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**The Monolith Cracking:
American Response to the Sino-Soviet Split, 1961-1963**

By

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Abstract

Scholars interested in Sino-Soviet-US triangular relations have generally been contending that during the early 1960s, the John F. Kennedy administration had committed itself to the wedge strategy – namely, to exacerbate the increasingly furious Sino-Soviet dispute – of which the American pursuit of the Limited Test Ban Treaty was a crucial part. However, I, as this thesis shows, am convinced that the Kennedy administration had been more concerned about exploiting than aggravating the Sino-Soviet split, although it did take pains to avoid the reconciliation between the Chinese and the Soviets. This not only had to do with the constant uncertainties about the future of Sino-Soviet relations but also was out of the American hope to use the Soviet restraint of China, which demanded the residual Soviet leverage on the Chinese. Therefore, I view the American quest for the test ban not as the wedge strategy's embodiment but as an excellent case of the US utilizing the Sino-Soviet discord to stifle China's nuclear program. Actually, with the American struggle for the underdeveloped world, China's global revolutionary initiatives and nuclear ambitions made it the archenemy of the United States, much more dangerous than the Soviets advocating peaceful coexistence. Lastly and fundamentally, the Americans, embracing Wilsonian liberalism, had not expected much from the communist infighting.

Introduction

The American myth of a monolithic world communist movement had been prevalent since the late 1940s, especially after the outbreak of the Korean War. Keeping pace with the Congress and the public, the State Department officials and the National Security Council (NSC) strategists, with the approval of NSC 68 in September 1950, also came to perceive communism as both a moral evil, as opposed to American liberty and way of life, and a monolith, with different communist regimes being identically perilous under the Soviet Union's control.¹

Such was the case with the Sino-Soviet alliance. On the eve of the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, Dean Acheson, then Secretary of State, referred to the Communist Party of China (CPC) as a puppet serving "the interest of a foreign imperialism,"² a view persisting through the first half of the 1950s. Although frictions between the Chinese and the Soviets were gradually captured by the Americans, US Consulate General in Hong Kong as late as 1955 was still talking about the monolithic Sino-Soviet solidarity.³ Till the end of the decade, however, the Sino-Soviet divergence over both domestic and foreign policies had started to surface: by 1960, the Soviets had cut off their nuclear assistance to the Chinese and withdrawn nearly all their specialists from China.⁴ Before the end of the Dwight

¹ Lixin Wang, *Yishixingtai yu Meiguo waijiao zhengce: yi 20 shiji Meiguo dui Hua zhengce wei gean de yanjiu* (Beijing: Peking University Press, 2007), 320-334.

² "Letter of Transmittal," in *United States Relations with China: With Special Reference to the Period 1944-1949*, ed. US Department of State (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1949), xvi; *Yishixingtai yu Meiguo waijiao zhengce*, 348-349.

³ "Zhu Xianggang zonglingshiguan guanyu 1954 nian Zhong Su guanxi gei guowuyuan de baogao," in *Meiguo dui Hua qingbao jiemi dangan: 1948-1976*, Wu, Di 9 bian, Zhong Su guanxi, ed. Yan He (Shanghai: Orient Publishing Center, 2009), 284-293.

⁴ Zhihua Shen and Yafeng Xia, "Between Aid and Restriction: The Soviet Union's Changing Policies on China's Nuclear Weapons Program, 1954-1960," *Asian Perspective* 36, no. 1

D. Eisenhower administration, US intelligence agencies had refrained from calling the Sino-Soviet bloc a “monolith,” but solidarity between the two countries was never questioned.⁵

Remarkable here is the way the American perception of Sino-Soviet relations got renewed continuously. With the intensification of the Sino-Soviet dispute in the 1960s, one would naturally wonder how the subsequent John F. Kennedy administration cognized and even responded to that. Did the United States grasp the development in a timely way? If so, how did the administration react? Did its top leaders attempt to widen the Sino-Soviet rupture? This issue turns even more perplexing in light of Kennedy’s unremitting pursuit of the Limited Test Ban Treaty (LTBT), which eventually came to fruition in summer 1963 and, in effect, aggravated the existing Sino-Soviet strains, as illustrated by the increasingly vicious accusations between both sides.⁶ In this case then, was the test ban agreement an embodiment of the wedge strategy, which both the Harry S. Truman and Eisenhower administrations had adopted through economic inducement or sanctions to stop China from becoming a Soviet satellite and to accelerate the Sino-Soviet estrangement respectively, though of little avail from the American perspective?⁷

It is noteworthy that the existing scholarship tends to answer this series of questions, especially the latter two, in a positive way. In his *Friends and Enemies: The United States*,

(January-March 2012): 114; Zhihua Shen, ed., *Zhong Su guanxi shigang: 1917-1991 nian Zhong Su guanxi ruogan wenti zaitantao*, Shang (3rd edn, Beijing: Social Sciences Academic Press, 2016), 253-368; *Zhong Su guanxi shigang*, Xia, 371-424.

⁵ “Zhongqingju guanyu Zhong Su guanxi de yuce,” in *Meiguo dui Hua qingbao jiemi dangan*, Wu, Di 9 bian, 404-429.

⁶ Shen, ed., *Zhong Su guanxi shigang*, Xia, 497-499.

⁷ Shu Guang Zhang, *Economic Cold War: America’s Embargo against China and the Sino-Soviet Alliance, 1949-1963* (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2001), 48-49, 202, 265, 267.

China, and the Soviet Union, 1948-1972, Gordon Chang argues that the Kennedy administration since its inception had been trying to cast a bone between the Chinese and the Soviets, which culminated in its pursuit of a test ban agreement with the Soviet Union.⁸ Chang's thesis is revised by the ensuing works, notably Shu Guang Zhang's *Economic Cold War*, Noam Kochavi's *A Conflict Perpetuated*, and Lorenz Lüthi's *The Sino-Soviet Split*. While Zhang identifies that by mid-1962, the US had decided to "stay tough" on the China trade issue in order to "widen the Sino-Soviet split,"⁹ Kochavi, seeing continuity between the Eisenhower and Kennedy administrations, stresses the triumph of "the pressure-wedge approach" in late 1962.¹⁰ Likewise, Lüthi contends that it was not until "late 1962" that "Washington saw the test ban negotiations as a tool to apply the wedge strategy against the Sino-Soviet alliance."¹¹ Nevertheless, such claims were oftentimes only incidental rather than central to these works. In other words, that the Americans in the early 1960s did try to exacerbate Sino-Soviet relations is only an assumption scholars hold knowingly or unknowingly, which rendered me extraordinarily suspicious in the literature review process.

Meanwhile, another monograph, Wan-chin Tai's *Kan-nai-ti chengfu tui Chung Su kung fenlieh chih jenchieh yü fanying* (The Kennedy Administration's Perception of and Response to the Split between the Chinese Communists and the Soviets), seized my attention. According to Tai, a number of former key officials during Kennedy's tenure when interviewed by him

⁸ Gordon H. Chang, *Friends and Enemies: The United States, China, and the Soviet Union, 1948-1972* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 230, 249.

⁹ Zhang, *Economic Cold War*, 249.

¹⁰ Noam Kochavi, *A Conflict Perpetuated: China Policy during the Kennedy Years* (Westport: Praeger, 2002), 190.

¹¹ Lorenz M. Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split: Cold War in the Communist World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 253, 270-271.

recalled that the Kennedy administration had harbored no intention to drive the two communist powers further apart.¹² A close examination of contemporaneous archival sources supports Tai's skepticism of the wedge strategy. As this thesis demonstrates, my own finding is that the Kennedy administration was more concerned about exploiting instead of aggravating the Sino-Soviet dispute, although it did take pains to avoid the reconciliation between the Chinese and the Soviets. This not only had to do with the constant uncertainties about the future of Sino-Soviet relations but also was out of the American hope to use the Soviet restraint of China, which demanded the residual Soviet leverage on the Chinese. Actually, with the American struggle for the underdeveloped world, China's global revolutionary initiatives and nuclear ambitions made it the archenemy of the United States, much more dangerous than the Soviets advocating peaceful coexistence. Fundamentally though, the Americans, embracing Wilsonian liberalism, had not expected much from the communist infighting.

The sources I utilize are mainly archival documents, official proclamations, and recollections by former Kennedy administration officials such as Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission Glenn Seaborg and Adviser on African, Asian, and Latin American Affairs James Thomson, Jr. I have divided the entire thesis into four parts, excluding the introduction and the conclusion. The first part explores the American knowledge of the Sino-Soviet polemics at different stages. It was only after late 1962, I suggest, that consensus about the severe Sino-Soviet discord was reached within the Kennedy administration. But even after that, caught between the Chinese and the Americans, Soviet policy was still largely unpredictable. The second part lays out how the administration reacted to the dispute. Focusing

¹² Wan-chin Tai, *Kan-nai-ti chengfu tui Chung Su kung fenlieh chih jenchi yü fanying* (Taipei: Cheng Chung Book Co., Ltd., 1992), 242.

on the nuclear issue, the third part shows that the American quest for the LTBT was driven by the fear of a nuclear-armed China rather than the wedge strategy. Finally, the fourth part tries to interpret the American response to the Sino-Soviet split in the early 1960s through the ideological lens. It is my faith that this thesis as a case study could help promote the understanding of US Cold War diplomacy in general.

Figuring out the Split

For nearly two years after Kennedy assumed office, the American knowledge of the Sino-Soviet split could be characterized as ambiguous, the shrewd identification of the sources of frictions notwithstanding.¹³ Particularly illustrative of the divergence of views were the intelligence reports. “The uncertain future course in Sino-Soviet relations” had throughout 1961 been one of the motifs of the National Intelligence Estimates (NIEs),¹⁴ which kept stressing the “strong” “cohesive forces” between the communist powers in the face of the West, despite the “trend away from monolithic unity.” Not only did “an open rupture ... appear ... unlikely,” while only “in the long run” might “a looser relationship” develop, but it could not be ruled out that the Sino-Soviet partnership would get closer as a result of the famine

¹³ *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS thereafter)*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Soviet Union, eds. Charles S. Sampson and John Michael Joyce (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1998), Document 1; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 76; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Northeast Asia, eds. Edward C. Keefer, David W. Mabon, and Harriet Dashiell Schwar (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1996), Document 49; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 92.

¹⁴ Harold P. Ford, *Estimative Intelligence: The Purposes and Problems of National Intelligence Estimating* (rev. edn, Lanham; New York; London: University Press of America; Defense Intelligence College, 1993), 97-98; Charles D. Cremeans, “Basic Psychology for Intelligence Analysts,” in *Inside CIA’s Private World: Declassified Articles from the Agency’s Internal Journal, 1955-1992*, ed. H. Bradford Westerfield (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 232-237; Kochavi, *A Conflict Perpetuated*, 193-194.

conditions and the removal of Soviet technicians on the Chinese side and increasing “militancy” on the Soviet part.¹⁵ Besides, the Current Intelligence Weekly Reviews (CIWRs) also noted the growing Soviet aggressiveness in colonial areas, loss of interest in a test ban, and emphasis on Sino-Soviet “unity,” as well as the “continuing areas of disagreement” with China.¹⁶

The situation within the intelligence community applied to the entire executive branch. Consider George Kennan’s call in February for intelligence analysis on Sino-Soviet relations.¹⁷ For the administration officials, not only was there a “Soviet-ChiCom row” in spreading communism,¹⁸ but also the Chinese seemed to have “rejuvenated [the] revolutionary posture of [the] Soviet party,” especially since the 1960 International Meeting of Communist and Workers Parties.¹⁹ Even US Ambassador to the Soviet Union Llewellyn Thompson, Jr., who credited the genuineness of the dispute more than most other people,²⁰ was slow to make definitive estimates in this respect, particularly after the Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev, in front of him, disproved the exploitation of the Chinese against the Soviets and instead underlined concessions’ importance to bloc strength.²¹ Thus, though he, convinced that China

¹⁵ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 1; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 6; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Arms Control and Disarmament, eds. David W. Mabon and David S. Patterson (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1995), Document 13; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 17; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 49; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 62.

¹⁶ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 3; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 15; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 96.

¹⁷ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 25.

¹⁸ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 7; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 63; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 78; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 79; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 104; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 107; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VIII, National Security Policy, ed. David W. Mabon (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1996), Document 30; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 76.

¹⁹ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 7; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 20.

²⁰ Kochavi, *A Conflict Perpetuated*, 194.

