

THE PATH TOWARD SINO-AMERICAN RAPPROCHEMENT, 1969–1972¹

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Early in 1969, it seemed that the confrontation between the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the United States was as sharp as it had ever been. When the newly elected U.S. president Richard Nixon delivered his inaugural address on January 20, Beijing's propaganda machine immediately fiercely attacked the "jittery chieftain of U.S. imperialism." *Renmin ribao* (People's Daily) and *Hongqi* (The Red Flag), the Chinese Communist Party's mouthpieces, jointly published an editorial essay characterizing Nixon's address as nothing but "a confession in an impasse" that demonstrated "the U.S. imperialists . . . are beset with profound crises both at home and abroad."¹ Indeed, the wording of the essay appeared quite similar to the anti-American rhetoric prevailing in the Chinese media during the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. Yet this was not one of the many ordinary anti-American propaganda pieces that the Chinese media churned out during the Cultural Revolution years. What made it unique was that it was published alongside Nixon's address in its entirety. More interestingly, major newspapers all over China, although following the general practice during the Cultural Revolution to reprint the commentator's essay, also reprinted Nixon's address.

Not until the late 1980s did we learn through newly released Chinese documents that it was Mao Zedong who personally ordered the publication of Nixon's address.² The likely reason behind the chairman's order was a point the U.S. president made in his speech: the United States was willing to develop relations with *all* countries in the world.³ The Chinese chairman, who had been paying attention both to the U.S. presidential election and to Nixon as a presidential candidate, immediately caught the subtext of Nixon's statement. Perhaps he ordered the publication of Nixon's address to reveal that he had noticed the message.

In retrospect, this was the beginning of a dramatic process that would finally lead to Nixon's visit to China in February 1972, during which he met face to face with Mao in Beijing. Toward the end of the "week that changed the world," Nixon and Chinese premier Zhou Enlai signed the historic Shanghai communiqué symbolizing the end of an era of intense conflict between China and the United States that had lasted for over two decades.

The conventional interpretation of Beijing's rapprochement with the United States emphasizes the role strategic-geopolitical considerations

played. Scholars favoring this interpretation usually argue that when the Soviet Union had emerged as the most serious threat to the PRC's security interests, it was impossible for Beijing to maintain simultaneously the same level of discord with the United States. By achieving a rapprochement with Washington, Beijing's leaders drastically improved China's strategic position vis-à-vis the Soviet threat, thus serving China's security interests.

In this essay, I argue that the geopolitics-centered interpretation alone does not fully reveal the complicated causes underlying Mao's decision to improve relations with the United States. I will place the Sino-American rapprochement in the context of the fading status of Mao's "continuous revolution," contending that a profound connection existed between these two phenomena and that the interpretation emphasizing the strategic-geopolitical element will make better sense if its link to the end of Mao's continuous revolution is properly comprehended. I will conclude the essay with some general comments on the relationship between the Chinese-American opening and the coming of Soviet-American détente in the development of the global Cold War.

China in 1968–1969: Deteriorating Security, Fading Revolution

Undoubtedly China in 1968–1969 was facing a rapidly worsening security situation. The contention between China and the United States, which began at the very moment of the PRC's establishment, seemed more intense than ever before. In response to the escalation of the Vietnam War and increasing American military involvement in it, Beijing dispatched large numbers of engineering and antiaircraft artillery forces to North Vietnam while providing Hanoi with substantial military and other support.⁴ Beijing and Washington thus were in danger of repeating their Korean War experience—when they were both dragged into a direct military confrontation. Such security threats from China's southern borders were made worse by the sustained military standoff between the Chinese Communists and Nationalists across the Taiwan Strait, as well as by Japan's and South Korea's hostile attitudes toward the PRC.

The security situation on China's long western border with India was no better. Since the Chinese-Indian border war of 1962, Beijing and New Delhi each regarded the other as a dangerous enemy. Although India, in the wake of its humiliating defeat in the 1962 clash, was not in a position to threaten Chinese border safety militarily, it was more than capable of damaging Beijing's reputation as a self-proclaimed "peace-loving country" among Third World nations. It was also likely to pin down Beijing's

valuable resources and strategic attention in China's remote western areas.

The worst threat to China's border security existed in the north from a former ally, the Soviet Union. Since the late 1950s, significant differences between Chinese and Soviet leaders had begun to develop in the wake of the Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev's de-Stalinization campaign. Starting in the early 1960s, along with the escalation of the great Sino-Soviet polemic debate, the disputes between Beijing and Moscow quickly spread from the ideological field to state-to-state relations. The hostility between the two communist giants flared into hatred when the Cultural Revolution swept across China, with Beijing and Moscow each regarding the other as a "traitor" to true communism. By 1968–69, each side had massed several hundred thousand troops along the border areas that, only less than a decade ago, had been boasted as a region characterized by "peace and eternal safety."⁵

China's already extremely tense security situation dramatically worsened in March 1969, when two bloody conflicts erupted between Chinese and Soviet border garrison forces on Zhenbao Island (Damansky Island in Russian), located near the Chinese bank of the Ussuri River. This incident immediately brought China and the Soviet Union to the brink of a general war, and, reportedly, the Soviet leaders even considered conducting a preemptive nuclear strike against their former communist ally.⁶

Given the dramatic deterioration of China's overall security situation in 1968–69, it is not surprising that Beijing's leaders had to consider how to improve their nation's security environment by making major changes in Chinese foreign policy and security strategy. However, although the security-threat-centered interpretation makes good sense in explaining why in 1968–69 it was *necessary* for Beijing to make major changes in Chinese foreign policy and security strategy, it does not explain how and why it became *possible* for Beijing's leaders to achieve such changes in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Historically, the question of how to deal with the United States was for Beijing not just a foreign policy issue but rather an issue concerning the very essence of the Chinese revolution. From the moment that the "new China" came into being, Beijing's leaders regarded the United States as China's primary enemy. They consistently declared that a fundamental aim of the Chinese revolution was to destroy the "old" world order dominated by the U.S. imperialists. For almost two decades, the United States had been thoroughly demonized in the Chinese popular image. As a result, the theme of "struggling against U.S. imperialism" had occupied a central position in Mao's efforts to legitimize his "continuous revolution" and was frequently invoked by the CCP to mobilize hundreds of millions of ordinary Chinese to participate in Mao's revolu-

tionary movements—most recently, the Cultural Revolution. Beijing's pursuit of fundamental changes in Chinese policy toward the United States therefore was fraught with political hazards, not least of which was possible detriment to the legitimacy of the Chinese revolution. It seemed that unless Beijing's leaders were willing to make basic compromises in their commitments to the anti-imperialist communist ideology, it would be impossible for them to pursue a rapprochement with the United States.

In this respect, we must note that Beijing's leaders considered pursuing a rapprochement with the United States within the context of radically redefining their concept of imperialism by identifying the Soviet Union as a "social-imperialist country." In Leninist vocabulary, "imperialism" represented the "highest stage" in the development of capitalism. Therefore, an imperialist country had to be capitalist in the first place; thus, few would ever call the Soviet Union "capitalist" given its overwhelmingly communist-dominated economic and political structures. However, in the wake of the great Sino-Soviet polemic debate, Beijing claimed that capitalism had been "restored" in the Soviet Union with the emerging dominance of a new "privileged bureaucratic capitalist class."⁷ During the height of the Cultural Revolution, and especially after the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968, Beijing charged that the Soviet Union had become a "social-imperialist country." Consequently, both in the Chinese Communist definition of the "main contradiction" in the world and in Chinese propaganda, "Soviet social-imperialism" gradually replaced "U.S. imperialism" to become the most dangerous enemy of the world proletarian revolution.⁸ Within this new theoretical framework, "U.S. imperialism" remained China's enemy but no longer the primary one.

This important change had provided the much needed ideological space for Beijing to justify a rapprochement with the United States. In Maoist political philosophy, which had been heavily influenced by the emphasis in traditional Chinese political culture on the necessity of "borrowing the strength of the barbarians to check the barbarians," it was always legitimate to pursue a "united front" with a less dangerous enemy in order to focus on the contest against the primary enemy. Since Beijing identified the "social-imperialist" Soviet Union as the most dangerous among all imperialist countries in the world, a rapprochement with the imperialist United States, an enemy now less dangerous in comparison, became feasible and justifiable for Beijing's leaders even in ideological terms.

In a deeper sense, Beijing was also able to pursue a rapprochement with Washington because, for the first time in the PRC's history, Mao's "continuous revolution" was losing momentum due to the chairman's *own* policies.

