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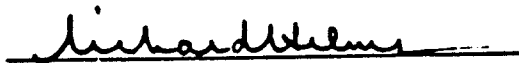
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# Communist China and Asia

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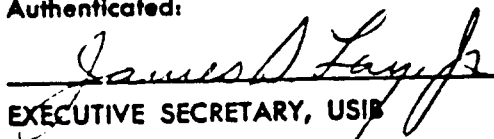
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## COMMUNIST CHINA AND ASIA

### THE PROBLEM

To survey recent Chinese foreign policy and alternate lines of development in the near term; to define the nature of the Chinese threat in Asia, and to estimate Chinese intentions in the area; and to estimate the longer term outlook for Chinese foreign policy.

### CONCLUSIONS

A. The Chinese Communist regime has fallen far short of its aspirations for a position of dominance in East and Southeast Asia and for the leadership of the world revolution. Neither its efforts at conventional diplomacy nor at supporting revolutionary struggles have been pursued consistently or with a regard to objective realities. Mao's ideological pretensions have earned China the enmity of the USSR, and his bizarre domestic programs have cost China greatly in prestige and respect elsewhere in the world. Yet China's location and size, and the traditional apprehensions of its neighbors, ensure for it a major impact upon Asia regardless of the policy it follows.

B. As long as Mao is the dominant figure, major changes in China's international posture do not appear likely. Mao will remain an insurmountable obstacle to any accommodation with the USSR, and there is little alternative to continuing hostility toward the US. A failure by the Vietnamese Communists to achieve their aims might require some shift in tactics, but the Chinese would almost certainly not launch an overt attack, nor would they be likely to open a major new front of conflict.

C. Nevertheless, Chinese aspirations for political dominance in Asia will persist. Almost certainly Mao and his immediate successors will not expect to achieve this by military conquest, although force and violence figure strongly in Mao's doctrines. The Chinese may hope that the possession of a strategic capability will give China greater freedom

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to support "people's war" or, more remotely, to engage in conventional war in Asia by diminishing the possibility of nuclear attack on China. Whatever Chinese hopes, however, the actual possession of nuclear weapons will not necessarily make China more willing to risk a direct clash with the US; indeed, it is more likely to have a sobering effect.

D. Whatever modifications in Chinese policy flow from its advance into the nuclear age, the principal threat from China will for many years be in the realm of subversion and revolutionary activity—mainly in Southeast Asia. In South Vietnam and Laos, Peking must take account of Hanoi's direct interests. China's policy toward Cambodia will be largely conditioned by Sihanouk's attitude. If he moves very far toward accommodation with the US, Peking's pressures against him—now minimal—would be increased. The Chinese may see Thailand as a more lucrative target for a Chinese-sponsored "people's war." Peking is already providing some training and support, but even the Chinese must realize that the Thai insurgency faces a long, difficult fight. The Chinese have a more clear-cut choice in Burma, and whether they significantly increase the insurgency or restore more normal diplomatic relations could be an indicator of trends in Peking's foreign policy.

E. The rest of Southeast Asia is less important in Peking's immediate scheme because the Chinese lack direct access and current prospects for insurgency in these areas are minimal. Peking seeks to weaken and embarrass India, but not to confront it directly so long as there is no threat to Tibet.

F. It is in the area of conventional diplomacy, which suffered severely in the Cultural Revolution, that Peking could most easily achieve significant changes. Restoration of normal diplomacy would facilitate a trend toward recognition of Peking, and this would in turn put pressure on other countries, particularly Japan, which does not want to be left behind in opening relations with the mainland. Taipei would undoubtedly suffer diplomatic losses in this process.

G. The departure of Mao could, in time, bring significant change in China's relations with the outside world. There could be contention and struggle for leadership that would freeze major policies during a long interregnum. But on balance, we believe Mao's departure will generate a strong movement toward modifying his doctrines.