²¹ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 13.

posed the “greatest problem” for the Soviets, would not exclude an “eventual complete break,” time alone was viewed as the answer to the question.²²

But it was the Vienna summit that, perhaps more than anything else, further complicated the scene. Before the meeting, noticing the recent ineffective Chinese pressures on the Soviets for “militancy” and the Soviet enthusiasm for a test ban for fear of China’s nuclear development, some reckoned that the “sharp” Sino-Soviet differences and China’s growth of power would propel Khrushchev to explore accommodation with the West and even privately indicate misgivings about China’s nuclear capability.²³ However, others, including Kennan, now Ambassador to Yugoslavia, and Thompson, argued otherwise. Attentive to “the assertiveness characterizing Soviet foreign policy” over 1960 and the bleak prospects for a test ban agreement due to the Chinese challenge, they presumed that Khrushchev would not go much far and that his intimating concerns over China was not only of “slight possibility,” but also “unlikely in any direct way.”²⁴

The reality appeared to favor the second type of opinion. At his June 3 and 4 meeting with Kennedy, Khrushchev talked at length about the “aggravated” Sino-US relations and urged the Americans to leave Taiwan, recognize China, and get it admitted into the United Nations (UN). China had replaced the US as the “leader in the fight for freedom,” he even declared, and “if the Soviet Union [had been] in China’s place, it would probably have attacked Taiwan long

²² *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 20; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 25; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 28; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 41; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 42.

²³ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 26; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 72; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 76; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 13.

²⁴ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 76; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 79; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 81.

time ago,” for such wars were “holy” ones. He warned that should the American position stay unaltered, he would have to regard the US as “seeking a pretext for warlike developments” and criticize Kennedy himself. When Kennedy later pushed for a test ban by invoking a Chinese proverb that “a thousand-mile journey begins with one step,” Khrushchev just sneered that he himself also knew the Chinese quite well.²⁵

The US-Soviet summit led Kennedy to believe that China and the Soviet Union were in a “very good” relationship and would cooperate in local engagements.²⁶ Or as Special Assistant to the Secretary of State Charles Bohlen commented, “there was no hint of a USSR-Chinese schism.”²⁷ Three months later, Secretary of State Dean Rusk’s exchanges with Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko on China were also of similar tones.²⁸ By late 1961, nevertheless, evidence about the deterioration of Sino-Soviet relations had come to light, the quarrels at the 22nd Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) in October in particular. “Khrushchev’s decision to reassert strongly Moscow’s primacy,” Rusk wrote, “confirmed ... indications that the 81 Party Statement of 1960 was a ‘papering over’ effort required by the failure to achieve a real reconciliation of views.”²⁹ Hence, bolder claims started to be made in terms of the outcome of the dispute.

²⁵ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 85; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 87; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 95; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VI, Kennedy-Khrushchev Exchanges, ed. Charles S. Sampson (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1996), Document 11; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 29.

²⁶ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 91; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 44; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 61; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 69.

²⁷ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 92.

²⁸ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 75.

²⁹ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 127.

According to a December Policy Planning Council (PPC) paper entitled “The Sino-Soviet Conflict and U.S. Policy,” the contention had reached a “critical stage” and was likely to continue, maybe until a “decisive break” occurred. At a January 1962 policy planning meeting, Rusk termed the paper “a highly important document,” and Chairman of the PPC Walt Rostow referred to the Sino-Soviet split as “an historic and unprecedented development.” Given “too many varieties of breaks possible,” he even cautioned against building the intelligence effort around the concept of a “break.” Others held comparable ideas as well. From Bohlen’s perspective, the Sino-Soviet discord was in no parallel to the divisions within the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), while both Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs George McGhee and Mose Harvey of the PPC denied the existence of the “monolith” for the two countries’ different goals.³⁰ “As each of the high-level participants around the table pondered ... that the split was not only real but probably permanent,” Thomson recalled, “one could almost hear the snap and crackle of frozen minds undergoing rapid thaw.”³¹

As time went on, with the deepening clashes over military, economic and ideological issues and authority within the bloc, the opinion that Sino-Soviet ties would never be essentially reinstated became prevalent. Seeing Sino-Soviet relations as “in a critical phase just short of an acknowledged and definitive split,” the intelligence reports calculated that “the chances that such a split [could] be avoided during 1962 [were] no better than even.” Therefore, future Soviet moves toward a *détente* with the West were anticipated. Though other sections of the administration were less optimistic, it was also proposed at an August policy planning meeting

³⁰ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 82.

³¹ James C. Thomson, Jr., “On the Making of U.S. China Policy, 1961-9: A Study in Bureaucratic Politics,” *The China Quarterly* 50 (April-June, 1972): 226.

that because of the “fundamental” Sino-Soviet feud, which “dated back to Stalin’s time,” “two cold wars [were] currently under way.”³²

Such sanguinity, nonetheless, was qualified by doubts. As early as November 1961, Director of Central Intelligence (DCI) Allen Dulles had been admonishing that “the Chinese setbacks as well as the ideological rift were [not] such that the Soviets and Chinese would not ... engage jointly any nation which threatened Communist interests.”³³ At the January 1962 policy planning meeting, Rusk still wondered whether the Chinese and Soviet objectives remained the same, while Bohlen contended that the Sino-Soviet dispute had magnified the domestic opposition to Khrushchev.³⁴ After all, both Chinese and Soviet considerations of self-interest argued against a split.³⁵ As a result, the possibility that the Soviets might be compelled “to display militancy against the West and to achieve tangible successes which demonstrate[d] the correctness of Moscow’s policies” lingered.³⁶ A near consensus was that both sides would surely hold together in the event of any conflict across the Taiwan Strait,

³² *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume II, Vietnam, 1962, eds. David M. Baehler and Charles S. Sampson (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1990), Document 84; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 78; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 160; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 165; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 172; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 187; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 194; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 203; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 228; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VIII, Document 85; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 84; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 92; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 132; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volumes VII, VIII, IX, Arms Control; National Security Policy; Foreign Economic Policy, Microfiche Supplement, eds. Evans Gerakas, David W. Mabon, David S. Patterson, William F. Sanford, Jr., and Carolyn B. Yee (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1997), Document 271.

³³ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 77.

³⁴ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 82.

³⁵ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 160.

³⁶ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 187; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 188.

especially with American involvement.³⁷ Quite a few, disclaiming any connection between the Soviet stand on the nuclear issue and the Sino-Soviet polemics, even deemed the Soviet nuclear nonproliferation initiative simply as “a gimmick ... [to] induce the US to ... force West German agreement.”³⁸

Most telling was the way a realist Kennan, who had once viewed the Sino-Soviet break as “practically impossible to overcome,”³⁹ disagreed with the intelligence reports produced in this period. “Chinese-Soviet relations bid fair to receive,” he maintained, “easement through ... frustrations ... suffered by the Chinese in the effort to realize their ambitious internal programs” and “by Khrushchev in his effort to establish ‘peaceful coexistence’ with the West.” To say the least, “an environment of continued ... bipolarity [would] leave the two partners little choice but to repress their differences and carry on.” Both Bohlen and even Thompson concurred with Kennan by pointing to the possibilities and even recent indications of “at least temporary accommodations between the two parties,” with the assumption that Khrushchev had found his leadership at home threatened.⁴⁰

Such ambiguity might have to do with the Soviets rarely revealing to the Americans their discord with the Chinese but peddling Sino-Soviet solidarity instead. Such was the case with conversations between Chief of the Press Division of the Soviet Foreign Ministry Mikhail

³⁷ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 84; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 92; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 95; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 113; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 118.

³⁸ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 228.

³⁹ *Executive Sessions of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee*, Volume XIV, Eighty-seventh Congress, Second Session, 1962 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1986), 25-26.

⁴⁰ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 142; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 175; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 231; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 111; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 133; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volumes VII, VIII, IX, Microfiche Supplement, Document 271.

Kharlamov and Director of the US Information Agency (USIA) Edward Murrow, between Editor in Chief of *Izvestia* Aleksey Adzhubey and Kennedy, between Soviet Ambassador to the US Anatoly Dobrynin and Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs Averell Harriman and the President's Advisor on Disarmament John McCloy respectively, between the "Observer" columnist for *Pravda* Yuri Zhukov and Thompson, and between Gromyko and Rusk, in which Taiwan's sovereignty and China's representation in the UN remained frequent topics.⁴¹

In late 1962, further strains were put on Sino-Soviet relations by the Cuban Missile Crisis and the Sino-Indian War. In October, the two-week Caribbean Crisis drew the superpowers to the brink of nuclear warfare. After the US-Soviet compromise, however, the Chinese, having no idea of the American concession on Turkey, gave up their previous support for the Soviet position and accused Khrushchev of initial "adventurism" and subsequent "capitulationism" and of encroachments upon Cuban sovereignty. Even before the Cuban Missile crisis' conclusion, the Sino-Indian border conflicts escalated into a local war. In spite of their original backup for China, the Soviets soon adopted a more "neutral" stance in early November and started to, in sympathy with the Indians, censure the Chinese in mid-December. Even during the war, the Soviet military aid to India was not suspended.⁴²

Prior to the Missile Scare, China's anxiety over the Soviet inroads into its national security – embodied in the closing of the last two Soviet consulates and propagandist allusions to

⁴¹ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 150; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 151; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 207; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 213; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 231; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 127; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 135.

⁴² "Quanshijie wuchanzhe lianhe qilai fandui women de gongtong diren," *People's Daily*, December 15, 1962; Shen, ed., *Zhong Su guanxi shigang*, Xia, 478-486.

“revisionist” efforts to subvert CPC members – had been grasped by the Americans.⁴³ Following the late-year crises, the administration was finally convinced of the “deeply serious” Sino-Soviet breach, at which time the “communist ... fiction of non-existent monolithic unity” and the Soviet reassessment of policies became popular concepts. “Except ... in some crisis which endanger[ed] vital interests,” it was stated, China and the Soviet Union were unlikely to be driven back together. Indeed, since the Chinese had broken “all but the most formal ties” with the Soviets, “a further exacerbation ... might lead to an open break.” With their confliction of interests “on almost every major issue,” Deputy Director for Intelligence (DDI) Ray Cline even asserted, “for most practical purposes, a ‘split’ [had] already occurred.”⁴⁴

The American confidence is understandable given that the Soviets at this point had even begun to spell out their difficulties to the Americans.⁴⁵ Dobrynin, in mid-November, raised with Ambassador at Large Chester Bowles the Soviet dilemma in taking sides between China and India, wish to end their fighting, and determination to carry out the commitment to ship MiG-21s to India, and later, in contrast with the Chinese, agreed with the significance of Indo-Pakistani rapprochement, which must have dispelled the American doubts about whether the Soviets would feel pressed by “extremists” like the Chinese.⁴⁶ Khrushchev also personally underlined to Kennedy how his opinions differed from his Chinese comrades:

⁴³ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 244.

⁴⁴ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 261; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 268; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 269; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 289; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 341; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 360; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 156; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 157; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 163; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 169.

⁴⁵ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 246; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VI, Document 56; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VI, Document 71; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VI, Document 91.

⁴⁶ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 246; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 265; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 275.

Our friends, especially those of them who regard us with certain lack of understanding, are trying to convince us that imperialism cannot be trusted, that is that you cannot be trusted, as a representative of such capitalist state as the United States of America.⁴⁷

Thereafter, Gromyko, his wife Lydia, Soviet First Deputy Foreign Minister Vasili Kuznetsov, and Chief of the American Countries Section Mikhail Smirnovsky would all intimate to the Americans their complaints about the Chinese.⁴⁸

Late 1962 and early 1963 witnessed the calls within the Communist Bloc for “unity,” resulting in the Sino-Soviet bilateral conference on July 5 to 20. Due to the continued mutual attacks and unwillingness to compromise on both parts – let alone the controversy over the form and rules of the meeting and the lengthy preparations – no “fundamental reconciliation” but “a superficial and temporary truce” at most and “a continuing and widening estrangement” were foreseen by the Americans. These seemed to be confirmed by tensions on the Sino-Soviet border, the Soviet suspension of the jamming of Voice of America (VOA) broadcasts, the Soviet-Yugoslav rapprochement, Indo-Soviet cooperation, and, most importantly, the test ban

⁴⁷ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VI, Document 83.

