Security

6 March 1981

MEMORANDUM FOR: Executive Officer, Directorate of Science and Technology

VIA: Director, Foreign Broadcast Information Service
Chief, Analysis Group, FBIS

FROM: [redacted] STAT

SUBJECT: Request for Approval of Oral Presentation

1. I request approval for oral presentation of the attached text entitled "Chinese Foreign Policy in the 1980's: A United Front Against Hegemonism."

2. When approved, I intend to present the topic at the conference of the International Studies Association in Philadelphia on 18 March 1981. The presentation is a summarized version of a monograph cleared by DOD and published by the National Defense University in 1980 before I became an Agency employee.

3. None of the material in the presentation is, to my knowledge, classified.

4. I am not under cover. I will be identified as an FBIS employee but will state the standard disclaimer indicating that the views expressed are my own and not necessarily those of FBIS.

[redacted] STAT

Attachment:
As stated

I have reviewed the attached text and, to the best of my knowledge, have found it to be unclassified.

[redacted] 8 MAR 1981 STAT

Director, FBIS Date

I have reviewed the attached text and, to the best of my knowledge, have found it to be unclassified, and approve it for oral presentation.

Executive Officer
Directorate of Science & Technology Date

SUBJECT: Request for Approval of Oral Presentation

Distribution:
Original and 1 - Executive Officer, DDS&T, w/att.
1 - DDS&T Registry, wo/att.
1 - D/FBIS, w/att.
1 - C/AG, w/att.
1 - DC/AS/FBIS, wo/att.
1 - C/LRB, w/att.
1 - FBIS Registry, w/att.

CHINESE FOREIGN POLICY IN THE 1980's: A UNITED FRONT AGAINST HEGEMONISM

by

[redacted] STAT

This is a summary of a monograph prepared earlier and has been prepared for presentation at the meeting of the International Studies Association, March 18, 1981. [redacted] is a China Analyst with the Foreign Broadcast Information Service. The views presented are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of FBIS or any other US government agency. STAT

CHINESE FOREIGN POLICY IN THE 1980's: A UNITED FRONT AGAINST HEGEMONISM

For purposes of this discussion I will try to summarize a longer monograph I wrote last year dealing with the same subject; though it was written more than a year ago, I believe the central thesis remains valid. In saying that, I am reminded of the story about a speaker at a party congress who reportedly said: "Comrades, the future is always certain; it is only the past that changes!"

Chinese Perceptions

It is my central thesis that Chinese foreign policy decisions arise from two aspects: the first is Chinese perceptions; the second is what may be termed bureaucratic politics. Chinese perceptions have historical and ideological roots. The modern Chinese revolution owes much to China's "century of humiliation" in its interaction with the West following the opium war. The Chinese Communist effort to achieve power, successful after a long period of revolutionary turmoil, centered on its program of restoring China's international status and prestige and on its promise of social change. The present program of "four modernizations" is a continuation of this historical quest; thus an editorial in RENMIN RIBAO celebrating the Fifth National People's Congress declared that only when China had overcome its technological backwardness and changed its social system could it become a modern, powerful nation.

Ideology has been an important factor in how the Chinese Communist leadership perceives that the goal of modernization may be accomplished. While there is considerable debate over what precisely constitutes

"Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought," it has been explained as an effort to integrate the principles of dialectical materialism with the concrete experiences of the Chinese revolution. Slogans and exhortations such as "Be a thoroughgoing materialist" or "Seek truth from facts" underlie a basic commitment to some form of socialism based on the leadership of the Communist Party, although the leaders are willing to experiment extensively in finding policies that work under the rubric "socialism."

Chinese perceptions of the international situation have changed considerably during the more than 30 years of Communist Party rule. The general dynamics of the shift from a close alliance with the Soviet Union to opposition to the USSR and detente with the United States are well known and need not be discussed in great detail here. It is important to say, however, that when the Chinese believe that a country's policies are in harmony with its goals of achieving modernization and prestige, it enjoys good relations with that country; but when those policies are not in harmony with its goals, there has been a deterioration in relations.

The Chinese perception of the international situation was summed up succinctly in an authoritative editorial in November 1977 outlining a "three worlds" hypothesis and calling for a united front against the Soviet Union. Inasmuch as the Soviet Union had become the most aggressive superpower, it was vital that other countries unite to oppose Soviet "hegemonism." In 1979, following the normalization of relations between China and the United States, Chinese Vice Chairman Deng Xiaoping said that the United States, the other superpower, was also qualified to

be part of the united front. Though the United States remains a superpower and practices hegemonism (particularly in Latin America), it presumably qualified for membership because it is on the defensive and is not trying to expand.

The need for unity against Soviet aggression has been particularly stressed since the Vietnamese invasion of Kampuchea and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. The Vietnamese invasion of Kampuchea, coming shortly after the conclusion of a treaty of peace, friendship, and mutual assistance between Vietnam and the USSR, seriously damaged China's status and prestige in Southeast Asia. China hoped to regain some prestige with its punitive "counterattack" against Vietnam in 1979, but the continuing ability of Vietnam to exercise control in Indochina and China's inability to get Vietnam to pull out are constant reminders of China's weakness. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan is a reminder of Moscow's military superiority over China and its ability to act in areas adjacent to China with little regard for China's ability to respond.

