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A Chinese Communist Nuclear Detonation and Nuclear
Capability: Major Conclusions and Key Issues
(References are to pages in the basic paper.)

I. Major Conclusions

1. The great asymmetry in Chinese Communist and U.S. nuclear capabilities and vulnerabilities makes Chinese Communist first-use of nuclear weapons highly unlikely except in the event of an attack upon the mainland which threatened the existence of the regime. Apart from serving as an additional inhibition on some levels of U.S. attack upon the mainland, a Chinese nuclear capability need impose no new military restrictions on the U.S. response to aggression in Asia (e.g., on amphibious operations). A limited ChiCom intercontinental capability, when and if achieved, would not eliminate this basic asymmetry. But the Chinese Communists (and non-Communist Asians) might believe that such a capability would have increased effect as a deterrent because of an unwillingness by the U.S. to assume the risks, in situations in which its interests were marginally engaged, of the absolute level of damage which the ChiComs could inflict. (pp 5-11)

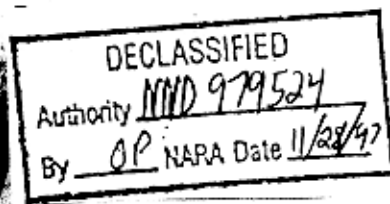
2. Whatever actual U.S. intentions, so long as the ChiComs have only soft, vulnerable delivery means, they will have to take account of the danger of a U.S. nuclear or non-nuclear counterforce attack as a possible U.S. response to major ChiCom aggression. This could increase ChiCom caution. (p 6)

3. Chinese prudence in the use of military force reinforces conclusions emerging from military logic. The basic military problems we will face are likely to be much like those we face now: military probing operations designed to test the level of the U.S. commitment and response; relatively low-level border wars; and "revolutionary" wars supported by the ChiComs. To the extent that there is danger of miscalculation by Peiping it is less likely to arise from overestimation of its military strength than from optimistic estimates of the psychological situation in Asia, and with respect to

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the reactions of the U.S., or possibly, U.S. European allies. Miscalculation is less likely to express itself in high-risk military actions than in somewhat increased willingness to accept risks in a process of gradual escalation. (pp 11-14, 18-19)

4. The ChiComs will value their nuclear capability as a deterrent to attack on the mainland and for its psychological effects in weakening the will of countries resisting insurgency, in inhibiting their requests for U.S. assistance and in stimulating and exploiting divisions within Asia and between Asian countries and the West. It will be used to put political pressure on the U.S. military presence and to obtain support for Chinese acknowledgment of claims to preeminence in Asia and status as a world power. (pp 12-13)

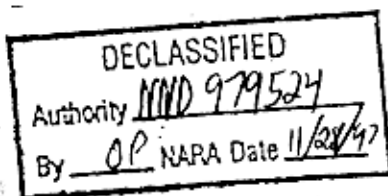
5. Peiping's tactics are likely to have two broad strands: (a) seeking to instill fear of its power; and (b) emphasizing its peaceful and protective intentions and attempting to demonstrate that it is U.S. nuclear power that brings the danger of nuclear war to Asia. (pp 19-21)

6. Asian countries will seek (or at least welcome) U.S. actions of reassurance. At the same time neutrals particularly may push harder for an Asian nuclear free zone, Chinese Communist membership in the U.N., participation in disarmament negotiations, etc. A ChiCom nuclear capability will have some effect in undermining remaining belief in return to the mainland on Taiwan and in eroding international support for the GRC. Large-scale raids by the GRC against the mainland would tend to accentuate this latter process. A ChiCom nuclear capability does not make a serious military effort to take the offshores more likely, but might be exploited for politically divisive effect in an offshores crisis although this, too, while possible, is not considered likely. (pp 11-14, 21-26)

7. A ChiCom capability is likely initially to confirm both aligned and non-aligned in their present policies. Longer-term effects will depend upon U.S. action and upon the general evolution of the Asian situation. A ChiCom capability in itself seems unlikely to stimulate a significant increase

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in willingness of Asians to cooperate in defense or non-defense matters but may have marginal reenforcing effect upon such tendencies as exist, particularly if the U.S. takes appropriate action to strengthen these tendencies. (pp 22-23)

8. Desires for reassurance are likely to express themselves in requests for (a) new or confirmation of existing defense guarantees and specific application of these to nuclear defense; (b) various forms of nuclear cooperation; and (c) increased conventional military assistance, particularly air defense. With the U.S. nuclear deterrent in the background, an evident U.S. will and ability to respond rapidly to Communist aggression without undue reliance upon nuclear weapons will be an important form of reassurance to Asian nations and a deterrent to ChiCom miscalculation. (pp 26-28, 37-40)

