

SURVEY AND ANALYSIS OF INDICATIONS OF CURRENT  
CHINESE COMMUNIST STRATEGIC THINKING

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## Preface

This study, "Survey and Analysis of Indications of Current Chinese Communist Strategic Thinking," has been performed by the Historical Evaluation and Research Organization (HERO) for the Stanford Research Institute (SRI), under Purchase Order 10024, as a subcontract for SRI's contract DA-49-092-ARO-10 with the Department of the Army. The study was initiated on October 15, 1965, on the basis of an oral understanding between the undersigned and Mr. Richard B. Foster, Director of SRI's Systems Science Strategic Center, in Washington. In the preparation of the study liaison with SRI has been maintained through Mrs. Anne Jonas, of the Systems Science Strategic Center.

This report is considered by HERO to be performance in full of the task assigned under the purchase order referred to above. Because of the extremely short period of time available to perform this study, however, HERO considers the report to be preliminary and tentative, and subject to possible future modification, if this should be requested.

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Survey and Analysis of Indications of Current  
Chinese Communist Strategic Thinking

INTRODUCTION

Assumptions

The general goals of CPR strategy are taken to be:

1. Security from encroachment by other powers, either in terms of loss of territory or of having to make disadvantageous concessions.
2. Further development of the technological and industrial base for a powerful modern state.
3. Eventual establishment of hegemony over all territories traditionally regarded as Chinese or as tributaries of the historical Chinese empire.
4. The removal of US and other Western influence (including military influence) from Asia.
5. Promotion and spread of the Maoist version of communism.
6. Leadership of as much of the world Communist movement as possible, with emphasis on Asia, Africa, and Latin America. This could be achieved only at the expense of the Soviet Union.

7. Participation, as a power of the first rank, in all world affairs. This would include acknowledgement of China as the spokesman for the Afro-Asian sector of the Communist world as described in 6 above.

The following specific assumptions were furnished by Stanford Research Institute:

1. The Communist Party of China (CPC) will remain in power and there will be no significant change of focus with respect to its goals.

2. There will be no significant resumption of military aid from the Soviet Union, putting aside the question of whether or not there is a complete split.

3. Although the Chinese People's Republic (CPR) will attempt to obtain foreign assistance, it will be unsuccessful in obtaining nuclear weapons parts, key technical components, and personnel.

4. The present US alliance commitments in Asia will be retained and the US military presence in the area will continue to reflect the current degree of US involvement.

5. There will probably be a necessity for strengthening US nuclear guarantees to free Asia as the CPR begins political exploitation of its nuclear capability.

#### Method

In view of the time constraint, it was not possible to assemble complete and detailed documentation for the material contained herein.

The group upon whose discussions and conclusions this paper is based consisted of Dr. Ralph L. Powell; Brig. Gen. Samuel B. Griffith, USMC, Ret.; and Professor S.M. Chiu. These scholars maintain close surveillance of Chinese political and military affairs. It was agreed that the information furnished and discussed by them forms a sound basis for determining whether public statements and open actions after the detonation of a nuclear device on October 16, 1964, suggest changes in long-term strategic concepts and point to new directions for Chinese policies and actions. While the controlling date is taken as October 16, 1964, it is recognized that comparisons must be made on a broader basis, since it is obvious that many senior government officials in China had some degree of foreknowledge of the planned detonation, and predetonation statements might well reflect the beginning of lines which were to be developed after the device had actually been fired; further, there could be factors other than nuclear considerations affecting recent developments in Chinese strategic thinking.

STATEMENTS RELATED TO THE NATIONAL DEFENSE

OF THE CHINESE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC

General

Chinese Communist defense doctrines have traditionally been based upon Mao's theories on war and revolution. These may be summarized as: Man and Space Over Weapons; The Army Must Be

Controlled By The Party; The Army Must Be The Army Of The People.

Four primary concepts defined the nature of the Communist military doctrine until the 1950s: the guerrilla strategy and tactics in what Mao called protracted war, the party control system in the army, army-civilian relations, and the vast militia system.

