Danger and Opportunity:
The Sino-U.S. Rapprochement as a Domestic Political Crisis in Both Countries, 1971-1972

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Notes on Language and Terminology

This thesis transliterates Chinese names with the Pinyin system, except for names well-known in the Wade-Giles system such as Chiang Kai-shek. It preserves the exact spelling of Chinese names in quotes, especially Chou En-lai and Mao Tse-tung, which corresponds to Zhou Enlai and Mao Zedong in Pinyin.

The author translates all quotes from Chinese primary and secondary sources. Some translated Chinese terms deserve further explanations:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese Term</th>
<th>English Term</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ganbu</td>
<td>Cadres</td>
<td>Government functionaries or, in the Chinese primary sources referenced, workers and residents trained to take on leadership positions in an organized unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geming Weiyuanhui (Abbrev.: Gewei)</td>
<td>Revolutionary Committees</td>
<td>Tripartite governing bodies of local governments and some departments of the central government during the Cultural Revolution, consisting of representatives from the people, the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) and the Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shonggongye</td>
<td>Handicraft</td>
<td>Industries that primarily rely on manual work to produce small merchandises (Shanghai Handicraft Industry Management Bureau, referenced in the Chinese primary sources, organized factories for lamp-making, clothing, printing, toy-making, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wuqi Ganxiao</td>
<td>May Seventh Cadre Schools</td>
<td>Labor camps for re-educating cadres and intellectuals whom the government considered politically backward</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hongxiaobin</td>
<td>Little Red Guards</td>
<td>Primary and middle school students organized into revolutionary units that engaged in striking, denouncing teachers, learning from Lei Feng (doing good deeds), etc. during the Cultural Revolution, younger counterparts of high school and college students organized into the paramilitary Hongweibin or Red Guard units</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Year/Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Revolution launched in China</td>
<td>1966</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nixon’s <em>Foreign Affairs</em> article “Asia After Viet Nam” published</td>
<td>October 1967</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nixon elected President of the United States</td>
<td>January 1969</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sino-Soviet border conflicts</td>
<td>March – September 1969</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China’s Ninth Party Congress named Lin Biao Mao’s successor</td>
<td>April 1969</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American travel and trade restrictions regarding China relaxed</td>
<td>July 1969</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mao’s May Twentieth statement issued</td>
<td>May 1970</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mao’s meeting with Edgar Snow</td>
<td>December 1970</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. ping-pong team invited to visit China in Nagoya, Japan</td>
<td>April 6, 1971</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. ping-pong team’s visit to China</td>
<td>April 1971</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minutes of Mao’s meeting with Snow distributed to local cadres</td>
<td>June 1971</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry Kissinger’s secret visit to China via Pakistan</td>
<td>July 9-11, 1971</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nixon’s visit to China announced</td>
<td>July 15, 1971</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Reston publicized his appendix-removal operation in China</td>
<td>July 25, 1971</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Reston granted interview with Zhou Enlai</td>
<td>August 9, 1971</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lin Biao’s attempted defection and death in a plane crash</td>
<td>September 13, 1971</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry Kissinger’s second visit to China</td>
<td>October 20-26, 1971</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People’s Republic of China admitted into the United Nations</td>
<td>October 25, 1971</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexander Haig’s preparatory visit to China</td>
<td>January 3-10, 1972</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nixon’s visit to China and Shanghai Communiqué issued</td>
<td>February 21-28, 1972</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhou Enlai objected to Jiang Qing’s meeting with Roxanne Witke</td>
<td>August 1972</td>
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Introduction

In a 1967 issue of *Foreign Affairs*, Richard Nixon (1913-1994) declared, “There is no place on this small planet for a billion of its potentially most able people to live in angry isolation.” This was his rationale for a shift from isolation to engagement in America’s China policy.¹ The United States and the People’s Republic of China had shared a common enemy since the Sino-Soviet split erupted into border conflicts in 1969. As Chinese and American strategic interests converged, both countries also saw more favorable public sentiments towards a rapprochement. By the early 1970s, China’s Cultural Revolution, a radical mass movement from 1966 to 1976 to re-impose Maoist thought and to purge the Chinese society of capitalist and traditionalist elements, had begun to lose steam. Meanwhile, Americans’ contributions to organizations identified with the pro-Taiwan special interest group, the “China Lobby,” had fallen as memories of their wartime alliance with the Republic of China regime in Taiwan faded.² However, rapprochement remained anything but the obvious foreign policy choice for both countries.

A friendly meeting between the Cold Warrior Richard Nixon and the Communist Revolutionary Mao Zedong (1893-1976) in the middle of the Cultural Revolution and the Vietnam War struck the media in both countries as ideologically problematic. Days before Nixon’s visit in February 1972, *People’s Daily*, China’s state newspaper, published a summary of a White Paper released by South Vietnam’s Communist provisional government. Based on the Nuremberg Tribunal’s standards, the White Paper accused the Nixon regime of genocide and

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committing war crimes by launching a war of aggression. On the American side, William Buckley (1925-2008), editor-in-chief of the conservative magazine *National Review*, analogized Nixon’s greeting of Chinese officials at a state banquet to Sir Hartley Shawcross embracing Goering, Goebbels, Doenitz and Hess at Nuremberg. Contemporary readers of both articles would not have missed their historical allusions to the appeasement of Fascism as a moral critique of approaching a Cold War enemy. Even if the *National Review* editorial could be dismissed as partisan, a February 1972 *New York Times* article did not hesitate to liken Chinese leaders to Hitler in its criticism of Nixon’s choice of summitry to advance Chinese-American relations. The article claimed to “raise the famous question of the Second World War: ‘Is this trip necessary?’” and reminded its readers of “how Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain was tragically taken in by Hitler at their Munich meeting in 1938,” implying that Chinese leaders could cast a similar “malign spell” on Nixon through personal contact as Hitler once did to Chamberlain.

Just as the Chinese word for crisis, *Weiji*, consists of two characters — *Wei*, danger, and *Ji*, opportunity, the Sino-U.S. rapprochement faced considerable opposition from American conservatives and Chinese radicals, but promised opportunities beyond world peace. A historiographical review of the subject reveals lingering questions about the interplay between the rapprochement and domestic politics in both the United States and China. Prior to the

3. “Committee released white paper accusing American imperialists and their running dogs for committing war crimes in South Vietnam; ‘Vietnamization’ is to extend, strengthen and expand the war to invade Vietnam; Imperialist America committed more new crimes against the Indochinese people through ‘Vietnamization’ of the war,” *People’s Daily* (Beijing, China), February 18, 1972.
declassification of diplomatic records, twentieth-century historians had searched for the causes and consequences of the rapprochement in domestic politics but were limited in their access to leaders’ policy-making and negotiation processes. Later scholars with such access, however, largely focused on the strategies and motivations of top leaders and debated whether the United States conceded too much in the rapprochement negotiations over its military alliance with Taiwan and over Taiwan’s future unification with mainland China. Despite a recent interest in changing domestic discourses in the media and the Congress, scholars of the rapprochement rarely viewed it as a platform for politicians to advocate for their domestic agendas or for grassroots groups to express their ideological beliefs. This thesis complements existing scholarship by studying references to domestic politics in rapprochement negotiations, by exploring how the rapprochement’s high media profile made it a medium for advancing domestic political goals and by highlighting grassroots response to top-down rapprochement policies.

Historiographical Review

With limited access to classified government files in both countries, twentieth-century scholars on Sino-U.S. relations have focused on the domestic context to search for the causes and consequences of the rapprochement. Stanley Bachrack (1976) evaluates the influence of a dominant “China Lobby” organization, The Committee of One Million Against the Admission of Communist China into the United Nations (“The Committee”), on foreign policies and public opinions from its founding in 1953 to its dissolution in 1971, when its core mission failed. The Committee grew out of a petition to President Eisenhower led by Republican Congressman Walter H. Judd against China’s admission into the United Nations and opened an office in New York under the leadership of secretary Marvin Liebman, whose Hoover Institute collection serves as Bachrack’s source base. Bachrack traces the Committee’s loss of bipartisan support and
Congressional endorsements in the years leading up to the rapprochement and recounts the Committee’s last-ditch effort to voice its frustrations with Nixon’s foreign policy change through a series of *China Report* newsletters. However, Bachrack is biased by his undisguised political stance against the Committee, evident in such question as, “should members of Congress be permitted to use executive sessions to organize and provide leadership for political interest groups; to listen in secrecy, then withhold from public scrutiny testimony and decision affecting the creation of such groups?” He also provides a one-sided picture of the Committee lobbying against the rapprochement without accounting for the nuances in its attitudes towards the Nixon administration or for Nixon’s response to its criticisms.6

John Garver (1982) points to China’s pro-Soviet tilt in 1970 to challenge the common hypothesis that China was primarily motivated by the Soviet military threat to seek better relations with the U.S. Garver concludes that China’s fear of a Soviet-U.S. collusion and desire for international recognition were the more significant motivations for its détente with the U.S. and that successful coalition-building by China’s moderate civilian faction against a radical military faction enabled the rapprochement’s implementation. Despite his introduction of a Sinocentric paradigm to the studies of Sino-U.S. rapprochement, Garver’s conclusions are undermined by his use of western journals and the Chinese press as the only sources at a time when official chronicles of Chinese leaders were not yet declassified.7

Turning to the consequences of rapprochement, James Mann (1999) claims that rapprochement with Communist China challenged the fundamental public perception of the Cold

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War as an ideological struggle and split the conservative camp into an anti-Communist right and an anti-Soviet right. Mann evaluates Nixon’s and National Security Assistant Henry Kissinger’s (1923-Present) personalized secret diplomacy as largely successful in containing the spread of communism and maintaining the stability of Asia despite their limited progress on a peace settlement in Vietnam and small concessions on Taiwan. Evelyn Goh (2005) will later challenge Mann’s evaluation by questioning whether the pair actually executed what they took credit for.

With the publication of William Burr’s *The Kissinger Transcripts: The Top Secret Talks with Beijing and Moscow* (New York, 1999), a plethora of recently declassified records of top-level negotiations during the Sino-U.S. rapprochement have directed scholarly attentions to the leaders’ decision-making processes. Jian Chen (2001) draws on the Chinese government’s published source collections to emphasize the role ideology played in China’s foreign policymaking beyond justifying policies made on security grounds. Chen interprets the downfall of radical leader Lin Biao (1907-1971) in September 1971 not just as the removal of a political obstacle to the implementation of rapprochement, as Garver does, but also as a catalyst for Mao’s foreign policy revolution to restore his reputation and authority. Nevertheless, Chen leaves his readers wondering what role, if any, the Chinese public may have played in the high-level factional struggle regarding opening to the United States. Based on oral history, Margaret MacMillan (2007) opens a window into China’s public sentiments by recording a local anti-American incident where Shanghai’s leading radical Wang Hongwen ordered unfriendly treatment of Kissinger’s Assistant Alexander Haig (1924-2010) on his January 1972 trip to

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China. The incident even provoked personal intervention by China’s Premier Zhou Enlai (1898-1976). Meanwhile, Yafeng Xia (2006) analyzes the transcripts of Sino-U.S. ambassadorial talks that paved the path to rapprochement and observes that “ethnocentrism, or ignorance of culture-bound factors such as belief, value, and historical consciousness,” on both sides gave rise to misunderstanding. According to Xia, Chinese negotiators were more oriented towards China’s political independence, the rapprochement’s long-term consequences and personal relationships than their American counterparts.

Scholars have also challenged Mann’s account of the rapprochement as a success story of American triangular diplomacy with new primary sources. Tracing the changing U.S. discourse on China, Evelyn Goh (2005) argues that Nixon and Kissinger claimed to exploit a Sino-Soviet conflict to improve relations with both the Soviet Union and China but in practice supported China against the Soviet Union. Goh studies Nixon’s contributions to a domestic reconfiguration of the Chinese threat from a “Red Menace” to a “Resurgent Power” and Nixon’s use of different justifications to advocate his triangular policy to Chinese leaders, U.S. allies and American on the left and right. Goh also shows that while Nixon intended the realpolitik argument for limited consumption by the American right and while Chinese leaders remained suspicious of U.S. sincerity and reliability, Kissinger did prioritize a “tacit alliance” against the Soviet Union in his talks with Chinese leaders.

Other scholars have criticized the means of secret diplomacy as a cause of excessive U.S. concessions on Taiwan and the growing mistrust of U.S. allies. Rosemary Foot (2005) identifies three main issues in the Sino-U.S. dispute over Taiwan: post-normalization U.S.-Taiwan relations, arms sales to Taiwan and Taiwan’s peaceful unification with the mainland. Foot attributes U.S. concessions on all three issues to Nixon’s and Kissinger’s apparent eagerness to normalize relations, long-term avoidance of thornier issues and reluctance to achieve a package agreement on a variety of bilateral concerns through linkage, under the constraint of secret diplomacy.\footnote{Rosemary Foot, “Prizes Won, Opportunities Lost: The U.S. Normalization of Relations with China, 1972–1979,” in Normalization of U.S.-China Relations: An International History, edited by William C. Kirby, Robert S. Ross, and Gong Li (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2005), 92, 115.}

Nancy Tucker (2009) takes a step further and argues that Kissinger readily “gave Beijing more than it could have expected” since he did not see Taiwan’s intrinsic value to the U.S. besides American domestic politics and anti-communist ideology and that Nixon gave his permission because he was more concerned about his foreign policy triumph and public support. Tucker is equally critical of America’s intentional withholding of information from Taiwan, which harmed U.S.-Taiwan relations.\footnote{Nancy Bernkopf Tucker, Strait Talk: United States-Taiwan Relations and the Crisis with China (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 37-38, 42-43.}

Similarly, Michael Schaller (1997) touches on Japan’s sense of humiliation after learning of Nixon’s trip to China just minutes before public disclosure and suggests that Nixon and Kissinger could have better leveraged the threat of a nuclear-armed Japan in their negotiations with China.\footnote{Michael Schaller, Altered States: The United States and Japan Since the Occupation (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 228-230.} However, Tucker’s portrayal of Nixon as a realist who only desired a “decent interval before China would retake Taiwan” receives a pushback from
Chris Tudda (2012), who uses unexamined Nixon tapes to show that Nixon ordered a good fight to save Taiwan’s UN seat.  

Recent dissertations have reexamined the domestic contexts of Sino-U.S. rapprochement in interaction with top-level negotiations, acknowledging the roles played by academia, the congress and the media. Katherine Klinefelter (2009) agrees with Foot’s argument in *The Practice of Power: U.S. Relations with China since 1949* (Oxford, 1997) that public reevaluation of America’s China Policy during the 1958 Taiwan Strait crisis preceded government policy change. Klinefelter traces the ideological foundation of the rapprochement back to a paradigm shift towards “containment without isolation” in the Kennedy and Johnson administrations. She highlights the contributions made by scholars of East Asian studies, including John K. Fairbank, George Taylor, A. Doak Barnett and Robert Scalapino, in popularizing “containment without isolation” through Congressional hearings on China and their network of mid-level bureaucrats.  

