cultural, scientific, and athletic exchanges; and a general improvement in the atmosphere of interstate relations. But China's repeated calls for removal of the major obstacles to a full normalization of Sino-Soviet relations reflected the

¹For a comprehensive assessment, see Harry Gelman, *The Soviet Far East Buildup and Soviet Risk-Taking Against China*, The Rand Corporation, R-2943-AF, August 1982.

undiminished Soviet military presence in Asia, intended in large measure to encircle and intimidate China. The steady growth in SS-20 deployments in Soviet Asia and incremental additions and improvements in Soviet ground and air power deployed in the region were both achieved without any interruption in the Sino-Soviet political dialogue. Thus, the key to a fuller understanding of the shifts in Chinese security strategy and their effects on Sino-Japanese relations must be sought in the interplay of political forces between Beijing and Washington.

This report will direct attention toward Chinese strategic calculations. A major objective is to explain how Beijing reassessed its security dealings with the United States under the auspices of the same leaders who helped initiate security ties five years earlier. This choice is not intended to place principal responsibility on the Chinese for the recent changes in Sino-American security dealings. rather reflects China's centrality in any effort to alter the framework of U.S. security relations in East Asia. As a major U.S. political and military adversary in the 1950s and 1960s, a long-standing opponent of the U.S. military presence in East Asia, a communist state, and the world's third intercontinental nuclear power, China posed special problems for U.S. security policy. Neither adversary nor ally, China was in compelling need of U.S. technological, economic, and political assistance. Yet how fully did the United States and China share security goals? Could joint Sino-American actions restrain and frustrate Soviet political and military objectives, or would such collaboration lead Moscow to undertake even more threatening actions toward China? Did the United States regard China's strategic position as genuinely important to global and regional security, and was the United States prepared to assist China's industrial and defense modernization?

The security implications of U.S.-Chinese relations were easy to identify, but means of association were not. The contrast between U.S.-Japanese defense relations and the nascent American ties with China is instructive. Despite the constraints and difficulties that mark the U.S.-Japanese security relationship, a detailed framework governs these ties. The United States and Japan are linked formally through the Mutual Security Treaty and through an extensive network of bases, facilities, and intergovernmental understandings. Tokyo and Washington have accumulated substantial working experience in the management of an alliance and in expanding the mechanisms for defense collaboration and consultation as well as the transfer of military technology. These include logistical and budgetary support for U.S. forces in Japan, assistance for the conduct of U.S. roles and missions in the waters and air space surrounding Japan, a commitment by Japan to

undertake greater responsibility for territorial defense and for defense of the sea lanes surrounding Japan, the use of U.S. bases in Japan in the event of renewed hostilities in East Asia (especially in Korea), and arrangements for joint consultation, military planning, and combined military exercises.²

U.S. policymakers have repeatedly expressed frustration at the glacial pace of defense policy change in Japan, but these changes are becoming evident in public debate, in discussions between ranking American and Japanese officials, and in the military capabilities being acquired by Japan. The Japanese are assuming more of the burden for their own defense and expanding the scope of their defense activities, but within an existing framework of cooperation with the United States. By the early 1990s, the improvement in Japanese military capabilities will enable the Self Defense Forces to undertake more of the responsibility for the defense of Japan. Japanese forces will also have acquired selected capabilities to complement U.S. roles and missions (for example, minelaying and anti-submarine warfare operations).³ The facile assertions of the late 1970s that China was de facto part of a "NATO of the East" now seem simplistic and misleading; the principal candidates remain Japan and South Korea.

Chinese security dealings with the United States were always far more limited. The PRC's grandiose political vocabulary generated substantial expectations, but its united front strategy was more metaphor than policy. It helped justify major departures in the PRC's dealings with the United States for both internal and external audiences, but it did not offer a framework for a long-term security collaboration. The "least common denominator" aspect to Chinese strategy of the late 1970s suggested a leadership consensus on the legitimacy of closer political ties with the United States, without any determination of the scope and sensitivity of security ties. The Chinese left open the prospect of broader arrangements, but with a minimum of risk and commitment on their part.

²For more detailed accounts, see Edward J. Feulner, Jr. and Hideaki Kase (eds.), *U.S.-Japan Mutual Security—The Next Twenty Years*, The Heritage Foundation, Washington, D.C., 1981; Mike Mochizuki and Michael Nacht, "Modes of Defense Cooperation," in *U.S.-Japan Relations in the 1980s: Towards Burden Sharing*, The Program on U.S.-Japan Relations, Harvard University, 1982, pp. 129-137; Richard L. Sneider, *U.S.-Japanese Security Relations—A Historical Perspective*, East Asian Institute Occasional Paper, Columbia University, 1982, especially pp. 78-93; and *Defense of Japan—1982*, The Japan Times Ltd., Tokyo, 1982, especially pp. 235-257.

³For some divergent perspectives, see Derek Davies, "Comprehensive Confusion," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, June 16, 1983, pp. 50-55; Murray Sayle, "The Siberian Cruise of the USS Enterprise," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, June 16, 1983, pp. 72-77; and David Jenkins, "Down Memory Lane," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, December 15, 1983, pp. 30-32.

Many Chinese leaders appeared to doubt that the United States would carry out its pledges of the late 1970s to assist in the development of "a secure and strong China." For example, in March 1983 Deng asserted that U.S.-China relations had "peaked" in 1979.⁴ Some leaders feared that the United States would capitalize on China's weakness and vulnerability and would not treat Beijing as a full-fledged partner in East Asia. Continuing U.S. arms sales to Taiwan and the slowness of U.S. responses to Chinese requests for dual use technology were considered potent evidence that many American leaders did not take China seriously. Leaders in Beijing concluded that Chinese security planning could never be mortgaged to the caprices of Western policy. A serious effort had to be made to elicit American assistance, but excessive expectations would only compound the problem.⁵

Some Chinese officials, including Deng Xiaoping, were initially prepared to take greater risks in dealings with the United States, hoping that Washington might sense a rare opportunity that would allow important breakthroughs in the security area. These optimists recognized that divisions and disagreements within the American government could limit or reverse these opportunities, and none were prepared to stake much of their political power on the possibility of fuller security ties with the United States. When U.S.-Chinese relations began to deteriorate, the advocates of closer Sino-American relations (including Deng) were among the first to air Chinese differences with the United States.

Although common anxieties about Soviet behavior had stimulated Chinese cooperation with the United States, Sino-American defense ties were intended to deter rather than provoke. The PRC was not intimidated by vaguely worded Soviet threats about the possible implications of Sino-American defense ties, but it could scarcely afford to ignore them, even if most Soviet warnings were directed toward the United States, Western Europe, and Japan rather than China.

China sought to convey a threefold message to leaders in Moscow about its security collaboration with the West. First, Beijing's actions derived not from a larger anti-Soviet design but were a response to threats posed by Moscow. Second, China undertook these dealings (especially in the area of defense technology transfer) to compensate for two decades of internal political and economic turmoil that left Beijing vulnerable to external pressure and coercion. Third, China viewed its dealings with the West as the best means of creating an

⁴Deng made this comment in a meeting with Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives Thomas O'Neill, then on a visit to the PRC. *Japan Times*, March 31, 1983, p. 4.

⁵For a discerning discussion, see Allen S. Whiting, "Assertive Nationalism in Chinese Foreign Policy," *Asian Survey*, August 1983, pp. 913-933.

environment that would support China's development plans. This consideration left open the possibility of diminished Sino-Soviet hostility if Moscow met China's conditions for improved Sino-Soviet relations.⁶

It is now a moot issue whether faster movement in the security sphere would have removed some of the ambiguities in PRC policy toward the United States and the Soviet Union. The lack of Soviet readiness to substantially increase its political and military pressure against China probably limited Sino-American security ties.

The Chinese believed that the Soviet geopolitical challenge was manageable. They assumed an American readiness to facilitate China's military modernization, because a stronger China would represent a more credible counterweight to Soviet power and permit the United States to concentrate its defense resources on other pressing military needs. According to the Chinese, their encouragement of "the broadest possible anti-hegemonic front" (one including the United States) represented an important gain for U.S. global strategic interests. But such a step entailed substantial risks to China's political position. For example, if leaders in Beijing appeared to acquiesce to the continued U.S. military presence on the Korean peninsula, that posed a serious challenge to PRC relations with North Korea. There is evidence that the North Korean leadership voiced disagreement with Beijing over China's moves toward Japan and the United States, leading to a slight improvement in Pyongyang-Moscow relations during the late 1970s.⁷ China's active solicitation of assistance from the United States posed an additional challenge to Beijing's stature among the nonaligned states. China's movement away from close alignment with the United States was followed by a noticeable warming in Beijing's relations with North Korea as well as a considerable effort to improve relations with Third World states.

Because the security relationship was the least institutionalized area of Sino-American cooperation, the downturn in relations occurred most rapidly in that area. The Chinese treated their decision in late 1981 to defer further discussions of possible sales of U.S. defense technology to the PRC as a suspension of their security collaboration with the United States, even though certain dimensions of the relationship continued without interruption. This decision also impeded efforts to devise a more coherent framework for the transfer of U.S. defense

⁶For more extended discussion, see Jonathan D. Pollack, *The Sino-Soviet Rivalry and Chinese Security Debate*, The Rand Corporation, R-2907-AF, October 1982.

⁷On this issue, see Donald S. Zagoria, "North Korea: Between Moscow and Beijing," in Robert A. Scalapino and Jun-Yop Kim (eds.), *North Korea Today—Strategic and Domestic Issues*, University of California, Berkeley, Korea Research Monograph #8, 1983, especially pp. 360-365.

technology to the PRC, although the Chinese continued to show some interest through private nongovernmental channels and through dealings with Western Europe. The deferral also placed in abeyance U.S. efforts to draw the Chinese into consultations over regional security issues, reflecting Beijing's conviction that the United States had to pay a price for what the PRC deemed American transgression of U.S.-Chinese understandings on the Taiwan question. Finally, it provided a better opportunity for China and the Soviet Union to open exploratory avenues for improved bilateral relations. With China posing Moscow's challenge to the PRC in less menacing terms, the political rationale for the creation of an informal security coalition with the United States received less emphasis.

The dilemmas of China's collaboration with the United States were readily evident. Anxieties about the growing Soviet geopolitical threat to China necessitated the creation of a political coalition with the United States. Yet these needs risked excessive dependence on American power, or (even worse) the perception of being used for the unilateral advantage of the United States. The Chinese always cast a wary eye on American intentions. If only to preserve the political mythology that China had no particular need of the United States, Beijing's public pronouncements did not depict China as the needier party in the relationship. This stance may not have been credible with external audiences, but it may have been essential to maintaining internal consensus on initiatives in the security area.

The internal political calculations influencing Sino-American relations are not well understood. During 1981 and 1982, Deng concentrated his political efforts on consolidating his internal power base, displacing his domestic adversaries from leadership positions, and implementing his ambitious efforts at political, economic, and organizational reform.⁸ If only to limit his political vulnerability to critics of Sino-American relations, Deng could scarcely risk close identification with the United States, especially when U.S. policy was running contrary to his expectations.

The domestic political scene limited Deng's room for maneuver in Sino-American relations, but the principal sources of instability in U.S.-Chinese relations were external, not internal. Deng's standing in the Chinese political hierarchy did not suffer in the wake of deteriorating relations between Washington and Beijing. He had little alternative to shifting course on relations with the United States and consenting to limited overtures toward the Soviet Union. But there is no

⁸For a thoughtful review of Deng's domestic political strategy, see Richard D. Nethercut, "Leadership in China: Rivalry, Reform, and Renewal," *Problems of Communism*, March-April 1983, pp. 30-46.

persuasive evidence that internal policy differences were the primary cause of China's strategic reassessment or that they placed Deng and other advocates of closer Sino-American relations under severe political challenge.

These observations underscore the need to examine closely the assumptions and calculations underlying China's security cooperation with the United States. How did the Chinese approach this sensitive policy issue? Were leaders in Beijing and Washington in essential agreement over the purposes and scope of this collaboration?

THE FRAMEWORK OF SECURITY RELATIONS

Since the early 1970s, the security implications of Sino-American relations were a pivotal determinant of the scope and character of U.S.-Chinese ties.⁹ The recognition of mutual or parallel security interests, in conjunction with the desire to forestall any movement toward U.S.-Soviet collusion against China, provided momentum for all three breakthroughs of the 1970s: the Nixon administration's initiatives of 1970-1972, China's unilateral proposal of 1973 for establishing liaison offices in both capitals, and the Carter administration's push for full diplomatic relations in 1978.¹⁰ At the same time, intermittent Chinese dissatisfaction with U.S. security and foreign policy helped sour the atmosphere of bilateral dealings in 1974-1975, 1977, and again in 1981-1982. Beijing's willingness and capability to collaborate with the United States, however, depended on three additional considerations: (1) the PRC's assessment of the credibility and consistency of American policy, (2) the judgments of the Chinese leadership about the strengths and liabilities of the administration in power, and (3) the stability of the Chinese leadership. For the Chinese to undertake closer association, the United States had to demonstrate the seriousness of its initiatives toward China and the political determination to carry out its commitments. Washington also had to convince Beijing that it was not seeking closer relations with the PRC simply to gain leverage in U.S. relations with the Soviet Union. At the same time, the PRC

⁹For an overall review, see Norman D. Levin and Jonathan D. Pollack, *Managing the Strategic Triangle: Summary of a Workshop Discussion*, The Rand Corporation, N-2125-USDP, April 1984.

¹⁰The memoirs of various officials responsible for U.S. policy during these years make this conclusion abundantly clear. See, in particular, Henry Kissinger, *White House Years*, Little, Brown and Company, Boston, 1979, Chaps. VI, XVIII, XIX, XXI, and XXIV; Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, Little, Brown and Company, Boston 1982, Chaps. III, XV; Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, Farrar-Straus-Giroux, New York, 1983, Chaps. 6, 11, Annex 1; and Cyrus Vance, *Hard Choices*, Simon and Schuster, New York, 1983, pp. 75-78, 112-113.

leadership had to avoid the debilitating effects of domestic political factionalism, because periods of leadership instability made collaboration far more difficult.

No single consideration dominated Chinese security calculations with regard to the United States. In Beijing's perspective, security cooperation with the United States and broader if tacit support for U.S. policy in East Asia were the two largest carrots to induce Washington to improve bilateral relations. Both were possible only when there was sufficient congruence in the general directions of U.S. and Chinese policy. Without such understanding, issues that otherwise seemed manageable became the focal point of major policy disputes, thereby posing risks to far more sensitive matters of security cooperation.

The best example of this phenomenon was U.S. policy toward Taiwan. The Chinese recognized very early in their dealings with the United States that there could be no immediate resolution of the Taiwan issue. According to former Secretary of State Kissinger, in November 1973 Mao dismissed the importance of Taiwan in relation to broader U.S.-Chinese interests: "We can do without Taiwan for the time being, and let it come after one hundred years. Do not take matters in this world so rapidly. Why is there need to be in such great haste? . . . The issue of the overall international situation is an important one."¹¹

What the Chinese themselves termed the "farsighted" character of Kissinger's exchanges with Mao and Zhou required that Taiwan not become a major impediment to improved Sino-American relations. Yet the Chinese made it equally clear that an express American commitment to the unity of all of China was essential to any substantial improvement in relations. Without such a commitment, other U.S. overtures to Beijing lacked credibility. Some observers argue that Chinese protests over U.S. dealings with Taiwan were obligatory concessions to Chinese nationalistic sentiments, but not of overriding concern to leaders in Beijing. According to this view, the importance of the Taiwan question reflected Chinese domestic politics, or was a convenient policy club wielded to express broader displeasure with U.S. policy. Both views are correct but incomplete. Although Taiwan constituted a continuing barometer of Chinese perceptions of the American stake in ties with Beijing, it could not be viewed in isolation from the broader directions of U.S. policy toward China. Thus, the Taiwan factor impeded the fuller development of security relations when U.S. actions as a whole raised doubts in Beijing about the credibility and consistency of the broader U.S. strategy toward the PRC.

¹¹Kissinger, 1982, p. 692.

These considerations shed light on the internal political dynamic at work within the PRC policy process. The Chinese tried to portray their security and diplomatic orientation as part of a "principled stand" that remained above politics. As a result, there is very little evidence of internal debate over Chinese security strategy. More important, those Chinese who publicly advocated the development of security relations with the West always constituted a very small group of decision-makers. That may have reflected a division of labor within the Chinese leadership, but it also suggested the tentativeness of leadership initiatives in this area. To persuade their colleagues of the necessity of such ties, the advocates of security cooperation had to (1) convey a strategic rationale to justify such relations, (2) place security ties within a broader political context, and (3) impart a reasonable understanding of both the limits and possibilities of informal security relations.

Although Chinese officials were quite forthcoming about the first two of these concerns, they were far more ambiguous with respect to the final consideration. The absence of any officially sanctioned formula for security dealings stands in striking contrast to other policy areas where the PRC issued public documents spelling out the framework for official policy in considerable detail.¹² The available statements on PRC security strategy left largely unaddressed the scope, character, and consequences of Chinese security dealings with the outside world. What were the bounds of the permissible on such ties? Did these shift as a result of other changes in the Sino-American relationship?

The answers to these questions depend on how one defines security relations. For example, the U.S. "tilt" in the India-Pakistan conflict and the subsequent signals to Moscow of U.S. support for the Chinese in any potential Sino-Soviet crisis emphasized the American commitment to China's territorial integrity. In this instance, the United States sought to signal Moscow that the Soviet Union could not act provocatively toward China without contemplating possible American responses. At the same time, Beijing was able to reduce the forces it had previously deployed for potential Sino-American military hostilities, and the United States shifted from a 2-1/2 war strategy to a 1-1/2 war strategy, thereby excluding China from contingency plans involv-

¹²Foreign trade policy is an obvious example. For one such document, see Editorial Department, "On Questions Regarding Our Country's Economic Relations with Foreign Countries," *Hongqi* [Red Flag], No. 8, April 16, 1982, in *Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Report-China* [FBIS-China], May 11, 1982, pp. K4-K16.

ing a major commitment of U.S. forces.¹³ These developments constituted a tacit or indirect security relationship. Their consequences for defense planning were tangible and important but were not adequate for a fuller security relationship.

Some analysts argue that the character of Sino-American security dealings began to change markedly during the mid-1970s.¹⁴ The growing frustrations evident in Soviet-American relations, especially in relation to Soviet policy in the Third World, purportedly led some U.S. officials to consider far bolder steps with the Chinese, encompassing efforts to ease the restrictions on sales of sensitive defense-related technologies to the PRC and discussions of how the United States might augment Chinese military strength in the event of Soviet-American hostilities. Such steps would have indicated that an anti-Soviet design was the principal motivating force underlying American advocacy of closer ties with China.

Although there is a certain plausibility to this general line of argument, on balance it is insufficiently credible. Selected policy options were prepared that might support such initiatives, but there is no convincing evidence that the U.S. government considered them as major policy initiatives toward Beijing. The United States no longer automatically opposed sales of sensitive technologies to the Chinese, including a December 1975 Chinese agreement with Great Britain for purchase of 50 Spey jet engines that the Ford administration allowed to bypass the usual licensing procedures on transfer of strategic technology.¹⁵ The Chinese at that time were also inquiring about purchases of various advanced technologies, including some with direct military applications.¹⁶ These activities reflected the willingness of the U.S. government to consider such inquiries and testified to Deng Xiaoping's consolidation of power during 1975, enabling him to address China's long-deferred technological, economic, and defense needs.¹⁷

¹³On the U.S. shift to a 1-1/2 war strategy and its implications for relations with China, see Kissinger, 1979, pp. 220-225.

¹⁴For one such interpretation, see Banning Garrett, "U.S. China Policy and the Strategic Triangle," in Banning Garrett and Bonnie Glaser, *Soviet and Chinese Strategic Perceptions in Peacetime and Wartime*, Harold Rosenbaum Associates, Inc., Burlington, Mass., October 1982, pp. 187-251.

¹⁵On the Spey sale and its history, see *Export Licensing of Advanced Technology: A Review*, Hearings Before the Subcommittee on International Trade and Commerce, Committee on International Relations, U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, D.C., 1976, especially pp. 7-8, 26-27.

¹⁶For one such account based on an interview with a "high-ranking [U.S.] intelligence officer," see "U.S. Arms for Red China?" *Forbes*, June 1, 1976, p. 21.

¹⁷On Deng's program of action during 1975, see Harry Harding, "The Domestic Politics of China's Global Posture, 1973-1978," in Thomas Fingar (ed.), *China's Quest for Independence: Policy Evolution in the 1970s*, Westview Press, Boulder, Colorado, 1980, especially pp. 114-115.

But internal leadership constraints in both countries still prevented major departures in policy. The prolonged stagnation in U.S.-Chinese relations during the mid-1970s reflected the weakness and instability in the Chinese and American leaderships at that time. Even though international conditions supported closer relations, a fully developed defense relationship was not an imminent prospect.

What did the Chinese envision in the way of security ties? Did these shift over time, as new opportunities or constraints emerged? Was there sufficient consensus within the Chinese leadership to permit sustained pursuit of these objectives? Were particular activities excluded from consideration? How did the Chinese depict their role and responsibilities in a Sino-American coalition? The Chinese always remained highly circumspect about these questions, preferring to issue general calls for joint efforts rather than commit themselves to a specific course of action. Without any comprehensive statement from Chinese officials or fuller access to the Sino-American documentary record, the discussion in this section is more an analytical framework than a detailed historical reconstruction. Enough is known, however, to suggest the full range of possibilities inherent in U.S.-China security relations.

Political and Diplomatic Signaling

Any security relationship must begin with a means of communication. In this sense, the United States and China established the basis for security ties as early as late 1968, when both leaderships (but especially the newly elected Nixon administration) conveyed their interest in more normal relations.¹⁸ The initiation of Sino-American consultations in the early 1970s had public as well as private dimensions, but they demonstrated each state's commitment to improving bilateral ties. When Beijing and Washington went public with their consultative process in July 1971, the relationship already had important security overtones. For the Chinese, the very existence of an "American connection" signaled to Moscow that Beijing was no longer isolated in the face of the growing buildup of Soviet forces along the Sino-Soviet border. It also reduced longstanding Chinese fears that the United States and the Soviet Union might act collusively against China.¹⁹ For the United States, the opening to China seemed to provide leverage in dealings with Moscow over important international issues, in particular SALT and efforts at a negotiated settlement in

¹⁸For a fuller account, see Kissinger, 1979, pp. 163-164.

¹⁹Kissinger, 1979, p. 765.

Vietnam.²⁰ Such channels of communication, therefore, are a useful barometer of the status of relations that both states have and their separate but complementary needs.

Consultative Processes

The interactions between Chinese and American officials in the spring of 1978 imparted a very different character to Sino-American relations.²¹ In the aftermath of Zbigniew Brzezinski's visit to Beijing in May 1978, bilateral ties became fueled by concern about the growth of Soviet power.²² Although Brzezinski argued that "the security relationship between China and the United States emerged very slowly and tentatively," his personal impressions and the activities of the officials accompanying him created a different impression and prompted high-level Soviet warnings.²³

From the perspective of both parties, such arrangements developed logically from expanding ties between Beijing and Washington. It existed to translate these shared concerns into a leadership dialogue. The objectives of such consultations were subsequently defined by Defense Secretary Brown following his visit to the PRC:

China and the United States have proceeded during the past years from enmity through conversations and normalization to a potential partnership. . . [including] a mutual examination of the global strategic situation. . . exchanging views on the balance of power in various parts of the world, indicating to each other our intentions are, [and] what our own plans are. Not planning to mention to the other what our programs and plans are.

This justification furnished a strategic rationale for the process that would be considered a normal part of bilateral relations. Brown described this process as "strategic coordination"—the coordination of actions by the United States and PRC, but with the understanding that each is committed to inform the other of the scope and objectives of its policies.²⁵

²⁰John Newhouse, *Cold Dawn*, Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, New York, 1978, p. 10.

²¹For an authoritative account emphasizing the late 1970s, see "A Decade of Sino-American Relations," *Foreign Affairs*, Fall 1982, pp. 1-10.

²²Bernard Gwertzman, "U.S. Reported Acting to Strengthen Regime," *The New York Times*, June 25, 1978.

²³Brzezinski, 1983, p. 419.

²⁴Defense Secretary Brown, Interview on ABC News "Issues and Answers," April 13, 1980.

²⁵See Yi Jiao, "Soviet Foreign Policy as Seen from the 26th Congress of the Communist Party of China," *Renmin Ribao*, April 3, 1981, in *FBIS-China*, April 13, 1981, p. 1. See also "Present International Situation and Modern Socialist Constructive Foreign Policy," *Renmin Ribao*, April 3, 1981, in *FBIS-China*, April 13, 1981, p. 1.

The establishment of a regular dialogue on security unfortunately contributed to the "trip driven" quality of decisions. To demonstrate to Beijing that relations were upward momentum, successive high level visitors to the U.S. policymaking process without the undergoing full appraisal within the U.S. government. The pressure of impending travel was often needed within the policy process, such decisions suggested U.S.-China security relations had an upward dynamic independent of Soviet or American behavior. This contributed to excessive expectations on the part of the Chinese, also interfered with full consultation between the U.S. and regional allies.

Institutional Relations

Institutional ties between the U.S. and China developed in increments followed logically from the development of military relations. The posting of military attaches, other military-to-military contacts were a supplement to interstate relations and permitted valuable access to their professional military counterparts. Although less publicized than high level political and diplomatic contacts, they allowed an incremental expansion in the framework of Sino-American defense ties in a manner that did not alarm the Soviet Union. As the Chinese modernization agenda toward the professionalization of the armed corps, such institutional contacts proved highly valuable. But such channels were also subject to the perturbations of the relations.

Technology Transfer and Advisory Assistance

If Soviet political and military actions constituted a security collaboration between China and the West, the technological, economic, and manpower needs were the most pressing. The technological and industrial shortcomings had figured prominently in Sino-American relations during the early 1970s, and received more prominent consideration in Sino-Japan

period.²⁶ In the aftermath of the succession to Mao Zedong in the mid-1970s, China's economic relations with the industrial world became pivotal to the PRC's long-term development prospects. China's prolonged economic dislocation during and after the Cultural Revolution had contributed to a widening gap between Chinese scientific, technological, and manpower capabilities and those of the outside world. Even assuming a prolonged period of internal political and economic stability, few leaders entertained any illusions that China could appreciably narrow this gap on the basis of indigenous capabilities alone.²⁷

China's technological and industrial backwardness and Beijing's open solicitation of Western assistance offered a clear opportunity for both the United States and Japan. One of the central participants in U.S. China policy during the late 1970s saw the U.S. commitment to the advancement of Chinese science and technology as the principal area that distinguished the Carter administration from its predecessors.²⁸

Although pledges to enhance Chinese national power were far less sensitive than commitments to the modernization of Chinese defense capabilities, the two issues were closely intertwined. China's technological requirements were so pervasive that it was difficult to determine where civilian needs ended and military needs began. The Chinese understood that enhancing their military strength required major improvements in their technological and industrial base.²⁹ But the complexity and sensitivity of these issues posed difficult problems for U.S. decisionmakers. The involvement of multiple bureaucracies in the export licensing process, for example, created major difficulties for the assessment of various technologies. Many of the technologies of interest to the Chinese—satellite communications, computer systems, fabrication techniques in metallurgy, and radar systems, to name but a few—had both civilian and military relevance. Did the particular technology have potential military applications? If so, did these applications pose any appreciable risks either to U.S. security interests or to those of U.S. friends and allies in the Pacific? And could the augmentation of Chinese power be justified as a gain for rather than a risk to U.S. security? These considerations repeatedly bedeviled the

²⁶On the latter issue, see Chae-Jin Lee, *Japan Faces China*, The Johns Hopkins Press, Baltimore, 1976, pp. 174-183.

²⁷For a detailed overview, see Richard Baum (ed.), *China's Four Modernizations: The New Technological Revolution*, Westview Press, Boulder, Colorado, 1980.

²⁸Oksenberg, 1982, p. 184.

²⁹See Jonathan D. Pollack, *Defense Modernization in the People's Republic of China* The Rand Corporation, N-1214-1-AF, October 1979.

formulation of coherent policy guidelines on technology transfer to the PRC.

To the Chinese these issues were not nearly as complicated. The United States had pledged its assistance to the modernization of China and should have been prepared to facilitate such assistance in the five areas of science and technology identified by the PRC: advanced equipment or components of such equipment; new, high-quality materials that China could not produce indigenously; principles of data acquisition and management; advanced scientific procedures; and advanced management methods.³⁰ If the United States would not assist China fully in these areas, Beijing argued, the credibility of U.S. commitments to strengthening China's indigenous technological and industrial base was called into question. It is no surprise that this domain contained so many of the vexing problems impeding a coherent approach to security relations.

Facilitation and Collaboration

Some of the least discussed issues in Sino-American defense collaboration concerned the possibility of Chinese assistance for U.S. security needs in Asia. By virtue of geography, China was in a theoretical position to facilitate vital U.S. security objectives, especially in intelligence collection and logistical assistance for U.S. forces in Southwest Asia. In addition, both the United States and China opposed the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan and the Vietnamese occupation of Kampuchea, with the potential for coordinated Sino-American assistance to resistance forces in these locales. The sensitivity of these undertakings argued for caution on the part of both states, especially Beijing, because joint actions would have conveyed China's readiness to move much closer to operational military collaboration with the United States. Both countries were able to realize certain common understandings on such issues as Afghanistan and Kampuchea, but compatible policy objectives did not guarantee close coordination. Both states strived for parallel, mutually supportive actions that benefited their interests but impinged minimally on their freedom of action.

The possibility of facilitation and collaboration—stimulated principally by the revolution in Iran and by instability in Southwest Asia following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan—represented an important moment of decision in Chinese security strategy. Since the breakdown of the Sino-Soviet alliance, the Chinese had been extremely leery of

³⁰The list derives from *Hongqi* Editorial Department, "On Questions Regarding Our Country's Economic Relations with Foreign Countries," fn 12, p. 8.

any steps—no matter how innocuous—that suggested infringement on PRC sovereignty or freedom of action, especially in relation to the superpowers. By allowing such collaboration, or making its prospect far more likely in certain contingencies, the advocates of closer cooperation with the United States were potentially vulnerable to internal challenge.

Although there is no documentary evidence of Chinese leadership debate over these issues, it is possible to identify the probable lines of argument. Those doubting the value of such association had three principal concerns:

- (1) These arrangements conferred unilateral advantages upon the United States;
- (2) Any facilitation should first depend on American provision of technological assistance to the PRC; and
- (3) An active Sino-American defense relationship would be provocative to the Soviet Union and risk embroiling China in Soviet-American tensions.

But the advocates had equally potent arguments:

- (1) Security collaboration with the United States considerably raised the costs to the Soviet Union for their actions in Southwest Asia;
- (2) Sino-U.S. agreements (especially intelligence collaboration) would provide China with vital technological assistance; and
- (3) Soviet behavior, not Chinese or American goading of Moscow, was the principal source of tension and instability in Asia.

The Chinese leadership did not have to define a precise agenda of collaboration before entering into discussions with the United States. Leaders in Beijing wanted to gauge how far the United States would proceed on such matters before tendering any opinions, commitments, or needs of their own. In their public statements, however, leading Chinese officials (including Deng Xiaoping) left open the possibility for substantial collaboration. Facilitation of U.S. signal intelligence collection (compensating for the loss of U.S. facilities in Iran), monitoring Soviet naval movements in the Western Pacific, permitting transit or overflight rights for U.S. military aircraft en route to Southwest Asia, providing landing rights for U.S. forces earmarked for duty in Southwest Asia, and coordination of military assistance in Kampuchea and Afghanistan all numbered among the possibilities. Being both sensitive and markedly different from previous Chinese policy, such cooperation could not develop overnight but depended on Soviet objectives and actions as well as the judgments of Chinese and American

officials on the costs and benefits of any prospective association. For these reasons, facilitation and collaboration were difficult and subject to complications, reversals, and misunderstandings.

Weapons System Transfer

The possible transfer of U.S. defense technology or military hardware to the PRC ranked among the most controversial elements in Sino-American security cooperation. For both symbolic and substantive reasons, American involvement in China's defense modernization effort was a major priority in the PRC's united front strategy. An American commitment to enhance Chinese military power would testify to the importance that the United States attached to close relations with the PRC, but it also would indicate to U.S. allies that "a secure and strong China" served the interests of the West as a whole. Although the Chinese entertained few illusions about the speed with which defense modernization could be undertaken, they clearly assumed that the United States would rapidly make good on its pledges of assistance. As an informal but important security partner of the United States, China felt that it should be treated no differently than U.S. allies receiving up-to-date U.S. weaponry and technology.

The reasoning underlying Chinese expectations of the United States was simple.³¹ The United States and China faced a common threat, but it was not possible to prevent Soviet expansion on a closely coordinated basis. The United States, however, had a clear interest in providing assistance to China that would enable the PRC to oppose Soviet and Vietnamese power more effectively. U.S. assistance would allow China to augment its indigenous military strength, quite possibly compelling Moscow and Hanoi to commit more weapons and troops to the China front, leaving fewer assets available for other theaters. In China's view, Chinese military power was strictly defensive; thus the United States did not have to worry about the PRC using weapons offensively.

U.S. policy calculations were more complex. China's interest in upgrading its defense capabilities meant that the *prospect* of U.S. military assistance might restrain Soviet behavior. The Soviet Union had indicated considerable concern about a major military relationship between the PRC and the West and had issued warnings about the consequences of such a development. If the United States was seeking to deter rather than provoke Moscow, the implicit threat to "arm

³¹See, for example, Wei Shihua, "Oppose Hegemonism and Safeguard World Peace," *Beijing Daxue Xuebao* [Beijing University Journal], No. 4, August 20, 1980, in *China Report—Political, Sociological, and Military Affairs*, No. 140, JPRS, No. 76, 858, pp. 3-13.

China" in the event of certain Soviet actions was a large one. Once this threshold had been breached, it meant that the United States (although still hoping to deter Soviet expansion) was seeking to punish the Soviet Union for its behavior and was attempting to solidify a long-term and higher-level security relationship with the PRC.

The United States also recognized the concerns of U.S. allies and friends in Asia about the implications of a major U.S. commitment to strengthen China's industrial and military power base. The absence of firm Chinese commitments not to transfer sensitive technologies to third parties meant that U.S. defense hardware (or critical components of that hardware) might ultimately reach states aligned with China but antagonistic to the United States and its regional allies—for example, North Korea.

But the terms of U.S. policy debate were substantially removed from the reality of China's defense effort and capabilities. Potential U.S. military assistance to China involved many possibilities: (1) provision of technical data and various "dual use" technologies that would enhance Chinese industrial capabilities, thereby indirectly facilitating PRC military modernization; (2) sales of military support equipment to China ("non-lethal" military items) that would upgrade China's logistical capabilities; (3) sales of various military components that would enable China to improve its existing weapons systems; and (4) sales of finished U.S. weaponry (actual defense hardware). In addition, at each level the United States faced decisions on the possible transfer of the capability to produce selected items.

Thus, the defense technology debate repeatedly ran the risk of confusion and misperception. In the immediate aftermath of Mao's death and the ouster of the "gang of four," the Chinese military leadership had unparalleled opportunities for discussing their long-deferred needs, which generated widespread expectations of major military transactions between China and the West, including Chinese purchases of finished weaponry.³² The visits of high-ranking Chinese military delegations to the West and the intermittent comments of Chinese officials led to endless rumor and speculation about impending large-scale Chinese weapons purchases—the Harrier aircraft, TOW anti-tank weaponry, Mirage 2000 fighters, and even the F-15, to name but a few. Repeated Soviet warnings to the United States and its allies added further fuel

³²For several illustrative accounts, see William T. Tow and Douglas T. Stuart, "China's Military Turns to the West," *International Affairs*, Spring 1981, pp. 286-300; Stuart and Tow, "Chinese Military Modernization: The Western Arms Connection," *The China Quarterly*, No. 90, June 1982, pp. 253-270; and David L. Shambaugh, "China's Defense Industries: Indigenous and Foreign Procurement," in Paul H. B. Godwin (ed.), *The Chinese Defense Establishment - Continuity and Change in the 1980s*, Westview Press, Boulder, Colorado, 1983, especially pp. 69-73.

to the fire.³³ Yet the size of China's defense establishment precluded major purchases of military end items; the Chinese could not possibly incur the expense of a comprehensive upgrading of their weaponry. In addition, the Chinese were quickly disabused of any belief in a "quick fix" approach to military modernization. The requirements of sophisticated defense production—in design, fabrication of exotic alloys and special materials, quality control, testing procedures, and the like—vastly outstripped China's budgetary, technological, and manpower resources.