From a historical perspective, the Cultural Revolution represented the climax of Mao's efforts to transform China's "old" state and society through extensive mass mobilization. Mao initiated the Cultural Revolution for two purposes. First, he hoped that it would allow him to discover new means to promote the transformation of China's party, state, and society in accordance with his ideal—that China should be transformed into a land of prosperity, universal justice, and equality. Second, he desired to use it to enhance his much weakened authority and reputation in the wake of the disastrous Great Leap Forward. In the chairman's mind, his strengthened leadership role would best guarantee the success of his revolution.

By carrying out the Cultural Revolution, Mao easily achieved the second goal, making his power and authority absolute. But the Cultural Revolution failed to bring him any closer to achieving the first goal. Although the power of the mass movement released by the Cultural Revolution destroyed both Mao's opponents and the "old" party-state control system, it was unable to create the new form of state power Mao desired so much for building a new society in China. Mao was ready, however, to halt the revolution in 1968–69. In late July, Mao dispatched the "Workers' Mao Zedong Thought Propaganda Team" to various universities in Beijing to reestablish the order that had been undermined by the "revolutionary masses." After the Red Guards at the Qinghua University opened fire on the team, Mao decided it was time to dismantle the Red Guards movement, thus leading his "continuous revolution" to a crucial turning point.⁹ This was a huge decision on Mao's part. For almost two decades, "mobilizing the masses" had been the key for Mao in maintaining and enhancing the momentum of his revolution; but now the chairman openly stood in opposition to the masses in an upside-down effort to reestablish the communist state's control over society.

Against this background, with the chairman's repeated pushes, Beijing began to stop using the notion that China was "the center of the world revolution," which had prevailed since the beginning of the Cultural Revolution.¹⁰ In several internal talks, Mao emphasized the importance of "consolidating" the achievements of the Cultural Revolution—which in reality meant no more than consolidating his own authority and political power. These were critical signs indicating that Mao's China as a revolutionary state, after being an uncompromising challenger to the "old world" for two decades, was now beginning to demonstrate a willingness to live with the yet-to-be-transformed "old" world order. In other words, a "socialization" process, to borrow a critical concept from David Armstrong, had been eroding the Maoist revolution.¹¹ It was within this context that, when the security threat from the Soviet Union escalated

dramatically in 1969, Mao began to consider adopting a new policy toward the United States.

The Marshals' Reports

The first sign of change in Chinese attitude toward the United States appeared in November 1968, when Washington proposed to resume the stagnant Sino-American ambassadorial talks in Warsaw. Beijing responded positively and with "unprecedented speed."¹² Then, in January 1969, Mao ordered the publication of Nixon's inaugural address. One month later, however, because Washington provided asylum to Liao Heshu, the Chinese chargé d'affaires in the Netherlands who defected to the West in February 1969, Beijing canceled the ambassadorial talks that had been scheduled to resume on February 20.¹³

Although we cannot know exactly what Mao was thinking when he showed interest in dealing with the United States, one thing is certain: the chairman now was turning more of his attention to international issues, trying to understand the orientation of Moscow's and Washington's global strategies in the wake of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968. In late 1968–early 1969, in a series of conversations with foreign visitors to China, the chairman revealed his deep concern about the expansionist nature of Soviet foreign policy. Indeed, he tried hard to comprehend the significance of Soviet behavior, wondering aloud if the Soviet invasion should be interpreted as the prelude to a more general war. In the chairman's view, now "all under the heaven is in great chaos."¹⁴

It was against this background that on February 19, 1969, Mao summoned a meeting at his residence attended by Lin Biao, Zhou Enlai, members of the Central Cultural Revolution Group, several veteran party and government leaders, and the four marshals (Chen Yi, Xu Xiangqian, Nie Rongzhen, and Ye Jianying). To the great surprise of all participants, the four marshals in particular, the chairman announced that he hoped that the four marshals—who had been excluded from the decision-making inner circle during the Cultural Revolution—would devote more attention to "studying international strategic issues."¹⁵ Two days later, Zhou Enlai followed Mao's instructions to inform the four marshals that they should meet "once a week" to discuss "important international issues" for the purpose of providing Mao and the Party leadership with their opinions. In particular, the Chinese premier advised the marshals "not to be restricted by the old frame of thinking" in their deliberations.¹⁶

The four marshals began to meet on March 1 and had held four meetings by the end of the month. The first meeting was a general discussion. The next three were held after the Sino-Soviet border clash at

Zhenbao Island, so the discussion focused on assessing the implications of the clash and analyzing Soviet strategy toward China. By the end of March, the marshals had finished two reports, in which they cast doubt on the notion that the Soviet Union was ready to wage a major war against China. They also pointed out that the focus of the American-Soviet global dispute was "the competition over oil resources in the Middle East" and that the Soviet Union could not easily turn its main strategic attention to China before the situation in the Middle East had been resolved. Nowhere in the reports did the marshals refer to the sensitive question of adjusting Chinese policy toward the United States.¹⁷

Between April 1 and 24, the CCP held its Ninth National Congress. In the main political report delivered by Lin Biao, then China's second most important leader and Mao's designated successor, there was nothing to indicate that Beijing had changed its attitude toward the United States.¹⁸ Lin's report was, however, prepared for a public audience. When Mao wanted a more sophisticated understanding of the changing world situation, he again turned to the four marshals, instructing them to resume regular meetings to "study the international situation."¹⁹ In mid-May, Zhou Enlai further informed them that Mao assigned them this task because the international situation was "too complicated" to fit the Ninth Congress's conclusions. Zhou again asked the marshals not to be "restricted by any established framework" in their thinking and to try to help Mao to "gain command of the new tendency in the strategic development" in the world.²⁰

The marshals resumed meeting on June 7, 1969. On July 11, they submitted a comprehensive report, "A Preliminary Evaluation of the War Situation," to Mao and the Central Committee. They argued that the United States and the Soviet Union, which each regarded China as an enemy, took "each other as the enemy" too; for them, "the real threat is the one existing between themselves." Because the United States and the Soviet Union were both facing many difficulties at home and abroad, and because the focus of the strategic confrontation between them existed in Europe, stressed the marshals, "it is unlikely that U.S. imperialists and Soviet revisionists will launch a large-scale war against China, either jointly or separately."²¹ The marshals did not probe further into the question of adjusting Chinese foreign policy in their report.

After the marshals adjourned on July 11, several signs showed that subtle changes were happening in Washington's attitude toward China. On July 21, the U.S. State Department announced it was relaxing restrictions on American citizens traveling to China; five days later, Prince Norodom Sihanouk, Cambodia's chief of state, conveyed a letter by Senator Mike Mansfield to Zhou Enlai in which the veteran American politician expressed the desire to visit China to seek solutions to the "twenty-

year confrontation" between the two countries. Moscow proposed a meeting between top Chinese and Soviet leaders around the same time.²²

To better understand these new developments, the marshals resumed their discussions on July 29. They saw a possibility of "intentionally utilizing the contradictions between the United States and the Soviet Union" and believed, moreover, that not only should border negotiations with the Soviet Union be held in order to strengthen "our position in the struggle against America," but other policy options should also be considered. However, they did not believe that the time was right to accept Mansfield's request to visit China and proposed to "let him wait for a while."²³

Before the marshals could put these opinions into writing, another major border clash, more serious than the two clashes at Zhenbao Island in March, occurred between Chinese and Soviet garrisons in Xinjiang on August 13. An entire Chinese brigade was eliminated.²⁴ Beijing reacted immediately to this incident and to other signs indicating that Moscow probably was preparing to start a major war against China. On August 28, the CCP Central Committee ordered Chinese provinces and regions bordering the Soviet Union and Outer Mongolia to enter a status of general mobilization.²⁵ The marshals, meanwhile, still believed it unlikely the Soviet Union would wage a large-scale war against China, but, at the same time, they emphasized the need for Beijing to be prepared for a worst-case scenario. Within this context, Chen Yi and Ye Jianying mentioned that in order for China to be ready for a major confrontation with the Soviet Union, "the card of the United States" should be played. In another report, "Our Views about the Current Situation," they proposed on September 17 that in waging "a tit-for-tat struggle against both the United States and the Soviet Union" China should also use "negotiation as a means to struggle against them" and then perhaps the Sino-American ambassadorial talks should be resumed "when the timing is proper."²⁶ After submitting the report, Chen Yi confided some of his "unconventional thoughts" to Zhou Enlai, proposing that in addition to resuming the ambassadorial talks in Warsaw, China should "take the initiative in proposing to hold Sino-American talks at the ministerial or even higher levels, so that basic and related problems in Sino-American relations can be solved."²⁷

We do not know exactly how Mao responded to these reports. Yet the fact that the chairman, through Zhou Enlai, encouraged the marshals to present ideas that were not necessarily consistent with the general foreign policy line set up by the party's Ninth Congress is revealing enough. Apparently, what the chairman wanted to get was exactly such "unconventional thoughts." According to the recollections of Mao's doctor, Li Zhisui, the chairman said in August 1969: "Think about this. We have the

Soviet Union to the north and the west, India to the south, and Japan to the east. If all our enemies were to unite, attacking us from the north, south, east, and west, what do you think we should do? . . . Think again. Beyond Japan is the United States. Didn't our ancestors counsel negotiating with faraway countries while fighting with those that are near?"²⁸

With these "unconventional thoughts" in his mind, the chairman was determined to explore the possibility of opening relations with the United States. The main question he then faced was: through what channel could Beijing establish communication with the Americans? Not just by coincidence, Nixon was eager to find an answer to the same question.

