

headline-grabbing tour through Asia, while significant, is basically the work of a prominent "opposition" spokesman to the policies of the Carter Administration. Such an understanding would miss the important point that in recent months a major revision has taken place in the Carter Administration's Asian defense policy, such that there is now apparently complete agreement between Kissinger and the Administration. A clue to this agreement is Kissinger's emphasis on the need to bolster the U.S. Pacific fleet and to create a new American fleet to "patrol" the Indian Ocean.

Signs of revisions in the Carter policy for Asia have been evident for some time, with the announced slowdown in the controversial plan to withdraw American troops from South Korea being the most prominent example. However, recent congressional testimony by Assistant Secretary of State Richard Holbrooke, as well as selected official "leaks" to the press indicate that a comprehensive policy revision has been made.

New York Times correspondent Richard Burt, a popular channel for leaks from the National Security Council, has taken the lead in reporting the changed American policy in Asia. In a March 15 article, citing "senior officials," Burt described the new U.S. policy to be a "quarantine strategy" toward the increasing Sino-Soviet tension in the Pacific. While defacto allying with the Chinese side, the Administration intends to expand American military and economic presence in Southeast Asia, among the non-Communist states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN: Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia and the Philippines), and in Northeast Asia with Japan and South Korea.

Such an active profile by the United States in Asia is a direct reversal of Carter's previous policy of strictly limiting American presence in the Pacific. The stated purpose of this shift is that, according to Burt, "an American retreat from Asia would quickly result in a political division of the region in which pro-Western nations would come under intense pressure to align themselves with Peking or Moscow." In short, the "all-important" (but ambiguous) "equilibrium" in the region must be maintained.

According to Holbrooke and Burt, the most important features of this new policy are as follows: increased military aid to Thailand and the other ASEAN states, as well as the promotion of a build-up in the Japanese air and naval forces; maintenance of the U.S. ground forces in Asia, particularly halting the withdrawal of troops from South Korea and the cancellation of plans to reduce the strength of the Seventh Fleet; and joint efforts with Japan to strengthen ASEAN economically.

—Peter Ennis

Korea: a wild card in

A new round of "ping-pong diplomacy" has begun as part of the stepped up effort by Henry Kissinger and the Carter Administration to bring about the formation of a "second front" in Asia against the Soviet Union. While the game was used in 1971 as the first step toward a new relationship between the United States and the People's Republic of China, the focus of attention has now become the Korean peninsula.

The diplomacy surrounds the international table tennis championships now being held in Pyongyang, North Korea. Last year the North Koreans were successful in convincing the International Table Tennis Federation to hold the championship matches in their country, an event they saw as providing an opportunity to improve the international stature of North Korea. At that time, Pyongyang agreed to allow all members of the ITTF to participate in the games, including arch-enemies, the United States and South Korea.

As has often been the case with the North Koreans however, the country's erratic leader Kim Il-sung suddenly changed his mind on this agreement, and decided to exclude the South Korean table tennis team from the matches. Instead Pyongyang proposed the formation of a "single Korean team" to jointly represent the divided nation, a proposal which was unacceptable to the South Korean government.

With the South Koreans thus barred from the competition, the question turned to whether the United States would legitimize the North Korean decision by participating in the games, or stand by its South Korean ally and boycott the games. After days of contradictory reports and apparent uncertainty, the final decision emerged this week: participate in the games.

State Department spokesmen have gone to great pains to emphasize that the Carter Administration had no role in this "nonpolitical" decision. However, the Administration will be hard pressed to convince anyone of this claim, especially those with fresh memories of the extensive negotiating carried on between Henry Kissinger and the late Chinese premier Zhou Enlai over a ping-pong table just eight years ago.

Spokesmen for North Korea have made clear in recent days that Pyongyang sees the American decision as highly political. Just days before the formal announcement of American participation in the championship games, North Korean sources in Japan issued an unusual invitation to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee delegation touring the region, to visit Pyongyang. As part of the invitation, issued via the

the China deck

Baltimore Sun, the North Korean sources endorsed the "friendship" treaty signed last year by Japan and China, which amounts to backing by Pyongyang of Peking's anti-Soviet policies.