In the absence of U.S. willingness to offer substantial defense assistance to China on concessionary terms, the largest issues in the debate over U.S. military sales to China remained symbolic. The prerequisites for China's transition to a modern, professionalized military force were improvements in training, readiness, professional military education, and military doctrine—areas where U.S. technological assistance could play only a marginal role.³⁴

The Chinese understood that a decision to begin such collaboration with the United States had major implications for its political effects with regard to the Soviet Union and for the PRC's confidence in a long-term security relationship with the United States. During 1980, the Chinese cautiously initiated discussions with the United States about the PRC's long-term defense plans and the potential role of U.S. assistance, but these tentative exchanges were interrupted by Chinese disagreements with U.S. policy toward Taiwan. The Chinese also voiced suspicions that the United States was not prepared to facilitate the transfer of sensitive technologies, thereby raising doubts in Beijing about the credibility of U.S. China policy. The military sales issue was symptomatic of the continuing difficulties in moving from assertions of parallel interest into active defense collaboration, thereby diminishing the potential value of security ties to both leaderships.

Joint Contingency Planning

The most advanced level of Sino-American military ties would have involved a formal alliance between the United States and China. It would have committed Beijing and Washington to mutual responsibilities and obligations in both peacetime and wartime, quite possibly linked to expanded security arrangements between the United States

³³For several Soviet warnings voiced at critical junctures in U.S.-Chinese relations, see Georgiy Arbatov's interview with Jonathan Power in *The Observer* (London), November 12, 1978; and I. Aleksandrov, "Escalation of Recklessness: On A. Haig's Visit to Beijing," *Pravda*, June 27, 1981, in *FBIS-Soviet Union*, June 29, 1981, pp. B1-5.

³⁴For a valuable discussion of many of these issues, see Committee on Foreign Relations, U.S. Senate, *The Implications of U.S.-China Military Cooperation*, Washington, D.C., 1981.

and Japan. Such an alliance would have integrated China within U.S. wartime planning in East Asia and defined the defense of the PRC as a priority objective of U.S. global security strategy.

The outlines of such arrangements might have included providing vital defense equipment and services to the Chinese (air defense, anti-armor capabilities, and naval support), joining with the PRC in training exercises, prepositioning of U.S. equipment on Chinese territory, enhancement of Chinese detection and intelligence capabilities, and a far more direct U.S. role in upgrading Chinese defense industrial capabilities. Such an alliance would have guaranteed China's involvement in any military hostilities between the Soviet Union and the putative members of an East Asian security pact, including Japan. As a result, China would no longer retain the option of neutrality or noninvolvement in the event of a global military conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union. The transformation of the Sino-American relationship from informal alignment to full military partnership would have been complete.

There is no evidence that leaders in either Beijing or Washington seriously considered such an alliance. However, with the establishment of a unified theater command in Asia, Moscow had demonstrated its intent and capability to maintain autonomous force structures in both east and west. The deployment of large Soviet forces in East Asia had not led to drawdowns in Soviet military assets available for use in Europe or in Southwest Asia. For the first time, Moscow had large forces in being with which to threaten China without diminishing its capabilities along other fronts.

The argument in favor of a Sino-American alliance would be that the augmentation of the Soviet military posture in Asia linked the security of China to the security of the United States. These new forces increased China's vulnerability to attack, through which the Soviet Union could reduce China's strategic value. A weakened or defeated China would profoundly alter the balance of power in East Asia, thereby posing major new security challenges to the United States and its regional allies. The United States had to enhance China's capacity to defend itself, to communicate China's heightened priority within U.S. security planning to the Soviet Union, and to compel Moscow to weigh potential American responses far more carefully in any Soviet effort to coerce or intimidate China.

This assessment reflected a set of interrelated assumptions: that the Soviet Union posed a major military threat to China, that the United States could not countenance China's subjugation or dismemberment in any military conflict with the Soviet Union, and that an independent, stronger China more capable of defending itself was important to

U.S. global military planning. The unresolved issues concerned priority and feasibility: How important was China relative to other U.S. security needs, both globally and regionally? Would higher levels of Sino-American military cooperation enhance stability and deterrence in East Asia or undermine it? Could American assistance provide a real measure of security for China beyond what the Chinese could provide for themselves? Could the United States safely assume that China would support U.S. security objectives in East Asia in both peacetime and wartime? And was such support more likely with an active Sino-American defense relationship?

Even in the absence of a Sino-American alliance, these questions conveyed the potential import of security dealings between Beijing and Washington. The security implications of Sino-American relations had greatly bolstered the political logic underlying bilateral ties. But was there a larger strategic design for U.S.-PRC relations? Could China serve as a security collaborator with the United States, or was Beijing better judged a major power in its own right? Did a larger Chinese role and higher levels of Sino-American cooperation pose risks to other U.S. political and security objectives in the region? To what extent were the Chinese prepared to play a more active role in confronting Soviet power in Asia? And how did Chinese and American actions affect security calculations in Moscow?

II. SECURITY COALITION POLITICS: THEORY AND PRACTICE

BUILDING THE UNITED FRONT

The task of coalition-building was not new to China's leaders. At successive stages of the Chinese revolution, the Chinese Communist Party had to assess relationships among the three forces—"ourselves, our friends, and our enemies"—as part of the process of augmenting the CCP's political and military strength.¹ The formation of a united front did not reflect unanimity of viewpoint with noncommunist forces: It was premised on mutual advantage under given historical conditions. To the extent that common struggles or common enemies existed, disparate political and social forces could reach accommodation and cooperate with one another. Such cooperation should not obscure differences or "contradictions" at other levels, only that lesser order differences should not interfere with the need to join forces in particular political or military circumstances.

The value of a united front strategy did not diminish appreciably after the Chinese Communist Party's triumph. Alignments with other states diversified China's sources of political and economic support, provided added security by creating more favorable political and military balances, and enabled China to acquire an indirect voice in internal policy debates in other political systems.² The lack of a broader basis of accommodation suggested the probable limits of these arrangements. China had to avail itself of the opportunities for maneuver that existed in a divided international system and not allow its enemies to concentrate their power against the PRC. Although the Sino-American rapprochement of the early 1970s was of undisputable political and strategic importance to the PRC, it reflected a long-standing approach to Chinese security. Where the superpowers contended with one another but neither could dominate the entire globe, China could "exploit the contradiction of the two hegemonist powers" and gain new freedom of action, as well as reduce its potential vulnerabilities.³

¹See Lyman P. Van Slyke, *Enemies and Friends—The United Front in Chinese Communist History*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1967.

²On China's post-1949 use of the united front strategy, see J. D. Armstrong, *Revolutionary Diplomacy—Chinese Foreign Policy and the United Front Doctrine*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1977.

³For the fullest exposition of this argument, see Editorial Department of *People's Daily*, "Chairman Mao's Theory of the Differentiation of the Three Worlds Is a Major Contribution to Marxism-Leninism," *Renmin Ribao*, November 1, 1977, in *Peking Review*, No. 45, November 4, 1977, pp. 10-41.

During the early and mid-1970s, however, both the Chinese and the American leaderships experienced severe political instability and policy conflict. The growing physical infirmities of Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai, the continued inability of leaders in Beijing to agree upon a political and economic course, and the imminence of a leadership succession struggle all argued for caution in Chinese foreign policy. Similarly, the Watergate crisis crippled the Nixon administration's ability to conduct foreign policy. President Ford's accession improved this situation marginally, but bitter differences within the administration over relations with the Soviet Union continued to impede relations with China. Neither Washington nor Beijing was able to define a common strategic rationale to sustain Sino-American relations, nor could the two sides assent to a formula for defusing the sensitive Taiwan question. As a result, the atmosphere of U.S.-Chinese ties was one of stagnation, if not outright deterioration.

Thus, although the outlines of a coalition strategy were discussed publicly as early as 1971,⁴ the united front concept did not approach fruition until 1977 and the accession of new leaders in both Washington and Beijing. The displacement of China's leftist leadership following Mao's death and Deng Xiaoping's restoration to political power permitted the reorientation in Chinese domestic politics toward economic construction and expanded technological, commercial, and political relations with the major industrial powers. By defining "the broadest possible international united front," China could "put off the outbreak of war," obtain technical cooperation from the industrialized states, and place China in a less disadvantaged position should war occur. In the contemporary international system, two superpowers were "contending fiercely for world hegemony, [but] of the two . . . the Soviet Union is the more ferocious, the more reckless, the more treacherous, and the most dangerous source of world war." According to the Chinese, the United States had "overreached itself. . . . All it can do at present is to strive to protect its vested interests and go over to the defensive in its overall strategy."⁵ These circumstances provided opportunities for common efforts against the more dangerous adversary.

But the Chinese never believed that a united front required them to yield any of their political or military prerogatives. As a leading Chinese foreign affairs analyst argued:

⁴Writing Group of the CCP Hubei Provincial Committee, "A Powerful Weapon to Unite the People and Defeat the Enemy—A Study of 'On Policy,'" *Hongqi*, No. 9, August 1971, in *Survey of China Mainland Magazines*, No. 711, p. 1-9.

⁵Editorial Department, "Chairman Mao's Theory" (fn. 3), pp. 22, 33, 35.

China's advocacy that various political forces should unite to oppose hegemonism is based on the policy conclusions made after serious analysis of objective reality. Hence, the United States alone or China alone cannot effectively check Soviet expansion. Japan or other east Asian countries could achieve even less in that respect. It obviously will not do just to rely on the U.S.-Japanese alliance either. Only by uniting to oppose hegemonism can superiority in strength be gained over the Soviet Union and can her expansion and aggression be checked. . . . Each country concerned should proceed from common strategic interests, act under the principle of equality, step up consultations and promote coordination in policies and cooperate with and complement each other in action. Due to the fact that the position and circumstances of the different countries vary, it cannot be demanded that this unity should have a permanent form and take unified action. However this certainly does not exclude each country from adopting parallel policy and action in the light of its own circumstances. . . [and] in accordance with what is possible for it.⁶

Despite these calls for bilateral and multilateral consultations, a united front did not depend upon formal security understandings. No state—least of all the Soviet Union—could mistake Sino-American dealings for an alliance. An article published in a pro-PRC Hongkong newspaper in mid-1980 offered a clear explanation of Chinese thinking:

China has not called for an alliance. At present, there is no need for China to form an alliance with the United States. . . . As soon as the Sino-Soviet alliance treaty expired last April [1980], China became a nonaligned country. . . . If war breaks out, it is absolutely possible that China and the United States will become allies and deal with the Soviet Union with joined hands. . . . If there is no war, there will be no need for China to form an alliance.⁷

The clear Chinese stress was on peacetime deterrence, not wartime planning. "Strategic coordination" permitted consultations aimed at parallel political responses to threatening Soviet actions, but the Chinese did not provide any clues about their behavior in the event of deterrence failure. Notwithstanding Soviet accusations of Sino-American collusion, these arguments suggested the limited, exploratory nature of any security arrangements.

Broad rationalizations of official policy offered little guidance on China's more specific expectations from a Sino-American coalition. A united front strategy still depended on defining a common ground to

⁶Pei Monong, "The International Situation and Development Prospects in East Asia," *Renmin Ribao*, March 27, 1981, in *FBIS-China*, April 8, 1981, pp. A2-3. Pei is Deputy Director of the Institute of International Studies, the principal research organization of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

⁷"Cooperation But Not Military Alliance Between China and the United States," *Hongkong Xin Wan Bao*, May 30, 1980, in *FBIS-PRC*, June 2, 1980, p. VI.

attract leadership attention in Washington to increase the importance of China as a U.S. policy concern, and devising a mutually acceptable formula for the Taiwan issue. The growth of Soviet power in the Third World offered a prospective common ground for the first requirement. In China's view, the United States had proved powerless to challenge Soviet advances in Angola and the Horn of Africa, although Soviet actions had heightened debate in Washington over Moscow's long-term intentions toward the West. The souring of Soviet-American detente seemed to bear out China's warnings about the illusion of constraining Soviet actions through negotiations. Leaders in Beijing grudgingly accepted that Soviet-American relations (especially related to strategic arms control) would remain a central priority in U.S. foreign policy. The more pressing issue for Beijing was whether the deterioration in U.S. relations with Moscow would heighten the importance of U.S. relations with China.

But expectations in Beijing of an early breakthrough with the Carter administration were quickly dashed. Although improved relations with China were an important objective, they were not an immediate policy priority.⁸ The new president's early determination to achieve deep cuts in the Soviet and American nuclear arsenals, ratification of the Panama Canal Treaty, and (for a time) normalization of U.S.-Vietnamese relations were all placed higher on the U.S. policy agenda than full ties with China. When Secretary of State Vance traveled to Beijing in August 1977—in part to convey the administration's readiness to move toward full diplomatic relations—the Chinese wasted little time in objecting to U.S. proposals for a continuing unofficial presence on Taiwan following normalization as well as the continuing U.S. insistence on the right to sell arms to Taiwan.⁹ Despite the Secretary's reaffirmation of the Shanghai communique and a parallel pledge to remove the residual U.S. military presence from Taiwan, Foreign Minister Huang Hua described the U.S. position as merely giving lip service to China's three conditions for achieving full diplomatic relations (derecognition of Taiwan, withdrawal of U.S. military forces and installations from the island, and abrogation of the Mutual Security Treaty).¹⁰ Similarly, Deng Xiaoping (who had been officially rehabilitated only weeks earlier) described the U.S. position as a retreat from the pledges of the Ford administration to normalize ties in accordance with the Japanese formula, which allowed for private but quasi-official

⁸Michel Oksenberg argues that in 1977 the Carter administration "neglected China." Oksenberg, 1982, p. 184.

⁹Oksenberg, 1982, p. 182.

¹⁰Vance, 1983, p. 82.

representation on the island. In Deng's view, Vance tutored an embassy in all but name. As Vance could not seem ready to negotiate seriously."¹¹

Chinese displeasure was also conveyed publicly. Carter sought to describe the Secretary's visit. Chinese officials (including Deng) quickly disseminated references to American concern for their "old assertions that the sale of arms to Taiwan would be "intolerable" and would "compel China to force," and that the presence of "such a heap of cannon on Taiwan that [national unification] cannot be fought" all appeared within weeks of the Vance visit. The ship appeared ready to tackle the delicate, difficult lead to an early normalization of relations. Such a press that the Chinese had demonstrated flexibility, particularly provocative to Beijing. In Michel Ok Xiaoping had too recently returned to office, his consolidation, to afford the label 'flexible.' He could not misunderstand over the Chinese principle that he had to sever official ties with Taiwan unambiguously.

Equally telling, the Chinese renewed their attack. Initially launched during the Ford administration. Immediately following the Vance visit implied that the shift in the camp of those appeasing the Soviet Union. Chinese attacks, issued in late November under the ship, saw a dual danger in improved Soviet Appeasement not only strengthened the Soviet economically against Western Europe, it posed direct dangers to China:

Today, in the face of the grave threat of war by imperialism the trend of appeasement similar to that emerged in the West. . . .

The core of the appeasement policy championed by his like in the 1930s was to maneuver to divert the

¹¹Vance, 1983, p. 82.

¹²These citations are drawn from a series of interviews given to visiting Western journalists. Harrison E. Salisbury with Carter over Taiwan, a Top Leader Says," *The New York Street Journal*, October 3, 1977; and "China's Vice Premier Taiwan, Calls Use of Force Inevitable," *Wall Street Journal*. Deng Xiaoping's remarks were similarly negative, unlike others that "in finding a solution to the Taiwan problem the Chinese ignore the special conditions on the island." Louis D. Boccardi, "Set Back Normal Ties," *The New York Times*, September 7,

¹³Oksenberg, 1982, p. 182.

Their smug calculation was to induce Germany concessions to halt in the west and drive to the east vis-à-vis Britain and France in the west and the Soviet Union in its east. . . .

Like their precursors, the advocates of appeasement saw the Soviet peril to the east, to China. Helmut Sonnenfeldt saw the Soviet Union with the groundless prediction that the third superpower, China, in 20 years or so. . . . He clearly implied, should shift its focus of aggression from Europe to east. . . . The fact that Soviet social policy was its utmost to encourage illusions about "deterrence" and the trend of appeasement in the West makes this opposition to imperialist war and put off the outbreak of war. It is necessary to combat appeasement with might.

The Chinese understood the implications of the Sino-Soviet alliance because it necessitated their choosing sides in the Cold War that increasingly characterized Carter administration foreign policy. Twice during the winter of 1978, the PRC invited National Security Advisor Brzezinski to visit China. Brzezinski observed, "The Chinese turned to the official Washington line which closely corresponded to their own."¹⁵ As early as 1972, the Liaison Office in Washington, where the national security advisor had a direct opportunity to put forth views of U.S. policy toward the Soviet Union that differed substantially from those of the State Department.¹⁶

Events in Washington and Beijing increasing the Sino-Soviet alliance. Deng's steady consolidation of power and the emergence of an economic development strategy predicated on increasing political and commercial ties with the West accelerated movement in Sino-American relations. In the United States, mounting frustrations in Soviet-American relations prompted Brzezinski to move with vigor on the China front. The issue of internal debate in the Carter administration was the Brzezinski visit to Beijing, in mid-March 1978. It was the national security advisor's trip.¹⁷

Chinese security calculations, especially regarding the Soviet Union, proved pivotal. The deterioration of Sino-

¹⁴Ren Guping, "The Munich Tragedy and Contemporary China," *Ribao*, November 26, 1977, in *Peking Review*, No. 50, December 1, 1977, p. 18.

¹⁵Oksenberg, 1982, p. 183.

¹⁶Brzezinski, 1983, p. 203.

¹⁷Oksenberg, 1982, p. 184.

although first evident in the early 1970s during Mao and Zhou's initiatives with the Nixon administration, had accelerated following the collapse of the Saigon government in the spring of 1975.¹⁸ By the time of the Brzezinski visit, Beijing-Hanoi relations had already approached the breaking point. According to one authoritative account, "The vehemence with which the Chinese denounced Vietnamese perfidy was the most unexpected aspect of Brzezinski's discussions."¹⁹ The expulsion of several hundred thousand Chinese nationals from Vietnam in the late spring met with direct PRC retaliation, when Beijing severed all remaining economic and advisory links to Vietnam. By the end of July, the Chinese for the first time argued that a larger strategic design explained Vietnam's hostility toward China:

Behind every anti-China step taken by the Vietnamese authorities is the large shadow of Soviet social imperialism. . . .

What the Soviet Union wants is to put Vietnam under the influence of its own hegemonism. . . .

What Moscow needs is a "forward post" to dominate Southeast Asia. . . . The Soviet Union urgently needs a reliable base for the long voyage from the continental base of its Pacific Fleet to the Indian Ocean. This is why the Soviet Union has cast a covetous eye on the military bases in Vietnam.

Soviet actions in Asia were depicted as "a component of [a] global strategic plan [intended] . . . to outflank and encircle Europe and isolate the United States" by gaining control of various strategic locations and oil routes, abetted by Cuba and Vietnam.²⁰ U.S. concern with Soviet inroads in Angola and the Horn of Africa had fused with Chinese concern about Soviet actions in Southeast Asia. The logic of "the broader international united front against hegemony"—that is, one including the United States—had begun to take shape.²¹

¹⁸For a comprehensive Chinese account of the deterioration of Sino-Vietnamese relations in the latter half of the 1970s, see Editorial Department, "The Truth About Sino-Vietnamese Relations," *Guoji Wenti Yanjiu* [Journal of International Studies], No. 10, October 1981, in *China Report—Political, Sociological, and Military Affairs*, No. 2, JPRS, No. 79, 661, especially pp. 17-21.

¹⁹Oksenberg, 1982, p. 185.

²⁰Commentator, "The Soviet Strategic Intention as Viewed from the Vietnamese Authorities' Anti-China Activities," *Hongqi*, No. 8, August 1978, in *FBIS-PRC*, August 1978, pp. A12-14.

²¹For several authoritative Chinese discussions, see Zhu Yu, "From Angola to Horn of Africa," *Hongqi*, No. 4, April 1978, in *Peking Review*, No. 16, April 21, 1978, 9-11; Commentator, "The Cuban Mercenary Troops Are a Product of the Policy of Soviet Social Imperialism," *Hongqi*, No. 10, October 1978, in *FBIS-PRC*, October 1978, pp. A1-6; and Commentator, "Social-Imperialist Strategy in Asia," *Renmin Ribao*, December 30, 1978, in *Peking Review*, No. 3, January 19, 1979, pp. 13-16.

China's initiatives toward the United States were as important for what they precluded as for what they portended. During 1977, Washington had initiated negotiations with Hanoi aimed at establishing full diplomatic relations. The accelerated pace of these negotiations during the summer of 1977 suggested that a diplomatic breakthrough with Vietnam might be achieved before a comparable achievement with China. However, Vietnam's raising of preconditions (especially Hanoi's insistence that economic assistance be considered reparations) blocked further progress. By the summer of 1978, the escalation in Sino-Vietnamese tensions compelled changes in Hanoi's strategy. Vietnam now signalled its willingness to drop all preconditions.²² But Vietnam's expulsion of the boat people and its preparations for the invasion of Kampuchea further cautioned the Carter administration. On October 11 President Carter decided that he would defer any early normalization of relations with Vietnam, because he feared it would complicate the Sino-American negotiations over the establishment of full diplomatic relations.²³ The possibility of a U.S.-Vietnam breakthrough prior to Sino-American normalization must have been extremely unsettling to the PRC, even more so given Vietnam's close alignment with the Soviet Union.

The May 1978 Brzezinski visit capitalized on the increasing compatibility between Chinese and American policy. Brzezinski was able to provide his Chinese hosts what Vance could not: compelling evidence that China now ranked as a very important priority in U.S. foreign policy calculations. The Brzezinski mission furnished clear U.S. support in four vital areas: (1) close agreement with Beijing's view of Soviet assertiveness in the Third World and repeated pledges to cooperate with China "in the face of a common threat" in both Southwest and Southeast Asia; (2) unambiguous assurances that President Carter "had made up his mind" on Sino-American normalization and was prepared to resolve the Taiwan impasse on terms acceptable to China, subject to the devising of suitable arrangements for unofficial U.S. relations with Taiwan; (3) pledges to modify intra-alliance arrangements on the transfer of advanced technology to the PRC; and (4) a declaration of U.S. interest in "a secure and strong China" and China's presumed interest in "a powerful, confident, and globally engaged United States," thus speaking to China's preoccupation with the threat of Soviet encirclement.²⁴

China's expressions of frustration at the slow pace of negotiations over the Sino-Japanese Treaty of Peace and Friendship provided a

²²Vance, 1983, p. 122.

²³Oksenberg, 1982, p. 186. According to Oksenberg, "neither the Vietnamese nor the Chinese were informed of this decision."

²⁴For a fuller account, see Brzezinski, 1983, pp. 209-219; see also the text of President Carter's instructions to Brzezinski, in Brzezinski, 1983, pp. 551-555.

further opportunity to demonstrate the credibility of U.S. policy. The long stalled negotiations on the treaty had resumed in March 1978, but many in Tokyo continued to feel that inclusion of an anti-hegemony clause threatened to embroil Japan in the Sino-Soviet rivalry, thereby challenging Japan's commitment to omnidirectional diplomacy.²⁵ On his own initiative, Brzezinski promised the Chinese that he would personally voice U.S. support for early ratification of the treaty to the Japanese leadership, including its anti-hegemony clause.²⁶ U.S. lobbying now combined with Japan's new economic opportunities with the Chinese and extreme rigidity in Soviet diplomacy toward Japan, leading to the signing of the treaty in mid-August.²⁷

China's initiatives toward the United States had begun to achieve important results. Beijing had opened a reliable, high-level channel of communication with the United States, and leaders in Washington were prepared to identify with Chinese security and development objectives, including lobbying on China's behalf with U.S. allies. Although leaders in Beijing continued to castigate those in the Carter administration who were allegedly too enamored of arms control agreements with Moscow, the Chinese believed that the United States would not seek to improve U.S.-Soviet relations in a manner detrimental to Chinese interests.

By the summer of 1978, Deng Xiaoping had considerable cause for satisfaction. Both the United States and Japan had demonstrated their commitment to a major expansion of their relations with China, with Washington adding an explicit security component to the previous bilateral orientation.²⁸ Upon his return to the United States, Brzezinski indicated that Washington would no longer object to possible sales of arms and related equipment to China by the European allies. And, although domestic constraints precluded a direct Japanese role in facilitating Chinese military modernization, Japan's broader commitment to economic and technological cooperation with the PRC would greatly enhance China's power potential.²⁹

Circumstances were becoming propitious for Sino-American normalization. Deng was able to persuade his political colleagues—some of

²⁵For a more detailed account, see Chae-Jin Lee, "The Making of the Sino-Japanese Peace and Friendship Treaty," *Pacific Affairs*, Summer 1979, pp. 420-445.

²⁶Brzezinski, 1983, pp. 216-218.

²⁷For a text, see *Peking Review*, No. 33, August 18, 1978, pp. 7-8.

²⁸For contemporary assessments, see Bernard Gwertzman, "Brzezinski Gave Details to China on Arms Talks with Soviet Union," *The New York Times*, May 28, 1978; Gwertzman, "U.S. Reported Acting to Strengthen Ties with Peking Regime," *The New York Times*, June 25, 1978.

²⁹William T. Tow, "Sino-Japanese Security Cooperation: Evolution and Prospects," *Pacific Affairs*, Spring 1983, pp. 61-62.

whom previously appeared to doubt the benefits of closer Sino-American relations—that U.S. policy toward China had crossed a major threshold.³⁰ The new directions in U.S. policy permitted China to take political risks with the United States that were not possible under conditions of greater uncertainty.

When President Carter decided in June 1978 to push for full diplomatic relations with the PRC before the end of the year, the largest uncertainties still concerned Taiwan.³¹ The U.S. willingness to challenge Soviet geopolitical advances and a credible American policy on technology transfer to the PRC were both vitally important to instilling greater Chinese confidence in the United States, but Taiwan remained by far the largest stumbling block. An accurate picture of the results of the Sino-American negotiations during the latter half of 1978 is essential to understanding later differences between Washington and Beijing.

From the time of the earliest deliberations of the Carter administration in the spring of 1977 over diplomatic relations with China, all participants in the making of U.S. China policy recognized the necessity of continued unofficial American relations with Taiwan, including the right to sell arms to the island. U.S. officials did not expect China to sanction these arrangements, but they did expect that Beijing would accept them, even if the PRC protested their legality. At the same time, the Carter administration recognized that no Chinese leader could accept terms of normalization that implied permanence or officiality to U.S. dealings with Taiwan. U.S. proposals for future relations with Taipei, aired first during the Vance visit and again when Leonard Woodcock began discussions in July 1978 over the terms of normalization, sought to define a suitably ambiguous framework for uninterrupted U.S. ties to Taiwan. The normalization agreements of December 1978 derived substantially from these earlier proposals; U.S. expectations and stipulations throughout this period remained essentially unchanged.

³⁰The terms of Chinese leadership debate over Sino-American relations during 1978 remain the subject of speculation. There was circumstantial evidence of policy differences, notably Hua Guofeng's pointed expression of displeasure over continuing U.S. arms sales to Taiwan at the time of normalization, contrasting with Deng's effort to reassure Washington about China's preference for a peaceful resolution of the Taiwan issue. But more detailed evidence is lacking.

³¹For more detailed accounts upon which this assessment draws, see Oksenberg, 1982, especially pp. 185–188; Brzezinski, 1983, especially pp. 225–232; and Vance, 1983, especially pp. 117–118. For the most comprehensive Chinese account of the commitments and results of the normalization process, see *Guoji Wenti Yanjiu* Special Commentator, "Where Does the Crux of the Sino-U.S. Relationship Lie?" *Renmin Ribao*, April 6, 1982, in *Beijing Review*, No. 15, April 12, 1982, pp. 13–17, 28.

China's willingness to consent to these formulas was greatly affected by the larger strategic context governing Sino-American relations, but also by U.S. decisions on Taiwan's long-pending requests for improved weaponry, especially advanced aircraft. Since 1973, co-production arrangements had permitted local assembly in Taiwan of the F-5E and F-5F, the mainstays of the island's air defense forces. This program had enabled Taiwan to introduce newer aircraft into its combat inventory as well as replace more dated aircraft. By the late 1970s, however, Taiwan voiced mounting concern about the erosion of its qualitative edge in the air order of battle. The expected introduction of more advanced aircraft into the PRC inventory and the scheduled termination of the co-production agreement in mid-1980 raised new uncertainties in Taipei about the sufficiency of the island's air defense capabilities. According to aerospace industry reports, these concerns had led Taiwan to lobby for a considerably more capable aircraft, with speculation centering on the F-4 fighter bomber.³²

The Carter administration recognized that any decisions on sales of additional aircraft for Taiwan had substantial political implications. Supplying Taiwan with a more advanced aircraft would greatly diminish U.S. credibility in Beijing, because it would imply an open-ended commitment from the United States to meet Taiwan's requests for newer weaponry. Denying it would lend credibility to U.S. pledges not to impede a resolution of the Taiwan question, even if the United States could not unequivocally forswear the right to sell additional arms to the island. A decision to continue sales of the F-5E and F-5F, although more indeterminate, implied a ceiling on the military capabilities to be offered to Taiwan.

During the summer and fall of 1978, the Carter administration made its decisions: All of Taiwan's requests for more advanced aircraft were denied. At the end of June, the United States quietly cancelled the rumored sale of 60 F-4s, a transaction estimated at \$500 million.³³ In mid-October, the United States informed Taiwan that sale of the F-5G (with performance characteristics and radar capabilities well beyond the F-5E) would not be permitted.³⁴ Instead, the Carter administration proposed sales of an additional 48 F-5Es equipped with Maverick

³²For relevant details, see Donald E. Fink, "Nationalists Update Fighter Force," *Aviation Week and Space Technology*, May 29, 1978, pp. 14-16; and Fink, "Center Designs Two Aircraft," *Aviation Week and Space Technology*, June 5, 1978, pp. 14-16. According to Fink, Taiwan also inquired about a land-based version of the F-18 as well as the F-15 and F-16.

³³"U.S., in Gesture to Peking, Drops Jet Sale to Taiwan," *The New York Times*, July 1, 1978.

³⁴"Carter Vetoes F-5G Sale to Taiwan," *Aviation Week and Space Technology*, October 23, 1978, p. 24.

missiles, enabling continuation of the co-production arrangement.³⁵ These decisions lent substance to what President Carter told Chinese Ambassador Chai Zemin in a White House meeting in mid-September: the United States insisted that it retain the right to continue "carefully selected arms sales to Taiwan that would not be threatening to China."³⁶ As former Secretary of State Vance has noted, the decision on the F-5E conveyed to both Taipei and Beijing "that we meant what we said about supplying defensive arms to Taiwan."³⁷

Beijing had ample reason to be gratified by these decisions. Although they did not offer the prospect of an immediate end to U.S. arms sales to Taiwan, they suggested a qualitative ceiling. The fact that the United States reserved the right to sell arms did not mean that additional arms *would* be sold, only that they *could* be sold.³⁸ Continued U.S. arms sales to Taiwan precluded any Chinese declaration of peaceful intent toward the island, but tacit restraints on both sides (the Chinese in their statements and military deployments, the Americans in their commitments and military sales) suggested an unspoken but pivotal linkage between Chinese and American policy. The Chinese seemed persuaded that leaders in Taipei did not have an open-ended commitment from the Carter administration, and that U.S. support would diminish over time. With the reduction of Chinese military forces opposite Taiwan and continued political overtures to the island, China anticipated an eventual cessation in U.S. weapons sales to Taipei.³⁹ Washington's unilateral statement at the time of normalization that it reserved the right to continue limited sales of defensive arms could be construed as a short-term, face-saving gesture. The United States agreed to a one-year moratorium on further arms sales; Deng and other Chinese leaders therefore felt that time was on their side. Taiwan, sensing its international isolation and unable to rely on the United States, would ultimately be compelled to negotiate on Beijing's terms.

³⁵ *Aviation Week and Space Technology*, November 13, 1978, p. 26.

³⁶ Oksenberg, 1982, p. 187.

³⁷ Vance, 1983, p. 117.

³⁸ During his visit to China in August 1981, former President Carter made very clear that "no time limit" had been placed on continued sales of U.S. defensive weapons to Taiwan. "The Chinese had been adamantly opposed to the sale of any arms to Taiwan, and our commitment was that it be handled with prudence, that the arms be strictly defensive in nature and not the kind of weapons that could be used offensively against the mainland. . . . We all expressed the hope that the resolution of difficulties would be as soon as possible. There was no specific time limit on the sale of defensive arms." James P. Sterba, "Carter Says He and Peking Agreed on Sale of U.S. Arms to Taiwan," *The New York Times*, August 28, 1981.

³⁹ Michael Weisskopf, "China Said to Believe U.S. Reneged on Deal About Taiwan Arms," *Washington Post*, August 11, 1981; Richard Nations, "Normalizing Nuances," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, January 22, 1982, pp. 15-16.

Deng's expectations were conveyed clearly on January 1, 1979, the date of U.S. derecognition of the Taipei government. In a speech delivered to the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Congress (which he then served as Chairman), Deng elaborated on the New Year's Day message from the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress to the "compatriots in Taiwan." The latter message had marked the onset of Beijing's highly publicized appeals to Taiwan, coinciding with the cessation of China's bombardments against Quemoy and other offshore islands. The statement had expressed a "fervent hope that Taiwan return to the embrace of the motherland at an early date," with pledges by the PRC to "take present realities into account . . . and respect the status quo on Taiwan." Beijing further promised to "adopt reasonable policies and measures in settling the question of reunification so as not to cause the people in Taiwan any losses."⁴⁰

Deng's remarks amplified on these appeals, stating, "the great cause of Taiwan's return to the motherland and the motherland's reunification is [now] placed on our concrete agenda." This step, he argued, was "a result of our important achievements in both domestic and international work."⁴¹ Deng described the reunification issue in terms of historical inevitability, the patriotism of all Chinese, and the compelling need for China to modernize. Weeks later he stated that ten years was "too long a time" for reunification, although he conceded that his hopes for realizing the goal during 1979 were "probably being too impatient." Further U.S. arms sales to Taiwan threatened to unsettle all such calculations, because leaders on the island would not feel pressured to negotiate. In Deng's view, "the continued sale of arms is of no benefit to negotiations between us and the Taiwan authorities for peaceful reunification, because then Chiang Ching-kuo will think he has nothing to fear, and he will thrust his tail up 10,000 meters high in the sky."⁴²

The terms of normalization (no matter how accommodating to the PRC position) represented a gamble for China's leaders that was judged worth the risk. By the end of October 1978, an authoritative Chinese commentary argued that the Soviet Union's expansionist behavior was "leading to the ever growing expansion of the international anti-hegemony united front."⁴³ The United States had been

⁴⁰All citations are from the NPC message issued by Xinhua, December 31, 1978, in *FBIS-PRC*, January 2, 1979, pp. E1-2.

⁴¹Only excerpts of Deng's speech are available. They were issued by Xinhua, January 1, 1979, in *FBIS-PRC*, January 2, 1979, pp. E3-4.

⁴²"An Interview with Teng Hsiao-p'ing," *Time*, February 5, 1979, p. 35.

⁴³Commentator, "The Plotter of a Siege Is Being Besieged," *Hongqi*, No. 11, November 1978, in *FBIS-PRC*, November 29, 1978, p. A13.

added to the "ever growing" roster of forces opposing hegemony, culminating in the mid-December announcement of full diplomatic relations between Washington and Beijing.

Mounting tensions along the Sino-Vietnamese border were a far more immediate concern in Beijing than the long-term disposition of the Taiwan question. The signing of the Soviet-Vietnamese Treaty of Peace and Friendship in early November 1978 and Vietnam's move into Kampuchea in late December underscored China's argument about the larger strategic implications of these regional rivalries.⁴⁴ As the Chinese contemplated a decision to initiate hostilities with Vietnam, the importance of closer U.S.-Chinese relations grew accordingly.

