

Calculations and Suggestions

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Can the U.S. exploit the Sino-Soviet rift? For one deeply knowledgeable view, NEWSWEEK turned to Prof. Zbigniew Brzezinski, director of Columbia University's Research Institute on Communist Affairs.

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There are several general propositions to bear in mind when thinking about American policy toward China:

1—China is simultaneously in the midst of three revolutions: a nationalist, an industrial, and a Communist. This unprecedented combination creates intense feelings of enthusiasm and animosity that are likely to dominate the Chinese international outlook for some time.

2—As long as the Sino-Soviet dispute was primarily strategic and ideological, it was always possible that some reconciliation, as in the Soviet-Yugoslav case, might some day take place. But the escalation of the dispute into a bitter national-territorial hostility, reawakening deep-rooted historical conflicts, makes a real reconciliation unlikely.

3—Since both America and the Soviet Union are global powers, since the Soviet Union is determined to surpass the United States as a world power, and since the Soviet Union has the means to inflict serious damage to America, American-Soviet conflicts (in spite of the test-ban agreement) are still more dangerous and more fundamental than American-Chinese differences, with China still basically only a regional power.

4—Although today China is directing its main hostility at the United States, its basic national-territorial interests are more directly in conflict with those of the Soviet Union than with America.

Bearing the foregoing general propositions in mind, in our policy toward China:

We should strive to disprove the basic Chinese foreign-policy calculation that a sustained commitment to national liberation struggles and local wars will force the "imperialist" powers to yield gradually. Anything less than resolute refutation of this Chinese thesis actually would weaken the Soviet conviction that local conflicts are risky and would incline also the Soviets into similar ventures.

We should, for the moment at least, continue the policy of isolating China since this inevitably feeds back into the Sino-Soviet relationship and intensifies Chinese hostility to the Russians' policy of coexistence with the United States.

If North Vietnamese aid to the civil war in the south is of importance, we should then perhaps encourage the South Vietnamese to undertake reciprocal guerrilla warfare in North Vietnam, through sporadic mobile raids, directed mainly at the collective farm system hated by the peasants. The purpose would be to force Ho Chi Minh either to halt his aid to the civil war in the south or to face the risk of becoming subordinate to the Chinese by asking them for more help. Given the historical Vietnamese fear of Chinese domination, and Ho Chi Minh's internal agricultural problems, such pressure might encourage him to desist from the sponsorship of the civil war in the south, thereby containing this local conflict.

At the same time, however, we should gradually extend our policy to moderate their policies. The Soviet trade

blockade of China has hurt the Chinese economy. Blockaded economically by the Soviets, blocked militarily by the U.S., the Chinese, for the sake of their domestic development, may eventually acquire a stake in international stability, especially if alternatives become available through Japanese or West European trade. We should encourage such trade.

In the longer range, if the Chinese do not modernize, it is likely that Japan will increasingly emerge as a political force in Asia, probably spurred in that direction by the eventual shock-effect of the detonation by the Chinese of an atomic bomb. If, however, the internal evolution of the Chinese regime, especially after Mao's death, should involve greater moderation, then it might be in the American interest to adjust our policy accordingly, especially since the fundamental conflict between the Chinese and the Soviets is likely to persist. Deep-rooted, historical conflicts, once awakened, do not become dormant rapidly. In those circumstances, the pre-occupation of the Soviets with the Chinese might be very helpful to us, and, after all, the United States has no interest in pulling Soviet chestnuts out of the fire. A weak China is in Russia's interest: Russia can continue pressing the West without fear of its rear. A stronger China might press the Soviet Union into a better relationship with the West.

IN SUCH a context, the United States might find it advantageous, in addition to continuing its policy of building up India and the other free nations in Asia, to begin trading with China, as the first, preliminary step to an eventual accommodation in Asia on the basis of the present status quo. The admission of Red China to the United Nations might then also become desirable. China's continued exclusion would be more in the Soviet interest than in the American.

Lastly, we should not forget that the specter of partition is beginning to haunt the Russians. In the West, the new Franco-German constellation has already raised the slogan of Europe to the Urals, and this is beginning to find a responsive echo in Eastern Europe and among some Western Soviet nationalities. More recently, the Chinese have reopened their old territorial conflict with the Russians, by pointing to territories ceded by China to Russia, and by agitating among the non-Russian Soviet Central Asians. All this should give the United States the advantage of flexibility and maneuver. America is blessed with two friendly and much weaker neighbors. Russia is seeing the emergence both in the east and in the west of major powers, and both of them have more than hinted at the desirability of partitioning the Soviet Union. In those circumstances, American goodwill and restraint will become more and more vital to the Soviets' national interest. This gives us the opportunity of deflecting the Chinese from their present policy of an impressive lever against the Soviet Union if it misbehaves globally.