Opening Moves

In the fall of 1969, there existed no channel of communication between China and the United States. The last meeting of the Sino-American ambassadorial talks was held in Warsaw in January 1968, and the talks had then been indefinitely suspended. Therefore, when President Nixon intended to let the Chinese know of his "readiness to open communication with Peking [Beijing]," ²⁹ he had to travel a circuitous path. During an around-the-world trip beginning in late July 1969, the U.S. president talked to Pakistani president Mohammad Yahya Khan and Romanian leader Nicolae Ceausescu, both of whom had good relations with Beijing, and asked them to convey to the Chinese leaders his belief that "Asia could not 'move forward' if a nation as large as China remained isolated."³⁰ When Zhou Enlai received the message from Yahya Khan, he commented in a report to Mao on November 16, 1969: "The direction of movement of Nixon and Kissinger is noteworthy."³¹

Washington took the first substantial move toward reopening channels of communication with Beijing on December 3, 1969, when the American ambassador to Poland, Walter Stoessel, following Nixon's instructions, approached a Chinese diplomat at a Yugoslavian fashion exhibition in Warsaw. The diplomat, caught off guard, quickly fled from the exhibition site. However, Stoessel was able to catch the Chinese interpreter, telling him in "broken Polish" that he had an important message for the Chinese embassy.³²

After receiving the Chinese embassy's report on the American ambassador's "unusual behavior," Zhou Enlai immediately reported it to Mao, commenting that "the opportunity now is coming; we now have a brick in our hands to knock the door [of the Americans]."³³ The premier acted at once to let the Americans know of Beijing's interest in reopening communication with Washington.

Following Beijing's instructions, the Chinese embassy in Warsaw informed the American embassy by telephone that Lei Yang, Chinese

chargé d'affaires, was willing to meet Ambassador Stoessel. On December 11, 1969, Lei and Stoessel held an "informal meeting" at the Chinese embassy during which the American ambassador, in addition to proposing a resumption of the ambassadorial talks, asked the Chinese to "pay attention to a series of positive measures the American side had taken in recent months."³⁴ On January 8, Lei and Stoessel held another informal meeting at the American embassy in Warsaw. The two sides agreed to resume the ambassadorial talks, which would be held in turn at the Chinese and American embassies, on January 20.³⁵ When the Sino-American ambassadorial talks formally resumed on January 20 at the Chinese embassy, Stoessel expressed Washington's intention to improve relations with China, stating that, in order to have "more thorough discussion" on "any question" related to Sino-American relations, Washington was willing to dispatch an envoy to Beijing or accept one from the Chinese government in Washington. Lei Yang, already having received detailed instructions from Beijing on how to deal with different scenarios, replied that if Washington were interested in "holding meetings at higher levels or through other channels," the Americans might present more specific proposals "for discussion in future ambassadorial talks."³⁶

The second formal meeting between Lei and Stoessel was scheduled to be held at the American embassy on February 20, 1970. On February 12, Zhou Enlai chaired a politburo meeting to draft instructions and prepare speech notes for Lei Yang. The politburo decided that Lei should inform the American side that "if the U.S. government is willing to dispatch a minister-level official or a special envoy representing the president to visit Beijing to explore further solutions to the fundamental questions in Sino-American relations, the Chinese government will receive him." Mao approved the decision on the same day.³⁷ When Lei met with Stoessel on February 20, he highlighted the Taiwan issue, emphasizing that Taiwan was part of Chinese territory and that "withdrawal of all U.S. armed forces from the Taiwan Strait area" and the "solution of the Taiwan issue" were the preconditions for "fundamentally improving Sino-American relations." The Chinese chargé d'affaires, though, also mentioned that China was willing to "consider and discuss whatever ideas and suggestions" the American side would make to "reduce tensions between China and the United States and fundamentally improve the relations between them in accordance with the five principles of peaceful-coexistence." In particular, he informed the American ambassador that the Chinese government "will be willing to receive" a high-ranking American representative in Beijing.³⁸

After the meeting, Nixon, eager to bring contact with Beijing to a higher and more substantial level, conveyed (again through Yahya Khan) the following message to Beijing: "We prepare to open a direct channel of

communication from the White House to Beijing. If Beijing agrees [to establish such a channel], its existence will not be known by anyone outside the White House, and we guarantee that [we have] the complete freedom to make decisions." Zhou Enlai received the message on March 21 and commented: "Nixon intends to adopt the method of the [American-Vietnamese] negotiation in Paris, and let Kissinger make the contact."³⁹

At this moment, however, several events combined together to prevent Beijing and Washington from establishing high-level direct contacts. In mid-March, Cambodia's Prince Norodom Sihanouk, while on an annual vacation abroad, was removed by a coup at home, and he came to Beijing to establish an anti-American exile resistance government. In April, Taiwan's vice premier Jiang Jingguo visited the United States. Early in May, Nixon ordered American troops to conduct a large-scale operation aimed at destroying Vietnamese communist bases inside Cambodia. On May 18, Beijing announced the postponement of the Sino-American talks in Warsaw. Two days later, a million Chinese held a protest rally at the Tiananmen Square, and Mao issued a statement calling for "the people of the world to unite and defeat the U.S. aggressors and all their running dogs."⁴⁰ Consequently, the process of Sino-American rapprochement was delayed.

Despite Beijing's renewed anti-American propaganda, the Nixon administration decided not to give up the effort to open channels of communication with China. On June 15, Vernon Walters, military attaché at the American embassy in Paris, followed Washington's instruction to approach Fang Wen, the Chinese military attaché in Paris, and asked that the Chinese open another "confidential channel of communication" as the "Warsaw forum was too public and too formalistic."⁴¹ But Beijing was not ready to come back to the table at the moment. On June 16, at a politburo meeting chaired by Zhou Enlai, CCP leaders decided that, "given the current international situation," the ambassadorial talks in Warsaw "will be postponed further" and that only the Chinese liaison personnel would continue to maintain contacts with the Americans.⁴² Yet Beijing did not want to allow the process toward opening relations with Washington to lose momentum completely. On July 10, Beijing released Bishop James Walsh, an American citizen who had been imprisoned in China since 1958 on espionage charges.⁴³

Beijing slowed the pace of opening communication with Washington in summer of 1970 not just because Nixon had ordered the invasion of Cambodia. A potential storm was brewing between two of China's most powerful men, Mao Zedong and Lin Biao, which forced the chairman to turn his main attention to domestic, especially inner-party, affairs. After the party's Ninth Congress in April 1969, Lin's relations with the chair-

man turned sour, and they deteriorated rapidly during the summer of 1970. In designing China's new state structure to reflect "the achievements of the Cultural Revolution," Lin, as Mao's designated successor, argued that Mao should reclaim the position as chairman of the state, which, in Mao's eyes, reflected Lin's own ambition to occupy the position himself.⁴⁴ The struggle between Mao and Lin escalated significantly in the summer of 1970, leading to a *de facto* showdown between Mao and several of Lin's main supporters at a party Central Committee plenary session held from August 23 to September 6. At one point, it seemed that Lin and his followers had gained the support of most Central Committee members, and only after Mao personally addressed the plenary session did he control the situation.⁴⁵ This major inner-leadership struggle occupied much of Mao's energy and time, making it difficult for him to take sophisticated new steps in pursuing contacts with the Americans. Consequently, the process of opening relations with the United States was again deferred.

The Role of Edgar Snow

Mao began to refocus his attention on the Americans in late 1970. Just like Nixon, he was not happy with the "formalistic" nature of the Warsaw channel. However, because of some complicated concerns—to be discussed below—Mao, though willing to establish secret connection with Washington, did not want to follow the pace set by and communicate under terms defined by Washington.