Why North Korea?

The decision by the Carter Administration to play "ping-pong diplomacy" with North Korea is only the latest of many efforts to "resolve" the conflict between the two Koreas in such a way as to foster improved relations between Washington and Peking. Despite the years of effort, the Korean peninsula continues to cause many headaches in Washington and New York policymaking circles, as it remains a wild card in the "China deck" which could easily pose a roadblock to the formation of their coveted Washington-Tokyo-Peking Axis.

The problem stems from the fact that Peking and Washington, though allied in the grandiose scheme of stemming the tide of Soviet "expansionism," are closely tied to the opposite parties in the Korean conflict.

The PRC, for military and ideological reasons, has been firmly allied with the North since especially the Korean War, and is cautious to maintain and expand that alliance. The United States, on the other hand, is firmly rooted in South Korea, unable to easily extricate itself (though many in Washington would like to) from a relationship hardened on the Korean War battlefield and through some 20 years of economic cooperation.

Resolving this dispute in such a way as to enable Washington and Peking to be on the "same side of the fence" would be a difficult enough task, were the deep hatred and distrust between the two Koreas the only problems to contend with. There are further complications involved, however.

Since the early 1970s, when this problem was actively discussed by Henry Kissinger and Zhou Enlai, Washington policy has sought to prod North Korea into a full-scale alliance with China—and away from the Soviet Union. In line with his penchant for "big-power politics," Kissinger shunned direct contact with North Korea during his tenure as Secretary of State, and chose to urge China to "take responsibility" and dominate North Korea. His proposal for a four-party conference on Korea, involving the two Koreas, China and the United States (conveniently excluding the Soviet Union) is the best example of this strategy.

North Korea was slow to respond to the Kissinger policy, seeing little benefit for itself. The North Koreans, though ideologically very close to Peking,

were reluctant to lose the privileged middle position between Moscow and China and fall under the domination of Peking. Moreover, Pyongyang is fundamentally committed to dominating the entire Korean peninsula and saw little benefit in the Sino-American alliance so long as American troops remained in South Korea.

Thus, while China and the United States made great strides in coordinating their policies on Korea during the "Kissinger era," the North Koreans were in no hurry to side with the new alliance against Moscow.

A major change took place when the Carter Administration came to power. The North Koreans saw great benefits for them in the Carter plan to withdraw troops from the South. Under the influence of what might be termed the "Brookings" faction, the Administration embarked on an Asian policy characterized by reductions in American force deployments in the Pacific, and redeployments of the withdrawn forces to Europe and other "theaters." Under this plan, as stated by the Brookings Institution and the Congressional Budget Office, a Chinese "sphere of influence" in Asia was to replace the withdrawn American forces, and provide the bulk, along with Japan, of the "NATO-Second Front" against the Soviet Union in the region.

With the prospect of American "withdrawal" from Asia—coordinated with China—in sight, Pyongyang has seen new opportunities in the Sino-American alliance. The Brookings policy, which included direct Washington-Pyongyang contact in the early months of 1977, is believed to have encouraged Kim Il-sung to adopt a more strident anti-Soviet position alongside China.

It remains to be seen whether the recent revisions in United States policy toward Asia will have an effect on North Korea. The revisions, fostered by the "Georgetown University faction," do not alter the fundamental strategic goal of aligning China, Tokyo, and Washington against the Soviet Union, but seek to step up the pressure on Moscow by increasing the direct American role in the alliance.

Properly understood, the Brookings and Georgetown policies are not opposing views, but rather quite neatly complement each other, as the short-lived American withdrawal from the region set the stage for an expanded defense role for Japan and China.

It is apparent that North Korea was upset about the revisions in U.S. policy, especially the decision to halt the troop withdrawal from South Korea, and for President Carter to visit Seoul in June. Fearing a return to the pre-Carter policies, when the Sino-American alliance offered little to the North, Pyongyang has been more actively criticizing Washington in recent months, and has also grown visibly suspicious of China as well.

Washington and New York policymakers are quite aware of the possibility of "losing" North Korea however, and have shaped their policy to prevent this.