⁴⁸ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 330; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 339; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 287; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 348; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 349; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 354; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volumes VII, VIII, IX, Microfiche Supplement, Document 197.

negotiations. Now that “a formal schism could occur at any time,” Khrushchev was expected to “put the blame for any break upon the Chinese.”⁴⁹

Others, nevertheless, were afflicted by the uncertainties of Soviet conduct, which was vacillating between the Chinese and the Americans, primarily because of the static Soviet posture on the test ban as well as the forthcoming Sino-Soviet meeting. Above all, East-West talks could add to the Soviet vulnerability “to ChiCom criticism.” In light of the Soviet domestic tightening up, “each party’s ... anxiety to avoid the onus of having split the world Communist movement,” the internal threats to Khrushchev’s leadership, and his refusal to meet Kennedy, the Americans were not only extremely pessimistic about the test ban negotiations but worried about the realignment of Sino-Soviet policies. Even the sanguine intelligence reports conceded that the Soviet “sober appraisal of their opportunities” disproved the “common Soviet-Western front against China.” After all, “Communists look upon their approach to [the] West as temporary expedient,” wrote Thompson.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ “Taoliyadi zai Yigong dishici daibiao dahui shang de zongbaogao (zhaiyao),” *People’s Daily*, December 31, 1962; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 280; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 301; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 305; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 317; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 324; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 326; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 329; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 334; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 360; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 268; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 269; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 270; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 281; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 300; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 309; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 311; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 176; Shen, ed., *Zhong Su guanxi shigang*, Xia, 498.

⁵⁰ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 20; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 280; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 282; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 289; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 298; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 304; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 305; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 307; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 309; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 312; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 324; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 326; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 334; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 268; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 269; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 270; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 272; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII,

These misgivings were largely overcome by the Soviet final acceptance of a test ban, which was interpreted by Harriman, the new DCI John McCone, and others as to preserve authority within the bloc by isolating the Chinese, and the unfruitful Sino-Soviet conference. Choosing the nuclear issue as “their strongest ground,” the Soviets not only substantiated the edge of peaceful coexistence but forced the Chinese to “appear truculent and irresponsible,” which was indicative of the irreparable Sino-Soviet relations.⁵¹ In autumn 1963, Kennedy, Rusk and Rostow were all talking about such phrases as the “definite” “Sino-Soviet rift,” the “very deep” Sino-Soviet differences, and “the fact of the Sino-Soviet split.”⁵² With the territorial disputes, accusations as to the alliance commitments, and the dubious Soviet nuclear umbrella over China, the Soviets were deemed as reluctant to “back China in any wild adventure” or “react if the Chinese got into a small military fight.” With no possible reconciliation “during ... the present leadership,” the clash of national interests would render transient even a future “ostensible reconciliation” brought about by the leadership changes.⁵³

Document 281; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 287; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 290; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 300; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 311; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 318; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 321; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XI, Cuban Missile Crisis and Aftermath, eds. Edward C. Keefer, Charles S. Sampson, and Louis J. Smith (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1996), Document 274; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XI, Document 276; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 176.

⁵¹ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 347; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 358; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 318; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 320; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 331; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 333; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 335; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 342; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 357; Shen, ed., *Zhong Su guanxi shigang*, Xia, 498.

⁵² *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 352; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 362; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VIII, Document 142.

⁵³ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 349; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 355; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 358; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 181; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 185; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 186; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 190; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 191.

But it would be wrong to presume that concerns on the American part had been completely cast away. With the Chinese and the Soviet keeping defending one another's prestige and legitimacy and guarding against efforts to utilize their disagreement, perhaps nothing annoyed the Americans more than the Soviet lack of interest in inhibiting China's nuclear progress.⁵⁴ Consequently, even after the test ban negotiations, the administration could not help suspecting that "a final break ... would [not] occur," and that the Soviets would not "acknowledge any common interest with the West against China, lest this be taken as a sign of weakness." Not the least would they tolerate the use of nuclear weapons against or the "overthrow of Communist domination" in China. As Rusk warned, since "totalitarian regimes [were] capable of reversing course overnight," China's "more assertive initiatives" might even "reveal that the Russians and the Chinese were back together again."⁵⁵

Coping with the Monsters

During the Kennedy years, the United States was concerned more with exploiting than with widening the rift between China and the Soviet Union. On the one hand, US policy by early 1962 had been formulated in such a way that it was aimed not so much to broaden the

⁵⁴ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 327; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 354; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 282; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 348; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 354; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 194; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volumes VII, VIII, IX, Microfiche Supplement, Document 197.

⁵⁵ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 347; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 358; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 283; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 344; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 348; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 351; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 353; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 362; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 172; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 177; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 181; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 185.

Sino-Soviet rupture as to prevent the two countries' reconciliation. On the other hand, the United States, on political, security and economic issues, attempted to utilize the Sino-Soviet discord by improving relations with the Soviets and putting further pressures on the Chinese.

At the inception of Kennedy's presidency, due to the great uncertainty about the reality of Sino-Soviet relations, the administration's top priority in this regard was "intelligence analysis rather than planning."⁵⁶ Therefore, he had tried to elicit the Soviet view on China both at the summit with Khrushchev and in his conversation with Adzhubey, Kharlamov, and editor of *USSR* Georgi Bolshikov. The unresponsiveness on the Soviet part,⁵⁷ nonetheless, brought about irresolution in policy lasting through most of 1961. As Rusk wrote in November, "the implications for Western policy as regards [to] ... Sino-Soviet ramifications [were] not fully evident."⁵⁸

As time went on, however, US policy took shape gradually. At the January 1962 policy planning meeting, Rostow raised the possibility, in the event of Mao's death and a crisis within the Chinese leadership, of developing better relations with China should it "calm down" – in order to preclude it from being "buckle[d] in even more tightly with the Russians"⁵⁹; his open-minded proposal to lift the China trade ban⁶⁰ should also be understood in this framework. Contrary to Rostow's view, Assistant Secretary of State for Economic Affairs Edwin Martin

⁵⁶ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 4; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 25.

⁵⁷ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 73; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 76; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 83; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 87; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 95; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 102; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 29.

⁵⁸ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 127; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 76; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 111.

⁵⁹ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 82.

⁶⁰ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 99; Kochavi, *A Conflict Perpetuated*, 196-197.

contended that lest the disappearance of “economic adversity” reduce Sino-Soviet tensions, the United States should abstain from “providing any assistance at all to the Chinese,” to which Rusk agreed⁶¹ – Thomson’s recollection delicately grasped the meeting’s heavy-headed nature.⁶² Despite the eventual triumph of Martin’s approach, both he and Rostow intended to keep the communist giants apart, but without further documentation, it would be an overstatement that much emphasis was laid by the Americans on exacerbating Sino-Soviet relations.⁶³

For the administration, so as not to lead Beijing to make peace with Moscow, it was imperative to forestall a conflict across the Taiwan Strait, which was no new departure in US policy since the early Cold War. In this connection, Robert Komer of the NSC staff in late January had been arguing against helping the Chinese Nationalists return to the mainland or even stir up unrest in South China,⁶⁴ which by mid-1962 had become some sort of common sense.⁶⁵ Furthermore, Director of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR) Roger Hilsman, Jr., even stressed the disadvantages of the United States intervening in any conflict across the strait, such as defending the offshore islands, which indicated the desirability of Nationalist withdrawal from those islands.⁶⁶ Throughout 1963, restraining the Chinese Nationalists remained a frequent topic. As late as September that year, the President’s Special Assistant for National Security Affairs McGeorge Bundy was still cautioning Chiang Ching-

⁶¹ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 82.

⁶² Thomson, “On the Making of U.S. China Policy, 1961-9”: 227.

⁶³ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 150.

⁶⁴ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 84.

⁶⁵ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 92; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 95; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 113; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 118.

⁶⁶ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 125.

kuo, son of Chiang Kai-shek, against “any major attack against the China mainland in which the United States would be a dominant factor.”⁶⁷

In studying the Kennedy administration’s policy toward the Sino-Soviet split, a useful set of evidence might be the “Basic National Security Policy (BNSP)” papers, whose preparation Rostow had supervised since November 1961.⁶⁸ According to the final version sent to Kennedy in June 1962, “there [was] little that the U.S. [could] do to promote that split,” but “we should at least avoid ... healing it.”⁶⁹ The Soviet-Albanian breach should remain a bone of the Sino-Soviet contention, while practically, the US “should ... not so openly favor Khrushchev’s point of view vis-a-vis the Chinese Communists as to make it difficult for him to justify it within the Communist camp.” On China, the US should: avoid giving it a more effective basis for seeking Soviet nuclear aid by deploying offensive nuclear weapons in its vicinity before required; take unilateral measures like averting unnecessary provocations; damp down Communist-Nationalist hostilities, particularly get disengaged from the offshore islands.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 139; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 140; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 172; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 181; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 185.

⁶⁸ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VIII, Document 70; John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of American National Security Policy during the Cold War* (rev. and expanded edn, New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 199.

⁶⁹ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VIII, Document 62; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VIII, Document 70; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 129; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volumes VII, VIII, IX, Microfiche Supplement, Document 248; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volumes VII, VIII, IX, Microfiche Supplement, Document 271.

⁷⁰ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VIII, Document 62; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VIII, Document 70; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VIII, Document 83; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VIII, Document 119; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 76; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 129; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volumes VII, VIII, IX, Microfiche Supplement, Document 248; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volumes VII, VIII, IX, Microfiche Supplement, Document 271.

In late November, the PPC “US Policy toward Communist China” paper proposed once more “to avoid actions ... that would reduce pressures operating on the regime ... or would force the regime and the Soviets back into a close association,” which was strongly reminiscent of Martin’s idea. Based on this document, however, while the risky military operations against the mainland should be ruled out, the US might only pull back from the Taiwan Strait or induce the Nationalists to evacuate the offshore islands when the Chinese Communists behaved themselves. Largely as a result of China’s enmity toward India, such a tough tone won the majority’s approval within the administration.⁷¹

The kind of policy identified so far – to refrain from soothing the Sino-Soviet dispute persisted till the end of Kennedy’s presidency. In February 1963, now Ambassador at Large Thompson disproved the “accurate publicity” of the Sino-Soviet split, for “strong emphasis by [the] United States officials tend[ed] to increase the pressure of the other communist parties upon the Soviets and Chinese to patch up the quarrel and get together.” On the contrary, he suggested avoiding the impression of the US taking advantage of the conflict. Such considerations were not only carried out soon,⁷² but also affirmed by Kennedy when he told Murrow in July that apart from “playing straight the comments on the split coming out of both Peking and Moscow,” VOA should “not attempt to exploit the difference.”⁷³

But again, the Americans were not so obsessed with the wedge strategy as one might surmise. Kennedy in February ordered certain sanctions against Cuba, especially an embargo on US-owned goods, despite Thompson’s admonition about their potential provocative

⁷¹ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 157; Zhang, *Economic Cold War*, 251-252.

⁷² *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 169.

⁷³ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 181.

consequences at a time when the US was pursuing a test ban treaty and the future of the Sino-Soviet dispute was not clear yet.⁷⁴ In May, Under Secretary of State George Ball on behalf of the State Department reiterated that “we [saw] little we [could], or ... need[ed], do to further” the Sino-Soviet split.⁷⁵ The USIA also “forbade polemics and attempts to exacerbate relations between Communist China and the Soviet Union,” as instructed by Kennedy.⁷⁶

Although when inquired by the JCS in August about the political benefits of the test ban agreement, Rusk asserted that it could contribute to the Sino-Soviet split, this should be viewed as part of Kennedy’s efforts to get the approval of the JCS, one of the toughest opponents of a test ban.⁷⁷ In this process, Rusk took pains to assure “a high state of readiness for resuming testing in the atmosphere,” underlined “a very flexible withdrawal provision,” and warned against “read[ing] too much into the treaty.” On the same occasion, Harriman also played his part in persuading the chiefs by claiming that “the Soviets [were] very anxious to bring maximum pressure on Communist China,”⁷⁸ which was completely contrary to reality. Indeed, it was mainly because of the treaty’s possible divisive effect within the Communist Bloc that a JCS still obstinately adhering to the notion of a monolithic Sino-Soviet bloc⁷⁹ eventually conceded, as Chang pointed out.⁸⁰ On the other hand, Rusk could be most honest when he rejected in December 1962 the idea of broadening the Sino-Soviet rupture:

⁷⁴ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 282; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XI, Document 274; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XI, Document 276.

⁷⁵ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 324.

⁷⁶ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 181.

⁷⁷ Andreas Wenger and Marcel Gerber, “John F. Kennedy and the Limited Test Ban Treaty: A Case Study of Presidential Leadership,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 29, no. 2 (June 1999): 478.

⁷⁸ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 362.

⁷⁹ Franz Schurmann, *The Logic of World Power: An Inquiry into the Origins, Currents, and Contradictions of World Politics* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1974), 387.

