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THE IMPACT ON WORLD SECURITY OF PEOPLE'S
REPUBLIC OF CHINA'S RECENT RISE IN POWER

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ii

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**THE IMPACT ON WORLD SECURITY OF PEOPLE'S
REPUBLIC OF CHINA'S RECENT RISE IN POWER**

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iii

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The recent rise in power of Communist China has generated great concern in many nations of the Free World and Communist Block as well. The impact on world peace and security has been significant primarily because of a possible power balance shift among nations. A brief historical, political, and economic background of China is given. Current assets and constraints are examined. Basic objectives of the People's Republic of China and related threats are reviewed. There is little doubt that Red China will, in due time, become a great and influential power. A policy of negotiation, mutual understanding, and improved relations with Communist China will best serve the interests of the United States and world peace.

INTRODUCTION

China has been called by many the "Sleeping Giant" primarily because of its great potential in military, economic, and political power. The significant capability of China in becoming a great and powerful nation was recognized over the years by many observers, including Napoleon, who was quoted to have said:

"Let China sleep for when she wakes up the world will be sorry."

It is, however, important to note that a correct estimate of Communist China's present assets and future capabilities is very difficult to determine for several reasons. First of all, the mountainous terrain of this country where eight dialects are spoken, has created great regionalism with very poor communications and transportation facilities. In addition, due to a well maintained secrecy, reliable data are scarce or non-available. Malcolm Stewart put this in a very nice manner when he said:

"The traditional unreliability of chinese statistics complicates the task of arriving at reasonably accurate assessments and conclusions."¹

At this time, the present status and future capability of Red China's economic strength and military power are the ones that are known the least to the Free World. What is known is that Communist China has enormous human resources. Her population is rapidly approaching the spectacular number of one billion. Her industrial assets are expanding slowly but surely. In addition, her natural resources appear to be

adequate or abundant. It's apparent that today the communist government is in firm control in the People's Republic of China (PRC), and that this control will continue for a long time to come. On the other hand, it's also known that the population growth coupled with scarcity of productive land will continue to be a serious problem. Mainland China will have to depend on imports for food and related products for a long time to come. This will significantly take away from industrial and military developments. There is no doubt, however, that taking everything into consideration, the People's Republic of China is headed for the status of a great power in the world; most probably not in our generation, or in our children's generation, but some time soon after that.

In the last few decades, the People's Republic of China has had great successes and at the same time great failures in the economic field, military strength, and political power. Close observation reveals, however, that most of the crises have been solved rapidly and successfully and that the general direction has been one of great success and significant progress. For this reason, there is no question in anyone's mind that the People's Republic of China will be in due time a great power and will certainly influence the power balance in the world.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Although one of the center of ancient civilization, China was isolated from the rest of the world for over two thousand

years and its population struggled to survive primarily on agriculture and farm products.² In the 1840's, with the beginning of Western influence, China made remarkable progress in industry, trade, and economy.³ A chaotic situation was produced by the sudden change. Eventually, this led to the Sino-Japanese war which began in 1937, and terminated in 1945. Following the end of the war, the Nationalist Government was faced with serious economic problems and the Communist Party, led by Mao Tse-tung took over the government. This resulted in the government of Peking and the Nationalist Government of Taiwan led by Chiang Kai-shek.⁴ A "Period of Restoration" followed. Armed resistance was abolished and economic stability initiated.⁵ A few years later, with the aid of the Soviet Government, the government of the People's Republic of China made great and remarkable progress in industry, agriculture, and economy.

The "First Five Years Plan" succeeded the period of restoration. During this time, which went from 1953 to 1957, great emphasis and priority was given to the heavy industry sector of the economy and to "capital construction."⁶ Great strides were made. Encouraged by this initial success, the Communist Party leaders announced the "Great Leap Forward" where all the available man-power was mobilized in order to support the economic effort.⁷ Shortly thereafter, the prolonged and serious agricultural crisis and the related reduction in grain output which greatly affected the industrial sector caused a collapse of the "Great Leap Forward" during

the years of 1959 to 1960.⁸ The Sino-Soviet split in 1960, which eventually resulted in withdrawal of support from the USSR added other serious problems. In order to remedy to this situation, grandiose ideas of rapid growth were abandoned and a more reasonable and bland policy was instituted. This change gave immediate good results; however, the authority of Mao Tse-tung appeared to be greatly diminished.⁹

In the early 1960's, Mao Tse-tung turned then more and more toward the People's Liberation Army (PLA) as the only institution capable of carrying his programs and in 1966, launched the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. Red Guards were formed and old leaders and institutions were attacked and discredited. A chaotic situation resulted and the People's Liberation Army was called in to restore order and stability. By 1969, the People's Liberation Army had restored enough control. Shortly thereafter, Revolutionary Committees were instituted with the PLA in charge.