In October and November 1970, Beijing received more overtures from Washington through the Pakistani and Romanian channels indicating that Nixon remained willing to dispatch a high-ranking representative to China.⁴⁶ Beijing's leaders decided to respond positively to these messages. On November 14, Zhou Enlai told President Yahya, who was in China for a state visit, that "if the American side indeed has the intention to solve the Taiwan issue," Beijing would welcome the U.S. president's "representative to Beijing for discussions." The premier also emphasized that this was the first time Beijing's response "has come from a Head, through a Head, to a Head."⁴⁷ One week later, in a meeting with Romanian vice premier Gheorghe Radulescu, Zhou asked China's "friends in Bucharest" to convey to Washington that the Chinese government would welcome Nixon's representative, or even Nixon himself, to Beijing for discussions about "solving the Taiwan issue" and improving Sino-American relations.⁴⁸ Interestingly, Zhou also advised the Pakistanis and Romanians to hold the message for a while before delivering it to Washington. As a result, the Pakistanis did not convey the message to Washington until December 9 and the Romanians not until January 11, 1971.

Kissinger reported in his memoirs that he had found such delay puzzling.⁴⁹ The likely reason for the delay was that Mao, for the purpose of legitimizing the coming changes in Sino-American relations, was planning to make an initiative in his own way, and his vision had fallen on the American writer Edgar Snow.

Snow had been a friend of Mao and the Chinese Communists since the mid-1930s, when he visited the Chinese Communist base areas in northern Shannxi province and interviewed Mao and many other CCP leaders. His highly-acclaimed book, *Red Star over China* (1938) helped create a positive image of the Chinese revolution both within and outside China. After the PRC's establishment, Snow visited China in 1960 and 1965, and he continued to write about the "great achievements" of Mao's "long revolution."⁵⁰ During the Cultural Revolution years, Snow attempted several times to revisit China, but he was unable to get a Chinese visa. The situation suddenly changed in August 1970. Snow, then living in Switzerland, received several urgent calls from Hunag Zhen, the Chinese ambassador to France and another of the American writer's old friends. When Snow arrived at the Chinese embassy in Paris, he was urged by Huang to reapply for visiting China. The Chinese ambassador, in response to the American writer's complaint that Beijing had ignored him in previous years, told him that the invitation "comes from the top" and promised that "he will be treated as a distinguished guest by Chairman Mao himself."⁵¹

On October 1, 1970, when Snow and his wife were invited to review the annual National Day celebration parade at the top of the Gate of Heavenly Peace, they were escorted by Zhou Enlai to meet Mao and stand by the chairman's side. A picture of Snow and Mao together would later be printed on the front page of major Chinese newspapers. Mao was sending a message intended not only for the Americans but also for people all over China. For over two decades, the United States had been thoroughly demonized in the minds of Chinese people by the CCP's widespread anti-American propaganda campaigns and indoctrination efforts. Now, as the chairman was planning to pursue a new relationship with the United States, he would need to create a new American image in the Chinese people's minds. A subtle signal such as this one would serve to gradually prepare the Chinese people psychologically for the big changes in Sino-American relations.

Mao obviously did not invite Snow to Beijing merely to take a publishable photo, however. He also planned to use Snow in pursuit of larger goals. After several delays, the chairman received Snow on December 18 for a lengthy interview. As far as the prospect of Sino-American relations was concerned, Mao's most noteworthy statement during the interview was that he was willing to receive Nixon in Beijing. The chairman told

Snow that Beijing was considering allowing Americans of all political persuasions—Left, Right, and Center—to come to China. He particularly emphasized that he would like to welcome Nixon in Beijing because the U.S. president was the person with whom he could “discuss and solve the problems between China and the United States.” The chairman made it clear that he “would be happy to meet Nixon, either as president or as a tourist.”⁵² After the interview, Snow received a copy of the interview transcribed by the Chinese interpreter Tang Wensheng (Nancy Tang) but was advised not to publish it “at the moment.” Snow did not publish the interview “with the use of direct quotation” until April 1971.⁵³ According to Nixon, however, Washington “learned of Mao’s statement [on welcoming Nixon to Beijing] within days after he made it.”⁵⁴

It is likely that Mao asked Snow to hold the publication of the interview, again, for domestic considerations. The chairman’s five-hour interview with Snow covered a wide range of issues. In addition to Sino-American relations, he particularly focused on the Cultural Revolution. As the chairman had done on many other occasions, he argued compellingly that the Cultural Revolution was absolutely necessary because it exposed the “bad elements” by creating chaos “all under the heaven.” But he also mentioned that he did not favor two tendencies prevailing during the Cultural Revolution: one was “not telling the truth,” the other “the maltreatment of captives” in an “all-round civil war.” This rare confession from the chairman on the fading status of the Cultural Revolution was further linked to his ongoing political struggle with Lin Biao. Implicitly targeting his designated “heir and successor” and “Cultural Revolution star,” the chairman claimed that it was too much and ridiculous to call him the “Great Teacher, Great Leader, Great Supreme Commander, and Great Helmsman,” and that “one day every title will be eliminated except for the title ‘Teacher’.”⁵⁵ Throughout the interview, Mao jumped freely between domestic and international topics, implying that improving relations with the United States would have to be closely interwoven with major changes in China’s political and social life.⁵⁶ What seems ironic is that although he consciously defended the Cultural Revolution as much as he could, on a subconscious level he was virtually saying farewell to this most radical phase of his continuous revolution.

The transcript of Mao’s interview with Snow was another masterpiece from the chairman designed to influence the minds of the Chinese masses. The content of this message, though, was different from that of any of the chairman’s previous ones in that, rather than trying to encourage the people to enter a revolutionary movement, it attempted to convince them of the need to end an existing one. The chairman knew that such messages had to be delivered to the party and the nation in calculated ways. In this sense, Snow was the chairman’s carefully picked

agent—by having a well-known American sympathizer for the Chinese revolution deliver the message, the chairman, as he had done so many times in his long political career, was staging an unconventional political drama, one that he hoped would justify the rapprochement with the Americans and convince the Chinese masses that his revolution was still alive. As does any drama, this one needed a climactic episode to produce its maximum effect. This episode was something Mao much needed but could not plan well in advance, although he must have believed that it would emerge during the course of events. Indeed, in a few months, that dramatic episode took place, and it was what would be recorded in history as the “Ping Pong diplomacy.”

“Ping Pong Diplomacy”

The exchanges between Beijing and Washington slowed in the early months of 1971. Although both sides were willing to upgrade the discussions between them to higher levels, neither the Chinese nor American leaders seemed to know exactly how to take the next step. One major obstacle was determining the issues that should be on the agenda. The differences between Beijing and Washington were tremendous. For Beijing’s leaders, the key issue was America’s military intervention in Taiwan. They had argued for over two decades that to improve Sino-American relations, Washington had to stop meddling in China’s internal affairs. For Washington, however, the key to resolving the Taiwan issue lay in Beijing’s recognizing that the Nationalists had effective control over Taiwan and agreeing that any resolution of the matter must be reached by peaceful means. The Chinese and Americans also differed significantly on other international issues, such as how to end the military conflict in Vietnam, how to deal with the division between North and South Korea, and how to evaluate Japan’s reemergence as an economic giant. On none of these questions was it easy for the two sides to reach a compromise. In order to close the gap, both sides believed it necessary to hold bilateral meetings at higher levels. Before such talks could begin, policy makers in Beijing and Washington spent the early months of 1971 assessing diplomatic options and formulating negotiation strategies.⁵⁷

In the meantime, both the Chinese and Americans were waiting for the opportunity to take the next step. This was especially important for Beijing. In addition to weighing the pros and cons of reaching a rapprochement with Washington strategically and geopolitically, Beijing’s leaders, Mao in particular, needed to find a “triggering event” that would allow them to mobilize and achieve the Chinese people’s support for establishing a new relationship with the United States. It was against this background that in April 1971 an opportunity appeared almost suddenly

in Nagoya, Japan, where the Chinese Ping Pong team was participating in the Thirty-First World Table Tennis Championships.

