

---

## Part III: New Era in U.S.-China Relations

---

# The Kissinger China card worked to Moscow's advantage

by Richard Cohen

Beginning with the June 1982 insertion of longtime Kissinger collaborator George Shultz as Secretary of State, and with the immediate covert introduction of former Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger himself as a principal factor in State Department policy and personnel decisions, Kissinger and his accomplices have been obsessed with masterminding a replay of his 1971-72 strategic efforts.

Those efforts, hailed as the magical performances of a profound statesman, represented the most tragic disaster in U.S. post-war history. Indeed, the series of initiatives which Kissinger now seeks to repeat—his opening to Moscow dramatized in the May 1972 Nixon-Brezhnev summit and SALT I arms control agreement, the February 1972 Nixon China visit, and the Aug. 15, 1971 global monetary reorganization—were the instruments by which Kissinger, modeling himself on the evil Metternich, would seek to buy time for a dying supranational Western empire.

A centerpiece of Kissinger's efforts would be to destroy the military and industrial foundation of the national governments of the West and the nationalist forces within them, while leveling the same assault on the developing-sector trading partners of these nations.

Ironically, to ensure the rapid decline of the Western powers, Kissinger's "magic" was staked on an essential deal. This deal would give the Soviet empire a decisive strategic margin through agreement in the SALT I and 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty, in exchange for Soviet "restraint" in seizing the opportunities created by the Kissinger-led assault on the West and the developing sector. It was codified in the oft-repeated phrase resurrected in the context of Soviet violations during the 1970s—the "code of détente."

As Kissinger stated explicitly in his April 1983 *Parade* magazine interview, his operation depends on obtaining a "major negotiation" with the Soviet Union. As early as October 1982, Kissinger had targeted spring 1984 as the date for a Reagan summit with the Soviet leadership. As a first priority in securing such a deal with Moscow, Kissinger and his allies have undertaken to torpedo President Ronald Reagan's strategic rearmament program and his March 23, 1983, demand for American ballistic-missile defense systems. Rea-

gan's plan not only threatened to reassert U.S. national independence from the rigged game set in motion by Kissinger in 1971-72, but also threatened to reverse the key part of Kissinger's gift to Moscow: strategic superiority.

In addition to reversing this "Reagan revolution," Kissinger would promote a rebirth of the "China card" policy. But the new China card would be a mere ploy in lulling Moscow in anticipation of a major U.S.-Soviet negotiation. Hoping not to antagonize a Soviet Union whose hardware advantage over this nation had grown substantially since the 1970s, Kissinger would at the same time move to allay Moscow's fears about China, fears reflected in a consensus of the U.S.S.R.'s China experts in 1975, who offered a radically new assessment of long-term Soviet China policy. The experts concluded that the technologically suffocating Maoist domination would shortly end, and that the new Chinese leadership would seek a long-term modernization program integrating the most advanced technologies. It was projected that some time between the 1990s and the turn of the century, a Chinese modernization effort could rapidly be translated into a formidable military concern.

### The technology transfer question

Thus, to please Moscow, Kissinger and his cohorts have moved to restrict the profile of U.S. technology transfer to Peking so as to contain the growth of a Chinese industrial base which might, in 10 to 20 years, be capable of supporting a modern military.

This orientation has already been underwritten by the leading lights of the Pugwash disarmament group, operating under the auspices of the Atlantic Council, which in October 1983 issued a major policy document entitled "China Policy for the Next Decade." Kissinger Sovietologists, including William G. Hyland, Brent Scowcroft, Helmut Sonnenfeldt, and Winston Lord (head of the New York Council on Foreign Relations) participated in the formulation of the proposal. While supporting the standard recent U.S. policy of selling defensive weapons to Peking, the authors of the report warn that in helping China to modernize, the United States should "recognize this course involves a degree of risk, since a

strong Chinese industrial base could be used in the future for military purposes not consistent with our national interest.” To quash these fears, a broad study should be conducted to identify and quantify the probable impact of Western technology on China’s industrial base. Under the heading of “Transfer of Dual Use Technology”—an area of most intense Chinese interest—the report urges that “technologies which make a direct and significant contribution to nuclear weapons and their delivery systems, electronic and anti-submarine warfare, and intelligence gathering,” should continue to be withheld.