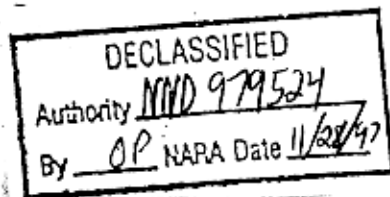
9. Of the three potential non-Communist nuclear powers in Asia (Australia, India and Japan), only India might in the foreseeable future seek a nuclear capability. (pp 27-28)

10. Availability of Korean and Philippine bases does not seem likely to be affected nor does access to Thai bases, provided U.S. words and actions provide evidence of a continuing strong commitment to Thai defense. Dramatic effects on access to Japanese bases are not likely, though there will be some increased tendency toward restriction. (pp 28-29)

11. The USSR will be concerned that a nuclear capability will increase Peiping's prestige and influence in the Communist world and among the developing countries. While it very probably realizes that the ChiComs are unlikely to be reckless, the USSR will fear Chinese miscalculation that could lead to situations in which it would be forced to choose between coming to the aid of a Communist state or failing to perform its role as protector of the Communist world. Ultimate ChiCom dependence upon the Soviet nuclear umbrella will give the USSR some residual influence over Peiping in crisis situations. Soviet cooperation with the U.S. in containing Communist China is more likely to be tacit than explicit. (pp 31-32, 93)

II. Key Issues

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II. Key Issues

Introduction. Since, in general, a Chinese Communist nuclear capability will affect existing problems at the margins rather than create wholly new ones, most actions to deal with it represent adjustments in, or projections of, existing U.S. policies and programs rather than wholly new approaches. Accordingly, while actions proposed in the report can be justified on the basis of implications of a Chinese Communist nuclear capability, decisions on them must often take account of other considerations. (The list of proposed actions below does not include all actions recommended in the report.)

Issue No. 1: Against the background of a ChiCom nuclear capability and the requirements for reassurance which it will generate, what kind of U.S. military strategy, posture and programs would be most appropriate in Asia?

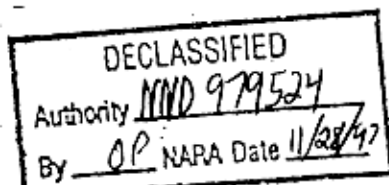
General Purpose Forces Studies, prepared last year in the Joint Staff (but not formally approved by the JCS), indicated that U.S. and allied conventional forces could deal successfully with Communist aggression in Southeast Asia, Korea or Taiwan provided construction, pre-positioning and preparatory actions and improvement in sea and air-lift were undertaken for Southeast Asia and deficiencies in support capabilities remedied in Korea.

Nevertheless, military thinking and planning for the Far East has tended to prefer a relatively low nuclear threshold. General Taylor's report on his trip to the Far East in the fall of 1962, JCS studies and the recent recommendations by Secretary McNamara on redeployments involving withdrawals of conventional forces from the area have all posed this issue. How is the issue related to a Chinese Communist nuclear capability?

It is evident that effective strategy for Asia must find an appropriate blend between an implicit nuclear threat and an evident visible ability to deal conventionally with

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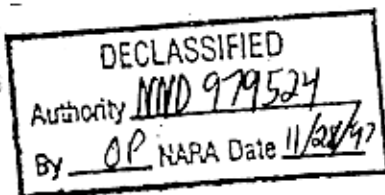
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Communist aggression. When the ChiComs have a nuclear capability there will be increased fear in Asia of the possibility of a nuclear war on Asian soil. An evident (declared or undeclared) U.S. policy of major reliance upon nuclear weapons will in this circumstance make Asian states more reluctant, if not afraid, to seek U.S. assistance, more concerned that the U.S. would not respond adequately to lower levels of aggression that would not justify nuclear weapons use, and less likely to give the U.S. continued access to bases and facilities (particularly in Japan). Willingness to resist the political and military pressures of a nuclear-armed Communist China would therefore tend to be reduced. Moreover, the more evident the U.S. dependence upon nuclear weapons, the greater is likely to be the appeal of Peiping's proposals for removing the danger of nuclear war from Asia through nuclear free zones, etc. and the greater the acceptance of its claims that its nuclear program is defensive in character.

Not only the improvement in U.S. conventional capabilities, but also the decline in ChiCom capabilities, in part as a result of the Sino-Soviet split, make it practical to consider a relatively high nuclear threshold. For example, the General Purpose Forces Study on Korea concluded that resumption of Korean hostilities by the Communists would require extensive Soviet technical and logistic support and that without such support it was questionable whether the ChiComs and/or North Koreans could launch a sustained offensive. Since that study was prepared, it has become more evident both that such Soviet support will not be forthcoming and that the cut-off of Soviet military aid will have increasingly serious effects upon Communist China's conventional capabilities.