After the adoption of a constitution in 1954, the armed forces were "regularized" with the formation of a Defense Ministry, a staff system, and special services. A military service law was passed, military ranks and uniforms were adopted, and regular service academies were founded. It appeared that soon afterwards an intra-party dispute occurred over the question of professionalism versus traditionalism: whether the armed forces should be made into a modern regular fighting force with diminished political control or remain an instrument of the party, retaining their "guerrilla characteristics." Obviously, operations against modern Western conventional forces in Korea had induced some re-examination of the structure of the PLA. In addition, there appears to have been an increase in concern over the effects of a nuclear attack on mainland China as a by-product of the Straits crisis of 1954.

According to many observers, a group of staff officers headed by Su Yu and Yeh Chien-ying, who shared a more professional outlook and who insisted upon strengthening and modernizing the armed forces even at the expense of the national economy, gained the ascendancy in 1955 and 1956. But at the Party Congress in the latter year, attacks on the "purely military outlook" began to appear. Successful



Party opposition to the group of professionally oriented officers led to the wholesale reshuffle of the General Staff and the Ministry of National Defense in 1958 and 1959. While there was a decision to improve the technical equipment of the armed forces, firm Party leadership was reasserted and strengthened. The revolutionary traditions of the army had to be preserved, a militia system had to be built up as a reserve for the regular army, and the army had to continue to undertake the three traditional tasks of fighting, participating in "mass work," and production.

The communes launched in 1958 were not only a form of social and economic organization in the countryside, but "in the event of a war of aggression they will be the mighty prop for the task of turning the whole population into fighting men, of supporting the front, of defending the country and overwhelming aggressors." Lin Piao, replacing Peng Teh-huai as Minister of Defense, wrote in 1959:

Some comrades take the view that modern warfare differs from warfare in the past, that since the weapons and equipment available to our army in the past were inferior we had to emphasize dependence on man. . . . They say that modern warfare is a war of technique, of steel and machinery and that in the face of these things, man's role has to be relegated to a secondary place. . . . Contrary to these people, we believe that while equipment and technique are important, the human factor is even more so. Technique has to be mastered by man. Men and material must form a unity, with men as the leading factor.

At the same time, economic programs were pushed forward (with heavy emphasis on basic industries), armed forces personnel were used in building projects, a campaign to preserve democracy in the

armed forces was launched by transferring officers to serve in the ranks for one month in the year, and a long-term scientific development plan was adopted. All these indicated that the Communists were determined to maintain the revolutionary character of the PLA while striving for industrial self-sufficiency. This would build an indigenous national defense base to support modernization of the armed forces. Their posture was defensive. In the event of an invasion, which the Communists did not expect, they would fight a "people's war." Mao said in early 1957:

We stand resolutely for peace and oppose war. But if the imperialists insist on unleashing another war, we should not be afraid of it. . . . We are against it; but we are not afraid of it.

The first World War was followed by the birth of the Soviet Union. . . . The Second World War was followed by the emergence of the socialist camp with a combined population of 900 million. If the imperialists should insist on launching a third world war, it is certain that several hundred million more will turn to socialism. . . .

Again, in 1958, a compendium of Mao's sayings was published by Peking entitled "Imperialism and All Reactionaries are Paper Tigers," in which was an excerpt from his early writings on war:

The so-called theory of "weapons decide everything" . . . is a mechanistic theory of war, a subjectivist and one-sided view. Our view is contrary to this; we see not only weapons but also the power of man. Weapons are an important factor in war but not the decisive one; it is man and not material that is decisive. The contest of forces is not only a contest of military and economic power, but also one of the power and morale of man. Military and economic power must be controlled by man.

Since October 1964 there has been increased public emphasis in statements by Chinese leaders on nonnuclear conventional military defense doctrine and on wars of revolution and liberation in Asia,