⁸⁰ Chang, *Friends and Enemies*, 248-249.

A more realistic view is that it is not a very good thing for us to tinker with this, as though we were playing with toys, and it is not so easy to determine what ... would be ... effective in widening the rift and ... would be in our own interests, and in which directions.... There is [not] anything very striking or dramatic that we can do in the situation.⁸¹

With one aspect of US policy being to prevent a settlement between the Chinese and the Soviets, the other side of the coin was to capitalize on the Sino-Soviet discord. As early as March 1961, Rusk had expressed to British Ambassador Baron Harold Caccia his interest in exploiting Sino-Soviet differences.⁸² At the January 1962 policy planning meeting, it was claimed that the Sino-Soviet conflict was “a strong argument for establishing diplomatic relations with Outer Mongolia” and could afford “leverage within Communist parties outside of the bloc.”⁸³ However, most cases of utilizing the Sino-Soviet split were focused on dealing with a more belligerent – as perceived by the Americans – China and reducing tensions in US-Soviet relations. For the most part, relieving East-West strains was for the purpose of jointly bending the more perilous Chinese.

In mid-1961, Kennedy in the presence of Adzhubey, Kharlamov and Bolshikov urged US-Soviet cooperation so that the superpowers would not “fight and leave everything to the rest of

⁸¹ “Secretary Rusk’s News Conference of December 10,” *Department of State Bulletin*, Volume 47 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1962), 999.

⁸² *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 13.

⁸³ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 82.

the world – including the Chinese.”⁸⁴ From the American perspective, the Chinese contrasted sharply with the Soviets in being extremely hard to tackle. During the Sino-US Ambassadorial Talks, the American side kept pressing the Chinese to repatriate the imprisoned Americans by invoking the Soviet release of American airmen, including the famous Francis Gary Powers.⁸⁵ In spring 1962, both Rostow and Bohlen recommended “agreement with the Soviet Union in any important area” and clarification to the Chinese that “aggressive ... actions would be countered resolutely and effectively,” besides the “psychological exploitation of the dispute through the dissemination of information.”⁸⁶

The “BNSP” papers also articulated US policy in this respect by calling for “a constructive as well as a militant track in relations with Communist regimes” – distinct treatments of the Soviets and the Chinese. In the Soviet case, the US should, through crisis avoidance or temporary and partial accommodations, “encourage Khrushchev’s stated preference for negotiation and peaceful settlement over war.” As for China, nevertheless, it should be elucidated that “any contrary Chinese view [was] likely to prove ... self-defeating.” In light of China’s aging leadership and the Soviet pressures, the US should only leave ajar possibilities for expanding contacts and pursue informal negotiations on minor subjects, in the hope that the deepening of difficulties would result in a leadership split or change of regime and less

⁸⁴ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 102.

⁸⁵ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 10; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 11; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 87.

⁸⁶ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 99; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 111.

bellicose policies, on which condition Sino-US relations could be normalized, even though it was “barely possible” that this strategy would turn out to be effective.⁸⁷

For the Americans, Khrushchev’s reluctance to see an East Asian war was useful in hindering the Chinese Communists from causing trouble in the Taiwan Strait. In mid-1962, China’s massive troop movement across the strait caused alarm on the American part, whose “scale and urgency” sustained the possibility of a surprise attack on the offshore islands. To deter such an offensive, Kennedy chose to approach the Soviets, and ambiguity of the American stand was proposed in order not to decrease the Chinese need for Soviet backup and thus the “Soviet influence for restraint.” Subsequently, Harriman and McCloy asked Dobrynin in June and July respectively for clues to China’s force build-up in Fujian and its purposes, spelling out US resolution both not to give Taiwan a freehand in invading the mainland and to defend the former against aggression. Although the Americans hoped that Khrushchev could renounce support for Chinese incursions, which since then had become a recurrent practice, Dobrynin neither provided further information nor made any commitment. Nonetheless, the American attempt to utilize the Soviet “restraining influence on Peiping” was remarkable.⁸⁸

Of more importance was the Sino-Soviet debate over wars of national liberation – “Communist-directed subversive insurgency and guerrilla warfare.”⁸⁹ Both the Chinese and

⁸⁷ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VIII, Document 62; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VIII, Document 70; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VIII, Document 83; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 129; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volumes VII, VIII, IX, Microfiche Supplement, Document 248; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volumes VII, VIII, IX, Microfiche Supplement, Document 271.

⁸⁸ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 207; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 246; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 122; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 124; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 125; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 127.

⁸⁹ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VIII, Document 67; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VIII, Document 130; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 129; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volumes VII, VIII, IX, Microfiche Supplement, Document 271.

the Soviets seemed to back such subversions, but they differed over how far to go. Regarding local wars as inessential for communist gains, the Soviets seconded national liberation wars to a huge degree to meet the Chinese charges of timidity. Even so, they had refrained from giving full political or material support and were unwilling to get their own forces involved or risk military clashes with the West. By contrast, the Chinese, seeing local wars as “the best way to spread Communism,” understated the risks of military confrontations. They dismissed Khrushchev’s wooing the underdeveloped countries’ nationalist leaders at the expense of local communists as exaggerating the neutralists’ importance⁹⁰ and pressed for earlier establishment of “national democracies,” characterized by local communist participation in a governing national front, in neutral countries.⁹¹

Such a debate was especially applicable to Southeast Asia, where Sino-Soviet differences began to surface in 1962. It was only to preserve their influence in North Vietnam and thwart China’s criticisms or intervention that the Soviets had fanned the flames in Laos or would more strenuously aid the North Vietnamese should the situation deteriorate significantly. In general, however, they would prefer peaceful solutions, keep relatively calm, and restrain the Chinese: first, to prove the efficacy of peaceful coexistence; second, to prevent others from controlling Soviet policy or embroiling them in open conflict with the Americans, particularly in view of

⁹⁰ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Soviet Union, Document 15; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Soviet Union, Document 187; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Soviet Union, Document 192; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Soviet Union, Document 228; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VIII, National Security Policy, Document 56; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VIII, National Security Policy, Document 69; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VIII, National Security Policy, Document 130.

⁹¹ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 15; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 326.

their disinclination to either honor or renege on their alliance commitments.⁹² Determined to take advantage of the circumstances, the Americans conceived of two ways to maintain South Vietnam's independence and counter North Vietnam's invasion. One was to disprove the Chinese creed that "communist sponsored insurgency in the guise of a war of liberation [could] pay off," maybe by inflicting selective damage beyond the North Vietnamese borders, so that the Soviet viewpoint might prevail.⁹³ For the Soviets to stabilize the Southeast Asian scene, the US would have to induce local communists to seek Soviet support.⁹⁴

The other was to urge the Soviets to put pressures on China. In January, Kennedy had been commending in front of Adzhubey the Soviet Union for being "more interested in a peaceful solution" of the Laotian problem than China.⁹⁵ By autumn, Bowles had explicitly recommended to Dobrynin that the Soviets "take charge in Hanoi and insist on a live-and-let-live solution in East and Southeast Asia" to rule out any dangerous "opening for the Chinese." When Dobrynin insisted that the Việt Minh had left Laos, Bowles demanded the supervision of the International Control Commission (ICC), to which Dobrynin made no objection.⁹⁶ In August 1963, Kennedy also cautioned Dobrynin about how China's efforts to drive away the

⁹² *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume II, Document 84; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 7; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 162; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 165; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 192; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 194; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 203; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 228; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 289; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 324; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 326; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 290; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 132.

⁹³ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 194; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 228; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 129; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volumes VII, VIII, IX, Microfiche Supplement, Document 271.

⁹⁴ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 326.

⁹⁵ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 150.

⁹⁶ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 246; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 265.

Western forces and the defensive measures of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), should the Laotian situation worsened, might escalate the conflicts.⁹⁷

But most controversial was to define the implication of the Sino-Soviet split for US economic policy toward China. When Kennedy just came into office, changes related to “the bunkering of Free World ships under Communist Chinese charter ... carrying only food and paid cash” were discussed at a February 1961 NSC meeting. No immediate decision was made, while Kennedy even wondered “whether any such change ... could be at the request of the Canadian Government.”⁹⁸ By spring 1962, Rostow, Bowles, Harriman, and Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs Edward Rice had advocated lifting the embargo against China on foodgrains and medicines and even consider “whether trade with Communist China should not be put on a comparable basis with trade with the Soviet Union” – “in exchange for modifications in its behavior.”⁹⁹ Rusk, on the other hand, once scrutinized a middle ground – to allow the de facto exportation of food and medicines, while avoiding the impression of terminating the embargo, and the expansion of trade between other Western countries and China – to facilitate changes in the latter’s “external behavior.”¹⁰⁰ Clearly, the Chinese conduct was always the center of American deliberations: even the traditional

⁹⁷ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 350.

⁹⁸ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VIII, Document 8.

⁹⁹ Chester Bowles, *Promises to Keep: My Years in Public Life, 1941-1969* (New York; Evanston; San Francisco; London: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1971), 401-402; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 76; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 99; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 104; Kochavi, *A Conflict Perpetuated*, 196-197.

¹⁰⁰ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 100.

argument against annulling the China trade ban was based on its seemingly militantly aggressive policies, especially toward its neighbors.¹⁰¹

In June, the “BNSP” final paper calculated that in light of China’s adamant posture, the policy of encouraging East-West economic contacts and communist participation in international economic organizations was inapplicable to Beijing.¹⁰² At almost the same time, both Kennedy and Rusk had already precluded any initiative on the American side without the reversion of “the Food for Peace slogan to ‘Peace for Food.’” On the contrary, it would be better for the US to “furnish the gendarmes to keep [the Chinese] from misbehaving.”¹⁰³ It would not take long for Bowles to capitalize on the augmented trust between the superpowers following the Cuban Missile Crisis¹⁰⁴ by raising with Dobrynin in mid-October US-Soviet collaboration in “bring[ing] effective pressure to bear on China – the U.S.S.R. through oil and the U.S. through food.” Stressing how a grab for Siberia’s oil and wheat potential could amplify China’s danger, Bowles went so far as to offer to help guard the Soviet borders against the Chinese. As he said, the United States and the Soviet Union, neither of which could “run the world,” should not “quarrel” but “together ... keep the world from exploding.”¹⁰⁵

The efforts to perpetuate the economic strains on China only got reinforced by its enmity against India. Adopting a more confident tone, the late November PPC “US policy toward

¹⁰¹ Bowles, *Promises to Keep*, 402; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 98; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 81; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 102; Zhang, *Economic Cold War*, 246, 248.

¹⁰² *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volumes VII, VIII, IX, Microfiche Supplement, Document 271.

¹⁰³ “Remarks at a Meeting with the Headquarters Staff of the Peace Corps. June 14, 1962,” *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States*, John F. Kennedy, 1962 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1963), 488; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 132; Zhang, *Economic Cold War*, 249.

¹⁰⁴ Wenger and Gerber, “John F. Kennedy and the Limited Test Ban Treaty”: 469.

¹⁰⁵ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 246.

Communist China” paper pointed to the huge probability that China’s economic difficulties, worsening relationship with the Soviets, and the passing of the current leadership would bring about “a basic change in orientation.” Hence, the US ought to discourage the liberalization of Chinese trade relations with the West by considering both “denying to China petroleum from western sources should Peiping ... attempt to shift from the Soviet market” and even “a total western embargo” “should large-scale Chinese attacks against India be resumed.” Although the US should be receptive to China’s intention to fulfill its people’s needs and develop friendly and long-lasting relations with the outer world, the former “should not initially expect ... formal agreements or negotiated quid pro quos” but “begin with only token steps.”¹⁰⁶ In reality, nonetheless, it would be most difficult to impose US will on its allies.¹⁰⁷

Since late 1962, when the Cuban Missile Crisis and the Sino-Indian War rendered the severe Sino-Soviet discord and China’s bellicosity as opposed to restraint on the Soviet part beyond doubt,¹⁰⁸ exploiting the dispute had become one of the focal points of US foreign policy, illustrated most dramatically by the American attempt to stifle China’s nuclear progress through the test ban treaty. As Kennedy declared during his 1963 State of the Union Address, “the new Sino-Soviet difficulties” provided a “special avenue of opportunity.”¹⁰⁹ Apart from the nuclear issue, which will be discussed in the next part of the thesis, the way that the

¹⁰⁶ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 157.

¹⁰⁷ Zhang, *Economic Cold War*, 252.

¹⁰⁸ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 163; Kochavi, *A Conflict Perpetuated*, 199-204.