In 1967 and 1969, because of the chaos of the Cultural Revolution, Chinese table tennis players—the best in the world—failed to show up at the world championships. Early in 1971, Koji Goto, president of the Japanese Table Tennis Association, visited China to invite the Chinese to participate in the forthcoming world championships in Nagoya.⁵⁸ From the beginning, Beijing regarded the decision whether to dispatch a team to Japan as a political issue, especially because this would be the first time since the height of the Cultural Revolution that a Chinese sports team would attend a major international event. Zhou Enlai and Mao Zedong in particular finally decided that “our team should go.”⁵⁹

Table tennis was the most popular sport in China in the early 1970s and the only one in which the Chinese players could defeat anyone in the world. Not surprisingly, Chinese participation in the Nagoya championships turned out to be a major national event that resulted in widespread “Ping Pong fever” throughout the country. In the meantime, the Chinese team leadership, who had been instructed to make two to four phone calls back to Beijing everyday, kept top leaders in Beijing abreast of any new developments in Nagoya.⁶⁰

During the course of the championships, Chinese and American players had several unplanned encounters. On March 27, the Chinese players talked to a few American players at the championships’ opening reception. Four days later, Graham B. Steenhoven, manager of the American delegation, encountered Song Zhong, general secretary of the Chinese delegation, at an International Table Tennis Association meeting break. Reportedly, Steenhoven mentioned that only two weeks earlier the U.S. State Department had terminated all restrictions on the use of American passports for traveling to China and asked Song “if the American players could have the opportunity to visit China.” Officials of the Chinese delegation met the same evening to discuss the “implications” of Steenhoven’s comments, and they decided to report to Beijing that “the Americans want to visit China.”⁶¹ Officials at the Chinese Foreign Ministry and National Commission on Sports treated the report seriously. After carefully discussing the matter, they concluded in a report on April 3 that “the timing now is not yet mature for the Americans to visit China, and the Americans should be advised that there will be other opportunities in the future.”⁶² On April 4, Zhou Enlai endorsed the report. The premier, however, was uncertain about his decision and sent the report to Mao for the chairman to make the final ruling.⁶³

In the meantime, another incident occurred between Chinese and American players. On the afternoon of April 4, Glenn Cowen, a nineteen-year-old American player, accidentally boarded a bus carrying Chinese

players. The Chinese all smiled, but no one extended him a greeting. Suddenly, three-time world champion Zhuang Zedong approached him, presenting him with an embroidered scarf as a gift.⁶⁴ The next day, Cowen returned the favor by offering Zhuang a T-shirt with the Beatles' popular slogan "Let It Be" on it as a gift.⁶⁵

In Beijing, Mao had been following the events in Nagoya from the start. Mao's chief nurse, Wu Xujun, recollected that during the championships the chairman was constantly excited, lost sleep, and did not have much of an appetite. Wu noted that Mao's state was usually a sign that he was thinking about big decisions.⁶⁶ Zhou's report regarding the American players visiting China had been sitting on Mao's desk for more than two days when, on April 6, the chairman finally approved it and returned it to the Foreign Ministry.⁶⁷ Yet the chairman's concerns were far from over. When Wu read to him foreign news reports about the encounters between Zhuang Zedong and Cowen, the chairman's eyes "suddenly turned bright." He asked Wu to read the reports again, commenting that "Zhuang Zedong not only plays good Ping Pong but knows how to conduct diplomacy as well." That evening Mao went to bed at around eleven o'clock after taking several sleeping pills. But before he fell asleep, he suddenly called Wu to his bed and asked her to call the Foreign Ministry immediately and to "invite the American team to visit China." Wu did not at first trust her own ears since the chairman had reversed the decision he had endorsed when his mind had been clear. But the chairman, despite being under the strong influence of medicine, insisted Wu make the phone call. Only after confirming that the chief nurse indeed had made the call did the chairman allow himself to get to sleep.⁶⁸

Mao's sudden change of mind caused a sleepless night for Zhou Enlai and many others at the Foreign Ministry and National Commission on Sports. The next day, Chinese officials with the Ping Pong team in Nagoya received the order from Beijing to extend an invitation to the American table tennis team to visit China.⁶⁹ Upon learning of the invitation, the White House immediately approved it.⁷⁰ The Americans' activities during their visit to China were widely covered by the Chinese media. The highlight of the visit was a meeting held on April 14 between the American team, together with teams from four other countries, with Zhou Enlai at the Great Hall of the People during which the premier announced, "[Y]our visit has opened a new chapter in the history of the relations between Chinese and American peoples."⁷¹ A few hours after Zhou met with the American players, Washington announced five new measures concerning China, including the termination of the twenty-two-year-old trade embargo. In a few short days, Ping Pong diplomacy had completely changed the political atmosphere between China and the United States, making the theme of improving relations between the two

countries, as Kissinger put it, “an international sensation” that “captured the world’s imagination.”⁷²

When the Americans were playing China’s most popular and strongest sport in front of a huge Chinese audience (especially if radio and television audiences were included), it was almost as if a modern version of the ritual procedures related to the age-old Chinese “tribute system,” wherein foreign barbarians came to China to pay tribute the superior Chinese emperor, was taking place. The Chinese players were very friendly toward the Americans, even allowing them to win quite a few matches. In the eyes of the Chinese audience, though, this was not just an indication of friendship but also, and more importantly, a revelation of superiority.

Mao moved quickly to fit the new Chinese popular mood toward America into the orbit of the relations he was planning to pursue with the United States. The chairman looked to Snow once again. In addition to permitting the American writer to publish in the West, the chairman ordered that the complete transcript of the interview—in which he said that he was willing to meet Nixon in Beijing—be relayed to the entire party and the whole country.⁷³ Mao’s maneuvers, as it turned out, further prepared the Chinese people politically and psychologically for the forthcoming transformation of Sino-American relations.

Kissinger’s Secret Trip to Beijing

In the wake of the Ping Pong diplomacy, Beijing and Washington immediately worked toward plans for the high-level meeting that had been discussed since late 1970. The Pakistani channel again played a crucial role in facilitating communications between the two sides. After a series of exchanges of messages through the Pakistanis, Kissinger stated in a message to Beijing on May 10 that because of the importance Nixon had attached to normalizing relations with China, he was prepared to visit Beijing “for direct conversations” with PRC leaders.⁷⁴

The progress in handling relations with Beijing significantly enhanced Washington’s confidence and capacity in dealing with relations with Moscow. In mid-May, Washington and Moscow reached a procedural breakthrough in the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks. Kissinger immediately asked the Pakistanis to convey an advance copy of the U.S.-Soviet agreement to Beijing, with an accompanying message stating that Washington would “conclude no agreement which would be directed against the People’s Republic of China.”⁷⁵

In late May, with Mao’s approval, Zhou Enlai chaired a series of meetings (including a politburo meeting) to discuss the issue concerning improving Sino-American relations. These meetings concluded that the

visit of top American leaders to China would allow Beijing to voice its opinions on the Taiwan issue, and would enhance China's international position vis-à-vis the two superpowers. If the opening succeeded, the "competition between the two superpowers" would be more fierce; and even if the opening failed, the "reactionary face" of U.S. imperialism would be further exposed. Therefore, there was no reason not to pursue the opening. Mao approved the conclusions reached at the meeting.⁷⁶

On May 29, Zhou Enlai, once again via the Pakistani channel, sent Beijing's formal responses to Washington, informing the Americans that Mao was looking forward to "direct conversations" with Nixon, "in which each side would be free to raise the principal issue of concern" and that Zhou welcomed Kissinger to China "for a preliminary secret meeting with high level Chinese officials to prepare for and make necessary arrangements for President Nixon's visit to Beijing."⁷⁷ Nixon received the message four days later, commenting, "This is the most important communication that has come to an American president since the end of World War II."⁷⁸

After careful planning, Kissinger secretly visited Beijing from July 9 to 11. During the forty-eight hours he stayed in Beijing, he met with Zhou and other high-ranking Chinese officials in six meetings lasting a total of seventeen hours.⁷⁹ Although Beijing had repeatedly emphasized that unless progress could be reached on the Taiwan issue no other question would be discussed, Zhou's attitude was flexible. The most important breakthrough was reached on the first day, when the two leaders tried to comprehend the other's basic stand. Kissinger spent much time explaining Washington's policies toward a series of international issues, including Taiwan. He stated that Washington would withdraw two-thirds of U.S. armed forces from Taiwan after the end of the Vietnam War and would continue to withdraw more troops from Taiwan in concert with further improvement in Sino-American relations. Kissinger also made it clear that the United States acknowledged Taiwan as a part of China and would not support Taiwan's independence. Within this context, he emphasized that Washington firmly believed that the Taiwan issue should be solved in a peaceful manner. Kissinger also told the Chinese that the Nixon administration had committed to ending the Vietnam War through negotiations and thus was willing to follow a timetable to withdraw American troops from South Vietnam if America's honor and self-esteem were protected. Mao and Zhou seemed satisfied with Kissinger's statement that Washington recognized Taiwan was a part of China. Although in the talks with Kissinger Zhou continued to emphasize that all American troops must be withdrawn from Taiwan and the U.S.-Taiwan treaty must be abolished, he also stated that the differences between Beijing and Washington should not prevent the two from living in peace and equal-

ity.⁸⁰ On July 15, Beijing and Washington announced simultaneously that Nixon was to visit China “at an appropriate date before May 1972.”