Africa, and Latin America--the so-called "storm centers of revolution." This is believed to derive largely from Chinese recognition of the fact that the CPR lacks an operational capability with nuclear weapons and will require some time to develop one. Evidence, especially in the Bulletin of Activities papers, points to a continuing interest in defense against nuclear, chemical, and biological attack and to concentration on conventional ground and aircraft defenses, radar, air bases, aircraft, and surface-to-air missiles. Increasing attention has also been given to dispersion of industrial and military installations, including the People's Liberation Army, and the hardening of selected military sites. Chinese statements have emphasized the idea that the CPR cannot be defeated by nuclear weapons alone and that such strikes, however massive, must be followed by ground invasion by an enemy seeking victory over China; such invasion must fail. It is maintained that a ground invasion can be defeated by conventional defense action, combined with a Maoist "people's war" fought by both the regular armed forces and a massive militia mobilized under the concept "everyone a soldier." It is claimed that by using both mobile and guerrilla warfare, a great horde would drown the enemy in "a sea of battles." The CPR defense doctrine includes the concept of a "broken-back" people's war as well as more conventional types of operations. The somewhat strident invitation to the United States to invade seen in recent utterances probably reflects little more than the regime's knowledge that conventional ground forces allied with guerrilla operations will continue to be

their principal strengths for some time to come. They play naturally to their strong suit. Further, this constant propaganda serves the purposes of internal control and psychological motivations.

As we have noted, the Chinese have manifested an increasing interest in defense against chemical and biological warfare. Their economy, still heavily agrarian and unmodernized, would be extremely vulnerable to such attacks, particularly in rice-growing areas.

In realistic terms, the CPR has few real options. Gradual modernization of their ground forces in terms of conventional light weapons and the continued provision of automatic and infantry weapons for the military and People's militia are well within their capabilities even though the cost will not be insignificant. However, to achieve effective modernization, the Chinese must now design and build some of the heavy and sophisticated items which before 1960 were provided by the Soviet Union. Some progress is apparently being made in this direction.

#### Revolutionary Strategy

The CPR continues to incite the underdeveloped countries of the world to revolution with "imperialism" as personified by the United States as the principal target. In fact, since detonation of their first nuclear device, bellicose propaganda has been intensified. This was focused in Lin Biao's article in commemoration

of the 20th anniversary of V-J Day. This item reflects Chinese pragmatism and the Maoist strategy expressed in the slogans "we fight with what we have" and "we defeat our enemies one-by-one." Revolutionaries are encouraged to proceed so that the United States may be embarrassed by simultaneous involvement at a number of points in the world. The Lin Piao article was notable for its derogation of use of nuclear weapons by imperialists in wars of liberation or revolution as well as by the complete absence of any mention of the fact that China had tested two nuclear devices. The article also provided a doctrinal rationalization for the CPR's nonintervention on a major scale in "wars of liberation" and "people's wars," since these wars must be won by the people of the country involved.

The Lo Jui-ching article of May 10, 1965, is relevant in this context. When the two authoritative statements (Lo's and Lin's) are taken together; there develops the feeling that the aging Chinese leadership may be desperately trying to hasten the course of an historical development they believe to be inevitable. But for them, personally, time is running out, and whether they will live to see the imperialist "paper tiger" mortally wounded is a consuming question.

Intangible factors such as this are indeed relevant to the pace and intensity of the CPC's campaign in the underdeveloped countries.

## Actual Operations

In the 15 years preceding the test of the first nuclear device a number of Chinese actions furnished some clues as to the level of commitment that the CPR is willing to undertake under any given set of conditions. The Korean intervention has been by far the largest venture and it may be reasonably argued that the presence of massive UN forces near the border of China's principal industrial area exercised critical influence on the decision to intervene. "When the lips are gone, the teeth are cold." "When the gates are crashed, the halls are imperiled." No doubt the Chinese also had reason to believe at the time that they were to some degree operating under the protection of the Soviet Union. In the series of crises in the Taiwan Straits there appears to be a definite limit beyond which the CPR is not willing to go, even though this limit is obscured at times by shrill and menacing declarations. The 1962 border incident with India was kept under control. Indeed, the Chinese unilaterally abandoned a number of tactically useful positions taken in the Northeast Frontier Area (NEFA). There may be involved here a piece of Chinese indirection which could almost be called typical since, despite the fact that they relinquished territory in NEFA, the Chinese continue to hold positions in the Aksai Chin through which runs their strategic road connecting Sinkiang and Tibet.

There are ambiguous elements in the 1965 action on the Indian border. It is probable that the CPR recognized the disadvantages in attempting to force India to the wall. But the Indian episode

is a good example of the way the Chinese link threats with the prudent application of controlled, measured force.