The ninth Communist Party of China (CPC) Congress held in April of 1969, approved the cultural revolution and in this way, a new militarization of the chinese society took place. This was strongly reminiscent of similar situations in Germany and Japan prior to World War II and has presented a grave danger for peace in the world.

ASSETS AND CONSTRAINTS OF MAINLAND CHINA

Communist China is a large country surpassed in size only by the Soviet Union and Canada.¹⁰ About 80% of the total area

is made up by mountains and plateaus.¹¹ The mountainous regions are located primarily in the west and southwest. Toward the east, the terrain is less mountainous and descends gradually toward the sea.

Most of the population and agricultural development as well as a great portion of the industry is located in this area which represents only 11% of the entire nation.¹²

The projected population of the People's Republic of China for the year 1981 has been estimated to be in the vicinity of one billion. This creates a great number of problems but also some definite assets. On the negative side, there are one billion people to feed, govern, house, and find jobs for. On the other hand, one billion people represent a great pool of human resources readily available for use when needed.

Agriculture occupies a significant place of importance and interest in the economy of Communist China. For this reason, any problem in harvest and crop may have serious and far reaching consequences. Of the 3,700,000 square miles occupied by the People's Republic of China, only 11.1% is arable.¹³ Of this land, not all can be cultivated because of unfavorable communications and weather conditions. A serious problem does exist because recent increase of products in agriculture has not kept pace with the increase in population. For this reason, Communist China must develop increasing trade credits and contacts with countries that can help, including the United States and the USSR. Unless this is accomplished, the economic, industrial, and military progress will be slow and pain-

ful. In the mid 1960's, much emphasis was placed on fertilizers and insecticides.¹⁴ In addition, great importance was given to irrigation and mechanization. In spite of all this, Communist China's outlook for rapid expansion of her agricultural and industrial base is poor.

The communist leadership in the People's Republic of China has always been preoccupied with the task of building Communist China into a great industrial power. A partial success was achieved a few years ago primarily because of the aid received from the USSR, which was subsequently withdrawn in the mid 1960's. The temporarily lost capabilities in producing heavy and sophisticated weapons and machines have been recently regained due to an intensive economic and technologic effort.¹⁵ Communist China has a surplus and relative abundance of most minerals with the exception of precious metals.¹⁶ Cognizant of the importance of minerals, Communist China has undertaken extensive geological researches and development operations. Coal reserves appear to be abundant, iron and petroleum are present in adequate quantity.¹⁷ It's apparent that Communist China has sufficient mineral resources to become a first rank industrial power.¹⁸ Recently, production of coal, iron, and petroleum has been on a definite increase. All this indicates that the People's Republic of China is on the move and should not be considered as a country without economic progress or aspirations. Communist China imports a considerable quantity of wheat and barley and exports rice in considerable amount because the latter sells on the world's market at higher price than the former grains.¹⁹

Communist China in addition exports a considerable amount of fertilizers, textiles, and manufactured goods; however, international buyers for these products are difficult to find.²⁰

The People's Republic of China uses trades, not only because of economic necessity, but also for political infiltration especially in Africa and Asia. Chu En Lai has said, "Trade and politics are inseparable things."²¹ It is expected that the People's Republic of China will intensify trade and political infiltration in the next few decades to come.

SHIFT OF BALANCE OF POWER IN THE WORLD
AS A RESULT OF CHINA'S EMERGING STRENGTH

Additional development of manpower and natural resources in the People's Republic of China will most certainly affect the balance of power and peace in the world.

