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PLAUSIBLE POLICY FOR THE PEOPLE'S
REPUBLIC OF CHINA IN LATIN AMERICA

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1 October 1973

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1 OCTOBER 1973 ✓



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BY

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AUTHOR: Franklyn C. Goode, LTC, TC
TITLE: Plausible Policy for the People's Republic of China
in Latin America
FORMAT: Essay
DATE: 1 October 1973
PAGES: 30

The knowledge that United States policy in Latin America has not always been what it should have been and the growing awareness of recent People's Republic of China's (PRC) economic and diplomatic successes in Latin America have produced some concern as to what the future intent and capabilities of China are in Latin America. This essay reviews China's intent (goals and objectives), capabilities, and the Latin American environment within which any Chinese policy must operate. Data was gathered using a literature search which emphasized the review of more recent periodicals. The conclusion reached is that the PRC must follow an essentially conservative policy in Latin America in the next decade. A policy of seeking increased influence through widened diplomatic relations, pragmatic trade and economic agreements, and anti-imperialist propaganda efforts. China's objectives will be realistically formulated to conform to resource capabilities and the socio-political and economic conditions in Latin America. Within this framework certain limited success is achievable and may be expected. However, no major PRC influence in Latin America is forecast.

US CONCERN OVER COMMUNISM IN LATIN AMERICA

There is an existing general concern within the United States of a significant communist threat in Latin America. Several factors have contributed to this perception, they include: Castro's inept but newsworthy attempts to export revolution; the 1969 Rockefeller Report on the Americas; the high visibility afforded Latin American guerrilla activity and increasing acts of terrorism; Chile's attempt at Democratic-Marxism; and finally, Latin America's rapid diplomatic embrace of the People's Republic of China (PRC). In an effort to determine the reality of any current or forecastable PRC ability to promote communism in Latin America, this essay seeks to identify the policy which China can realistically adopt for Latin America and will touch upon the degree of current communist influence in that area.

In order to achieve the above estimate of PRC intentions, this paper progresses from an initial examination of basic Chinese goals and objectives to a discussion of broad, worldwide Chinese foreign policy in support of these perceived objectives. The examination then narrows from the worldwide to a review of current PRC third world (new and developing nations) activity and further narrows to a more specific look at China's recent actions in Latin America. Those factors which tend to constrain and limit Chinese policy are subsequently discussed in order to finally arrive at what China can realistically achieve in Latin America and consequently, a forecast of the PRC's most plausible Latin American policy.

CHINA'S GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The primary national goal of the PRC may be stated as preservation of the regime.¹ Included within this goal is not only the nationalistic consideration of defense and security of homeland but also the ideological concern for use of this territory and the existing government/party organization as a base for the worldwide propagation of China's version of Marxist-Leninist Communism, in order to further strengthen the regime's world position. A corollary domestic goal of strengthening the economy not only supports the ability to insure security of the homeland but also assists in providing the necessary resources for achievement of another goal, that of attaining world status and recognition as a superpower or world center, a historical Chinese purpose.² The goal of sustaining the base for the propagation of communism is associated with the significant Chinese long term aim of transformation of the world along Maoist lines. This basic ideological goal is highly significant to the Chinese. Most short term accommodations and policy adjustments will reflect its consideration.³

A range of objectives are subordinate to these goals, however this essay will examine only those which have some significance in relation to a Chinese Latin American policy. The following selected objectives are those most closely related to the structuring of current Chinese foreign policy in relation to the third world and reflect an important need for increased trade and technology, and the concurrent requirement for broadened diplomatic relations:

increased research and development; increased industrialization; improved agriculture; expansion and modernization of transportation capability; support of wars of national liberation and Communist subversive movements; development of advanced weapons capability; establishment of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) as a world model; establishment of state relationships which benefit the PRC and erode US and USSR influence; acceleration of the demise of imperialism and revisionism; advancement of the Maoist version of world communism; and:

To win great power status and dominance of the world Communist movement by diplomatic, psychological, economic, and military pressures applied in state-to-state relations or within international organizations such as the UN.⁴

CHINA'S BROAD FOREIGN POLICY

The strength of capitalism as a world force is centered within the United States. China perceives this strength as her greatest, long term threat. More immediate threats are seen in the USSR and the rising economic power and possible militarism of Japan.⁵ These perceptions, domestic attitudes and objectives, and historical, geopolitical and ideological factors, all work to shape Chinese policy. Therefore this policy cannot be characterized as primarily "Chinese" or primarily "Communist."⁶