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H. A less ideological approach would not necessarily make China easier to deal or live with in Asia. Pursuit of its basic nationalist and traditional goals could sustain tensions in the area, and a China that was beginning to realize some of its potential in the economic and advanced weapons fields could become a far more formidable force in Asia than is Maoist China.

## DISCUSSION

### I. INTRODUCTION

1. During 20 years of rule, the Chinese Communists have not come close to realizing China's aspirations for leadership or domination in Asia. There are many reasons for this. China has of course had to operate from an economic base inadequate to support the full range of its pretensions. Maoist preoccupation with making China the leader of the world revolution has often led to policies and actions harmful to other more traditional or conventional Chinese goals in Asia. The tension and inconsistencies in the basic Chinese approach to foreign policy have been magnified by frequent shifts in actual tactics and strategy. In consequence, Peking has failed to pursue any single course with consistency and maximum effect over a prolonged period.

2. In the flush of victory in 1949, Peking joined the USSR in proclaiming Asia ripe for revolution and called for "people's war" against all existing governments in the area. But China was not ready to offer much practical assistance to this end, local communist parties lacked the strength for revolution, and the principal result was to alienate the leaders and supporters of the newly independent Asian governments who considered themselves anti-imperialist and deserving of Peking's support, not its enmity.

3. The Korean war forced China to concentrate on more immediate security concerns, and in its aftermath Peking shifted to the line of peaceful coexistence abroad while concentrating on construction at home. But this line, which had considerable promise of winning friends, diplomatic recognition, and broad commercial opportunities for China, gradually gave way to a more belligerent and revolutionary line. By the late 1950's, the dispute with the USSR began to take shape and has since consumed a good deal of China's energies and attention. During the early 1960's, China suffered a great loss of prestige as the absurdities, administrative confusion, and economic chaos of the Great Leap became evident to the world.

4. By 1964, however, China seemed to be back on an even keel and growing in strength and influence. A working balance between support for revolutionary goals and improving China's international position seemed to exist in Chinese foreign policy. China was closely aligned with North Vietnam and North Korea, commanded respect among numerous communist parties, and had established an "axis" with Indonesia. The revolutions in Vietnam and Laos were progressing.

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Maneuvering was underway for a new Afro-Asian conference, which the Chinese hoped to turn against the USSR. Several noncommunist states were considering recognition, and France actually took this step. Chou En-lai embarked on an extensive tour of Africa. In October 1964, Mao's archenemy Khrushchev fell and the Chinese exploded their first atomic device.

5. But once again a combination of circumstances intervened to produce major shifts in the Chinese posture in foreign affairs. Suddenly, in 1965, the war in Vietnam became much more than another war of liberation. With the US intervention, Mao's theories on the validity of guerrilla war were being subjected to extreme test, and China itself felt the risk of direct conflict with the US. The problem was a delicate one: how to assure success in the Vietnam war without provoking an American attack on North Vietnam and ultimately China.

6. The entire question of how to confront the US was apparently the subject of a debate during 1965, a debate which was greatly complicated by changes in the USSR, where the new leadership was bent on rebuilding its position with Asian Communists, especially in Hanoi. The Soviet proposal for "united action" to support Hanoi, however, was regarded by Mao as a trap which would hamstring Chinese freedom of action and undermine Peking's claim to be the center of a new revolutionary movement. Most important, Mao saw that any accommodation with Moscow would contribute to the erosion of morale and ideological purity which he apparently feared was already spreading rapidly throughout the Chinese party and society.

7. In the rest of the world, the Chinese found that they had overestimated the revolutionary enthusiasm of their friends. Chou En-lai's African tour was cut short, after embarrassing reaction to his vivid descriptions of Africa's ripeness for revolution. With the collapse in 1965 of the "Bandung II" Conference in Algiers, China was rebuffed in its effort to form an anti-Soviet and anti-US bloc of Afro-Asians. The recognition by France was not followed by a rush of other countries. And the alliance with Sukarno collapsed in a massive bloodbath for the Indonesian Communists and a wave of violent repression of the overseas Chinese community there.