### The Role of the People's Liberation Army

From its earliest days the CPC has taken an objective view of the role of military power. We can trace numerous statements in the works of Mao expressing generally the idea that power rests primarily in arms and that peace can only be achieved when the revolutionaries hold the guns in their hands. Further, the Red Army was the principal instrument in gaining allegiance and support from peasants in the countryside. It was, and is, employed as an instrument of mass propaganda and as a labor force. Two and a half million men under arms testify to the basic continuing belief in the efficacy of the army as both a political and a military instrument. Coupled with this are the continuing concepts that "men are everything," and "men are superior to weapons"--even nuclear weapons. The supporting concept of a massive militia--"every man a soldier"--continues as an element of action and statement, seeming to indicate that the Chinese still fear massive ground invasion. It is interesting to note that increased cordiality and cooperation between the South Koreans and the government of the Republic of China on Taiwan probably have exacerbated these Chinese fears. A further complication has been the opening rift with Russia, which seems to have produced a number of incidents along the Sinkiang border. Not to be overlooked is the additional usefulness of a large militia as a means for controlling and propagandizing the masses.

The doctrine of self-sufficiency grew out of the caves of Yen-an. It was nurtured by necessity and Stalin's calculated neglect. The CPR leadership has cherished this precept even though they have always demonstrated a willingness to accept such aid as they could get. The doctrine of self-reliance was, of course, not too strongly emphasized during the period of Chinese-Russian rapport, but since the split it has again become current and is being urged on other revolutionaries. They continue thus to make a virtue of necessity. This emphasis will probably be continued until such time as some level of operational capability with nuclear weapons indicates a change to a mixed strategy.

In passing, it is interesting to note that the PLA was thanked specifically for assisting in achieving the second nuclear detonation.

#### STATEMENTS RELATING TO REVOLUTIONARY WAR--WORLD-WIDE

The Chinese Communists, in true Marxist fashion, have always had their own definition of just and unjust wars. The former includes all wars waged by the "oppressed" peoples against "imperialists" and "feudalists." As early as 1950, the Chinese Communists claimed that their experience in China should be an example for all other peoples of Asia that were under colonial rule. Their methods were known to have been exported to other countries, notably Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaya, and Burma. However, direct Chinese involvement was limited, because the new Peking regime needed time to consolidate its control of the country.



For several years after Bandung in 1954, Chinese espousal of the theme of "peaceful co-existence" did not lend itself to active support of foreign revolutionary movements, although Peking soon realized that peaceful co-existence per se was tantamount to abandoning the fast-growing Communist parties in Asian countries. Beginning in 1957, Peking's policy changed to one of peaceful co-existence cum liberation: co-existence with those governments that joined with Peking against "imperialism," and liberation movements in those countries that collaborated with imperialism. They even instigated liberation movements in some countries that were cooperative, as witnessed by their actions in some of the new African nations. This was the first transference of their "united front" policy to the foreign policy area.

In actual operation, the international united front was to be a grand alliance of all those countries that shared in the common goal of opposing imperialism and what the Chinese called neo-colonialism. This struggle can take many forms. It may be violent, as in Vietnam (against the United States) and Malaysia (by the Indonesians against the British in North Borneo). During the common struggle against the common enemy, an ally of expediency may be the target of a united front led by the indigenous Communist Party in an internal struggle. In effect, the ally may unwittingly become a supporter of Peking or be transformed through an internal struggle. Peking could also use other weapons including trade, overseas Chinese, and diplomacy.

In the Chinese Communist view, any disturbance anywhere started against the United States and its allies would contribute to weakening of the United States. Such disturbances would not lead to general war. Events since World War II have proved to them that they would not. The Suez and Iraq are examples. Pledges of support for revolutionary movements cost Peking very little so long as those movements take place in countries far away or fail to develop into nation-wide wars of liberation.