¹⁰⁹ “Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union. January 14, 1963,” *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States*, John F. Kennedy, 1963 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1964), 15.

Americans dealt with the Sino-Indian War was another excellent example of utilizing the Sino-Soviet rupture to tame the fractious Chinese.

Five days after the Chinese forces launched major offensives against India on October 20, US Ambassador to India Kenneth Galbraith had pointed out to Rusk the advisability of taking advantage of the “Soviet restraint of [the] ChiComs.”¹¹⁰ In mid-November, when Dobrynin expressed to Bowles his concern about the intensification of the conflict, the latter replied “facetiously” that the Soviets knew about the situation better “since the petroleum products on which the Chinese were dependent must be coming largely from the USSR and ... the undertaking must be a major one.” In response to Dobrynin’s hope to end the fighting, Bowles advised him on the only way a truce could come to existence in the near future – the Soviets compelling the Chinese to back away completely by clamping down on their petroleum supplies.¹¹¹ Several days later, Rusk confirmed once more the desirability of approaching the Soviets because “there [was] some reason to believe that Moscow [was] also very much worried about the dangerous possibility.”¹¹² In late December, Harriman asked Dobrynin, “If you are a friend of India, why didn’t you try to stop Chinese aggression by threatening to end [the] shipments of POL?” Dobrynin, however, “slyly intimated that they had used their influence and this had something to do with the Chinese withdrawing their troops.”¹¹³

Whatever the actual American influence on the Soviet thinking, evident was how the US sought to make use of instead of aggravating the Sino-Soviet dispute. Indeed, while handling

¹¹⁰ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XIX, South Asia, ed. Louis J. Smith (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1996), Document 179; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XIX, Document 180.

¹¹¹ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 265.

¹¹² *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XIX, Document 206.

¹¹³ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 275.

the Himalayan war, the administration was only anxious to prevent the Sino-Soviet realignment at most. At a November presidential meeting, when Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara urged sending a high-level mission to India to coordinate the local actions, Rusk “preferred to see the UK take the lead ... rather than a straight US mission,” now that “the more we got in front the more we would push Moscow toward Peiping.”¹¹⁴ Later in his telegram to Galbraith, Rusk reaffirmed the “strong reasons why the United States should not appear to be the point of the spear in assisting India,” “the most impelling of these [being] that our role might force Moscow to support Peiping.”¹¹⁵

Beyond the struggle over the Sino-Indian War, the United States on other issues also continued its exploitation policy. Throughout 1963, what such senior officials as Rusk, Ball and Thompson were keen on talking about was still “to take advantage of ... [the] Sino-Soviet split” by siding with the Soviets against the “much more dangerous” Chinese. For one thing, “because of the prospects opened up by the Sino-Soviet rift and the ... test ban,” the US should “keep channels open” to the Soviets to preclude their harder line and facilitate further progress in détente. As for China, besides using its isolation and internal stresses, “the confrontation with military power” instead of contacts would conduce to countering its militancy and global ambitions – also “one aspect of the dispute.” After all, “Peking [should] not be given any impression that any such policy would pay dividends.”¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XIX, Document 202.

¹¹⁵ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XIX, Document 206.

¹¹⁶ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 324; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 347; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 359; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 362; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 169; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 184; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 195.

The last few months of Kennedy's tenure witnessed a trend within the administration to review its over-rigid China policy, most notably led by Hilsman, who later served as Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, and based on a more practical evaluation of Chinese intentions.¹¹⁷ Both Rostow and Hilsman noticed "the diffusion of effective power away from both Moscow and Washington," which, together with China's domestic situation and schism with the Soviets, rendered its growing dependence on Western countries other than the US "a more meaningful fact than Peking's tough ideological language or ... acquiring some kind of nuclear capability."¹¹⁸ Under such circumstances, US Ambassador to Poland John Cabot in preparing for the 118th Ambassadorial Talk recommended utilizing the Sino-Soviet rift by experimenting with a "more conciliatory tone on our part."¹¹⁹ The most remarkable efforts, of course, were made by Hilsman, who suggested establishing an Office of Asian Communist Affairs in the Bureau of Far Eastern Affairs which included a Sino-Soviet specialist, "siding neither with Moscow nor Peiping" by lifting the China travel ban, and recognizing Mongolia.¹²⁰

Hilsman's initiatives culminated in his December 13 speech to the Commonwealth Club of San Francisco, in which he promised to "keep the door open to the possibility of change."¹²¹ Later, he explained the "consistent policy of firmness and flexibility" of the US toward communist regimes and the "divergence between U.S. treatment of Moscow and U.S. treatment of Peiping":

¹¹⁷ Kochavi, *A Conflict Perpetuated*, 225-233.

¹¹⁸ "United States Policy in the Pacific," *Department of State Bulletin*, Volume 49 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1963), 387-389; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VIII, Document 142; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 190; *A Conflict Perpetuated*, 226.

¹¹⁹ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 187.

¹²⁰ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 190; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 192.

¹²¹ Thomson, "On the Making of U.S. China Policy, 1961-9": 230.

When the Soviets placed missiles in Cuba, we responded with firmness; but ...
when the Soviets sought a Test Ban agreement, we were willing to negotiate....
As the Soviets have begun to behave more responsibly, the U.S. has become more
responsive to Soviet initiatives; but with Peiping continuing to hew to a bellicose
Stalinist line, we have been unresponsive to the Chinese.¹²²

Obviously, irrespective of the extent to which Kennedy or Rusk had been sympathetic to such
opinions – a focus of much scholarly debate¹²³ – the basis of US policy toward the Sino-Soviet
split remained: to exploit the dispute by compelling modifications in China's truculent conduct.

The Test Ban: A Wedge?

The LTBT concluded in August 1963 following the US-Anglo-Soviet tripartite talks in
July was one of the most significant events in the early 1960s in terms of Sino-Soviet-US
triangular relations. Despite the conflicting views on the extent to which the test ban was
implemented to further widen the already profound Sino-Soviet rupture, a close examination
of the primary documents betrays that Kennedy's pursuit of the agreement was not so due to
his interest in the wedge strategy, as other scholars have argued, but instead was the product of
his deep fear of a nuclear-armed China. Meanwhile, the way that the Americans attempted to

¹²² *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 196.

¹²³ Kochavi, *A Conflict Perpetuated*, 230-233.

secure a test ban treaty was also manifested as one of the most remarkable examples of US exploitation of the Sino-Soviet split.

Started in 1958, the test ban negotiations gained new momentum during Kennedy's presidency. Apart from containing the Soviet technological development, the environmental concerns, the desire to lessen the arms race, and public pressure, nuclear nonproliferation was also one of the basic motives behind the American push for a test ban.¹²⁴ In this connection, the Americans had been especially concerned about China's nuclear capability since the Eisenhower administration,¹²⁵ and the situation continued after Kennedy took office.¹²⁶ It is worth emphasizing, however, that preventing China's nuclear progress by late 1962 and early 1963 had become one of the most significant driving forces of Kennedy's quest for the LTBT, a motif running throughout most of 1963.¹²⁷

¹²⁴ Wenger and Gerber, "John F. Kennedy and the Limited Test Ban Treaty": 462; Luthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split*, 247, 270.

¹²⁵ Luthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split*, 249-250.

¹²⁶ Eric W. Hayden, "Soviet-American Arms Negotiations – 1960-68: A Prelude for SALT," *Naval War College Review* 25, no. 1 (January 1972): 70; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 1; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 38; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 118; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 120; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 139; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 141; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 146; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 152; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 155; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 169; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 171; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 188; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 191; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 245; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 246; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 368; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VIII, Document 62; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 4; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 10; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 13; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 76; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 191; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volumes VII, VIII, IX, Microfiche Supplement, Document 248.

¹²⁷ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 245; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 249; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volumes VII, VIII, IX, Microfiche Supplement, Document 155.

In early November, Bundy in a memorandum to Kennedy highlighted the question of China's nuclear development,¹²⁸ a point Kennedy recognized. On January 10, 1963, Bundy told McCone that Kennedy considered China's imminent nuclear explosion as "probably the most serious problem facing the world," which, should its efforts in this field endure, would require US action.¹²⁹ On January 22, Kennedy during an NSC meeting defined the main purpose of a test ban treaty as "to halt or delay the development of an atomic capability by the Chinese Communists." He went so far as to state that "a test ban including only the USSR, the British, and the U.S. would not be very meaningful except in regard to the Chinese problem," while "if a test ban treaty could lessen this prospect, the U.S. should take much forethought before turning it down."¹³⁰ In February and March, Kennedy reiterated that the "only" and "whole reason for having a test ban [was] related to the Chinese situation," for "otherwise, it wouldn't be worth the disruption and fighting with Congress" or the Soviet cheatings.¹³¹ In mid-1963, Kennedy still believed the restraint of China was the most powerful argument in favor of a risky test ban¹³²; even a limited one would be useful in this regard.¹³³ After the conclusion of the tripartite negotiations, Kennedy at his August 1 press conference articulated

¹²⁸ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 243.

¹²⁹ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 162.

¹³⁰ Glenn T. Seaborg, *Kennedy, Khrushchev and the Test Ban* (Berkeley; Los Angeles; London: University of California Press, 1981), 181; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 259; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VIII, Document 125; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 164.

¹³¹ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 262; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 266.

¹³² *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 297; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 304.

¹³³ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 311; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 318; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 320; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 321; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 326; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 337.

that the US had supported the limited test ban, for all its defects, to minimize the prospect of China becoming a full-fledged nuclear power.¹³⁴ Although the Soviets had shown no concern for China's nuclear program, this matter continued haunting the Americans. At an October policy planning meeting, the "prevention of a ChiCom nuclear capability" was restated as an important goal, toward which the test ban agreement would be a step.¹³⁵

From the American perspective, it would be most desirable if China could sign and be bound by the test ban treaty, which without Chinese participation could mean little. Even US non-recognition of it or its exclusion from the UN should not offer an excuse for non-adherence.¹³⁶ But even if China refused to sign, it still could be expected that "the existence of the treaty might instill in the Chinese a 'moral inhibition' against testing and acquisition of nuclear weapons." The withdrawal clause which the US insisted on was also "to pressure any aspiring nuclear power to abstain from testing unless it wanted to trigger another testing round by the existing nuclear powers."¹³⁷ In addition, the US thought over the possibility of taking out China's nuclear facilities through a preemptive strike.¹³⁸ However, all these – be it simply to reach a test ban agreement, to persuade and press the Chinese to adhere (maybe de facto), or approve of the use of force against them – required Soviet cooperation.¹³⁹ Since the idea that

¹³⁴ "The President's News Conference of August 1, 1963," *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States*, John F. Kennedy, 1963, 616; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 361.

¹³⁵ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 364; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 191; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 193.

¹³⁶ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 243; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 304; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 332; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 355; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 361.

¹³⁷ Seaborg, *Kennedy, Khrushchev and the Test Ban*, 181; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 296; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 301; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 337; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VIII, Document 125; Luthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split*, 249.

¹³⁸ Kochavi, *A Conflict Perpetuated*, 217.

¹³⁹ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 283.

the Soviets “must harbor the profoundest apprehension” of China’s nuclear capability, even an initial operational one, was prevalent within the administration,¹⁴⁰ the US kept tapping the Soviets when possible.¹⁴¹ Before 1963, the nuclear issue had been raised by Kennedy before Khrushchev and Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister Valerian Zorin, by Rusk before Gromyko and Dobrynin, by McCloy before Khrushchev and Gromyko, and by Thompson before Zhukov. However, for all the Soviet interest in a test ban, nuclear nonproliferation, and disarmament in general, the Americans did not even secure a single agreement and were given absolutely no indication of the Soviet concern about China’s nuclear program.¹⁴²

What deserves attention, however, is that following the Cuban Missile Crisis and the Sino-Indian War, evidence about the aggravation of Sino-Soviet relations and the improvement in US-Soviet relations provided further room for US maneuver to utilize the Sino-Soviet dispute. By late October, Kennedy had expressed to Khrushchev his inclination to “give priority to ... a nuclear test ban” to “make real progress” in disarmament.¹⁴³ In Kennedy’s own words, the

¹⁴⁰ Seaborg, *Kennedy, Khrushchev and the Test Ban*, 181; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 26; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 76; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 213; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 228; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 269; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 1, *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 181; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 248; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 249; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 268; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 283; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 314; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VIII, Document 125; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 82; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 164; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 191; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volumes VII, VIII, IX, Microfiche Supplement, Document 271.

¹⁴¹ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 76; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 175; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volumes VII, VIII, IX, Microfiche Supplement, Document 271.