China's tactic in these situations has been to try to portray the Afghan and Indochina situations as part of the USSR's strategic conspiracy to encircle Western Europe and Japan and isolate the United States. Beijing argues that these actions are just the first step in Moscow's plan to gain control of vital sea lanes and to seize control of the Middle East energy supplies in its program of conquest. Beijing plays down the prospect of a threat to China in all this, alleging that the principal thrust is aimed at the West, and it uses this allegation to support its call for a united front with Western Europe, Japan, and the United States, as well as with the Third World.

Bureaucratic Politics

Besides Chinese perceptions of the international situation as stated in various interviews, articles, and editorials, there is another important facet of Chinese foreign policy decisionmaking--bureaucratic politics. The term "factional politics" is perhaps too strong to apply to China since the Chinese, unlike the Japanese, do not have highly coherent and identifiable factional alignments; but there have been shifting informal coalitions among China's political elites. Since the death of Mao and the purge of the "gang of four" there have been several shifts in Beijing's ruling coalition.

Much of Beijing's internal politics has been characterized by Deng Xiaoping's effort to enhance his power and preferred policies, sometimes at the expense of rivals, and in turn by their efforts to resist his ambitions. Deng's moves resulted in the purge of a so-called whatever group from the Politburo last year, and now he is apparently trying to move against Party Chairman Hua Guofeng. Recent evidence suggests that in moving against Hua, he has had to compromise some of his policy preferences to build a coalition. This ongoing factionalism centers on personality conflict, ideological commitment differences, bureaucratic interests, and policy divisions stemming from the attempt to achieve modernization.

Clearly there is strong disagreement among various groups over how to manage the economy and over a wide variety of other domestic questions, but there have also been important differences in foreign policy. Within the broad framework of building a united front against hegemonism, there are apparently those who want to adopt a less hostile

position toward the Soviet Union in return for greater assurance of a stable international environment in which development can be pursued. Evidence suggests that when Deng's policies have been under attack, there has been a corresponding interest in improving relations with the USSR, and that when he has been more securely in control, there has been a more hostile line toward the USSR.

Bureaucratic politics is also an important factor in Beijing's sensitivity over Taiwan in its relationship with the United States. Obviously Taiwan is of great symbolic importance to Beijing and therefore sensitive. An upgrading of relations between the United States and Taiwan could be perceived as a serious challenge to Beijing's prestige in Asia, and Beijing reacted strongly when the Republican candidate suggested he would consider such a relationship. Nevertheless, Beijing was willing to make concessions on the Taiwan issue as part of the arrangement to normalize relations with the United States. Deng even went so far as to tell U.S. Congressmen that Taiwan would keep its own economic system, military and police forces, and a high degree of autonomy in its political relationships, even if it were reincorporated into the mainland.

Nevertheless, such signs of flexibility have not been as forthcoming in recent months, probably because of political wrangling among the Chinese leadership. In addition to the downgrading of relations with the Netherlands after the Dutch went ahead with the decision to sell submarines to Taiwan--an action which doubtless was intended to warn the Reagan Administration--the Chinese press, particularly the PRC-controlled press in Hong Kong, has kept up a

shrill barrage of reporting on the Taiwan question. Just as the subject of relations with the USSR has become a subject of contentious debate in China, so apparently has the relationship with the United States.

The economic debate within China has already dramatically affected Chinese relations with Japan. Japan was eager to participate in the modernization of China and pushed rapidly for Japanese corporate involvement in Chinese development. But the Chinese decision last fall to readjust the national economy and slow economic reforms resulted in the cancellation of several projects in which Japanese companies had heavy stakes. While both sides attempt to put the best face on the situation, the Japanese Government feels that unilateral Chinese cancellations without adequate compensation could result in a major deterioration of Japanese-Chinese relations.

These brief examples serve to illustrate that while the united front against hegemonism is a strategy based on Chinese perceptions, its application is affected by domestic factional political conflict. In the instances mentioned previously, the long-range strategic interest of improving relations with the United States and Japan, a frequent thesis of Chinese statements, has been modified by immediate political concerns; therefore, both perceptions and factional politics must be taken into account in understanding Chinese foreign policy decisions.

Conclusions

It is tempting to state here that the foregoing is merely a restatement of what should be obvious to serious students of Chinese foreign policy. Nevertheless, there has been a tendency among some observers to forget one or the other element, and this has given a

somewhat distorted picture of Chinese actions. I submit that it is essential to take both into account to understand the issues I have briefly outlined above, as well as other currents of Chinese foreign policy. For example, the Chinese position of maintaining relations with insurgent parties in Southeast Asia while adopting a policy of better government relations with these countries reflects both Beijing's strategic perceptions and internal politics. And China's current effort to improve party ties with communist and socialist parties in various countries reflects both elements.

I could cite further examples, but it is sufficient to conclude that Beijing's foreign policy will continue to reflect a mixture of the two variables in the coming decade. We can expect that while Beijing may articulate a fairly clear vision of how it perceives the international environment, its actual policies will also reflect an ongoing change of factional coalitions. Given the serious economic and political problems facing China, over which there is apparently considerable disagreement among the leadership, there is little reason to anticipate a prolonged period of political stability. Hence, Beijing's call for a stable international environment in which it can achieve modernization, free of the machinations of Soviet hegemonism, must certainly be affected by China's internal political situation. China's changing past suggests an uncertain future.