8. China reacted to these circumstances, not by muting its revolutionary propaganda, but by calling for an acceleration of the worldwide revolutionary movement. Supposedly, the various insurgencies, activists, parties, and front groups would step up their efforts in order to divert US resources and wear down the US will. At the same time, the USSR and its clients would be excluded from the new phase of intensified revolutionary activity, and China would remain the center of the movement.

9. The net effect of this line was to create an even wider gap between Chinese ideological prescriptions and objective reality. In dealing with major problems of national security, especially those involving a threat of confrontation with the US, China was forced to remain cautious and prudent. As the domestic crisis of the Cultural Revolution deepened, Peking became more and more rigid and

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doctrinaire, insensitive to the advice of its friends, utterly hostile and inflexible towards its enemies, and increasingly oblivious to the deterioration of its international position.

10. Even so, the Chinese leaders might have been content with their position had it not been for new developments in 1968. The onset of negotiations over Vietnam was tantamount to a repudiation of the Chinese by Hanoi, seemed to vindicate the position of the USSR, and pointed to growing Soviet influence. And the USSR engaged in a substantial military buildup in the Far East which was clearly directed against China. The Chinese have not reacted by a similar buildup of their own along the Soviet frontier, and they probably do not expect an open Soviet attack. But they are no doubt concerned about Soviet efforts to influence internal developments in China in one way or another. All this was brought into sharper focus by the invasion of Czechoslovakia and the subsequent promulgation of the "Brezhnev doctrine."

11. In sum, by the end of 1968, the revolutionary line had failed in its principal objectives. It was becoming increasingly clear that a settlement in Vietnam was not likely to validate Mao's strategy of "people's war." The influence of the USSR in the region had not been contained but had in fact grown, both in the communist capitals of Pyongyang and Hanoi, and in South and Southeast Asia. China had failed completely to achieve a "broad united front" against the imperialist US and the revisionist USSR. Instead it found itself "encircled," as Chou En-lai acknowledged, and isolated on most key policy issues.

12. Yet Peking's lack of progress toward its revolutionary objectives has by no means completely vitiated its influence in Asia. China's location, size, and history, buttressed by the traditional apprehensions of its neighbors, ensure for it a major impact upon Asia regardless of the policy it follows. Awareness of China's existence and potential for making trouble affects the current policies of every country in the area.

## II. IMMEDIATE PROSPECTS

13. In the near term, there does not appear to be much chance for a major change in China's international posture. As long as Mao is the dominant figure of the regime and the source of ideological guidance, Chinese policy will probably be confined within fairly narrow limits. He is likely to remain an insurmountable obstacle to any accommodation or modus vivendi with the USSR. Indeed, Chinese enmity for the Soviet Union has recently reached a level at least equal to that against the US; China now has two "number one enemies." With age, Mao has become less flexible and even more obsessed with revolutionary goals. There is not likely to be any slackening in his commitment to the notion that China is the center for inspiring the world revolution and that its principal allies are not to be found in the established Communist regimes and parties, but in the guerrilla movements that have accepted "Mao's thought" and intend to persist in protracted struggle. In this sense, there is little alternative to continuing hostility toward the US.

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14. Yet within this fairly rigid strategic framework, there are signs of some greater flexibility in tactics. These signs are often contradictory and confusing, but they could be significant if domestic affairs are entering a new phase. The growing concern that the US and USSR are pursuing parallel, anti-Chinese policies may be a factor dictating Chinese moves to complicate or disrupt what they see as a tacit alliance. What such moves might be is not at all clear, and in the end they may be of no great significance. As long as Maoist ideology is dominant, however, the road to Moscow is blocked. Ironically, the Chinese may be coming to feel that they have more room for maneuver *vis-a-vis* the US than the USSR, though of course the Taiwan question will continue to obstruct Sino-US relations.

