

Haig pulls 'China Card' policy coup . . . for now

by Richard Katz

With the announcement that the United States will end prohibitions on the sale of offensive arms to China, Alexander Haig has succeeded in making it official U.S. policy to escalate tensions with the Soviet Union. Outside of giving a U.S. government grant to Lech Walesa, no U.S. act is more calculated to provoke the U.S.S.R. than providing arms to what Moscow regards as "those madmen in Peking." TASS predictably denounced "a new dangerous phenomenon, the partnership of imperialism and hegemonism, the military-political cooperation of China with the West, [which] is shaping world politics. This course constitutes a threat to countries that are China's neighbors."

Haig's geopolitical strategy is to polarize the world along East-West lines, and to force all questions—from North-South economics, to energy, to Arab-Israeli tension, to nuclear nonproliferation (or, in the case of Pakistan, proliferation) to be viewed by every participant through the prism of U.S.-Soviet confrontation.

Moreover, Haig has made it official U.S. policy to support China's ambitions to be "the superpower in Asia" and America's chief ally there, disregarding the interests of Japan and continuing obligations to the Republic of China on Taiwan. American arms to China are less likely to be used against the U.S.S.R. than against China's southern neighbors.

Under the guise of stopping what Haig labeled "Soviet proxies," Haig is backing Chinese military pressure not only against Vietnam but against India, which China invaded in 1962. U.S. backing of China also means that

Southeast Asian nations, particularly those with large ethnic Chinese populations, will feel China's intimidating methods.

No debate

Even high-level State Department sources acknowledged that Haig did not bother with a full-scale debate before the President prior to the arms sales announcement. Arms sales were *not* agreed to at the June 5 meeting of the National Security Council (which included senior officials from State, Pentagon, CIA, etc.) before the President. At that meeting there was no open debate of Haig's fundamental policy of making China our chief ally in Asia, but only on the narrow question of arms sales. "I don't think Jim Lilley [an opponent of the China Card serving as NSC political director] got to present his full views to Reagan," said a Washington source. "Instead, Reagan got a single set of options papers reflecting a supposed compromise, 'dual-use' technology but no arms."

Regarding actual offensive arms, a State Department official said, "Reagan has been so preoccupied with his domestic economic program that he literally has not found the time to hear the different points argued before him." Instead, only 10 hours before he got on the plane, Haig strongarmed the President into making a snap decision. Haig said his trip would worsen, not improve U.S.-China ties unless he could fulfill Carter's promises of weapons sales.

Behind Haig's ploy was a classic "hard-to-get"

campaign by China. The official *People's Daily* "threatened" that China would not take U.S. arms if Taiwan got them. The Pro-China Card *New York Times* and *Washington Post* ran lengthy pieces "explaining" that pro-U.S. strongman Deng Xiaoping was under pressure by anti-U.S. factions, and that therefore Washington had to make more concessions to shore up Deng.

Timely leaks appeared in the German press on a fight in the Chinese Politburo on whether to continue the alliance with America, or move to an equidistant position between the United States and the Soviet Union. The *Post* printed excerpts from a *People's Daily* article attacking 19th-century "pro-Western bureaucrats who procured arms from the West."

These fights in China are real. However, instead of taking the factional split as evidence of China's unreliability as an ally, Assistant Secretary of State John Holdridge, a former Kissinger aide, reportedly argued that the United States had to make concessions, particularly on the arms issue, to shore up Deng.

China was due to begin a long-stalled party congress days after Haig's departure. Deng is under severe political attack, and needs to consolidate his leadership at the congress. Haig argued that Deng needed to present the arms-sales gift, just as the U.S. recognized China during the December 1978 Central Committee plenum, in which Deng purged more leftist opponents.