On the other hand, it is not safe to assume that the Sino-Soviet dispute will preclude Soviet nuclear support to third country Communist regimes (North Korea or North Vietnam) if they are placed under actual or threatened nuclear attack (or even to Communist China, if it is threatened with nuclear destruction).



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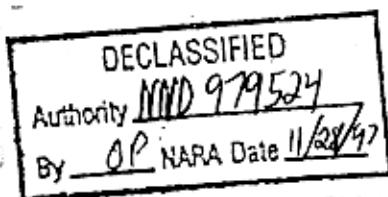
destruction). The USSR would be under great pressure precisely because of the issues involved in the Sino-Soviet dispute, to provide assistance. Even if provided initially only on the verbal and political level, such assistance could make it very difficult for the U.S. to initiate, or when initiated to continue, use of nuclear weapons.

(Actions Proposed: no increase in the apparent or real U.S. dependence upon nuclear weapons; a decision that nuclear weapons will be used in responding to non-nuclear attack only in situations in which U.S. and allied conventional forces are not sufficient to contain a major Communist aggressive action which jeopardizes vital U.S. interests -- U.S. and allied forces should, at a minimum, be able to enforce a pause in the event of major ChiCom attack; avoidance of redeployments which will (or which will appear to) significantly reduce the U.S. non-nuclear presence and, so far as possible, avoidance of timing of redeployments to follow close after a ChiCom nuclear detonation; dispatch of one POLARIS submarine to the Pacific in advance of detonation, but in continued and subsequent deployments particular emphasis to dual-capable seaborne forces such as carrier task forces (e.g. proposed Indian Ocean Task Force); various actions to improve and make visible conventional rapid reaction capabilities; for primarily psychological reasons and as necessary, air defense for U.S. bases on territories of allies, deployment of mobile air defense units to Asia and responsiveness to the likely increased sense of air threat without, however, proliferating major new air defense programs. Actions rejected: creation of a specifically identified standing counter-China nuclear deterrent force; deployment of land based MRBMs to Asian territory; extensive refinement of measures for increasing survivability of U.S. nuclear forces in Asia.) (pp 34-46, 53-58, 63-71)

Issue No. 2: How can Asian states best be offered assurance of U.S. deterrence of, and defense against, nuclear attack in a form that (a) will be reassuring rather than

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alarming to countries with a wide range of attitudes toward nuclear weapons and toward relations with the West; (b) will reduce the possibility of development of national nuclear capabilities (particularly by India); while (c) avoiding entanglement of the U.S. in undesirable commitments or arrangements?

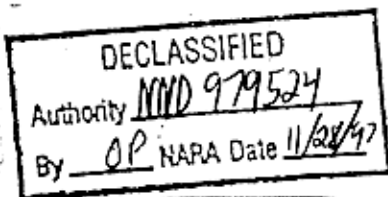
(Actions proposed: a general unilateral U.S. declaration on nuclear defense, and, as needed: private assurances to allies under existing security commitments; offers to neutrals of a declaratory commitment to consult; offers of bilateral planning for nuclear defense; in the event of actual ChiCom nuclear threat and in response to request, emplacement on an ad hoc basis of nuclear weapons under U.S. control on Asian territory or nearby. Actions rejected: more formal clear-cut U.S. commitments to neutrals; emplacement of nuclear weapons under joint control; and, for the present at least, an effort to obtain a UK guarantee of nuclear defense for India and Pakistan.) (pp 46-52, 58-63)

Issue No. 3: How can the U.S. meet probable Chinese Communist efforts to demonstrate its peaceful and protective intentions through proposals for Asian nuclear free zones, etc. with positive U.S. initiatives without acting in a way that will be seriously unsettling to U.S. Asian allies or inconsistent with other major U.S. policies?