15. Whether shifts in Chinese tactics do occur could depend, of course, on developments in Vietnam. The Chinese already perceive that the war in Vietnam is likely to end in a negotiated settlement. They have taken some steps to mute their opposition to negotiations. And at some point in this process, they are likely to re-emphasize their broad political interest in the area, seeking to make it clear that no lasting settlement can be achieved without Peking's approval.

16. Of course, it is possible that the Chinese will choose not to adjust to developments in Indochina, but rather seek to disrupt them. However, a failure by the Vietnamese Communists to achieve their aims would probably not lead to extreme reactions by the Chinese. Almost certainly the Chinese are not going to launch an overt attack in Vietnam or seize some territory elsewhere, nor are they likely to open a major new front of conflict, using their own resources. At the other extreme, there is little likelihood that the Chinese will suddenly become quiescent because of the outcome in Vietnam. They are going to remain active in support of those movements that they believe are loyal to Maoist concepts and have some potential for effective development.

17. In any case, China's foreign policies are likely to be influenced to a significant degree by the internal crisis. Even if the extremes of the Cultural Revolution are already past, it is possible that a new phase of coercive social programs and disruptive economic initiatives may prove as debilitating as the political purge. If, on the other hand, a more moderate line in internal policies prevails, then order may be gradually restored, and the Foreign Ministry professionals may gain the initiative over policy. But as long as Mao lives and rules in Peking, the present instability in China. Foreign policy in a general sense will continue to and reflect the internal line. Accordingly, Peking will be more likely to respond to outside events than to launch major new initiatives of its own.

### III. THE CHINESE THREAT IN ASIA

18. All these considerations do not mean that China will be a negligible factor in Asia or in international politics. Chinese goals, in Asia at least, are fairly clear. Almost all Chinese—whether in Peking or on Taiwan—would agree that China's rightful position is one of political dominance on the Asian main-

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land, and ultimately throughout East and Southeast Asia. Such aspirations have deep historical roots. In this sense, China poses a threat to Asia and to those outside powers which seek to play an important role in Asian affairs. The question is how the Chinese intend to accomplish their objectives.

#### A. Military Power

19. Almost certainly the Chinese do not expect to achieve a dominant position by military conquest, even though force and violence figure strongly in Maoist philosophy and Chinese Communist practice. In the cases where the Chinese have resorted to military means—in Korea and India—this was, in their view, defensive to protect the security of their borders. Indeed, a principal objective of China, like most states, is to insure its security against unfriendly powers ranged along its frontiers. Where the Chinese see an immediate threat to their security, they will be prepared to use force, even pre-emptively. But neither Mao nor his immediate successors are likely to believe that the Chinese revolution can be exported by the People's Liberation Army, or that armed conquest in the style of Imperial China is a safe or profitable course.

20. All this, of course, applies primarily to China as a conventional military power, but its acquisition of nuclear weapons will not necessarily increase its aggressiveness. The Chinese may hope that the possession of a strategic capability will give China greater freedom to support "people's war" or, more remotely, to engage in conventional war in Asia by diminishing the possibility of nuclear attack on China. The Chinese certainly hoped to gain such freedom in the Taiwan Strait crisis of 1958 by exploiting the Sino-Soviet alliance to deter the US. Moscow's refusal in that instance to back China with nuclear threats was probably a major factor in convincing Peking that it must have its own nuclear weapons.

21. Whatever may have been Chinese hopes in the past, however, the actual possession of nuclear weapons is likely to have a sobering effect. China has no hope of achieving parity with either the US or the USSR in nuclear weapons in the foreseeable future.<sup>1</sup> Despite its propaganda concerning China's ability to withstand nuclear attack, Peking will almost certainly come to realize, if it does not already, that either the US or the USSR possesses more than sufficient nuclear weapons to devastate China.