While President Reagan would agree with these restrictions on technology transfer to China, his motives—as noted in the preceding article in this series—were not those of Kissinger, who aimed at appeasing Moscow, and also at steering Chinese development in the direction of extractive industries and “appropriate technologies.”

Kissinger had moved into the middle of China policy soon after his early meetings with the new Secretary of State. Then in October 1982, clearly operating on behalf of Shultz in the aftermath of the August 1982 Joint Communiqué on Taiwan, he spent 12 days in China with NBC reporter David Brinkley, engaging in high-level meetings with government and Communist Party officials. By this time Kissinger had already penetrated the principal trade and technology concerns of Peking by becoming a paid consultant to the Hong Kong-based firm Evergreen, Inc., a front for P.R.C. foreign trade interests. Then, on Dec. 31, Winston Lord organized and chaired a “summit” on China policy which involved a broad array of Pugwash-linked China experts at the State Department in preparation for Shultz’s February 1983 trip to the People’s Republic.

Before Shultz left, Kissinger took to the op-ed page of the Jan. 30 *Washington Post* to restate the principal purpose of U.S.-China relations, “obtaining the right price from Moscow,” while also praising President Reagan’s “concessions” to Peking in the August 1982 Taiwan agreement. Shultz’s trip (along with an April 2 secret trip to China by Kissinger to meet with Chinese Foreign Minister Wu) paved the way for Secretary of Commerce Malcolm Baldrige’s successful May agreement with Peking on technology transfer. The nominal agreement on high-technology transfer to China was the price Kissinger had to pay in order to obtain a choreographed U.S.-P.R.C. summit before his then-expected spring 1984 U.S.-U.S.S.R. summit. The agreement’s “Catch 22,” spelled out in the reservation that the United States retains the right to review each Chinese request on a case-by-case basis and the now-public Kissinger-Pugwash-supported conditions on technology transfer to China, shows the limits in the deal.

Then, following the Sept. 1 Soviet shootdown of Korean Airlines Flight 007 and the subsequent escalation of Soviet global offensives, Kissinger and his group made a turn. With the prospects for a U.S.-U.S.S.R. summit now badly damaged, no matter how much Kissinger and his associates apol-

ogized for Soviet behavior, the Pugwash crowd would seek to totally eliminate the “China card” factor against Moscow in upcoming planned meetings between Reagan and the Chinese leadership.

Leading Kissinger outlet columnist Joseph Kraft, echoing the consensus of the Pugwash crowd, warned, before Prime Minister Zhao Zi-Yang’s visit to Washington in January that China’s “decline” both as an international force and as a “military card” should be viewed as an excuse by the Reagan administration to drop not only its anti-Soviet policy but its rhetoric as well, so as to appease Moscow while Zhao was in the United States. And indeed, the Zhao-Reagan meetings and the Zhao visit generally were played by both the administration and the Kissinger crowd in an extremely low-keyed fashion.

### **Kissinger plays the China card**

The origins of U.S. China card policy can be seen in two significant March 1969 Sino-Soviet border explosions on the Manchurian frontier. It was there that Kissinger saw in China’s weakness the opportunity that he required. The battles were followed by skirmishes in the summer of 1969 and by a massive border buildup of both sides. The Soviet Union immediately raised its border strength to 35 full divisions armed with battlefield nuclear weapons, and drained bombers from the western front in East Europe.

Since the mid-1960s Chinese military force deployment has been targeted at a Soviet threat. These deployments occurred even while Peking showed deepening concern over the escalation of U.S. force in Indochina; following the 1969 border clashes, rumors were rampant in the P.R.C. of an imminent Soviet attack. The pressure toward full alert was exacerbated by a factional crisis that had surfaced in 1969 within the P.R.C. Politburo. A group centered around Defense Minister Lin Piao and the Central Military Command aligned with Cultural Revolution ideologist Chen Po-Ta had lined up against Mao and all other factions.