Building on Guangqiu Xu’s *Congress and the US-China Relationship: 1949-1979* (Akron, 2007), Paul Coyer (2013) addresses the interplay between the legislative and executive branches on the policy of rapprochement. According to Coyer, although the White House’s concealment of its shift away from “evenhandedness” towards a security relationship with China constrained Congressional willingness to support the rapprochement, the House leadership backed Nixon’s China initiative at a time when the House was largely composed of Cold War Democrats who shared Nixon’s ideologies. Coyer also observes that powerful constituencies

such as the media, Sinologists and agricultural and business interests lobbied for better relations with China while Democrat senators hoped to score political points by visiting China, and through their visa applications, kept the Chinese leaders informed of Washington’s politics.¹⁸

While Tsan-kuo Chang’s *The Press and China Policy: the illusion of Sino-American relations, 1950-1984* (Norwood, 1993) questions the American press’s independence from policy makers, Guolin Yi (2013) affirms the American press’ independent contributions to transmitting diplomatic signals and highlights the Chinese media’s role in sending signals and reorienting public opinions. Yi considers *The Times* more sophisticated and more positive in its coverage of China than *The Post*, a distinction that Beijing seemed to have also picked up when it granted *Times* staff special privileges, including visas to report in China and an official interview with Premier Zhou Enlai. On the other hand, Yi finds the American press repeatedly misreading China’s domestic turmoil, conjuring up an anti-Mao bloc or a drive for modernization after taking the Cultural Revolution propaganda in Chinese newspapers at their face value and speculating about Mao’s death or a Sino-Soviet war in response to the Lin Biao affair to be introduced later in this thesis.¹⁹

Both Coyer and Yi point out the Chinese government’s demonstrated awareness and exploitation of America’s domestic dynamics to its advantage in the initial phase of the rapprochement. Their analyses build upon the works of earlier scholars in exploring the

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intersection between the domestic and the diplomatic. Based on declassified Nixon notes and CIA chronology, Mann argues that the Nixon administration cited the “Taiwan Lobby” to justify its secret diplomacy and that Chinese leaders exploited American politics by inviting extensive U.S. press coverage of “ping-pong diplomacy,” the U.S. ping-pong team’s visit of China upon the invitation of Zhou Enlai in April 1971, and by hinting at potential cooperation with Congressional Democrats.\(^{20}\) Tudda calls attention to China’s success in omitting any references to the Taiwan defense treaty in the Joint Communique by manipulating Kissinger’s anxiety about U.S. domestic opposition to.\(^{21}\) In contrast, the American government’s knowledge of and reactions to China’s domestic political turmoil remain ambiguous. Historians present at a January 2002 research symposium in Beijing remarked that “had the Americans known how unstable the political situation was in 1971, they would never have risked a presidential visit.”\(^ {22}\)

* * *

As scholars have increasingly turned to the intersection between Cold War and civil rights history to study how the U.S. government responded to international criticism of its race relations by propaganda and, more effectively, by pushing for social changes,\(^ {23}\) the historical studies of Sino-U.S. rapprochement will benefit from an awareness of not just the domestic contexts in both countries but also the openness and accuracy of such information available to the other side and the roles it played in bilateral negotiations. The first chapter reexamines memorandums and transcripts in *Foreign Relations of the United States* for references to


domestic politics and reconstructs the information gathering and processing practices of government officials based on memoirs and CIA reports. It explores the different ways in which both sides exploited domestic politics to their advantage in rapprochement negotiations and identifies informational disparity and mutual biases. It finds that, while the excuse of opposition at home primarily strengthened the hands of American negotiators, Chinese diplomats scored victories through their active awareness and exploitation of America’s political division. It proceeds to claim that Chinese diplomats might have an informational advantage over their American counterparts because America had an open press while China did not.

So far, current scholarship has also limited its attention to the impact of domestic concerns, primarily of the top decision makers, on their crafting of rapprochement policies. In response, the second chapter turns to the impact of rapprochement policies on domestic politics and studies the conservative journals National Review and Human Events and the biography and official chronicles of Chinese politicians to ask what the wider societal debates over Sino-U.S. rapprochement can tell us about their active participants, the American conservatives and the Chinese Cultural Revolution radicals. It finds that Nixon, Mao, supporters and even critics of the rapprochement took advantage of the event’s extensive media coverage to publicize their political beliefs or to advance their personal political goals.

The third chapter explores heretofore neglected sources, U.S. opinion polls and Chinese local governments’ internal reports, to understand the images Chinese and Americans had of each other at the grassroots level before and after the rapprochement. It identifies a more drastic break from Cold War binary thinking on the American side and stronger ideological dissonance with the rapprochement on the Chinese side. The conclusion extends this query into mutual perceptions from the initial years of the rapprochement into the 1980s and identifies cycles of
demonization, idealization and disillusionment in response to both foreign policy changes but and the changing dynamics of domestic politics.
Chapter I. Domestic Voices in Diplomatic Negotiations

On September 21, 1971, Kissinger reported to Nixon in the oval office, “Something funny is going on in China, Mr. President. They have – there is a stand-down on civil aviation there for nearly a week now. And today they have canceled the October 1 parade on their national holiday. We’ve had other reports that they’ve been taking down pictures of Mao.” Nixon postulated that the Chinese were “taking it out on [Chinese Premier] Chou En-lai for his American initiative,” but Kissinger wondered why the “most anti-Russian” Cultural Revolutionists would oppose an American initiative. Nixon offered two possible explanations the next day, “either that Mao is ill … or that Chou is purging his opponents.” 24 Neither were true. What transpired was an attempted defection to the Soviet Union by Lin Biao, then-Defense Minister of China and Mao’s designated heir, that ended in a plane crash in Mongolia on September 13, 1971. The Lin Biao affair would resurface in Nixon’s first meeting with Mao on February 21, 1972. Responding to Kissinger’s reference to domestic opposition from the pro-Soviet left, Mao said, “In our country also there is a reactionary group which is opposed to our contact with you. The result was that they got on an airplane and fled abroad.” 25

In his theory of Two-Level Games for international negotiations, Robert Putnam introduces the concept of “win-set,” which is the set of all possible international-level agreements that will gain the necessary majority among domestic constituents for ratification. Putnam argues that national governments have to strike a balance between a larger perceived win-set that will increase their credibility of delivering on agreements and a smaller one that will

increase their bargaining power, as in “I’d like to accept your proposal, but I could never get it accepted at home.”  

During the Sino-U.S. rapprochement, both sides presented a smaller domestic win-set, constrained by the pro-Soviet left and the pro-Taiwan right or the Lin Biao and Jiang Qing cliques, as part of their negotiating strategies. However, the Chinese side not only sought to maximize the win-set of the Nixon administration by distancing itself from Nixon’s political rivals on the left, as Putnam’s theory predicts, but also demonstrated an awareness of American domestic politics by presenting its positions on the international level as politically favorable for the Nixon administration on the national level. In contrast, as Nixon’s and Kissinger’s far-fetched guesses about the Lin Biao affair shows, American negotiators did not have much information on China’s domestic political landscape to fully exploit China’s national level game to its advantage. To a large extent, the informational disparity can be attributed to the difference between the two countries’ political systems and, consequently, the press, which also prevented either side from fully understanding and responding to the other side’s domestic political crises such as the Lin Biao affair and Watergate.

Citing Domestic Opposition

Cognizant that Taiwan would become the central contention in the drafting of a Joint Communique, Kissinger explicitly advised Nixon to cite domestic opposition as a negotiating strategy a week before the presidential visit to China. “You should just put it to Mao,” Kissinger suggested on the topic of Taiwan, “you can say, we can do a lot, but if you force us into a tremendous domestic debate on it, with so many people in our bureaucracy –” Nixon interrupted, “Put it on Rogers;” declaring his intention to blame his constraints on the Secretary of State

27. Ibid., 454.
largely out of the loop on Nixon’s China initiative. Taking Kissinger’s advice, Nixon would elaborate on his political problems in a conversation with Zhou on February 22, 1972. Nixon began his presentation of the America position on Taiwan by laying out five principles: 1) “There is One China, and Taiwan is a part of China;” 2) “We have not and will not support any Taiwan independence movement;” 3) “We will, to the extent we are able, use our influence to discourage Japan from moving into Taiwan as our presence becomes less, and also discourage Japan from supporting a Taiwan independence movement;” 4) “We will support any peaceful resolution of the Taiwan issue that can be worked out;” and 5) “We seek the normalization of relations with the People’s Republic.” However, Nixon quickly directed Zhou’s attention away from these U.S. positions to their domestic perception if publicized through the Communique. He reiterated his earlier message to Mao that “I always do more than I can say” and made the appeal that “what we say here may make it impossible for me to deliver on what I can do.” Nixon subsequently introduced four American domestic groups opposing his China initiative from all sides – the pro-Soviet left, the pro-Taiwan right motivated by “deeply principled ideological reasons,” the pro-Indian left and a pro-Japanese group.

Nixon clearly hoped to avoid public, if not actual, U.S. concessions on Taiwan by referencing these opposition groups, but he delivered two more messages in this conversation. Firstly, he warned Zhou that these opposition groups might form a “very unholy alliance” by seizing on the Communique’s language to say that “the American president went to Peking and sold Taiwan down the river,” thus creating public pressure for all politicians to take a more pro-

Taiwan stand. Secondly, while Nixon emphasized his priority of the China initiative over his own political survival, he called attention, albeit indifferently, to the ties between these opposition groups and political candidates posing a threat to his standing. In other words, Nixon was reminding the Chinese leadership of their vested interest in his reelection and persuading them not to jeopardize his prospects through a seemingly unequal Communique.\textsuperscript{29} Within Putnam’s framework, both messages cautioned Zhou against an even smaller domestic win-set for the United States, to China’s disadvantage, if he would pressure Nixon to adopt overly conciliatory language on Taiwan in the Communique.

In a balancing act to show goodwill towards the Chinese leadership without compromising American interests, Kissinger and Haig even characterized their desired outcomes as demands of the domestic opposition. In a memorandum to Nixon on his second visit to China in October 1971, Kissinger recounted warning Zhou that Sino-U.S. relationship would fall back into rigidity “if either side tried to use the improvement in our relations as a device to destroy the traditional friendships of the other side.” Zhou pushed back, saying that new era required some change in relations. In response, Kissinger brought up the domestic criticism that “China was only using the initiative as a trick to destroy our traditional relationships so as to resume the old hostilities from a better tactical position,” thus challenging Zhou’s statement without personally questioning Chinese intentions.\textsuperscript{30} On January 3, 1972, Haig also lectured Zhou on the severity of American opposition to Nixon’s upcoming visit and the stupidity of most American journalists to warn the Chinese side against publicly embarrassing Nixon, especially through the wording of

\textsuperscript{29} “196. Memorandum of Conversation, Beijing, February 22, 1972, 2:10-6 p.m.,” \textit{FRUS China}, 697-699.

\textsuperscript{30} “164. Memorandum From the President’s Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon, Washington, November 1971,” \textit{FRUS China}, 531.
the Communique. According to Haig, because the pro-Soviet left, conservative elements and bureaucratic haggling converged to prevent the presidential visit in the short run and the normalization of relations in the long run, Nixon’s visit must succeed in appearance; because American journalists “[drew] their editorial line from the immediate atmospherics of the situation and from what is essentially the instantaneous reporting of a set of circumstances rather than from a careful analysis of the realities and implications of these realities,” the Communique should reference trade or increased scientific or cultural exchanges and take into consideration an updated American draft of the paragraphs on Taiwan. Haig was clearly tasked with bargaining for more Chinese concessions while excusing his demands as a “soldier’s blunt elucidation of Dr. Kissinger’s and the President’s views.” By the same line of logic, American domestic critics could be excused for making excessive or even offensive demands that would nevertheless command the attention of the Chinese side.

In contrast, Mao and Zhou repeatedly reassured American leaders that anti-American propaganda in the state media was “firing an empty cannon.” In a conversation with Kissinger on October 21, 1971, Zhou criticized U.S. Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird’s speech publicized in a July 8, 1971 New York Times article titled “Laird Advises Japanese to Spur Defense.” When Kissinger responded that “we choose to enforce discipline only on those statements that have practical consequences,” Zhou conceded that his government only protested the speech through a press commentary, which is “firing empty guns.” Zhou added, cynically, that slogans such as “down with imperialism” and “down with revisionism” aimed at the people of the targeted countries. Thus, these slogans were nothing but “empty cannon” if their intended audience did not.

not rise up in revolutions. In his memorandum to Nixon, Kissinger also recalled Zhou calling anti-American propaganda “firing an empty cannon” the next day in response to a Reuters story that joked about Kissinger’s motorcade driving past a Chinese wall slogan denouncing “American Imperialism.” When he met with Nixon on February 22, 1972, Zhou again dismissed the slogan “Down with U.S. Imperialism” as “empty cannon,” this time citing Mao, to make the point that there was no real conflict between China and the United States despite philosophical differences. Mao and Zhou could have complained about anti-American sentiments within their own people that necessitated these slogans and subsequently called for stronger ideological language in the Communique. Instead, they prioritized building common ground with American leaders by downplaying the significance of these slogans.

Even when the pair cited their domestic obstacles of an ideologically anti-American population or radical political factions, they expressed a confidence in overcoming these obstacles on their own. On February 24, 1972, Zhou said to Nixon, “Mr. President should realize that we do have our difficulties, but we have the courage to take on such difficulties, to overcome them” and he credited “the great trust placed in Chairman Mao by our 700 million people” for such courage. At this point, Zhou shifted the topic to Taiwan. Nixon followed by asking for “running room” in the Communique language so that he could “go back to Washington and say that no secret deals have been made between the Prime Minister and myself on Taiwan.” Zhou concurred that the Communique should set no time limit on resolving the Taiwan issue because “our Foreign Minister has similarities with the Secretary of State – he has

32. “162. Memorandum of Conversation, Beijing, October 21, 1971, 10:30 a.m.-1:45 p.m.,” FRUS China, 513.
33. Ibid., 519.
34. “196. Memorandum of Conversation, Beijing, February 22, 1972, 2:10-6 p.m.,” FRUS China, 709.
his limitations. … On this point our Foreign Minister represents the feelings of the people.” However, Zhou was quick to reiterate that “it is possible for us to persuade our people because of the prestige of the leadership of Chairman Mao.”35 Zhou’s boast of Mao’s popularity and prestige effectively rendered any excuses of public opposition to Chinese concessions invalid.