22. In these circumstances, China is likely to remain cautious in areas of possible direct confrontation with the US or the USSR, calculating that its own possession of nuclear weapons may increase, rather than lessen, the chances of a pre-emptive nuclear strike against it. For some time, China is likely to value its nuclear capability primarily as a Great Power status symbol and for

<sup>1</sup>The Intelligence Community currently estimates that the earliest possible initial operational capability for a Chinese intercontinental ballistic missile is late 1972, and that if the Chinese achieve that date, they might have between 10 and 25 launchers in 1975. A modest program for deployment of medium-range ballistic missiles will also probably be underway in the next few years.

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its political effects. In sum, when China actually becomes a nuclear power during the next decade, it will probably be subjected to the same constraints and complications of policy as the other nuclear powers.

23. We cannot predict the ultimate effect of Chinese acquisition of nuclear weapons on the rest of Asia. At a minimum, China will gain greater prestige and respect; translated into political gains, this will probably mean that more countries will seek some relationship with Peking at Taiwan's expense, and that some will explore the possibility of accommodation, if Chinese policy is sufficiently flexible to permit such accommodations. However, few countries are likely to respond favorably to China's desire to monopolize nuclear power in Asia and to provide "protection" for the area against all outside powers. Indeed, the Chinese attitude may increase pressures in some Asian countries to develop their own nuclear capabilities or to cling more closely to other nuclear powers.

#### B. People's War

24. Whatever modifications in Chinese policy flow from its advance into the nuclear age, the principal threat from China will, for many years, be in the realm of subversion and revolutionary activity. Such activity will be conducted mainly in Southeast Asia where it relates directly to Peking's security interests in denying the US or other unfriendly powers positions close to China's borders. It also serves to satisfy the more general interest of China in establishing its own dominance in the area and in the world revolutionary movement.

25. *Vietnam and Laos.* To these ends, Peking supports and assists the Communists in Vietnam and Laos. For the present, at least, Peking has to take account of North Vietnam's direct interests in both South Vietnam and Laos. Peking could try to circumvent the North Vietnamese and open competing lines to the National Liberation Front and to the Pathet Lao. But its chances of gaining significant influence are poor and the cost in relations with Hanoi potentially so great that such a maneuver is unlikely. Though sharp disagreement could develop over tactics in Laos, in general Hanoi and Peking almost certainly share the same immediate goal: communist control of Laos, with Hanoi in the dominant role.

26. *Thailand.* As a close ally of the US and as a US strategic base, Thailand is a key object of Chinese policy in Southeast Asia and will probably receive increased emphasis after the war in Vietnam is settled. In this respect, Thailand is the most obvious target for "people's war." The political leadership of the Thai insurgency is now lodged in Peking, and the Chinese are providing some training and arms. Moreover, the Chinese have assumed a heavy propaganda commitment; recently they have announced the formation of a Thai "People's Army" supreme command and publicized the new manifesto of the Thai Communist Party.

27. The Chinese will almost certainly continue to support the Thai insurgents. Yet they must realize that the insurgency faces a long, difficult fight; it has made little progress in gaining the allegiance of ethnic Thais. And Thailand possesses

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many strengths. Thus, it is possible that at some point the Chinese might want to reconsider their support, if in doing so they could induce Bangkok to draw away from its alliance with the US.

28. *Burma.* A period of cordial Sino-Burmese relations was broken by Peking in the midst of the Cultural Revolution nearly two years ago. Since then the Chinese have openly supported the Burmese Communist movement and publicly endorsed the formation of a united front with the ethnic insurgents. During much of 1968, the insurgency did increase along the Sino-Burmese border. There is, on the other hand, some evidence that the Chinese may want to restore more normal relations. Neutralist Burma would, of course, be receptive to such a move, especially if accompanied by a letup in the insurgency. Thus the Chinese have a fairly clear-cut choice between increasing the insurgency in northern Burma and restoring more normal government-to-government relations. How they decide could provide some indication concerning the extent of their commitment to the policy of insurgency in general.