Beijing recognized the political and diplomatic risks of its military operations against Vietnam. Anxieties seemed to run particularly high in Tokyo, where the Japanese—fearful of excessive polarization in East Asia and wary of identifying too closely with Chinese security objectives—expressed reservations about the prospect of a PRC attack on Vietnam. But Deng was determined to accept the risks. Having secured full ties with Washington and signed the peace and friendship treaty with Tokyo, China appeared much less likely to incur major criticisms for its actions and felt far less threatened by possible Soviet retaliation.

China's mid-February 1979 attack into northern Vietnam constituted the first major test of the Sino-American united front. On balance, the Chinese judged their operations a political and diplomatic success, though the PRC military performance left much to be desired.⁴⁵ The Chinese apparently regarded a forceful response to the Vietnamese invasion of Kampuchea as an immediate necessity. Both publicly and privately, Deng Xiaoping sought to reassure the United States that Chinese operations against Vietnam (like the Sino-Indian conflict of 1962) would be punitive but brief.⁴⁶ China had no intention of taking excessive risks in its impending attack on Vietnam, nor did the Chinese expect any U.S. assistance. By providing the United States with information on the scope and duration of their intended actions, the Chinese hoped for something between approval and

⁴⁴See David W. P. Elliott (ed.), *The Third Indochina Conflict*, Westview Press, Boulder, Colorado, 1981.

⁴⁵Harlan W. Jencks, "China's 'Punitive' War on Vietnam: A Military Assessment," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 19, No. 8, August 1979, pp. 801-815; Daniel Treiakh, "China's Vietnam War and Its Consequences," *The China Quarterly*, No. 80, December 1979, pp. 740-767.

⁴⁶According to Brzezinski, during his visit to Washington Deng informed President Carter that China's operations against Vietnam would take 10-20 days, during which time Deng saw very little likelihood of hostilities drawing in the Soviet Union. As a result, the Chinese made no request for U.S. assistance. Brzezinski, 1982, pp. 409-410.

understanding from officials in Washington. In Beijing's united front logic, Chinese actions against Vietnam served the common interests of those opposing the Soviet Union, much as Chinese military forces along the Sino-Soviet border tied down large numbers of Soviet ground troops.⁴⁷ Indeed, the Chinese implied they were undertaking actions that rightfully the United States should have been performed.

The principal concern of the Carter administration was that the warfare between China and Vietnam and the increasing Sino-Soviet polarization in Asia might engulf the non-communist states of the region. U.S. policy was therefore one of limited dissociation from Chinese actions, the suspension of plans for further U.S. military withdrawals from the region, and increased U.S. military assistance for regional allies. Such a "quarantine strategy" sought to limit the possible consequences of Sino-Vietnamese hostilities; even a tacit endorsement of Chinese actions ran the risk of further polarization and conflict in East Asia.⁴⁸

The Chinese, however, correctly calculated that an operation limited in time and objectives would reduce the likelihood of a Soviet intervention, thereby providing them with freedom of action against Hanoi.⁴⁹ Washington's limited dissociation from the Chinese attack had no lasting consequences. The advocates in the U.S. government of closer Sino-American cooperation felt that it demonstrated China's intention to do whatever it deemed necessary to further its strategic objectives.⁵⁰ As Deng made clear to President Carter, the Chinese did not seek a formal alliance or explicit security commitments from the United States, only a recognition of the need to coordinate activities and support one another on matters of mutual concern.⁵¹

⁴⁷See the speech by Xu Xin, May 1981, in *Trilateral Members' Beijing Meeting—Chinese Speeches and Presentations*, n.p., May 20–23, 1981, pp. 21–28. Xu then served as Vice Chairman of the Beijing Institute for International Strategic Studies; he is now a PLA Deputy Chief of Staff.

⁴⁸For an assessment of U.S. thinking in the wake of the Chinese attack, see Richard Burt, "U.S. Is Formulating New Policy on Asia," *The New York Times*, March 15, 1979.

⁴⁹On Chinese risktaking calculations, see Gelman, 1982 (Section I, fn 1), pp. 98–105.

⁵⁰Brzezinski, for example, describes Deng's presentation of Chinese plans for the attack in Vietnam as "the single most impressive demonstration of raw power politics that I encountered in my four years in the White House." Brzezinski, 1982, p. 25.

⁵¹Jimmy Carter, *Keeping Faith—Memoirs of a President*, Bantam Books, New York, 1982, p. 205.

FROM THE ARC OF CRISIS TO AFGHANISTAN

Political and military instability in 1979 in both Southwest and Southeast Asia—the overthrow of the Shah, growing Soviet involvement in Afghanistan, and open hostilities in Kampuchea and along the Sino-Vietnamese border—intensified the atmosphere of military crisis prevailing to China's west and south. But the defense relationship was still more latent than active. Although the Chinese were loath to suggest the possibility, leaders in Beijing had quite possibly expected more of the United States than Washington was yet prepared to offer. In the early spring, Deng Xiaoping for the first time publicly discussed the establishment of direct security ties between China and the United States. Although his overtures did not go unnoticed, the Carter administration approached them cautiously. There was both public and private evidence of division in Washington, which reflected bureaucratic rivalries as well as fundamental divergences on U.S. strategy toward China and the Soviet Union. To Secretary of State Vance, it was imperative that the United States “steer a balanced course” between Moscow and Beijing.⁵² In the Secretary's view, good relations with the Soviet Union and completion of the SALT II agreement ranked as the cornerstones of U.S. foreign policy. He considered a serious effort to engage the Chinese in strategic cooperation provocative of Moscow, and likely to strain U.S.-Soviet relations even further.

National Security Advisor Brzezinski and Defense Secretary Brown opposed these views. According to Vance, even before normalization Brzezinski and Brown saw various “security enhancements” (the exchange of attaches, technology transfer to China, third country sales of military equipment to China, and other unspecified forms of cooperation) as likely to caution rather than provoke Moscow.⁵³ The momentum of Soviet advances in the Third World furnished an additional reason. As Brzezinski argued to President Carter in October 1979, “the Chinese relationship is useful in showing the Soviets that their assertiveness is counterproductive and not cost-free.”⁵⁴ But these debates within the Carter administration remained unresolved. The United States was still not prepared to accord China an independent strategic role in relation to U.S. security objectives, and other goals (notably the administration's continuing effort to reach a SALT II agreement with Moscow) still represented more pressing priorities. Congressional passage of the Taiwan Relations Act further cautioned

⁵²See Vance, 1983, pp. 120-139.

⁵³Vance, 1983, p. 78.

⁵⁴The quotation is from Brzezinski's memo of October 5, 1979 to the President, as cited in Brzezinski, 1983, p. 566.

Beijing. Under substantial domestic pressure, in early April 1979 President Carter signed the act, which provided an explicit framework for continuing U.S. ties with Taiwan.⁵⁵ Both the tenor and specific obligations of the act (especially on the security of Taiwan) were far stronger than the Carter administration would have preferred and the Chinese had expected. But President Carter chose to ignore Chinese warnings that passage of the act "contravened the principles agreed upon by the two sides at the time of normalization" and threatened "great harm" to the embryonic U.S.-China relationship.⁵⁶

Other problems loomed on the horizon. China's military operations against Vietnam had entailed unexpectedly high combat and equipment losses, revealing China's low levels of military readiness and undermining Deng's argument that China could serve as a credible counterweight to the expansion of Soviet or Vietnamese power. In the aftermath of the conflict, the Soviet naval and reconnaissance presence in Vietnam also increased appreciably, confirming China's expressed fears about Soviet political and military encirclement. And even as Hanoi buttressed its military presence along the Sino-Vietnamese border, there was no evidence that Vietnam's new security problem to the north had compelled reassessment of its strategy of subjugating Kampuchea to the west.

The Chinese leadership also began to appreciate the full dimensions of China's economic crisis. Having engaged in a headlong international buying spree during much of 1977 and 1978, the Chinese encountered serious budgetary problems. To control these deficits, China had to curtail major purchases of foreign technology, which included transactions in the defense sector. To its substantial embarrassment, China reneged upon negotiated agreements with Japan and other major trading partners.⁵⁷ The cancellation or postponement of costly industrial projects may have made good economic sense, but it further tarnished China's international credibility.

It is impossible to determine how much political capital Deng expended in these policy reversals, especially in prosecuting the war

⁵⁵For a text of the act, see Richard Solomon (ed.), *The China Factor*, Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1981, pp. 304-314.

⁵⁶Chinese concerns were voiced privately by Foreign Minister Huang Hua to U.S. Ambassador Woodcock on March 16, and publicly by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on March 24. See Linda Mathews, "China Charges U.S. Violated Terms of Ties," *Los Angeles Times*, March 25, 1979.

⁵⁷Linda Mathews and David Holley, "China Puts Brakes on Modernization Drive," *Los Angeles Times*, March 18, 1979. For further details, see Martin Weil, "The Baoshan Steel Mill: A Symbol of Change in China's Industrial Development Strategy," in Joint Economic Committee, Congress of the United States, *China Under the Four Modernizations—Part I*, Washington, D.C., 1982, especially pp. 374-379.

against Vietnam. More than any other Chinese leader, he was closely identified with this policy. The opening of a military front against Vietnam entailed major costs and only uncertain prospects for success. Placing China on a war footing to the south clashed sharply with Deng's effort to advance the PRC's development goals and undermined his attempt to improve China's political and economic relations with the non-communist states of East Asia. At the same time, there was a vital need for American political, economic, and technological assistance. But passage of the Taiwan Relations Act posed renewed uncertainties for Sino-American relations; Deng could ill afford to take excessive risks with Washington in such circumstances.

Deng showed little hesitancy in addressing these uncertainties. Nine days after the act's passage, Deng entertained a delegation from the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. He took President Carter to task for signing the act, warning that its passage bordered on nullification of the normalization accords. According to Deng, the act had only made leaders on Taiwan more stubborn; thus it was impossible for Deng to rule out the possible use of force against the island should Taipei continue its refusal to negotiate with Beijing.⁵⁸ Deng's warnings were intended as statements for the record, but they also indicated the potential for an unraveling of the understandings reached at the time of normalization.

In the same meeting, however, Deng publicly indicated China's interest in active security collaboration with the United States. Although there had been elliptical hints of Chinese interest since late 1978, Deng's imprimatur lent far more credibility to these possibilities. He raised three potential areas for security cooperation: (1) U.S. naval port calls to China, (2) Chinese purchases of U.S. weaponry (in particular advanced fighter aircraft), and (3) the operation of U.S. monitoring equipment on Chinese territory to verify Moscow's compliance with Soviet-American arms control accords.⁵⁹

Port calls by the Seventh Fleet would have constituted a direct response to growing Soviet naval activities in the South China Sea (especially Moscow's access to Vietnamese naval facilities). Extending a welcome to U.S. ships would have conveyed Beijing's endorsement of the U.S. naval posture in the West Pacific. But Deng indicated that

⁵⁸Fox Butterfield, "Senators Cautioned on Taiwan by Deng," *The New York Times*, April 20, 1979.

⁵⁹Details on Deng's conversation are drawn from Jay Mathews, "China Offers to Monitor SALT Data," *Washington Post*, April 20, 1979. See also Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, *The United States, China, and Japan*, Washington, D.C., September 1979, p. 15. Some of Deng's comments were prompted by queries from members of the Senate delegation, but his consent to attribution of these overtures gives his remarks added weight.

such a step would have to await study, given the Arms Control and Relations Act and the reported consideration of the Act between the United States and Taiwan's armed forces.

China's potential interest in the purchase of advanced weapons already been the subject of widespread public speculation. Chinese military delegations had undertaken high-profile missions to Western European armaments plants, and there had been reports of major sales of advanced weaponry to the PRC. Since the late 1950s, there was a real possibility of China's gaining access to advanced weapons systems from abroad, despite the shortcomings in China's military performance. Deng's statement to the Senate delegation was free: According to those present, he argued that it was the courage to buy advanced fighter aircraft from the United States had the courage to sell them.

Deng was well aware of the constraints that would be placed on sales to China. Although the United States had indicated that it would not object to defense transactions with China, Western Europe, officials in Washington continued to oppose a Sino-American military supply relationship was not in the interests at the highest levels of the Carter administration. Secretary of State Vance strongly opposed to any weapons sales to China; those were well known to the Chinese; Deng may have been aware of a means of lobbying for changes in U.S. policy; he was aware of China's mounting budget deficits; the possibility of large purchases of sophisticated defense equipment. In addition, China had a long-standing aversion to externally produced military equipment. Deng argued that the United States would permit local assembly of combat aircraft in Chinese defense factories, not even approach the capability to utilize new technologies without extensive foreign involvement. Deng nonetheless spoke to a pivotal consideration: Would the United States judge China reliable and important enough to supply it with technologies, even major weapons systems, or at least to do so? And was the United States sufficiently degraded in its strategic position to view the transfer of military power as an important gain for U.S. strategy?

⁶⁰See Paul H. B. Godwin, "China and the Second World War: Technology," *Contemporary China*, Fall 1978, pp. 3-9.

⁶¹See National Security Advisor Brzezinski's comment in the *Department of State Bulletin*, July 1978, p. 27.

Intelligence cooperation was the most sensitive security collaboration mentioned by Deng, largely because the stakes were real rather than hypothetical. The Soviet withdrawal from the SALT II talks in 1979 and the loss of listening posts in Northern China, which would have enabled the U.S. to monitor Soviet missile tests from Asia, complicating the Carter administration's position in the impending Senate debate. When Deng spoke to the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, U.S. verification of compliance with arms control treaties were in the hands of the Executive Branch.⁶² Administration officials, including Defense Secretary Brown, were insisting publicly on U.S. capability to monitor Soviet adherence to SALT II within a year, well before Moscow could undertake a program for new missiles.⁶³ China immediately refuted reports about possible sites for replacement of listening posts in electronics industry journals as early as 1978. Brzezinski had discussed it during his May 1978 visit to the PRC.⁶⁴ The reports led Carter administration spokesmen to insist that such collaboration had been broached or contemplated.

Deng's offer revealed an acute sensitivity to the administration's political needs. He understood that China was an excellent location for enhancing U.S. intelligence gathering on Soviet missile tests. At the same time, he recognized that SALT verification could doom the treaty and limit future cooperation prospects. Deng must have appreciated the opportunity to assist the United States in guaranteeing compliance with SALT II, which the Chinese had repeatedly disparaged.

Deng was aware of the potential reactions to his offer, one in Moscow and the other in China. A close relationship with the United States on matters vital to China's interests made American relations made China less susceptible to allegations that Beijing was engaging in illicit security cooperation with the United States. Deng also made very clear that the U.S. would accept only American *equipment* in a facility in China, with Chinese technicians, after initial training by U.S. personnel on Chinese soil.

⁶²Hedrick Smith, "Arms Hurdle: Trust in Soviet," *Washington Post*, 1979.

⁶³Vance, 1983, pp. 136-137.

⁶⁴See *Electronics Week/Defense Electronics*, August 1979, p. 19.

⁶⁵"U.S. Says No to Spy Posts Inside China," *Washington Post*, 1979.

acceptable, as evidenced by Deng's allusion to Soviet efforts to acc naval facilities in China in 1958. No Chinese decisionmaker—least all the one most intimately tied to the “American connection”—could afford to appear beholden and yielding to a foreign power, especially one still accused of intervening in China's internal affairs. But a collaborative arrangement would offer maximum technological gains to China, while providing technical data to the United States important to the ratification prospects for SALT II. The political and strategic implications of such a step were at least as important as its consequences for arms control. Granting China access to U.S. detection capabilities implied a readiness to treat China as a quasi-ally. It also indicated that the United States no longer sought to steer an equidistant strategic course between Moscow and Beijing.

The Carter administration's responses to these overtures, although not decisive, were encouraging to the Chinese.⁶⁶ In the aftermath of Deng's visit, Brzezinski had initiated informal negotiations with the Chinese on security matters. During the same period, Brzezinski and Defense Secretary Brown repeatedly pushed for changes in U.S. policy on technology transfer to China and argued for “benign neutrality” toward Western European weapons sales to the PRC. Although Secretary of State Vance continued to resist these moves, growing Soviet involvement in Afghanistan and South Yemen and mounting instability in Iran helped shift opinion within the Carter administration. According to Brzezinski, in a May 3 meeting with Ambassador Zemin, President Carter, “taking into account the overall global situation . . . made some proposals [on security matters] to the Chinese side, and thus an important threshold was crossed.”⁶⁷ Carter described these developments to Defense Secretary Brown as “an embryonic U.S.-Chinese military relationship.”⁶⁸ In the wake of Carter's decision, Brzezinski proposed to Chai the visit of U.S. warships to Chinese ports as a response to Soviet naval activities in Vietnam. But Chai's positive response paralleled Deng's public stance during April. The offer was not timely because of the Taiwan Relations Act.⁶⁹ Brzezinski and Brown also continued to be stymied by Vance's opposition to a security relationship with the PRC. Vance feared that “a mi-

⁶⁶For a useful account on U.S.-Chinese security dealings during the Carter administration, see Brzezinski, 1983, pp. 419-425.

⁶⁷Brzezinski, 1983, p. 420.

⁶⁸Brzezinski, 1983, p. 421.

⁶⁹Brzezinski, 1983, p. 421.

security relationship with China . . . would suggest that we have given up hope of improving relations with the USSR."⁷⁰

Although the Chinese had voiced their clearest calls for expanded Sino-American collaboration and events in Southwest Asia portended further crises and instability, the Carter administration was still unable to agree upon an appropriate course for security dealings with China. The United States continued to institutionalize Sino-American relations across a broad range of government departments and agencies, but the Defense Department was still not centrally involved. An explicit U.S. commitment to China's well being and territorial integrity was important but in Chinese eyes was not the response required to deal with mounting instability in both Southwest and Southeast Asia. When Vice President Mondale spoke at Beijing University in late August 1979, he pledged that the United States would "advance our many parallel strategic and bilateral interests. Thus any nation which seeks to weaken or isolate you in world affairs assumes a stance counter to American interests."⁷¹ Yet the Vice President also stated that "we do not have a military relationship [with China] and are not planning one."⁷² Although a possible visit by Defense Secretary Brown was also discussed at this time, it was not portrayed to Beijing as a first step toward a major strategic relationship.

The Chinese expressed mounting concern about the possibilities for major Soviet breakthroughs in both the Persian Gulf and Indochina. As early as March 1974, Chinese strategic analysts had predicted a two-pronged Soviet geopolitical advance (later termed the "dumbbell strategy"), whereby Moscow would gain control of vital strategic routes and lines of communication in Southwest and Southeast Asia, gaining an economic stranglehold on the West and Japan.⁷³ The Shah's ouster from power and the emergence of a revolutionary anti-Western regime in Iran had greatly weakened the U.S. geopolitical position in the Persian Gulf and bore out Chinese warnings of mounting dangers in Southwest Asia. In Beijing's view, the U.S. response to these developments was grossly inadequate, providing Moscow with major new opportunities for expansion.

In early November 1979, for example, the *Hongqi* Commentator painted a bleak picture of the vulnerability of the West's energy life-

⁷⁰Brzezinski, 1983, p. 422.

⁷¹Xinhua, August 27, 1979, in *FBIS-PRC*, August 28, 1979, p. B4.

⁷²Norman Kempster, "Carter May Go to China Next Year, Hua to Visit U.S.," *Los Angeles Times*, August 29, 1979.

⁷³Xiang Dong, "Expansion by Soviet Revisionist Social Imperialism in Southeast Asia," *Renmin Ribao*, March 19, 1974, in *FBIS-PRC*, March 20, 1974, pp. A1-3.

line.⁷⁴ Commentator even suggested the possibility of a direct U.S.-Soviet conflict: "Not only must the countries in the areas themselves take the lead in opposing Soviet expansion and domination, but the United States and its allies also absolutely cannot just sit back and watch because all kinds of struggles and conflicts will keep on occurring which might even touch off a direct confrontation between the superpowers." The Chinese expressed gratification that "more and more people" understood that China's struggle against the Soviet Union concerned all states, and not just China. Yet Commentator still argued that Soviet power was insufficient to achieve its global aims. China was more concerned with the voices in the West urging continued restraint in dealings with the Soviet Union, lest Moscow be pushed into war. In Commentator's view, Soviet advances could be halted only by heightening vigilance, "adopting realistic measures and practical actions to constantly upset the expansionist schemes of the planners of war, oppose the policy of appeasement and when necessary take retaliatory actions against aggressors."

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in late December 1979 dramatically altered these debates. Moscow's behavior had confirmed China's warnings of an expansionist Soviet Union seeking to dominate its neighbors. The Soviet intervention and Moscow's growing military presence in Vietnam suggested a pattern of expansion and encirclement that China had been powerless to prevent. New measures were now required to impede the consolidation of Soviet power in Southwest and Southeast Asia. A united front opposed to the Soviet invasion and lending support to rebel forces would help transform Afghanistan into a "quagmire" for Soviet forces, rather than a first step in a Soviet drive to the Persian Gulf.⁷⁵

The more immediate effects of the Afghanistan invasion were the shifts in U.S. policy debate toward the USSR and the PRC. President Carter's unwillingness to choose between the views of his Secretary of State and those of his National Security Advisor had finally ceased: If detente was not dead, it was on deep freeze. The President publicly adopted a stance of global opposition to Soviet policy, including withdrawal of the SALT II treaty from the Senate, imposition of a grain embargo, and the U.S. withdrawal from the Moscow Olympics. At the same time, President Carter for the first time defined the defense of the Persian Gulf as a vital U.S. security interest. A large expansion of the U.S. military presence in the Persian Gulf made even more imperative the consolidation of U.S. relations with the PRC and the

⁷⁴All citations are drawn from Commentator, "The Current Danger of War and the Defense of World Peace," *Hongqi*, No. 11, November 1979, in *FBIS-PRC*, November 27, 1979, pp. A1-7.

⁷⁵On Chinese reactions to the Afghanistan invasion, see Pollack, 1982 (Section I, fn 6), pp. 43-44, 58-59.

maintenance of stable, friendly relations among Beijing, Tokyo, and Washington.

Debates within the U.S. government over security dealings with China also experienced a major shift in direction. During the late fall, as Defense Secretary Brown's visit to the PRC drew closer, the Carter administration tried to resolve its continuing differences over the security component of relations with China. Secretary of State Vance continued to favor an evenhanded approach in dealings with Moscow and Beijing and sought to forestall any moves with China beyond the implied threat to collaborate with the PRC on security matters. Brown advocated loosened controls on exports of dual use technologies but no military sales to China "at this time."⁷⁶ On December 17 and again on December 19, President Carter tried to reconcile these approaches. Although he continued to rule out an avowed military relationship or U.S. arms sales to the PRC, he authorized Defense Secretary Brown to undertake broad consultations, hoping to identify complementary American and Chinese approaches to common security concerns.

In the wake of the Afghanistan invasion, the President shifted course. On January 1, 1980, only hours before Brown's departure for Beijing, President Carter authorized sales of nonlethal military equipment to the PRC as one of the U.S. responses to the invasion. He also reaffirmed a December decision to permit China preferential arrangements in certain high technology transfers, including over-the-horizon radar. In Carter's view, however, arms sales were a "quantum leap" that he would rather defer.⁷⁷ But exponents of security relations with the PRC had finally achieved a long-sought goal: an explicit decision by the Carter administration to favor China at the expense of the Soviet Union. Leaders in Beijing now had evidence of China's growing political and strategic value to the United States. Sino-American security collaboration constituted one of the Carter administration's principal responses to Soviet geopolitical advances; the Defense Secretary's imminent arrival in Beijing would fully reveal to Beijing the actions the United States was prepared to undertake.

THE BROWN VISIT

Defense Secretary Brown's visit in January 1980 formally instituted ties in the defense field. Although under consideration for

⁷⁶Brzezinski, 1983, p. 423.

⁷⁷Vance, 1983, p. 390-391; Brzezinski, 1983, pp. 430-431.

some months and officially announced in October, the Secretary's trip had been given new import by the invasion of Afghanistan. The expansion of security ties enabled President Carter to delegate responsibility in this sensitive area to an official less involved in the administration's internecine foreign policy warfare. It also allowed Beijing and Washington to explore more fully each side's security calculations and expectations.

The Chinese viewed the Brown visit with considerable circumspection. On January 2, 1980—only a week after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and only three days before Defense Secretary Brown's scheduled arrival in Beijing—the Carter administration notified Congress that it intended to resume arms sales to Taiwan.⁷⁸ Two days later, the administration announced a major change in its arms sale policy, for the first time permitting sales of an intermediate fighter—the FX—designed exclusively for export.⁷⁹ Taiwan figured immediately in the speculation about possible purchasers of the aircraft. One of the candidate planes, the F-5G, represented the next generation of F-5 aircraft for which Taiwan had lobbied heavily in the summer of 1978. The resumption of arms sales immediately following the end of the one-year moratorium stipulated by the normalization accords did not augur well for Beijing's long-term strategy of isolating Taiwan. Even though the Chinese chose not to make a major public protest, trends were running contrary to China's expectations, and under the same administration that had normalized relations only a year before.

There were also repeated indications of debate over U.S. China policy. Leaks in early January of an internal Defense Department study on the prospects for a major U.S. military supply relationship with the PRC implied a U.S. willingness to consider a substantial security commitment to the PRC, including possible joint U.S.-Chinese operations in the event of a global war.⁸⁰ Yet other press reports had accurately reported the unresolved policy debates in the Carter administration over U.S. technology transfer policy to the PRC. There was still no clarity about the administration's willingness to allow sales of various

⁷⁸The total arms package announced on January 2 amounted to \$280 million. In June, the Carter administration promised final decisions on Taiwan's other arms requests. See the testimony of Assistant Secretary of State Holbrooke to the House Foreign Affairs Committee, "Review of Relations with Taiwan," June 11, 1980, in *Department of State Bulletin*, August 1980, p. 52.

⁷⁹"Export of Fighter Aircraft," *Department of State Bulletin*, March 1980, p. 64. See also Janice M. Hinton, *The Sale of FX Aircraft to Taiwan*, The Rand Corporation, P-6730, February 1982.

⁸⁰Drew Middleton, "Pentagon Studies Prospects of Military Links with China," *The New York Times*, January 4, 1980.

technologies (notably, satellite communications and computers) that had civilian as well as potential military applications.⁸¹

Moreover, Deng did not have a free hand to expand the scope of security collaboration. On the eve of the Brown visit, Chinese policy statements continued to stress a united front logic of shared concerns but divided responsibilities. Leaders in Beijing understood their limited capabilities to counter Soviet moves in Southwest Asia and their even more limited incentives to raise the temperature of the Sino-Soviet confrontation. A more workable strategy, as described by one observer in Beijing, was "to continue to mobilize international pressure and let long-term attrition take its toll in Hanoi and Moscow."⁸² At a time of considerably heightened tensions in Asia, the PRC wanted to avoid antagonizing the Soviet leadership. Finally and perhaps most important, leaders in Beijing did not want to commit themselves to increased security collaboration with the United States without first determining whether U.S. actions would match its rhetoric.

Deng Xiaoping conveyed the prevailing political mood in Beijing in January 1 remarks to the Chinese People's Political Consultative Congress, and amplified on them in a longer presentation on January 16 to a major cadre conference convened by the Party Central Committee.⁸³ In his latter address, Deng set forth three main policy goals for the 1980s: (1) "to oppose hegemonism and safeguard world peace," (2) "to return Taiwan to the ancestral land" and achieve the full unification of China, and (3) "to step up economic construction." Among the three, Deng regarded economic construction as the most important. He acknowledged concerns about the uncertain prospects for peace ("the eighties will be a dangerous era and the beginning of the eighties was not good"), but conveyed a generally optimistic tone:

We are confident that if the struggle to oppose hegemonism goes well, the outbreak of war can be postponed and a longer period of peace secured. This is possible and it is also what we are striving for. Not only the people of the world, but also we ourselves definitely need a peaceful environment. Therefore, in terms of our own country, our foreign policy should seek a peaceful environment to carry out the four modernizations.

⁸¹Daniel Southerland and John K. Cooley, "U.S. Technology for Sale to China?" *Christian Science Monitor*, December 28, 1979.

⁸²Fox Butterfield, "China Standing Firm Amid Growing Crises," *The New York Times*, January 5, 1980.

⁸³Deng's January 1 remarks are not available. All citations are drawn from "The Present Situation and Our Tasks," January 16, 1980, in *Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping*, in *China Report—Political, Sociological, and Military Affairs*, No. 468, JPRS, No. 84, 651, pp. 169-195.

Deng sought to dampen concerns that mounting tensions in Asia might lead China into war. In Deng's view, the Party had already "laid a very good foundation for the 1980s. . . . An attitude of doubt with regard to the domestic situation and the future of the four modernizations is completely erroneous and without foundation." But Deng offered no concrete proposals about the operation of a united front, or on how China could avoid war while opposing Soviet expansion. Finally, his attention to Taiwan, although perfunctory, suggested that the political future of the island might yet again become a contentious issue between Beijing and Washington.

Harold Brown's visit to China captured this flavor of expectancy mixed with uncertainty. The Defense Secretary went further in calls for security collaboration than any administration official before him. In banquet remarks at the close of his first full day in Beijing, Brown called for expanded professional military exchanges and a broadened "security dialogue." But he also noted that such steps "should remind others that if they threaten the shared interests of the United States and China, we can respond with complementary actions in the field of defense as well as diplomacy." Minister of National Defense Xu Xiangqian was more cautious and equivocal. He acknowledged the need for "joint efforts" between the United States and China in their bilateral relations, but made no mention of military ties. Xu also alluded to the PRC's "hope to have a long period of peaceful international environment in which to concentrate . . . on the realization of the four modernizations." Any increase in Chinese defense capabilities was "solely for self-defense and not to threaten anyone."⁸⁴

Two days later, Deng called for "do[ing] something in a down-to-earth way so as to defend world peace against Soviet hegemonism." In the initial English-language report of his meeting with Defense Secretary Brown, he contended that "all countries in the world should enter into an alliance to deal seriously with [Soviet] global expansionism."⁸⁵ On January 10, however, Xinhua canceled the original report, because it reportedly "contained several mistranslations." According to the revised report, Deng stated that all countries should "unite."⁸⁶ Although some observers interpreted this revision as an attempt to dampen expectations of a rapid expansion in security ties, the assertion of mistranslation seems credible: The Chinese-language version of the

⁸⁴Xinhua, January 6, 1980, in *FBIS-PRC*, January 7, 1980, p. B3.

⁸⁵Xinhua, January 8, 1980, in *FBIS-PRC*, January 8, 1980, p. B1.

⁸⁶Xinhua, January 10, 1980, in *FBIS-PRC*, January 11, 1980, p. B1.

Deng-Brown meeting mentioned only the term for "unite" (*lianheqi-lai*).⁸⁷

By the time of Brown's departure from Beijing, the two sides had moved closer to a declaratory formula for security collaboration. Xu Xiangqian now adopted Deng's phrase, arguing that "all countries interested in world peace and security need to get united, coordinate their actions and take effective measures against Soviet aggression and expansion so that it cannot do such things freely and with impunity." Defense Secretary Brown argued more forcefully that "our strategic views—and even more important, our strategic interests—converge in many instances. . . . The task before us is to ensure that our converging assessments are translated into effective responses."⁸⁸ A Xinhua summary of Brown's exchanges in Beijing emphasized these remarks. Although acknowledging "differences on some issues," there was "a broad spectrum of converging views" that made possible further cooperation: "Both sides expressed a desire to strengthen their own defense capabilities and take parallel actions. . . . They planned to make respective responses that they considered appropriate, and agreed to continue consultations in the future."⁸⁹

Although the Chinese had adopted a somewhat less cautious tone than at the start of the Brown visit, leaders in Beijing did not respond fully to U.S. overtures and proposals. (The absence of a joint communique at the conclusion of the talks also bears out this conclusion, although the sensitivity of security cooperation argued against explicitness and publicity about the results of the discussions.) Three major areas still required clarification: intelligence sharing and collaboration, technology transfer to the PRC, and means of political and military cooperation to oppose the Soviet Union and Vietnam. The documentation on these issues is incomplete, but it does permit a partial account of the deliberations.

Reports of Sino-American intelligence collaboration had surfaced repeatedly in the Western press. These reports suggested that the Carter administration regarded the provision of U.S. intelligence data as a good faith gesture to Beijing, and a Chinese leadership eager to improve both the quantity and quality of its information on Soviet military activities and deployments would have welcomed it. But the Chinese did not want to depend on intermittent briefings from U.S. officials. In April 1979, for example, Deng had argued that intelligence sharing should become a two-way street, not simply the provision of U.S. data to China. Brown therefore informed Deng that the United

⁸⁷ *Renmin Ribao*, January 9, 1980, p. 1.

⁸⁸ Xinhua, January 9, 1980, in *FBIS-PRC*, January 10, 1980, p. B3.

⁸⁹ Xinhua, January 10, 1980, in *FBIS-PRC*, January 11, 1980, p. B2-3.

States was prepared to sell the PRC a ground receiving station for the Landsat-D photo reconnaissance system.⁹⁰ Although the Landsat-D was deemed suitable only for civilian purposes, it was a breakthrough in the development of China's nascent satellite reconnaissance capabilities. Access to Landsat imagery would represent a major improvement in Chinese resolution capabilities, and the computers and taping equipment were considered more advanced than any technology authorized for sale to the Soviet Union, thereby signifying the administration's departure from its previous evenhandedness. Such a transaction could also lay the basis for later, more wide-ranging U.S. assistance to the Chinese satellite reconnaissance effort.

Defense Secretary Brown also proposed the establishment of a U.S.-China hotline comparable to the communication links between Washington and Moscow and major U.S. allies. According to various sources, however, China's response to this proposal was "less than enthusiastic," because the Chinese "seemed to associate hotlines with adversary relationships, as in the case of the Russians, and obviously wanted to know whether Americans still regard them as adversaries."⁹¹ Although PRC officials did not flatly reject the proposal, their response was not positive, whether out of caution, lack of familiarity, or a concern that Washington might be trying to embroil Beijing unnecessarily in the U.S.-Soviet global rivalry.

Later reports, although unconfirmed by either the Chinese or American governments, reported China's readiness to accept U.S. equipment for monitoring Soviet missile tests.⁹² If true, these reports indicated that Beijing and Washington were prepared to undertake independent but mutually beneficial actions in the area of intelligence collaboration.

Despite the widespread publicity given to the Brown trip, initial Soviet reactions to the formal establishment of security ties were surprisingly cautious.⁹³ They were supplanted in late January by dire warnings from Soviet President Brezhnev (in an interview with former French Prime Minister Chaban-Delmas) that the Soviet Union "would

⁹⁰Fox Butterfield, "U.S. Plans to Sell a Satellite Ground Station to China," *The New York Times*, January 9, 1980.

⁹¹Linda Mathews, "U.S. and China Considering a Moscow-Style Hotline," *Los Angeles Times*, February 9, 1980.

⁹²Neither the United States nor the PRC has ever confirmed the existence of such facilities. For Western press reports alleging such cooperation, see Philip Taubman, "U.S. and Peking Jointly Monitor Russian Missiles," *The New York Times*, June 18, 1981; Murray Marder, "Monitoring: Not-So-Secret Secret," *Washington Post*, June 19, 1981; and Robert C. Toth, "U.S., China Jointly Track Firings of Soviet Missiles," *Los Angeles Times*, June 19, 1981.

⁹³Craig R. Whitney, "Carter's China Card: Moscow Is Worried and Peking Coy," *The New York Times*, January 28, 1980.

not tolerate" certain actions by the United States, specifically the provision of nuclear weapons to China.⁹⁴ Brezhnev's warnings were so audacious as to lack credibility: Even the most vocal advocates of U.S.-Chinese military cooperation had not proposed nuclear assistance to the PRC. However, during his visit to Beijing Defense Secretary Brown had met with Zhang Aiping, then Deputy Chief of the General Staff and Chairman of the State Science and Technology Commission for National Defense, and Qian Xuesen, Vice Chairman of the Commission.⁹⁵ Both had been intimately involved with the Chinese nuclear weapons program since its inception and were closely associated with China's defense modernization effort as a whole. Such developments may well have led the Soviets to believe that the United States and China had decided to consolidate a full-scale defense relationship. Brezhnev's remarks emphasized extreme Soviet sensitivity about even the suggestion of U.S.-Chinese strategic collaboration.