Zhou made another reference to domestic politics during a roast duck luncheon on July 10, 1971. He insisted on talking about China’s Cultural Revolution despite Kissinger’s remark that it was the People’s Republic’s internal affair. “Chairman Mao and others had not foreseen the extent of the disturbances, and in fact some members of the People’s Liberation Army had sacrificed their lives,” Zhou said, “However, the opponents of the Cultural Revolution had ultimately been struck down, including Liu Shao-chi who was the leader of the oppositionists, with the result that China was now firmly guided by the thought of Mao Tse-tung.” American transcripts described Zhou as “genuinely anguished when talking about the difficulties” and “sincere in his belief that whatever had occurred, it had been all to the good.”36 Presenting the Cultural Revolution as a hard-fought victory over its opponents, Zhou could have intended it as an analogy of China’s rapprochement with the United States rather than a testament to the strength of his political rivals. After all, conspicuously missing from Zhou’s remarks was the fact that radical leaders of the Cultural Revolution, Lin Biao and Jiang Qing (1914-1991), still in power at the time, were the strongest opponents to rapprochement.

After Lin Biao’s downfall, Mao did hint at Lin’s faction’s opposition to rapprochement, but their opposition was presented as futile – “the result was that they got on a plane and fled

35. “197. Memorandum of Conversation, Beijing, February 23, 1972, 2-6 p.m.,” FRUS China, 767-769.
abroad.” In a much later meeting with Kissinger on November 12, 1973, Mao also jokingly called two female Chinese translators Nancy Tang and Wang Hairong spies. According to John Holdridge, then-Deputy Chief of Mission in Beijing, Mao believed them to be in league with his wife Jiang Qing. However, it is unlikely that Mao intended his casual remarks to send any messages to the Americans about the power struggles going on in China. The Chinese side’s general refrain from citing domestic opposition as a negotiating tactic could perhaps be attributed to their nationalist pride in self-reliance, tendency to mask any signs of domestic disunity and, objectively speaking, their general immunity to public criticisms with Party control of the government. As Zhou admitted to Kissinger during his secret visit in July 1971, “After the announcement is made public, I’ll be in more trouble than I am at present, but I’ll still be better off than you because I don’t see too many newspapermen.”

**Leveraging Political Divisions of the Other Side**

Chinese negotiators adopted an alternative strategy to pressure the Nixon administration – leveraging political divisions in the United States. In a February 19, 1972 memorandum to Nixon, Kissinger predicted that if the United States failed China’s litmus test of seriousness and reliability, the Chinese “could easily resort to the tempting levers of public opinion … - inviting in opposition politicians, dealing with unfriendly private groups, appealing to hostile journalists, lambasting us in the United Nations, and generally turning popular pressures on us while being tough on the state-to-state level.” Kissinger understood his government’s vulnerability to popular pressure under a system of democratic elections and so did the Chinese.

38. Ibid., 199, 215.
One Chinese strategy was to elicit the Nixon administration’s gratitude by keeping its political rivals eager to visit China at a distance and by showing considerations for its pro-Taiwan political base. James Mann highlights that, during the U.S. ping-pong team’s visit to China in April 1970, a Chinese official flaunted the potential of inviting Democrat presidential contenders Senators Edward M. Kennedy, Edward Muskie and George S. McGovern and journalists James Reston, Walter Lippmann and Walter Cronkite to China to an American reporter, who passed along the message to Washington. Unwilling to share the credits for its opening to China, the Nixon White House first asked the Chinese not to invite other American politicians through the Pakistan channel on April 28, 1971. Kissinger subsequently told Zhou in July 1971 that Nixon “wants no political visitors” before himself and told Chinese officials in Paris that the Chinese leaders should “keep their distance from American left groups,” including the anti-war movement. Mann shows how China’s power to grant or suspend invitations for American politicians seeking a visit became a bargaining chip in its negotiation with the Nixon administration.40 Moreover, Zhou was vocal about having done Nixon a political favor during the negotiations. On July 10, 1971, Zhou reminded Kissinger that “I have a great pile of letters from [American politicians] on my desk asking for invitations, which I have not answered,” to which Kissinger responded, “What you have done is greatly appreciated by President Nixon.”41

Meanwhile, Qiao Guanhua, China’s Deputy Foreign Minister who negotiated the Communiqué’s wording with Kissinger framed what was essentially a U.S. concession as a political gain for the Nixon administration, according to Chris Tudda. When Kissinger questioned the Communiqué’s silence on the Taiwan Defense Treaty, saying “I do not think it

40. James Mann, About Face, 29-30.
will help you when we are asked by Congress what this means that we point out that you have not mentioned the defense treaty, because that would be embarrassing to you,” Qiao responded that China deliberately omitted any reference to the treaty “to take into consideration your difficulties,” adding that “Our American friends should understand.” Kissinger seemed persuaded enough by Qiao’s concern for his political difficulties to drop this issue.\textsuperscript{42} Qiao’s argument, according to the transcript of his conversation with Kissinger on February 24, 1972, was that the Chinese side could have made such unilateral declaration as the U.S. must “immediately totally and unconditionally withdraw from Taiwan” if the Communiqué was to mention the defense treaty but chose not to mention the treaty at all.\textsuperscript{43} After the Nixon party left for Hangzhou and Shanghai, however, Secretary of State William Rogers and his Assistant Secretary of State Marshall Green strongly objected to the omission of the defense treaty, which gave the appearance of a sell-out to Beijing. Seeing their point, Nixon ordered Kissinger to renegotiate with Qiao. When Qiao refused to budge, Kissinger had to plant a question with a \textit{Los Angeles Times} reporter at the February 27 press conference in Shanghai to reaffirm U.S. commitment to the Treaty as stated in the President’s World Report.\textsuperscript{44}

Another Chinese strategy was to confront the Nixon administration with domestic criticisms of its motives in coming to China, most importantly the linkage of China and Vietnam. On February 22, 1972, Zhou told Nixon that “the Democratic Party tried to put you on the spot on this question [Indochina] by alleging that you came to China to settle Vietnam. Of course this

\textsuperscript{42} Chris Tudda, \textit{A Cold War Turning Point}, 194-195.


\textsuperscript{44} Chris Tudda, \textit{A Cold War Turning Point}, 199-200.
is not possible. We are not in a position to settle it in talks.” After presenting the U.S. conditions for a complete withdrawal from Vietnam, Nixon acknowledged that “we, of course, would welcome any moves, any influence to get negotiations” but immediately clarified that “we don’t expect anything, however, and if we cannot get any assistance we understand.” However, en route to China, Nixon wrote down the following notes in his diaries, “What they want: 1. Build up their world credentials. 2. Taiwan. 3. Get U.S. out of Asia. What we want: 1. Indochina. 2. Communists-to restrain China expansion in Asia. 3. In Future-Reduce threat of a confrontation by Chinese Super Power. What we both want: 1. Reduce danger of confrontation and conflict. 2. a more stable Asia. 3. a restraint on U.S.S.R.” Zhou certainly hoped to avoid any Chinese commitments to a settlement on Vietnam, possibly because of China’s limited influence over North Vietnam and its own ideological and strategic concerns, but it is worth questioning why Nixon so quickly delinked rapprochement with China and a settlement on Vietnam if he truly considered Indochina the top U.S. objective in Sino-U.S. negotiations. His reluctance to appear desperate to end the Vietnam War and to grant legitimacy to domestic criticisms in front of Chinese leaders might serve as an explanation.

**Disparity in Information and Mutual Biases**

It is important to realize that the exploitation of the other side’s domestic politics to one’s advantage in bilateral negotiations rests on two key premises – that one has such information and correctly evaluates its significance. American diplomats were uniquely disadvantaged in satisfying the first condition because of China’s lack of a free press and guard against foreigners. Nicholas Platt, an officer covering China’s internal affairs in the American Consulate General in

Hong Kong in the 1960s, recalled analyzing sources that were more than 90 percent public, primarily “deviation or repositioned language” in People’s Daily editorials, for information. Platt also solicited information from passing travelers to or from China, including visiting diplomats, journalists and scholars. While better than nothing, such information was either selectively released by the Chinese government for its own purposes or uncorroborated rumors. Platt’s own experiment highlighted the ease with which unreliable rumors circulated among China watchers. When he told a visiting diplomat that the mayor of Shanghai had not been seen for more than a month because he had liver cancer, he received the same piece of fake news in a week from a Norwegian journalist returning from Beijing.

Notably, three American Korean War defectors, William White, Morris Wills and Clarence Adams shared key insights with Platt into the Chinese system of information distribution. The three defectors refused repatriation at the end of the Korean War and settled in China, but they left in 1965 and 1966 expecting their children of “mixed blood” to have a better future in the United States. White, a top translator for the Chinese government, was the first to inform Platt of China’s layered system of confidential party publications containing news about China in the foreign press. Party members of different ranks had different levels of access to these publications, from Every Daily with every item on China for the top leaders through Reference Materials with important foreign articles and internal Party documents for senior officials to Reference News for all Party members. Wills, working for the publication China Pictorial, found the inner workings of China’s leadership as mysterious to him as to other

48. Ibid., 34-35.
observers, both native and foreign.\textsuperscript{49} Even China’s highest-ranking defector to the United States, the number two man from the Chinese embassy in The Hague, turned out to be too far removed from the central leadership to offer Platt any insight into their attitudes and moves in 1969. He had to read the \textit{People’s Daily} for political signals in the same way that Platt did.\textsuperscript{50} The Party’s tight control over the distribution of information prevented from the source potential leaks by mid-level government employees and bureaucrats to foreign China watchers. The layered system of information distribution White described also extended beyond foreign news on China to politically sensitive domestic events such as the Lin Biao affair. According to Mao’s official chronical, upon his review and approval on October 6, 1971, Party Central decided to convey the news of “Lin Biao’s betrayal of the Party and of the country” to local Party branch secretaries, deputy secretaries and Army company-level Party cadres in mid-October, to the country’s worker, farmer and soldier masses on October 24 and to patriots, returned overseas Chinese and foreigners having joined the Chinese nationality on October 29.\textsuperscript{51} It is no wonder that Nixon and Kissinger remained ignorant of the event in late September.

While both Wills and Adams shared with Platt their observations of China’s domestic society, such as the seclusion of foreigners and intellectuals in Beijing and the popularity of black market items,\textsuperscript{52} it was a young Chinese radical fleeing for his life from factional struggles in Guangzhou to Hong Kong who provided an insider’s perspective into the Cultural Revolution. Factional struggles broke out in Chinese cities since the “January Revolution” of 1967.

\textsuperscript{49} Ibid., 36-38.
\textsuperscript{50} Ibid., 55.
\textsuperscript{51} Zhong gong zhong yang wen xian yan jiu shi [CCCPC Party Literature Research Office], \textit{Mao Zedong nian pu} [\textit{Chronicles of Mao Zedong}], 1949-1976 (Beijing: Zhong yang wen xian chu ban she [Central Party Literature Press], 2013), 410.
\textsuperscript{52} Nicholas Platt, \textit{China Boys}, 36-38.
empowered anyone to rebel against established authority. According to the young radical who served as a telephone operator for a “have not” faction in Guangzhou, these factions complete with their own propaganda arms, dance troupes, street combat units, and work and welfare brigades formed along the “have” and “have-not” line despite their similar nomenclature. In other words, those who had something to lose defended themselves against the poor and disenfranchised in these fatal factional fights. The young radical’s mindset was also “instructive” for Platt as he was no commonplace political defector or refugee. He despised Madame Mao, i.e. Jiang Qing, as “shallow and uneducated” and adored Chairman Mao, whose teaching “to fear no enemies and overcome all obstacles” inspired his escape for survival. The young radical’s story improved Platt’s understanding of not just the logic but also the emotions of China’s grassroots participants in the Cultural Revolution. Nevertheless, it is difficult to imagine such understanding strengthening the hands of American negotiators because they still had limited knowledge of the Chinese elites who made foreign policies.

In contrast, Chinese officials could learn about the attitudes of American politicians through the relatively free flow of information out of the United States. In his memoirs, Nixon highlighted the Chinese leadership’s attentiveness to his public remarks, to the point of possessing the script of “one of the periodic briefings on administration policies” he made to Midwestern news media executives in Kansas City on July 6, 1971. In this speech, Nixon talked about his administration’s resolve to “take the first steps towards ending the isolation of mainland China from the world community” and directed his audience’s attention to “whether there will be other doors opened on their part.” According to Nixon, he intended the speech to “place on the record an outline of the reasons for approaching China” rather than sending any

53. Ibid., 46-47.
diplomatic signals. However, when Kissinger arrived secretly in Beijing a few days later, Zhou asked him about Nixon’s Kansas City speech. Since Kissinger had only read the press reports of this low-profile speech, Zhou placed a copy of the speech on Kissinger’s breakfast table the next day, with underlines and marginal notations in Chinese and a note requesting its return because it was Zhou’s only copy. Zhou could have obtained the full text of the speech through the Party publication Every Daily that in turn sourced from local American press or even through China’s intelligence network within the United States.

The Chinese leadership also had American friends with ties to national politicians in the know of foreign policy changes. One such friend was Edgar Snow (1905-1972), who established close relationships with Mao and other Chinese Communist leaders through first-hand interviews with them for his book Red Star Over China (Random House, 1938). Therefore, Nixon’s political rivals in the Congress, who hoped to visit China before him, turned to Snow as a channel for direct communication with the Chinese leadership. According to Paul Coyer’s research of the Edgar Snow Papers, nine days after Snow informed McGovern of Nixon’s secret communication with Mao and Zhou about a potential visit, McGovern telephoned Snow to say that “he planned to announce that if elected President he would immediately recognize Beijing as the legitimate Chinese government, and that he should shortly introduce legislation in the Senate that would recommend a new China policy.” It is questionable whether McGovern intended these plans as a political deal with Chinese leaders, but it is certain that Snow told Zhou about McGovern’s plan in a subsequent letter, arguing for a McGovern visit that would “oblige Mr. Nixon to move faster.” Even though McGovern did not end up receiving an invitation, his

unofficial communication with the Chinese leadership through Snow exemplified the multiple channels through which Chinese leaders learned about American politics.\textsuperscript{55}

Yet it would be an exaggeration to claim that the Chinese diplomatic community at large had similar access to foreign affairs as Mao and Zhou did. Memorandums by Vernon A. Walters, American Military Attaché in Paris, on his conversations with Chinese diplomats Tsao and Wei (whose full name could not be identified) in preparation for Sino-U.S. rapprochement found these high-level officials eager to learn about the American society and often surprised by the discrepancy between Walters’ accounts and Chinese domestic propaganda. After delivering a message about the technical details of Kissinger’s upcoming visit in October 1971, Tsao and Wei asked Walters about the role of U.S. military in politics. They were bewildered by Walters’ response that U.S. laws prohibited any military person from serving in the cabinet and unaware that Eisenhower resigned from the military before running for the presidency. They then asked about America’s racial relations and were again surprised by Walters’ citation of “a Japanese, a Chinese, a Black and a Spanish Speaking Senator” as well as “some statistics concerning the income of black families in the U.S.”\textsuperscript{56} The next day, Tsao and Wei continued to quiz Walters on the American income tax system and credit card system. Surprised by America’s progressive tax rate, they told Walters that there was no income tax in China, somehow finding it necessary to defend China’s socialist system as the more progressive. At the end of the conversation, Tsao even accepted Walters’ personal gift of a copy of the periodical World Almanac, “which contained much information about the United States, salaries, tax, production, etc.”\textsuperscript{57} These

\textsuperscript{55} Paul Coyer, “Congress, China and the Cold War,” 89.
unofficial chit chats revealed the extent to which Chinese diplomats remained ignorant of or mistaken about the American society despite genuine curiosity. It appeared that China’s layered system of informational distribution that formed a domestic barrier to information about the outside world and fed ideological biases against the capitalist world.