Chinese impatience with Russian timidity clearly became apparent when Russia, after launching Sputnik and firing an ICBM in the fall of 1957, still failed to demonstrate greater aggressiveness in supporting the revolutionary surge in the underdeveloped countries. Regarding itself then as the inheritor of Communist leadership by default (and probably also by right) the Chinese have steadily fomented and encouraged revolutionary action against their "neo-colonialist" and "imperialist" targets. China has made strong efforts through aid and diplomatic action to turn situations to its advantage in Africa and to a lesser degree in Central and South America. Some, as in Burundi, have backfired. The Chinese leadership has made much of the point that nuclear weapons in the hands of "peace-loving" countries like itself would deprive the United States and other imperialists of their means of blackmailing smaller, weaker nations. Thus, they argue, proliferation of membership in the "nuclear club" is the surest road to nuclear disarmament. Emphasis has grown and continued, however, on the thesis that revolutionaries may safely proceed first because the United States does

not dare use these weapons against them for fear of the damage it will do to the US position in the world, and second, because of the inapplicability of such weapons to wars of national liberation.

The "self-sufficient" doctrine has been receiving increased emphasis in the exhortations to violent action addressed to underdeveloped nations by the Chinese. This suggests that China, deeply involved in problems of her own, is putting others on notice that little material help may be expected.

The war in Vietnam is of primary importance in these considerations. The actual degree of material assistance being provided by China has not been measured, but it is noteworthy that Chinese promises of assistance and, under certain conditions, commitments to intervention have not been accompanied by very much in the way of specific action. In fact, since Korea, China's foreign policy actions have been more cautious than Peking's propaganda would indicate. As has been observed, the "do it yourself" revolution is supported further by an extension of Mao's doctrine for revolution in China, which recognized the absence of a useful proletariat and advocated engulfing the cities from the countryside, basing the revolution on peasants rather than the urban proletariat. One Chinese official has given Dipa Nusantara Aidit, leader of the Indonesian Communist Party, credit for this analogous transfer of Mao's thought to the concept of engulfing the imperialist nations as if they were cities and the poorer nations the rural peasantry. Whether or not the analogy bears close examination, it does suggest an attempt

to embarrass and overcommit the United States by generating simultaneous actions at a number of separated points. This is quite clearly a continuing predetonation idea, but it has been given increased emphasis since last year.

#### STATEMENTS OF GENERAL NUCLEAR POLICY

Long before the Chinese could predict a date for any nuclear achievement, the offset strategy was to derogate nuclear weapons and to emphasize China's relatively great ability to sustain and recover rapidly from massive nuclear attack. Although the Chinese gave definite indications of their determination to achieve a nuclear capability, there was an continues to be a marked lack of open debate over nuclear strategy and policies in China. This, we may recall, parallels the situation in Russia before 1956. There have been references to the provision of nuclear protection for other countries and several public statements to the effect that China would never be the first to use nuclear weapons. The first two tests, however, have not produced any material which would give specific clues as to the directions the Chinese propose to follow or the uses they would threaten to make of such weapons. However, Chinese references to Western writings on counterinsurgency doctrine indicate that they study foreign developments in military matters carefully. It must be concluded then that they are well aware of Western thought on nuclear strategies. Scattered references to a "truncated" nuclear doctrine have occurred in some CPR statements, as, for example, the idea that nuclear war

would destroy capitalism but not socialism and the repeated assertions about China's ability to recover, cited above. The inapplicability of nuclear weapons to "wars of liberation" might also be thus classified.

More realistically, if the Chinese Communists had a nuclear doctrine at all before 1964 it was the negative concept of "man over weapons" even if those weapons were of the nuclear variety. They disparaged the atomic bombs dropped on Japan in 1945. In an interview with Anna Louise Strong in 1946, Mao for the first time likened the bomb to a paper tiger "with which the US reactionaries try to terrify the people." It looks terrible, he said, but in fact is not. "Of course the atom bomb is a weapon of mass destruction, but the outcome of a war is decided by the people, not by one or two new weapons." Yet after the announcement that the Soviet Union had successfully tested its first bomb, Peking's reaction was that "US atomic blackmail has ended," and "it strengthened the cause of peace."

Alice Hsieh has speculated that the Chinese were exposed to the realities of the atom during and after the first off-shore island crisis of 1954-1955. Possibly after that the Soviet Union agreed to turn over a reactor to Peking. Chinese efforts in the next two years to secure more aid in nuclear research failed. But with the first Soviet ICBM and the first two Sputniks in late 1957, the Chinese re-examined their strategic concepts, apparently believing