The revised Carter policy toward Korea, rather than being a "victory" for the antiwithdrawal "Georgetown faction," is more accurately seen to be a combination of the Brookings and Georgetown views. The maintenance of American troops in Korea is not designed as a deterrent to a very possible North Korean attack on South Korea, but rather is designed to bolster South Korea as a "geopolitical" cornerstone in a stepped-up campaign of pressure against Moscow. Simultaneously, the White House plans to maintain a Brookings-oriented stance against the government of Park Chung-hee, a stance which, it is hoped, will keep interested in the Washington-Tokyo-Peking Axis.

The recent flurry of talks between North and South Korea, which had been suspended for several years largely due to North Korean stalling, were entered into by the South under heavy pressure from Washington that Seoul respond to Pyongyang's "genuine" peace-talk offers. This is perhaps the best example of the way the joint Brookings-Georgetown policy will work.

With the North Koreans leaning in the direction of the Axis powers, the South Korean government sticks out like the proverbial "sore thumb" as the only nation in the region not cooperating. For this reason, heavy pressure is expected to soon come down on Seoul—including during the Carter visit—to actively work against Moscow as well.

The South Koreans, who are genuinely concerned about threats to their security from their unstable North Korean neighbor, are known to oppose the idea of a "second front" in Asia against Moscow as, in the words of one Korean official, "vulgar Machiavellianism." Rather, in the view of Seoul, efforts must be made to reduce tensions in the region through broad-based economic cooperation among the nations of the region, including the Soviet Union.

The South Koreans will be particularly vulnerable to Washington's pressure, due to the continuing possibility of resumed withdrawal of American troops.

Moreover, the vulnerability of the Koreans to American pressure is heightened by the refusal of Moscow thus far to respond to Seoul's many offers for economic and other forms of cooperation. While limited contacts are known to exist between the two countries, the Soviets have thus far proven to be unwilling to risk total rupture in relations with its nominal ally North Korea, which open relations with Seoul could bring.

Short of open discussions with the Soviet Union, there appear to be several other options available to the South Koreans to reduce the pressure from Washington. Most important would be discussions with the governments of West Germany and France, both of which have made clear in recent months their firm commitment to policies, especially East-West economic cooperation, favorable to detente.

Kissinger: militarized Japan can counter USSR

The following are excerpts from an April 19 article appearing in the Japanese daily Yomiuri, reporting on an exclusive interview granted by former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger to the Nippon Television Network Corporation.

On the growing Soviet military presence in the Pacific, Kissinger said Japan "must play a greater role in the defense of the western Pacific." And the U.S. must stay strong in this part of the world, he added.

He said Moscow cannot be allowed to continue encouraging every conflict by Soviet arms, Soviet friendship treaties and protecting a nation involved by means of Soviet veto in the UN.

"The Soviet Union will have to choose between expansion and relaxation of tension," he said.

Asked about the so-called "China card," and a possible tripartite alliance involving Japan, China and the U.S. against the Soviet Union, Kissinger said, "Soviet expansion must be stopped, because if the Soviet expansion continues there will be a confrontation."

Indicating the possibility of a trilateral alliance, he said, "China will cooperate with countries like the U.S. and Japan for its own reasons."

Kissinger said China attacked Vietnam because of its growing concern over what was going on next to its borders. China did not want to see a Soviet-backed empire being created next to it, he added.

On the Egypt-Israel peace agreement, Kissinger said he didn't think the agreement will bring a "true peace" to the area by itself. He called it an important step toward peace.

Kissinger said that since Iran was no longer a balancing factor in the Middle East, the U.S. would have to conduct a more active diplomacy in the area and introduce some other force to supply the balance.

He said there was a need of "more visible American military power in the Indian Ocean" to assure the protection of Saudi Arabia and Jordan which "have become less sure" of U.S. support following the Islamic revolution in Iran and the growing Soviet presence in Ethiopia.

Kissinger said that the Islamic revival, in the long run, has also serious consequences for the Soviet Union, because by the year 2000 more than 100 million Soviet citizens out of a total population of about 250 million will be Moslems. "And this revival cannot be confined by national borders," he said.