A flurry of activity during the Brown visit and immediately following the Defense Secretary's return to the United States further fueled Soviet anxieties. The Carter administration had decided that the provision of dual use technology to Beijing was essential to the furthering of Sino-American relations. The Chinese indirectly signaled their interest in technology transfer by granting the Brown delegation extensive access to Chinese ground, air, and naval facilities, with close inspections of the PRC's well-maintained but outmoded military equipment. In discussions with members of the Brown delegation, the Chinese made clear their need for and interest in a wide range of technologies relevant to the defense sector. The Carter administration rapidly sought to carry out its pledges. In mid-January U.S. officials sought support among the European allies for a "China differential" in high technology sales.⁹⁶ On January 24, the Defense Department publicly announced that the United States was now prepared to sell various categories of non-lethal military support equipment to the PRC, including trucks, communications equipment, and early warning radars.⁹⁷ These actions served two purposes. They prodded the policy machinery to define a policy framework for technology transfer to China, and they imparted greater credibility to Brown's private assurances to the Chinese of access to U.S. equipment and technology.

⁹⁴R. W. Apple, Jr., "Brezhnev Reported to Warn U.S. on Arming China," *The New York Times*, January 30, 1980.

⁹⁵Xinhua, January 8, 1980, in *FBIS-PRC*, January 9, 1980, p. B1.

⁹⁶Oswald Johnson, "U.S. Asks Allies to Favor China in Technology Sales," *Los Angeles Times*, January 15, 1980.

⁹⁷Michael Getler, "Pentagon Willing to Sell Chinese Some Equipment," *Washington Post*, January 25, 1980.

The third potential leg in U.S.-Chinese security cooperation involved coordinated American and Chinese responses to the political and military situation in Southwest Asia. These proposals encompassed several distinct components: (1) U.S. and Chinese military support for Pakistan, (2) U.S. and Chinese covert military assistance to the Afghan rebels, and (3) proposals for U.S. overflights and landing rights in the PRC. Aid for Pakistan was the least contentious consideration. Both countries had long provided Pakistan with vital military assistance, the Chinese more consistently than the Americans. It was now a matter of coordinating such assistance to Pakistan's maximum advantage.⁹⁸ Yet the Chinese would not commit themselves to more than an informal division of labor. They indicated publicly and privately that Pakistan was best able to evaluate and communicate its defense requirements to the United States. Beijing chastised the United States for its erratic policy on supplying arms to Islamabad.⁹⁹ Undue American restraint, the Chinese implied, risked a Soviet intervention in Pakistan as well as Afghanistan.

Assistance to the Afghan rebels was much more sensitive. Although the Chinese had urged the United States and other powers to provide moral and material support to the resistance forces, the Chinese were not prepared to engage in more than minimal and informal collaboration. The Chinese informed Defense Secretary Brown that the PRC would increase the covert supply of weaponry to the rebels, principally small arms supplied through Pakistan, describing this aid as an adjunct to the U.S. supply of more sophisticated arms to Pakistan.¹⁰⁰ But the Chinese had no intention of assuming a direct military role in Afghanistan. Mobilizing international opposition to the Soviet invasion and providing indirect military support were congruent with a people's war strategy intended to frustrate Moscow's consolidation of power and impede Soviet efforts to legitimize its political and military presence.¹⁰¹ More direct and visible involvement would confirm Moscow's accusations of Sino-American collusion to destabilize the political and military situation to the Soviets' south.¹⁰² China sought to challenge Soviet

⁹⁸See Richard Burt, "U.S. Looks to China for Aid to Pakistan," *The New York Times*, January 3, 1980; and Don A. Schanche, "China, Pakistan Appear to be Moving Toward Joint Strategy Against Soviets," *Los Angeles Times*, January 22, 1980.

⁹⁹Don Oberdorfer, "Slowly, Cautiously, China Builds a Relationship with U.S.," *Washington Post*, January 21, 1980.

¹⁰⁰Richard Halloran, "Peking Reported to Offer More Guns to Afghan Rebels," *The New York Times*, January 17, 1980.

¹⁰¹For an authoritative Chinese statement, see Observer, "Critical Choice," *Renmin Ribao*, June 19, 1980, in *Beijing Review*, No. 26, June 30, 1980, pp. 8-9.

¹⁰²Anthony Austin, "Soviet Stresses Peril from China Through Afghanistan," *The New York Times*, March 13, 1980.

forward movement and find credible ways to raise the costs of the Afghan invasion to Moscow, but without greater Soviet pressure on China. Above all, China's strategy was premised on the United States doing more to oppose the expansion of Soviet power in Asia, and on a credible, consistent basis.

This final consideration was a sensitive concern for Beijing. The U.S. record of equivocation and inconsistency in the Third World had done little to persuade the Chinese that Washington would be a reliable security partner. The long-term implications of a Soviet consolidation of power in Southwest Asia (in conjunction with Moscow's growing military presence in both Southeast and Northeast Asia) posed an enormous challenge to PRC security. But China was not particularly eager to participate in a highly coordinated defense strategy. When Defense Secretary Brown proposed that the Chinese permit emergency U.S. overflights with military supplies for Pakistan, the Chinese allegedly demurred.¹⁰³

China's extreme reluctance to enter into higher levels of security association precluded (at least for the moment) other proposals involving Chinese facilitation of U.S. military activities in Southwest Asia. The creation of the Rapid Deployment Force, for example, raised critical problems for the U.S. logistic train and the prepositioning of materials. In a fuller security relationship, the Chinese might have entertained proposals for overflight rights and landing arrangements at Chinese air bases. But such steps were well beyond the inclinations of the PRC leadership, who seemed much less eager than the United States to consolidate and expand what weeks before had been a modest and extremely tentative security relationship.

At the same time, however, Secretary Brown indicated to Beijing that in the event of a major Vietnamese assault into Thailand, the United States would welcome Chinese military actions directed against Vietnam.¹⁰⁴ This posture conformed far more to China's preference for a division of labor free from external restraints. A united front strategy provided a strategic umbrella under which both leaderships could rationalize, discuss, and interrelate their national policies, but it was a far cry from an alliance. To the Chinese, ever suspicious of the intentions of larger powers, the United States had to fulfill the large expectations that U.S. policy initiatives had begun to generate.

The Chinese nevertheless had cause for encouragement. Since Deng Xiaoping's restoration to power, China had achieved major political breakthroughs with both the United States and Japan. For the first

¹⁰³Oberdorfer, 1980.

¹⁰⁴Halloran, 1980.

time since 1949, the United States was able to avert many of Beijing's security and economic problems by upholding its more long-standing commitment to China. The Chinese recognized that close relations with the United States were vital to deflecting Soviet pressure and that Sino-American relations with Washington would depend on tacit U.S. political and military presence in East Asia.

China's assessment of Japanese security and the U.S. regional defense role reflected these mutations. The Chinese recognized that various constraints imposed limits on Japan's military expansion. The extent of Tokyo's alignment with Beijing. He supported the U.S.-Japan Mutual Security Treaty as a guarantee of vigilance against growing Soviet naval power and to keep Japan firmly anchored to the United States, thereby demonstrating to Washington the strength of Sino-American relations. A growing "China threat" limited Japanese involvement in the economic sphere, especially in view of increasing Japanese anxiety over Soviet military power in Northeast Asia, including approximately 5000 Soviet troops on the disputed island of Etorofu.¹⁰⁵

Chinese assessments of the Japanese security situation noted changes in Japanese thinking. As noted:

For a long time, Japanese political circles have been divided about whom to guard against or where to focus defense. Many people consider defense a "taboo" and some people hope Japan can maintain "friendly relations" with the Soviet Union through a "peace diplomacy." Around Japan and the Asian Pacific [region] of "détente." More and more facts have indicated that the Soviet Union's expansion and war preparations are

The situation is pressing. Many people in Japan are anxious. In the present defense situation, the "Soviet Union will even defend itself," still less defend the people of Japan. They think that "maintaining" the defense capability "independent" in the face of a Soviet military threat. They also point out that it is an urgent task to strengthen defense which can prevent the occurrence of "unforeseen" "uncertain" situation in the 1980s.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵Henry Scott Stokes, "Tokyo Charges Soviets Build Up in Northern Japan," *The New York Times*, January 31, 1979.

¹⁰⁶Wu Delie, "New Trends in Japan's Defense," *Reuter* FBIS-PRC, March 7, 1980, p. D3.

Thus, the Chinese supported Japan's efforts capabilities and to counter the growth of S in Northeast Asia.

Despite such encouragement for a larger role, the Chinese did not offer an explicit conception of U.S. defense strategy in the Pacific, or an outline of long-term objectives of Japanese security. However, then Party Chairman Hua Guofeng met separately with Yasuhiro Nakasone, a Liberal Democratic Party group visiting Beijing, in encouraging a larger and more autonomous role than had any other Chinese officials. Wu's defense role was particularly provocative:

I am all for Japan's increasing its self-defense. I stand that your country renounced the right to have a big army. . . . must be able to have various kinds of conventional arms. . . . Generally speaking, Japan is one of the economically powerful countries. It is entitled to become a big power militarily, too. . . .

Japan is technically and financially capable of increasing its Defense Forces qualitatively. . . . It would be able to do so even if defense spending were 1 percent of the gross national product.

Equally important, Wu described the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty as "of positive significance to the region." Hua's endorsement of a Japanese buildup in the region was also approving:

I hope Japan remains a prosperous nation. China favors Japan's increasing its defense. . . . As a sovereign state Japan should be equipped with a strong defense. . . . We also do not oppose the U.S.-Japan agreement on the stationing of U.S. forces in Japan. We respect Japan's decision to do so in its own interests. In my opinion, this decision is correct in opposing the Soviet hegemonists.

When Hua visited Japan late in May, he was more restrained. Hua endorsed Japan's right to maintain its own defense, but he did not comment on the strengthening of tripartite relations between Beijing, and Washington, Hua noted that

¹⁰⁷ All citations are drawn from Nakasone's conversation with Hua on April 30, 1980, as excerpted in Asahi

efforts to strengthen its alliance with the United States and to develop its relations with Europe"—a virtual endorsement of the Mutual Security Treaty.¹⁰⁸

The Chinese sought a united front formula with Japan comparable to that adopted with the United States. In a joint communique near the conclusion of Hua's visit to Japan, the two sides affirmed "China and Japan, each proceeding from their own positions, continue to work for the maintenance of peace and stability" in Asia. As Hua had also asserted, "We believe that a long period of international peace can be secured if only all the peace-loving countries each adopting [its] own effective measures, constantly frustrate expansionist plans and war provocations of the aggressors."¹¹⁰ In addition, Hua stressed that China did not intend "to interfere in Japan's internal affairs" with respect to Japan's defense plans, thereby defusing both Japanese and Soviet criticism of his April remarks to Yasuhiro Nakasone.¹¹¹ Soviet warnings about tripartite security arrangements among the United States, China, and Japan were vastly overstated, as there was no firm evidence that any of the states desired such a possibility.

In addition, the Chinese increased their military-to-military exchanges with Japan and openly solicited Japanese technical assistance for China's industrial modernization. Although most of Japan's involvement concentrated on large development projects (for example, port and railway expansion), the Chinese also approached various Japanese firms on possible defense industrial cooperation. During his visit to China in December 1979, Prime Minister Ohira expressly excluded military items from any economic assistance that Japan might furnish to China.¹¹² But this prohibition did not preclude approaches to Japanese firms in various high-technology areas (for example, computers, space technology, advanced instrumentation, and collaboration on metallurgy for jet engines) that would enhance China's defense industrial potential.¹¹³ The cultivation of military-to-military contacts also helped build a more reliable, long-term association

¹⁰⁸Hua made these remarks in a press conference in Tokyo, Xinhua, May 29, 1980, *FBIS-PRC*, May 29, 1980, p. D10.

¹⁰⁹Xinhua, May 29, 1980, in *FBIS-PRC*, May 29, 1980, p. D11.

¹¹⁰Xinhua, May 28, 1980, in *FBIS-PRC*, May 29, 1980, p. D4.

¹¹¹Geoffrey Murray, "China Urges Japan to Help Check Soviets," *Christian Science Monitor*, May 29, 1980.

¹¹²Takashi Oka, "Japan Courts China with First Offer of Direct Economic Assistance," *Christian Science Monitor*, December 10, 1979.

¹¹³For further discussion, see "Japan-PRC: Military Cooperation?" *Defense Foreign Affairs Daily*, March 20, 1980, p. 2; and Tow, "Sino-Japanese Security Relations: Evolution and Prospects," (fn 29), p. 70.

defense area, but not in a bold or provocative manner.¹¹⁴ The Chinese clearly understood the potential gains from economic and technological assistance from Japan, but collaboration weighted too heavily to national security considerations would undermine Japan's willingness to provide this assistance. Some leadership circles in Tokyo remained hesitant about Japan's growing if indirect identification with Chinese security calculations, even if Beijing's policies were aligned with preferences voiced in Tokyo.

Chinese anxieties about Soviet political and military pressure had partially fused with U.S. and Japanese concerns about the growth of Soviet power in Asia. This had enabled the formation of a coalition to frustrate Soviet and Vietnamese actions in Southwest and Southeast Asia, to temper further Soviet military moves in the Third World, to provide a framework for technological and economic assistance from the major non-communist powers to China, and to enable major internal economic advances in the PRC.¹¹⁵ The uncertainties were at least as great as the potentialities. As Deng remarked to a Japanese delegation in late March 1980, there were grave dangers to international peace and security, but the Chinese continued to insist that existing problems (notably, Afghanistan) were beyond their control. China pledged to "do what it must do to the maximum extent possible," but each country would make a separate determination of its contribution. There was "no need of rendering cooperation by signing an agreement," only a general commitment to collaborate on shared ends.¹¹⁶ In Beijing's view, the largest responsibilities were still with the United States. The Afghanistan invasion had finally led Washington to tilt decisively toward China, beginning with the prospect of a military supply relationship with the PRC.

MILITARY MODERNIZATION AND U.S. POLICY

America's entry into the policy debate over a military supply relationship with China in 1980 altered both the terms and implications of this issue. For three years, the Chinese military leadership had wrestled with contentious questions about the pace, scale, cost, and method of military modernization. China's exposure to state-of-the-art

¹¹⁴For several such reports, see Kyodo, March 12, 1980, in *FBIS-PRC*, March 13, 1980, p. D2; Kyodo, March 13, 1980, in *FBIS-PRC*, March 14, 1980, pp. D1-2; and Xinhua, April 14, 1980, in *FBIS-PRC*, April 17, 1980, pp. D2-3.

¹¹⁵For the fullest exposition of Chinese thinking in the aftermath of the Afghanistan invasion, see Wei Shihua (Section I, fn 31).

¹¹⁶All citations are from Deng's March 29 interview in *Yomiuri Shimbun*, March 30, 1980, p. 3.

military equipment, the fitful, inconclusive efforts to negotiate defense sales with West European arms manufacturers, the costs of modern military technology, and China's mounting budgetary problems had left senior military commanders chastened about the prospects for a major technological upgrading of the Chinese armed forces.

During the latter half of the 1970s, China's efforts at negotiating defense technology agreements had concentrated on Great Britain, and the results were highly sobering to both sides. The Sino-British jet engine agreement of late 1975—the largest defense technology contract between the PRC and a major Western power—had fallen far short of expectations. Although numerous Chinese engineers had received training in advanced metallurgical techniques, the British-built factory in Xian proved incapable of producing the Spey engines for which it had been built. A mid-1981 report indicated that the Chinese had been able to produce only three engines, with the factory now idle.¹¹⁷ The prolonged but ultimately unsuccessful negotiations over purchase of the Harrier, Great Britain's vertical takeoff and landing aircraft, had proven equally frustrating and disappointing to both sides.¹¹⁸ The acquisition of advanced weaponry would be prolonged and extremely costly, and (in view of China's infrastructural and manpower deficiencies) the results far from certain.

Cost was the most immediate factor leading the Chinese to defer purchase of the Harrier. At one point in the negotiations, the Chinese even proposed a barter arrangement, exchanging the Harrier for Chinese textiles.¹¹⁹ Long delays in the negotiations cast increasing doubt on the credibility of Chinese intentions, but it also reflected China's familiarization with the cost and complexity of major arms sales. By the fall of 1979, at the precise time when the newly elected Thatcher government gave every indication of wanting to complete the transaction, the Chinese were conveying major reservations about the Harrier's purchase.¹²⁰ Although the unexpectedly difficult execution of the foray into Vietnam had sobered the Chinese about their military preparedness and the adequacy of their own weapons systems, China's looming budgetary crisis compelled a major reappraisal of the PRC's development priorities. Between 1977 and 1979, Chinese defense expenditure had grown appreciably in both absolute and relative terms.

¹¹⁷*Strategy Week*, June 1-7, 1981, p. 7.

¹¹⁸For a detailed account of the Harrier negotiations, see David Crane, "The Harrier Jump-Jet and Sino-British Relations," *Asian Affairs*, March-April 1981, pp. 227-250. Crane makes clear that the difficulties in reaching an agreement resided with both sides, although China's expectations in the negotiations were particularly unrealistic.

¹¹⁹Crane, 1981, p. 238.

¹²⁰Crane, 1981, pp. 231-232.

(See Table 1.) But the increases in 1979 were attributable largely to the replacement costs for equipment and weaponry losses in the border war with Vietnam. Fiscal stringency was the order of the day, with defense expenditure and capital construction both reduced abruptly in mid-1979.¹²¹ Immediate purchases of Western arms seemed increasingly unlikely. When British Defense Secretary Francis Pym traveled to the PRC in March of 1980 to open a major aerospace exhibition, Chinese Vice Premier Wang Zhen (previously the leading proponent of the Harrier sale) did not even bother stopping to examine a large-scale model of the aircraft.¹²²

Thus, by the time the United States decided to ease prior restrictions on sales of defense equipment and critical technologies to the PRC, the Chinese were reducing the absolute and relative level of

Table 1
CHINESE DEFENSE EXPENDITURE, 1977-1982
(in billion yuan)

	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982 (preliminary)
Defense expenditure	14.9	16.8	22.3	19.4	16.8	17.9
Total state expenditure	84.4	111.1	127.4	121.3	109.0	113.7
Defense share of state budget (%)	17.7	15.1	17.5	16.0	15.4	15.7

SOURCES:

1977—Zhang Jingfu, "Report on the Fiscal State Accounts for 1978 and the Draft Budget for 1979," *Renmin Ribao*, June 30, 1979.

1978-1982—State Statistical Bureau, *Zhongguo Tongji Zhaiyao* [China's Statistical Summary], 1983, State Statistical Publishing Agency, Beijing, 1983, p. 65.

Retail prices have increased during this period (1978 = 100, 1982 = 112.8), so the purchasing power of these budget allocations has probably also diminished.

¹²¹Zhang Jingfu, "Report on the Fiscal State Accounts for 1978 and the Draft Budget for 1979," *Renmin Ribao*, June 30, 1979. In the original plan for 1979, defense expenditure would have risen to more than 18 percent of total state expenditure; since 1980, the percentage has ranged between 15 and 16 percent. See Table 1.

¹²²Crane, 1981, p. 232.

defense expenditure. The Chinese nevertheless attached considerable symbolic importance to U.S. policymaking on technology transfer. It is impossible to determine whether the Chinese had received private assurances from the United States about access to U.S. weaponry or production technologies, but various Chinese officials seemed to assume such a possibility. Beijing's earliest comments on the U.S. export licensing process were almost blithely innocent. The United States had indicated its willingness to supply *some* military equipment to China, so Beijing saw little reason why such commitments could not be extended to *all* categories of hardware and technology. During the winter of 1980, leaders in Beijing knew that the U.S. government was drafting guidelines on military sales to China. As early as mid-March of that year, however, Vice Minister of National Defense Su Yu (a long-time advocate of defense modernization) complained to a visiting Japan Defense Agency delegation that U.S. policies were discriminatory and unsatisfactory. According to Su, the Chinese had indicated to Defense Secretary Brown that the PRC desired U.S. military assistance, but the United States had done little more than "offer Ford vehicles to China." Su further criticized the U.S. "breach of trust" in resuming weapons sales to Taiwan. The United States had yet to prove that it was "a true friend of China" determined to struggle against hegemonism.¹²³

China combined these expressions of displeasure with intimations of interest in various defense-related technologies, but these hints were ambiguous. When Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Zhang Wenjin traveled to the United States in March 1980 for consultations over Afghanistan and other issues, he also allegedly conveyed interest in transportation and communications equipment as well as "over the horizon" radar.¹²⁴ The Chinese probably assumed that these hints would impel the United States to show its hand; China had no intention of indicating its precise interests or expectations.¹²⁵

¹²³See the Kyodo report of March 13, 1980, in *FBIS-PRC*, March 14, 1980, pp. D1-D2.

¹²⁴Don Oberdorfer, "U.S. Begins Talks Here with Top Diplomats of China, Japan," *Washington Post*, March 18, 1980; Oberdorfer, "U.S. and China Agree to Try to Counter Afghanistan Invasion," *Washington Post*, March 21, 1980.

¹²⁵The degree of China's *explicit* interest in 1980 in purchasing U.S. weaponry remains in dispute. In an interview shortly before leaving office, Defense Secretary Brown asserted that at some unspecified point the PRC had made an actual request to purchase U.S. weaponry, quite possibly an allusion to Geng Biao's informal request in June 1980 for clarification of U.S. weapons sales policy, discussed below.

As a general rule, however, Chinese officials sought to *imply* an interest in U.S. weapons technology and hope for changes in U.S. export policy, mixed with intermittent criticisms of the restrictiveness of that policy. Richard Halloran, "Defense Secretary Critical of Allies and Dissenting Officers," *The New York Times*, December 7, 1980.

The Carter administration's decision to permit sales of selected military equipment had generated substantial activity within the U.S. policy machinery. On March 25, the State Department issued *Munitions Control Letter Number 81*, which specified the categories of military technology eligible for sale to the PRC. Although excluding any lethal military equipment, it incorporated a wide range of "dual use" technology and military support equipment that would assist China in upgrading its research and development effort, training procedures, and logistical base, including helicopters, transport aircraft, and communications equipment. At the same time, Assistant Secretary of State Holbrooke reiterated that "these decisions do not foreshadow a U.S.-China alliance. Neither we nor the Chinese seek such an alliance. Nor do we anticipate any joint Sino-U.S. military planning. And we have no plans to sell arms to China."¹²⁶ The Carter administration thus sought to clarify the complex policy guidelines related to technology transfer, conveying to the Chinese (as well as to U.S. allies) the limits and the potentiality of a U.S. military relationship with Beijing. In an attempt to formalize these arrangements, the Commerce Department on April 25 established a special category for China (Category "P") in U.S. commodity control export regulations, as distinct from the category for the Warsaw Pact nations (Category "Y"). Departure from the earlier policy of evenhandedness was now ratified in official U.S. policy.¹²⁷

But the opening of the door to military sales ran the risk of moving the United States beyond the limits it was seeking to impose. In mid-April, for example, a major aerospace publication reported that the United States was considering "the possibility of providing non-nuclear weapons, including cruise missiles, to China in the event of a Sino-Soviet conventional shooting war." Other steps, including the upgrading of Chinese reconnaissance and intelligence capabilities, were also allegedly under consideration.¹²⁸ In addition, Secretary of State Vance's resignation removed from office the principal figure within government who had expressed serious misgivings about the wisdom of U.S.-PRC security relations. As the date for the reciprocal visit to the United States by the PRC defense minister approached, the Carter

¹²⁶Assistant Secretary of State Richard Holbrooke, "Procedures for Sale of Military Support Items to the PRC," Statement to the Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs, House Foreign Affairs Committee, April 1, 1980.

For a subsequent exposition of administration policy, see Holbrooke, "China and the United States: Into the 1980s," June 4, 1980, in *Department of State Bulletin*, August 1980, pp. 49-51.

¹²⁷For a more detailed discussion, see Karen Berney, "Dual-Use Technology Sales," *The China Business Review*, July-August 1980, pp. 23-26.

¹²⁸As reported in *Aviation Week and Space Technology*, April 15, 1980.

administration appeared ready to move ahead in the defense area, quite possibly going beyond the boundaries of previous policy. On his departure from Beijing for Washington, Geng Biao stated, "China is willing to buy what she needs but would not try to force the U.S. government to do what it did not want to do."¹²⁹ According to Geng, China wanted to be treated in the same manner as Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and other countries regarded as strategically important.¹³⁰ It was easy enough to recognize the distinction between China and these Middle Eastern states: Saudi Arabia and Egypt were both acquiring frontline U.S. military equipment, including modern combat aircraft.

Geng's hints of interest in U.S. weaponry were expressed privately as well. According to later disclosures, Geng supplied the administration with a "wish list" of 52 items and defense technologies, including some lethal military equipment (for example, Hawk ground-to-air missiles and TOW anti-tank missiles) that the Chinese knew were excluded from existing policy guidelines. Geng's list did not represent an explicit Chinese request for any weapons or technologies but an informal call for clarification of U.S. policy. He had raised the prospect of Chinese weapons purchases without making an explicit request or statement of China's intentions.¹³¹

The Chinese were seeking to test the limits of U.S. policy. PRC officials left open the prospect of more comprehensive defense cooperation, even as they continued to insist that there were "no military ties" between Washington and Beijing.¹³² Such denials suggested that the term "military ties" had a specific meaning for the Chinese that had yet to be realized at existing levels of security collaboration.

Geng Biao's visit in late May and early June 1980 and the far less publicized visit of Deputy Chief of Staff Liu Huaqing between May 5 and June 18 marked another major watershed in U.S.-China defense relations. Although Defense Secretary Brown stressed that "this is not a military alliance," the U.S.-China defense relationship was now obviously more than simple friendship. Among those Chinese officials visiting the United States were Geng, Liu (who had principal responsibility for defense technology transfer), Chen Lei (Deputy Chief of Staff

¹²⁹Geng made these remarks to an airport press conference before departing for Washington. Xinhua, May 24, 1980, in *FBIS-PRC*, May 27, 1980, p. B1.

¹³⁰Geng's latter statement did not appear in the Xinhua report of his airport remarks. Linda Mathews, "China Urges U.S. to Sell It Modern Weapons," *Los Angeles Times*, May 25, 1980.

¹³¹On Geng's list, see Leslie H. Gelb, "U.S., Peking, and Taipei Make Game of Arms Sales," *The New York Times*, October 16, 1981.

¹³²As stated by Premier Zhao Ziyang in an interview with Chinese and foreign correspondents, Beijing Domestic Television Service, February 4, 1983, in *FBIS-China*, February 7, 1983, p. B1.

for Logistics), and Huang Zhengji (Deputy Director of Military Intelligence).¹³³ Their itinerary encompassed visits to industrial facilities producing key dual use items (notably, computers, communications gear, and radar) and visits to U.S. military installations, including NORAD.¹³⁴ Liu's party also visited General Electric's military jet engine facility.¹³⁵ In addition, during Geng's stay the United States announced approval of export licenses for a wide range of military equipment, including radar sets, transport helicopters, jet engine testing equipment, early warning radar antennae, transport aircraft, and electronic countermeasure devices.¹³⁶

As an article in *Renmin Ribao* observed following Geng's return to China, the talks had been "completely successful." The joint discussions revealed that "China and the United States hold identical views on the overall matter of resolutely meeting strategic challenges in the 1980s." Yet the authors also made clear China's dissatisfaction with continuing limits on sales of defense technology, even though it was couched in the rhetoric of self-reliance:

U.S. press circles attached great importance to Geng Biao's visit. However, their interests concentrated more on the problem of transferring technology and on the problem of U.S. preparations for selling some military logistic support equipment. While reporting this they never forgot to mention that it is still U.S. policy not to sell weapons to China.

The Chinese position is clear on this issue: The consistent principle of Chinese socialist construction is to take self-reliance as the essential factor. . . . The Chinese people deeply understand that we cannot rely on "buying" to achieve the socialist "four modernizations," including modernization of national defense. Under the premise of adhering to self-reliance, we must surely learn all advanced foreign things and import the necessary advanced technology to increase the speed of the "four modernizations."¹³⁷

In subsequent weeks various Chinese officials sought to nudge U.S. policy into accepting the legitimacy of not only transferring U.S.

¹³³Xinhua, May 25, 1980, in *FBIS-PRC*, May 27, 1980, p. B2.

¹³⁴Liu's delegation also included Du Ping, Director for Weaponry Research on the General Staff, and Ma Zhanmin, Vice Chief of Staff of the PLA Air Force. "Chinese Delegation Briefed by Defense Department," *Aviation Week and Space Technology*, May 26, 1980, p. 24.

¹³⁵Berney, 1980, p. 23.

¹³⁶"U.S. Will Sell Aircraft and Defense Radar to China," *The New York Times*, May 30, 1980; Norman Kempster, "China Gets OK to Make U. S. Helicopters," *Los Angeles Times*, May 30, 1980.

¹³⁷Wang Fei and Zhou Zexin, "A Successful Visit," *Renmin Ribao*, June 8, 1980, in *FBIS-PRC*, June 8, 1980, pp. B3-4.

weaponry, but of the means to produce such equipment. Military officials offered particularly harsh views. According to a journalist visiting Beijing in late June and early July, the U.S. offer to permit the sale of non-lethal military equipment "was not even welcomed. It was greeted in Beijing with complaints of discrimination. Why, it was asked, should China not be permitted to buy any kind of weaponry it requires?"¹³⁸ Even though China had no intention of allocating sums to make large purchases, it would testify to the U.S. belief in China's strategic importance. Vice Foreign Minister Zhang Wenjin was more subtle in his encouragement:

Our armament and military equipment is old. That is why it is necessary for us to import sophisticated arms, and we are prepared to do so. What suits our purposes we plan to obtain from the United States . . . and other states.

At the moment the United States is not supplying us with any lethal weapons, though we hope this will change in the future We are unable to buy large quantities. To equip such a large army we must primarily rely on our own production and innovation. We import what we need most urgently, and in doing so we keep our financial potential in mind.¹³⁹

Thus, the Chinese did not view U.S. guidelines on technology transfer as rigid and binding; the United States could demonstrate that it took China seriously by extending the boundaries of such assistance.

The 1980 presidential campaign injected new uncertainties in the Sino-American relationship. In a mid-May press conference, Ronald Reagan voiced severe criticism of the terms of normalization. In tenor and substance, his remarks were highly provocative and contemptuous of Beijing's sensibilities.¹⁴⁰ Reagan stated that a two-China policy was "something very much worth exploring."

I want to have the best relations and have the Republic of China, the free Republic of China, know that we consider them an ally and that we have official relations with them. . . . That liaison office [the American Institute on Taiwan] is unofficial. . . . I would make it an official liaison office so that they knew they had a governmental relation.

¹³⁸Russell Spurr, "China Cautiously Delays Military Upgrading," *Strategy Week*, July 7-13, 1980, p. 7.

¹³⁹See Zhang's interview with German correspondent Herbert Kremp in *Die Welt*, July 29, 1980, in *FBIS-PRC*, July 29, 1980, p. G3.

¹⁴⁰All citations are drawn from Richard Bergholz, "As President, Reagan Would Support Renewal of Official Ties with Taiwan," *Los Angeles Times*, May 19, 1980.

When queried about whether the United States should extend official recognition to Taiwan should the island declare independence, he stated: "Yes, just like a lot of countries recognized the thirteen colonies when they became the United States."

Despite these comments, China refrained from any criticisms of Reagan's remarks for almost a full month. Their subsequent decision to attack the candidate's proposals reflected anxieties about the implications of the steps advocated by Reagan and a growing pessimism about President Carter's reelection prospects:

This [campaign] is the United States affair on which we normally do not comment. But since some of [Reagan's] statements involve the Chinese question of Taiwan and betray a desire to turn back the wheel of history on the question of Sino-U.S. relations, we cannot let his statements pass without comment. . . . Reagan's declaration for the reestablishment of "official relations" with Taiwan is obviously a great retrogression. It reflects an attempt among certain short-sighted people in the United States to revive their old dream of "two Chinas." Whatever the supporting arguments, his position if carried into practice would wreck the very foundation of Sino-U.S. relations.¹⁴¹

The decision to criticize Reagan directly was the opening volley in an effort to convey to both candidates the seriousness of PRC concerns and to inject China directly into the American presidential campaign.¹⁴² So long as the United States did not directly challenge Beijing's views of the terms of normalization, the PRC's objections to dealings between Washington and Taipei remained muted. Candidate Reagan's vocal support of the Taiwan Relations Act contrasted sharply with President Carter's far more low-key references to the legislation.

The Chinese did not exempt President Carter from criticism. In June 1980, the Carter administration authorized U.S. aircraft manufacturers to open discussions with Taipei on the possible sale of the F-X—only weeks after Assistant Secretary of State Holbrooke had stated that "tensions in the [Taiwan Strait] area are demonstrably at an historic 30-year low."¹⁴³ Beijing's reactions were sharp and suspi-

¹⁴¹Commentator, "Retrogression Is No Way Out—Comment on Reagan's Statements on Sino-U.S. Relations," *Xinhua*, June 13, 1980, in *FBIS-PRC*, June 16, 1980, p. B3; see also "The Clock Must Not Be Turned Back," *Renmin Ribao*, June 14, 1980, in *FBIS-PRC*, June 16, 1980, pp. B4-5.

¹⁴²For a more detailed discussion of the PRC's handling of the arms sale issue during 1980 and 1981, see A. Doak Barnett, *The FX Decision—"Another Crucial Moment" in U.S.-China-Taiwan Relations*, The Brookings Institution, Washington, D.C., 1981.

¹⁴³Richard C. Holbrooke, "China and the United States: Into the 1980s," June 4, 1980, in *Department of State Bulletin*, August 1980, p. 49.

cious.¹⁴⁴ Even if Beijing viewed Carter's actions as a sop to campaign pressures, the implications were very unsettling. Only two years earlier, the United States had canceled a major arms transaction with Taiwan, when Sino-American relations were far less settled and when Chinese military forces were still deployed in large numbers opposite Taiwan. The prospect of sales of a new generation of aircraft must have been incomprehensible and extremely worrisome to Beijing. The Chinese approached the upcoming U.S. election with growing unease about the future of U.S. China policy—even as political consultations and security cooperation had begun to expand. In an interview with Oriana Fallaci in late August, Deng took issue with both parties' candidates. According to Deng, China was "not very satisfied" with the state of U.S.-China relations:

Warming up for a period does not mean much. The friendship between countries must be manifested in many other specific ways. . . . We follow with great interest the behavior of the American leaders toward China but it's so hard to predict what kind of policy the United States will adopt in the future . . . [and] what Reagan says and has said until now is far from being good, so I don't see many reasons to feel optimistic.¹⁴⁵

The PRC did not let these developments stand in the way of two ongoing parallel processes: the implementation process for export licensing and a fuller assessment by both sides of the relevance and feasibility of U.S. production technology facilitating the PRC's defense needs. The latter task ran the risk of exposing the potential hollowness of China's claims on U.S. defense technology, with the PRC lacking the funds, manpower, and facilities to use American resources and capabilities. China would then appear less a counterweight than a strategic burden, calling the credibility of Chinese power into question.

Both considerations were in evidence during the September visit to China of Under Secretary of Defense Perry and Assistant Secretary of Defense Dineen. The Perry-Dineen delegation followed directly upon the Geng Biao-Liu Huaqing visits of May and June. For two weeks, ranking Defense Department personnel had widespread access to the Chinese research institutes, defense industrial plants, and related Chinese military facilities. As Under Secretary Perry noted upon his arrival, the objective of his mission was "to assess the Chinese ability to assimilate U.S. technology," rather than to conduct negotiations on

¹⁴⁴Barnett, *The FX Decision*, pp. 12-13.

