

THE UNITED STATES IN ASIA:

POSTURE AND POLICY

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The preoccupation of the people of China with American foreign policy is to an American flattering, and very sobering. Though one writes from the vantage point of Taipei, he can be sure that a similar preoccupation stimulates thought on the Chinese Mainland. What will be the impact upon Chinese on both sides of the Taiwan Strait of a reduced American military presence--if such is to be. What will be the effect of increasing economic relations with both Taiwan and the Mainland? What, above all, is the meaning of the over-used and ambiguous word, "commitment?"

Many areas of the world are in political flux, with institutions strained by pressure for change, populations confused by the new techniques of social change and uncomprehending of the causes for these changes. Such feelings are especially acute and threatening in Asia because of the direct interaction on the greatest scale among the United States, the U. S. S. R. and the mainland part of China (PRC). In eastern Asia, Southeast Asia, and to a lesser degree in southern Asia the interests and influences of these powers converge and provide pressure points, if not of growing tensions at least of rapidly mounting uncertainty. Uncertainty is interesting to some but saddening to most. Enlarged communications among the leadership of these three giants are required in the interests of general peace. This is a consideration widely misunderstood, I suggest, by many of America's friends and supporters in Asia.

The role of the United States in a changing world must be better apprehended by Asians, especially in these decisive years of the mid-1970s. That does not require one to "like" or even accept the points of view of this Giant. But certainly for his own benefit, the Asian observer must better understand this Great Beast, how it moves and what its heaving of sighs may portend for Asia and the world. With these thoughts in mind I would presume to offer some suggestions.