Reagan acquiesced to Haig's demand. However, at the June 16 press conference, Reagan referred only to defensive weapons and compared the new decision with the arms sales to many other countries. Clearly, Haig did not brief the President on the strategic shift in U.S. policy. Reagan was not the only one deceived. Senator John Glenn of Ohio told the *Baltimore Sun* that Holdridge, before leaving, had denied his request for a briefing, saying there was no "final decision" on arms sales, and Haig's trip was only "exploratory."

A China-centered Asia policy

Beginning with Kissinger and continuing with Brzezinski and Haig, U.S. policy in Asia has revolved around China, including support for China's power ambitions in the region. U.S. conventional weapons to Peking are not likely to be used against Moscow, though Moscow indeed worries that U.S. computers and electronics will aid the "Peking madmen's" nuclear missile delivery system.

Conventional arms, however, *are* to be used for incursions, or threats against China's southern neighbors, or both. Haig stated in his press conference that "Naturally, much of our discussion focused on the challenges posed by the Soviet Union and its proxies in Afghanistan and Indochina." A Washington source added, "Haig is telling Peking that the U.S. and China should supply the anti-Vietnam forces in Kampuchea,

including Pol Pot, in coordination with China's own military incursions against Vietnam's northern provinces." Indeed, Holdridge said in Peking that the United States and China "will seek to find ways to increase the political, economic, and, yes, military pressures on Vietnam, working with others."

The "others" is a reference to joint U.S.-China pressure on the members of the Association of South-east Asian Nations (ASEAN) to support the so-called united front of Pol Pot and the tiny forces of Prince Sihanouk and Son Sann against Vietnam. At a recent foreign ministers meeting of ASEAN, the final communiqué refused to endorse the "united front," saying it was up to the Kampuchean people. ASEAN's big meeting June 18-22 has invited Haig and other foreign ministers as guests. Haig indicated at his press conference he will pressure ASEAN to join the U.S.-China position on both Afghanistan and Kampuchea. The Haig-Holdridge team views the Kampuchea issue as useful in suppressing anti-China sentiment among ASEAN nations, particularly Indonesia and Malaysia.

Haig was equally supportive of China's military pressure on India. Using the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan as justification, Haig's assistant James Buckley arranged just before Haig's China trip a \$3 billion arms package to Pakistan's unstable, but China-linked, military regime. In fact, since the invasion of Afghanistan, not a single Pakistani soldier has moved from the Indian border where 80 percent of them are concentrated.

A particularly ominous part of the package is the inclusion of F-16s, previously restricted to NATO and Israel, which can carry nuclear weapons. India issued a statement saying they accept Pakistan's need for "self-defense," but that this package is "qualitatively different" and "could undermine the serious effort under way to strengthen normalization of relations between India and Pakistan." Asked about this, a State Department official declared that "the recent Soviet arms deal with India may be equally construed along with Afghanistan as among the Soviet pressures on Pakistan. To enable the Pakistani people to withstand Soviet pressures is in our national interest."

Are U.S.-armed Chinese pressures on India now to be considered part of the defense of Pakistan's security? It seems so. Former Carter era NSC staffer Roger Sullivan commented, "India is nobody's proxy. Unlike Vietnam, they do not take orders from Moscow." He added, "However, Moscow knows that by giving India arms, the Indians—for their own reasons—will do what the Russians want. They will put pressure on Pakistan because India wants hegemony in South Asia. So there is a coinciding of interest. It is in U.S. interest to help Pakistan maintain its independence against both Indian pressure and the Soviet threat."

If it is true that India seeks hegemony in South Asia and China seeks it in all of Asia, why, since the advent of Henry Kissinger, has the U.S. backed China? China's anti-Sovietism is only part of the story.

Since the time of Robert McNamara's presidency at the World Bank and Kissinger's rise in the Nixon era, U.S. security policy has been run under the bizarre theory that the industrialization of developing countries, particularly more independent-minded ones like India, threatened U.S. political power. Previously, many policy makers recognized that economic development was a source of internal and international stability, and served U.S. interests. Indeed, the foundation of U.S. Asia policy was an industrially powerful Japan.

