

POOL REPORT
 AIR FORCE ONE
 TO JAKARTA
 PART TWO

December 5, 1975

A senior American official briefed extensively aboard Air Force One. What follows is an account of the briefing in which the bulk of the material is on background and can be quoted, attributable to a senior American official, portions of the material are on deep background and are so identified; they must be used on the reporter's own authority, as the United States position is understood to be.

Q. If Ford is still President in 1977, will U.S. break relations with Taiwan?

"That's a totally subsidiary issue," the senior official said. "That's a really subsidiary issue because it was settled in '72 -- that some time along the way we're going to normalize relations, which means some sort of political recognition."

Asked what, then, he was referring to as the benefit of the summit, the official said he was referring to the parallelism of foreign policies on certain key issues. The official indicated it was correct to say that the triangular aspects of diplomacy were most important on this trip.

What is the likely consequence of this trip, then in terms of the United States' relationship to the Soviets, with whom Secretary Kissinger is expected to meet in Moscow later this month?

"It's not final," the senior official said of the Moscow trip. "It remains to be seen" how the China trip will affect the relationship between Moscow and Washington, he said.

Is the mere fact of the meeting in Peking useful to the United States now in the SALT negotiations?

The official did not want to give the impression that we're playing a sort of a game -- going to Peking to bring leverage on Moscow, then going to Moscow to get leverage in Peking on short-term negotiations because if we do that we're going to wind up in trouble with both of them. There are some realities that people have to look at: You don't have to play leverage in such a short-term way. Just think of what the world situation would be like if we were still locked in hostility with the Chinese -- the rigidities that would develop all over the world. Look at Japan for example. What would happen in Japan if the Chinese and we were actively competing with each other?

But can the United States use the Chinese attitude to the benefit of the United States vis-a-vis the Soviets?

"We are better off having this relation than not having this relation. We are better off if the United States Secretary of State says in China, 'our relations are good and they will be improved steadily.' " You can bet your bottom dollar now, ON DEEP BACKGROUND, we have agreed on that phrase with the Chinese. You know damn well the Secretary of State would not have said this if there was one chance in a million Chiao Kuan-hua (the Chinese foreign minister) would get up and say, "that guy's nuts."

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What about the fact that the United States influence, after Vietnam, has eroded so much in Southeast Asia, with nations there turning now to Peking?

DEEP BACKGROUND: Indochina was a disaster for the U.S. but we've recovered from it better and more rapidly than we thought so we don't feel there's any danger in the Philippines--?

AGAIN ON DEEP BACKGROUND: It is our impression that the Chinese will do nothing to undercut our position in the Philippines, in Japan, in Thailand and throughout Southeast Asia.

They're more preoccupied with Russia in these areas?

DEEP BACKGROUND: That's what one has to look at -- and not whether three more professors are going to study linguistics in Canton University. On top of it, they (the Chinese) obviously have their own domestic problems, which accounts for the complexity with which some of these issues have to be presented.

Did the United States get anything concrete in the way of a Chinese pledge on Southeast Asia?

"The Chinese, really, are professionals," the senior official said. "With the Chinese you don't ask for a pledge. You ask for a discussion of how they see the situation and how you see it. The Chinese -- if what they tell you they see is compatible with you, you don't need a pledge."

ON DEEP BACKGROUND: It was said: those who know the Chinese would agree that they can be bloody-minded but they are serious. They pride themselves on the phrase, "our word counts" and when they say something it's never trivial, so you can rely on it. It's a sign of insecurity to ask them for assurances. And as a general proposition we've never done it. On the other hand, when you meet with them for hours, it isn't the sort of haggling as with some other countries. They state their view -- unless they have it in their mind to be bloody-minded. If they're serious, they state their views -- unless they have it in their mind to be bloody-minded. If they're serious, they state their views and you state yours and then you have to see whether it's compatible." Continuing on DEEP BACKGROUND, it was said that in many areas of the world we have compatible analyses and in those cases you can rely on their actions. They don't trick. They have enough understanding to know their reputation for reliability is an asset. They're much more likely to tell you to go to hell than to tell you one thing and do another. Our experience with them in four years: not one case where they tricked us. You know, if they could achieve an irrevocable gain by tricking us they'd no doubt do it. But to score a 10 percent advantage they're not going to do it.

Why do the Chinese lack interest in expanding in Southeast Asia?

On DEEP BACKGROUND, it was said that we don't claim they don't have an interest in expanding. Watch what they're doing in Cambodia. They're quite active in Thailand, but they are not doing it at this moment. Maybe ten years from now they will. At this moment, the expansion of their influence is not directed primarily at us."

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Where does all this triangular relationship leave Suharto?

On DEEP BACKGROUND, Suharto does not play the Chinese game, and they're not going to make him.

Asked about the effect on American foreign policy of the uncertain domestic political situation in the United States, the senior official said:

"We're in an uncertain situation largely because of what we are doing to ourselves."

Alluding to the remnants of Watergate and the divisions between the White House and Congress and among members of Congress, the senior official said that these factors tended to make it difficult to show the authority that lies behind American policy.

What does the President feel after having emerged from his journey to China as Chief Executive?

"If you write down for yourself what could come out of this," the senior official said, "in terms of the real national interest -- I think it was a very good trip. The President is very satisfied. He has a right to be."

The phrases used by the Chinese to characterize the Ford-Mao meeting -- earnest and significant -- reflected words that were "very carefully chosen," the senior official said.

The senior official said also that it was significant that Teng had pointed out at the meeting with Ford after the Ford-Mao session, "just in case anybody missed it," that the Ford-Mao meeting had been very significant, and that Teng had referred to the Ford-Mao meeting again in his final toast.

What was important, the senior official said, was that the characterization came from the Chinese. "Why would the Chinese play our game?" he asked rhetorically.

Why were the Chinese happy; was it because they got what they wanted?

DEEP BACKGROUND: There is a degree of parallelism, but they didn't get it; it was reestablished.

Reestablished?

Sustained is a better word.

You're almost making the Chinese allies in Asia, suggested a pooler.

"We have no legal obligations." (to the Chinese)

Isn't the American balance-of-powers policy a bit eaten up?

DEEP BACKGROUND: It got beaten up partly because of our domestic upheavals. For a foreign leader, we seem to be an anomaly. You can say it's anybody's fault.

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How deeply was the question of the domestic American political situation discussed?

"What was important was to see a President who's in charge, whatever has happened. And who seems to know what he is doing. That, after all they (the Chinese) have read, was important. People say, why couldn't the Secretary of State tell them? They've seen the Secretary of State. They had to see that in action."

DEEP BACKGROUND: When you say they got what they wanted, they didn't get anything that was spectacularly novel, except a sense of steadiness in our policy.

Naughton, New York Times
Roderick, Associated Press
Thomas, United Press International

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