¹⁴² *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 87; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 213; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 12; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 32; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 38; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 44; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 75; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 216; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 231; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 29.

¹⁴³ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VI, Document 69; Wenger and Gerber, “John F. Kennedy and the Limited Test Ban Treaty”: 469.

Sino-Soviet discord was “the key” upon which “the negotiations in Moscow very much depended.”¹⁴⁴ The “avenue of opportunity” the Sino-Soviet split furnished,¹⁴⁵ therefore, explained why the Chinese problem became one of Kennedy’s primary concerns in late 1962 and early 1963, even if there had long since been serious doubts about the waning Soviet “influence in inhibiting the Chinese Communists.”¹⁴⁶ The perceived proximity of China’s nuclear explosion might also be alarming: most estimates predicted that China would detonate its nuclear device between 1963 and 1964.¹⁴⁷ Thereinafter, let’s focus on the US pursuit of the test ban treaty during Kennedy’s last year in office.¹⁴⁸

In October and November 1962, Bowles had been probing with Dobrynin the possibility of US-Soviet collaboration in discouraging China’s nuclear development through a test ban in the atmosphere and under the sea and cooperation in underground testing.¹⁴⁹ As Bundy and

¹⁴⁴ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 298; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 265; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 318; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 321.

¹⁴⁵ “Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union. January 14, 1963,” *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States*, John F. Kennedy, 1963, 15.

¹⁴⁶ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 131; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 234; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 272.

¹⁴⁷ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 80; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 243; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 283; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 301; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 304; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 348; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VIII, Document 81; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VIII, Document 138; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 36; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 114; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 162; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volumes VII, VIII, IX, Microfiche Supplement, Document 297; William Burr and Jeffrey T. Richelson, “Whether to ‘Strangle the Baby in the Cradle’: The United States and the Chinese Nuclear Program, 1960-64,” *International Security* 25, no. 3 (Winter 2000-2001): 60, 64, 66.

¹⁴⁸ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 181; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 230; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 234; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 247; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 248; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 249; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volumes VII, VIII, IX, Microfiche Supplement, Document 155.

¹⁴⁹ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 246; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 265.

Harriman recommended raising with the Soviets – even Khrushchev himself – the Chinese problem,¹⁵⁰ Kennedy did get occupied with this issue. In January 1963, he expressed concern about China to Kuznetsov, only to get a reply that the Soviet Union “[could not] speak for other socialist countries.”¹⁵¹ Though during the first few months in the year, besides Khrushchev’s vacillation between the Chinese and the Americans as mentioned, the controversy over inspection and NATO’s Multilateral Force (MLF) arrangements constituted insurmountable obstacles to a test ban agreement, the Soviet stand by April had started to soften. At the end of the month, Khrushchev even held a secret high-level talk with Harriman.¹⁵² Despite the latter’s probe into the Soviet attitude toward China’s nuclear progress, however, Khrushchev evaded the topic.¹⁵³ Bundy’s and Rusk’s mid-May conversations with Dobrynin had similar outcomes.¹⁵⁴

Despite these setbacks, the Americans, with few alternatives, still regarded Soviet cooperation as of extreme importance if China’s nuclear development was to be held back.¹⁵⁵ By late May, Kennedy, together with British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan, had expressed to Khrushchev their willingness to “send highly placed representatives to Moscow ... during the last half of June or ... in the first half of July” to further discuss the subject, to which Khrushchev agreed and suggested the negotiations start on July 15.¹⁵⁶ On June 10, Kennedy

¹⁵⁰ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 243; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 164.

¹⁵¹ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 255.

¹⁵² Luthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split*, 251-258.

¹⁵³ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 282.

¹⁵⁴ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 322; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 287.

¹⁵⁵ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 283; Burr and Richelson, “Whether to ‘Strangle the Baby in the Cradle’”: 68.

¹⁵⁶ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VI, Document 105; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VI, Document 106; Luthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split*, 258.

in his American University speech spelled out his desire for peace and disarmament, especially a test ban, and announced the upcoming discussions in Moscow.¹⁵⁷ With the approach of the test ban negotiations, figuring out the way to bend the recalcitrant Chinese became increasingly imperative.

In preparation for chief US negotiator Harriman's mission to Moscow, the administration officials almost unanimously deemed the Soviet card as the optimal solution to China's impending nuclear detonation, which helped Kennedy make up his mind to "discuss with the Russians" the restraint of the Chinese. Given the desirability of joint US-Soviet action in preventing nuclear proliferation to China, "a tacit understanding" between the two superpowers in this respect was considered the least that could be expected.¹⁵⁸ Notably, to facilitate the Soviet pressure on the Chinese, it appeared crucial that "the French Government join in the agreement."¹⁵⁹ On the eve of Harriman's departure, he promised Kennedy that he would raise the Chinese issue with the Soviets, although he, perhaps recalling his April conversation with Khrushchev, "was personally doubtful that they would discuss this subject with us."¹⁶⁰

To facilitate the negotiation process, the American side before Harriman's Moscow trip had been ready to give up its insistence on a comprehensive ban – both because Khrushchev in

¹⁵⁷ "Commencement Address at American University in Washington. June 10, 1963," *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States*, John F. Kennedy, 1963, 460, 463; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 290; Luthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split*, 258.

¹⁵⁸ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 296; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 297; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 303; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 304; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 320; Burr and Richelson, "Whether to 'Strangle the Baby in the Cradle'": 70.

¹⁵⁹ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 297; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 311.

¹⁶⁰ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 304; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 312; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 318; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 321; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 323.

his July 2 speech proclaimed the Soviet willingness to conclude a limited one and on account of the likely effectiveness of “limited enforcement machinery” in achieving China’s de facto adherence – thus resolving the US-Soviet controversy over inspection. Importantly, to better tackle the China problem, the administration even recognized the necessity not to close the door on the MLF issue and Khrushchev’s proposal for a non-aggression pact between the NATO and the Warsaw Pact member states. Though no agreement later was reached on these two points, the test ban treaty got initialed on July 25. The talks were moving so fast that the Americans felt somewhat unprepared.¹⁶¹ To their dismay, however, the Soviets expressed no interest in containing China’s nuclear development, let alone reaching an agreement on this issue.¹⁶²

On July 15, the first day of the test ban negotiations, Harriman asked Khrushchev for information about the Chinese situation and reminded him of the consequences of China’s nuclear explosion, especially in light of the Chinese extremist views on nuclear war. Khrushchev, however, as in April, refused to talk at length. He not only declared that it would take years for China to become a nuclear power and that its bomb would not change the “correlation of forces,” but also dismissed the efforts to accentuate Sino-Soviet differences as capitalist. In the end, the conversation on China ended in a weird way with discussions on

¹⁶¹ “Statement by Premier Khrushchev at Berlin [Extract], July 2, 1963,” *Documents on Disarmament*, 1963 (Washington: United States Arms Control and Disarmament Agency; for sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1964), 245; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VI, Document 112; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 296; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 320; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 321; Seaborg, *Kennedy, Khrushchev and the Test Ban*, 229; Burr and Richelson, “Whether to ‘Strangle the Baby in the Cradle’”: 54; Kochavi, *A Conflict Perpetuated*, 221; Luthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split*, 258-259, 266, 268.

¹⁶² *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 180.

Stalin. In reply to Harriman's recollection that "Stalin had had no liking for Mao," Khrushchev even endorsed Mao's distaste for Stalin.¹⁶³ After receiving the meeting's report, Kennedy, who remained anxious about even small nuclear stockpiles in the Chinese hands, immediately instructed Harriman to "elicit Khrushchev's view of means of limiting or preventing [the] Chinese nuclear development and his willingness either to take Soviet action or to accept US action aimed in this direction" as well as reveal the American pressure on France.¹⁶⁴ The opportunity, nevertheless, did not come till July 26.

On July 16, Harriman insisted in the presence of Gromyko on a withdrawal provision covering China's testing. Otherwise, he hoped the Soviets could assure that the Chinese would adhere to the treaty and "would not become [a] danger to [the] mankind, which might necessitate ... resumption tests by [the] US." The eventual concession on the Soviet side regarding the withdrawal clause notwithstanding, Gromyko refused to give any assurance about the Chinese whatsoever, in accordance with Khrushchev's remarks.¹⁶⁵ By this time, although Harriman had used nuclear nonproliferation "as one approach to hammer away at China," he had no choice but to play down the relevant discussions due to the Soviet lack of interest.¹⁶⁶ The exchanges on China, however, still made little progress in the following days.

Rusk and Kennedy, when instructing Harriman on July 22 and 23 separately to better prepare the Soviets for the possible French rejective attitude toward a test ban, incidentally

¹⁶³ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 325; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 180; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volumes VII, VIII, IX, Microfiche Supplement, Document 197.

¹⁶⁴ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 326.

¹⁶⁵ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 328; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volumes VII, VIII, IX, Microfiche Supplement, Document 200.

¹⁶⁶ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 331.

asked him to press the Soviets by elucidating that in the event of a Chinese nuclear test, the US would have to “examine carefully” the situation, threatening to withdraw from the treaty if necessary.¹⁶⁷ During his July 24 meeting with Gromyko, therefore, Harriman emphasized the American wish to “see [China] adhere” and the Soviets “use their good offices.” But when he probed whether the Soviets would encourage Chinese adherence, Gromyko, on the other hand, only indicated no objection and replied tactfully and ambiguously that “the broader the participation the better.”¹⁶⁸ On July 26, the day after the test ban agreement’s initialing, Harriman’s long-desired opportunity to raise the Chinese issue again with Khrushchev finally came. To his disappointment, nonetheless, there was little change in the latter’s stance.

During the meeting, while Harriman pointed to the serious Sino-Soviet strains, the previous Soviet nuclear aid to China, and the looming Chinese nuclear detonation, Khrushchev denied further knowledge in this regard and asserted that “he was not concerned at all,” considering China’s backward industry. The subject digressed a couple of times owing to the lengthy comparisons between the American and the Soviet nuclear capabilities. Perhaps in case Khrushchev lost face, except to point out US preponderance in lightweight nuclear weapons, Harriman echoed instead of refuting Khrushchev’s claim about the US lagging behind in missiles, in spite of the American disillusionment with the missile gap myth. Afterward, Harriman referred to the Soviet “accusations re China’s recklessness” and the menace of even a few Chinese missiles. Taking a subtle stand, however, Khrushchev both agreed with Harriman’s comments and averred that the possession of “means” would render China more

¹⁶⁷ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 340; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 341; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 344.

¹⁶⁸ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 348.

restrained. In response to Harriman's caution that China's advanced weapons could be directed against the Soviets, Khrushchev nevertheless retorted that such weapons would advance the communist cause. Eventually, Harriman could but explicitly profess his hope that the Soviets could "get [the] Chinese [to] adhere to [the] treaty before they became [a] nuclear power" and "more comprehensive control of armaments could be had" when China acquired a nuclear capability. Khrushchev ostensibly concurred, but saw efforts in nuclear nonproliferation without agreements on disarmament as "weak."¹⁶⁹

As a result of the Soviet indifference to China's nuclear progress during the tripartite negotiations, the administration could only admit that with respect to the nuclear problem, the Soviets were not even so concerned with China as with West Germany, not to mention "mount[ing] any preemptive strike against its future nuclear capability."¹⁷⁰ Obsessed with his Chinese problem, Kennedy nonetheless continued urging de Gaulle, although in vain, to sign the treaty so that China could be criticized by world opinion for its defiance.¹⁷¹ Neither could he help but raising the situation in China with Dobrynin and Gromyko in August and October respectively, underlining the threat of even a small number of Chinese bombs and the danger of war in Southeast Asia, especially in Laos. Rusk also accused the Soviet Union of losing its "virginity" for "[having] slept with China." While interested in a nonproliferation agreement, the Soviets merely expected the increasing pressure on the Chinese and their isolation but "were not worried" about China's testing. Downplaying the Soviet nuclear assistance to China

¹⁶⁹ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 354; Greg Thielmann, "Looking back: The Missile Gap Myth and its Progeny," *Arms Control Today* 41, no. 4 (May 2011): 46.

¹⁷⁰ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 347; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 357.

