

THE SECRETARY OF STATE
WASHINGTON

~~TOP SECRET/NODIS/HOMER~~

February 9, 1972

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

Subject: The Scope for Agreement in Peking

A significant improvement in our relations with the PRC could contribute to the evolution of a more stable world balance of power. Even a limited agreement on further steps toward normalization would reduce the likelihood of our Asian commitments being further tested, and thus enable us, without endangering our own security or that of our allies, to continue to reduce our military forces in East Asia. Although we and the PRC share an interest in improving relations, the gulf between us on specific issues remains wide, and PRC suspicions of our motives and intentions still runs high. We must expect, therefore, that progress toward normalization will probably be slow and halting.

What Do We Want?

Without damaging the credibility of our commitments in Asia, we wish to find a formula for interim agreement on the Taiwan issue. If this can be done, we can proceed with much more promise of success toward the achievement of our other objectives, which include:

- a) improving and regularizing US-PRC communication;
- b) finding ways to reduce tensions in East Asia, particularly in the Korean peninsula, the Taiwan Strait and the South China Sea;
- c) explaining our view of the US role in Asia to make the point that our presence and our interests need not be seen by Peking as automatically antithetical to PRC interests;

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d) creating a basis for PRC cooperation on international issues of concern to us such as oceans matters, airline hijacking, etc.

e) initiating direct trade;

f) expanding exchanges in cultural, scientific and academic fields in the hope of slowly diffusing more realistic ideas of American society among present and future PRC elites;

g) obtaining the release of the remaining American prisoners in China.

What Do They Want?

Without tarnishing its image as the vanguard of the world revolutionary movement, the PRC wishes to:

a) improve relations with the US as a psychological weapon against the USSR and Japan;

b) use normalization with the US to build PRC prestige internationally and exert pressure on those major countries which have not yet recognized it -- principally Japan -- to do so on Peking's terms;

c) use the psychological pressure of agreement with the US to induce the ROC leadership to come to terms; if possible, persuade the US to assist in this;

d) heighten Japanese anxiety and suspicion of the US by withholding from Japan advantages conferred on the US; as a long-term objective, use the "China issue" to manipulate Japanese public opinion in favor of political leaders disposed to cut ties to the US;

e) move the US toward a settlement in Korea on terms at least mildly favorable to the North Koreans in order to keep the latter in their (rather than the Soviet) orbit while speeding US withdrawal from the peninsula; if possible do the same in Indochina;

f) achieve withdrawal of all US forces on China's periphery and the abandonment of our posture of forward deployment as a deterrent against China;

g) in the long term, secure US recognition of the PRC as the sole legitimate government of China and US acknowledgement of PRC sovereignty over Taiwan; in the short term, induce the US to withdraw its forces from Taiwan, progressively limit ties with the ROC, and give no assistance to Taiwanese independence or movement into the Japanese orbit.

What Can We Achieve?

There is a big difference between what Peking wants from us and what we are prepared to give. We cannot "deliver" Taiwan, recognize the PRC on its own terms, or abandon our commitments to the ROC, the ROK or the GVN. Certainly preservation of the close relationship with Japan remains an essential part of our overall stance in Asia.

At the same time, forces are at work which tend to make the Chinese put off or moderate some of their longer-term goals, and greatly increase the chances for some form of limited US-PRC agreement. The Chinese fear Soviet intentions at a time when Russian troops are spread along China's borders from the Sea of Japan to the Pamirs with increasing capability to damage vital Chinese security. The PRC is concerned over Japan's economic, political and military potential. Perhaps almost as important is that most of the PRC's "psychological warfare" goals (particularly vis-a-vis Japan and the ROC) depend upon achieving an agreement with the US and upon public expectation that relations between us will continue to improve. This does not mean the Chinese will not bargain hard or that they can be wooed with insubstantial offers; it does mean that for the first time since 1950 there is prospect for achieving a mutually beneficial modus vivendi.

Areas of Possible Agreement

The key to the negotiation will be the Taiwan issue. It is here that Chinese emotion and self-image will be most intensely involved. We must expect that despite

the forces impelling them toward agreement, the PRC leadership will agree to nothing that compromises their claim to be the only legitimate Chinese government, including sovereignty over Taiwan. At the same time, we may be able to secure a "unilateral" PRC commitment to resolve the issue through peaceful means rather than by force. This would be in return for an equally "unilateral" US statement of intent progressively to reduce its forces in Taiwan as tensions in the area lessen. We would also take note of the PRC position (which is also the ROC position) that Taiwan is a part of China. "Taking note" of the PRC position on Taiwan does not commit us to formal acceptance of Peking's claim to sovereignty over the island. The trade-off of a renunciation of force for troop withdrawal leaves us with the US-ROC Mutual Security Treaty, and our commitment to a peaceful settlement, intact.

Effect on Others

A limited agreement on the Taiwan issue will greatly facilitate movement on other areas of concern. I believe we must bear in mind the necessity of fully consulting with our other Asian allies, particularly the ROC, Japan, South Korea and South Vietnam. Since any agreement at all will cause concern in Taipei, and at least a degree of suspicion in Tokyo, it is all the more necessary that we move quickly to explain the nature of the agreements reached in Peking while emphasizing that what we consider to be the vital interests of our friends have not been adversely affected by our action.


William P. Rogers