China began to move from its historical introversion subsequent to Stalin's death in early 1953 when Khrushchev's revisionism was determined to be ideologically unacceptable and became the major

accelerant to the Sino-Soviet rift.⁷ China gained increasing influence in the communist and underdeveloped world throughout the subsequent decade, resulting in significant pluralism and nationalism in the third world arena.⁸ China's outward reorientation was terminated in 1966 with Mao's initiation of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution which resulted in almost total Chinese withdrawal from foreign relations through 1969.⁹

Many internal stresses and demands caused Mao to undertake the Cultural Revolution.¹⁰ The results were not only a purification of the revolution (an intended objective) but also sharpened internal economic problems which had much to do with the subsequent basic change in foreign policy. Faced with a basic contradiction of either maintaining revolutionary purity through continued relations with only those states of similar ideological belief or satisfying national interests through indulging in world politics, China has chosen to engage in world politics.¹¹ This basic decision has resulted in significant adjustments to Chinese foreign policy. In the broader application it has emphasized the requirement for increased military power through an improved nuclear weapons capability.¹² In addition to making its defensive strategy more respectable such a capability aids in insuring continued third world recognition as a true world power. The decision to engage in world politics also drives major efforts toward acquiring much needed technology and parallel efforts to increase trade and improve global transportation capabilities.

CHINA'S THIRD WORLD POLICY

As indicated, the primary thrust of PRC foreign policy is support of nationalistic aims as opposed to supporting wars of national liberation. However, this policy is subject to varying degrees of emphasis. Where homeland defense is not a primary consideration (i.e., in areas far removed from China's borders) ideological considerations play a more important role.¹³ The PRC's current third world objectives may be therefore stated as (1) increased influence, and (2) encouragement of people's war.¹⁴ However, the encouragement of people's war becomes a highly selective and pragmatic issue. Although the adjustments to previous PRC policy may on the surface appear so negligible as to be insignificant, the framework within which policy actions work and their implementation have undergone major change.

The Cultural Revolution allowed the third world countries a breathing spell from the rather intense competition that was developing between the USSR and PRC in the rush to curry the favor of new and developing nations. The period allowed these countries enough time to grow in sophistication to the point where they could no longer be swept off their feet.¹⁵

China's framework of policy implementation was further adjusted by the increased emphasis on nationalism and the consequent alignment of national resources toward that goal. Although Peking continues to promise aid, they now stress the importance of revolutionaries

placing their primary reliance on their own resources and improving their revolutionary spirit.¹⁶

The "armed struggle" aspect of revolutionary effort has been soft pedaled as the PRC seeks sympathy and support for its objectives and more normalized international relations.¹⁷ The revolutionary concept of third world countries being rural bases which encircle the cities (superpowers) is still valid. However, the goal of transformation of the world along Maoist lines has been significantly muted.¹⁸ Propaganda efforts now represent the major Chinese efforts currently in support of revolutionary effort.¹⁹

China's previous failures in Africa, which include the support of armed insurrections which subsequently failed due to insufficient preparatory groundwork, have resulted in a more careful establishment of politico-economic bases in the developing countries.²⁰ And the PRC now seeks to achieve its goals through a more normalized diplomatic approach. The Nixon visit, establishment of an ever increasing number of foreign embassies, and UN membership all point toward more traditional diplomatic relationships and a need to disassociate with the more disreputable, radical groups which could prove an embarrassment.²¹

Supporting the previous contentions, a more specific picture of third world relationships is provided by the following trade and aid profiles. The PRC's basic concern with border defense is reflected in the fact that between 1955 and the early 1970's, China's \$1.9 billion investment in military aid went primarily to Communist countries of North Korea and North Vietnam, and almost

seventy-five percent of third world military aid went to Pakistan.²² The 1971 trade figures confirm both increased emphasis on trade with communist countries and a shift from trade with Western Europe to increased trade with certain countries of the third world (i.e., Zambia, Chile, and Peru). Credit foreign aid to Africa rose sharply (seventy percent) and trade with Latin America tripled.²³ Recent expansion of both PRC and USSR military aid to Africa highlights their continuing rivalry for influence and support in that area.²⁴

CHINA'S LATIN AMERICAN POLICY

China's further definition of third world policy to a specific Latin American policy takes into account the PRC's new position in the international diplomatic arena. It is also framed by PRC knowledge of the diverse character of individual Latin American nations. The major problem of effectively projecting a vigorous policy over the distances involved has acted to limit Chinese objectives and goals in Latin America. These objectives and goals must be categorized, in the main, as long range.