(Actions proposed: continued exploitation of the test ban to isolate Communist China politically on this issue; in advance of a ChiCom detonation statement of a willingness and desire to negotiate with Communist China on arms control and disarmament when it demonstrates a willingness to negotiate seriously, while at the same time pointing out that Communist China's present views make it evident that such negotiations would not now be meaningful; development of the Asian components of the U.S. Outline Treaty; continued exploration through such forums as the Warsaw meetings of the extent to which basis exists for reaching understanding on arms control; response to proposals for nuclear free zones which, while not

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rejecting the proposals outright, would state the qualifications that such proposals would need to meet for serious U.S. consideration; a public U.S. policy statement soon after the ChiCom nuclear detonation which would respond to both strands of probable ChiCom exploitation - to this element as well as to the element of threat. Actions rejected: for the immediate future, bringing Communist China into the Eighteen Nation Disarmament Commission.) (pp 73-75, 86-89)

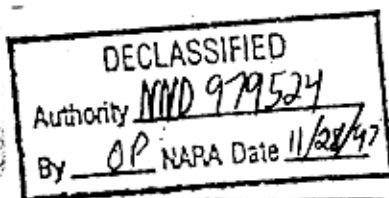
Issue No. 4: Many considerations besides a Chinese nuclear capability bear upon general U.S. policy toward the Republic of China. However, by helping to undermine the raison d'etre of the Nationalist Regime and by tending to erode its international support, a ChiCom nuclear capability could enhance Peiping's opportunities for political subversion of the GRC through offshore islands crises or otherwise. While the Chinese nuclear detonation and capability may have some longer term effects in eroding GRC support on the UN membership question, other factors are likely to be of greater importance and the more immediate effect is likely to be to confirm present attitudes. Other nations can be expected to argue for improved means of communication with Peiping once it has nuclear arms.

These and other considerations raise three interrelated questions: (a) What can be done to improve prospects for continued international support of the GRC and to reduce prospects for effective subversion by Communist China? (b) Would it be desirable to apply pressure on the GRC for withdrawal from the offshores? (c) Is it necessary to change our position on the UN membership question?

(Actions proposed: In general it is considered that, in this context, present policies require no change. We should discourage major raids on the mainland; continue present long-term efforts to lay the basis for a different vision of the future on Taiwan than return to the mainland through political reform and diversion of resources from military to economic

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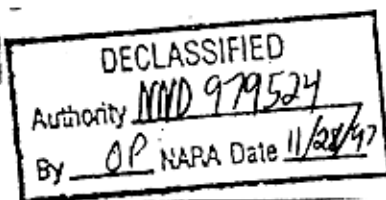
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development purposes; make no serious effort or effort "for the record" to effect change in the offshores (through careful review of the pros and cons as discussed in the basic paper and review of existing military plans for possible U.S. first-use of nuclear weapons is suggested); make no change for this reason in the U.S. position on UN membership while recognizing the probable international political need to find other particular means of communication with Peiping (in addition to the Warsaw talks). (pp 14-18, 23-25, 84-86, 96-105))

Issue No. 5: Peiping can be expected to use its nuclear capability in exploiting existing divisions within Asia. What can be done to stimulate greater intra-regional cooperation in defense and non-defense matters, given the marginal effects of a Chinese nuclear capability in this respect?

(Actions proposed: private reiteration against the background of the ChiCom capability of the importance of settlement of intra-regional disputes and assumption of a greater measure of defense responsibility through cooperative action to meet a common threat; establishment of informal joint committees or study groups of representatives of U.S. missions and local governments in allied and some non-allied countries for continuing discussion of the implications of a developing ChiCom nuclear capability against the background of the general Chinese situation and similar use of SEATO and ANZUS; greatly expanded employment of the third country training technique under MAP to increase military training exchange within Asia; active U.S. support for a Pacific Defense College; emphasis upon implications of a ChiCom capability in CINCPAC weapons demonstrations; identification of specific measures by which Japan, India and Australia can play a larger role in the area; assignment of responsibility within AID for giving impetus to regional possibilities within existing aid programs and arranging feasibility studies of possible binational or multinational projects; and creation of a field office in South and Southeast Asia to provide staff assistance to U.S. missions in dealing with intra-

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regional problems and in identifying means of fostering limited bilateral or multilateral forms of non-military and military cooperation. (pp 23, 76-84)

Issue No. 6: A Chinese Communist nuclear detonation and capability is likely to generate additional requests for military assistance, particularly air defense. These requests will reflect in part a desire for general reassurance with respect to the U.S. commitment, in part a more particular sense of air threat (despite the fact that the real air threat will not be significantly increased). Yet MAP levels are declining and this decline will particularly effect Asia because of the large proportion of MAP already going to Asia. How can demands for this kind of reassurance be met?

(Actions proposed: anticipation of this contingent requirement in present aid planning; in the event, without permanently reversing the general downward trend in MAP, provision of temporary limited increases in military assistance to Asian countries as a form of reassurance, obtaining funds initially by diversions to be replenished in the following appropriations cycle. Action rejected: special request to Congress for additional MAP based upon the needs generated by a ChiCom detonation and capability.) (pp 43-44, 71-72)

S/P:R.H.Johnson
October 15, 1963