¹⁷¹ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 352; Kochavi, *A Conflict Perpetuated*, 223.

and denying knowledge about the Chinese nuclear efforts, they reiterated that China would not affect the balance of power and that the Chinese not only harbored no intention to start a war but also would be “more cautious” after acquiring some bombs.¹⁷²

Finally, it’s also worth mentioning that throughout most of 1963, the use of force against China’s nuclear program was also seriously contemplated so that it reached quite advanced planning though short of the operational stage. Seeing little chance to enlist the Soviet backup, the Americans then discussed ways to contain China’s nuclear development with Chiang Ching-kuo during the latter’s September visit to Washington. The means which received attention included air dropping Chinese Nationalist sabotage teams, paramilitary actions, conventional attacks, nuclear attacks, etc. Such kind of thinking would persist into Lyndon Johnson’s years in office, during which the final decision not to undertake unilateral military attacks on China’s nuclear facilities was eventually made in September 1964.¹⁷³ These facts also help illustrate that the American moves on the nuclear issue were not an embodiment of the wedge strategy, for otherwise, they would not have gone so far as to deliberate on such perilous choices.

Atlas, the Sky-holder

Given the magnitude of the nuclear issue in Sino-Soviet-US relations throughout the Kennedy years, the reason for which China’s nuclear progress caused such a great alarm on the American side is worth digging into. It needs to be pointed out that in the American minds, the

¹⁷² *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 350; Burr and Richelson, “Whether to ‘Strangle the Baby in the Cradle’”: 75-76.

¹⁷³ Burr and Richelson, “Whether to ‘Strangle the Baby in the Cradle’”: 55, 67, 72-75, 87; Kochavi, *A Conflict Perpetuated*, 217.

immediate problems the Chinese bomb would bring about were not military.¹⁷⁴ First, in the foreseeable future, China's advanced weapon systems would not invalidate the existing power balance – “large stockpiles [were] characteristic of [the] US and [the] USSR only,” while China due to its domestic difficulties and lack of Soviet assistance would not “approach the advanced weapons might of” or “constitute a direct danger to ... the US.”¹⁷⁵ When China acquired a meaningful deterrent, decades would have passed.¹⁷⁶

Second, “the real threat would continue to be conventional rather than nuclear.” The Chinese could “see their nucs as a deterrent to escalation” but would maintain its emphasis on ground forces and refrain from attaching “decisive importance” to modern weaponry or making trouble which might ascend to a nuclear conflict, not to mention initiating the use of nuclear weapons – given the American nuclear deterrent, the shortage of valid targets in Asia, and the psychological and political damage a nuclear attack against Asians would do to the image of China.¹⁷⁷ Indeed, evident in the Chinese accusations during the Ambassadorial Talks of Americans preparing for nuclear war¹⁷⁸ was China's profound fear of US nuclear capability:

¹⁷⁴ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 191.

¹⁷⁵ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 11; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 326; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VIII, Document 138; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 176; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 180; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volumes VII, VIII, IX, Microfiche Supplement, Document 297.

¹⁷⁶ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 283; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 301; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 314; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VIII, Document 81; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VIII, Document 138; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 36; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 62; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volumes VII, VIII, IX, Microfiche Supplement, Document 297.

¹⁷⁷ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VIII, Document 138; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 114; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 191; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 193; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volumes VII, VIII, IX, Microfiche Supplement, Document 297.

¹⁷⁸ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 80; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 87; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 101; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume

consider that Eisenhower's nuclear brinkmanship largely stimulated China's nuclear program in the first place.¹⁷⁹

Third and most importantly, the Americans even calculated that the Chinese were unlikely to "take significantly greater military risks" or "adopt a general policy of open military aggression." Sure, a truculent China getting "bolder and more inclined to take risks" could not be completely precluded. Under such circumstances, it would not only continue to create general hostilities in Asia-Pacific but so overestimate its capabilities as to wage a general war. In the event of a war with China, the Americans feared, its bomb would undermine the advantages of the American part. It was in the minds of Chairman of the JCS Maxwell Taylor, McNamara, and even Kennedy that to avoid an engagement with "the hordes of China" and even defeat, the use of nuclear weapons would be advisable.¹⁸⁰ However, prospects of China's overt use of force seemed extraordinarily slim. Since "the Chinese [had] ... assessed risks carefully, and despite their bellicose talk they [had] refrained from actions which involved serious risk of large-scale military operations," a nuclear detonation would reinforce their "tendency toward prudence" – not only owing to the potential for an American counterattack but as they realized nuclear war's danger, their inability to alter the balance of power or "to remove or neutralize the US presence in Asia," and their vulnerable industrial capacity.¹⁸¹

XXII, Document 109; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 158; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 168.

¹⁷⁹ Kochavi, *A Conflict Perpetuated*, 213-214.

¹⁸⁰ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 6; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 13; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 301; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VIII, Document 138; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 114; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 177; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 190; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volumes VII, VIII, IX, Microfiche Supplement, Document 297.

¹⁸¹ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 6; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VIII, Document 138; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 191; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII,

In fact, haunting the Americans most were diplomatic and political issues, especially the psychological ramifications of China's nuclear explosion for both US allies and neutral countries in Asia.¹⁸² On the one hand, a nuclear capability would furnish China with great power status. China could, by "forc[ing] its way into world disarmament discussions and other world councils," demand diplomatic recognition, the return of Taiwan, and UN membership.¹⁸³ Besides, its advocating nuclear weapons' defensive and peaceful purposes could also create an image of a seemingly responsible nuclear power.¹⁸⁴ More significantly, through stressing the importance of nuclear weapons and exaggerating their achievement, the Chinese would "give the impression of much greater strength than had actually been acquired."¹⁸⁵

On the other hand, these Chinese moves would produce negative propaganda and security impacts.¹⁸⁶ With its self-confidence and prestige boosted, China would further perceive the American unwillingness to react and more assertively pursue "Asian hegemony," especially on its periphery, "through political pressures and the indirect support of ... wars of liberation," perhaps involving border incursions. On account of China's increased military advantage and deterrent to response to major conventional aggression, its tactics such as overawing and softening its neighbors for subversion or coercing them into political compromises would gain

Document 193; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volumes VII, VIII, IX, Microfiche Supplement, Document 297; Kochavi, *A Conflict Perpetuated*, 218.

¹⁸² *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 249; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 191.

¹⁸³ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 13; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VIII, Document 138; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volumes VII, VIII, IX, Microfiche Supplement, Document 297.

¹⁸⁴ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 191.

¹⁸⁵ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VIII, Document 138; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volumes VII, VIII, IX, Microfiche Supplement, Document 297.

¹⁸⁶ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 80.

additional efficacy. Taiwan would especially experience hardship as a result of demoralization, the shrinking backup, and Beijing's exploitation of the offshore situation.¹⁸⁷

Additionally, China's nuclear test would touch upon the tricky problem of nuclear proliferation, which could add to "the chances for irrational and desperate action" by encouraging intransigence, fear and counteraction. To be specific, China's bomb might propel the Indians, the Israelis, or even the Japanese to make further efforts in the nuclear field. In the Middle Eastern case, the Arab world could blame the West, a circumstance the Soviets might make use of.¹⁸⁸

To minimize the impact of China's nuclear explosion, the United States was ready to take coordinated political, economic, military, and psychological actions.¹⁸⁹ Basically, the increase in conventional military capability in the Pacific and assistance, especially in air defense, to Asian countries and psychological warfare measures would be useful in preventing China's nuclear blackmail and reassuring these countries that the US could defend them "without necessarily involving them in nuclear war." More than that, the US could prolong China's predicament by exerting further pressure on it to allow the Asian countries' growth of strength, and consolidate "peripheral areas" like Southeast and Northeast Asia through promoting rapprochements and cooperation between Japan and South Korea and between India and

¹⁸⁷ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 301; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VIII, Document 138; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 181; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 191; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volumes VII, VIII, IX, Microfiche Supplement, Document 297.

¹⁸⁸ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 80; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 260; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 272; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 301; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VIII, Document 2.

¹⁸⁹ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 36; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 157.

Pakistan. In light of the nuclear proliferation issue, should “the Asians ... want to lower the nuclear threshold,” the US should urge the emphasis on conventional forces.¹⁹⁰

But since the United States itself would face little direct threat, then why were Americans so paranoid about a nuclear-armed China? And why were such concerns exclusive to the Americans, considering that the UK, another Western power, during the tripartite negotiations generally paid little attention to China and instead viewed it merely as “a problem for the Russians?”¹⁹¹ Clearly, simply seeing foreign policy as seeking power and interests falls short; it’s essential to understand in the first place the ideological lens through which the national interests were defined – in the American case since WWII, Wilsonian liberalism. Recognizing a close connection between US security and the international environment, Christopher Layne writes, such an ideology regarded the defense of the American way of life as the fundamental objective of US foreign policy, any closure abroad to American core values a threat, and the achievement of absolute security a reliable way to relieve the country’s vulnerability. The implication of such reasoning for the American grand strategy was the overexpansion of interests and the pursuit of “extraregional hegemony.”¹⁹²

Within the Cold War context, both to avoid multi-polarity to maintain its hegemonic status and to uphold the momentum of worldwide anti-communism, the United States as the vindicator of the Free World had to prove itself credible and resolute in protecting allies and

¹⁹⁰ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 76; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 84; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 182; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 191; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 193.

¹⁹¹ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 304; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 312.

¹⁹² Christopher Layne, *The Peace of Illusions: American Grand Strategy from 1940 to the Present* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 3, 6, 30, 32, 118-120; Wang, *Yishixingtai yu Meiguo waijiao zhengce*, 10, 32-34.

combating enemies – by fending off communist aggression anywhere, even when its own core interests were not involved. To use Michael Lind’s analogy, the US during the Cold War acted like Atlas, a titan in Greek mythology holding up the celestial heavens on his shoulders. The stress on marginal issues not only betrayed the deep distrust the Americans harbored of their allies as well as the neutral countries but also was to keep effective the American nuclear deterrence.¹⁹³

Thus, the danger China – even potentially – posed to the Asian Free World, in turn, became a threat to the security posture of the United States itself.¹⁹⁴ Remarkably, the Americans, anxious about such psychological notions as credibility,¹⁹⁵ cared about the perceptions of reality more than reality itself. For one thing, extremely disturbing to them was the possibility that the Chinese might “confuse the distinction between a simple detonation and a weapons capability and between having a small weapons capability and being a major nuclear power.” In that case, China’s neighbors’ sense of power relations would be altered, even with few immediate changes in reality. For another, the Americans were resolved not to leave the impression that “the US would be more reluctant to intervene on the Asian mainland.”¹⁹⁶ And

¹⁹³ *FRUS*, 1947, Volume VI, The Far East, ed. John G. Reid (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1972), 924; *FRUS*, 1950, Volume I, National Security Affairs; Foreign Economic Policy, eds. John P. Glennon, David W. Mabon, Ralph R. Goodwin, Neal H. Petersen, and William Z. Slany (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1977), 255; Michael Lind, “America as an Ordinary Country,” *The American Enterprise* 1, no. 5 (September/October 1990): 19-23; Layne, *The Peace of Illusions*, 126; Wang, *Yishixingtai yu Meiguo waijiao zhengce*, 241; Lixin Wang, “The Honor and the Burden of World Leadership: Reputation Anxiety and US Military Intervention Abroad,” *Social Sciences in China*, no. 2 (February 2016): 198, 201.

¹⁹⁴ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 249; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 361; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VIII, Document 69; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VIII, Document 125; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 36.

¹⁹⁵ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 304.

¹⁹⁶ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VIII, Document 138; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volumes VII, VIII, IX, Microfiche Supplement, Document 297.

according to the PPC, McGhee, and Harriman, the US ought to disengage itself and the Chinese Nationalists from the offshore islands before the Chinese Communist nuclear explosion, lest it be interpreted as “motivated by apprehension.” For the same reason, Harriman even advocated making overtures to the Chinese as soon as possible regarding the food trade.¹⁹⁷

Also added to deliberation was the competition between the American and the Soviet ways of life, the ideological aspect of the Cold War – largely a strife over membership of the two opposing camps. Cherishing their values of private property, formal equality, market economy, the rule of law, orderly popular sovereignty, and gradual changes in a universalist, messianic and determinist manner – associating the spread of their influence with historical progress – the Americans feared that “the Chinese feat” might convince the underdeveloped countries that “Peiping was riding the wave of the future” and provided the most efficient method to become a modern industrial, scientific, and military power. The promotion of communism would be bad enough, but even worse was that of Chinese-style communism, particularly in view of China’s recklessness and militancy. The US of course had to discredit such beliefs in order to prevent “the colored peoples ... [from] rally[ing] to ... China.”¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁷ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 104; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 114; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volumes VII, VIII, IX, Microfiche Supplement, Document 271.