Kissinger seized the opportunity, knowing that the only card the Lin-Chen opposition could play against Lin’s opportunist promotion of an emergency conventional military buildup against the now-clear Soviet threat would be the “American card.”

When a desperate P.R.C. leadership broke off proposed back-channel negotiations in Warsaw in spring 1969, Kissinger responded by ordering the State Department to send a signal to Peking—in July—by relaxing travel restrictions to China. Kissinger increased the signals in early January 1977, attempting, as he would later report, to seize the advantage of the outbreak of riots in Poland.

In late January, China responded, requesting a renewal of talks. But by that time Kissinger had already secured a back channel for negotiations with the Soviet Union on arms and other matters with Soviet Ambassador to the U.S. Anatoli Dobrynin, and had already begun the process of large-scale U.S. retrenchment from Asia under the auspices of the

already announced "Guam Doctrine."

Within this context Kissinger launched a gamble aimed at pressuring North Vietnam into negotiations by extending the war into Kampuchea.

While the Kampuchea invasion forced the P.R.C. to break off negotiations, in the summer of 1970 the relentless Soviet border buildup had them signaling anew to talk. By August, the P.R.C. had invited U.S. author Edgar Snow to China, and in October, Snow stood next to Mao during the annual review on China's National Day. In December, Snow was asked to deliver a message to the White House requesting a Nixon visit to the People's Republic. At the same time, Pakistani and Romanian channels were used to convey the same message to Washington.

After a secret visit to Peking by Kissinger in early July 1971, on July 15 President Nixon took to national television to announce his acceptance of the Chinese invitation. The startling July 15 announcement came just two months after Nixon, at the urging of Kissinger, announced a breakthrough in SALT negotiations. The breakthrough was the result of a general agreement Kissinger had negotiated through Dobrynin—an agreement which was so egregious in its concessions to Moscow that it would have to be repeatedly modified during the course of the year.

And on Aug. 15, Nixon made a third drastic move, this time under the advice of then-Office of Management and Budget Director George Shultz, Kissinger, Undersecretary of the Treasury Paul Volcker, and Treasury Secretary John Connally, to announce removal of the U.S. dollar from the gold standard, which would have drastic negative effects on Japan and Europe.

### **The 1972 Nixon trip**

In February 1972, after a final showdown between the Lin Piao group and the Mao-Chao forces had been resolved in October 1971, when a failed military coup led by Lin resulted in his death and the imprisonment of his literary collaborators with the already jailed Chen Po-ta, the Nixon visit occurred.

The result of the four-day visit to the P.R.C. was summarized in the so-called Shanghai Communiqué, which separated the Taiwan issue from the prospect of ultimate normalization between the two countries. The inclusion of an "anti-hegemony" (anti-Soviet) clause created the impression of unavoidable strategic implications for the new Sino-American relationship. China had secured at least the threat of an American card, while the United States had established a threat of a China card. But for Kissinger the China card only paved the way to guarantee a successful May summit in Moscow between Nixon and Brezhnev, where the treasonous SALT I and ABM agreements were signed. Thus, Kissinger set up his China card as a vehicle for gaining what he believed to be a "code of détente" from the Soviet Union.

Thus, by the beginning of 1973 the strategic die was cast. Kissinger and his accomplices were well on the way to guar-

anteeing the "controlled economic disintegration" of the West and of the developing sector, and they had granted to Moscow a guaranteed growing strategic hardware advantage in offensive systems, while pledging to cancel outright U.S. technical advantages in defensive systems.

The history of the rest of the decade would be woven about this guaranteed Soviet advantage, an advantage which repeatedly trumped Washington's and Peking's attempts to use their respective cards.

In early 1973, the Soviet leadership decided to ease pressure against Peking by stopping its border buildup. Although U.S.-Chinese trade would continue to grow dramatically through 1974 and decline thereafter, Sino-American relations would peak with the May establishment of liaison offices in the two countries.