29. *Cambodia.* Relations with Phnom Penh have fluctuated in recent years, partly because of Sihanouk's belief that Peking is sponsoring an insurgency, which he styles the Khmer Rouge. But the Chinese have been willing to tolerate a number of insults and taunts from Sihanouk and to furnish him arms, mainly because of the importance of Cambodia to the prosecution of the Vietnam war. The Chinese also value the fact that Cambodia is ostensibly neutral and frequently anti-American. Finally, in the long term Cambodia could be of potential significance in developing an insurgency in Thailand, with Cambodian territory possibly serving some of the same purposes it has served in the Vietnam war.

30. Thus, a major change in relations will probably depend less on Peking than on Sihanouk. He has long believed that China will become the dominant force in the Far East, and he sees value in trying to use the Chinese as a counterweight to his traditional enemies, the Vietnamese and the Thais. In these circumstances, Peking will probably continue to have considerable influence in Phnom Penh. Nevertheless, if Sihanouk feels that the tide is setting against the Communists in Vietnam, he is capable of becoming more cooperative with the US. Should he attempt to move very far in this direction, however, neither Hanoi nor Peking would be reluctant to step up political pressures against him and to increase support to dissident groups in Cambodia.

31. *Other Areas.* Insurgencies in the rest of Southeast Asia are much less important in the Chinese scheme, mainly because the Chinese have no direct access and the insurgents' prospects are currently minimal. The attempt of the Maoist-oriented Indonesian Communists to develop an insurgency in East Java last summer resulted not only in failure but in the death of key leaders. Peking occasionally publicizes the exploits of the Malayan Communist Party, which in turn pays homage to Mao. Peking, of course, has a considerable potential asset in the large ethnic Chinese population in Malaysia, but the Communist movement's overidentification with the Chinese hampers its avowed policy of forming a broadly based movement with the Malays. Peking has little influence in the

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Huk movement in the Philippines, though China periodically publicizes the exploits of Filipino insurgents.

32. *India.* In the late 1950's, China came to regard India as a competitor for leadership in Asia, especially because India seemed to benefit from the support of both the USSR and US. Thus Chinese policy has been framed to harass and intimidate India and demonstrate that it was generally incapable of taking the role of a leading Asian power. Since the border war of 1962, the Chinese have maintained some level of tension and threat along the Indian frontier; their military aid to Pakistan serves the same general purpose.

33. If China chose to, it could probably cause considerable trouble by supporting dissidents along the Indian frontier, especially in the northeast. The Chinese eagerly publicized the Naxalbari uprisings in Darjeeling, as the beginning of a Mao-inspired peasant upheaval. In Eastern India, the Chinese have propagandized and apparently have provided limited arms and training to Naga and Mizo tribesmen. Peking's aim seems to be to embarrass and worry New Delhi without becoming deeply involved, and we do not foresee much change in this attitude.

### C. Politics and Diplomacy

34. In general, China's relations with the noncommunist world have suffered in consequence of the Cultural Revolution. Its extreme xenophobia and hysteria impinged on Chinese diplomatic relations. Foreign diplomats in Peking were abused and humiliated; Chinese embassy staffs abroad were reduced and ambassadors withdrawn. Even now, the functioning of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs remains disrupted by political campaigns and factional disputes.

35. Nevertheless, it is in the area of normal political relations and conventional diplomacy that the Chinese probably have the greatest room for change. Without much effort, the Chinese could resume normal diplomatic activity in Europe, Africa, and the Middle East. Moreover, there appears to be a new movement towards diplomatic recognition of China. Though the Chinese have exhibited no eagerness for such recognition, there is no doubt they would regard it as a gain, especially if such a trend adds to pressures in Japan and elsewhere for closer relations with China.

36. The next two years should present the Chinese with new opportunities for exerting some influence on Japanese politics. The tensions associated with the Okinawa question and the US-Japanese Security Treaty all lend themselves to exploitation by Peking. China could make a serious overture to restore more normal commercial relations and could encourage the visits of influential Japanese politicians. To have a significant impact in Japan, however, Chinese maneuvers would require a more skilled and flexible diplomacy than Peking has been willing to adopt thus far.