¹⁴⁵"Deng: A Third World War Is Inevitable," *Washington Post*, September 1, 1980.

specific transactions.¹⁴⁶ His visit was a sobering one. Although members of the delegation remarked positively on the dedication of Chinese scientists and their determination to recover from the ravages of the Cultural Revolution, Perry noted that it was impossible to overstate the difficulties the PRC faced.¹⁴⁷ The most serious deficiencies were in defense electronics; China's convulsive internal politics meant that the PRC defense industrial system had forgone a technological revolution. Perry noted the PRC's interest in U.S. electronics technology, particularly semiconductors, testing equipment, instrumentation, and radar.¹⁴⁸

Despite China's eligibility for acquiring advanced U.S. technology, the larger issues for the United States concerned China's capability to absorb and pay for large quantities of equipment and technology. The Chinese made very clear to the Perry-Dineen delegation that they had no interest in extensive purchases of finished defense hardware. As one Defense Department official observed, "China does not want to buy aviation hardware; it wants licensing and coproduction arrangements."¹⁴⁹ Yet if China's industrial infrastructure had only the most marginal of capabilities to utilize and absorb advanced equipment, an emphasis on specific end items or particular technologies seemed misplaced. Following his visits to China's defense industrial facilities, Under Secretary Perry on his own initiative conveyed his impressions to his Chinese hosts.¹⁵⁰ In Perry's view, the PRC's foremost need was to rebuild its technical infrastructure, especially in non-defense areas. He argued that China was too far behind in most critical areas of advanced weaponry to benefit from a sudden infusion of sophisticated U.S. defense technology; strict financial limitations imposed additional constraints.

As an alternative to a massive infusion of U.S. technology, Under Secretary Perry recommended that the United States conduct a joint assessment with the PRC of Chinese technical capabilities, so that the United States could devise a more long-range plan of technological assistance to China. By the conclusion of Perry's stay, Chinese officials seemed inclined to accept his proposal for a joint study of Chinese

¹⁴⁶"U.S. Arms Expert Arrives in Peking on Study Trip," *The New York Times*, September 7, 1980.

¹⁴⁷John J. Fialka, "China Defense Technology Years Behind, U.S. Experts Say," *Washington Star*, October 4, 1980.

¹⁴⁸"China Will Sell U.S. Metals Needed to Make Planes," *The New York Times*, September 11, 1980.

¹⁴⁹Clarence A. Robinson, Jr., "China's Technology Impresses Visitors," *Aviation Week and Space Technology*, October 6, 1980, p. 26.

¹⁵⁰This discussion is based on an interview with William Perry, December 15, 1983.

technical capabilities. Unlike the start of the visit, officials had again pressed for answers to some questions. Defense Secretary Brown about selected questions. He mentioned their interest in specific military capabilities.

China's limitations were both financial and technical. During the Perry-Dineen visit, the National People's Congress announced further cutbacks in defense spending. The means of reducing China's spiraling defense deficit would restrict the institutional and budgetary support of the armed forces met with displeasure among officials. As the reductions were announced, Chief of State Hu Yaobang called for a reversal of the policy: "We hope to find an appropriate amount the national defense spending to permit the process of modernizing our defense capabilities within the budgetary restrictions, Zhang Aiping informed the U.S. officials that the scale and pace of technological development of the forces would have to be reduced.¹⁵¹ But this did not challenge Deng's essential argument: China's defense requirements of advanced defense materials and technology for combat. The only effective means to meet these requirements is to undertake far-reaching reforms in the defense system as a whole, including training, organization, and production, as well as defense production capabilities.¹⁵²

By the conclusion of its stay in China, the U.S. Arms Expert gained much insight into the potential of the Chinese defense industries, and Chinese officials expressed their views of U.S. policy and the preferences for U.S. arms. Secretary Perry informed the Chinese that the U.S. had approved more than 400 export licenses for civilian and military support equipment. These included geophysical computers, heavy trucks, C-130 helicopters. But U.S. export lists continued to exclude weaponry, combat aircraft, and aircraft engines, which posed Chinese interest. As Perry observed, "The Chinese are looking forward to the day when the U.S. export list is broadened to encompass [weapons] trade." The Chinese indicated their willingness to increase exports of various rare metals such as titanium and tungsten.

¹⁵¹"U.S. Arms Expert Begins Talks with China," *New York Times*, September 9, 1980. Emphasis added.

¹⁵²Ellis Joffe, "Party and Military in China: The New Balance," *Journal of Communism*, September-October 1983, pp. 1-12.

used in aircraft manufacture, quite possible arrangements for U.S. technology.¹⁵³ But not ready to offer advanced equipment and on concessionary terms, there would be no "critical" military deficiencies.

In the aftermath of the Perry visit, China was much more willing to acknowledge the constraints on China's defense modernization. A U.S. army attache in Beijing that because there would be no money available for modernization in other nations. Enhanced defense industry was only as a consequence of industrial advancement even if the United States gave weapons systems. China did not have enough qualified personnel to use them.

By the fall of 1980, the broad outlines of new procedures for U.S.-Chinese defense relations. The Carter administration intended to liberalize export controls to China and facilitate the flow of technology used for military purposes.¹⁵⁵ The administration felt that it wanted to ease restraints on technology. The Coordinating Committee for Multilateral Export Controls permitting greater Chinese access to such technology and sophisticated electronics gear, both for exploration in Sino-U.S. and Sino-Japanese relations. broadly, however, whole new generation of engineers had to be trained, and the labor control procedures, and general manufacturing process complete overhaul. The United States had a role in these processes and needs, but the Chinese agenda went well beyond U.S. willingness to export or dual use technologies.

New and troubling uncertainties arose from China's acknowledgment of its severe economic problems rather than more security collaboration.

¹⁵³Jay Mathews, "U.S. to Let Chinese Buy High Tech," *Post*, September 11, 1980.

¹⁵⁴Monte R. Bullard, "The U.S.-China Defense Relationship," 1983, p. 46. Colonel Bullard served as U.S. army attache in Beijing which time he interviewed Chinese officers in four visits.

¹⁵⁵"Foreign Sales: Administration Decides on Policy," *Federal Contracts Report*, No. 842, July 1980. "Exports," *Washington Post*, September 13, 1980.

¹⁵⁶On Japanese high technology sales to China, see *Post*, 65-71.

Chinese cast a wary eye on the American presidential campaign. The U.S. relationship with Taiwan (with respect to both the normalization and future U.S. policy) was hotly disputed by the Carter and Reagan camps. China's realization of President Carter's vulnerability was unsettling to Beijing. The Carter administration finally achieved a consensus on treating relations with PRC, including security ties—as a major policy priority, but the prospect of a second term were in jeopardy. The approaching U.S. election and the uncertainties in U.S.-China ties seem at least as great as the uncertainties in U.S.-China ties. A long-standing maxim in Chinese security calculation again prove relevant: Hope for the best, prepare for the worst.

III. THE COALITION IMPERILED

ASSESSING THE REAGAN ADMINISTRATION

The election of Ronald Reagan as the new American president posed major problems for leaders in Beijing. The uncertainties created by Reagan's accession to power were a familiar experience to the PRC: Each presidential administration since Nixon's had presented mixed or divided signals about its policy toward China. However, the uncertainties were now different. In the preceding two years, the Chinese had drawn closer to an explicit security relationship with one of the two superpowers than at any time since the Sino-Soviet alliance. Reagan's long-standing sympathies with Taiwan and his campaign pledges to upgrade U.S. ties with the island had been highly unsettling to Beijing and threatened major reversals in Sino-American relations. Although many of the new administration's officials were well-known to Beijing—in particular Vice President Bush, former head of the U.S. Liaison Office in the PRC, and Secretary of State Haig, a member of Henry Kissinger's National Security Council Staff—the Chinese viewed Reagan's power base and his policy stance as substantially different from those of his Republican predecessors.¹

President Carter's resounding defeat greatly troubled Beijing. The Chinese considered Carter timorous in responding to instability in the Third World and overly committed to a SALT II agreement, but he had normalized relations with the PRC. The Carter administration had also achieved consensus on the importance of U.S.-Chinese security ties in the emerging U.S. strategy for challenging Soviet power. America's priority emphasis on Western Europe and the Persian Gulf required that U.S. relations with both Japan and China be placed on a firmer footing. In the view of Chinese strategists, the United States had established an informal alignment with Beijing because the Soviet challenge had become global and because Washington lacked the resources to engage the USSR simultaneously on all fronts.²

¹For an early Chinese assessment of Reagan administration foreign policy that drew explicit attention to the contradictions and uncertainties in its China policy, see Zhuang Qubing, "Reagan's Diplomatic Strategy," *Shijie Zhishi* [World Knowledge], No. 6, March 16, 1981, in *FBIS-China*, April 15, 1981, pp. B1-6.

²Chen Hsiung and Yao Mei, "'Two-and-a-Half Wars' and 'One-and-a-Half Wars'—Brief Comments on Changes in American War Strategy," *Shijie Zhishi*, No. 23, December 1, 1979, in *China Report—Political, Sociological and Military Affairs*, No. 53, JPRS, No. 74, 992, pp. 1-7.

The Reagan administration came to power less convinced of the importance of coalition-building and far less certain about the value of aligning with the Chinese. It welcomed China's anti-Soviet stance and judged China modernizing, friendly, and supportive of U.S. interests, but the PRC was also a communist state. Despite President Reagan's personal effort to reassure Beijing of the administration's intention to build upon the achievements of the Carter administration, the strategic imperative of closer relations with China clashed sharply with the desire to prove more attentive to Taiwan's needs.³ The incoming administration's indecision about China was compounded by its surprise at the scope of relations established during 1979 and 1980.⁴ According to one report, several Reagan advisers were "startled by the depth and breadth of relations with China" outlined by outgoing Carter administration officials, particularly with respect to intelligence cooperation.⁵

Major issues in U.S. China policy were not likely to remain dormant for very long. Within days of the Reagan inauguration, officials in Taipei renewed their long-standing calls for more modern combat aircraft.⁶ A positive decision would not only allow Taiwan to acquire a new generation of aircraft, it would constitute potent evidence that the United States (notwithstanding its derecognition of Taiwan and its commitment to positive relations with the PRC) had no intention of severing unofficial military ties with the island. In Beijing's view, new U.S. weapons would only embolden Taipei and make Taiwan's reincorporation with the mainland an even more elusive goal.

The PRC's optimism about an early resolution of the Taiwan question had been premature. A continuing stream of proposals issued by Beijing intended to reassure both Taipei and Washington of China's reasonableness were either rejected outright or simply ignored by leaders on Taiwan. Although unofficial ties between the rival regimes increased (notably by indirect trade through Hongkong and scientific and student contacts), Taiwan remained unyielding on the far larger question of acceding to PRC sovereignty. And, notwithstanding Taiwan's loss of formal diplomatic ties and its exclusion from various international organizations, nongovernmental dealings (especially in

³Bernard Gwertzman, "President Reassures China on Ties as Signs of Strain Begin to Emerge," *The New York Times*, March 22, 1981.

⁴For a detailed review of Sino-American ties through the summer of 1981, see Solomon, 1981 (Section II, fn 55).

⁵Philip Taubman, "U.S. and China Forging Close Ties; Critics Fear That Pace Is Too Swift," *The New York Times*, December 8, 1980.

⁶Henry Scott Stokes, "Taiwan's Premier Hopes Reagan Sends New Arms," *The New York Times*, January 25, 1981; Richard Halloran, "New Jets for Taiwan: An Issue Surrounded by Nettles," *The New York Times*, January 27, 1981.

foreign trade) enabled the island to recover from the trauma of derecognition.

To the Chinese, U.S. policy toward Taiwan assumed importance well beyond the island's relationship to the mainland; it represented a critical test of whether the United States took China seriously. The Carter administration had achieved its major breakthrough with Beijing by recognizing the PRC as the sole legitimate government of China, denying Taiwan more advanced aircraft, and facilitating the development of "a secure and strong China." Yet both sides confronted a long record of U.S. involvement in Taiwan. Beijing had always viewed American dealings with the Nationalist government as an unwarranted, illegitimate intrusion in China's internal affairs. Any U.S. assertions of continued American responsibility toward Taiwan—and any backsliding in the nonofficial status of U.S.-Taiwan relations—diminished the credibility of U.S. policy in Beijing. In all likelihood, therefore, Deng's room for maneuver within the leadership on the Taiwan question was very limited.⁷ No matter how important China's breakout from Soviet encirclement, Washington had to remain committed in both principle and action to the goal of a single Chinese state.

To justify extraordinary moves at home and abroad, Deng had portrayed China as backward, vulnerable, and in critical need of external assistance. Yet this bleak picture meant that the United States might take advantage of China, extracting concessions or reneging upon prior assurances and commitments. Deng recognized his dilemma and understood the risk of overstatement. In an interview with *Time* the month before his visit to the United States, he described China as "an insignificant, poor country." When further queried on this characterization, he added: "When I said insignificant, I was going to extremes. But China is quite poor. . . . Of course, that does not mean China is of no use. We do not look upon ourselves as inconsequential."⁸

Despite the Reagan administration's professed concern with alliance cohesion and broadening defense cooperation with China, the principal goal of the new president's defense policy was to increase the contribution of U.S. allies to a common strategy.⁹ But to the Chinese, coalition-building rested on parallel interests, not a common policy. A shared perception of the Soviet political and military threat did not necessitate common means, only broad-based common ends. A

⁷See Michael Parks, "Taiwan Issue Pivotal for Deng Leadership in China," *Los Angeles Times*, September 13, 1981.

⁸"An Interview with Teng Hsiao-p'ing," *Time*, February 5, 1979, p. 34.

⁹For a critique of the "sin of unilateralism" and its political and military consequences, see Robert W. Komer, "Maritime Strategy vs. Coalition Defense," *Foreign Affairs*, Summer 1982, pp. 1124-1144.

division of labor, therefore, should impinge minimally on sovereign political or military prerogatives.

The Reagan administration's strategy of countering Soviet military power with U.S. military power made China less important in U.S. policy calculations. Barring China's willingness to yield some of its decisionmaking autonomy, there was little that it could do directly to facilitate U.S. security objectives. China's experiences with Moscow during the Sino-Soviet alliance had inculcated a "never again" mentality in Chinese security strategy. China could not sacrifice its freedom of action, even if it expected major political or security dividends in return. Major risks were not possible with external powers, especially a former adversary about whom China retained large suspicions. These uncertainties argued for a cautious yet flexible strategy toward the United States—go slow, but with the prospect of more comprehensive security arrangements if lingering but potentially volatile differences could be managed or resolved.

Leaders in Beijing quickly sought to reassure the new administration of their continuing interest in security collaboration. In a lengthy interview on November 15 with Earl Foell, Chief Editor of the *Christian Science Monitor*, Deng Xiaoping attempted to ease anxieties in Washington about China's reliability as a long-term partner for the United States.¹⁰ Although Deng noted "we have always been dissatisfied with the Taiwan Relations Act," he did not dwell on it. He also insisted that there was no possibility of change in Sino-Soviet relations "if there is no change in the Soviet's hegemonic course of action. . . . It's common sense that since China dares to stand up to the Soviet Union when we are so poor and even if our armaments are so backward now, why should we try to seek reconciliation with the Soviet Union after it [China] gets rich?" Deng then tackled Sino-American relations:

Some people in the United States think that China wants to improve its relations with the United States because China has its own fears, because it has to ask something of the United States. According to this logic, once China has developed, once it has become strong economically and militarily, then China will not think of cultivating good relations with the United States so as to jointly deal with the Soviet global challenge. This logic is not sound.

¹⁰All citations in this paragraph came from "A Talk with China's Most Powerful Man," *Christian Science Monitor*, December 4, 1980. Foell's interview with Deng (with some variations in language and text) also appeared in *Renmin Ribao*, November 24, 1980, in *FBIS-PRC*, November 24, 1980, pp. L18-23.

According to Deng, Soviet global strategy "posed a threat to the whole world," making Sino-American cooperation imperative:

The United States alone is not in a position to deal with Soviet hegemonism. The Soviet challenge can only be coped with if the United States strengthens unity with its allies and unites its strength with all the forces that are resisting the Soviet challenge, including the forces of the Third World. . . .

We think that in order to check the Soviet pace [of expansion] or to slow it down, something concrete and substantial should be done. . . .

We hope that Sino-American relations will not mark time, still less retrogress. This is required by global strategy.

Deng was seeking to put the uncertainties of the Presidential campaign behind both leaderships.

Yet Beijing also recognized the implications of the change in administrations. In an interview with the *Washington Post* a few days following Deng's remarks, Vice Foreign Minister Zhang Wenjin explicitly set forth Chinese expectations of the new leadership in Washington.¹¹ China wanted to cooperate with President Reagan on a global scale, but this would depend on a series of critical U.S. policy decisions, including Taiwan's appeal for new fighter aircraft, China's interest in expanded military cooperation (including access to U.S. defense technology), American encouragement of a growing Japanese defense role, maintaining pressure on Vietnam to withdraw from Kampuchea, and continuing U.S. efforts to counter Soviet involvement in Southwest Asia and Middle East. Any arms shipments to Taiwan, Zhang argued, violated China's understanding of the normalization agreements; in China's view, it was time to end all U.S. arms sales to the island.

Even as it held out the prospect for greater collaboration, China conveyed that it was not prepared to do America's bidding. The outline of a more independent foreign policy course—one less dependent on positive Sino-American relations—first appeared in late 1980:

China has no intention of concealing its poverty and technical backwardness. But, it is not an insignificant country. It is determined to never barter away its sovereignty and principles. It is an illusion to think that China will ever accept "two Chinas." It has always sought to build security on the basis of an independent and self-reliant defense policy and will never resort to sheltering under an external protective umbrella. China's development depends mainly on self-reliance, helped by external aid wherever possible.

¹¹Jim Hoagland and Michael Weisskopf, "China Renews Bid to Cooperate But Cautions Reagan on Taiwan," *Washington Post*, November 23, 1980.

"The development of Sino-American relations cannot avoid becoming a global issue," the author observed. Treating Sino-American relations "as a bilateral issue or as one only concerning business interests between the U.S., Taiwan, and the mainland" would be "a historical mistake."¹²

In the early months of 1981, the Chinese awaited implementation of Reagan administration policy toward the PRC. The Chinese recognized that determination of the Reagan administration's personnel assignments and policy guidelines would take time. Early assessments of Reagan's foreign policy stressed the cleavages between the "Eastern internationalist forces" of the Republican party (principally in the State Department) and a Western, ideologically based faction (principally at the National Security Council).¹³ The proponents of closer ties with Beijing were now in the State Department, not in the White House, but the consequences were largely the same: Different views on the value of strategic alignment with Beijing were both represented at the highest levels of government.

There was also some evidence of possible differences within the Chinese leadership over dealings with the United States. In the winter and spring of 1981, allegorical articles in the Chinese press warned of the dangers of excessive Westernization and reliance on external powers for technological, economic, and security assistance. The lessons of history—deriving mainly from China's reform movement of the late 19th century—appeared relevant to the present as well: China could not depend on others and expect to retain initiative and independence in relation to the outside world.¹⁴ It is impossible to prove whether these articles represented veiled attacks on Deng and his policies. Deng had to avoid accusations that he was beholden to the United States, further reducing his flexibility with Washington. His efforts to institutionalize major domestic policy initiatives and retain momentum in political and economic reform could both be compromised if he proved vulnerable to attacks on foreign policy.¹⁵ Reports of

¹²Chen Si (Xinhua correspondent), December 19, 1980, in *FBIS-PRC*, December 22, 1980, p. A3.

¹³See Zhuang Qubing, "Reagan's Diplomatic Strategy" (fn 1).

¹⁴For some representative examples, see Yang Dongliang, "A Tentative Analysis of the 'Debate on Coastal Defense Versus Land Border Defense,'" *Guangming Ribao*, February 10, 1981, in *FBIS-PRC*, March 5, 1981, pp. L3-L7; Qiao Huantian, "A Discussion of Li Hongzhang's Westernization Activities," *Renmin Ribao*, March 30, 1981, in *FBIS-China*, April 3, 1981, pp. K8-12; and Qiao Huantian, "The Diplomatic Activities of the Westernization Proponents Should Not Be Cut Off From the Westernization Movement," *Renmin Ribao*, May 7, 1981, in *FBIS-China*, May 15, 1981, pp. K4-K7.

¹⁵On Deng's domestic policies and political strategies in 1981, see H. Lyman Miller, "The Politics of Reform in China," *Current History*, September 1981, pp. 258-262 ff; and

internal debate over Deng's alignment with the United States and his unyielding anti-Soviet course appeared intermittently during the spring.¹⁶

There was circumstantial evidence of policy debate in other areas as well. A series of commentaries published during May in several foreign policy journals and in *Renmin Ribao* challenged the views of "some Western strategists, including decisionmakers," that Soviet strategy was opportunistic or defensive rather than expansionist and global. The authors forcefully reiterated the main pillars of Deng's united front strategy, seemingly directing their critique at least as much at internal dissenters as at unnamed strategists abroad. Although acknowledging Soviet difficulties and shortcomings, the authors concluded with a ringing defense of a coalition strategy:

Facts show that we should not have unpractical illusions about the Soviet Union and adopt the ostrich policy toward its expansionist activities. . . . It would be very pitiable if we throw ourselves into a situation where we can only meekly submit ourselves to the Soviet Union and where we would surely be defeated in war and a truce can only mean capitulation. . . . At present the world's joint force against hegemony is growing day by day. We . . . must not confine our scope to only one country or only one region. Instead we should take the world situation into consideration and do some practical work.¹⁷

Regardless of these debates, leaders in Beijing had to await more definitive indications of Washington's strategic intentions toward the PRC.

But Sino-American relations were not a dominant policy concern in the earliest months of the Reagan administration. U.S.-Soviet relations, the U.S. military buildup, the prospect of a Soviet military intervention in Poland, and growing unrest in El Salvador all consumed much more attention. Although the administration's emphasis on the Soviet global challenge seemed to accord with China's underlying security concerns, the Chinese quickly expressed doubts about specific U.S. policies, beginning with El Salvador. In early commentaries on Reagan administration policy in Latin America, Chinese analysts generally endorsed the U.S. position that the Soviets and Cubans had used civil unrest in the area as a pretext to infiltrate and expand their power in

Dorothy J. Solinger, "The Fifth National People's Congress and the Process of Policy Making: Reform, Readjustment and the Opposition," *Asian Survey*, December 1982, pp. 1238-1275.

¹⁶For one such report, see Michael Parks, "Peking Leader Reported Upheld on Ties to West," *Los Angeles Times*, May 26, 1981.

¹⁷Qi Ya and Zhou Jirong, "Does the Soviet Union Have a Global Strategy?" *Renmin Ribao*, May 20, 1981, in *FBIS-China*, May 21, 1981, pp. C1-6.

the Caribbean.¹⁸ By late March, however, the Chinese seemed more troubled by the administration's course:

After being in office for one month, U.S. President Reagan chose El Salvador as the place "in America's backyard for a showdown with Russia" [taking] a series of extraordinary steps to express its resolve to block Soviet expansion in Latin America. . . . What actually has been going on in El Salvador, that the United States should attach so much importance to that country? . . . The reason . . . is not because it [El Salvador] is explosive but because she [the United States] wants to take tough action in a place easily controlled just by her side, with the aim of letting Moscow know that . . . the era of "hesitation and lack of resolve" in U.S. foreign policy is over. Some people hold that behind the strong U.S. words . . . seems to be a kind of keynote to the effect that the United States and the Soviet Union should respect each other's sphere of influence.¹⁹

Other commentaries worried that the Soviet Union might lure the new administration into cooperative action through a U.S.-Soviet summit:

Noticing that Reagan has revealed an inclination toward a "bipolar world" during his election campaign, Brezhnev tries to play along and lure Washington into agreeing to redivide the spheres of influence with the Soviet Union on a global scale. . . . Moscow has already set a trap for Washington. . . . It [Moscow] may for the time being recognize the principal U.S. interests in El Salvador in exchange for Washington's recognition of its interests in southwest Asia (including Afghanistan) and other places. . . . What Brezhnev has in mind is to reach an agreement which marks off "your business" and "our business" so that the two countries can leave each other alone.²⁰

Despite the clear intention of the Reagan administration to challenge Soviet global objectives, the Chinese judged U.S. policy unsympathetic to or neglectful of U.S. allies and of concerns in the Third World. Undue emphasis on the U.S.-Soviet military rivalry also tended to slight other strategic issues and political considerations.²¹

The Chinese quickly recognized some of the implications of these policy directions for their own dealings with the United States. Beijing

¹⁸See, for example, Ji Liquan, "Soviet-U.S. Contention as Seen from the Situation in El Salvador," *Renmin Ribao*, February 27, 1981, in *FBIS-PRC*, March 2, 1981, pp. J1-2.

¹⁹Yao Chuntao, "The El Salvador Situation Is Evolving," *Renmin Ribao*, March 28, 1981, in *FBIS-China*, April 2, 1981, pp. J1-2.

²⁰Di Xin, "A Sinister Design," *Guangming Ribao*, March 31, 1981, in *FBIS-China*, April 13, 1981, pp. C4-5.

²¹Mei Ou, "U.S.-European Relations Since Reagan Came to Power," *Renmin Ribao*, April 17, 1981, in *FBIS-China*, April 20, 1981, pp. 1-3; Di Xin, "Some Trends of U.S. Diplomacy as Seen from Reagan's First 100 Days," *Guangming Ribao*, April 30, 1981, in *FBIS-China*, May 7, 1981, pp. B3-5.

continued to stress the need for complementary actions to counter Soviet power, but on the basis of equality, with each party doing what was possible in light of its own capabilities and circumstances. In a series of presentations to the Beijing meeting of the Trilateral Commission held in late May of 1981, the Chinese participants reiterated their determination to cooperate with the West against the Soviet Union. But the PRC representatives also contended that a united front reflected shared needs—"the question of who is seeking help from whom simply does not exist."²²

The prospects for the united front depended on the resolution of debates in Washington over China policy. Two major decisions—both holdover issues from the Carter administration—loomed on the horizon: one on new arms sales to Taiwan, and the other on still pending Chinese inquiries into purchase of U.S. weaponry and defense technology. For leaders in both capitals, the two issues were interconnected. When former President Ford visited China in late March, he proposed one possible solution: The United States would supply new arms to Taiwan but would also permit weapons sales to the PRC.²³

Mounting pressures to respond to Taiwan's repeated requests for new aircraft had thus converged with unresolved debates over the administration's broader China policy.²⁴ Leaders in Beijing bluntly conveyed that a deal to sell arms to both Beijing and Taipei was no deal at all; U.S. weapons sales to the PRC were not welcome in such circumstances.²⁵ Dissociation from such an arrangement entailed risks for the PRC, but in Beijing's view Chinese sovereignty over Taiwan could not be compromised. As a result, any prospective transfer of sensitive U.S. technologies to Beijing remained in limbo, with uncertainties about Taiwan being a principal contributing factor.²⁶

The connections between the two arms sales were different for Beijing than they were for Washington: The United States could demonstrate that it accorded China strategic importance, but only if it first denied Taiwan more advanced weaponry. A decision to increase arms sales to the island would be an affront to Chinese sensibilities, especially after nearly a year of warnings from Beijing that U.S.-China

²²Xu Xin, Speech to the Beijing Meeting of the Trilateral Commission, May 1981 (Section II, fn 47), p. 27.

²³Michael Parks, "Ford Hopeful Taiwan Arms Sales Issue Can Be Solved," *Los Angeles Times*, March 28, 1981.

²⁴Michael Getler, "Taiwan Seeks F16s, Raising Issue of Policy," *Washington Post*, March 9, 1981.

²⁵Michael Parks, "China Still Opposed to U.S. Arms Sales to Taiwan," *Los Angeles Times*, April 3, 1981.

²⁶Michael Parks, "Sales of U.S. Military Gear to China Fail to Materialize," *Los Angeles Times*, April 17, 1981.

relations would suffer a severe setback in the event of further sales to Taiwan. Possible sales of lethal military technology to Peking were an important indication of U.S. intentions, but the Chinese would not clamor or plead for such assistance. Indeed, the Chinese recognized that Washington might decide to offer arms to China independently of Chinese actions or inquiries. While in London in early April, Defense Secretary Weinberger (paralleling a proposal aired by Zbigniew Brzezinski in the last month of the Carter administration) hinted that the United States might choose to offer arms to Beijing should Soviet troops move into Poland.²⁷ Although Weinberger further asserted that "there's no linkage yet" and subsequently argued that weapons sales to China were not under "active consideration," even the implication was undoubtedly noticed in Beijing and Moscow.²⁸

The Taiwan arms sale issue loomed larger for Beijing and would determine whether sustained strategic collaboration between the United States and China was even possible. The Chinese were openly hinting that the further development of an anti-Soviet united front in East Asia was now hostage to a satisfactory resolution of the arms sale controversy. As a leading Chinese foreign affairs specialist observed at the Trilateral Commission meetings:

There are people who presume that since China has established a strategic relationship with the United States, she would have to sacrifice her sovereignty. . . [But] the Taiwan issue is highly sensitive to the Chinese people . . . [It] is not only a question of Sino-U.S. bilateral relations. In fact, it involves the global strategic situation. Should Sino-U.S. relations be turned backwards because of this issue, it would certainly bring harm to the "strategic relationship of overriding importance" . . . [and] would inevitably affect the overall anti-hegemonic struggle.²⁹

In the Chinese view, America had yet to decide on the value of its ties with China, to the disadvantage of both states' security interests in East Asia.

²⁷Richard Halloran, "Weinberger Asserts Russian Buildup Is Continuing," *The New York Times*, April 5, 1981. On the Carter administration's consideration of this option, see Brzezinski, 1983, p. 467.

²⁸George C. Wilson, "Weinberger Sent Mixed Signals on European Tour," *Washington Post*, April 14, 1981.

²⁹Speech of Pei Monong (Deputy Director of the Institute of International Studies) to the Trilateral Commission (Section II, fn 47), p. 36.

THE HAIG VISIT

Secretary of State Haig's visit to Beijing in mid-June 1981 marked a major turning point in Sino-American relations, the consequences of which continued to be felt long after his departure from office. A greatly expanded relationship seemed a real possibility even as the seeds for a dismemberment of security ties were sown. The Secretary of State may have intended to put a personal and a Presidential imprint on Sino-American relations, but these expectations were never fulfilled.

The foremost difficulty confronting Haig during his visit to Beijing was the Reagan administration's inability to resolve its internal debate over arms sales to Taiwan. This consideration continued to loom much larger in Beijing's calculations than the prospective willingness of the United States to consider sales of lethal arms to the PRC. Even though there were hints from Washington that the sale of newer combat aircraft to Taiwan had been postponed indefinitely, suspicions ran high in Beijing that the United States was trying to buy China's acquiescence to renewed sales. Authoritative reports from Washington before Haig's departure made it clear that the Secretary of State would propose a further loosening of restraints on sales of sensitive defense technologies.³⁰ The initial PRC response to these reports was not encouraging. On June 10, a Foreign Ministry spokesman stated unambiguously: "We have time and again made it clear that we would rather receive no U.S. arms than accepting continued U.S. interference in our internal affairs by selling arms to Taiwan, to which we can never agree."³¹

A day later, a Xinhua commentary posed the issue in even blunter terms.³² If U.S. proposals for heightened security cooperation with the PRC were a subterfuge to gain China's acquiescence to arms sales to Taiwan, China would steadfastly oppose the exercise of such "super-power logic":

Of late, some high-ranking U.S. Government officials have repeatedly called attention to China's strategic position and role, and hope to further strategic relations with it through the opening up of certain areas where the two countries have yet to establish links and other steps. Public opinion in China has given enough attention to and expressed appreciation of this good intention. However, the crux to

³⁰Leslie H. Gelb, "Military Aid for China Considered as Haig Prepares to Visit Peking," *The New York Times*, June 5, 1981; Don Oberdorfer, "U.S. Plans to Sell High Technology Material to China," *Washington Post*, June 6, 1981.

³¹Xinhua, June 10, 1981, in *FBIS-PRC*, June 15, 1981, p. B1.

³²Hua Xiu, "A Move Doomed to Failure," June 11, 1981, in *FBIS China*, June 11, 1981, pp. B1-2.

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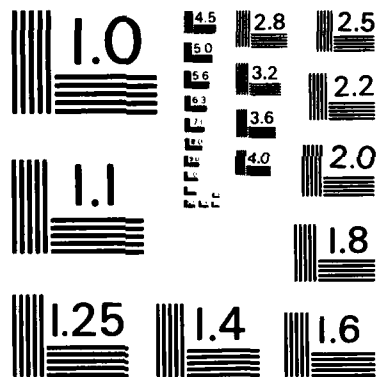
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further strategic relations between the two countries remains that the United States stop developing all relations with Taiwan that go beyond non-governmental relations.

Any arms sales to Taiwan were thus "a destructive factor in the development of Sino-U.S. strategic relations"; China would rather do without any U.S. defense assistance than to accept a major affront to national sovereignty.

Although some press reports claimed that the Chinese private negotiating posture was different from their public stance,³³ the Secretary of State was well aware of the delicacy of the Taiwan issue. He sought to reassure Beijing that the administration would abide by the terms specified at the time of normalization. This would enable China and the United States to concentrate on the "fundamental strategic imperatives" that drew them together. Yet, in view of China's military deficiencies and Beijing's reluctance to undertake closer association with the United States without clearer evidence of U.S. intentions, there were clear limits to a starkly anti-Soviet "strategic consensus."³⁴ In banquet remarks at the close of his first full day in Beijing, Secretary of State Haig deemed China "a close and valued friend . . . [whose] strength, security, and well-being [are] fundamental to the global balance." Foreign Minister Huang Hua, however, was noncommittal. He noted that "China attaches importance to her strategic relationship with the United States" and that the two countries "have many common and similar views," but his general tone was far more measured, and he did not even mention "Soviet hegemonism." Huang alluded to Afghanistan and Kampuchea—two areas where U.S. and Chinese interests converged—but he also referred to the Middle East, South Africa and the new international economic order, where U.S. and Chinese policies differed.³⁵

Two days later, Huang acknowledged that the Haig visit had "helped to deepen our national understanding and yielded positive results," but there were no clarion calls for joint action to oppose hegemonism, only

³³See especially Michael Weisskopf, "Chinese Indicate Softening on Question of Weapons Sales to Taiwan," *Washington Post*, June 10, 1981. According to Weisskopf, "sources close to China's foreign policymakers" indicated that China would "tolerate continued weapons sales to Taipei so long as they do not exceed the sophistication or volume of arms currently sold by Washington to Taiwan." In view of the terms of the August 1982 communique, Weisskopf's claims should not be dismissed. See also Weisskopf, "China's Tough Talk Often Belies Softer Stand," *Washington Post*, June 14, 1981.

³⁴For a superb assessment, see Murray Marder, "The China Policy That Isn't," *Washington Post*, June 14, 1981.

³⁵Haig and Huang's remarks are both drawn from Xinhua, June 14, 1981, in *FBIS-China*, June 15, 1981, pp. B2-3.

an allusion to "the great responsibility our two countries shoulder in defending world peace and security in the current turbulent international situation." Huang offered no assent to U.S. policy views and alluded indirectly to differences: "Each side frankly expounded its views on the global situation and on major international issues. We are very glad to have had the opportunity of hearing the secretary's authoritative explanations of the foreign policies of President Ronald Reagan and his administration."³⁶

Both sides avoided mention of U.S.-PRC strategic cooperation and technology transfer. By mutual consent neither the United States nor China disclosed the topics discussed in Haig's June 15 meeting with Geng Biao on "defense matters," the first occasion when an American Secretary of State had met with the Chinese Minister of National Defense for security consultations.³⁷ The presence at the meeting of Zhang Zhunzi (described by Chinese sources as deputy chief of army intelligence) was not mentioned by Xinhua, nor was a separate session of State and Defense Department officials with some of their Chinese counterparts.³⁸ It was generally assumed that these sessions addressed defense technology transfer and intelligence cooperation.

In a press conference following three days of deliberations, the Secretary of State announced that China would no longer be subject to restrictions on the munitions control list, and that the United States would now consider sales of lethal weaponry to China "on a case by case basis."³⁹ He also disclosed that Vice Chief of Staff Liu Huaqing would make a second visit to the United States in August, purportedly to discuss the specific technologies and weapons that China wished to acquire. However, it soon became apparent that the Secretary of State had spoken out of turn. According to one reconstruction of the U.S. decision,

Shortly before Haig left Washington, a decision was made at the highest levels of the government to inform the Chinese leaders that the United States was ready to make them eligible to purchase American arms. . . . [It] was understood in advance that the manner of its revelation was important . . . [and] would require public notice. *But Haig was to inform Peking only of the U.S. intention to take that*

³⁶Both sets of remarks are drawn from Xinhua, June 16, 1981, in *FBIS-China*, June 17, 1981, pp. B1-2.