If the Americans were primarily challenged by sourcing intelligence, the Chinese were primarily challenged by interpreting it. Watergate provides a case study into the biases preventing even top Chinese leaders from fully grasping American politics. Himself ruling with power unchecked by the judiciary or the media, Mao could not understand the severity of Watergate in the American political context. *The Kissinger Transcripts* recorded a conversation on November 12, 1973 when Mao asked Kissinger, “Why is it in your country, you are always so obsessed with the nonsensical Watergate issue? The incident is very meager, yet now such chaos is being kicked up because of it. Anyway, we are not happy about it.” Mao’s word *fangpee*, translated into “nonsensical,” literally meant “to let our air,” a colorful expression of Mao’s contempt for the fuzz over Watergate. Despite Kissinger’s assurance that Watergate would not derail the present course of U.S. foreign policy, Mao still questioned, “Why should the Watergate affair become all exploded in such a manner.” He considered Nixon’s economic achievements, namely lower number of the unemployed and relatively stable U.S. dollar, to be more important than the legality of his political tricks.\(^{58}\) Winston Lord, Kissinger’s special assistant who sat in on the meeting, summed up the Chinese attitude well when he recalled that “[Watergate] plainly puzzled [the Chinese] because they just didn’t understand our system …

The Chinese were somewhat baffled by it and were somewhat contemptuous of American puritanical attitudes.”59

Besides their unfamiliarity with and contempt for American political principles, the Chinese leadership also exhibited an egotistical bias towards magnifying the significance of Nixon’s China policy. Portraying the public outcry at Watergate as self-interested politics that Mao could better understand, Kissinger explained, “there are many old style politicians who dislike the President because he pursues unorthodox policy.” As for the two American journalists Mao brought up as “triggered against President Nixon,” James Reston “is always a reflection of the fashionable view” and Joseph Alsop “will return to his original position very soon.”60 Mao named these two journalists partly because he viewed the opening to China as one of Nixon’s defining policy success – Reston on the left and Alsop on the right were both known for their fascination with the Chinese society during the rapprochement period. Although Lord recalled that “there was no evidence that [the Chinese] thought [Watergate] had anything to do with China,” Richard Solomon on the National Security Council recalled, “in early ’73, we began seeing intelligence reporting that said the Chinese thought that Nixon was under attack because of his opening to China.” Solomon further juxtaposed such intelligence with Russian misinterpretation that Watergate was related to Nixon’s pursuit of U.S.-Soviet détente to show, in his words, “how insular [these foreign governments] were.”61 Whether confused, contemptuous, egotistical or insular, the Chinese leadership were biased in their interpretation of

61. Nancy Bernkopf Tucker, China Confidential, 291.
Watergate despite extensive American press coverage of the crisis and their attitudes were telling of the limits to which they could exploit American politics in diplomatic negotiations.

Americans were not immune to misinterpretation of Chinese political events, either, due to an unfamiliarity with China’s political system or an egotistical projection of their own values onto a different culture, as Guolin Yi points out in her analysis of contemporary American news reports of the Cultural Revolution. Taking the Chinese media’s frequent attacks on Liu Shaoqi as Mao’s chief opponent at their face value, *New York Times* and *Newsweek* reporters in late 1967 misinterpreted the Cultural Revolution as a struggle between Mao and an anti-Mao bloc rallied around Liu while, in reality, all factions in the Cultural Revolution claimed allegiance to Mao. Overestimating China’s enthusiasm for technological and economic development, *The Washington Post* repeatedly argued that the Cultural Revolution was another Great Leap Forward program centered on modernization while, in reality, Mao was more interested in revolution or his personal power struggles.62 Such misunderstanding of Mao’s political influence or desires could easily lead to a misguided policy recommendation, such as an outreach to the non-existing anti-Mao bloc, or a false value proposition, such as an offer of economic or technological aid in exchange for political concessions.

However, the American press is not to be equated with the American intelligence, which identified and evaluated Mao’s goals for the Cultural Revolution in much more objective tone two years later. According to a CIA report on “The Cultural Revolution and the Ninth Party Congress,” Mao had four goals for the Cultural Revolution: 1) eliminating his opposition in the name of “smashing revisionism” by destroying and radically modifying political, educational and

social institutions, 2) “changing the very nature of Chinese man by means of a political indoctrination campaign of unprecedented intensity and magnitude,” 3) “strengthening and consolidating the economic base of socialism” through certain features of the Great Leap Forward and commune programs and 4) picking “revolutionary successors.” The report judged the first goal as largely successful but self-defeating and the rest as unsuccessful. The report predicted, rightly so, that the Cultural Revolution would continue as long as Mao continued to dominate the Party and the people although its visionary aims were not to be achieved. 63

Turning to the downfall of Lin Biao in October 1972, a CIA report defined the Lin Biao affair as fundamentally “struggles for control of the political apparatus between Mao and his designated successors” no different from the Cultural Revolution. Therefore, “policy issues become primarily weapons for use in, rather than the causes per se of, such struggle.” Even though the report identified Lin as a proponent of the “revolutionary model” of Chinese foreign policy that advocated for Chinese support of rural-based revolutions abroad and opposed Nixon’s visit to China, the report viewed the foreign policy role in the Lin Biao affair as “more tactical than causative or fundamental.” It even noted the tendency for Chinese officials to exaggerate the importance of foreign policy in briefing non-Communist westerners on the affair, allegedly to distract them from the problem of civilian versus military control in China. The report also acknowledged and resisted the temptation to simplify China’s foreign policy debate as a debate between rapprochement with the Soviet Union or the United States. 64 If Soloman was correct

64. U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, Directorate of Intelligence, Policy Issues in the Purge of Lin Piao (Reference Title: POLO LI), November 1972, CIA Reading Room, accessed
about the Chinese government’s assessment of the Watergate and if the Nixon administration took the CIA reports into consideration, it appeared that the American side held a more impartial view of what drove Chinese domestic politics than the Chinese side did of what drove American domestic politics. Nevertheless, given the informational disparity, the American side was unable to play the national level game to its fullest extent in rapprochement negotiations.

* * *

This chapter analyzed the Sino-U.S. rapprochement through the theoretical framework of Putnam’s Two-Level Games and showed two different ways in which domestic politics could play an important role in international negotiations. American negotiators invoked domestic opposition to Nixon’s China initiative, primarily from the right, to set a limit on their concessions on Taiwan and to make new demands for expanded trade and cultural exchange without offending Chinese sensibilities. Chinese negotiators, on the other hand, exploited domestic challenges to Nixon’s presidency, primarily from the left, to elicit his gratitude by not accepting political visitors before him and to reframe Chinese demands as politically expedient for his administration. The distinct political systems of both countries offered an explanation as to why they leaned on different strategies. Just as Chinese leaders could not convincingly point to domestic dissents as a formidable barrier to accepting U.S. terms, American leaders found it difficult to fathom the dynamics of Chinese politics to make an appeal to their Chinese counterparts on the ground of domestic political gains. Mutual biases resulting from political and cultural differences constituted additional obstacles to playing the two-level game. But how valid were the claims and observations top leaders made about domestic opposition to the

rapprochement? The next chapter will examine the positions and underlying motives of politicians and intellectuals in each country’s domestic debate over the rapprochement policy.
Chapter II. The Rapprochement in Domestic Politics

In a phone call on July 28, 1971, two weeks after Nixon announced his trip to China, Buckley notified Kissinger that 10 conservatives, including him, would release a declaration tomorrow to suspend their support of the Nixon administration over “the defense situation,” to which Kissinger protested, “I wanted pressure put on the left, not on the President.” Although Buckley considered Nixon’s “opening to Chinese government without public concession on their part” as one of four foreign policy disagreements, Kissinger was primarily concerned with the conservatives’ position on China. He first demanded the declaration to be “only on Vietnam” and then conceded that “we need opposition from the right as long as you don’t hit us too hard on China. This will help with the Chinese.” Buckley also read Kissinger a part of the declaration, “We do not plan at the moment to encourage formal political opposition to President Nixon in the forthcoming primaries, but we propose to keep all options open in the light of political developments in the net months. … We consider that our defection is an act of loyalty to the Nixon we supported in 1968.” 65 Just as the declaration made public the unpopularity of Nixon’s China initiative among his conservative supporters, so did Buckley’s prior notice and the declaration’s deliberate wording of suspending support and “act of loyalty” betray conservatives’ reservations about attacking their candidate Nixon in an election year. The conservative declaration was but one of the varying reactions to the rapprochement by intellectuals and politicians in both countries.

Nixon’s opening to China not only alienated the declaration’s conservative signatories, which the first chapter shows to have inadvertently strengthened Kissinger’s hands in his negotiations with the Chinese, but it also became a new issue over which the American right could attack the left. While the declaration opposed the rapprochement on the ground of national security, many conservatives made insinuations about the left’s domestic agenda by evaluating the Chinese society as if evaluating the American one. Even though China did not have an open press that allowed for such critical foreign policy commentaries, political factions within China still positioned themselves vis-à-vis the rapprochement with domestic political concerns in mind. Lastly, Nixon and Mao could not have made their decisions to approach each other’s government without considering their domestic political standing at a time of uncertainty, i.e. a pending election and a recent attempted defection at the top level.

American Conservatives Attacking the Left

In addition to evaluating the strategic value of Nixon’s opening to China, conservatives jumped at the opportunity to point out the failure of the liberal domestic agenda on display in China and to hint at the Communist sympathies of liberal journalists and scholars who pushed for Sino-U.S. rapprochement. With travel and trade restrictions relaxed in July 1969,66 Americans began to visit China and to publish their observations of China’s once-mysterious domestic society. Economist Alan Reynolds responded to these traveler accounts in his March 1972 National Review article. Reynolds used China as a case study to criticize the American left who supported environmental protection, planned economy and social welfare. Those who found China “[taking] better care of the environment than we do” overlooked its lack of industrial production of consumer goods; those who praised China’s low meal prices neglected the implicit

taxes through price and wage controls and the costs of state activities; and those who admired China’s free nurseries and schooling should also accept women’s “equality” to work “on road gangs and in coal mines” and “a centralized educational Leviathan” that indoctrinated children in “the insignificance of the individual.” Reynolds’ critiques of the Chinese society betrayed an antipathy to state control in a libertarian strand of American conservatism in the 1970s.

Citing their favorable attitudes towards China as new evidence, Buckley attacked the left-leaning academia and press for moral relativism. In April 1971, Buckley called New York Times’ Max Frankel an “instant historian” because Frankel allegedly blamed the American public’s anti-Communism for former Presidents’ failure to improve relations with China. Buckley proceeded to criticize “sound scholarship,” with irony, for making the United States the guilty party in the Cold War and hypothesized that historians portrayed the heroes as the villains and vice versa because they “don’t have quite enough to do.” In September 1971, Buckley shared humorist Art Buchwald’s joke that Chinese surgeons inserted into New York Times’ China correspondent James Reston’s (1909-1995) stomach a receiver to transmit his conversations to Chinese agents and a tape machine that “would cause Mr. Reston’s lips involuntarily to spew forth a relevant thought or two of Chairman Mao’s.” Buckley found the joke not too far-fetched given Reston’s recent profession of his Irish Catholic belief in “the redemption of the human spirit and the improvement of man” with regards to the Chinese Communists who were persecuting Christian priests.

The American Council on World Freedom, an anti-communist NGO, further constructed a binary between a patriotic silent majority and a subversive elitist minority in its 1971 report on the “Red China Lobby,” playing on the more commonly known name “China Lobby” given to Pro-Taiwan interest groups. The report defined the “Red China Lobby” as “an amorphous group of liberals” who advocated “accommodation and appeasement towards Communist China.” These liberals, according to the report, taught in the Universities, exerted dominating influence in the press and the State Department and had a “strange myopic fascination … for an alien ideology.” The report analogized the “Red China Lobby” to New Left organizations such as the Student for a Democratic Society (“SDS”) and the Black Panthers for their representation of “the power of miniscule minorities in American life” although it stopped short of suggesting that the “Red China Lobby” shared membership with these organizations.\(^7\) Both Buckley and the American Council on World Freedom hinted at the existence of a liberal establishment and made populist attacks against it. As Jonathan Rieder argues in “The Rise of the ‘Silent Majority,’” conservatives began to convince former Democrat constituencies in the 1960s that “liberalism was a special enthusiasm of the well-born and well-placed.” Alienated by racial and social issues such as busing and street crimes, the white working class and lower-middle class would throw their support behind local candidates who vowed to represent their interests ignored by the liberal establishment and form Nixon’s key voting bloc.\(^8\)

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Conservative politicians and lobbyists also invoked the fear of Communist subversion from within, a fear dating back to the McCarthyism of the 1950s, to warn against the American public’s susceptibility to China’s people-to-people diplomacy. In response to the U.S. ping-pong team’s trip to China, Democrat Congressman Joe D. Waggoner requested a 60-minute special order in the House of Representatives on June 9, 1971 to oppose China’s potential admission into the United Nations. Waggoner self-identified as “one of those people … who still believes that a Communist is a Communist” and reminded the floor of China’s ongoing propaganda with slogans like “support the Indochinese people against American aggression.” Waggoner alleged that the “liberal left” had carried out the slogan in action, thereby connecting the domestic anti-Vietnam War protests with China’s anti-American propaganda.\(^2\) Addressing the World Anti-Communist League on August 27, 1972, former Republican Congressman and Chairman of the Committee of One Million Walter H. Judd also argued that Communists “isolate, divide, demoralize, and pull down free countries – not because they are ordered to do so by the Kremlin, but because they are Communists!” Judd interpreted China’s new May Day slogan “support the American people against the American government’s aggressive policies” as a “two-America” policy that exploited the American people’s war weariness and anxiety about economic stagflation to force the American president to reduce his support for U.S. allies.\(^3\)

*Human Events*, another leading journal for a broad spectrum of conservative views, even published explicit allegations against American leftist groups of Maoist subversion backed by the Chinese government. The alleged offenders included the Progressive Labor Party, which not


only functioned as “a quasi-political party and a revolutionary action organization” but also controlled the SDS and played a role in the Harlem riots of 1964, the San Francisco-based Revolutionary Unit, a Red Guard outfit in New York’s Chinatown called I Wor Kuan and African American militant Robert Williams. Another *Human Events* article alleged the Chinese government of growing and exporting opium to the West based on a British “confidential document.” It referenced a March 1967 report by columnist Victor Riesel about a Chinese laundry in the Bronx, “one of a number of ‘communes,’” that paid off its workers in heroin. Riesel was quoted writing, “this would be only part of Peking’s annual overseas sales of some $600 million worth of raw opium with which the Mao government helps to finance guerrilla and propaganda activity across the world … [Chinese American leaders] do not want Communist infiltration of their law-abiding communities.” With shaky evidence, the article associated Americans’ drug use with Chinese espionage and questioned the allegiance of Chinese Americans as a foreign racial group. The conservative commentaries discussed above attacked China as symbolic of the socialist state and attacked liberal support of Nixon’s new China policy as symbolic of the unpatriotic, unchristian and unrepresentative nature of American liberalism. Their arguments expressed domestic, rather than international, concerns by generalizing about the Chinese society and the opening to China as the antithesis of conservative ideals.