37. Eventually, a return to more normal diplomacy does seem likely. The flow of visitors to China has begun to increase, relations with the foreign em-

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hassies in Peking have been eased, some new economic agreements have been concluded in recent months, and rumors recur that the Foreign Minister or Chou En-lai may visit abroad. Some reports have indicated that Chinese ambassadors are to return to their posts this spring. However, both China's internal politics, and the reaction of Chinese leaders to foreign events could serve to delay moves to restore greater normalcy to Chinese diplomacy. Peking's abrupt postponement of the 20 February session of the Warsaw Talks—rationalized by references to the case of defecting Chinese diplomat Liao Ho-shu—suggests that Peking is as yet undecided about its foreign policy posture.

#### D. China's Vital Interests: Korea and Taiwan

38. In North Korea, the Chinese have seen their influence diminish significantly, largely because of their own rude arrogance and partly because of the consequences of the USSR's renewed cultivation of Pyongyang and Kim Il-song. Such a deterioration, however, is not likely to be a permanent state of affairs. Developments in Korea are of major importance to China, especially if tensions there continue and the danger of hostilities grows. Eventually, we expect the Chinese to repair their position and attempt to gain some influence over the Korean leadership. Probably, however, China will not pursue a policy intended to increase the risks of war. Its behavior during the past year, particularly in the Pueblo crisis, suggests that the Chinese are not about to pledge themselves unreservedly to Kim Il-song's adventurism.

39. Taiwan, of course, is a central element in Chinese foreign policy. US support for the GRC is a monumental obstacle to any Chinese reconsideration of its relations with the US. Peking will almost certainly not abandon its claim to Taiwan, and this position appears to rule out acceptance of a two-China solution. Yet there is not much Peking can do to gain possession of Taiwan as long as it is reluctant to engage in a military confrontation with the US. There is the possibility of pressure on the offshore islands (Chinmen and Matsu). Such a move might appeal to Peking as a test of US intentions in the post-Vietnam period, especially if it could be used to aggravate relations between Washington and Taipei.

#### IV. THE POST-MAO PERSPECTIVE

40. In some respects it is fruitless to speculate on the longer term development of Chinese foreign policy. The prospect of Mao's departure overshadows all other considerations. In many respects, the situation is analogous to that of the USSR in the early 1950's, when the death of Stalin unlocked Soviet foreign policy and led to a series of significant new departures. Naturally, this question is uppermost in China's case also. Will Mao's departure open a new era of significant change in China's relations with the outside world?

41. We believe that Mao's departure will generate a strong movement toward modifying his doctrines and jettisoning his disruptive programs. In foreign affairs, new leadership will ultimately seek to focus more effectively on national interests

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understood in terms of a more realistic world view. Even if Maoist rhetoric should temporarily survive, we believe the trend will be toward moderating the Maoist line in favor of more practical diplomacy. Some modus vivendi with the USSR is possible, though anything approaching a renewal of the old alliance is most unlikely. Moreover, we would not exclude a return to the tactics of peaceful coexistence as part of an effort to undermine the US position in Asia.

42. But such a process is not inevitable and it would not in any case have to be steady and uninterrupted. If there is contention and struggle for the leadership, major policies could be frozen for a long-term interregnum. The timing of Mao's departure and the identity of the principal survivors could be important to policy. Finally, there is the response of outside powers. It would make a great difference whether a new leadership had plausible alternatives or whether it believed that its enemies were seeking to exploit China's weaknesses and uncertainties. Thus, the transition from Mao and his generation may last many years before real changes evolve. Meanwhile, support to subversive movements, if not to active insurgencies, is likely to play a continuing role in China's external policy.

43. In any case, a less ideological approach would not necessarily make China easier to deal or live with in Asia. Pursuit of its basic nationalist and traditional goals could sustain tensions in the area, and a China that was beginning to realize some of its potential in the economic and advanced weapons fields could become a far more formidable force in Asia than is Maoist China.

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