By this time, Kissinger was totally dominant in U.S. foreign policy, while Shultz was promoted to the position of U.S. economic policy czar. Under their leadership the United States went into an even deeper decline. Through late 1973 and 1974, President Nixon and the presidency itself were under severe attack in the Watergate scandal. In early 1975 the entire U.S. position in Southeast Asia suddenly collapsed, and U.S. credibility vanished in the rest of Asia. By mid-1975 the hard core of American patriots in the military and intelligence, dragged through the mud by Kissinger's handling of Vietnam, were all but destroyed during the notorious Church Committee hearings on alleged abuses by U.S. intelligence officials.

### **From Ford to Carter**

During the 1974-76 Ford administration, with Kissinger and his accomplices totally dominant in foreign policy, the China card was put on ice as Kissinger desperately attempted to obtain a new SALT II agreement. For Asia, in mid-1975 Kissinger and Ford announced the so-called Pacific Doctrine, which attempted to calm allies' nerves with assurances that the United States would halt its retrenchment and maintain its existing air and naval presence in the region.

By late 1975 Kissinger had appeared to obtain his goal. Supranational rule had been consolidated over the West and the developing sector through austerity-based monetary reforms and raw-materials crises. The China card appeared to have served its purpose in securing a major agreement with Moscow and then guaranteeing continuing Soviet acquiescence in the agreement, and finally, Kissinger had succeeded in securing a pullback of U.S. forces worldwide.

However, by late 1975 a challenge to the entire scenario erupted. Unexpectedly, the Soviet Union, in league with Cuba, appeared to have broken the agreement with Kissinger by openly intervening in the crisis in Angola. Kissinger's failed military response was complemented by an impotent policy of "linkage" which torpedoed the SALT II agreement.

But what drove Kissinger hysterical is that he and the Establishment began to realize that the Soviet Union, opting for the Angola intervention, was not really interested in a

SALT II agreement.

On this ominous note the Carter administration entered office.

Following the open failure of Secretary of State Cyrus Vance's March 1977 trip to Moscow, conducted on the basis of a proposal drafted by Sen. Henry Jackson calling for deep cuts in strategic forces and conducted in an atmosphere of a human-rights barrage against the Soviet leadership, a sharp reversal took place in Washington. By the spring of 1977, Vance had prevailed over National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski on both Soviet and China policy; Carter toned down his human-rights rhetoric and, on July 21 delivered a speech hailing a new atmosphere conducive to a U.S.-Soviet accord.

By the summer, forces close to Vance leaked Presidential Review Memorandum 10, which set the ground for a radical softening of the U.S. SALT position. PRM 10 stipulated that the growth of the Soviet military and civilian economy was seriously slowing and that long-term strategic trends favored the United States.

In September, Vance met with Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko on SALT, and in late October, Carter predicted an arms agreement in two weeks. While the Carter administration had put China policy very low on its list of priorities, the Soviets took no chances. Speaking under their traditional name of "I. Alexandrov" in *Pravda* on May 14, the Politburo warned that the United States was serious about selling arms to the P.R.C., that such sales would threaten Soviet security, and that an anti-Western China would succeed in pulling Washington into an anti-Soviet front.

By June, any fears Moscow might have had that Brzezinski would be successful in promoting the China card were allayed. Vance delivered the Carter administration's first address on Asia policy, in an atmosphere of vehement commitment to Kissinger's Guam Doctrine—exemplified by Carter's hysterical proposal for the full reduction of U.S. ground forces in South Korea in early 1977 and the drive by Assistant Secretary of State

Ambassador Andy Young's to normalize relations with Vietnam. Vance called for the eradication of any strategic relationship between the United States and the P.R.C., stipulating that relations must be "bilateral" and not "triangular"—i.e., aimed at Moscow.

Vance's so-called even-handed policy between Moscow and Peking offered a limp reassurance to Peking, pledging that the United States would enter into "no agreements against the P.R.C."