³⁷Xinhua, June 15, 1981, in *FBIS-China*, June 16, 1981, p. B1.

³⁸Bernard Gwertzman, "Haig Discusses Arms with China Leaders," *The New York Times*, June 16, 1981.

³⁹Don Oberdorfer and Michael Weisakopf, "U.S. Reaches Accord with China on Arms Sales," *Washington Post*, June 17, 1981.

*action, and therefore the subject could be kept quiet for the time being.*⁴⁰

Chinese officials were also caught off guard by the Haig announcement. According to one source, PRC leaders were "known to have been unhappy at Haig's public announcement of plans for the Liu visit," since disclosure of his trip implied China's consent to a major expansion of strategic cooperation in the absence of a resolution of the Taiwan arms sale question.⁴¹ The Xinhua account of Haig's press conference avoided reference to the U.S. willingness to consider the sale of arms; rather, Xinhua stated that Haig "outlined some changes in export control procedures which he hoped will facilitate the expansion of trade with China." In addition, the dispatch said that Liu would travel to the United States for discussions on expanding "exchanges between . . . defense establishments"; no reference was made to arms sales or other forms of Sino-American security cooperation.⁴² It was only in Xinhua's response to President Reagan's press conference remarks six and one-half hours later that the PRC acknowledged "the lifting of restrictions on arms sales to China."⁴³

At his press conference, the President insisted that "I have not changed my feelings about Taiwan" and "I intend to live up to the Taiwan Relations Act." The President's remarks led to what one U.S. journalist termed "a last-minute lecture on the airport tarmac" for the Secretary from "unhappy Chinese officials."⁴⁴ A Xinhua commentary on the status of Sino-American relations disputed Haig's claim that his visit had been "unusually productive, unusually significant [and] unusually successful":

U.S. relations with Taiwan, continued U.S. arms sales to Taiwan in particular, constitute the key link . . . in the development of Sino-U.S. relations. . . . The joint communique on the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and the United States is the only legal basis governing the two countries' relations.

The provisions of the Taiwan Relations Act that allowed for sale of "defense articles and services" to Taiwan were "tantamount to a de facto revitalization" of the abrogated Mutual Defense Treaty:

⁴⁰Don Oberdorfer, "Haig's Asian Venture: From Diplomatic Heights to a Political Downer," *Washington Post*, June 27, 1981. Emphasis added.

⁴¹Michael Weiskopf, "China Delays Start of Talks on Arms Sales," *Washington Post*, August 12, 1981.

⁴²Xinhua, June 16, 1981, in *FBIS-China*, June 16, 1981, pp. B3.

⁴³Xinhua, June 17, 1981, in *FBIS-China*, June 17, 1981, pp. B3-4.

⁴⁴Karen Elliott House, "U.S. Foreign Policy Remains Muddled as Haig Ends 12-Day Far East Tour," *The Wall Street Journal*, June 25, 1981.

There are Americans in the U.S. Government and of the opposition who are bent on giving Taiwan an international status as an independent political entity. . . . The Chinese people treasure the relationship established and developed between China and the United States out of their overall strategic considerations. However, if the U.S. side merely pays attention to the pressure of some pro-Taiwan forces and ignores the national feelings of the Chinese people, the Sino-U.S. relationship cannot even be preserved as what it is today, to say nothing of any development. . . .

There are still Americans . . . who contend that since China never fails to take the overall situation into consideration, it would . . . swallow the bitter pill of U.S. arms sales to Taiwan. This is completely illogical.

The commentary noted China's refusal two decades earlier to submit to Soviet pressure and implied a comparable situation with the United States:

In the 1960s, under extremely difficult conditions, China waged a resolute struggle against the oppression and bullying by the Soviet hegemonists in order to defend the principles of independence, sovereignty, and equality, not hesitating to bear the consequences of a break with the Soviet Union.⁴⁵

In the wake of Haig's announcement, Washington tried to demonstrate the credibility of its decision on weapons sales to the PRC. En route to Manila, the Secretary of State asserted that "we've made no decision on the provision of arms" to Beijing, but that the Reagan administration had "basically thought through" which arms the United States was prepared to sell.⁴⁶ In mid-July testimony to the House Foreign Affairs Committee, however, Assistant Secretary of State John Holdridge stated that there was still no framework for arms sales to China:

The decision is not a decision to sell any specific weapons systems or military technology; it will merely enable Beijing to make requests to purchase from U.S. commercial sources any items on the U.S. munitions list, including weapons. We are by no means committed to approving such requests but only to considering them.

Holdridge further acknowledged that the United States intended "to move slowly . . . and to insure that any weapons are only defensive in

⁴⁵All citations are from Xinhua correspondent, "A Key Link in Development of Sino-U.S. Relations," Xinhua, June 18, 1981, in *FBIS-China*, June 19, 1981, pp. B1-2. See also Zhang Dezhen, "Haig's Trip to the Asian and Pacific Region," *Renmin Ribao*, June 23, 1981, in *FBIS-China*, June 24, 1981, pp. B1-3.

⁴⁶Don Oberdorfer, "Implications of Sino-U.S. Accord Go Beyond Eventual Arms Sales," *Washington Post*, June 18, 1981.

character." But in declaring China's non-eligibility for foreign military sales, Holdridge made apparent that the Reagan administration did not contemplate arms transactions of any consequence:

In the absence of FMS eligibility, the legislated \$100 million ceiling on commercial exports of defense equipment and services would act as a barrier to large Chinese purchases. The time may come when we will need to address this question, but we are not seeking to make China eligible for FMS cash sales at this time. FMS credits or FMS-guaranteed loans are even more premature.⁴⁷

Such admissions generated further suspicions in Beijing about U.S. China policy. The decision on weapons sales had been taken mainly to placate China, but instead it aroused even greater Chinese doubts about American intentions.

The Chinese confronted a serious dilemma. They viewed Secretary of State Haig as the administration official most sympathetic to their concerns and interests and were extremely reluctant to criticize him directly. For example, four days after leaving China Secretary Haig expressed his view that there was "no urgency . . . at all" to supplying Taiwan with new combat aircraft. At the same time, he described Taiwan as "a rather impregnable aircraft carrier in a vital sea lane."⁴⁸ Such language seemed certain to offend an extremely sensitive leadership in Beijing that was now reacting to the smallest of slights, but in this instance it passed without mention.

Any Chinese decision to proceed with purchases of American defense technology would have had major political implications. In view of China's technological shortcomings, active defense cooperation would have necessitated (at least in its earliest stages) a direct American advisory presence on Chinese soil. In circumstances where the Reagan administration might yet decide to provide Taiwan with a more advanced aircraft, such a step was unthinkable. Other cooperative activity with security implications could continue. For example, Chinese rare metals sales to the United States had by mid-year more than doubled their total for 1980.⁴⁹ The United States and China also expanded upon their political collaboration in Southeast and Southwest Asia.⁵⁰

⁴⁷John C. Holdridge, "U.S. Relations with China," July 16, 1981, in *Department of State Bulletin*, October 1981, p. 39.

⁴⁸Bernard Gwertzman, "Jets to Taiwan: From Haig's Viewpoint, No Urgency," *The New York Times*, June 22, 1981.

⁴⁹Michael Parks, "China Increases Exports of Strategic Rare Metals—U.S. the Major Buyer," *Los Angeles Times*, July 14, 1981.

⁵⁰See, for example, Don Oberdorfer, "U.S., China Join to Back 'Third Force' in Cambodia," *Washington Post*, May 5, 1981.

It seems likely that other security-related measures had not been interrupted.

But expanded cooperation was now in limbo. There was increased reference in Chinese strategic assessments to "the different interests and positions of various countries" and to the world's evolution from a bipolar to a multipolar structure, with the United States and the Soviet Union no longer able to exercise their power with impunity. "Under these circumstances," a leading Chinese strategist analyst observed, "countries which have established strategic relationships in the course of fighting Soviet hegemonism should treat each other as equals and partners in reality as well as in name."⁵¹

The strongest words came from Deng Xiaoping. Speaking in mid-July to Cha Leung Yung (chairman and president of the Hongkong newspaper *Ming Bao*), Deng indelibly identified himself with the growing nationalistic streak evident in Chinese foreign policy. Others in China may have questioned the wisdom of excessive Sino-American accommodation, but Deng made very clear that he was not beholden to the United States:

The United States thinks that China is seeking its favor. In fact, China is not seeking any country's favor. . . . China hopes that Sino-American relations will further develop rather than retrogress. However, this should not be onesided. . . . It is nothing serious even if the United States causes a retrogression in Sino-American relations. If worst comes to worst and the relations retrogress to those prior to 1972, China will not collapse. . . . The Chinese people . . . will never bow and scrape for help. . . . When U.S. Secretary of State Alexander Haig came to China, I told him the same thing. . . . China and the United States should cooperate on an equal footing. If the United States does not play fair but forces China to act according to the will of the United States, China will not agree.⁵²

It was one matter for China not to agree with the United States on specific issues; it was quite another for China to establish a credible strategic position independent and even defiant of the United States, without endangering either Chinese security or the prospects for a Sino-American understanding on Taiwan. In the aftermath of the Haig visit, the Chinese began to contemplate such a course.

⁵¹Pei Monong, "A Brief Discussion of the Strategic Relationships Opposing Soviet Hegemonism," *Renmin Ribao*, July 8, 1981, in *FBIS-China*, July 9, 1981, pp. C1-3.

⁵²"Deng Xiaoping Talks to *Ming Bao* Director on July 18," *Hongkong Ming Bao*, August 25, 1981, in *FBIS-China*, August 25, 1981, p. W6.

IN SEARCH OF POLICY INDEPENDENCE

The remainder of 1981 and much of 1982 were a time of severe testing in U.S.-Chinese relations. Three interrelated considerations repeatedly came to the fore: U.S. deliberations about arms sales to Taiwan, coupled with Chinese warnings to the United States about the consequences of such sales; further discussions and debates about the supply of U.S. defense technology to Beijing and China's increasingly equivocal stance toward this prospect; and evidence of U.S.-Chinese differences on issues of global strategy. None of these issues foreclosed the possibility of continued defense collaboration, but they testified to China's movement away from the united front politics of the 1978-1980 period.

The Taiwan arms sale question was the most public and heated of the three.⁵³ Beijing had stated both publicly and privately that it considered Washington's handling of the arms sale dispute a litmus test of U.S. policy toward China. The Chinese also made it clear that, in the event of the sale of the FX to Taipei, China was prepared to downgrade relations with the United States, quite possibly by withdrawal of the PRC's ambassador to Washington. The inability of the Reagan administration to resolve this issue speedily heightened China's disquiet. Leaders in China probably recognized the inevitability of some aircraft sales to Taiwan. Beyond trying to prevent the sale of a new generation of aircraft, therefore, China's harsh attacks on the United States were intended to convey the gravity of Beijing's concerns, as well as trying to make the PRC an indirect participant in future decisions on the supply of weaponry to Taiwan.

U.S. deliberations over technology transfer to Beijing were a separate but very important consideration. The Chinese viewed these decisions as indicative (at least symbolically) of the importance the Reagan administration attached to good relations with Beijing. But leaders in Beijing feared that their willingness to move ahead in this area could be construed as acquiescence to any U.S. decisions on the Taiwan arms sale question. Thus, the former issue became hostage to the latter.

In mid-July, the United States further relaxed restrictions on transfer of dual use technology and non-lethal military equipment,⁵⁴ but the Chinese in early August communicated to Washington that Liu

⁵³For a fuller discussion, see A. Doak Barnett, *U.S. Arms Sales—The China-Taiwan Tangle*, The Brookings Institution, Washington, D.C., 1982, especially pp. 28-38.

⁵⁴"Controls Eased on Exports to China," *Aviation Week and Space Technology*, July 20, 1981, p. 18.

Huaqing's visit to Washington would be delayed.⁵⁵ Following Secretary of State Haig's remark in early September that "there's something on the horizon with respect to Taiwan's defense needs," the Chinese again made it known that the time was not right for a Chinese military delegation to visit Washington.⁵⁶ Yet the Chinese (in a late August meeting in Washington between Huang Hua and Secretary of State Haig) asked for and received a response to China's June 1980 informal queries of interest on 52 defense items. According to one report, the Reagan administration indicated that it was prepared to approve approximately 30 of the items, including such defensive arms as TOW antitank weaponry. In addition, the United States proposed that American technical experts travel to China to discuss U.S. assistance in upgrading China's production capabilities in defense metallurgy and electronics. The PRC made very clear that both possibilities would have to await a U.S. decision on arms to Taiwan.⁵⁷

Despite the U.S. decision of early June to lift previous restrictions on sales of lethal military technology, debates over technology transfer to China remained highly contentious. In late September, the Defense Department declared its objections to Japan's impending sale of a large Hitachi computer to the PRC, which U.S. officials felt had capabilities that could improve Chinese nuclear targeting capabilities.⁵⁸ In mid-December, the United States informed Japan that it would block the sale under COCOM procedures, thus calling into question the Reagan administration's willingness to liberalize technology transfer guidelines.⁵⁹ Blockage of sales of more advanced radars was also reported.⁶⁰

But the Taiwan factor in particular cast a pall over the larger Sino-American relationship. The Chinese warned the Reagan administration that any major arms sale to the island would affect areas of Sino-American relations particularly valued by the United States. Defense dealings were an obvious candidate; U.S. trade with China represented

⁵⁵For the first such report, see Michael Weisskopf, "China Delays Start of Talks on Arms Sales," *Washington Post*, August 11, 1981.

⁵⁶Don Oberdorfer, "Absence of Peking Arms Buyers May Be Hint to U.S. on Taiwan," *Washington Post*, September 18, 1981.

⁵⁷Leslie H. Gelb, "U.S., Peking and Taipei Make Game of Arms Sales," *The New York Times*, October 16, 1981.

⁵⁸Walter S. Mossberg, "Pentagon Resists Japan Computer Sale to China," *The Wall Street Journal*, September 22, 1981.

⁵⁹Takashi Oka, "China, Japan, U.S. Caught in Computer 'War,'" *Christian Science Monitor*, December 14, 1981.

⁶⁰Jay Mathews, "China Sales Lagging Despite Eased Rules," *Washington Post*, November 21, 1981.

another possibility.⁶¹ The threat of reprisals contradicted Deng's earlier assertions of the strategic, long-term nature of China's relations with the United States and posed an equal or greater danger to PRC security and economic interests.

The PRC's effort to dissociate itself from previous assertions of parallel security concerns with the United States also necessitated adjustments in China's strategic formulations. In July 1981, the Chinese took issue with U.S. policy toward the Third World, which according to Beijing favored America's four "old friends"—Israel, South Africa, South Korea, and Taiwan.⁶² In addition, China reiterated its continuing ties with the Third World and its disapproval of "the erroneous policies of the United States toward certain Third World countries."⁶³ Commentaries on the 20th anniversary of the nonaligned movement attacked both the Soviet Union and the United States as "superpowers" exploiting smaller states.⁶⁴ And, in Zhao Ziyang's speech to a joint session of the Mexican Congress following the Cancun summit, a Chinese official for the first time since 1978 lumped the United States and the Soviet Union together as threats to international security: "To our regret, the present-day world is very unstable and dangerous. The two superpowers in their worldwide rivalry are menacing and encroaching upon the independence and security of many countries."⁶⁵

Although China had begun to define a foreign policy strategy apart from the United States, Beijing continued to regard "Soviet hegemonism" as a far greater threat to peace. Authoritative commentaries renewed calls for consultation, coordination, and concerted action with the United States.⁶⁶ The asserted existence of two "hegemonic superpowers" permitted the Chinese to adjust the balance between

⁶¹According to one report, in late November 1981 Chinese officials were warning that preparations were already under way to shift Chinese purchases of grain to other countries, to exclude U.S. oil companies from offshore exploration, and even to cancel contracts with U.S. firms. No other confirmation of such a threat of economic reprisal has been located. Michael Parks, "China Rejects U.S. Compromise on Sale of Planes to Taiwan," *Los Angeles Times*, November 26, 1981.

⁶²Mei Zhenmin, "U.S. Relationship with Third World," *Xinhua*, July 8, 1981, in *FBIS-China*, July 9, 1981, pp. B1-2.

⁶³"China Belongs to the Third World Forever," *Liaowang*, No. 5, August 20, 1981, in *FBIS-China*, August 24, 1981, p. A3.

⁶⁴*Xinhua*, September 1, 1981, in *FBIS-China*, September 2, 1981, P. A3.

⁶⁵*Xinhua*, October 27, 1981, in *FBIS-China*, October 27, 1981, p. J3.

⁶⁶For two examples, see Qi Ya and Zhou Jirong, "Some Key Issues in the Struggle Against Hegemonism," *Xiandai Guoji Guanxi* [Contemporary International Relations], No. 1, October 1981, in *China Report - Political, Sociological, and Military Affairs*, No. 312, JPRS, No. 81,165, pp. 1-19; and Li Dai, "Independence and China's External Relations," *Shijie Zhishi*, No. 19, October 1, 1981, in *FBIS-China*, November 19, 1981, pp. A1-5.

collaboration and contention with the United States. In early November, for example, an article in *Guangming Ribao* argued that "maintaining independence and keeping the initiative in our own hands" was the "fundamental principle" of Chinese foreign policy: "It means that both politically and militarily, we must [not] . . . be dependent on the pleasure of others, or be controlled by others."⁶⁷ In other assessments, the Chinese deemphasized the dangers of "Soviet hegemonism," and began to give greater stress to "the superpowers' struggle for hegemony."⁶⁸

These doctrinal adjustments did not preclude continuing Sino-American efforts to reach agreement on the Taiwan arms sale dispute. In discussions during and after the Cancun summit of October 1981, the Chinese voiced disagreement with various U.S. compromise proposals. Yet even as the Chinese insisted that any weapons sales constituted an infringement on their sovereignty, they intermittently demonstrated more flexibility. In remarks to the National Press Club in mid-December, for example, Ambassador Chai Zemin said that China's reactions would "be determined by the circumstances, in light of the nature and amount of the sales."⁶⁹

After a full year of internal policy review, the United States decided in early January 1982 to allow continued coproduction of the F-5E on Taiwan but to deny Taipei's requests for the F-5G. Like the Carter administration in the fall of 1978, the Reagan administration had determined that "no sale of advanced fighter aircraft to Taiwan is required because no military need for such aircraft exists."⁷⁰ The administration had also concluded that sales of more advanced aircraft to Taipei posed a major risk to U.S.-PRC relations. When Assistant Secretary of State Holdridge flew to Beijing to inform the PRC of the administration's decision, the Chinese had some cause for satisfaction. Although Beijing continued to object to any U.S. sales to the island and even insisted on the right to be informed in advance of U.S. policy deliberations, the worst had not occurred.⁷¹ The PRC quickly sought to

⁶⁷Lu Ding, "The Principle of Independence Has the Significance of Methodology," *Guangming Ribao*, November 7, 1981, in *FBIS-China*, November 18, 1981, p. K11.

⁶⁸For a good example, see Editorial Department, "Review of the International Situation of 1981," *Banyuetan* [Semi-Monthly Talks], No. 24, December 25, 1981, in *China Report—Political, Sociological, and Military Affairs*, No. 291, JPRS No. 80,272, pp. 1-7.

⁶⁹Robert C. Toth, "Peking Envoy Appears to Soften Stand Against U.S. Arms for Taiwan," *Los Angeles Times*, December 17, 1981. This remark was not included in the Xinhua version of Chai's talk.

⁷⁰Richard Halloran, "U.S. to Let Taiwan Buy Some Jets But Not More Advanced Fighters," *The New York Times*, January 12, 1982.

⁷¹Michael Weisskopf, "Peking Cites Sovereignty in Protest of Continued U.S. Jet Sales to Taipei," *Washington Post*, January 13, 1982.

convey a more reasonable attitude toward resolution of the arms sale question. At the end of January, the Chinese indicated publicly for the first time that they might be willing to assent to continued sales for a period of time if the two sides could devise a formula for the eventual termination of U.S. arms sales. Beijing argued that it made this offer to help preserve the Sino-American political and strategic relationship: "Always mindful of the larger interests, China is willing to negotiate with the United States for an end to the sales within a time limit."⁷²

From Beijing's perspective, an official formula for future U.S. arms sales to Taiwan had become essential to stable U.S.-China relations. Without it, Sino-American relations were vulnerable to potential reversal and crisis whenever the United States delivered additional weaponry to Taipei. The Chinese probably regretted their previous willingness to rely on the informal assurances of the Carter administration, since this did not protect them against later policy reversals. An official document was needed to formalize the restraints that had now been applied by both the Carter and Reagan administrations.

During the first half of 1982, prolonged and often strident negotiations over such a document dominated Sino-American relations. Strategic relations (other than existing modes of cooperation) were on hold, and the broader bilateral relationship seemed in substantial jeopardy. Throughout the negotiations, Chinese statements warned repeatedly that Sino-American relations were "at a critical juncture" and in danger of "retrogression." Taiwan remained an exceedingly sensitive issue for the Chinese leadership, at times provoking intensely nationalistic reactions. For example, according to a detailed Chinese reconstruction of U.S. policy toward Taiwan during 1949 and 1950 published in the summer of 1982, "the fact that there still remains a 'Taiwan issue' in the relations between China and the United States is the consequence of the imperialistic expansionist policy on the part of the United States."⁷³ Another authoritative article explained U.S. recalcitrance over Taiwan in terms of China's presumed security imperatives:

Some people say that because China is backward and faces a Soviet military threat, it needs U.S. assistance. They believe that so long as the United States adopts a hardline towards the Soviet Union, China will swallow the bitter pill on the questions of sovereignty and U.S. arms sales to Taiwan. This is fallacious reasoning based on ignorance of the history of Sino-Soviet relations and the history of

⁷²Christopher S. Wren, "Chinese Ease Taiwan Arms Stance a Bit," *The New York Times*, February 1, 1982.

⁷³Zi Zhongyun, "A Historical Test—U.S. Policy Toward Taiwan Shortly Before and After the Birth of New China," *Guoji Wenti Yanjiu*, No. 3, July 1982, in *Renmin Ribao*, July 13, 1982, in *FBIS-China*, July 14, 1982, p. B11.

Sino-U.S. relations. . . . The gradual improvement of Sino-U.S. relations . . . came only after the United States recognized that there is one China. . . . China did not alter its conditions for the establishment of Sino-U.S. diplomatic relations simply because of the Soviet threat.⁷⁴

The injection of highly sensitive concerns over national sovereignty had left Deng and other Chinese officials wary and doubting about U.S. intentions, and with little room for maneuver.

Despite the strains and tensions permeating the negotiations, China and the United States on August 17 reached agreement on a joint communique governing future U.S. arms sales to the island. In the communique, the United States offered major concessions and assurances to the PRC:

The United States Government states that it does not seek to carry out a long-term policy of arms sales to Taiwan, that its arms sales to Taiwan will not exceed, either in qualitative or in quantitative terms, the level of those supplied in recent years . . . and that it intends to reduce gradually its sales of arms to Taiwan, leading over a period of time to a final resolution.⁷⁵

The August 17 communique went very far in meeting Chinese concerns, in particular the U.S. agreement to impose quantitative and qualitative limits on any resupply of arms, but it was immediately subject to radically different interpretations by U.S. and Chinese officials.⁷⁶ Moreover, because of the prolonged uncertainties in Sino-American relations, China had already devised a foreign policy strategy far less dependent on close strategic bonds with the United States.

Such calculations led China to adopt a more neutral stance toward Soviet-American relations, but with a continued effort to protect and enhance the economic gains produced by China's dealings with the West.⁷⁷ In mid-April 1982, authoritative statements appeared on successive days defining the broad contours of Chinese foreign economic

⁷⁴Special Commentator, "Where Does the Crux of the Sino-U.S. Relationship Lie?" *Guoji Wenti Yanjiu*, No. 2, April 1982, in *Renmin Ribao*, April 6, 1982, in *Beijing Review*, No. 15, April 12, 1982, p. 17.

⁷⁵U.S.-China Joint Communique, August 17, 1982, in *Department of State Bulletin*, October 1982, p. 20.

⁷⁶Compare, for example, the testimony of Assistant Secretary of State Holdridge before the House Foreign Affairs Committee, August 17, 1982, in *Department of State Bulletin*, October 1982, pp. 19-22; and Xinhua, August 20, 1982, in *FBIS-China*, August 23, 1982, pp. B1-2.

⁷⁷See, for example, Deng's remarks to Armand Hammer, Chairman of the Board of Occidental Petroleum. Michael Parks, "Deng Bars Compromise on U.S. Arms Sales to Taiwan," *Los Angeles Times*, March 27, 1982.

policy and the PRC's overall course in foreign relations. The attraction of foreign investment, the importation of advanced science and technology, and the continued expansion of the foreign trade sector would all remain integral to China's long-term plans.⁷⁸ China's broad foreign policy principles (put forward by Premier Zhao Ziyang) stressed China's identification with the Third World, anti-hegemonism, and pursuit of a long period of international peace.⁷⁹

Attributing international tension and turbulence to "the scramble between the two superpowers" still left China free to define the degree of threat posed by either Moscow or Washington to Chinese security. In this respect, the equidistance between China and the two superpowers existed only in theoretical terms. In both private and public formulations, the Chinese continued to argue that the Soviet Union remained the "superior" hegemonic power and the United States the "inferior" one. Over the long run, the United States might hope to narrow the gap between Soviet and American military power, but for the foreseeable future U.S. strategy would remain defensive, not offensive.⁸⁰

The Chinese hoped to gain political latitude by their pursuit of an independent foreign policy. China would not allow itself to be used as a pawn in the U.S.-Soviet strategic competition. As Foreign Minister Huang Hua told U.N. Secretary General Perez de Cuellar in late August, "China will never cling to any superpower. China will never play the 'U.S. card' against the Soviet Union, nor the 'Soviet card' against the United States. We will also not allow anyone to play the 'Chinese card.'"⁸¹ At the Chinese Communist Party's Twelfth National Congress on September 1, Party General Secretary Hu Yaobang reiterated that "China never attaches itself to any big power or group of powers, and never yields to pressure from any big power."⁸² Yet even as Hu acknowledged continuing difficulties with the United States over Taiwan, he provided a litany of Soviet military activities throughout

⁷⁸Editorial Department, "On Questions Regarding Our Country's Economic Relations with Foreign Countries," *Hongqi*, No. 8, April 16, 1982, in *FBIS-China*, May 11, 1982, pp. K4-16.

⁷⁹See Zhao's conversation with Joao Bernardo Vieira, Head of State of Guinea-Bissau, April 17, 1982, in *Beijing Review*, No. 18, May 3, 1982, p. 6.

⁸⁰This strategic evaluation remained consistent throughout 1981 and 1982. See Wang Qianqi, "Military Strategy of the Reagan Administration," *Xiandai Guoji Guanxi*, No. 1, October 1981, in *China Report—Political, Sociological, and Military Affairs*, No. 310, JPRS, No. 81,103, pp. 1-7; and the *Summary of Discussion, Joint Conference on Soviet Strategy and Asian Security*, United Nations Association of the USA and the Beijing Institute for International Strategic Studies, May 1982.

⁸¹Xinhua, August 29, 1982, in *FBIS-China*, August 23, 1982, p. A1.

⁸²Hu Yaobang, Report to the 12th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, September 1, 1982, in *Beijing Review*, No. 37, September 13, 1982, p. 29.

Asia that constituted "grave threats to the peace of Asia and to China's security." Hu's calls on the Soviet Union to "take practical steps to lift their threat to the security of our country" was a direct challenge to Moscow to make good on its pledges to improve ties with the PRC.⁸³

During late 1981 and early 1982, the Soviet Union had sought to capitalize on the deterioration of Sino-American relations and improve relations with the PRC, but neither side offered its opposite number serious incentives to negotiate. Although both Moscow and Beijing had begun to establish a more correct tone in interstate relations, their broader political and security differences remained undiminished.⁸⁴ The Soviet Union was not inclined to alter its political and military behavior in Asia or toward China. The PRC did not want its difficulties with Washington to compel even a limited accommodation with Moscow.

Circumstances appeared slightly different in late 1982. Beijing's adoption of an independent foreign policy posture signalled to Moscow that the PRC would not collaborate with the United States if it were fueled explicitly by an anti-Soviet design. The Chinese also wanted to test for any political opportunities that might result from the impending succession to Leonid Brezhnev. Finally, more active pursuit of negotiations with Moscow would demonstrate to Washington that China had options for reducing the Soviet threat to China other than a Sino-American united front.

In October 1982, the Chinese sought to test Soviet intentions by consenting to the initiation of vice ministerial "consultations" on the normalization of Sino-Soviet relations. The Chinese probably expected more from the Soviet Union in these talks than they received. Chinese spokesmen repeatedly conveyed that no fundamental changes in Sino-Soviet relations would occur without serious efforts by Moscow to redress the Soviet political and military threat to China. In the words of Huan Xiang, a leading international affairs specialist and adviser to the PRC government:

China . . . wants to relax its relations a little with its neighbor, the Soviet Union, for the sake of the four modernizations. What it wants is normalization, that is, to conduct dialogue, build balanced state relations, and carry out normal trade and cultural exchanges. To that end we are asking the Soviet authorities to take steps to dispel our suspicions.⁸⁵

⁸³Hu, 1982, p. 31.

⁸⁴For a more extended discussion, see Pollack, 1982 (Section I, fn 6), especially pp. 80-87.

⁸⁵See Huan's interview in *Yomiuri Shimbun*, January 4, 1983, p. 3.

The negotiations offered an opportunity to reduce Sino-Soviet tensions, but major improvements could occur only with major reductions in the Soviet security threat to China.

China's pursuit of an independent course posed potential risks in relation to the Reagan administration. For much of 1981 and 1982, the PRC leadership had spoken contemptuously of U.S. foreign policy. China now argued that it would not join a security coalition with the United States even if Sino-American relations *did* improve, thus diminishing the incentives for the United States to accommodate with China. China's independent posture seemed more designed to punish the United States for its transgressions on Taiwan than to offer serious inducements to improve Sino-American relations.

Additional risks for China were evident in relation to Japan. During 1979 and 1980, the Chinese had called for a greater Japanese defense effort to counter Soviet threats to intimidate and encircle Japan. The Chinese had never spelled out in any detail how they envisioned the evolution of Japanese defense policy in relation to East Asian security. As U.S. pressures mounted on Tokyo to do more and spend more on defense, some of the implications became unsettling to Beijing. For example, depending on how the circle was drawn U.S. calls for Japan to assume responsibility for defense of the sea lanes to a distance of 1000 miles could encompass Taiwan. In addition, the United States was urging Japan to provide economic assistance to Seoul, thereby freeing additional South Korean resources for defense expenditure.⁸⁶ U.S.-Japanese consultations were also now extending to military contingencies in East Asia outside Japan, presumably including the Korean peninsula.⁸⁷ The prospect for a larger Japanese security role in Northeast Asia was becoming evident, some of it in ways the Chinese did not welcome.

It was far from certain that the Chinese wanted Japan to undertake autonomous military development. For example, a Chinese assessment in early 1982 noted, "Japan realizes that the time for relying on the U.S. will and deterrent is over. Security and national defense cannot be guaranteed by relying solely on U.S. strength." Yet the author foresaw the possible implications of such a line of reasoning:

⁸⁶Takashi Oka, "Japan Weighs More Aid to its Korean 'Defense Shield,'" *Christian Science Monitor*, January 5, 1982.

⁸⁷Henry Scott Stokes, "High Japanese Aide Bids U.S. Foster China Ties," *The New York Times*, January 13, 1982; Mike Tharp, "Allies in an Emergency," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, January 15, 1982, pp. 29-30.

A sovereign state needs to possess a solid, independent self-defense force, and has no need to suit the requirements of other countries This does not mean that Japan should develop its military beyond its needs, thus heading towards militarism. . . . In regard to setting up and developing a "U.S.-Japan-Korea military system," this runs counter to historical needs, and will certainly aggravate the tense situation in the Korean Peninsula [and] endanger the region's peace and stability.⁸⁸

Further doubts were raised in the summer of 1982, when revisions of school textbooks by the Japanese Education Ministry diluted the wording used to describe Japan's aggression against China and other Asian states during the 1930s and 1940s. Chinese accusations were especially harsh:

This is definitely not a simple dispute over the use of words or over accidental mistakes made by the Japanese authorities concerned. It is a grave signal that the danger of a revival of Japanese militarism exists in Japan. . . .

The militarist elements have by no means vanished in Japan. . . . These people are . . . [bidding] to revive militarism and are vainly thinking of turning Japan from an economic into a great military power.⁸⁹

The intensity of China's responses to these developments was possibly explicable in light of historical associations and grievances. Thus, any suggested changes in Japan's official interpretation of its aggression of the 1930s and 1940s was certain to provoke an extraordinarily vehement Chinese response, as it did elsewhere in East Asia. Even though Tokyo and Beijing were later able to resolve their differences, the intensity of Chinese reactions must have been sobering to Japanese leaders.

In addition, during the spring and summer of 1982 the Japanese began to express growing concerns to Beijing about the deterioration of Sino-American relations.⁹⁰ China's dissociation from close support for the U.S. political and military presence in the Western Pacific impinged on Japan as well. Although the PRC sought to reassure Prime Minister Suzuki that Sino-Japanese relations would be unaffected by Sino-American difficulties, Japanese officials expressed open doubt about these reassurances. In October 1982, Sun Pinghua,

⁸⁸Di Ershi, "Japan's Security and Development Strategy," *Guoji Wenti Yanjiu*, No. 1, January 1982, in *Beijing Review*, No. 18, May 3, 1982, pp. 22, 23-24.

⁸⁹Commentator, "Be Vigilant Against the Danger of a Revival of Japanese Militarism," *Hongqi*, No. 16, August 16, 1982, in *FBIS-China*, September 3, 1982, pp. D1, D3.

⁹⁰Michael Parks, "Growing U.S.-China Rift Worries Other Nations," *Los Angeles Times*, April 13, 1982.

Secretary General of the China-Japan Friendship Association, appeared to equivocate on China's support of the U.S.-Japan Mutual Security Treaty.⁹¹ A month later, Liao Chengzhi (in his capacity as chairman of the association) stated to the former Japanese ambassador to China that "the Chinese Government neither approved nor protested the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty."⁹² In April 1983, Vice Premier Wan Li asserted that the treaty "is a matter between Japan and the United States, and China does not meddle in their affairs. However, we will criticize them if they do anything harmful to another country."⁹³ Such remarks represented a sharp reversal from China's previous position.

As the Chinese critique of "American hegemonism" began to gather steam, U.S. and Japanese policy in Northeast Asia again became the target for Chinese criticism. A lengthy commentary in *People's Daily* in January 1983 on the U.S.-Soviet rivalry in the Western Pacific criticized U.S. warfighting strategies in the region.⁹⁴ Prime Minister Nakasone's pledges to assist U.S. defense policy in Northeast Asia (especially in Korea) drew particularly sharp criticism. According to the Chinese, Nakasone's pledge of economic aid to South Korea represented "support [for] the reactionary rule of the Chon Tu-hwan clique [that] . . . is not beneficial to the stability of the Korean peninsula."⁹⁵ Nakasone's readiness to assume increased responsibilities for sea lane defense, the Chinese argued, "was the first time a Japanese prime minister has directly touched on [the] Taiwan Strait when speaking of national defense issues." Japan's commitment to military collaboration with the United States, the article contended, was "strongly opposed" by those Japanese who were against the "Japanese-American military alliance," and was viewed elsewhere in Asia as portending "a possible revival of Japanese militarism."⁹⁶ Attacks on Operation Team Spirit—the annual joint U.S.-South Korean military exercises—were even sharper, and suggested that the Chinese were no longer prepared to view (at least publicly) the U.S. regional military

⁹¹Kyodo, October 9, 1982, in *FBIS-China*, October 12, 1982, pp. D3-4.

⁹²Kyodo, November 7, 1982, in *FBIS-China*, November 8, 1982, p. D1.

⁹³See Wan's interview in *Nihon Keizai Shimbun*, April 6, 1983, p. 6.