Closing Moves

The communication between Beijing and Washington became more direct after Kissinger’s trip: in addition to occasional use of the Pakistani channel, a new secret “Paris channel” was established. Vernon Walters and Huang Zhen, the American and Chinese ambassadors to France, were assigned by Washington and Beijing to serve as messengers.⁸¹

To settle important details for Nixon’s visit, Kissinger openly visited Beijing from October 20 to 26. During his seven-day stay in Beijing, he and Zhou Enlai held ten meetings, which lasted a total of twenty-three hours and forty minutes.⁸² They exchanged opinions on a host of international issues and the details of Nixon’s visit (e.g. media coverage); the most difficult challenge they faced, however, was to work out a draft summit communiqué. Before coming to China, Kissinger had prepared a draft, in which he emphasized the common grounds shared by Beijing and Washington while using vague language to describe the issues on which the two had sharp differences. But Mao instructed Zhou to veto the draft, claiming it to be “totally unacceptable.” The Chinese premier emphasized that the communiqué must reflect the fundamental differences between Beijing and Washington and not present an “untruthful appearance.”⁸³

In essence, Zhou’s response reflected Mao’s way of demonstrating to the Americans his moral superiority in handling important international issues. What the Americans had proposed was a conventional document that would make the chairman’s unprecedented acceptance of Nixon’s visit look like no more than a common diplomatic venture. By contrast, the chairman wanted to emphasize the drama of the visit and thereby put the Chinese in an “equal” (as Mao defined the term), thus superior, position vis-à-vis the Americans. When Kissinger received the Chinese draft communiqué that had been approved by Mao, his first reaction was disbelief. But when he had finished reading this document and had time to reflect, he “began to see that the very novelty of the [Chinese] approach might resolve our perplexities.”⁸⁴ The two sides then started working on a mutually acceptable draft that not only defined common grounds but also used clear yet moderate language to state each side’s views on important issues. The most difficult in this regard was, of course, Taiwan. When Kissinger departed from Beijing on October 26, the two sides had reached agreement on almost all points except for a few specific expressions concerning Washington’s attitude toward Taiwan.⁸⁵

When Kissinger was in Beijing, the United Nations General Assembly voted with the support of an overwhelming majority to let Beijing have

China's seat at the UN and expel Taipei from it. This development was immediately propagated throughout China as a "great victory" of Chinese foreign policy as well as an indication of the "significant enhancement" of the PRC's international status and reputation.⁸⁶ In internal indoctrination, the "victory" was further linked to Mao's "brilliant decision" to open relations with the United States. At a time when Mao and his revolution continuously had suffered the loss of the Chinese people's inner support, the breakthrough in China's external relations, which allowed Beijing's leaders to proclaim that Mao's revolution had indeed transformed China from a weak country into a prestigious world power, played an increasingly important role in providing legitimacy to Mao's regime.

It was in this context that Alexander Haig, Kissinger's deputy on the national security staff, inadvertently offended his Chinese hosts while in China in early January 1972 to make the final technical preparations for Nixon's visit. At a meeting with Zhou Enlai on January 4, Haig delivered an assessment from Nixon and Kissinger about the recently concluded India-Pakistan crisis that made clear the American leaders, in managing the crisis, were concerned about China's viability and believed that maintaining China was in the fundamental interests of the United States. When Zhou reported the meeting to Mao, the chairman commented: "Why should our viability become America's concern? If China's independence and viability should be protected by the Americans, it is very dangerous [for us]."⁸⁷ On January 6, Zhou formally told Haig that "no country should depend upon a foreign power in maintaining its own independence and viability" as "otherwise it would become that power's subordinate and colony."⁸⁸ Such emphasis—or overemphasis—upon Beijing's determination to maintain China's independence and self-esteem reflected the CCP leaders' understanding of the importance of the viability issue in legitimizing the Communist regime in China.

Nixon arrived in Beijing on February 21. He had hardly settled down at the guest house when Zhou Enlai informed him that Mao was ready to meet him. The conversation between the Chinese chairman and the U.S. president lasted one hour and seems not to have had a central focus.⁸⁹ The chairman refused to get into details of any specific issues, announcing that he would only "discuss philosophical questions." It appears that the chairman was eager to demonstrate his broad vision, showing the Americans that not only was he in total control of matters concerning China, but he also occupied a privileged position to comprehend and deal with *anything* of significance in the known universe. In a sense, what was most meaningful for the chairman was not the specific issues he would discuss with the president but the simple fact that it was Nixon and Kissinger who came to *his* study to listen to *his* teachings. The chairman

probably was revealing some of his truest feelings when he said that he had “only changed a few places in the vicinity of Beijing.” Yet, at the bottom of his heart, he also must have believed that he had indeed changed the world—had he not, the “head of international imperialism” would not have come to visit his country in the first place.

The Taiwan issue remained the key to finalizing the text of the joint communiqué, which Kissinger and Ch’iao Kuan-hua, China’s vice foreign minister and one of Zhou’s main associates, were responsible for composing. The main challenge was finding a mutually acceptable expression of the United States’ stand toward the linkage between Washington’s agreement to withdraw U.S. troops from Taiwan and Beijing’s commitment to a peaceful settlement of the Taiwan issue. Although this was a sensitive issue for the Chinese because they had to stick to the principle that anything concerning Taiwan “belonged to China’s internal affairs,” they showed flexibility by allowing compromises to be reached.⁹⁰

On February 28, the Sino-American joint communiqué was signed in Shanghai. This was an unconventional document in that in addition to emphasizing common ground, it also highlighted differences between Beijing and Washington, with each side expressing in its own way its basic policies toward important international issues. From Beijing’s perspective, such a format best served China’s fundamental interests. In a geopolitical sense, Nixon’s visit did establish the framework in which a strategic partnership could be constructed between China and the United States. More importantly, especially for Mao, the unique format of the communiqué allowed China not only to remain a revolutionary country but also to claim an equal footing with the United States in the world. Not just for propaganda purposes did Beijing claim that Mao had won a “great diplomatic victory.”

Yet this was not a victory for international communism. With the deepening of the Sino-Soviet confrontation and the continuation of the Sino-American rapprochement in the 1970s, fundamental changes occurred in the orientation and, in a sense, even the essence of the global Cold War. The great Sino-Soviet ideological and, now, military and strategic rivalry not only forced Moscow into an ever-worsening over-extension of power but also, and more importantly, further drained both material and spiritual resources from international communism as a self-proclaimed trend that “represents the future.” In the meantime, the Sino-American opening enormously enhanced Washington’s strategic position in its global competition with Moscow. As far as these two events’ overall historical impact is concerned, together they caused the most profound shift in the international balance of power—in both strategic and ideological terms—between the two contending superpowers, presaging the

Cold War's end with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Soviet Bloc in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

But in terms of their immediate effect on American-Soviet relations in Europe, these two events created a crucial condition for the two superpowers to consider how to wage the Cold War in forms and styles that had been inconceivable in the past. Indeed, as Moscow had to devote a large portion of its resources to coping with an ever-worsening confrontation with China, and after Washington, through a new, albeit limited "strategic partnership" with China, enhanced its strategic position vis-à-vis the Soviet bloc in Europe, it was almost inevitable that the Cold War politics would have to be pursued in new ways. Not by mere coincidence, therefore, we see that "détente" emerged between Moscow and Washington as well as between Warsaw Pact and NATO in the 1970s. The global Cold War subsequently entered a new stage.

Notes

* This essay is a shortened and revised version of Chapter 9 in Chen Jian, *Mao's China and the Cold War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), and is included here with the permission of the University of North Carolina Press.

¹ *Renmin ribao* [People's Daily], January 28, 1969. For the English text of the essay, see *Peking Review* (January 31, 1969), 7–10.

² See Chen Jian and David L. Wilson eds., "All Under the Heaven Is Great Chaos: Beijing, the Sino-Soviet Border Clashes, and the Turn Toward Sino-American Rapprochement, 1968–1969," *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, no. 11 (Winter 1998), 161.

³ For Nixon's address, see *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Richard Nixon, 1969* (Washington, DC, 1971), 1–4.

⁴ See Chen Jian, "China's Involvement in the Vietnam War," *China Quarterly*, no. 142 (June 1995), 356–387.

⁵ Yang Kuisong, "From Zhenbao Island Incident to Sino-American Rapprochement," *Dangshi yanjiu ziliao* [Party History Research Materials, Beijing], no. 12 (1997), 7–8; Xu Yan, "The Sino-Soviet Border Clashes of 1969," *Dangshi yanjiu ziliao*, no. 6 (1994), 6–10.

⁶ For example, Kissinger recorded in his memoirs that in August 1969, a Soviet diplomat in Washington inquired about "what the US reaction would be to a Soviet attack on Chinese nuclear facilities." See Henry Kissinger, *White House Year* (New York, 1979), 183. See also discussions in Yang Kuisong, "From Zhenbao Island Incident to Sino-American Rapprochement," 12.