This is in fact, a definite possibility if one considers that today peace exists primarily because of a balanced power between potential enemies.²² On the other hand, armed conflicts do occur if this balance is upset and one country feels that has gained a definite advantage and can obtain a certain victory. The concept of balance of power is based on the fact that potential enemies are reluctant to initiate military hostility not only because the chances of victory are 50/50, but also because the victor is assured only a marginal and very costly victory which in many instances will not even be worthwhile.²³

The balance of power in the world can be upset by any nation in a direct or indirect way. The former approach con-

sists in developing the war machine in that particular country. The latter has to do with supporting other countries that could prevent the potential enemy from growing stronger or by keeping him occupied militarily elsewhere.²⁴ The first approach is costly; the second approach is cheap. It appears that the People's Republic of China is working with great success on both of these approaches. In the first place, it has been observed that during the last few decades, the war machine of Communist China has increased in strength and has undergone great modernization. During the Korean War (1950-1953) the Chinese People's Liberation Army underwent great changes and updating.²⁵

In the first few years, the People's Liberation Army was based on the military model of the Red Army. Political education was given to the ranks by their leaders according to the policy of the Russian Army.²⁶ After the Sino-Soviet split, the People's Liberation Army suffered a setback and its progress was halted.

In a few years, however, it became evident that the USSR, could not be trusted and that the Red Army could not be used as a model for Communist China's needs.²⁷ It also became evident that Communist China needed a great military deterrent to guarantee its National and International interests. Great progresses were than made with the result that today, the People's Liberation Army is a strong army, capable of nuclear strikes and equipped with modern and sophisticated weaponry. In addition, it has been observed that since the early 1970's, the

People's Republic of China began to move rapidly and aggressively from a self-imposed economic and diplomatic isolation in order to recuperate from the time which had been lost in the past.²⁸ An increasing technical assistance was provided to many less developed countries.

Economic and military aids to countries of Africa, Asia, and Europe increased many folds. Foreign aid has been and will continue to be for the People's Republic of China, an important tool in order to create areas of influence in the world. Soviet and American influence is being challenged and this can create a situation which is likely to upset the balance of power in the world.

OBJECTIVES OF RED CHINA AND RELATED THREATS TO WORLD SECURITY

Having examined the actual and potential capabilities of Red China, perhaps a good way to identify and appreciate the nature of People's Republic of China threats to the Free World is by studying and evaluating the PRC National objectives. In this way, the impact on World Security of People's Republic of China rising in power can be easily derived.

Since the Sino-Soviet split in 1957, Communist China has been concerned with the possibility of remaining militarily isolated and therefore totally responsible for its own defense. The communist leadership has also been greatly disturbed that Mainland China has remained "encircled" by two super powers, the United States and the USSR. For this reason, one of the

basic objectives for Red China has been to develop a military force capable of nuclear strikes in order to obtain a certain degree of national security. Soon after the Sino-Soviet split, Red China, unable to obtain further reliance on the Russian protective nuclear umbrella, began to move toward an independent nuclear force. This led to the explosion of the first Chinese atom bomb on the 16 October 1964. Remarkable progress has been made since that time, some of it is known, some unknown. In spite of all this, however, the current military strategy and doctrine of the People's Republic of China is based primarily on defense of the mainland and limited support of the so called "Wars of National Liberation."

It is believed that at this time, Communist China still lacks a valid and significant nuclear capability.²⁹ It can be readily appreciated that in seeking to improve her defense capabilities, Red China may easily become a world super power capable of offensive actions against the Free World and other nations within the communist block. This is a definite threat to world peace.

Another major objective of the People's Republic of China has been to increase its influence in the communist and non-communist world. Possession of nuclear weapons has eliminated dependency on the USSR, and has increased the PRC prestige and power within the communist world. In addition, Red China has shown great interest in establishing relations with other countries and having friendly and neutral nations on its borders and throughout the world. The possession of a strong

military posture has greatly increased the PRC influence in the world, while the United States's power and credibility has been diluted. As a result, a power balance shift in favor of Communist China with significantly serious consequences for the Free World can be considered as a definite possibility.

The incorporation of Taiwan and the destruction of the Nationalist regime has been another major goal of the People's Republic of China. Up to this time, all the efforts have been unsuccessful primarily because of the threat of United States intervention. The inability to obtain even a partial success on this matter has stimulated Red China even more to develop nuclear weapons in order to avoid the United States from intervening.