⁹⁴Cheng Bifan, "U.S.-USSR Contention on the Sea of the Western Pacific," *Renmin Ribao*, January 19, 1983, in *FBIS-China*, January 20, 1983, pp. A2-A6.

⁹⁵"A Positive Proposal for Eliminating the Root Cause of the Division of Korea," *Renmin Ribao*, January 21, 1983, in *FBIS-China*, January 21, 1983, p. D1.

⁹⁶Sun Dongmin, "The Japanese-U.S. Summit Talks for Strengthening Alliance Relations," *Renmin Ribao*, January 22, 1983, in *FBIS-China*, January 24, 1983, pp. A8-9.

presence as a stabilizing factor.⁹⁷ Thus, the shifts in Chinese security strategy were increasingly unsettling for the United States and Japan. China's remarks were no doubt intended in part to placate North Korea, but China's assertions of policy independence had begun to lead in unwelcome and somewhat worrisome directions.

TOWARD A NEW COALITION STRATEGY

By early 1983, severe doubts about the durability of Sino-U.S. ties had supplanted the heady atmosphere and extravagant expectations of the earliest years of full Sino-American diplomatic relations. Much to the distress of American officials, China again depicted the United States as a "hegemonic superpower" that represented a threat to global peace and security equal to that of the Soviet Union. Although the signing of the August 1982 joint communique on arms sales to Taiwan had quieted some of the immediate pressures from Beijing to achieve a final resolution of the issue, a mood of uncertainty continued to prevail. In addition, security relations had been largely frozen since the late summer of 1981, with Secretary of State Haig, the principal advocate of closer ties to China, now out of office. When Secretary of State Shultz flew to Beijing in early February, the prospects for U.S.-China relations were not encouraging.

For the first time in many years, however, an American Secretary of State travelled to Beijing without "trip driven" pressures compelling major decisions from the U.S. policy machinery immediately before leaving Washington. The PRC's determination to move toward a more independent position had downgraded the China issue on the U.S. policy agenda; this lowered expectations on both sides and made somewhat more likely the establishment of a normal dialogue with Beijing. Moreover, Secretary Shultz had no experience or identification with China policy.

For the Chinese, the absence of a crisis atmosphere was helpful. Although relations with the United States could not be considered stable or secure—according to Huan Xiang, China now had "almost no trust in the United States"—neither were relations fueled by extravagant expectations so characteristic of the preceding years.⁹⁸ China's willingness to undertake discussions on normalization of Sino-Soviet relations reflected a relaxed if not benign view of the international situation. According to authoritative strategic pronouncements, despite

⁹⁷Michael Parks, "China Assails Presence of U.S. Forces in Korea," *Los Angeles Times*, February 2, 1983.

⁹⁸*Yomiuri Shimbun*, January 4, 1983, p. 5.

major tensions between the superpowers, neither state was likely to have the capability to overwhelm the other. The U.S. defense buildup had eased previous Chinese anxieties that Washington would not counter the increases in Soviet military power. "In overall terms," one major commentary observed in January 1983, "both the Soviet Union and the United States have their weaknesses, but in general there seems to be a balance." In relative terms, the influence and position of both powers would "weaken and decline" during the remainder of the decade.⁹⁹

Chinese defense policy also reflected these views. During 1981 and 1982, senior military commanders described the PLA's deficiencies quite explicitly. Chinese thinking now accorded closely with the advice proffered by Under Secretary of Defense Perry in September 1980. Predominant attention now focused on the long-term tasks of upgrading and professionalizing the Chinese military establishment. This goal entailed improvements in the technological capabilities of China's defense industrial base, but it first required infrastructural development, the recruitment and cultivation of technically skilled manpower, and major reforms in training and military operations.¹⁰⁰ Chief of Staff Yang Dezhi took public note of these problems in early 1982. Training and organization, Yang argued, were at least as important as improved weaponry:

To deal with [a highly modernized and powerful] enemy, we need not only high morale but also expertise in using modern weapons in any tactical or strategic operation in perfect coordination with other branches of the armed forces. If we fail to upgrade the organization and discipline of the armed forces, we would not be able to engage an enemy in modern warfare.¹⁰¹

Yang tacitly acknowledged that the PLA should not expect a rapid infusion of advanced weaponry. Even if newer weapons were acquired in the more distant future, soldiers, sailors, and airmen had to be able to use them.

The Chinese high command was also searching for an appropriate military role in the context of China's domestic and external priorities. An authoritative article in November 1982 put forward a detailed

⁹⁹Xing Shugang, Li Yunhua, and Liu Yingua, "Soviet-U.S. Balance of Power and Its Impact on the World Situation in the 1980s," *Guoji Wenti Yanjiu*, No. 1, January 1983, in *FBIS-China*, April 21, 1983, pp. A4-5, A10.

¹⁰⁰See Jonathan D. Pollack, "The Men But Not the Guns," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, December 18, 1981, pp. 26-29.

¹⁰¹"Army Chief Urges Better Organization for PLA," *China Daily*, February 3, 1982.

rationale.¹⁰² Although the author acknowledged that "the 1980s will be a decade marked by great turbulence and riddled with crises," China hoped for peace:

Strengthening our national defense is closely related to seeking a peaceful international environment. In seeking a peaceful international environment for socialist construction, we need a correct foreign policy on the one hand and a consolidated national defense on the other. Both are indispensable. . . . When our actual strength . . . is augmented, they [hegemonists and other reactionary forces] will be forced to refrain from making reckless moves against us.

But "the most important prerequisite" for the modernization of national defense was "the development of the national economy." The complexity of modern warfare "inevitably entails a tremendous increase in defense spending, both financially and materially . . . the grim reality is that weapons are playing an ever increasing role in war." The general level of China's weaponry was "relatively backward; they are restricted chiefly by the levels of economic development of our country. Modernization of national defense can only be a gradual process." Thus, the scale and speed of modernization "should be appropriate, and should not go beyond the limits of our national financial and material capacities, and should not affect the speed of economic construction." The military in the meantime should make maximum use of existing weaponry and equipment, even as it sought to convert to "a powerful composite army able to operate in concert with various branches of the services under modern conditions."

The need for greater stability in the Chinese security environment—especially with unsteady U.S.-China relations—made more credible the case for diminished tensions with Moscow. In the PRC's view, the Soviets and their allies had been unable to consolidate their position in Southeast and Southwest Asia. In addition, some Chinese analysts privately argued that the Andropov succession seemed likely to lead to a shift of attention in Soviet policymaking from external to internal matters, although others disputed this assessment.¹⁰³

Chinese leadership alignments also seemed quite stable. Earlier fears that the difficulties in Sino-American relations would undermine Deng Xiaoping's internal political position proved unfounded. Slowly but steadily, Deng (in conjunction with his designated choices for Party

¹⁰²All citations are drawn from Shao Huaze, "A Reliable Guarantee for Socialist Construction," *Hongqi*, No. 21, November 1, 1982, in *FBIS-China*, November 19, 1982, pp. K20-28.

¹⁰³This conclusion is based on the observations of an American visitor to Chinese research institutes during the summer of 1983.

General Secretary and Premier of the State Council) institutionalized a successor leadership. In mid-November 1982, Wu Xueqian was appointed Foreign Minister, replacing the ailing Huang Hua. Far more important, Geng Biao was replaced as Defense Minister by Zhang Aiping, a leading proponent of defense modernization. As a career military professional committed to the technological upgrading of the Chinese armed forces, Zhang was undoubtedly a popular choice among disgruntled commanders, who had seen their opportunities for acquiring advanced defense technology erode severely since the late 1970s.

Zhang wasted little time in setting forth his priorities. Speaking to a military logistics meeting in late November, he noted that "as our national economy develops, the main characteristics of our army's modern weapons and equipment are automation, high speed, flexibility, and complexity resulting from a high degree of mechanization and computerization." Zhang was not arguing that such capabilities could be acquired overnight, but that the need for "persons who can grasp and use [modern] weapons and equipment" had grown appreciably.¹⁰⁴ Shortly thereafter, Zhang undertook an inspection tour of PLA units in northeast and southeast China—the PRC's most important military fronts—as well as other areas. Although acknowledging the need for military preparations in both peacetime and wartime, he stated, "In normal times, we must cut the expense of national defense as much as possible in order to ensure that economic construction can develop at a faster pace." At the same time, major efforts had to be made to upgrade the technological base upon which China's defense effort rested.¹⁰⁵

The status of U.S.-PRC relations was clearly linked to such needs. If the PLA expected to benefit from a larger effort to upgrade China's technological and industrial base, then U.S. policy would play a large role. After two years of uncertainty with the Reagan administration, however, the Chinese confessed not to know the value that the United States attached to ties with China. As Huang Xiang observed in early January 1983:

In my opinion there are four kinds of relationships between states and between people. The first is that of enemies. The second is that of friends or allies. In the third category they are neither enemies nor friends. In the fourth category they are potential enemies, but outwardly they maintain a friendly relationship. I do not know myself which of these four kinds of relationships the United States

¹⁰⁴Xinhua, November 28, 1982, in *FBIS-China*, November 29, 1982, p. K28.

¹⁰⁵Zhang Aiping's remarks appeared in *Jiefangjun Bao*, as reported by Zhongguo Xinwen She [China News Service], December 9, 1982, in *FBIS-China*, December 10, 1982, pp. K62-63.

believes it is maintaining with China. I hope that Mr. Shultz will clarify this point during his visit to China.¹⁰⁶

In both tone and substance, the Shultz visit was a success. The security dimension of the visit was measured and low key, befitting the reluctance of both leaderships to overstate the possibilities. Foreign Minister Wu urged "solid efforts" on both sides "to remove the obstacles and dispel the dark clouds," but the Taiwan issue figured only marginally in the deliberations. An unscheduled meeting with Zhang Aiping—the first such meeting since the rupture in U.S.-Chinese security relations in mid-1981—produced a decision to establish a committee to discuss defense collaboration. Zhang's meeting with Shultz emphasized low-level military exchanges, military education, and the like, not major discussions of defense technology transfer.¹⁰⁷ Underscoring the limited, tentative nature of these discussions, Zhao Ziyang stressed in a press conference that "no military ties exist between China and the United States."¹⁰⁸ Secretary Shultz also noted that "the subject of arms sales didn't arise."¹⁰⁹ A report in *The Wall Street Journal* alleging an impending Sino-U.S. agreement on coproduction arrangements for the manufacture of antitank weapons and antiaircraft missiles was later dismissed by Wu Xueqian as "totally groundless."¹¹⁰ However, an offer of a briefing on U.S. arms control policy focusing on the INF negotiations was warmly accepted.¹¹¹

Chinese accounts of the Secretary's visit spoke of both accomplishments and disagreements. A Xinhua dispatch noted that "differences over Taiwan and other bilateral issues still remain," but that American and Chinese leaders were "close in their views" in many areas. In Beijing's view, Shultz's reliance on the Taiwan Relations Act to justify continued arms sales to the island was not legitimate, thus the act "should be annulled." In addition, Xinhua called attention to U.S. "discriminatory and restrictive practices" on technology transfer. But the news agency also asserted that "China and the United States are

¹⁰⁶Yomiuri Shimbun, January 4, 1983, p. 5.

¹⁰⁷Oswald Johnston, "U.S., China to Study Defense Cooperation," *Los Angeles Times*, February 5, 1983. Xinhua noted only the meeting with Zhang and did not allude to the other developments.

¹⁰⁸Xinhua, February 4, 1983, in *FBIS-China*, February 4, 1983, p. B2.

¹⁰⁹Shultz, Press Conference in Beijing, February 5, 1983, in *Department of State Bulletin*, March 1983, p. 54.

¹¹⁰Robert Keatley, "Differences Remain, But U.S. and China Move Toward Pact on Arms Production," *The Wall Street Journal*, February 22, 1983. Wu issued his denial in a March 2 interview with V. G. Kulkarni, in *Far Eastern Economic Review*, March 31, 1983, p. 25.

¹¹¹Shultz, Press Conference en route to Seoul, February 6, 1983, in *Department of State Bulletin*, March 1983, p. 59.

close in their analyses of the current international situation as well as in their views on the issues of Afghanistan, Kampuchea, and arms control."¹¹²

The reference to support for U.S. arms control policy was unprecedented. Chinese and Japanese concerns about the prospective transfer of SS-20 missiles from European Russia to the Soviet Far East dovetailed with the U.S. negotiating posture at Geneva.¹¹³ The U.S. zero option proposal implemented on a global basis meant that the interests of Beijing and Tokyo would not be slighted in order to gain an INF agreement in Europe. As a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman noted some weeks later, "Nuclear weapons should be destroyed instead of being moved from one area to another. . . . Moving of SS-20s from one area to another can by no means reduce the threat to Europe, but can aggravate the threat to the Far East and Asia."¹¹⁴ The Chinese continued to follow American and Japanese reports of Soviet preparation of an additional 100 SS-20 launchers in Asia, making abundantly clear that Moscow viewed major new missile deployments in both theaters as essential to its strategic posture.¹¹⁵ Few developments better captured the congruence of Chinese, Japanese, and American security concerns.

The Shultz visit imparted the most consistent direction in U.S. China policy in several years. A month following his return from the PRC, the Secretary put forward a political rationale for U.S. relations with China in a speech to the World Affairs Council of San Francisco. China was now treated "first and foremost as part of Asia and only secondly as a counterweight to the Soviet Union." Even if China had "a decidedly global approach to economic and security problems," it remained a modernizing, regional power. In both economic and security terms, therefore, Japan remained the most important Asian partner of the United States.¹¹⁶

The Chinese were clearly stung by the characterization of China as a regional power and were equally concerned about the prospect of Shultz's tilt toward Japan. But the Secretary of State's views conformed with the PRC's expressed determination to limit its

¹¹²Xinhua, February 6, 1983, in *FBIS-China*, February 7, 1983, pp. B7-8.

¹¹³See Henry Scott Stokes, "Japan Sharply Protests Soviet Proposal on Shifting Missiles to Asia," *The New York Times*, January 28, 1983; Oswald Johnston, "Shultz Assures Japan U.S. Won't Accept a Deal 'Bad for Asia,'" *Los Angeles Times*, February 1, 1983.

¹¹⁴Xinhua, March 8, 1983, in *FBIS-China*, March 8, 1983, p. A1.

¹¹⁵Leslie H. Gelb, "Soviets Reported Preparing Rise in Asian Missiles," *The New York Times*, May 8, 1983.

¹¹⁶For an excellent interpretive analysis of the shift in administration thinking, see Richard Nations, "A Tilt Toward Tokyo," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, April 21, 1983, pp. 36-37.

involvement in the U.S.-Soviet global competition. The Chinese wanted to concentrate on internal economic reconstruction by facilitating the development of a peaceful international environment. It therefore made eminent sense to pose the PRC's economic emergence in regional terms. Although the Chinese still assumed importance in global strategic calculations, their economic and defense capabilities placed them in a different context. As the SS-20 issue demonstrated, however, the Chinese could not ignore their continuing involvement in matters vital to the global and regional power balance. Despite their repeated assertions of independence, the Chinese still had to deflect a multifaceted Soviet political and military threat. This could not be accomplished alone.

China's needs of the United States, however, were now different. Following the Shultz visit, the Chinese deemed U.S. willingness to expedite the transfer of dual use technology vital to U.S.-China relations. China's modernization prospects depended in part on fuller access to sophisticated technologies from the West. A credible and consistent U.S. policy in this area was vital to China's prospects for upgrading its dated industrial plants. As newly appointed Chinese Ambassador Zhang Wenjin argued in May 1983:

As regards technology transfer to China, steps toward relaxation of restrictions are welcome, but the movement is very slow. China still fares much worse than many other countries which have normal relations with the United States. Export licenses to China are slow in coming with many applications killed on the way. Even with those items of technology approved for export to China, the U.S. side has often imposed strict restrictions, aiming at lowering the performance of certain equipment.¹¹⁷

Chinese officials expressed repeated frustration with blockages of approved sales. The exceedingly complicated decision process on technology transfer explained many of the delays and denials.¹¹⁸ But in many cases the potential military applications of various technologies (for example, computers) had impeded or prevented PRC purchases in areas of compelling national need.¹¹⁹ Administration officials sought to demonstrate their sincerity in expediting such transfers; by the end of

¹¹⁷"Chinese Ambassador to the USA on Sino-U.S. Relations," May 2, 1983, in *Beijing Review*, No. 20, May 16, 1983, p. 15.

¹¹⁸See Paul Mann, "China Export Policy Takes Final Form," *Aviation Week and Space Technology*, January 25, 1982, pp. 57-58.

¹¹⁹See, for example, Richard Nations, "Who's in Charge Here?" *Far Eastern Economic Review*, April 7, 1983, pp. 28-29.

1982, a total of 1700 export licenses had been issued for possible sales of advanced American technology.¹²⁰

U.S. policy debates on technology transfer finally led to a presidential decision in late May 1983 to ease previous restraints.¹²¹ China was now placed in Category "V" along with the Western European nations, India, most of Africa, some Arab countries, Australia, New Zealand, and Japan. The designation was more symbolic than substantive: Each sale would still be decided case by case. A week after being informed of the decision Vice Premier Yao Yilin expressed his concerns: "We fear . . . that there will be some petty maneuvers on this question. Nominally, China will be put in the same category as Japan and the Western European countries. But there will be additional conditions on the transfer of technology."¹²² Despite continued reports of pessimism from certain quarters,¹²³ others now expressed greater optimism on the prospects for Washington-Beijing ties. Deng Xiaoping, for one, acknowledged in late June that relations "have already made some improvement," although it remained to be seen whether the United States would remove obstacles to expanded sales of technology and equipment.¹²⁴ Those favoring closer Sino-American ties carried the day. On July 11, the Defense Department disclosed that Secretary of Defense Weinberger would undertake a long-delayed trip to the PRC during the early fall; two weeks later, Xinhua reported the official invitation from Zhang Aiping.¹²⁵ Beijing clearly understood the implications of such a visit for Sino-Soviet relations, and for the United States taking China into account as a major factor in a global rather than regional strategic context. In fact if not in name, China continued to lean more to the United States than to balance between the two super-powers.

¹²⁰ Assistant Secretary of State Paul Wolfowitz, "Developing an Enduring Relationship with China," February 28, 1983, in *Department of State Bulletin*, April 1983, p. 64.

¹²¹ Michael Weisskopf, "U.S. Vows Speedup in Sales to China," *Washington Post*, May 26, 1983; Weisskopf, "New Rules to Let China Purchase High Technology," *Washington Post*, June 4, 1983.

¹²² Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, "Chill Wind from Peking," *Washington Post*, June 3, 1983.

¹²³ See Michael Parks, "Peking Disillusioned Over U.S. Ties," *Los Angeles Times*, May 3, 1983; Parks, "Chinese Leaders Reported Split Over U.S. Ties," *Los Angeles Times*, May 23, 1983; and Peng Di, "Whither U.S.-China Policy?" *Liaowang*, No. 5, May 29, 1983, in *FBIS-China*, August 4, 1983, pp. B1-B3.

¹²⁴ Yang Liyu (Winston Yang), "China and the United States—Deng Xiaoping Discusses Sino-American Relations," *Hongkong Pao Hsing*, No. 53, August 1, 1983, in *FBIS-China*, August 2, 1983, p. W1.

¹²⁵ Richard Halloran, "Weinberger Planning to Visit China in the Fall," *The New York Times*, July 12, 1983; Xinhua, July 27, 1983, in *FBIS-China*, July 27, 1983, p. B1.

The Chinese had concluded (in the words of Wu Xueqian) that "after a period of coolness there were recent signs that the relationship was improving."¹²⁶ Although the PRC continued to object to American arms sales to Taiwan (the latest package of \$530 million had been announced in mid-July), their criticisms reflected China's continued opposition to *any* sales of arms to the island.¹²⁷ Progress on other fronts permitted signing a major agreement on oil exploration in the South China Sea in early August and led Deng (in the most optimistic assessment in several years) to call publicly for expanded U.S.-China relations.¹²⁸

The changing mood and China's increased willingness to edge cautiously toward renewed security collaboration with the United States also reflected the status of Sino-Soviet relations. A second round of negotiations had been completed in March 1983 without apparent success. Despite renewed civility in interstate relations (including increased trade ties and cultural and scientific exchanges), the Soviets offered no indications that they were prepared to address China's three stated "obstacles" to improved relations: the Soviet military presence in Mongolia and along the Sino-Soviet border (including its SS-20 deployments), Soviet support for Vietnam's activities in Kampuchea, and the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. In the view of Chinese officials, if the Soviet Union posed no threat to China, it should not prove difficult for Moscow to demonstrate this claim by deeds as well as words.

Soviet reasoning may well have been different. In circumstances of an unsettled relationship between China and the United States, Moscow may well have judged Beijing's incentives for improving Sino-Soviet relations as greater than their own. Moreover, Soviet officials understood that China's requirements for improving the Sino-Soviet relationship were a virtual call for the surrender of Soviet geopolitical gains in Asia of the preceding decade or more. The Chinese had yet to persuade the Soviet Union of the credibility of their independent foreign policy posture.

¹²⁶Wu offered this assessment in early August to visiting Australian Foreign Minister Bill Hayden. Agence France Presse, August 5, 1983, in *FBIS-China*, August 8, 1983, p. B1.

¹²⁷Don Oberdorfer, "Arms Sale of \$530 Million Set for Taiwan, U.S. Tells Congress," *Washington Post*, July 16, 1983; Michael Weisskopf, "Peking Restrained in Criticism of U.S. Weapons Sales to Taiwan," *Washington Post*, July 20, 1983; Weisskopf, "Peking Protest Says Latest U.S. Arms Sale Upgrades Taiwan's Weaponry," *Washington Post*, July 24, 1983.

¹²⁸"U.S. Company Gets Rights to Search for Oil Off China," *The New York Times*, August 7, 1983; Michael Parks, "Deng Sees Better Sino-U.S. Ties, Asks New Cooperation," *Los Angeles Times*, August 28, 1983.

American reactions to the onset of the Sino-Soviet negotiations demonstrated neither visible alarm nor anxiety; U.S. officials saw no need to somehow do more for China to forestall an improvement in Sino-Soviet relations. During 1982, Chinese officials had argued that Sino-U.S. relations and Sino-Soviet relations were separate considerations, and the United States did not challenge this assessment. Indeed, Zhang Wenjin denied that the Chinese were seeking to balance their relations between the two superpowers: "Some people in the world say that China adopts a balanced and equal stance regarding the two superpowers. We say that this claim is a misunderstanding of Chinese foreign policy. No one can incite us against anyone."¹²⁹ Zhao Ziyang restated the outlines of China's non-confrontational posture in late July: (1) consistent opposition to superpower hegemonism; (2) a willingness to pursue normal state-to-state relations with both states on the basis of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence; and (3) continuation of a dialogue with both Moscow and Washington. "There are still obstacles in the development of Sino-Soviet and Sino-U.S. relations," Zhao concluded, "but the obstacles are not on the side of China."¹³⁰

It was obvious that the Chinese agenda with the two superpowers differed considerably. In an interview with a visiting delegation from *Mainichi Shimbun* in mid-August, Hu Yaobang acknowledged the complexity of the issues dividing Moscow and Beijing and argued that full Sino-Soviet normalization might take twenty to thirty years. Even when it did occur, he argued, it would not reflect a return to the 1950s. China, according to Hu, had been compelled to take an out-and-out pro-Soviet position in the 1950s because of U.S. pressure and opposition, but such conditions no longer existed. At the same time, Hu admitted that reunification with Taiwan might not be achieved in the present decade—"if it is not attainable in the 1980s, we will strive to achieve it in the 1990s."¹³¹ No other Chinese official had made such an admission.

Yet the prospect of an improved Sino-American relationship was more than an inducement to goad the Soviet Union into making concessions to China. Although the Chinese were loath to acknowledge compelling need of the United States, a confrontational posture toward Washington ill served the PRC's broader political, technological, and

¹²⁹Zhang Wenjin made these remarks in an interview published in the Lebanese newspaper *As-Safir*, July 29, 1983, in *FBIS-China*, August 4, 1983, p. A4.

¹³⁰Zhao offered these "three principles" in a meeting with President da Costa of Sao Tome on July 29, 1983, in *Beijing Review*, No. 32, August 8, 1983, p. 7.

¹³¹Hu's interview was published in *Mainichi Shimbun*, August 16, 1983, p. 1. It appeared subsequently in *Renmin Ribao*, lending further credibility to its judgments.

economic goals. Even if Beijing judged the United States a born again hegemonist, the Chinese had a clear interest in not allowing the super-power military competition in Asia and the Pacific to undermine broader Chinese security concerns.

The aborting of U.S.-Chinese military ties had diminished attention to the transfer of U.S. defense technology to China, but this issue also remained an important factor in Chinese thinking. Zhang Aiping's major article on defense modernization, published in *Red Flag* during March 1983, demonstrated the continuing relevance of U.S. policy:

At present, the armaments race between the superpowers is, in essence, a competition of science and technology. . . .

In order to achieve modernization of our national defense, our first task is to develop and produce sophisticated military equipment. This work demands the comprehensive application of all modern science and technology and involves very complicated systems engineering. . . . Solution to these problems involves the vast involvement of science and technology. . . .

Our country is a big country and it is not realistic or possible for us to buy national defense modernization from abroad. We must soberly see that what can be bought from foreign countries will at most be things which are advanced to the second grade. . . . Depending on modeling one's weaponry on others is not a way of realizing national defense modernization either. *At the outset it is necessary to obtain such technology that can be imported and model some weaponry on that of others.*¹³²

Thus, Zhang sought to disabuse those who felt that foreign weaponry represented an easy or inexpensive means of achieving military modernization. Innovation in national defense would be based on indigenous capabilities, but the nature and amount of external technological assistance to China would have a critical role in this process. The subsequent cancellation of a Sino-British agreement to update the electronics of Luda-class destroyers and to supply the destroyers with Sea Dart missiles was described as "an isolated case," not reflecting broader Chinese policy.¹³³ Coproduction arrangements or other forms of assistance in vital technological areas—for example, electronic components, metallurgy techniques for improving jet engine life and performance, and utilization of composite and exotic materials—represented

¹³²Zhang Aiping, "Several Questions Concerning Modernization of National Defense," *Hongqi*, No. 5, March 1, 1983, in *FBIS-China*, March 17, 1983, pp. K2-3. Emphasis added.

¹³³On the Sea Dart cancellation, see *Defense and Foreign Affairs Weekly*, April 4-10, 1983, p. 3; and Agence France Presse, April 16, 1983, in *FBIS-China*, April 20, 1983, p. A3.

potential areas for collaboration bearing directly upon Chinese defense programs.¹³⁴

China's more immediate preoccupation was to weigh the directions and implications of Reagan administration's defense strategy. By 1983, Chinese strategic analysts were expressing doubts about the wisdom and viability of U.S. defense plans. One major assessment, published in *People's Daily* in early May, voiced considerable concern about American policy directions in the 1980s.¹³⁵ According to the author, the Reagan administration had instituted a policy of "all around confrontation with the Soviet Union" as a means of reversing U.S. strategic setbacks of the past 15 years. This policy was premised on "the capability to fight wars of all scales and types and to deal with all kinds of threats of any category . . . in one or many theaters." There were military, political, and economic reasons for doubting the efficacy of such a strategy. Despite the need for close cooperation and support of allies and local countries, the situation in both Western Europe and Northeast Asia was by no means politically stable. "Due to differences in the strategic situation and the national interests of each country," the author observed, "there are also differences of opinions in varying degrees among them over assessment of the Soviet threat, the policies to be adopted, and the tasks to be borne." Despite their long urgings for a countervailing U.S. presence in Asia and the Pacific, the Chinese were not convinced that they stood to gain from a confrontational security environment.

The Chinese viewed Japan as central to the implementation of U.S. defense strategy in Northeast Asia. According to one Chinese assessment, in 1983 "the United States has begun . . . to rebuild its hegemony in the Far East. Its approach was first to rope in Japan . . . to share part of its defense and military expenditure and form a kind of military and political union with it." Inevitably and inexorably, Japan's economic might was being converted into a larger political role, which "is bound to be propped up by military strength in the future."¹³⁶ The Chinese had thus begun to show some wariness about the directions and implications of such an effort. In an interview with the French quarterly *Politique Étrangère*, Foreign Minister Wu Xueqian argued: "The Chinese government holds that as an independent, sovereign state, Japan has the right to possess a certain degree of self-defense armed forces. Of course, these armed forces should be defensive in

¹³⁴See *Defense and Foreign Affairs Weekly*, August 22-28, 1983, p. 1.

¹³⁵Zhang Jingyi, "Analysis of the Reagan Administration's Military Strategy," *Renmin Ribao*, May 5, 1983, in *FBIS-China*, May 6, 1983, pp. B1-6.

¹³⁶The citations are drawn from an interview with Huan Xiang appearing in *Hong-kong Da Gong Bao*, August 16, 1983, in *FBIS-China*, August 19, 1983, pp. W2, 7.

nature and moderate in amount, and should not pose a threat to neighboring countries."¹³⁷

The Chinese took issue with some of these developments.¹³⁸ When Prime Minister Nakasone paid tribute to Japan's war dead at the Yasukuni Shrine on August 15 (the thirty-eighth anniversary of the Japanese surrender), Xinhua reported that this "glorifying the past aggressors . . . aroused strong resentment in the Japanese public."¹³⁹ The Chinese also sought to identify with Japanese public opinion. A more detailed assessment of these developments described the August 15 commemoration as an increase in influence of the "handful of people in Japan who are attempting to revive militarism." Japan's growing political and military involvements with the United States, including possible provision of advanced Japanese technology to the United States, were also noted warily. As the article concluded:

The people of various countries in Asia and the Pacific region, including the Chinese, have never forgotten the sufferings brought to them by Japanese militarism in the past. . . . They feel worried about any symptoms of a revival of militarism in Japan's politics. They hope that Japan would become a factor contributing to the stability and prosperity in the region and not drive off in the opposite direction.¹⁴⁰

The Chinese were being discomfited by some of the directions of Japan's growing security consciousness that they had done so much to encourage. Another reason to reactivate security relations with the United States was to dilute the political effects of closer U.S.-Japanese security association.

Chinese security strategy was at a crossroads. Having long called on the United States to do more to counter the Soviet military presence in Asia, leaders in Beijing were now uneasy about some of the directions of U.S. policy. Having warned about the inexorable Soviet geopolitical advance, they now worried about an excessively confrontational atmosphere in Soviet-American relations. Having lobbied for the formation of an informal security coalition with the United States and to a lesser extent with Japan, they now preached independence, not alignment, but with problematic prospects for diminishing the Soviet threat to China while still urging greater American technological assistance to the PRC. Beijing no longer considered a united front metaphor

¹³⁷Wu's remarks were cited by Zhongguo Xinwen She, July 3, 1983, in *FBIS-China*, July 5, 1983, p. D2.

¹³⁸For an excellent synthesis of these developments, see Clyde Haberman, "Japan Steps Up Talk of Arms and World Role," *The New York Times*, August 17, 1983.

¹³⁹Xinhua, August 18, 1983, in *FBIS-China*, August 19, 1983, pp. D3-4.

¹⁴⁰Xinhua, August 20, 1983, in *FBIS-China*, August 23, 1983, pp. D2-3.

appropriate for its relations with Washington and Tokyo, but overlapping security concerns—in Afghanistan, in Indochina, and in the Soviet conventional and nuclear buildup in East Asia and the Pacific—remained vital priorities.

Equating the two superpowers lacked relevance in particular to the SS-20 question. The slower pace of SS-20 deployments in Soviet Asia, the European focus of the INF negotiations, and the extraordinary publicity that attached to the impending deployment of cruise missiles and Pershing 2 missiles in Western Europe all diminished attention to the Soviet missile buildup east of the Urals. In addition, as long as the United States adhered to its zero-option proposal in the INF talks, the Chinese had no particular cause for concern about the results of the Geneva negotiations. But the Soviet Union repeatedly emphasized that SS-20s based in Asia were not on the negotiating agenda at Geneva. Throughout the spring of 1983, Moscow had stated that it was free to redeploy any missiles dismantled in the European portion of the USSR to positions east of the Urals, provided they no longer could reach Western Europe.¹⁴¹

Accelerated Soviet deployments in Asia during 1983 steadily narrowed the gap between the number of SS-20s in the two theaters. In March 1983, the Reagan administration estimated that there were "230+" operational SS-20 launchers west of the Urals, and "95+" east of the Urals.¹⁴² By December, European deployments of the SS-20 stood at 243, with Asian deployments at 126.¹⁴³ In the same month, Secretary of Defense Weinberger reported another three missile sites under construction in Asia, which would provide for an additional 27 launchers east of the Urals.¹⁴⁴ In early January 1984, a NATO spokesman confirmed that an additional SS-20 battery was now operational in Soviet Asia, bringing the total to 135.¹⁴⁵

Although the SS-20s were undoubtedly targetted against military objectives throughout East Asia, China and Japan possessed the most lucrative targets for Soviet planners. Beijing and Tokyo increasingly made common cause concerning the SS-20 threat in Asia, especially in

¹⁴¹John F. Burns, "Moscow Asserts Missile Cut Offer Doesn't Affect Launchers in Asia," *The New York Times*, December 23, 1982; see also the excerpts from Foreign Minister Gromyko's April 2 news conference in *The New York Times*, April 3, 1983.

¹⁴²U.S. Department of Defense, *Soviet Military Power*, Second Edition, March 1983, p. 34.

¹⁴³These figures were supplied by Assistant Secretary of State Burt to a meeting of the NATO Special Consultative Group in Brussels. Michael Getler, "Reagan 'Very Hopeful' Soviets Will Resume Missile Talks Soon," *Washington Post*, December 9, 1983.

¹⁴⁴"Weinberger Puts SS-20 Total at 369," *Washington Post*, December 14, 1983.

¹⁴⁵William Drozdiak, "Soviets Deploy New SS-20 Missiles, NATO Groups Says," *Washington Post*, January 17, 1984.

view of the consideration given to various compromise formulas at Geneva that would have greatly reduced SS-20 deployments in Europe without comparable reductions in Asia.¹⁴⁶ The Soviets sought to counter the growing criticisms of their Asian deployments, but China and Japan remained unpersuaded. In late August, Soviet President Andropov for the first time pledged to "liquidate" Soviet missiles in Europe limited by any agreement at Geneva, including a "considerable number" of SS-20s. In flat contradiction to previous Soviet pronouncements, Andropov deemed Western allegations that the USSR intended to transfer missiles eastward "a deliberate lie." He coupled his offer with renewed pledges to normalize Sino-Soviet relations.¹⁴⁷

Andropov's offer prompted the first major Chinese commentaries on the implications of the Asian SS-20s for Chinese security and the future of Sino-Soviet relations. On September 17, Foreign Minister Wu Xueqian called on Moscow to "cut back drastically" on the 108 SS-20s already deployed in Asia and to destroy the launch sites.¹⁴⁸ In a *People's Daily* commentary published the same day, the Chinese made clear that the SS-20 deployments were also among the continuing "obstacles" to an improvement in Sino-Soviet relations, to be treated entirely separate from and uncoordinated with U.S. proposals at Geneva:

As everyone knows, the Soviet Union has already deployed large numbers of SS-20 missiles in its Asian region, which pose a very serious threat to China and other Asian countries. If, as it says, the Soviet Union really hopes to reduce the danger of nuclear war, the missiles it has deployed in the Asian region must also be greatly reduced. One of the three main obstacles to the development of Sino-Soviet relations, which China has called on the Soviet Union to remove, is that of reducing military forces in the Sino-Soviet and Sino-Mongolian border regions, and this naturally includes missiles.¹⁴⁹

China's public posture conformed with comparable appeals to Moscow in Beijing's private exchanges with Soviet officials visiting China dur-

¹⁴⁶Michael Getler, "Soviet Missile Curb Problem Noted," *Washington Post*, February 19, 1983; Steve Lohr, "Japan Is Worried by Report on Soviet Missiles," *The New York Times*, May 9, 1983; David Wood, "Japan Tells Weinberger It Fears for Security in U.S.-Soviet Arms Pact," *Los Angeles Times*, September 25, 1983.

¹⁴⁷"Yu. V. Andropov's Answers to *Pravda* Questions," *Pravda*, August 27, 1983, in *FBIS-Soviet Union*, August 29, 1983, pp. CC2-3.