In 1971 Kissinger switched the United States to a China-centered policy in Asia and support of anti-industrial Third World regimes more generally. Brzezinski continued this with covert support for Khomeini and undermining the Park Chung Hee regime in Korea. Haig's backing of Deng and Pol Pot continues the trend. Characterized by former U.S. ambassador Marshall Greene's comment that "over-rapid industrialization produces instability, as in Korea," this is a policy modeled on classic British colonial strategy.

Chinese pressure on India is thus seen as hindering its industrialization and political power. One former official commented, "You've got to remember the U.S.-China relationship started in 1971 with India signing the treaty with the Russians, and then attacking and dismembering Pakistan. Kissinger's memoirs say that if the Chinese decided to help Pakistan and the Russians pressured China, we promised to help China." Other sources noted that Kissinger's 1971 promise was necessary to prove his "reliability" to Peking.

The former official noted that had Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's opponents (who rejected her industrialization program) remained in power, the U.S. and China would have been more friendly to India.

Backing the Deng faction

The anti-industrialization strategy is also at the heart of the Kissinger-Haig-Brzezinski consistent preference for the Deng faction in China. Deng cut China's military budget 35 percent this year. His anti-heavy industry orientation, including a 45 percent cutback in capital investment in 1981 precludes the industrial base needed for a strong conventional army. Deng's policy makes ludicrous the idea of China being useful militarily against the U.S.S.R., except for tactical nuclear warfare.

Yet, the Haig-Holdridge team and the rest of the China Card faction openly prefer Deng to the military and heavy industry groups, partly because they do not want China to become a powerful industrial nation, and also because it makes the Chinese "soul brothers" in stopping the industrialization of China's neighbors.

However, the very thing which makes Deng attractive to the China Card faction undermines his permanence. His economic policies are causing very serious economic turmoil and workers' strikes, for which he is under serious factional attack because of the political consequences of a weak economy. In that circumstance, strong pressures can be exerted to move China to a more equidistant position between the superpowers. This instability and factionalization will continue—hardly the hallmark of a reliable ally.

One final note: as Haig departed, the deputy foreign minister appeared at the airport to protest Reagan's favorable comments on Taiwan.

Noted Asia expert University of California Prof. Chalmers Johnson advised Reagan on Asia policy during the campaign. Below are excerpts from Johnson's interview with EIR's Richard Katz.

I think the arms sales are wrong. The right thing is to encourage economic relations with the Chinese, particularly opening our markets to their manufactures. That's hard, I understand, but that's the only way to put pressure on the regime to change in the way we want them to.

We must keep the military relations at arm's length for some very obvious reasons. Not just the Soviets. Virtually every noncommunist nation in East Asia, including our allies the Japanese, disagrees with us on including China in security relations.

In fact, under the surface of the whole defense issue and political turmoil in Japan is the fact that, while many in the [ruling] Liberal-Democratic Party want to change the policy toward upgrading Japanese military contributions, they do not agree with the U.S. on a three-way affair. They don't want an American-Chinese-Japanese security relationship.

This is also true in virtually all Southeast Asian nations. Even the Thais are irritated at their dependence on China.

Haig's decision is a wrong move that could have very serious consequences. . . .

We have characters today who talk about manipulating the Chinese, just as they did in the 1940s. In reality, just as Chiang Kai-shek threatened to make a separate peace with Japan, the Chinese today use the threat of a modus vivendi with Moscow if we are not more forthcoming. The Kissinger-Carter hangers-on in turn threaten that the whole U.S.-China tie will unravel unless we keep Carter's promise to sell arms. . . .

I don't know [if Washington thinks that Chinese military pressure on India helps the U.S.]. But, unquestionably we are sending signals that vastly overstate how far we are prepared to go. Or, if in fact we are prepared to go that far, then we'll end up with only one ally in East Asia, i.e. China. The rest will go neutralist.