Another significant objective of the People's Republic of China has been to acquire a certain economic independence and to develop and expand trade with other nations of the world in a way that will serve best and foremost the Chinese interests. This has been and for the foreseeable future will continue to be of great importance because of the enormous size of the population. Great progress has been made in this direction in the last few decades; however, much more remains to be done. An economically strong Red China is believed to be much more difficult to deal with since concessions, agreements, and treaties will not be easy to work out.

These objectives and related threats are real, current, and of serious impact and concern for the security of the United States and the Free World. It can be anticipated that

the People's Republic of China will persevere and intensify all the actions necessary for the achievement of these objectives. This is because Red China has really no choice being isolated as it is from the two super powers of the world; namely, the United States and the USSR.

The military and economic strength of Mainland China is expected therefore to grow because the communist leadership has learned that their country has to provide for its own defense and cannot depend on other nations for assistance. In addition, a strong Red China makes this nation less vulnerable to nuclear threats which have been used in the past by both the United States and the USSR on several occasions.

History has shown that great military power can be used for defensive and offensive needs either deliberately or by miscalculation. It can be done by a single country or in conjunction with other nations. This is the reason why the recent rise in power of the People's Republic of China can be considered as a real danger to the peace of the Free World and could cause a power balance shift among the nations. Containment of these threats is of vital importance. In order to do so, the United States should pursue two avenues of approaches. First of all, an economic and military superiority should be retained. No matter how strong Red China can or will become, the United States should have a definite and unquestionable superiority in order to deter attacks and annihilate the attacker should they occur. It is well recognized that this approach is costly, controversial, and leading to severe cri-

ticism. It can raise many valid questions. How can increasing military expenditures be justified in the United States when there are at home so many unresolved problems in relation to housing, health, welfare, and education? Why must the United States retain the role of super power and be recognized as the strongest nation in the world? It appears, however, that certain observers fail to understand that if this nation has to survive and retain its position of respect and leadership in the world, there is really no substitute for a strong and healthy military posture.

Military strength has been recognized by many and for a long time as a good foundation for serious and meaningful negotiation. For this reason, our military strength must be maintained. In addition, while the People's Republic of China and other potential enemies of the United States are constantly and rapidly increasing their military potential, it is foolish for our nation to unilaterally relax its efforts in maintaining a military force capable of discouraging aggression by any nation or group of nations considering an aggressive act.

Secondly, the United States should continue to pursue toward the People's Republic of China, not the policy of confrontation of several decades ago, but a policy of communication and negotiations. This new approach began in 1972, and has since produced excellent results. It should be continued and encouraged.

Prior to this time, the United States and Red China were very hostile to each other. This situation led to several

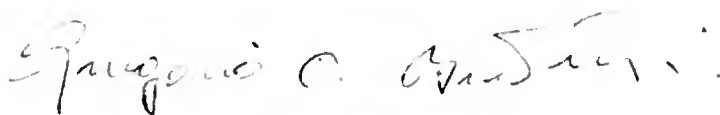
armed conflicts with great danger to world peace. If the United States can demonstrate its intent to construct a new relationship with Red China characterized by reconciliation and mutual understanding, many threats generating from the People's Republic of China's rise in power can be eliminated. There are really no other alternatives that can be accepted, and recognized as working in the best interest of the United States and world peace.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It appears then that because of its great resources and willingness to become a great nation, the People's Republic of China will in due time assume a position of power and prominence in the world. Due to significant difficulties in industry and agriculture, this new position of the People's Republic of China appears unlikely in our or next generation but is a definite possibility some time soon after that bearing some unforeseeable circumstances. This possibility is of serious concern to the United States, USSR, and many other nations of the world. Some serious and difficult questions arise: Should the United States aid the People's Republic of China in economic developments? What long range policy toward the People's Republic of China will best serve the interest of the United States? Can the United States influence the behavior of Mainland China? Is an economically healthy People's Republic of China a lesser risk than an economically desperate Communist China?³⁰

It is possible that whatever external influence can be

exercised' by the United States and other nations on the policy of the People's Republic of China will have very little effect on the final outcome. It is wrong; however, to assume that it will have no affect at all.³¹ While there are no definite ways to manipulate and shape the policy of the People's Republic of China, the United States's interests will be best served by a policy of cooperation and negotiations.



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FOOTNOTES

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