¹⁹⁸ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VIII, Document 138; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 191; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volumes VII, VIII, IX, Microfiche Supplement, Document 297; Odd Arne Westad, “The Cold War and the International History of the Twentieth Century,” in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*, Volume I, Origins, eds. Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 19; David C. Engerman, “Ideology and the Origins of the Cold War, 1917-1962,” in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*, Volume I, 20-21, 23, 26-27, 31-33; Laura McEnaney, “Cold War Mobilization and Domestic Politics: The United States,” in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*, Volume I, 432.

The Chinese nuclear issue tellingly revealed how the Americans blurred their core and peripheral interests; by the same token, China's global revolutionary initiatives in the early 1960s nearly made it "America's principal enemy." With the bipolar struggle in most of Eurasia in a stalemate, Kennedy saw East-West forces as more or less in balance. A believer of Wilsonian liberalism, he nevertheless cultivated a serious concern with the underdeveloped world and considered that more such countries turning red could disturb the existing power balance. Thinking international development in US national security's terms, he was devoted, Odd Arne Westad remarks, to facilitating the Third World's Americanization, both economically and politically; also recall the modernization theory built during this period to rival the communist theoretic model in the "battle for hearts and minds."¹⁹⁹

Strictly on the Third World issue, the Soviet Union due to its domestic liberalization and peaceful coexistence philosophy was seen as much easier to deal with. In comparison, China as "the fountainhead of world-wide insurgencies" instigating armed conflicts not only in Asia-Pacific, but also in the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America and developing an independent nuclear capability – which would only further complicate the already fragile situation – thus became "the greatest single threat to the status quo." After the Sino-Indian War broke out, it was exactly US global commitments that led it to suspect more ambitious objectives on the Chinese part beyond a border conflict. But nowhere alarmed the Americans more than Southeast Asia, especially Laos and South Vietnam, where "Chinese expansionism" had to be

¹⁹⁹ Schurmann, *The Logic of World Power*, 204, 337; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 85; Odd Arne Westad, *The Global Cold War: Third World Interventions and the Making of Our Times* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 27, 32-35; Wang, *Yishixingtai yu Meiguo waijiao zhengce*, 240.

thwarted at any cost.²⁰⁰ Certainly, here the racial hierarchy embedded in American liberalism, which only got reinforced by the Korean War experience, cannot be overlooked. As Kennan put it, the Soviets had “more in common with Western civilization” than the Chinese.²⁰¹

Such a definition of interests decided the way that the United States reacted to the looming Sino-Soviet split. On the one hand, pressure on the Chinese was sustained rather than alleviated. During the China trade debate, although those who argued against loosening the existing strains eventually won out, the rationale for their reasoning was precisely the same as that of those holding the opposite view – that is, to prevent the two communist powers from making peace and teach the Chinese to behave. On the other hand, the Americans also tried to capitalize on the “possible Soviet influence for restraint”²⁰² of China. This pattern was manifested in the US not only tempting the Soviets to reduce their fuel exports to the Chinese to coerce the latter into withdrawing from India, to discourage them from causing trouble in the Taiwan Strait, and to frustrate their expansion in the underdeveloped areas but also pursuing a test ban agreement to stifle China’s nuclear program, in the hope that the Soviets might be able to persuade the Chinese to adhere. Hence the East-West détente culminating in the test ban treaty’s conclusion. A bonus for this approach, in Franz Schurmann’s words, was the increment of power of “the chief executives of the two superpowers” at the expense of their respective bureaucracies.²⁰³

²⁰⁰ Schurmann, *The Logic of World Power*, 203-204, 328, 337-338, 344; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 243; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VIII, Document 79; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VIII, Document 125; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XIX, Document 183; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XIX, Document 199; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XIX, Document 201; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 164.

²⁰¹ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 25; Kochavi, *A Conflict Perpetuated*, 190; Engerman, “Ideology and the Origins of the Cold War, 1917-1962,” 21.

²⁰² *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 125.

²⁰³ Schurmann, *The Logic of World Power*, 328, 385, 391.

But for such a strategy to work, it seemed imperative that the Soviets retain their residual influence on the Chinese. To put it another way, to “use ... Russia ... to put pressure on China to desist from its expansionist, ultra-revolutionary course”²⁰⁴ was incompatible with the wedge strategy, which explained US reluctance to further exacerbate Sino-Soviet relations, despite suggestions, mainly from the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and Thompson, that making progress with the Soviets or proving invalid the Communist Bloc’s foreign policy could determine its division’s intensity.²⁰⁵ On the contrary, to keep China from becoming “less restrained in taking ... action independent of the USSR,” not only should its growth of strength be limited, but also its independent nuclear capability forestalled. In the end though, such efforts were of little avail, and the Americans were deeply upset with the diminishing Soviet “influence in inhibiting the Chinese,” particularly on the nuclear issue.²⁰⁶ After the Soviets failed to bring China into the test ban, as Chang comments, “those of an ironic mind ... must have asked, Where was the ‘Sino-Soviet bloc’ now that the United States ‘needed’ it?”²⁰⁷

The undesirability of the wedge strategy derived from the American conception that “a wider Sino-Soviet divergency would not necessarily lead to a less dangerous world.” At the very least, the Sino-Soviet competition could intensify global bilateral conflicts. Of greater significance was the implications of China’s bellicosity. A formal and definitive break between Moscow and Beijing could catalyze a separate more “militant and ... anti-Western” “Asian

²⁰⁴ *The Logic of World Power*, 386.

²⁰⁵ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume II, Document 84; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 20; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 25; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 66; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 269.

²⁰⁶ Schurmann, *The Logic of World Power*, 388; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 131; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 272; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 62; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 113.

²⁰⁷ Chang, *Friends and Enemies*, 240.

Communist Bloc under the leadership of China,” in which case the US would have to directly cope with the Chinese, as with the Soviets in the late 1940s and the early 1950s. Reminiscent of how close they had come to the brink of general war in dealing with the Soviet Union about a decade earlier, when it was “at the height of its expansionism,” by no means would the Americans, when China appeared to be “entering its own expansionist phase,” want a repetition of such experiences.²⁰⁸

Moreover, ambiguity of the state of Sino-Soviet relations added weight to this consideration. “Until the ... dispute became so real and self-evident as ... in the spring of 1969 when Russian and Chinese troops fought on the Ussuri,” nobody could guarantee that it would not be suddenly resolved or that the Soviet nuclear umbrella had been withdrawn from China. As in the case of a conflict across the Taiwan Strait, to repel the Chinese Communists – should the Soviets prefer to “preserve a Communist state, with its attendant opportunity to re-establish Soviet influence in China” – could mean hazardous confrontations with the Soviet Union. Nor was it acceptable to grant China great-power status because of the Sino-US enmity and the “radical redefinition of ... forces” entailed. In the context of the US-Soviet détente, to reference Schurmann, Khrushchev’s “loss” of China, would in turn mean a loss of power for Kennedy himself.²⁰⁹

Lastly, it would be wrong to assume that the US was expecting much from the Sino-Soviet split. Since Wilsonian liberalism differentiated between friends and enemies based on their

²⁰⁸ Schurmann, *The Logic of World Power*, 388; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 6; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 82; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 163.

²⁰⁹ Schurmann, *The Logic of World Power*, 386-387, 389, 393; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 6; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 95; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 113.

domestic institutions and ideologies, while communism as both a social system and an ideology were viewed as diametrically opposed to American liberty and way of life,²¹⁰ China and the Soviet Union as communist states, therefore, became natural enemies of the United States. Indeed, the internal competition within communism would curtail its prestige and effectiveness and heighten the chance of enlarging the Free World, which accounted for the American anxiety to preclude the two communist powers from backing into harmony. However, the unaltered Chinese and Soviet long-term aim of establishing communism globally bore out “the larger prospect” that “both states, whether closely knit or not, [would] continue to wax in strength, without waning in hostility” – the strongest argument against being excessively “fascinated with the Sino-Soviet split.” After all, Khrushchev’s peaceful coexistence applied only to the military but not the economic, political, and ideological field. Kennedy once satirized,

What comfort can we take from the increasing strains and tensions within the Communist bloc? ... The Soviet-Chinese disagreement is over means, not ends. A dispute over how best to bury the free world is no grounds for Western rejoicing.²¹¹

²¹⁰ Layne, *The Peace of Illusions*, 120-124; Wang, *Yishixingtai yu Meiguo waijiao zhengce*, 332-334.

²¹¹ *Events Incident to the Summit Conference: Hearings before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, Eighty-sixth Congress, Second Session, May 27, June 1, 2, 1960* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1960), 23; “Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union. January 14, 1963,” *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States*, John F. Kennedy, 1963, 17-18; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 1; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 269; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 304; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 49; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 82; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volumes VII, VIII, IX, Microfiche Supplement, Document 271.

Furthermore, the American aversion to communism was such that even the limited East-West accommodations won little trust of the administration: the Free World's extension should under no circumstances be diverted by "either false detente or an excessive preoccupation with East-West negotiations." Instead, the central role of military power in determining US-Soviet relations persisted. Since "totalitarian regimes [were] capable of reversing course overnight," it was contended, "should the Soviets felt that they [had] achieved a clear military superiority, they [were] likely to adopt policies involving serious risks of general war."²¹² As a consequence, "the Sino-Soviet bloc," a term whose usage endured throughout Kennedy's presidency, remained a de facto being within the American strategic thinking. While the necessity to deny the "world Communist movement" and rather "speak ... more of the national power complexes behind" so as not to lend communist prestige was understood, the Americans themselves were clinging on to the very concept of "international communism."²¹³

Conclusion

"As long as the Communists and their partisans continue to exert unremitting pressure upon ... the frontiers of the free community," the "BNSP" final paper pointed out with pity, "we must ... defend these frontiers.... These requirements ... tend to limit the scope for US

²¹² *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 1; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 362; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VIII, Document 62; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 129; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volumes VII, VIII, IX, Microfiche Supplement, Document 248; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volumes VII, VIII, IX, Microfiche Supplement, Document 271.

²¹³ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume VII, Document 321; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volumes VII, VIII, IX, Microfiche Supplement, Document 248; *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volumes VII, VIII, IX, Microfiche Supplement, Document 271.

initiatives designed to exploit possibilities for diluting the unity ... of the Communist Bloc.”²¹⁴ Exactly due to the way the Kennedy administration perceived its interests and the threats to them, it was concerned more about exploiting – by using the Soviets to restrain the unruly Chinese, although China’s national power was no match for the Soviet Union’s, let alone the former’s domestic hardship resulting from the Great Leap Forward and the curtailment of Soviet aid, which rendered it perhaps “feebler” than ever before²¹⁵ – than about aggravating the Sino-Soviet polemics, a more or less realist approach. In the latter’s regard, the US did no more than attempting to preclude a restored Sino-Soviet monolithic solidarity. The thesis thus verifies Tai’s interviewees’ testimonies, but at the same time also delineates a more substantial panorama of the American response to the Sino-Soviet split during the early 1960s. With a focus on the nuclear issue, it questions a common assumption about the LTBT being part of the wedge strategy, an assumption that may risk exaggerating the flexibility of US policy.

On the contrary, I would argue that for the Kennedy administration, the Sino-Soviet split offered no cure for its fundamental problems – communism and communist expansion.²¹⁶ As a result, the ideological lens with which the administration observed world politics and, more specifically, its fear of Chinese expansion at “the frontiers of the free community” so seriously confined the latitude of its foreign policy that opportunities to maneuver within Sino-Soviet-US relations were missed. Unlike Kennedy, Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger embraced the classical realist concept of balance of power. While Kennedy was more inclined to negotiate with the more rational Soviets, the Nixon administration was resolved “in a triangular

²¹⁴ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volumes VII, VIII, IX, Microfiche Supplement, Document 271.

²¹⁵ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Document 84.

²¹⁶ *FRUS*, 1961-1963, Volume V, Document 324.

relationship to side with the weaker instead of the stronger antagonist.” In reality, it pursued a détente with the Soviets, initiated a rapprochement with the Chinese, and “insisted that the new Sino-American relationship was in no way directed against Moscow.”²¹⁷ Nevertheless, before the Americans got trapped in the quagmire of the Vietnam War, which enabled Nixon’s and Kissinger’s paradigm shift in strategic thinking in the first place, it was just all too normal for the New Frontier President to overestimate his power, especially in changing the political structure of the entire world.²¹⁸

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²¹⁷ Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, 286-287, 294; Wang, *Yishixingtai yu Meiguo waijiao zhengce*, 179, 391.

²¹⁸ Schurmann, *The Logic of World Power*, 383; Wang, *Yishixingtai yu Meiguo waijiao zhengce*, 363.

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