### **Breach with Peking**

As expected, Vance's visit to Peking in August was a disaster. Newly rehabilitated Vice-Premier Deng's view was that the United States had regressed even from the Ford administration's commitment to normalization. Indeed, through late 1977 and early 1978 the Chinese press would charge that Cyrus Vance was "anti-Chinese," while accusing

Carter of underestimating Soviet expansion, trying to use disarmament to halt the Soviet military buildup, and trying to use technological expertise, loans, and grain as means of trying to pressure Moscow—a foolish underestimation of the adversary.

Then in late 1977 Moscow granted massive hardware under Cuban military direction to quickly decide the Ogaden war in favor of Ethiopia. The Ethiopian victory consolidated Soviet dominance over the strategic Horn of Africa and put Egypt's underbelly in Sudan in a pincer between Ethiopia and its ally Libya.

Even more telling than the Ethiopian intervention was the buildup during the course of 1977 of a decisive theater nuclear capability in the Soviet SS-20 (intermediate-range) missile deployment. By the end of the decade, full deployment of these advanced theater nuclear missiles would yield Moscow an unquestioned tactical nuclear dominance in an arc starting in the northern flank of NATO and encompassing the entirety of Western Europe, the Mediterranean, the Middle East, the Persian Gulf, northern India, Southeast Asia, China, and Japan. These weapons systems must have gotten their go-ahead immediately following the cataclysmic Kissinger concessions of 1971-72.

Under these circumstances, Moscow could now seek political domination. The SS-20 deployments were affixed to a massive buildup of the Soviet Pacific and Indian Ocean fleet, which beyond its geopolitical implications, would increasingly challenge the credibility of the U.S. deterrent, primarily based in missile-vulnerable submarine-launched ballistic missiles.

Soviet intelligence services seized the advantages provided them in Iran, starting in late 1977, with the foolish detonation of the Islamic card, vaunted by Brzezinski and others as a threat to Soviet internal stability. In April 1978, at the same time Iran began to boil, the Soviets sponsored their first coup in Afghanistan.

In mid-1977, Moscow had encouraged an ever more dependent Vietnam to dispatch a large occupation force into neighboring Laos. This Laotian deployment was an essential military preparation for a move into Kampuchea. Such a move by Vietnam was encouraged in late 1976 and early 1977 when the dominant Pol Pot forces of the Khmer Rouge backed by the P.R.C. launched a massive purge of Khmer Rouge military forces, many of which were allied to Vietnam and Moscow. These purges also included Khmer Rouge members of the Hanoi-linked Indochinese Communist Party. The Chinese-backed Pol Pot purge itself was a response to a series of attempted military coups in the Khmer Rouge against the Pol Pot clique.

In October 1978, immediately following the Sino-Japan Friendship Treaty, for the first time the Soviet Union garrisoned battalion-level forces on the so-called "Northern Islands" claimed by Japan but occupied since World War II by the U.S.S.R. This garrison would not only protect for Moscow the strategic Sea of Okhotsk, but along with the SS-20s,

it delivered to Japan a message similar to one being delivered to Europe by that time: Pay tribute to Moscow or face the consequences.

By the spring of 1978, the Chinese leadership, featuring Deng, were in an hysterical international mobilization to counter a Soviet deployment which would significantly be aimed at them. In Washington, the appeasement line of Vance and company was being discredited, leaving the door open for the self-styled Kissingerian magician Brzezinski. At no time did the Carter administration get close to considering a reversal of the disastrous Kissinger pledges of restraint on offensive and defensive systems. Brzezinski tried to force Moscow to honor the broken code of détente through a wave of bluff and bluster, starting with the "Islamic card," the China card, and later, an insane conventional buildup scenario centered on a diminutive "Rapid Deployment Force," a dangerous stretch-out of U.S. naval capability, and pressure on Europe and Japan for a conventional buildup to free up U.S. forces for the RDF.