China's retreat from aggressive support of people's wars is timely in the sense that the previous policy had achieved no positive results in Latin America. An internecine contest for domination and guidance of insurgency in Latin America has existed between the USSR, Cuba and the PRC. The Latin American Communist parties have generally sided with the Soviets.²⁵ China's attempts

at winning revolutionary leadership were, and are, further thwarted by additional fragmentation within the Chinese oriented, local communist parties in Latin America.²⁶

Several additional factors tend to weaken the PRC's ability to support wars of national liberation in Latin America. The rural native population per square mile is quite low and the smallness of many of the countries precludes maneuver room. Additionally, no privileged sanctuaries exist between countries. The fact that many of the governments have effective, airborne counter-insurgent forces also discourages this type of effort.²⁷ Another major disadvantage is the lack of a solid political base. Most Latin American local communist parties are at best lukewarm in their support of insurgency and tend instead to adhere to the Soviet policy of peaceful coexistence.²⁸ Consequently, guerrilla warfare in Latin America has been reduced from being involved with the people against the government to nothing more than a running gun fight with the police.²⁹ An interesting result of these conditions is the trend of insurgency to move from the rural to the urban areas and the readjustment of terrorist tactics to concentration on kidnappings and hijackings. The PRC now provides only very limited support to Latin American insurgent forces.³⁰

Turning to the second PRC third world objective of increased influence, and its resultant Latin American policy, it is again apparent that China seeks to achieve this through more normal diplomatic means. The anti-imperialist theme of their policy

highlights criticism of US trade policies, emphasizes national sovereignty and nationalization of US-owned enterprises, and agitates the future status of the Panama Canal.³¹

Through highly pragmatic and selective foreign trade and aid support, the PRC carefully husbands her limited resources and applies them to those areas promising the greatest return. The 26 million dollar, interest free, 20-year loan to Guyana last year provides an excellent example. The loan will be used to pay for factories which will be provided by the PRC, requiring therefore, an increased and continued working relationship between the two countries. The move undercuts USSR attempts at full diplomatic recognition in Guyana and provides the PRC with an important foothold in the English-speaking Caribbean.³² Equally productive arrangements have been made with other Latin American countries, including Chile and Peru, and most recently an agreement with Mexico giving that country most favored trade status in return for trade advantages.³³

On the diplomatic front, the PRC continues its quest for influence at the expense of the US by supporting Panama in its canal demands and in the support of expanded coastal sovereignty. The latter carries favor with Latin American coastal fishing countries such as Ecuador and provides an ideal anti-imperialist theme for the PRC in their newly achieved forum in the UN.³⁴

CHILE

Any discussion of China's Latin American policy must address its particular relationship with the Marxist oriented countries of Chile and Cuba. Due to the fact that Allende's Marxist coalition achieved government control through democratic election, as opposed to revolution, China was extremely cautious in recognizing it as a true Marxist victory.³⁵ The Chinese fear that Allende had won the government but not the power is supported by the continued difficulty which Allende had in controlling Chile's course of events, culminating in his recent overthrow by military coup.

China's reservations were mixed with the satisfaction of the anti-imperialistic foothold which the Allende regime provided in Latin America. Full diplomatic relations were established in early 1971 and the PRC moved quickly to gain further influence and trade opportunities at the expense of the US, through trade agreements and generous, interest free, economic aid.³⁶ The recent military coup has clouded the future of these relationships and no realistic forecast can be accomplished until the situation stabilizes.

CUBA

Castro's successful 1959 revolution was immediately embraced by China. However, as Castro began developing and practicing his own revolutionary theory, and as he began moving toward increased dependence upon the USSR, China became increasingly disenchanted and critical.³⁷

The cool relationship of the 1960's has been warmed by recent bilateral moves toward lessened tensions. State relationships have been improved through diplomatic and cultural exchanges. However, there is no evidence to indicate that any rapprochement can be achieved in the theoretical areas.³⁸ This fact, coupled with Cuba's dependence on Moscow, will act as a continued deterrent to any closer alliance.

CONDITIONS AFFECTING FUTURE POLICY

There are an infinite number of historical, ideological and geopolitical factors which shape China's foreign policy in Latin America. Only those which have a major or peculiar Latin American impact will be addressed here. They will be discussed under the broad categories of conditions external and internal to Chinese influence.