Surprisingly, there were also conservatives who praised the non-materialistic, anti-intellectual and orderly attributes of the Chinese society to hold America’s liberal elite and protesting students in shame. In June 1971, *National Review* columnist James Burnham

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responded to *The New York Times* journalist Tillman Durdin’s first-hand observations of China by criticizing the conformity of Chinese society as “Mao’s ants hill.” However, while Burnham differentiated the West’s renunciation of pleasure to realize the self from China’s renunciation of consumer goods and purely intellectual pursuits to negate the self, he acknowledged that “some of the best of us have sought salvation in the vow of poverty, chastity and obedience” and jested that “I can easily think of an intellectual or two who might benefit from a year on the lettuce farms or an auto assembly line.” Likewise, a *Human Events* article in March 1972 pointed out the irony that “the qualities that charmed the liberal elitists most in China are precisely the ones that they have done the most to destroy in this, their own country.” These qualities ranged from the absence of crime and disorder, dedication to hard work and honest toil to patriotism, ethnic pride and commitment to national defense. Patrick Buchanan, White House speechwriter who accompanied Nixon on his trip to China, also praised China’s social order exemplified by “disciplined and orderly” children and “tough and impressive” soldiers” despite his antipathy to Communism. Charles Freeman, the American interpreter for the Nixon trip, recalled that the right began to go to China after the Nixon trip and “discovered a society in which students sat straight upright in their chairs and had short hair and respected their elders and adhered to family values of a sort” without “theft or significant crime.” Consequently, “there was this sudden, strange fascination by the American conservatives with this really very conservative society, which Mao had attempted to radicalize, but had failed to radicalize.”

77. “‘Law and Order’ in Red China,” *Human Events* XXXII, no. 12 (1972): 221.
The anti-Vietnam war student protests on American college campuses were not far from some conservatives’ minds when they observed China’s movement to reform its urban youth by sending them to the countryside. Guolin Yi, who considers The Washington Post more conservative than The New York Times, analyzes a September 3, 1968 Post editorial that proposed to bring order to the campus by closing colleges “in imitation of Mao” and by dispersing students and faculty to the countryside where they would “acquire a new sense of identification with the proletarian masses.” Despite the editorial’s satirical nature, it took a negative view of America’s toleration of student protests in juxtaposition with China’s disciplining of its youth.80 On March 15, 1973, Los Angeles Times reported on China’s “youth problem” – “sons and daughters of senior Communist officials in Shanghai” displayed their status at school by eating food from home and wearing wristwatches. Moreover, the Chinese youth allegedly revolted against the authority, derided accepted standards and work and formed anti-establishment sexual liaisons. The author was concerned about the worldwide phenomenon of “youth problem” but claimed that it was “not as virulent in China as it is in those ‘bourgeois cultures,’ largely because much more intrusive discipline is exercised by the authorities and because drugs are virtually unobtainable.”81 Despite the author’s critical view of the Chinese youth as behaving similarly as America’s liberal students, he took a favorable attitude towards the Chinese government’s ability to enforce order and ban drugs.

The right’s fascination with Chinese society betrayed a tension between their values of individual liberty and social order, as China’s Communist regime seemingly suppressed the

former to uphold the latter. The tension arose partly because both liberals and traditionalists laid claim to the label of conservatism. A telling illustration of the frictions within the large conservative tent was the emergence of neoconservatives in the late 1960s. Neoconservatives were former liberals who began to view the left’s radicalization as a threat to democracy and their overly ambitious social reforms as hubris, but many including Midge Decter and Daniel Patrick Moynihan continued to identify as liberals. The National Review had its reservations about these new allies against the left. For example, in December 1970, a more traditionalist National Review article considered neoconservatives “insufficiently rooted in serious political realities, in general principle, or coherent intellectual tradition.”

**Nixon Reaping Transaction Benefits for Reelection**

Just as its conservative supporters evaluated the opening to China in the context of their disagreement with liberal domestic policies, the Nixon administration clearly recognized the rapprochement’s political usefulness for preempting the left and for generating public support in anticipation of the 1972 presidential election. When Nixon told Mao on their meeting in February 1972 that “those on the right can do what those on the left talk about,” he concede
détente with China was traditionally on the left’s foreign policy agenda. Democrat Senator J. William Fulbright, Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, began to criticize the Johnson administration’s East Asian policy as early as 1964 and oversaw the 1966 hearings that publicized the policy option of “containment without isolation” towards China. Fulbright’s 1964 speech “Old Myths and New Realities” urged the administration to act on the new reality that “there are not really ‘two Chinas’ but only one, mainland China, and that is ruled by Communists

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and likely to remain so for the indefinite future.” Senator George S. McGovern, a Democrat contender for presidency in 1971, also advocated recognition of the People’s Republic of China and its admission into the United Nations. In contrast, Republican Senators Strom Thurmond and John Tower labeled Fulbright’s 1964 speech as “appeasement” and the National Review published several articles attacking the 1966 hearings. In short, since the 1960s, the Congressional left had consistently pushed for further rapprochement with China than the right.

The Nixon administration reaped political benefits by taking the China issue away from the left. Freeman recalled that the topic of China, “a politically correct topic on campuses,” enabled the Nixon administration to start sending speakers to campuses that were protesting the Vietnam War. Freeman himself made more than a hundred public appearances in the first year after the Nixon trip. Even when criticized for not going far enough or for risking the détente with the Soviet Union, the Nixon administration could dismiss these criticisms as partisan or pro-Russian. On April 15, 1971, Kissinger and Haldeman brought to Nixon’s attention an unfavorable Washington Post editorial on his lifting of trade restrictions on China. The editorial allegedly praised the move but questioned Nixon’s statement that the move was planned a long time ago instead of a response to “ping-pong diplomacy.” Nixon responded, “we don’t care what they say”; Kissinger added, “if Kennedy had brought China policy a tenth of the way to this point, they’d be throwing bouquets at me”; and the White House Chief of Staff H. R. Haldeman echoed, “what bothers them is that they don’t like the fact that Nixon is going to get credit for it.”

On January 24, 1972, Nixon explained his China initiative to his Assistant for Domestic

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85. Nancy Bernkopf Tucker, China Confidential, 279.
Affairs John Ehrlichman as a strategy to play the weaker against the stronger and complained, “how many columns have you read that said the Chinese game … screws us with the Russians?” According to Nixon, “those who write are, basically, pro-Russian.” In the two conversations, Nixon and his staff appeared self-congratulatory on achieving “what those on the left talk about” and arriving at their China policy through a realistic assessment of national interests instead of an idealistic courting of foreign goodwill as the left did, in their opinion.

Nixon was more concerned about critical voices from his conservative support base, but most conservative thought leaders, regardless of their personal opinions on Nixon’s China initiative, kept their objections private in a key election year. On August 12, 1971, Kissinger briefed a group of conservatives that America’s opening to China provided “diplomatic maneuverability” against the Soviets at a time when the administration’s foreign policy instruments of military strength, military aid and economic aid were “hobbled by liberal assault.” Kissinger also called Barry Goldwater, Republican Senator and presidential candidate in 1964, hours before Nixon announced his visit to China and secured Goldwater’s promise to stay silent until briefed. In his 1979 autobiography, Goldwater would question if he made a wrong decision by supporting the Shanghai Communique, whose language “abandoned Nationalist China,” but he attributed his support for the Communique to Party loyalty, reasoning that “if I cannot believe my President, then I have lost all my faith in men and friends and my leadership.” Goldwater even came under conservative attack in the January 1972 issue of National Review for his support of Nixon at a time when America seemed to be losing the global

87. Ibid., 357-358.
88. Evelyn Goh, Constructing the U.S. Rapprochement with China, 219.
90. Ibid., 242.
Cold War. Goldwater allegedly called Congressman John Ashbrook’s entry into the New Hampshire Republican primary against Nixon from the right a threat “to the entire party, the entire country, the entire free world and freedom itself.” While the *National Review* article only briefly mentioned “disillusioned friends in Taiwan” as one of Nixon’s foreign policy failures, it recognized and criticized Goldwater’s prioritization of Party unity over ideological purity on China in the face of the 1972 presidential election.91

Likewise, in a phone call with Kissinger, Ronald Reagan, then-California governor and “China Lobby” member, pointed out the inconsistency between the United States’ support for China’s admission into the United Nations and opposition to Taiwan’s expulsion, but only advised the government to “be a little publicly hardnosed” in supporting Taiwan for the sake of public perception.92 Both Goldwater and Reagan objected to Nixon’s abandoning of Taiwan in the process of rapprochement with China, but Reagan only voiced his objection in private as friendly advice to the administration and Goldwater continued to rally conservative support for Nixon’s candidacy in the 1972 presidential election. In other words, the timing of the Sino-U.S. rapprochement prevented the formation of a conservative opposition bloc within the United States, to Nixon’s advantage.

For the Nixon administration and its conservative base, extensive media coverage of Nixon’s trip to China also served as free campaign propaganda. Referring to Nixon’s trip, Haldeman wrote in his diary, “from our viewpoint, and the P concurs in this, we need maximum coverage in order to get the benefit from it, especially in the short term.”93 The short-term benefit that Haldeman alluded to could be no other than Nixon’s chances for reelection. Nixon’s

sightseeing schedule in China gave away the intended audience. Nixon visited the Great Wall on Thursday morning, as the American public tuned in to their evening television, and live television cameras were positioned in two towers prior to Nixon’s visit to best capture his handshaking with all the Chinese present.94

On February 20, 1972, The Washington Post reported the back-stage work that brought “The China TV Show,” a satirical reference to the TV coverage of Nixon’s trip, into reality. The official press delegation featured 11 seats for each television network and one, if any, seat for each newspaper, newspaper chain, magazine and non-network broadcast organization. Perhaps biased against TV as print media itself, the article questioned whether journalists and viewers could “search out the meaning behind the pictures” and “distinguish show business from diplomatic business” when the live TV would only cover sights and sounds shown by the Chinese “with the President and Mrs. Nixon in the foreground” instead of any substantial announcements of diplomatic talks in progress.95 Through its deliberate choice of maximum coverage, prime TV time and press corps members, the Nixon administration made the diplomatic event of Sino-U.S. rapprochement into a political spectacle of Nixon’s statesmanship.

Despite some conservative criticisms of Nixon’s appropriation of government resources for personal aggrandizement, Nixon clearly orchestrated successful campaign advertising with his trip to China. His popularity rating rose to 56 percent, “the highest level in fourteen months,” and 98 percent polled were aware of the trip taking place, “the highest awareness score for any

94. Ibid., 283-284.
event within the history of Gallup poll.”96 A crowd of 15,000 greeted the Nixon party upon its return from China to Washington. Reagan even congratulated Nixon on “one of the greatest weeks of the American presidency,” to which Nixon responded, “Of course Reagan can see it in terms of the political impact, the television impact.”97 Even Burnham acknowledged “the political impact” by objecting to the U.S. Treasury paying “tens of millions of dollars” for the TV-radio-newspaper coverage of the visit without being subjected to any legal limits on what were really Nixon’s campaign outlays. After listing China’s numerous potential gains through better relations with the United States, Burnham posed the question “is no price too high for Mr. Nixon’s re-election?”98 While Burnham refused to compromise his intellectual honesty for political loyalty, Buckley acted otherwise. Upon invitation, Buckley suspended his “suspension of support” to join Nixon’s presidential press party to China, attesting to the appeal of a first-hand account of China for Americans who had limited sources of information on this country.99

**Chinese Factions Making Political Statements**

As Putnam points out, heads of government can reap “transaction benefits” from international negotiations partly because of the media attention.100 The “transaction benefits” of the Sino-U.S. rapprochement were not limited to Nixon. Chinese politicians also exploited the extensive domestic and international media coverage to signal changes in political fortunes and to make political statements. Marshal Ye Jianying, then-Deputy Chairman of China’s Military Affairs Commission and Lin Biao’s successor as Defense Minister in 1975, came under media

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spotlight for his reception of Kissinger and Nixon on their visits to China. John Holdridge, Kissinger’s aide on his two China trips in 1971, observed that “the Chinese took great care to publicize” Kissinger’s second visit to China and to show “Ye Jianying, the old marshal and presumed leader of the PLA … squiring Henry around.”

Holdridge proposed that “the public appearance of Marshal Ye with Kissinger showed the Chinese audience that the Chinese military supported Sino-American rapprochement.”

On the flip side, Ye’s public association with the rapprochement also signaled his political ascent. Having been exiled to a factory in Beijing for “investigation and study” by the radicals during the Cultural Revolution, Ye was called upon alongside three other veteran military commanders by Mao to report on international affairs in March 1971. He suggested playing “the card of the United States” after China’s major border clash with the Soviet Union in August 1971. Having come to a position in favor of the rapprochement at Mao’s encouragement, Ye soon became Zhou’s right-hand man in receiving visiting American dignitaries. In the People’s Daily report of Nixon’s arrival at Beijing on February 22, 1972, Ye’s name appeared right after Zhou and before China’s Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister as national leaders welcoming the Nixon party at the airport.

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104. “American President Nixon arrived in Beijing yesterday; Premier Zhou set a banquet to welcome President and Madame Nixon; National leaders including Zhou Enlai, Ye Jianying, Li Xiannian, Guo Moruo, Ji Pengfei, Wu De, etc. welcomed guests at the airport; Premier Zhou and President Nixon made toasts one after another at the banquet; Premier Zhou, etc. met with President and Madame Nixon and entourage before the banquet,” *People’s Daily* (Beijing, China), February 22, 1972.
Nixon’s visit of the Forbidden Palace also named Ye as his sole host.\textsuperscript{105} As the Chinese media attached political significance to the sequence in which officials were named, Ye’s much publicized and elevated roles in domestic reports of rapprochement not only convinced the public of the PLA’s support of this state initiative, but also assured the public of a stable transition of military leadership from Lin to Ye.