At the very end of 1977, Brzezinski attempted to parlay Capitol Hill resistance to the SALT sell-out (which he favored) and the Soviet move in Ethiopia (which he abhorred) by pressuring Carter to link the SALT II accord to Soviet restraint in Africa. In the aftermath of an early 1978 factional battle within the administration, Carter announced that he would exempt SALT from linkage, but he would give Brzezinski a green light to cook up plans to penalize Moscow's misbehavior.

### **A disastrous climax**

One month after the April 1979 Soviet-supported Taraki coup in Afghanistan, Brzezinski left for the People's Republic of China in the midst of leaks from his own National Security Council that the United States would not interfere with planned Western European arms sales to China and might itself sell China advanced military-related technology. In the middle of a Sino-Soviet border incident and several months of a Vietnamese-led expulsion of Chinese nationals dubbed the "boat people", Brzezinski arrived in Peking and initiated public assaults on Moscow's "hegemonist" intentions while additionally attacking "regional hegemony"—a swipe at Vietnam. In his toast at the formal dinner, Brzezinski intoned, "Only those aspiring to dominate others need fear our relationship," a drastic departure from Vance's 1977 toast in Peking, which offered that "our relationship will threaten no one." Importantly, Brzezinski's departure from Peking was greeted with a minor Sino-Vietnamese border incident.

By the beginning of 1978 the Chinese leadership, their position being most often articulated by Deng, had initiated a frenetic global effort to pull together a broad common front aimed at stopping or at least slowing the Soviet Union. Stepped-up diplomacy aimed at securing a Sino-Japanese defense treaty, urgent diplomacy among the weaker of Moscow's Eastern European allies, a similar focus in support of

the weakening Shah regime in Iran and Pakistan, as well as an all-out effort to open up to the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), plus an urgency in stepping up the pace of normalization with the U.S. was at the top of the P.R.C.'s agenda.

Brzezinski returned from the P.R.C. to sit in on a tense meeting between President Carter and Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko at the White House. Charges were made that Moscow had broken the "code of détente" during May incursions from Angola into mineral-rich Shaba Province in Zaire. The White House sought to coax the wayward Soviets from their adventurous path. On May 30 at the NATO summit, Carter focused on a Soviet military buildup in East Europe, urging that it would require larger NATO defense spending. On June 6, the President challenged the Soviets to choose between confrontation or cooperation.

The Soviets, however, secure in the strategic booty they had obtained from Kissinger and his successors, responded as follows. On June 25, Brezhnev publicly declared that "high-level and cynical attempts to play China against us" were "short-sighted and dangerous." This was followed by an unusual Aug. 25 Politburo statement cautioning that Western arms supplies to China would immediately cancel talks on both SALT and MBFR (conventional arms talks), and the Politburo publicly labeled Hua's trip to Romania, Yugoslavia, and Iran "a serious threat to peace," aiming at an "uncontrollable arms race." And finally, in an interview granted to the London *Observer* in November, Georgii Arbatov (head of the Soviets' U.S.A.-Canada Institute) warned that the Soviets would abandon SALT if Washington entered into a formal or informal alliance with Peking. Ironically, nine days before the Arbatov statement, on Nov. 3, the Soviet-Vietnamese military treaty was announced. On that same day, a weakened Vance, speaking in Washington, announced that the United States had no objections to Western European arms sales to the P.R.C.

### **The normalization agreement**

While Moscow and Hanoi had already made the decision to invade Kampuchea, on Dec. 15 the United States and China formally announced that normalization between the two countries would take place on Jan. 1, 1979. Importantly, the declaration contained an NSC-supported anti-hegemony clause. However, despite Soviet warnings against such an agreement, administration anticipation was high that an upcoming Geneva meeting between Vance and Gromyko would produce an immediate SALT agreement. Indeed, the Brzezinski NSC, intoxicated by Kissinger's formulas, was convinced that the China normalization had enhanced the possibility of a SALT agreement, since Brzezinski's ultimate purpose in pursuing the China card was to use it to pressure the Soviet Union back into the original deal they had supposedly cut in the early 1970s, a deal by which they would restrain their behavior in areas of Western concern in exchange for the destruction of U.S. military advantage.