INTERNAL CONDITIONS

Although the historic introversion of China exerts a cautionary influence on foreign policy, the national sense of superiority and goal of eventual world-wide hegemony is a strong and ingrained ideological force. Since social factors predominate over economic factors, ideology can be expected to continue to exert considerable influence over the broad spectrum of international Chinese economics, and therefore in specific trade and aid agreements with Latin American countries. However, domestic industrial and agricultural

realities impose severe limitations upon the range of alternatives which are available for policy choices.³⁹

Recent indications point toward a high potential growth rate in the Chinese economy. Agriculture appears near to significant breakthrough in new levels of yield, and industry continues an impressive growth.⁴⁰ However, insuring the promise of these trends demands continued priority application of available resources and it will be several generations before China can be considered an economic power.⁴¹ Additionally, the lack of a strong merchant fleet further restricts China's ability to project policy.⁴²

Although the People's Liberation Army (PLA) is a strong military factor in policy consideration on the Asian continent, the lack of ability to project this power via air or seahift, and the consistently conservative stance of the PLA commanders, limit its policy role in relation to Latin America.⁴³ This is not to say that the voice of the PLA commanders does not carry weight in foreign policy formulation, nor deny the PLA's covert logistic and training support of wars of national liberation.⁴⁴

The PLA expanded its political role and consequent influence under Lin Piao, and gained greater influence and strength during the Cultural Revolution. The present group of military leaders (concurrently party leaders) represents a strong voice in policy formulation and can be expected to gain influence during the period of succession after Mao. Representing the real political power base, the PLA will play a major role in selecting the government after Mao.⁴⁵

The problem of succession presents one of the most difficult current Chinese issues. It's resolution can have a major impact upon the foreign policy of China. The strength and stability of Chinese leadership which was so key in earlier years is now a growing source of weakness.⁴⁶ No visible attempt has been made to infuse younger leaders into the power structure in the numbers necessary, and in many cases key positions have remained unfilled for years. In fact, some purged individuals have recently been rehabilitated, apparently to utilize their previously proven management abilities.⁴⁷ Even if the infusion of younger blood were now accomplished, the capability of being able to truly transfer the power remains a significant question.⁴⁸ Regional factionalism persists in China today.⁴⁹ And the period of turbulence which can be forecast during power realignment will undoubtedly affect foreign policy in some manner. Traditional conservatism, regionalism, and a lack of centralized leverage in any future leadership coalition would appear to argue against any radical or risky changes in foreign policy after Mao.⁵⁰

EXTERNAL CONDITIONS

The countries outside of Latin America which most directly affect Chinese policy relations with respect to that area are the USSR, Japan and the US. China's problems with the USSR are deep and long term, and involve basic ideological differences.⁵¹ The PRC can be expected to continue to seek to undermine Soviet

influence in the communist parties of Latin America while continued critical response from the USSR is also expected.

China's view of Japan as a major and inevitable rival also affects the framing of Chinese Latin American policy, however to a lesser degree.⁵² Japan's geographical position, and economic and trading prowess provide the major, driving factors here. However, Latin America's limited trade potential for Japan, in relation to other areas of the world, has not produced any major policy confrontation as yet.

The lack of a strong, effective Latin American policy by the US, has created a vacuum which is an ideal target for the PRC.⁵³ The Chinese stand ready to develop any opportunity here, since to do so not only strengthens her position with the third world but actively undercuts the leader of world imperialism, in the leader's own back yard. Therefore, the lack of a strong US policy has created a very favorable condition for the Chinese in Latin America.

Internal, regional differences within Latin America are becoming more accentuated and commonalities are decreasing.⁵⁴ However, there are certain common conditions which are characteristic of Latin America as a whole, which will act to affect future PRC foreign policy in that area.

The principle asset for the PRC is the anti-imperialist sentiment found almost universally throughout Latin America. Other assets include: the political activism of Latin American students; the intellectual respect for Marxist concepts; and concentrated

landownership, which provides an ideal political target. There is also a desire for greater diplomatic and economic flexibility.⁵⁵ However, this desire for economic independence does not necessarily translate into an asset for the PRC. The Latin American desire for autonomy represents not only a demand for independence from the US but also an ambition for avoiding dependence upon any other country.⁵⁶ In fact, the PRC's arrival in Latin America has been viewed by some Latins with grave disapproval.⁵⁷

Conditions in Latin America which could be considered as obstacles to PRC policy include: distance from China, effective counter-guerrilla forces, communist party factionalism, and the significant differences between countries.⁵⁸ Additionally, there is a history in Latin America of solving domestic problems through government, and Latins have traditionally made poor communists.⁵⁹

PLAUSIBLE FUTURE POLICY IN LATIN AMERICA

The greater success of China's recent policy of rapprochement in Latin America, as opposed to the previous policy of supporting wars of national liberation, argues for more of the same in the future. Although China's dual third world objectives of increased influence and encouragement of people's wars are undoubtedly maintained, the second objective is muted by Latin American realities; and its underlying ideological goal of world communist domination and defeat of capitalism is pursued through seeking a broad, united third world front against imperialism.