Meanwhile, radical critics of the rapprochement told their side of the story to a western audience made accessible by the rapprochement. Jiang Qing, Mao’s wife and a radical leader of the Cultural Revolution, reached out to American historian Roxane Witke to commission her biography, 	extit{Comrade Chiang Ch’ing}, based on lengthy interviews she conducted with Witke in the summer of 1972. The biography presented Jiang as vocal in expressing her reservations about the rapprochement. In March 1975, Jiang made a speech critical of the ideology behind China’s foreign policy, which, according to a sympathetic Witke, had been beyond her “(and most other women’s) sphere of authority.” Citing Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought, Jiang not only proclaimed that China’s foreign policy “must concentrate on black friends, small friends, poor friends,” through whom it entered the United Nations, but also accused Kissinger of avoiding antagonism through balance of power, reflective of “his small bourgeois politician’s mental categories.”\textsuperscript{106} Jiang’s opposition to the rapprochement could certainly have been motivated by a sincere belief in the Marxist theories she cited, but it also implied a challenge to the ideological correctness of her pro-rapprochement political opponents.

\textsuperscript{105} “President and Madame Nixon visited the Forbidden Palace and unearthed historical artifacts; Deputy Chairman Ye Jianying, etc. accompanied the visit; Secretary of State Rogers, etc. also went on the visit; President and Madame Nixon visited Beijing Children’s Hospital,” \textit{People’s Daily} (Beijing, China), February 22, 1972.

Ironically, were it not for the rapprochement, Jiang would not have been able to share her life story with Witke. Witke came to the attention of Chinese politicians by confessing her academic interest in studying women in socialist revolutions to Chinese diplomats present in New York thanks to China’s admission into the UN. Witke could then travel to China because of the lifting of American travel bans. What motivated Jiang’s commission of the biography and why did she select an American to do so?

In the Prologue, Witke hypothesized that Jiang “missed the opportunity to make her name and accomplishments known abroad” when she lived in Mao’s shadow during the Communist Revolution and now “seized the chance to convince [her] and hence the world of her solo struggle to become a leader and compete with others for portions of Mao’s role after his death.” While Witke studied Jiang with a feminist lens familiar to her western readers, Jiang presented herself as a Communist revolutionary, an image that would appeal to no one other than a domestic audience or foreign sympathizers of the Communist cause. Witke did not fail to note that Jiang wanted to establish for the record that “she was a sincere Communist all along” her acting career in Shanghai in 1936-37, driven only by force and poverty to sign contracts for films that promoted the resistance war against Japan without elements of class struggle. Tellingly, in response to Witke’s parting words to “do a book on the history of the revolution mainly from her viewpoint,” Jiang reiterated her self-portrayal, perhaps in an attempt to set the tone for the entire project, by saying “writing’s your area of expertise. Mine is revolutionary leadership!”

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107. Ibid., 19-21, 24.
109. Ibid., 121-123.
110. Ibid., 445-446.
To publicize her alternative history of the Chinese Communist revolution that highlighted her roles in it, Jiang perhaps needed an American author to bypass state control over the media. The Chinese leadership already objected to Jiang’s project. Zhou’s official chronicle recorded,

August 1972: upon learning that Jiang Qing would continue to receive American scholar Roxane Witke in Guangzhou, [Zhou] sent her the message, ‘Only have one conversation, two in maximum; only discuss arts and literature, no discussion of other topics,’ with which Jiang was extremely unhappy.

The footnote was equally critical of Jiang’s loyalty, alleging that Jiang “supplied a large amount of inner-Party and inner-Military circumstances” in multiple conversations with Witke despite Zhou’s instruction to “concerned authorities to shorten Witke’s length of stay in China.”

Witke herself drew attention to the Chinese authorities’ attempt to suppress her publication of the biography. Zhou and other Chinese leaders edited the official Chinese interview transcripts provided to her, specifically to cross out “some shocking remarks about Lin Piao’s travesties.” He Liliang, wife of the Chinese ambassador to the UN, suggested that Witke write a history of the revolution from Mao’s point of view instead. A biography of Jiang certainly violated the Marxist axiom that masses make history and Chinese Communists’ belief in Mao’s monopoly on truth and wisdom, but it may also be that the Chinese leadership objected to Jiang’s access to an independent information platform, made possible by the rapprochement, as a new leverage against her political opponents.

**Mao Revolutionizing Foreign Policy**

While Ye and Jiang either passively or actively advanced their political stature through the rapprochement, Mao was the Chinese leader who ultimately decided to re-approach the

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111. Zhong gong zhong yang wen xian yan jiu shi [CCCPC Party Literature Research Office], *Zhou Enlai nian pu* [Chronicles of Zhou Enlai], 1949-1976, (Beijing: Zhong yang wen xian chu ban she [Central Party Literature Press], 1997), 547.
United States. Just as Nixon crafted his China policy with reelection in mind, Mao stood by his
decision at a time when the Lin Biao affair of September 1971 undermined public support for his
“continuous revolution.” As Jian Chen points out, the reported betrayal of Lin, Mao’s designated
“closest comrade-in-arms” and “heir and successor,” called into question Mao’s “eternal
correctness” and his ideology of “continuous revolution.” The ideology of “continuous
revolution” aims beyond the Communist seizure of power at transforming China’s state,
population and society domestically and asserting China’s central position internationally.

The rapprochement fit into this ideology as it brought about increased international
recognition of the People’s Republic of China and even created momentum for the domestic
Cultural Revolution weakened by the Lin Biao affair. Based on recently available Chinese
sources from the Central Archives of China, Kuisong Yang and Yafeng Xia find Mao inclined
towards worldwide revolution and half-hearted in the pursuit of a détente with the United States.
For example, after Mao approved of a Politburo decision to welcome a ministerial-level
American representative or presidential envoy to Beijing for negotiations in February 1970, he
reverted to a more militant position in April and May in response to American domestic anti-war
demonstrations against Nixon’s expansion of the Vietnam War to Cambodia. Mao explained to
Zhou that “The current international situation has developed to the high tide of world
revolutionary movement of anti-U.S. imperialists and its running dogs. We must make use of it.”
Mao was willing to establish contact with the United States in the absence of a general war and
revolution, conditions he perceived to be unfavorable to the Communist cause, but he would still
act on his revolutionary aspirations when opportunities arose. Mao himself characterized his

114. Ibid., 7.
policy of rapprochement as military tactics “to win over the majority, to oppose the minority, to utilize contradictions and to defeat [the enemies] one by one.”

Therefore, in the absence of world wars, the rapprochement carried on revolutionary struggles in a different form.

Mao’s interpretation of the rapprochement as a revolutionary move was evident in his directions to include revolutionary language in the Shanghai Communique on several occasions. In the memorandum on his second China visit for Nixon, Kissinger noted that Zhou personally delivered “a scorching one-hour presentation – as he indicated – at the explicit instructions of Mao” on October 24, 1971. Zhou’s speech centered on the Chinese belief in revolutionary progress that “required struggle not peace, or peace only after struggle.” Kissinger observed that “Chou clearly had been ordered by Mao to emphasize the Chinese revolutionary dogma and reject our effort to submerge differences and accent cooperation,” referring to the original U.S. draft of a conventional Communique. Although Zhou allegedly “took out the most offensive language such as supporting revolutions and opposing racial discrimination” in subsequent negotiations, the final Communique still preserved the unconventional format of each side stating its positions followed by both sides stating their agreements.

Indeed, on the evening of October 23, Mao ordered Zhou to take the unconventional approach, “I have said many times that all under heaven is great chaos, so it is desirable to let each side speak out for itself.” Jian Chen argues that, in doing so, Mao wanted to not only preserve his revolutionary image both at home and abroad but also highlight the drama in his unprecedented acceptance of Nixon’s


visit. During Haig’s China visit in January 1972, Mao also responded to Zhou’s solicitation of his opinions on the draft Communique by saying that “if we want to revise it, we will revise one point – change ‘the people want progress’ into ‘the people want revolution,’” a statement that appeared in the Communique’s final version. While Zhou carried out the implementation of Sino-U.S. rapprochement, Mao crafted the policy and had his own political statement to make. The Shanghai Communique itself bore witness to Mao’s ideology of “continuous revolution.”

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On the national level, the Sino-U.S. rapprochement offered both its critics and supporters an opportunity to rationalize and publicize their political viewpoints and bestowed “transaction benefits” on Nixon and Mao. In the United States, conservative opposition to the rapprochement, to some extent, was a microcosm of their critique of liberal social policies and the liberal elite in academia and the press post-1960s while conservative fascination with China’s domestic society, out of a traditional attachment to social order, could be read in the context of the ongoing anti-Vietnam War student protests. In China, the public association between the policy of rapprochement with moderate bureaucrats and the Army General signaled to the public a transition of power away from the Cultural Revolution radicals and the Lin Biao clique while the radicals’ opposition to the rapprochement was also a political statement of their revolutionary credentials. As the primary decision-makers, Nixon and Mao reaped political benefits as well. The rapprochement offered Nixon positive media coverage in a key election year, especially in

118. Zhong gong zhong yang wen xian yan jiu shi [CCCPC Party Literature Research Office], *Mao Zedong nian pu [Chronicles of Mao Zedong]*, 422.
the eyes of those Americans fearful of a nuclear confrontation, and offered Mao a diplomatic catalyst to continue his revolution in the aftermath of the Lin Biao affair.
Chapter III. Grassroots Response in a Top-Down Process

On June 5, 1971, Communist party cadres working in Shanghai’s handicraft industry launched a discussion to study an internal document they just received – summary minutes of Mao’s meeting with American journalist Edgar Snow in December 1970. Despite the cadres’ full support of Mao’s foreign policies and universal recognition of the document’s ideological significance, some expressed confusion about Mao’s favorable comments on Nixon, as recorded by the industry management bureau’s revolutionary committee in an internal report: “Some comrades took issues with Sihanouk’s statement, ‘Nixon is a good agent for Mao,’ primarily finding it hard to accept the word ‘agent.’ … Chairman Mao said he ‘prefers the Republican Party.’ Both the Democratic Party and the Republican Party are reactionaries, birds of a feather. What is the difference?”

Besides such enmity towards Nixon on ideological grounds and hence a resistance to associating Nixon with Mao or anything positive, some cadres remained sympathetic to the Soviet Union despite the Sino-Soviet split. In response to Mao’s words, “If the Soviet Union is not capable, I rest my hope with the American people,” they questioned, “Are the Soviet people even worse than the American people?” These dissenting voices in the report challenge a narrow view of the Sino-U.S. rapprochement as a negotiation between top leaders of the two countries or a contest among different political factions within each country. The public in both

119. Norodom Sihanouk fled to China after being overthrown as Head of State of Cambodia in a military coup in March 1970. The Chinese government referred to Sihanouk as one of the “old friends of the Chinese people,” an unofficial title of honor for supportive foreign leaders.

countries also had to reconcile with their governments’ abrupt betrayal of an anti-communist or anti-imperialist state ideology in favor of a more pragmatic approach to foreign policy-making.

Historians have noted both governments’ use or lack of public diplomacy, outreach to the general public of foreign nations to inform and influence their opinions, in the initial phase of Sino-U.S. rapprochement. Mayumi Itoh draws attention to the forgotten but indispensable role played by Japanese Table Tennis Association president Goto Koji in inviting China to the Nagoya World Championships despite domestic and foreign opposition and in making it possible for the Chinese team to invite the U.S. team to visit China in April 1971. The subsequent “ping-pong diplomacy,” Itoh argues, offered a singular opportunity for China to make a diplomatic initiative to reenter the international community through cultural exchanges.\textsuperscript{121} Robert Ross also underlines the uniqueness of Sino-U.S. contacts through sports, noting the then-conspicuous absence of American cultural or economic presence in China except for VOA broadcasts, whose radio signals the Chinese government had interfered with until the establishment of liaison offices in 1973. Ross, however, discounts the intrinsic value of public diplomacy in Sino-U.S. rapprochement. He claims that no U.S. government-sponsored cultural program would have worked in China anyway because the controlled press would not publicize such an initiative and those Chinese aware of it would not dare to risk the political consequences of making contacts with Americans, possessing American materials, or listening to the VOA. Ross thus concludes that the absence of public diplomacy did not impede strategic cooperation between the two countries.\textsuperscript{122} In sum, historians have paid more attention to the official policies of public


diplomacy than to its grassroots reactions and have largely focused on either China’s fruitful ping-pong offensive or America’s limited cultural programs without a comparative analysis.

Therefore, this chapter contrasts the two countries’ official policies regarding exchange and grassroots sentiments towards rapprochement beyond the opinions of prominent politicians or athletes. While the American government pushed for trade and non-official exchanges to win the goodwill of Chinese elites and the American domestic public, the Chinese government was unwilling to commit to these programs for fear that they might distract attention away from the Taiwan issue. In the United States, exposure to more positive media imagery of the Chinese society also gave rise to a paradigm shift away from the Cold War binary to an overall positive attitude towards détente with China among the American public. However, in China, the official guidance to reconcile Nixon’s visit with a negative image of the American government led to a more subdued grassroots response. Nevertheless, the Chinese public’s contacts with visiting American dignitaries and tourists still brought about an enthusiasm that threatened to defy the official state of hostility between the two countries.

**People’s Diplomacy as a Top-Down Strategy**

While both governments paid lip service to public or people’s diplomacy, they interpreted the term differently to fit their divergent strategic goals. According to National Security Study Memorandum 124 “Next Steps Toward the People’s Republic of China” on May 27, 1971, Beijing’s “people’s diplomacy,” a reference to “ping-pong diplomacy,” did not imply a more positive view of the U.S. or a change in its foreign policy goals but instead reflected China’s conflicting objectives between recovering Taiwan, against U.S. policy, and improving relations with the U.S. government, “if for no other reason than for leverage to use on the Soviets (and perhaps the Japanese).” NSSM 124 analyzed that, by appealing to U.S. public opinions,
Beijing hoped to pressure the U.S. government to consent to the Republic of China regime’s expulsion from the UN and to make concessions regarding its defense commitment to Taiwan, both of which would lead to better bilateral governmental relations. Therefore, NSSM 124 recommended that Washington deal with Beijing on a government-to-government basis, which would credit deliberate U.S. government policy for any improvement in relations. A memorandum from the National Security Council Staff to Kissinger on a March 31, 1972 Senior Review Group meeting on U.S.-PRC Trade and Exchanges reiterated both sides’ different objectives despite their common interest in exchange programs – “Where the U.S. will attempt to develop favorable attitudes toward the United States among PRC elite groups, the Chinese side will use people-to-people contacts to build popular support for their cause which can be used to undercut USG backing of the Nationalists.” The memorandum also conceded that, comparatively, the U.S. lacked institutions to influence Chinese involvement in American society or to elicit genuine reciprocity at the non-governmental level.