⁷ See, for example, editorial essay, "March forward along the Path of the October Revolution," *Renmin ribao*, November 6, 1967; and Lin Biao speech at the rally celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the October Revolution, *Renmin ribao*, November 8, 1967.

⁸ See, for example, editorial essay, "Leninism or Social-imperialism," *Renmin ribao*, April 22, 1970.

⁹ Remarks by Mao Zedong, August 5, 1968, *Jianguo yilai Mao Zedong wengao* [Mao Zedong's Manuscripts since the Formation of the People's Republic] (Beijing, 1987–1993), vol. 13, 516–517; see also transcript, "Mao Zedong's talks with the Red Guard Leaders from Five Universities in Beijing," July 28, 1968, in Song Yongyi chief ed. *Zhongguo wenhua dageming wenku* [Chinese Cultural Revolution Database] (Hong Kong, 2002), Part II, 1968.07.28.

¹⁰ Mao Zedong, "A Series of Remarks on External Propaganda and Diplomatic Affairs," March 1967–March 1971, *Jianguo yilai Mao Zedong wengao*, vol. 13, 275–276, 283–284.

¹¹ First in a pioneering case study on the changing behavior of Mao's China as a revolutionary state, then in a comprehensive study on the relationship between revolutionary states and world order, David Armstrong has developed a sophisticated concept useful for understanding how and why revolutionary states, such as Mao's China, become "socialized" during the process of encountering the existing world order. According to Armstrong, "Socialization denotes the process 'where men consciously or unconsciously conform to the convention of the society in which they live in order to function more effectively within it (and) whereby an increasing entanglement within an existing structure of relationships brings about an increasing degree of adaptation to the normal behavior patterns of that structure.'" See David Armstrong, *Revolution and World Order: The Revolutionary State in International Society* (New York, 1993), 7–8; see also David Armstrong, *Revolutionary Diplomacy: Chinese Foreign Policy and the United Front Doctrine* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1977).

¹² See John H. Holdridge, *Crossing the Divide: An Insider's Account of Normalization of U.S.-China Relations* (Lanham, MD, 1997), 25. Reportedly, Beijing's quick and positive response was approved by Mao himself. See Gong Li, *Mao Zedong waijiao fengyun* [A Record of Mao Zedong's Diplomacy] (Zhengzhou, 1996), 207.

¹³ *Renmin ribao*, February 20, 1969.

¹⁴ See, for example, conversation between Mao Zedong and Beqir Balluku, Albania's defense minister, October 1, 1968 and conversation between Mao Zedong and E. F. Hill, chairman of the Australian Communist Party (Marxism-Leninism), November 28, 1968, *CWIHP Bulletin*, no. 11 (Winter 1998), 156–161.

¹⁵ Li Ping et al., *Zhou Enlai nianpu, 1949–1976* [A Chronological Record of Zhou Enlai] (Beijing, 1998), vol. 3, 281; Liu Wusheng and Du Hongqi et al., *Zhou Enlai junshi huodong jishi* [Records of Zhou Enlai's Military Activities] (Beijing, 2000), vol. 2, 689.

¹⁶ Hu Shiwei et al., *Chen Yi zhuan* [A Biography of Chen Yi] (Beijing, 1991), 614; Du Yi, *Daxue ya qingsong: wenge zhong de Chen Yi* [An Unyielding Green Pine in Big Snow: Chen Yi in the Cultural Revolution] (Beijing, 1997), 208; Chen Xiaolu, "Chen Yi and Chinese Diplomacy," in Zhang Tuosheng chief ed., *Huanqiu tongci liangre* [All Around the World Is Like the Same] (Beijing, 1993), 155.

¹⁷ See Fan Shuo et al., *Ye Jianying zhuan* [A Biography of Ye Jianying] (Beijing, 1995), 598–599; Wei Wei et al., *Nie Rongzhen zhuan* [A Biography of Nie Rongzhen] (Beijing, 1994), 676–677; Hu Shiyuan, *Chen Yi zhuan*, 614; Liu Zhi et al., *Xu Xiangqian zhuan* [A Biography of Xu Xiangqian] (Beijing, 1995), 541–542; and Zheng Qian, "The Nationwide War Preparations before and after the CCP's Ninth Congress," *Zhonggong dangshi ziliao* [CCP History Materials], no. 41 (April 1992), 211.

¹⁸ *Renmin ribao*, April 25, 1969.

¹⁹ Xiong Xianghui, "The Prelude to the Opening of Sino-American Relations," *Zhonggong dangshi ziliao*, no. 42 (June 1992), 61.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 61–62.

²¹ Reports by Four Chinese Marshals to the Central Committee, "A Preliminary Evaluation of the War Situation," July 11, 1969, *CWIHP Bulletin*, no. 11 (Winter 1998), 166–168.

²² Xiong Xianghui, "The Prelude to the Opening of Sino-American Relations," 76–77.

²³ *Ibid.*, 78–79.

²⁴ Xu Yan, "The Sino-Soviet Border Clashes of 1969," 10; Yang Kuisong, "From Zhenbao Island Incident to Sino-American Rapprochement," 11–23.

²⁵ See "The CCP Central Committee's Order for General Mobilization in Border Provinces and Regions," August 28, 1969, *CWIHP Bulletin*, no. 11 (Winter 1998): 168–169.

²⁶ "Report by Four Chinese Marshals, 'Our Views about the Current Situation,'" September 17, 1969, *CWIHP Bulletin*, no. 11 (Winter 1998), 170.

- ²⁷ "Further Thoughts by Marshal Chen Yi on Sino-American Relations," *ibid.*, 170–171.
- ²⁸ Dr. Li Zhisui, *The Private Life of Chairman Mao* (New York, 1994), 514.
- ²⁹ Kissinger, *White House Years*, 180.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*, 180–181. For the role played by the "Pakistan channel" in the Chinese-American opening, see F. S. Aijazuddin, *From a Head, Through a Head, To a Head: The Secret Channel between the US and China through Pakistan* (Karachi, 2000).
- ³¹ Jin Chongji chief ed., *Zhou Enlai zhuan, 1949–1976* [A Biography of Zhou Enlai, 1949–1976] (Beijing, 1998), 1088; Li Ping and Ma Zhisun et al., *Zhou Enlai nianpu, 1949–1976*, vol. 3, 334.
- ³² Xue Mouhong et al., *Dangdai zhongguo waijiao* [Contemporary Chinese Diplomacy] (Beijing, 1989), 218; see also: Telegram, Stoessel to Secretary of State, December 3, 1969. National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), Record Group (RG) 59, Subject-Numeric Files, 1967–69, POL 23-8 US.
- ³³ Jin Chongji, *Zhou Enlai zhuan, 1949–1976*, 1087.
- ³⁴ Gong Li, *Kuayue honggou: 1969–1979 nian zhongmei guanxi de yanbian* [Bridging the Chasm: The Evolution of Sino-American Relations, 1969–1979] (Zhengzhou, 1992), 49; Luo Yisu, "My Years in Poland," 180–181; see also Kissinger, *White House Years*, 188–189.
- ³⁵ Luo Yisu, "My Years in Poland," 181; Telegram, Stoessel to the Secretary of State, 8 January 1970. NARA, RG 59, Subject-Numeric Files, 1967–69, CHICOM-US.
- ³⁶ Luo Yisu, "My Years in Poland," 181; Report, Stoessel-Lei talks, January 20, 1970. NARA, RG 59, Subject-Numeric Files, 1970–73, POL CHICOM-US.
- ³⁷ Li Ping and Ma Zhisun et al., *Zhou Enlai nianpu, 1949–1976*, vol. 3, 348; Jin Chongji, *Zhou Enlai zhuan, 1949–1976*, 1089.
- ³⁸ Gong Li, *Kuayue honggou*, 50–51; see also: Report, Stoessel-Lei talks, 21 February 1970. NARA, RG 59, Policy Planning Staff (Director's) Files, 1969–1977, POL CHICOM-US.
- ³⁹ Li Ping and Ma Zhisun et al., *Zhou Enlai nianpu, 1949–1976*, vol. 3, 356; Jin Chongji, *Zhou Enlai zhuan, 1949–1976*, 1089–1090.
- ⁴⁰ *Renmin ribao*, May 19 and 20, 1970; see also Gong Li, *Kuayue honggou*, 55–57.
- ⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 696; Gong Li, *Kuayue honggou*, 59.
- ⁴² Li Ping and Ma Zhisun et al., *Zhou Enlai nianpu, 1949–1976*, vol. 3, 372.
- ⁴³ *Renmin ribao*, July 11, 1970.
- ⁴⁴ In 1959, Mao resigned the position as chairman of the PRC, which was taken by Liu Shaoqi. During the Cultural Revolution, Liu was purged and the chairmanship of the PRC was virtually vacated. See remarks by Mao Zedong, *Jianguo yi lai Mao Zedong wengao*, vol. 13, 94.
- ⁴⁵ For a detailed study of the session, see Wang Nianyi, *Dadongluan de shinian* [The Decade of Great Chaos] (Zhengzhou, 1989), 394–406. The struggle between Mao and Lin would eventually result in Lin's escape from Beidaihe by plane on September 13, 1971; Lin died together with his wife and son when the plane crashed in Mongolia.
- ⁴⁶ Li Ping and Ma Zhisun et al., *Zhou Enlai nianpu, 1949–1976*, vol. 3, 406; see also Richard Nixon, *Memoirs of Richard Nixon* (New York, 1978), 546–547.
- ⁴⁷ Jin Chongji, *Zhou Enlai zhuan, 1949–1976*, 1091; Li Ping and Ma Zhisun et al., *Zhou Enlai nianpu, 1949–1976*, vol. 3, 410–411; Yang Mingwei and Chen Yangyong, *Zhou Enlai waijiao fengyun* [Zhou Enlai's Diplomatic Career] (Beijing, 1995), 244; see also Nixon, *Memoirs of Richard Nixon*, 546–547.
- ⁴⁸ Li Ping and Ma Zhisun et al., *Zhou Enlai nianpu, 1949–1976*, vol. 3, 417; Yang Mingwei and Chen Yangyong, *Zhou Enlai waijiao fengyun*, 244.
- ⁴⁹ Kissinger, *White House Years*, 700–703; Nixon, *Memoirs of Richard Nixon*, 546–547.