¹⁴⁸Michael Parks, "China Hints It Is Ready to Enter Nuclear Arms Talks," *Los Angeles Times*, September 18, 1983.

¹⁴⁹"How To Act To Meet the Interests of World Peace," *Renmin Ribao*, September 17, 1983, in *FBIS-China*, September 19, 1983, p. C2.

ing September and October.¹⁵⁰ Although the Chinese denied that the SS-20s represented a new issue in the Sino-Soviet consultations, the public airing of the SS-20 threat emphasized the major differences in Chinese dealings with the two superpowers. As Wu Xueqian had also observed, "Sino-American relations are different from Sino-Soviet relations. They are two different matters and should not be linked together."¹⁵¹

During the remainder of 1983 and early 1984, the Chinese sought actively to reconcile some of the ambiguities and contradictions in their dealings with both the United States and Japan. These steps did not presage a revitalization of China's united front strategy of the late 1970s, but they indicated China's continuing preoccupation with the Soviet military threat and the need to counteract this threat by closer relations with Washington and Tokyo.¹⁵² The September 1983 visit of Defense Secretary Weinberger to China in particular demonstrated the PRC's continued need for credible ties with the United States, including defense relations.

Immediately before Weinberger's arrival, Chinese officials were highly conciliatory toward the United States. According to officials in Beijing, changes in U.S. technology transfer guidelines were among the positive steps undertaken by the Reagan administration, prompting China to initiate discussions on the long-delayed visit of Premier Zhao Ziyang to the United States.¹⁵³ The Defense Secretary's trip helped maintain this forward momentum, culminating in an agreement to proceed with Zhao Ziyang's visit to the United States, President Reagan's visit to China, and a reciprocal visit of Defense Minister Zhang Aiping to the United States, all to occur in 1984. In addition, Weinberger provided a detailed presentation of the long-awaited U.S. policy guidelines on technology transfer. According to the new guidelines, as a "friendly, non-allied nation" China could now purchase a much wider variety of sophisticated dual use technologies, with a heavy emphasis on advanced electronics. Licensing procedures for technology export to China were now divided into three zones: a green zone, where licenses would be routinely approved by the Commerce Department without interagency review; an intermediate or yellow zone for

¹⁵⁰"China Makes Issue of Soviet Missiles," *The New York Times*, October 7, 1983.

¹⁵¹Parks, 1983.

¹⁵²These steps included Sino-Japanese discussions and information exchange on the SS-20 issue, undertaken by Foreign Ministers Wu and Abe. See the report in *Yomiuri Shimbun*, October 1, 1983, p. 1.

¹⁵³Michael Weisskopf, "Peking Official Sees Better U.S. Ties," *Washington Post*, September 18, 1983; Don Oberdorfer, "China Decides to Move on Zhao's Visit," *Washington Post*, September 22, 1983.

"very high technology" that would require case-by-case reviews among all appropriate government agencies, including the Defense Department; and a red zone, consisting of items so advanced that they were generally not shared with U.S. allies. U.S. officials expected that approximately 75 percent of China's requests would fall within the green zone and could therefore be approved rapidly. Some approvals were also expected for the yellow zone, with only items in the red zone excluded from consideration.¹⁵⁴

The Defense Secretary also informed Defense Minister Zhang that the United States had reevaluated a 1981 Chinese list of 65 items of military and dual-use technology where the PRC had requested clarification of U.S. export policy. The United States had previously been willing to issue export licenses for 11 of these items, but it indicated that an additional 32 could be approved under the new rules, with another 11 items requiring additional Chinese assurances on non-transfer to third parties before sales could be authorized. Only 11 items were excluded outright.¹⁵⁵ It was clear that some U.S. defensive weapons were on the list of approved items, including air defense missiles and anti-tank weaponry. As the Defense Secretary noted at the conclusion of his stay, expanded Sino-American relations could "mature very quickly into actual transfers of weapons systems, if that is what the Chinese want."¹⁵⁶

Despite these reassurances, China remained equivocal in its responses to U.S. policy changes. The Chinese would not commit themselves to purchase specific U.S. technologies, and instead sought to elicit a blanket U.S. endorsement of those defense items (including weaponry) that the United States was prepared to sell.¹⁵⁷ The Chinese also added another 10 to 15 items to their previous list of inquiry.¹⁵⁸ In direct contradiction to standard U.S. policy, the Chinese wanted to know what the United States would sell before they indicated what China was prepared to buy. As a U.S. official noted, "doing it by lists

¹⁵⁴Michael Weisskopf, "U.S. Seen Easing Arms Sales to China," *Washington Post*, September 24, 1983; Stuart Auerbach, "Export Controls Eased on Trade with China," *Washington Post*, September 28, 1983; Paul Mann, "New Rules Ease U.S. Exports to China," *Aviation Week and Space Technology*, October 3, 1983, p. 23.

¹⁵⁵John Woodruff, "China Assured U.S. Will Sell High-Tech Items," *Baltimore Sun*, September 27, 1983.

¹⁵⁶Christopher S. Wren, "Weinberger Hopeful on Arms for China," *The New York Times*, September 29, 1983.

¹⁵⁷Bernard Gwertzman, "U.S. Aide Blames China for Delaying Arms Deals," *The New York Times*, October 11, 1983. Gwertzman's dispatch is based on on-the-record comments by a senior State Department official describing the results of the Weinberger visit.

¹⁵⁸Don Oberdorfer, "Peking Presents U.S. with Military Shopping List," *Washington Post*, October 11, 1983.

is not the way we do it." The Chinese were not prepared to enter into detailed discussions of the roles, missions, and functions for which these technologies were intended, because furnishing such information implied a more intimate level of security association.¹⁵⁹

The Weinberger visit captured the cautious optimism of both Beijing and Washington toward heightened security dealings. The Defense Secretary called attention to the common strategic concerns of both states, but his Chinese hosts stressed their independence and unwillingness to "attach ourselves to any big power or bloc of powers."¹⁶⁰ Although not directly assenting to Defense Secretary Weinberger's depiction of the Soviet buildup in the Pacific, Zhang Aiping acknowledged that "we all know very well whence come the threats to China and world peace."¹⁶¹

China's mood of prickly independence was reflected in its initially cautious responses to U.S. proposals for future military exchanges in the areas of training, doctrine, and military logistics. In a press conference for American reporters, Premier Zhao Ziyang denied knowledge of such possibilities. Although he discounted the prospect for major military sales, he offered a rare public assent from a ranking Chinese official to possible Chinese weapons purchases:

If the United States is willing to sell weapons to us, and if we need them and can afford them, I wouldn't rule out the possibility of buying some weapons. [But] we rely mainly on our own efforts in modernization of our national defense.¹⁶²

By the conclusion of the Secretary's stay in China, the two sides had agreed "in principle" to resume military to military exchanges that had lapsed in 1982, possibly including joint study of training procedures, logistics problems, and military tactics.¹⁶³ In conjunction with various forms of technical cooperation, these exchanges had the potential to enlighten both states about their respective approaches to military organization and doctrine, and suggested renewed opportunities for broader collaboration in the defense sector.

¹⁵⁹Gwertzman, 1983.

¹⁶⁰Xinhua, September 25, 1983, in *FBIS-China*, September 26, 1983, pp. B2-3.

¹⁶¹Fred Hiatt, "Peking Cool to U.S. Call for Strategic Cooperation," *Washington Post*, September 27, 1983. Zhang's comments were not issued officially, indicating China's unwillingness to assent to a common view of the Soviet Union.

¹⁶²*Renmin Ribao*, September 28, 1983, in *FBIS-China*, September 28, 1983, p. B3.

¹⁶³David Wood, "Broader Military Ties with Peking Foreseen by U.S. Official," *Los Angeles Times*, September 30, 1983; Fred Hiatt, "U.S., China Set Military Cooperation," *Washington Post*, September 30, 1983. Although the PRC consented to disclosure of the military exchange programs, there was no official Chinese statement confirming this agreement.

Weinberger's visit had been successful, as indicated by Deng Xiaoping's cautious endorsement of the results of the Defense Secretary's exchanges with Chinese officials. Deng's initiation of a discussion on reducing tensions on the Korean peninsula was a further indication of Chinese concerns about regional stability and their willingness to discuss collaboration with Washington on a highly delicate political issue. Although Deng's comments did not depart from previous exchanges between American and Chinese officials on the Korean question, this was the first instance when the Chinese had even implied a willingness to work with the United States to reduce tensions on the peninsula.¹⁶⁴ The Chinese were acknowledging their compelling need for good relations with the United States.

In the aftermath of the Weinberger visit differences in approach to technology transfer continued to impede fuller security relations. The Chinese still balked at U.S. terms prohibiting transfer of advanced technology to third parties (in particular North Korea) as well as U.S. insistence on the right of periodic inspection of sophisticated equipment to assure it was not being put to unintended uses. Moreover, according to U.S. businessmen in China, China was "pressing hard" for a total exemption from COCOM review procedures.¹⁶⁵ The newness of such transactions and Chinese nationalistic sensitivities appeared to restrict the immediate possibilities, but the longer term outlook for increased U.S. high technology sales to China was more promising, including provision of selected U.S. weaponry and defense technologies.

China recognized that reaffirmation of its close ties with Washington and Tokyo was vital to its long-term development and security prospects. On his visit to Japan in late November, Party General Secretary Hu Yaobang—in his first visit ever to a non-communist country—went to exceptional lengths to reassure leaders in Tokyo of China's desire for amicable, long-term relations with Japan. Friendly political relations and heightened economic interactions, Hu argued, were vital "to the security and prosperity of both countries and . . . for safeguarding peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region and eliminating the threat from the war forces."¹⁶⁶ According to Hu, China's overriding concern on all major foreign policy questions was that of

¹⁶⁴William Chapman, "China Says It Is Open to Talks With U.S. About Korean Peninsula," *Washington Post*, October 21, 1983. Deng's offer, however, lost much of its credibility in the context of the North Korean terrorist bombing in Burma in early October. Michael Weisskopf, "China-U.S. Peace Feelers on Korea Canceled by Rangoon Bombing," *Washington Post*, November 17, 1983.

¹⁶⁵Michael Parks, "U.S. Sale to China Stalls on Security Term," *Los Angeles Times*, November 3, 1983.

¹⁶⁶Hu, Departure Statement at Beijing Airport, November 23, 1983, in *FBIS-China*, November 25, 1983, p. D1.

stability. "Sino-U.S. relations could gravely turn for the worse," he warned, "but China does not wish to see this happen." Similarly, China's pursuit of Sino-Soviet normalization was "a principled one. It should and would never impede or impair the growth of Sino-Japanese relations." China was also "genuinely and unswervingly in favor of enduring stability on the Korean peninsula and holds that whatever actions likely to aggravate tension there, no matter where they come from, should be avoided."¹⁶⁷ Finally, Hu expressed confidence that Japan would never again commit aggression against China, "even when Japan's defense power is expanded."¹⁶⁸

By year's end, the Chinese appeared closer to doctrinal closure on their security strategy than at any time since the breakdown of the Sino-American united front. Although authoritative pronouncements continued to criticize both superpowers for their hegemonic rivalry, Beijing had concluded that neither Moscow nor Washington had sufficient power to challenge the other through a test of arms:

Both the Soviet Union and the United States worry about the serious consequences of a world war in the nuclear era. Both sides have limited their struggle to the brink of war. . . . Nuclear deterrence has discouraged both superpowers from venturing into launching a major war or a nuclear war. . . . The U.S.-Soviet balance of military power unfavorable to the United States in the 1970s will possibly be changed in the eighties, but the present balance of comprehensive strength between the superpowers will not be changed to a marked degree and neither will be able to overpower the opposing side. . . . The strategic balance in the present nuclear era will effectively prevent the outbreak of a major war.¹⁶⁹

Thus, the Chinese appeared to concede that the U.S. effort to redress both the conventional and nuclear balance could prove beneficial to stability and security. Without the U.S. challenge to Soviet military power, China would not have been able to assume its more independent political and military posture. According to Huan Xiang,

Near the end of the Carter administration's term and at the beginning of the term of the Reagan administration, the Americans determinedly and energetically put up a front against the Soviet Union politically and militarily. . . . This stopped the Soviet Union. . . . It

¹⁶⁷All citations are from Xinhua's accounts of Hu's conversations with Prime Minister Nakasone, November 24, 1983, in *FBIS-China*, November 25, 1983, pp. D4-5, D7-8.

¹⁶⁸See the Kyodo report by Hiroshi Oshima on the Hu-Nakasone talks, November 24, 1983, in *FBIS-East Asia and Pacific*, November 25, 1983, p. C2. The Xinhua version of the talks did not mention this exchange.

¹⁶⁹Zhou Jirong, Wang Baoqin, and Gu Guanfu, "Change and Prospects in the Posture of Contention Between the Soviet Union and the United States," *Shijie Zhishi*, No. 23, December 1, 1983, in *FBIS-China*, January 5, 1984, pp. A4-5.

seems that the Russians still do not feel strong enough to react to the U.S. offensive. In our view, a certain balance between the two has emerged, especially in the military field.

As Huan further argued, however, the Soviet Union remained "the more direct and the more serious threat to our country's security"; thus "our policy is not proceeding at equal distance with the two super-powers."¹⁷⁰

Premier Zhao Ziyang's visit to the United States in mid-January 1984 culminated this process of strategic reassessment. The Chinese clearly placed considerable symbolic weight in the Premier's visit. According to several Chinese accounts, Congressional consideration of resolutions on Taiwan's future and the island's continued membership in the Asian Development Bank had renewed uncertainties in Beijing about U.S. determination to abide by the normalization accords, leading the PRC to contemplate cancellation or postponement of the Premier's visit. A subsequent account noted that "this wave of disputes was stopped only when the U.S. Government openly expressed its disagreement" with the Congressional actions and reaffirmed the U.S. commitment to the normalization accords.¹⁷¹ President Reagan's personal dissociation from the language contained in the Congressional resolution and budgetary actions led Beijing to inform Washington that the trip would proceed as planned.¹⁷²

Some observers concluded that the threat to cancel or delay Zhao's visit indicated serious differences within the Chinese leadership over relations with Washington.¹⁷³ Hu Yaobang in particular was allegedly unenthusiastic about closer relations with Washington. In a press conference during his visit to Japan, the Party General Secretary had been highly acerbic in criticizing recent U.S. actions, threatening that the Zhao visit might be cancelled "if there is no satisfactory answer" to China's objections to the Congressional actions. Hu also stated that "it's all right if China-U.S. relations stop where they are now."¹⁷⁴ Hu's remarks went farther in criticizing the United States than had earlier comments by Foreign Minister Wu Xueqian, who expressed displeasure

¹⁷⁰Huan made these comments in an extended interview in *Der Spiegel*, December 26, 1983, in *FBIS-China*, December 29, 1983, p. A8.

¹⁷¹Mu Guangren, "Viewing Sino-U.S. Relations From Premier Zhao Ziyang's Visit to the United States," *Liaowang*, No. 2, January 9, 1984, in *FBIS-China*, January 26, 1984, p. B1.

¹⁷²Christopher S. Wren, "China Affirms Zhao's Plan to Visit U.S.," *The New York Times*, December 7, 1983.

¹⁷³See Michael Parks, "Peking Discord Reported Before Zhao's Visit to U.S.," *Los Angeles Times*, January 25, 1984.

¹⁷⁴Sam Jameson, "Chinese Links Premier's Visit to Taiwan Move," *Los Angeles Times*, November 27, 1983.

at U.S. actions but did not explicitly threaten cancellation of the Zhao visit.¹⁷⁵ In the Xinhua version of Hu's remarks, however, the General Secretary's threat was not as explicit: "Whether or not the schedule of the exchange of visits between the leaders of the two countries can materialize will hinge on the U.S. government's sincerity regarding Sino-U.S. friendship."¹⁷⁶

These differences in text suggest that Hu's public statement in Tokyo exceeded his authorized instructions. However, in separate "strong protests" over the Congressional actions delivered by Assistant Foreign Minister Zhu Qizhen to U.S. Ambassador Arthur Hummel, the Chinese had expressly demanded "effective measures" and an "explicit reply" to the PRC protests, warning of "serious consequences" if the United States did not "take immediate concrete measures to stop all attempts at creating 'two Chinas.'"¹⁷⁷ China's private warnings may have been stronger than the ones Beijing was prepared to issue publicly. In an interview with French correspondents in Beijing in late January 1984, Hu acknowledged, "I made some relatively harsh remarks about a number of inappropriate actions taken by the United States during my visit to Japan last November. Afterwards, the U.S. authorities made clarifications, and we then eased the atmosphere in those days." According to Hu, "We leaders are completely unanimous on the policy toward the United States."¹⁷⁸ Hu implied that others in Beijing considered his statements in Tokyo overly provocative, which required a modest recanting on his part. But U.S. steps judged in violation of both the letter and spirit of normalization could not go unnoticed by any Chinese leader. Hu's reactions to the Congressional actions may have been stronger than those of others, but the differences were more of degree than of kind.

As Zhao remarked before his departure for the United States and Canada, President Reagan's "clarifications" had resolved these "unpleasant incidents." In spite of the "twists and turns" in Sino-U.S. ties, Zhao observed, "on the whole great progress has been made in bilateral relations." China would not demand an immediate or

¹⁷⁵Xinhua, November 25, 1983, in *FBIS-China*, November 25, 1983, p. D16.

¹⁷⁶Xinhua Domestic Service, November 26, 1983, in *FBIS-China*, November 29, 1983, p. D3.

¹⁷⁷Zhu's protests were lodged with Ambassador Hummel on November 18 and November 25, 1983. See *Beijing Review*, No. 48, November 28, 1983, p. 9; and No. 49, December 5, 1983, p. 10.

¹⁷⁸*Renmin Ribao*, January 25, 1984, in *FBIS-China*, January 26, 1984, p. A2. In an *Agence France Presse* account of this meeting, Hu allegedly stated: "Now, China's policy toward the United States is unanimous and approved by the Central Committee." Hong-kong AFP, January 24, 1984, in *FBIS-China*, January 25, 1984, p. A3. In the *People's Daily* version, however, there is no reference to "now" (*xianzai* or *xianshi*).

complete cessation of U.S. arms sales to Taiwan, but it did expect adherence to various Sino-American understandings. China's pursuit of Sino-Soviet normalization did not mean that China was practicing "equal distance diplomacy or equating different countries." The "troublesome problems" between Washington and Beijing would be "rather easy to solve." China "attach[ed] importance to relations with the United States," and therefore remained "rather restrained" in its reactions to U.S. arms sales to Taiwan, even though "the Chinese people are most unhappy about this."¹⁷⁹

Zhao's visit was judged a major success by the Chinese. The only "major obstacle" to Sino-U.S. relations remained Taiwan, which "some notable figures in U.S. political circles still regard . . . as an independent political entity."¹⁸⁰ Various U.S.-Chinese differences on pivotal international questions made it "impossible to establish a comprehensive strategic relationship," but the common interests outweighed the conflicting ones.¹⁸¹ Zhao's presentation and endorsement of North Korean overtures to Washington and Seoul reflected mounting PRC concern over heightened tensions on the Korean peninsula, and suggested areas where the PRC sought cautiously to expand its political dealings with Washington.¹⁸² As a *People's Daily* editorial concluded, "the fields of Sino-U.S. cooperation are broad and wide, but so far only a very small area has been exploited. . . . Facts all these years have proved that the significance of Sino-U.S. friendship has gone far beyond the ordinary bilateral relations and constitutes an important factor for world peace and stability."¹⁸³

A credible Sino-American relationship was essential to the PRC's broad foreign policy goals, but this did not lead inexorably to extensive, interlocking security ties. In China's view, Sino-American relations had an intrinsic importance that outweighed any bilateral differences, especially in view of the continuing challenge of Soviet power to the security of China and related threats to stability in East Asia. This context furnished the backdrop for President Reagan's trip to China in

¹⁷⁹All citations are from Zhao's remarks at a meeting with U.S. and Canadian reporters on January 3. *Renmin Ribao*, January 4, 1984, in *FBIS-China*, January 4, 1984, pp. A1-4.

¹⁸⁰"A Significant Visit," *Renmin Ribao* Editorial, January 18, 1984, in *FBIS-China*, January 18, 1984, p. B4.

¹⁸¹Don Oberdorfer, "Zhao Pleased Following Two Days of Talks Here," *Washington Post*, January 12, 1984.

¹⁸²Don Oberdorfer, "Zhao Preceded North Korea in Presenting Latest Peace Bid," *Washington Post*, January 13, 1984.

¹⁸³"A Significant Visit," pp. B4-5.

April 1984 as well as the more long-term prospects for Washington-Beijing relations. China continued to recognize the need for Sino-American cooperation and the avoidance of renewed differences that might again threaten the fabric of bilateral relations.

IV. THE LESSONS OF COALITION POLITICS

THE HISTORICAL RECORD

Sino-American security relations during the past half decade revealed the pitfalls of as well as the opportunities for informal defense ties. The difficulties encountered by Washington and Beijing did not demonstrate the impossibility of such relations but suggested some of the limits and uncertainties inherent in these dealings.

1. *Sino-American security cooperation was never an East Asian version of NATO.* The mechanisms for U.S.-Chinese cooperation, information sharing, technical exchange, and institutional collaboration were vastly different in their scope and consequences from those developed over more than three decades between the United States and its European allies. They also fell well short of the framework of U.S.-Japanese security cooperation. In both capitals, there was neither leadership support nor a strategic rationale compelling enough to sustain ties of greater depth and magnitude. China's consistent emphasis, although often obscured by the language of its united front strategy, was on peacetime coalition building, not wartime planning. The latter prospect could have been based only on a severe degradation in the U.S. strategic position in the Asia-Pacific region and a major expansion of Soviet military activities in Asia that substantially increased Moscow's threat to Chinese security. Because these developments did not take place, neither leadership saw the need to expand the framework of defense relations beyond the arrangements devised during 1979 and 1980.

2. *The security entente of the late 1970s had a demonstrable effect on Chinese and American security calculations, but in highly asymmetrical ways.* The United States no longer committed forces against the People's Republic and had foreclosed the possibility of renewed Soviet-American collusion at China's expense, greatly reducing PRC defense requirements. Washington's commitment to the PRC's well being and security limited the possibility of Soviet attempts to intimidate or coerce China. Finally, informal security ties enabled the Chinese to acquire information of considerable value to their own security planning, as well to devise means for periodic consultation with the United States.

3. *Sino-American accommodation helped reduce U.S. military deployments in the Western Pacific, but not nearly as much as implied by the Chinese.* The major reductions in U.S. military deployments in the Asia-Pacific region in the early 1970s derived in part from improving relations with China, but more from the U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam and the increasing self-defense capabilities of major regional powers (for example, South Korea).¹ In addition to the 10,000 U.S. troops withdrawn from Taiwan, the reductions in U.S. air and naval power from the Pacific Command were partially attributable to improving relations with the PRC.²

The larger effects of closer Sino-American ties on U.S. strategy in the Pacific concerned the diminished defense *requirements* postulated for the region. In his reformulation of U.S. defense policy enunciated at Guam in July 1969, President Nixon sought to reconcile U.S. defense doctrine with U.S. military capabilities. Previous policy had been based on a 2-1/2 war strategy (forward defense of NATO, defense of South Korea and Southeast Asia against a full-scale Chinese attack, and a smaller military contingency), but the United States never achieved the force levels needed to implement this strategy. The United States shifted to a 1-1/2 war strategy that excluded U.S. general purpose forces from any contingencies involving China.³ Despite major changes in the global political and military environment following the enunciation of the Nixon doctrine, the exclusion of China from U.S. regional defense requirements remained unchanged.

4. *Improving Sino-American relations had diminished U.S. defense requirements in the Western Pacific, but stable U.S.-Chinese ties continued to depend on the deployment of U.S. military power in the region.* A credible, consistent U.S. military presence was essential to fulfilling U.S. security obligations in East Asia, especially in the context of growing Soviet naval and air power in the region. Despite resumed Chinese attacks on U.S. military strategy in Northeast Asia during 1983, the U.S. regional military presence remained vital to positive relations between Washington and Beijing. It was also very important to maintaining support for U.S. policy among U.S. allies and friends, some of whom had voiced anxiety about the U.S. willingness to cede

¹See John M. Collins, *U.S.-Soviet Military Balance - Concepts and Capabilities, 1960-1980*, McGraw-Hill Publications, New York, 1980, especially pp. 341-349. Total U.S. pullouts during the 1970s included more than 500,000 from Vietnam, 26,665 from Japan, 17,000 from South Korea, 15,180 from Okinawa, 13,950 from the Philippines and 10,000 from Taiwan.

²Collins, 1980, p. 348.

³See Richard M. Nixon, *U.S. Foreign Policy for the 1970s—A New Strategy for Peace*, Report to the U.S. Congress, February 18, 1970, especially pp. 127-129.

China a major sphere of influence within the region. The U.S. defense posture in East Asia had to steer a course between an excessively confrontational posture toward the Soviet Union and one that suggested retrenchment and ultimate withdrawal, because neither would have fostered long-term confidence about the United States on the part of Beijing, Tokyo, or other Asian capitals.

Regional coalition building emphasized the augmentation and facilitation of U.S. goals and interests in East Asia, rather than substitution of regional military power for the U.S. military presence. Burden-sharing on the part of allies and friends permitted a more efficient and equitable division of labor, but this did not entail a "China-first" or a "Japan first" choice. U.S. ties with Japan were qualitatively and quantitatively different from those with China, but closer ties with both were essential to strengthening the U.S. political and strategic position.

5. *The most important benefits for U.S. policy deriving from Sino-American defense ties were indirect rather than direct.* Such advantages were obscured when the atmosphere of bilateral relations grew more heated, but they remained important. The United States no longer had to deploy military forces in the West Pacific for contingencies involving the PRC. In addition, the Chinese remained arrayed against both Soviet and Vietnamese military power in East Asia. The symmetry of Japanese and Chinese views with respect to Soviet intermediate nuclear force deployments in the Asian theater also conformed closely to U.S. global arms control objectives.

American concerns that the PRC might seek a rapid, concessionary accommodation with the new Soviet leadership also proved unfounded. Without a major alteration in Soviet foreign and military policy in Asia, the United States could continue to derive important indirect benefits for its own security planning from the general directions of Chinese policy. This did not preclude Chinese efforts to forge more stable ties with the Soviet Union in trade, scientific and cultural exchange, and other areas. But the national security dimensions of the Sino-Soviet rivalry remained largely unchanged.

6. *In certain areas, China was prepared to furnish direct, positive support for U.S. security objectives, but not on a highly coordinated basis.* The Chinese provided important declaratory support for the territorial integrity of both Pakistan and Thailand; Islamabad also received valuable material and military assistance from the PRC. PRC policy toward both states was congruent with U.S. security and foreign policy objectives in Southwest Asia and Southeast Asia. Reports of alleged intelligence collaboration, although unconfirmed by either government, suggested an additional means of parallel action for mutual benefit.

7. *U.S. dealings with Taiwan repeatedly jeopardized Sino-American security dealings and always remained an issue of utmost sensitivity to all leaders in Beijing.* Despite China's concern with Soviet political and military encirclement and the PRC's interest in acquiring advanced U.S. technology, the Chinese were prepared to put Sino-American security ties at risk when major uncertainties emerged about U.S. policy toward Taiwan. It would have been impossible for any Chinese leader to advocate expanded Sino-American security relations if the U.S. commitment to the normalization understandings appeared to be eroding.

8. *The advocates of closer Sino-American security collaboration never enjoyed a free hand in Beijing, especially during 1981 and 1982.* However, internal differences over policy toward the United States were not a major factor influencing China's receptivity to heightened security dealings with Washington. Chinese nationalistic sensitivities placed limits on what Beijing was prepared to undertake or even consider. Beijing was most explicit in its overtures to the United States during 1979, when Chinese concerns about Soviet military pressure and political intimidation were most acute, but the Carter administration had yet to achieve a consensus on security ties with the PRC. Washington was most explicit in its overtures to the PRC during 1980 and 1981, when internal economic construction had become far more important to Beijing than a Sino-American united front.

During the souring of Sino-American ties in the early 1980s, the primary goal of Deng Xiaoping and other united front advocates was one of damage limitation. Chinese attacks on the United States reflected Beijing's shifting assessment of U.S. China policy, but they were not intended to undermine collaborative dealings. Deng sought to preserve those areas of Sino-American cooperation most vital to PRC interests, especially China's acquisition of sophisticated U.S. technologies. His actions mollified those leadership forces less persuaded of the benefits of closer ties with Washington, and conveyed to the United States that China would not tolerate actions toward Taiwan that violated China's understandings of the terms of normalization, even if Beijing's behavior put heightened security collaboration at risk.

9. *Sino-American security dealings accelerated the normalization process between Washington and Beijing, but the excessive expectations generated by these developments subsequently undermined the relationship.* Deng's damage-limiting approach of the early 1980s required modification of China's security strategy of the late 1970s, which had posed the Soviet Union as an inexorable global threat. In its reformulated security strategy, Beijing (at least in declaratory terms) excluded the United States from a putative security coalition; in view of the PRC's diminished concern with Soviet encirclement, the Chinese no longer

saw the need for an overt coalition. But China also expressed concern about its possible exploitation in the U.S.-Soviet global competition, even as Beijing required closer relations with Washington to reduce Soviet pressure against China. At the same time, the possibility of higher levels of Sino-American collaboration created suspicions among regional friends and allies about polarization and confrontation not conducive to stability or security in East Asia.

10. *By viewing U.S.-China relations in terms of China's long-term political, economic, and strategic role in East Asia, Reagan administration policy ultimately conformed with the PRC's own conception of its role as an independent major power.* Both leaderships retained suspicions that the other sought closer relations only out of momentary need, and China in particular feared being doublecrossed by the United States over Taiwan. The United States still had to persuade leaders in Beijing that there was a credible, consistent U.S. commitment to the enhancement of Chinese power. Without such a commitment, there was a recurrent possibility of backsliding and instability in Sino-American relations.

The political and strategic context of Sino-American security relations had also shifted substantially between 1978 and 1983. The atmosphere of crisis and instability of the late 1970s had passed, with China no longer displaying or admitting to equivalent vulnerability under less threatening international circumstances. Initial expectations that China afforded the United States an opportunity to recoup from the U.S. strategic setbacks of the 1970s had not lasted long. China continued to share certain underlying concerns with the United States, especially curtailing the expansion of Soviet power in Asia, but Beijing was not an adjunct of American power, nor did Chinese leaders judge their vulnerability so acute that they saw no alternative to relying on the United States to buttress their own security.

IMPLICATIONS FOR U.S. POLICY

By early 1984, Sino-American relations had weathered repeated uncertainties and potential crises. Policy stability was not guaranteed for leaders in either Beijing or Washington, but the prospects for political and security collaboration appeared more encouraging than at any time since late 1980. Although the context of Sino-American security ties was very different than in the late 1970s, China's assessment of the opportunities for heightened security cooperation rested principally on the same factors as before: the perception of parallel or convergent security concerns, and the credibility and consistency of U.S. policy toward the PRC.

What are the common security interests of China and the United States, and are they congruent or conflicting with those of the United States and Japan?⁴ Beijing, Washington, and Tokyo share an underlying concern about Soviet capabilities to intervene or pressure states in regions of the Third World vulnerable to encroachment or intimidation; all three oppose the continuing Soviet military occupation of Afghanistan and Soviet support for the Vietnamese occupation of Kampuchea; they are also concerned (but for different reasons) about the implications of any major imbalance in U.S.-Soviet strategic nuclear capabilities, in both global and theater terms. In addition, none of the three states desires a regional military balance in East Asia that would provide the Soviet Union with opportunities for encroachment or intimidation of its neighbors, or would allow a local power to operate with impunity against a neighbor. In all these areas, there is an underlying congruence of interest among the United States, China, and Japan.

The differences are also marked. China is not an advanced industrial state; it is not nearly as dependent as the United States and Japan on external trade relations for vital natural resources, in particular energy; it cannot readily facilitate U.S. military roles and missions in the Pacific; its research and development capabilities cannot enhance collaborative defense efforts; it has no appreciable airlift or sealift capabilities that might aid U.S. defense efforts in the event of a crisis in Southwest Asia (although reliable air links and landing rights in China would be of some help); it plays no role in U.S. regional military planning; and it does not offer any explicit, reciprocal commitments to collective security goals. China's prospective role in a revived Sino-American security alignment would be confined largely to indirect facilitation rather than direct, coordinated involvement with the United States or Japan.

China's strategic importance rests both on what the PRC can do (most vitally for U.S. interests, its continued capacity to pin down substantial Soviet forces in the Asian theater) and on what it does not. As a leading Chinese strategic analyst observed in April 1983: "Intelligent Americans and America's allies . . . realize that if Sino-U.S. relations revert to the hostile phase of the 1950s and 1960s, the result would be very serious and unpredictable for the Asian and Pacific

⁴On the latter issue, see in particular *The Common Security Interests of Japan, The United States, and NATO*, The Atlantic Council of the United States, Security Studies Policy Paper, Washington, D.C., 1980.

region and for other areas of the world."⁵ Since 1975, East Asia represents a major success for U.S. foreign and security policy interests. China's growing involvement with the United States and Japan has been central to this process. A perception of common interests, and China's willingness to identify with these interests, will remain a major concern of PRC dealings with the United States. This does not necessitate Beijing's explicit identification with the goals of U.S. regional security policy, although China seems likely to emphasize its commitment to stability in East Asia. Higher levels of security cooperation—which would entail greater interdependence and more formalized political and institutional arrangements—will continue to lack credibility with leaders in Beijing.

Recapturing a sense of forward movement in Sino-American security relations must also entail close attention to the consequences of such dealings for Tokyo. U.S. policy toward China cannot put at risk Japan's position as the principal regional partner of the United States. At the same time, the prospect of more active U.S.-Japanese security cooperation will stimulate China to promote the parallel opportunities for expanded Sino-American defense cooperation. U.S. policies toward the two major East Asian powers are separate but closely related. It is possible to achieve positive ties with both—including a measure of security association with Beijing—but not by any attempt to recast the objectives of U.S. security policy in Northeast Asia. The Japanese are more prepared to pursue collaborative defense ties with the United States than at any point in the postwar era, but both Tokyo and Beijing want such steps to reinforce regional stability and security, not undermine it. Despite Beijing's intermittent criticisms of the U.S. military presence, the Chinese understand the threat to their own security if the Soviet Union gained military predominance in East Asia. There is no reasonable prospect of this development, nor will the Chinese stand in the way of U.S. efforts to remain a credible power in the Western Pacific.

Among the potential complicating factors in Sino-American relations, Taiwan still looms as the largest. Any departures from non-official relations with Taiwan or sales of more advanced aircraft to the island would violate U.S.-Chinese understandings achieved during 1982 and pose a renewed threat to stable Sino-American relations, including the security area.

⁵Pei Monong, "China's Future Position in Asia," in *Beijing Review*, No. 16, April 18, 1983, p. 19. Pei delivered these remarks on April 12 to a Sino-Japanese symposium meeting in Tokyo.

The Chinese will also remind the United States that meaningful security dealings depend on the fulfillment of U.S. pledges to China's modernization goals. Any comprehensive U.S. policy in this area must address the transfer and absorption of U.S. technologies relevant to the PRC's national defense effort. Although the Chinese assert that American assistance is helpful but not essential, such an argument is more posture than conviction. Even if there are alternative sources of vital defense technologies, these sources would largely disappear if the United States decided to retain major restrictions with respect to export controls and COCOM guidelines.

The policy debate over technology transfer captures the essence of U.S. policy dilemmas toward the PRC. Is the United States truly committed to seeing China emerge more capable of resisting Soviet power? Do American policymakers believe that a China so strengthened yet standing apart from either superpower represents a reliable guarantor for long-term security and stability in East Asia? Or is China only a large but passive factor in the global power balance, too weak and vulnerable to do more than keep Soviet forces committed along the Sino-Soviet border, yet too unstable and unpredictable to become a genuine security partner of the United States? The scale of these questions convey why the China issue remains a vital consideration in U.S. policy calculations. Resolving these issues would not guarantee amicable, productive ties with China, but it would be a large step in that direction and reduce the possibility of further cycles of exaggerated expectations and inevitable disappointment, to the marked detriment of the interests of both states.