Domestically, people’s diplomacy also appealed to Americans who subscribed to the diplomatic tradition of the open-door policy and Chinese who believed in the Marxist doctrine of proletarian internationalism. In May 1971, 70% of the 1,600 Americans polled by Harris in person would like to see “friendlier relations between the United States and Communist China.” Americans polled also showed a preference for an agreement to control nuclear weapons (76%), more diplomatic talks (74%) and more exchange of cultural missions (71%) and sports teams (68%) over other manifestations of friendlier relations such as reciprocal travels (52%) and

increased trade in non-strategic goods (47%).\textsuperscript{125} Besides their preoccupation with peace as the number one goal of Sino-U.S. rapprochement, these Americans expressed significant interest in more institutionalized and targeted exchange between the two peoples. In March 1972, Opinion Research Corporation (ORC) polled 1048 Americans by telephone, asking for their positions regarding statements made on Nixon’s China visit. While 69% polled agreed with the statement “the President’s visit to China eased tensions and made world peace more likely,” a surprising 84% agreed with the statement “President Nixon’s visit to China opened the doors to more normal relations with a large and important country” and a 65%, the third highest percentage, agreed with the statement “as a result of the President’s visit to China, there will be an increase of trade between the United States and China that will be good for our country.” Negative characterizations of the visit as a U.S. sell-out of Taiwan, a blow against the confidence of U.S. allies, unbalanced U.S. concessions and Chinese gains or Nixon’s publicity stunt received no majority agreement.\textsuperscript{126} These Americans, again, held largely positive views of the rapprochement not only as a generic step towards détente but also as an open door to China and its businesses.

In the eyes of the Chinese masses, people’s diplomacy justified Sino-U.S. rapprochement as a revolutionary struggle to convert the hearts and minds of the American people. Shanghai radio and TV stations’ commentary script for the friendly ping-pong match between Chinese and American teams on April 5, 1971 reminded the audience that “Great leader Chairman Mao taught us: ‘first, make distinction between the American people and their government; second,


make distinction between the decision-makers in the American government and the ordinary staff beneath them.’” The script proceeded to underline long-standing friendship between the Chinese and the American people, apparently calling for public support of this unprecedented ping-pong match as class-based international solidarity against the oppressive American government.127

It seems that the Chinese government could justify public diplomacy both strategically and ideologically, which begs the question of why it resisted including language about trade and exchange in the Shanghai Communique to build popular support both abroad and at home. According to Kissinger’s Memorandum for Nixon, during his October 1971 visit, the Chinese “showed almost no interest in arms control, airily dismissed the subject of trade, and unenthusiastically included a reference … to facilitating scientific, cultural, technical and journalistic exchanges.”128 Kissinger hypothesized that Chinese leaders likely resisted America’s interest in these subsidiary issues as an evasion of the fundamental question of Taiwan and as the pretense of a “normal” relationship that would compromise their ideological purity. Kissinger’s hypothesis seemed confirmed by Zhou’s consent to leaving these issues for lower-level dialogues only after Kissinger reframed them as giving impetus to fundamental agreements.129 Regardless of how much they bought into Marxist internationalism, Chinese leaders did not care for the doctrine or for domestic reactions to the rapprochement enough to prioritize trade and exchange.

127. “Shanghai People’s Broadcasting Station, Shanghai TV Station Commentary Script,” April 5, 1971, B92-2-1485-7, Shanghai Municipal Archives, Shanghai, China.
128. “164. Memorandum From the President’s Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon, Washington, November 1971,” FRUS China, 528.
129. Ibid., 557-558.
However, Chinese leaders courted the opinion of one particular group of Americans—Chinese Americans—by approving their visa applications for traveling to China at a much higher rate than those of other Americans. An official of the National Committee on United States-China Relations, Inc., when interviewed by The Washington Post in February 1974, estimated that 6,000 to 8,000 Americans had visited China since 1971, at least 50 to 60 percent of which were Chinese Americans. In contrast, Americans not of Chinese ancestry would likely have their visa applications rejected unless they were famous in a professional field, part of a pro-China organization or a businessman. Reporter Jay Matthews characterized such preferential treatment as “the natural outgrowth of [a] 20-year-old movement to impress ethnic Chinese throughout the world with the achievements of the Communist revolution.” According to Meredith Oyen, since the early 1950s, China had developed both an external policy to unite the Chinese diaspora behind the new government and an internal policy directed at returned overseas Chinese and fellow villagers or relatives of overseas Chinese who served their link with the homeland. To a large extent, these policies were motivated by the government’s desire for overseas remittances as an important source of foreign exchange and investment. Matthews, however, also pointed out China’s practical limits with accommodating non-ethnic Chinese visitors with heated accommodations, interpreters and Western cooks, an important reason behind its indifference towards exchange that Kissinger overlooked. Despite poorer material conditions, Chinese American visitors enjoyed more freedom to visit ancestral places, live with relatives or friends and lengthen their stay for medical treatment or education. Given Chinese Americans’ lack of


political influence as only 0.2 percent of the U.S. population, according to the Post report, the Chinese government could not have been motivated by a strategic objective to influence U.S. public opinions at large through such preferential treatment. In other words, it likely acted more on its ethnic identity or domestic needs than on its Communist doctrines or diplomatic strategies in welcoming Chinese Americans home. Its policy towards Chinese Americans were thus not representative of its policies towards Chinese-American exchange.

American Fascination and Ambivalence

Despite the difficulty for ordinary Americans to visit China in person, their perception of China took a U-turn to the extent that Los Angeles Times coined the term “China Craze” in February 1972. In his 1974 book, John Fairbank reflected on Americans’ “high point of interest and idealization” about the Chinese in the glow of rapprochement, in sharp contrast with their horror at the Cultural Revolution less than a decade earlier. Fairbank found the reports of American travelers superficial, reductive in presenting the complex Chinese mind or morale as uniform or friendly, and reminiscent of old stereotypes.132 These sentiments arose, Fairbank also claimed, out of the limitations of New China tourism that resembled the old tribute system in treating Americans as guests instead of merely commercial visitors. Foreign guests called for a local host, usually a Chinese state representative who “[proffered] civilities and amenities to ensure harmonious relations.” Reciprocally, the guests conducted themselves properly and offered constructive, but not destructive, criticism.133 Tracing American perceptions of China from 1784 to 1978, Warren Cohen also characterized the period following 1971 as an era of respect, in terms of public fascination with Chinese culture and political deference to China as a

133. Ibid., 168-169.
powerful nation. Cohen also considered Americans’ image of the Chinese dependent on how they assumed to be perceived by the Chinese reciprocally and hence superficial.\textsuperscript{134} While offering much-needed historical context to what appeared to be a drastic change in U.S. popular attitude towards China after the rapprochement, neither Fairbank nor Cohen closely examined the immediate sources for such a perceived shift. Moreover, both scholars said little about those Americans who remained ambivalent about the rapprochement.

In March 1966 and 1972, Gallup asked 1,551 and 1,513 Americans, respectively, to describe the Chinese people using a list of adjectives, as shown by Chart 1. While the political orientation of the two groups of respondents were consistent (26% identified as Republicans and around 45% as Democrats), they used positive adjectives to describe the Chinese people much more frequently six years later in 1972. The top adjective remained “hard-working,” but it was selected by 73%, as opposed to 37%, of the respondents. Ironically, the second most popular adjective switched from “ignorant” to “intelligent.” The Chinese people also ceased to be “warlike,” “sly” and “treacherous” and had become “progressive,” “practical” and “artistic.”

[Chart 1: American Perception of the Chinese People in March 1972 vs. 1966]\textsuperscript{135}


In a much shorter time span after 1972, the Communist regime on mainland China also earned the goodwill of Americans vis-à-vis the Nationalist regime on Taiwan. In May 1972 and April 1973, Gallup asked 1,541 and 1,528 Americans, respectively, to rate different foreign countries on a scale from minus five to five. As Chart 2 shows, all positive ratings of China saw increased selections while selections of negative ratings either declined or remained unchanged. While 34% of respondents in mid-1972 rated China minus five and only 22% rated China positively, half of the respondents in early 1973 rated China positively and only 15% gave the lowest rating. However, Gallup itself terminated the opinion poll on “Nationalist China (Taiwan)” and substituted the poll on “Red China” with “China,” implicitly granting legitimacy to the People’s Republic of China and introducing biases to the polling result in 1973.
While it is hard to pinpoint the impetus for this perception change, it is certain that American journalists’ travel accounts from China in 1971 and the TV coverage of Nixon’s visit in February 1972 contributed to the new image of China. Polling results testified to the impact of TV on popular conception of China. In May 1971, 80% polled by Louis Harris & Associates said that “a moving picture on television” meant more than “a photograph in a magazine or a newspaper” in describing “how the people of China really live.” In March 1972, 81% polled by ORC reported seeing “a great deal” or “a fair amount” of Nixon’s China trip on TV.

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Therefore, an analysis of mainstream broadcast television networks’ contemporary programming on China can shed light on the causes for their viewers’ paradigm shift.

On August 31, 1971, CBS broadcast an interview by Eric Sevareid with James Reston, *New York Times* journalist who visited China and interviewed Premier Zhou in July 1971, and his wife Sally. Many of Sevareid’s questions sought to dispel popular myths about China. He asked about the Chinese people’s “built-in arrogance or smugness,” ignorance about the rest of the world, belief in the thoughts of Mao Zedong, women’s liberation, expansionism and work ethic. Most of the negative stereotypes were called into question by James and Sally Reston’s highly positive impressions of the Chinese people. The couple found the Chinese people courteous towards foreigners, preoccupied with Taiwan and domestic problems, i.e. not expansionist, and working hard with a sense of purpose and nationhood and found the Chinese women truly liberated with equal pay and service organizations that took care of their grocery shopping and sewing. Even though James Reston still found the people ignorant and lacking in curiosity about world affairs, his praise for Zhou’s penetrating gaze, intelligence in answering questions to fit his own agenda without wandering off point and intimate knowledge of American affairs more than redeemed the image of Chinese intellect in American eyes. Even though Sally Reston suspected some cynicism on the part of the people who picked up little red books once a foreigner approached, 139 James Reston’s “one, overall impression” of modern China as a “school of moral philosophy” undertaking a “heroic attempt” to change the character

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of its people certainly made the Chinese Communist cause seem more like a proselytizing crusade than a brainwashing cult to his TV audience.140

Americans also tuned in to NBC’s live coverage of Nixon’s visit to China in February 1972. Besides following Nixon’s itinerary as he toured the tourist attractions, historical footage showed surprisingly diverse facets of the Chinese society, from pedestrians on the streets, PLA soldiers in military training, children studying in Evergreen People’s Commune, grocery shoppers at a food market to a mother undergoing a C-section operation under acupuncture anesthesia. Most commentaries were neutral or positive, remarking on a “simple curiosity” towards foreigners despite years of anti-American propaganda, the fact that “nobody’s starving” and how Nixon’s car got washed while he visited the Ming tombs “for a moment or two.”

However, the commentary bluntly criticized China’s higher education reform for turning Peking University into a three-year trade school led by a Party official with no education further than the grammar school and a 20-year career in a printing factory. The reporter ominously concluded, “at Peking University, in 1972, you feel that 1984 is not very far away.” The attack on China’s higher education also stood out for the commentator’s emphatic domestic reference, “this is what happened to Peking University because of the Red Guards and the Cultural Revolution. This is the New Left and student power carried to its end result.”141 While the reference did not compromise the sincerity of the critique, it did rationalize what many Americans perceived as a deplorable state of China’s higher education with familiar concepts.

140. Ibid., 338-339.
What ensued was a public fascination with anything Chinese. A February 21, 1972 Los Angeles Times article titled “And Now Americans Embrace the China Craze” gave a psychological explanation for the phenomena. Americans, the article alleged, saw the world as divided between good guys and bad guys, because of their frontier past, cold war fears and movie influence. The Chinese were bad guys until they turned into good-bad guys, “who [do] the wrong thing but [are] sound at heart” after Nixon announced his trip, but Nixon’s trip had made them into the deeply-wronged good guys. The report criticized such wild swings of attitudes as reflecting the “mobile and fluctuating” American character and concluded that “it is the Americans who want to be legitimized.”

Four days later, Chicago Tribune article “East Wind Brings U.S. New Fad” associated the “China Chic” in the fields of medicine, business, fashion, higher education, art and book publishing with public enthusiasm for exchange programs. The article, again, quoted an editor’s declaration of the death of “the cold war approach to Chinese studies.” “The Chinese Communist experience is part of human experience,” the editor added.

If the vogue of the people’s suits, the Chinese look and Peking opera bordered on orientalism, medical journal articles on acupuncture truly idealized Chinese medicine. On July 25, 1971, James Reston made famous the traditional Chinese medical practice to relieve pain by acupuncture and by burning Ai or mugwort leaves in a Times report on his own appendix-removal operation in the Anti-Imperialist Hospital in Beijing. Reston reported “a noticeable relaxation of the pressure and distension within an hour and no recurrence of the problem

144. Ibid.
thereafter” following his treatment. He followed up with an in-depth report on acupuncture anesthesia based on surgeries he eye-witnessed in a Shanghai hospital on August 21, 1971 and made an appeal for “serious” medical exchange. The efficacy of acupuncture was certainly exaggerated by both Chinese doctors and Times correspondents (Audrey Topping reported on acupuncture as a cure for child deafness and muteness), but these acupuncture pieces suggested to Americans that they might have something to learn from the Chinese.

However, it should not be ignored that some Americans remained ambivalent about or even hostile towards the People’s Republic of China. After all, many still harbored strong affinity for the Nationalist regime on Taiwan and opposed its expulsion from the UN. Chart 3 traces the changing responses to a Harris poll on Nixon’s handling of relations with China. While the percentage of positive ratings steadily increased from July to September 1971, it took a dip by nine percentage points in November, immediately following China’s admission into and Taiwan’s expulsion from UN on October 25. While such a disapproval of Nixon’s China policy was short-lived, it showed considerable opposition to the implied American recognition of the People’s Republic of China as the only legitimate Chinese government. As Chart 2 shows, as late as May 1972, Americans viewed Taiwan far more positively than they did the mainland, with 53% polled rating Taiwan positively.

[Chart 3: American Rating of Nixon’s China Policy from July 1971 to August 1972]
Given the two *Human Events* articles alleging Communist espionage in Chinatowns, it is not surprising that some Chinese Americans felt compelled to restate their allegiance to the United States as the rapprochement drew media attention to their state as a minority group. In April 1971, *The Washington Post* interviewed D.C. Chinatown residents for their reaction to Nixon’s relaxation of travel and trade restrictions with China. While some considered a trip to China interesting, all interviewees downplayed their Chinese identity by emphasizing either their lost connections with relatives in China or indifference towards China as a travel destination. After all, the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 severely restricted new Chinese immigration to the United States in the 20th century and discriminatory immigration quotas based on national origins were only abolished not so long ago by the Hart-Celler Act of 1965. In December 1971, *Chicago Tribune* also published a piece on Chinese-Americans identity, especially the coexistence of

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some social acceptance of them and subtle prejudices against them. According to the article, “many, if not most, Chinese here seem indifferent about the conflict between Mao Tse-tung and Chiang Kai-shek.”\textsuperscript{150} Busy with their quest for equality in the American society, they chose not to express, at least publicly, strong opinions on their distant ancestors’ land.