- ⁵⁰ Edgar Snow, *The Long Revolution* (New York, 1972).
- ⁵¹ Yin Jiamin, *Jiangjun buru shiming* [The General Has Succeeded in Carrying out the Mission] (Beijing, 1992), 211–214.
- ⁵² Minute, interview with Edgar Snow, December 18, 1970, *Jianguo yilai Mao Zedong wengao*, vol. 13, 166–168.
- ⁵³ Edgar Snow, “A Conversation with Mao Tse-tung [Mao Zedong],” *Life*, 70 (April 30, 1971): 46–48; see also Mao’s comments on not publishing the interview records, *Jianguo yilai Mao Zedong wengao*, vol. 13: 164.
- ⁵⁴ Nixon, *The Memoirs of Richard Nixon*, 547.
- ⁵⁵ Lin Biao was the initiator of the four titles for Mao.
- ⁵⁶ For the full text of the interview transcript, see *Jianguo yilai Mao Zedong wengao*, vol. 13, 163–187; for Snow’s account, see *Life*, 70 (April 30, 1971): 46–48.
- ⁵⁷ For example, Kissinger mentioned that in the early months early of 1971, he “used the interval to try to educate myself on China” by meeting academic China experts for policy suggestions. Kissinger, *White House Years*, 704–705.
- ⁵⁸ *Peking Review* (February 5, 1971): 4; see also Qian Jiang, *Ping Pong waijiao muhou*, 21–40.
- ⁵⁹ Jin Chongji, *Zhou Enlai zhuan, 1949–1976*, 1093; Zhao Zhenghong, “The Ping Pong Diplomacy as I knew,” *Zhonggong dangshi ziliao*, no. 39 (1991): 133–136; *Jianguo yilai Mao Zedong wengao*, vol. 13, 284–285.
- ⁶⁰ Zhao Zhenghong, “The Ping Pong Diplomacy as I knew,” 144.
- ⁶¹ Qian Jiang, *Ping Pong waijiao muhou*, 170–172.
- ⁶² *Ibid.*, 195.
- ⁶³ Gong Li, *Kuayue honggou*, 79; Qian Jiang, *Ping Pong waijiao muhou*, 211.
- ⁶⁴ Zhao Zhenghong, “The Ping Pong Diplomacy as I Knew,” 143–144; Qian Jiang, *Ping Pong waijiao muhou*, 197–198.
- ⁶⁵ Qian Jiang, *Ping Pong waijiao muhou*, 199–200.
- ⁶⁶ Wu Xujun, “Mao Zedong’s Five Superior Moves in Opening Sino-American Relations,” in Li Ke, Xu Tao, and Wu Xujun, *Lishi de zhenshi* [The Truth of History] (Hong Kong, 1995), 302–303.
- ⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 306.
- ⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 306–309.
- ⁶⁹ Zhao Zhenghong, “The Ping Pong Diplomacy that I knew,” 144–145.
- ⁷⁰ Nixon, *The Memoirs of Richard Nixon*, 548.
- ⁷¹ Minute, Zhou Enlai, “Conversations with the American Table Tennis Delegation,” April 14, 1971, ZWJWX, 469–475. The Chinese media widely reported the meeting. See, for example, *Renmin ribao*, 15 April 1971, front page, where the quote can be found.
- ⁷² Kissinger, *White House Years*, 710.
- ⁷³ On May 31, 1971, the CCP Central Committee, with Mao’s approval, ordered that the printed text of the interview be distributed to the party’s “bottom branches” and its contents relayed to every party member. See *Jianguo yilai Mao Zedong wengao*, vol. 13, 182.
- ⁷⁴ Kissinger, *The White House Years*, 723–724; see also Jin Chongji, *Zhou Enlai zhuan, 1949–1976*, 1095–1095; Gong Li, *Kuayue honggou*, 97–98.
- ⁷⁵ Kissinger, *White House Years*, pp. 725–726; Gong Li, *Kuayue honggou*, p. 98.
- ⁷⁶ “CCP Politburo’s Report on Chinese-American Talks,” May 29, 1971, in Song Yongyi chief ed., *Wenhua dageming wenku*, Part I, 1971.05.29; Gong Li, *Kuayue honggou*, 105–106; Jin Chongji, *Zhou Enlai zhuan, 1949–1976*, 1096.

⁷⁷ Gong Li, *Kuayue honggou*, 107; Kissinger, *White House Years*, 726–727.

⁷⁸ Nixon, *The Memoirs of Richard Nixon*, 552.

⁷⁹ Transcripts of these meetings are now available in NARA, RG 59, Policy Planning Staff (Director's) Files, 1969–1977.

⁸⁰ Haig to Eliot, January 28, 1972, enclosing Kissinger to the President, "My Talks with Chou Enlai [Zhou Enlai]," July 17, 1971. NARA, RG 59, Top Secret Subject-Numeric Files, 1970–1972, POL 7 Kissinger; see also Wei Shiyan, "The Inside Story of Kissinger's Secret Visit to Beijing," 40–41.

⁸¹ Cao Guisheng, "Recalling the secret 'Paris Channel' between China and the United States," in Pei Jianzhang ed., *Xin zhongguo waijiao fengyun*, vol. 2, 46–56.

⁸² For Kissinger's report on the trip, as transmitted to the State Department, see Haig to Eliot, 28 January 1972. NARA, RG 59, Top Secret Subject-Numeric Files, 1970–73, POL 7 Kissinger.

⁸³ Wei Shiyan, "Kissinger's Second Visit to Beijing," in Pei Jianzhang, *Xin zhongguo waijiao fengyun*, vol. 3, 66–67; Kissinger, *White House Years*, 781.

⁸⁴ Kissinger, *White House Years*, 782.

⁸⁵ Wei Shiyan, "Kissinger's Second Visit to Beijing," 69–70; Kissinger, *White House Years*, 787. The important breakthrough during the negotiation on the Taiwan issue was achieved after Kissinger proposed a highly subtle way to express the U.S. attitude toward Taiwan's status: "The United States acknowledges that all Chinese on either side of the Taiwan Straits maintain there is but one China and that Taiwan is a part of China. The United States Government does not challenge that position."

⁸⁶ See, for example, editorial essay, "The Tide of History Cannot be Stopped," *Renmin ribao*, 28 October 1971.

⁸⁷ Wei Shiyan, "The Haig Advance Group's Experience for Arranging Nixon's Visit," in Pei Jianzhang ed., *Xin zhongguo waijiao fengyun*, vol. 3, 76–79.

⁸⁸ Minute, Zhou Enlai's conversations with Alexander Haig, January 6, 1971, quoted from Jin Chongji, *Zhou Enlai zhuan, 1949–1976*, 1104–1105.

⁸⁹ Memcon of Nixon and Mao, 21 February 1972, in Burr, ed., *The Kissinger Transcripts*, 59–65.

⁹⁰ The text on the issue reads: "It [the U.S.] reaffirms its interest in a peaceful settlement of the Taiwan question by the Chinese themselves. With this prospect in mind, it affirms the ultimate objective of the withdrawal of U.S. forces and military installations from Taiwan. In the meantime, it will progressively reduce its forces and military installations on Taiwan as the tension in the area diminishes."