Therefore, the most plausible future policy for the PRC is to continue to drive for increased influence in Latin America through widened diplomatic relations, pragmatic trade and economic agreements, and anti-imperialist propaganda efforts (Panama Canal, territorial sea rights, landownership, etc.).

These PRC efforts will be seriously limited by a variety of factors, to such an extent that the PRC cannot be considered a major threat to US interests in Latin America throughout this decade. These limiting factors include:

- growing Latin American nationalism
- the attitudes and actions of other major powers
- limited Chinese resources (to include transportation)
- geographic separation
- priority Chinese interests in other third world areas (periphery countries, Africa, etc.)
- internal domestic problems
- PRC leadership succession

A final comment should be addressed on the leadership succession issue and the effect which Mao's departure might have upon continuance of the essentially conservative policy which is predicted above.

Mao's death or departure from power leaves Chou En-lai as the only central power figure in China. Present foreign policy is felt to be primarily Chou's policy.⁶⁰ Therefore, should Chou act as the central leader, or a strong member of any coalition leadership, there should be no major adjustment to the current foreign policy.

if, however, Chou is excluded as a strong factor in any future government (he also is well advanced in years) then the remaining power base strength is found in the People's Liberation Army. The PLA has been traditionally conservative, and would undoubtedly be equally or more conservative in any foreign policy adjustments during the period of turbulence in government which Mao's departure must bring.

Therefore, China's increasingly realistic adjustment of policy to economic capability, the rising sense of nationalistic pragmatism, the difficulty of long range policy implementation, and the political and economic realities in Latin America, all conspire to forecast a conservative Chinese policy within Latin America. A policy which will continue to achieve some limited success but which promises no major influence in Latin America.


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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE		READ INSTRUCTIONS BEFORE COMPLETING FORM
1. REPORT NUMBER	2. GOVT ACCESSION NO.	3. RECIPIENT'S CATALOG NUMBER <i>AD 778899</i>
4. TITLE (and Subtitle) Plausible Policy for the People's Republic of China in Latin America		5. TYPE OF REPORT & PERIOD COVERED Student Essay
		6. PERFORMING ORG. REPORT NUMBER
7. AUTHOR(s) LTC Franklyn C. Goode, Transportation Corps, USA		8. CONTRACT OR GRANT NUMBER(s)
9. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME AND ADDRESS US Army War College Carlisle Barracks, Pa. 17013		10. PROGRAM ELEMENT, PROJECT, TASK AREA & WORK UNIT NUMBERS
11. CONTROLLING OFFICE NAME AND ADDRESS Same as Item 9		12. REPORT DATE 1 October 1973
		13. NUMBER OF PAGES <i>35</i>
14. MONITORING AGENCY NAME & ADDRESS (if different from Controlling Office)		15. SECURITY CLASS. (of this report) Unclassified
		15a. DECLASSIFICATION/DOWNGRADING SCHEDULE
16. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT (of this Report) Approved for public release; distribution unlimited		
17. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT (of the abstract entered in Block 20, if different from Report)		
18. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES		
19. KEY WORDS (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number) Reproduced by NATIONAL TECHNICAL INFORMATION SERVICE U S Department of Commerce Springfield VA 22151		
20. ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number) The knowledge that United States policy in Latin America has not always been what it should have been and the growing awareness of recent People's Republic of China's (PRC) economic and diplomatic successes in Latin America have produced some concern as to what the future intent and capabilities of China are in Latin America. This essay reviews China's intent (goals and objectives), capabilities, and the Latin American environment within which any Chinese policy must operate. Data was gathered using a literature search		

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which emphasized the review of more recent periodicals. The conclusion reached is that the PRC must follow an essentially conservative policy in Latin America in the next decade. A policy of seeking increased influence through widened diplomatic relations, pragmatic trade and economic agreements, and anti-imperialist propaganda efforts. China's objectives will be realistically formulated to conform to resource capabilities and the socio-political and economic conditions in Latin America. Within this framework certain limited success is achievable and may be expected. However, no major PRC influence in Latin America is forecast.