In contrast, another minority group, African Americans, found the rapprochement relevant enough to make their criticisms of the Nixon administration’s policy priorities known. In the 1960s, many Civil Rights leaders identified with the Chinese Communist Revolution as China supported African liberation and funded African infrastructures,\textsuperscript{151} but there were more grounds for the African-American-Chinese solidarity. Not only did Vernon Jordan, executive director of the National Urban League, find black Americans as “ignored and unrecognized” by the U.S. government as the Chinese government, but Nixon also analogized “Red China” to “the more explosive ghetto elements in our own country” for their shared outlawed aggression in his 1967 \textit{Foreign Affairs} article.\textsuperscript{152} Therefore, the Sino-U.S. rapprochement, or rather the rapprochement between the Chinese and American governments, compelled African Americans to reconsider their views of the Nixon administration and of China. According to Robeson Taj Frazier, contemporary black newspapers criticized Nixon for prioritizing the rapprochement over the Vietnam War and the welfare of domestic black Americans. In response to Nixon’s racial analogy, a city clerk was quoted challenging, “why the hell doesn’t he visit Watts, Harlem, and the South Side, instead of going all the way to China?”

\textsuperscript{150} Merv Block, “Chinese-American, or America-Chinese?” \textit{Chicago Tribune} (Chicago, IL), December 15, 1971.
\textsuperscript{152} Ibid., 194, 199.
African Americans were less unanimous in their evaluation of the rapprochement policy and the People’s Republic of China. Some lamented a sell-out by Chinese leaders or even questioned China’s claim of racial solidarity with people of African descent, but more interpreted the rapprochement as “a useful example of international resistance against U.S. hegemony.” Chuck Hopkins, writing for a North Carolina-based black-nationalist collective, offered a more nuanced assessment. He saw the rapprochement as “another step in China’s long march to become the most powerful rear-base to the world’s racist [sic] and anti-imperialist forces” without denying that relations with the U.S. government might undermine China’s support for national liberation movements abroad. The rapprochement did not result in widespread black disillusionment with China but it did raise new questions about China’s revolutionary identity among African Americans who viewed the U.S. government more as their oppressor than as their advocate.

Polarized Chinese Response Contained by Official Guidance

If most Americans enthusiastically embraced or at least cautiously welcomed the rapprochement after undergoing a paradigm shift about China, Chinese urbanites exhibited more polarized attitudes towards the event while China’s negative official image of the U.S. government remained unchanged. Prior to the limited circulation of the excerpt of Mao’s meeting with Snow in June 1971, the Chinese public’s principal reference for the government’s U.S. policy was Mao’s May Twentieth statement made on May 20, 1970 and publicized through a People’s Daily article titled “People around the world unite, defeat American invaders and all its running dogs.” In response to the Cambodian coup of 1970, U.S. invasion of Cambodia and

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153. Ibid., 199-200.  
154. Ibid., 201.
resumed U.S. bombing of North Vietnam, Mao asserted that “a new climax in the struggle against American imperialism is currently forming in the world” and that “Nixon’s fascist atrocities have ignited the flaming fire of America’s revolutionary mass movement.” Mao reiterated his famous claim that American imperialism was a “paper tiger” that looked threatening but could not withstand challenges. Whereas Mao cited in generic terms facts such as the killing of Indochinese people by the U.S. military, the killing of white and black domestic protestors by the American police, and anti-imperialist revolutions in Afro-Asian countries, he predicted the victory of people’s revolutions over American imperialism despite inequality in national sizes as “a rule of history,” invoking a Marxist theory.  

However, in a private conversation with Snow on December 18, 1970, Mao said nothing about people’s revolutions or American imperialism but instead spoke positively of Nixon, whom he had designated a “fascist” just seven months earlier. Mao told Snow that he preferred Nixon in power because Nixon was less deceptive and welcomed Nixon’s visit to China because only he, and not centrists or leftists, could solve problems. Through the non-official channel of Snow, Mao paved the way for Nixon’s visit by signaling to Americans that “if Nixon is willing to come, I am willing to talk to him.” At the same time, through the unprecedented dissemination of this meeting’s summary minutes to grassroots party cadres months later, Mao prepared the Chinese public for a drastic change in China’s relationship with the United States.


156. Ibid., 592-594.
Analyzing *People’s Daily* and *Reference News* articles, Guolin Yi also reaches the conclusion that the Chinese government prepared its people for the rapprochement through the propaganda machine. By inviting non-official Americans such as Edgar Snow and the U.S. ping-pong team, the Chinese government attempted to make a distinction between the “good” American people and the “bad” American government and to create an impression that Nixon’s visit showed America’s need for China and not the other way around. However, Yi does not study the Chinese public’s responses to these articles. David Shambaugh offers the missing perspective by examining changing Chinese perceptions of the United States from the rapprochement in 1972 to the immediate aftermath of Tiananmen protests in 1989. By focusing on China’s America Watchers whose full-time occupation was to study and interpret American domestic or diplomatic events for both the leaders and the public, Shambaugh identifies two models that characterized the America Watchers’ analysis – Marxist and non-Marxist, with the Marxist model focused on class structure dominating American Watchers’ writings in 1972. However, the interpretations of America Watchers should not be equated with the sentiments of the masses at the receptive end of information. A number of local government and Party documents from Shanghai offer a rare glimpse into grassroots Chinese responses to the rapprochement.

Party cadres in Shanghai, who had heretofore been exhorted to fight American imperialism, responded to Mao’s consent to and even welcome of Nixon’s visit with considerable ideological dissonance. Some came up with their own interpretations of Mao’s motives that fit a revolutionary framework. Studying ‘Summary of Chairman Mao’s Meeting

with American Friend Snow,” the handicraft industry cadres in Shanghai reportedly came to the consensus that Mao “liked” Nixon because “Nixon’s reactionary [acts] can incite the world’s revolutionary people to struggle and soon overthrow reactionary rule” just as Mao had once called the Nationalist Party leader Chiang Kai-shek “our ‘transportation captain.’” They also praised Mao’s consent to Nixon’s visit as a foreign policy on the offensive by creating a dilemma for Nixon – if Nixon did not come, his “deception of the American people for the purpose of gaining votes” would be exposed; if he came, the conflict within the American ruling group would deepen. Some cadres worried about how to ideologically justify Mao’s new policy to “Soviet revisionists” as they used to attack the Soviets for “Soviet-American collusion.” After discussion, the handicraft industry cadres reportedly characterized the rapprochement as 1) principled negotiation with the United States based on the two premises of U.S. recognition of Taiwan as Chinese territory and U.S. troop withdrawal from Taiwan and, surprisingly, as 2) “friendly contacts with the American people to promote the American people’s revolutionary struggles, to establish more extensive international anti-American united front and to support world revolutions.”159 These remarks adhered closely to political and ideological correctness without regard for facts or even Mao’s own words to Snow that only Nixon could solve problems.

Party cadres in Shanghai also found it difficult to reconcile Beijing’s new policy towards the United States with a tacit ban on informal fraternization with foreigners. A few cadres in the handicraft industry management bureau pressed for guidance as to even the most casual contacts with Americans, such as receiving candies from them and taking photos with them, for fear of

159. “Chinese Communist Party Shanghai Handicraft Industry Management Bureau Committee Studying ‘Summary of Chairman Mao’s Meeting with American Friend Snow.’”
being accused of “having illicit relations with foreign countries.”  

In fact, some locals proved too eager to share with Americans unflattering aspects of their lives under Communist rule. When a visiting CBS filming team asked the Chinese municipal government in October 1973 for permission to interview four sisters who approached them, cadres at Shanghai People’s Radio Station rejected the request, noting that the four sisters had “very complicated social relations,” “political problems, backward thought and bad housing conditions.” It was also reported that David Liu, the filming team’s production manager, had relatives in Shanghai who asked him to purchase goods in short supply.  

The local cadres’ behind-the-scene attempts at containing local overenthusiasm about American visitors call into question the authenticity of their reported views on the Sino-U.S. rapprochement. Were they obstinate true believers in Mao’s “eternal correctness” and in China’s disinterested championship of people’s revolutions? Or did the revolutionary committees sanitize their actual remarks in the above-mentioned reports for higher authorities?  

Typed draft reports reveal a surprising diversity in the views of local cadres. Studying Mao’s statement that “Nixon is the world’s number one good person!” cadres at Shanghai Machine Tool Plant called Nixon “a good teacher by his negative example,” just as the handicraft workers did. However, those at Wujing Chemical Plant invoked Mao’s own explanation to Snow that “Nixon is less deceptive among the world’s contemporary teachers by his negative examples,” taking it as meaning that Nixon did not disguise his reactionary nature as an outspoken anti-Communist. Furthermore, while a few cadres reportedly could not understand

160. Ibid.  
Mao’s statement given that “Nixon is head of the world’s people’s number one enemy,” i.e. head of the United States, “individual comrades understood from the [position of political] right that [one should call Nixon a ‘good person’] because ‘among American Presidents, Nixon has not sent troops to our country.’” In this context, “the right” carried negative connotation as politically moderate. Praising the “reactionary” Nixon on any grounds thus casted these cadres to the right. The divergent views of grassroots Party members regarding Nixon’s “redemptive qualities” shone through the typed characters.

However, the typed report underwent hand-written edits that reflect the official Party line. Tellingly, the draft report’s unnamed editor changed the remarks of cadres at Wujing Chemical Plant about Nixon being less deceptive by his negative example to “Nixon is the number one reactionary figure in the contemporary imperialist camp” and crossed out the “rightist” interpretation of the U.S. president. The editor also dismissed the notion that the Sino-U.S. rapprochement signaled a fundamental shift in China’s foreign policy. While the draft showed some cadres asking “has the primary international conflict now changed to coping with Soviet revisionism?” the editor excised that question and instead added a criticism against the tendency of “equating our country’s certain diplomatic measures with strategy.”

The editor of an internal report on Shanghai Camping Training Command’s response to the news of Nixon’s visit to China did not even allow for any sign of surprise and confusion. The edited version replaced all remarks suggesting such reactions with a statement expressing the Command’s unanimous resolve to train for wars, declaring “only those who dare to fight dare to make peace, making

peace calls for preparing for wars.” Conceivably, these editorial interventions using stock revolutionary vocabulary were just another instance of risk hedging by local officials to survive the volatile political environment of the early 1970s. The editorial process, however, also suggested stronger grassroots acceptance of the Sino-U.S. rapprochement from the “rightists” and correspondingly stronger resistance by the “leftists” than represented in official records.

Besides *ex post facto* editing, local officials also attempted to foster a politically correct public understanding of the Sino-U.S. rapprochement. On January 7, 1972, a month before Nixon’s arrival in China, the Shanghai Finance and Trade May Seventh Cadre School, essentially a labor camp to “reeducate” cadres deemed as politically backward, organized a meeting to study the summary minutes of Mao’s meeting with Snow along with Mao’s May Twentieth Statement and Mao’s 1956 article, “On Chongqing Negotiations.” Through the bundling of these disparate documents, meeting organizers ensured that the cadres would view Nixon negatively without losing sight of an analogy between Mao’s upcoming talk with Nixon and his earlier negotiations with an equally evil character, Chiang Kai-shek, for the noble goal of preventing the Civil War. Indeed, the cadres came to the satisfying conclusion that Nixon was just as reactionary, deceptive and worthy of their condemnation as Chiang. At the same time, the cadres noted that Nixon was more desperate than Chiang, which worked to China’s advantage in its more complicated and open struggle with Nixon. Some cadres sensed inconsistency in such an argument, asking why China could not wait until American imperialism was strangled by its

164. “Chinese Communist Party Shanghai Finance and Trade May Seventh Cadre School Committee City Cadre Meeting Discussion Report,” January 9, 1972, A98-2-703, Shanghai Municipal Archives, Shanghai, China.
own ropes. Their remarks nevertheless conformed to the May Twentieth Statement included in the study materials and lost their edge as a fundamental criticism of the official line.

Officials in charge of receiving Haig and Mrs. Nixon at the Children’s Palace in Shanghai, a government-funded recreation center for children, also organized Little Red Guards who were primary and middle school children at the center to study the reception principle of “Be Neither Obsequious Nor Arrogant, Treat with Civility” laid down by the Party central. Their report proclaimed with self-congratulation that some Little Red Guards initially wanted to greet Nixon by shooting rubber bows at him, but decided to receive the U.S. president politely after learning that Chairman Mao consented to his visit. Furthermore, when Haig’s advance party visited, Little Red Guards reportedly did not clap to welcome him or stare at his party. Instead, they said “Chinese children have ambition. Why stare at him?” which implies that paying excessive attention to foreign dignitaries, especially from a western non-Communist country, gave away a lack of self-confidence. Common to both cases was the notion of China’s magnanimity to its enemies. Overall, local officials in Shanghai tried to reinterpret the Party directives in such a way as to maintain rather than change the public’s existing perception of the United States. In the eyes of the Shanghainese, Nixon remained a convicted “fascist” and “reactionary” even though his new status as Mao’s guest entitled him to polite treatment.

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One might conclude that neither Nixon’s visit to China nor the grassroots interaction with Americans changed the Chinese’ negative attitudes towards the U.S. government. As the

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Shanghainese’ experience has suggested, however, the Chinese were directly confronted with the leadership’s ideological inconsistency in preaching people’s revolutions around the world while receiving as their honored guest the head of a government that was said to suppress these revolutions both in Indochina (the Vietnam War) and at home (the Student Movement). In receiving non-official Americans, they also had to navigate a three-way fault line between the Marxist idea of class solidarity, the ambiguous reception principle of “Be Neither Obsequious Nor Arrogant, Treat with Civility” and genuine curiosity about the Americans. Therefore, on a deeper level, the rapprochement resulted in as much of a paradigm shift for the Chinese public from a binary Cold War mindset to a more pragmatist and nuanced view towards foreign affairs as it did for the American public. Therefore, the top-down strategy of exchange programs to generate public support for a controversial diplomatic gamble ended up creating impetus for the normalization of relations between the two former Cold War enemies in the years to come.
Conclusion

The rapprochement built the foundation for the establishment of formal diplomatic relationship between the United States and the People’s Republic of China in 1979 but the burgeoning bilateral relationship was not accompanied by ever increasing goodwill between the two peoples. Reflecting on American attitudes towards China in 1982, Harry Harding concluded that if the early 1970s witnessed a euphoric celebration of Chinese progress under Communist rule, the early 1980s was marked by disappointment and disillusionment. What appeared to be an egalitarian society providing an adequate standard of living for all its people turned out to have serious income and status disparity. What appeared to be a participatory society with popular control over the bureaucracy turned out to have non-monetary privileges and an inflexible bureaucracy. What appeared to be a virtuous people dedicated to service and sacrifice turned out to be apathetic and cynical about their work. There was no more discussion of Mao’s Cultural Revolution as a pursuit of egalitarian, populist and communitarian ideals or of the “Chinese model” for socioeconomic development for developing countries, let alone the United States.166

However, the China of the early 1980s was not so different from, if not more developed than, 10 years earlier. Harding attributed such a drastic reappraisal to changes in America’s domestic political and intellectual climate, foreign policy landscape and tourism to China. In the early 1970s, Americans who rejected the principles of capitalism, competition, individualism and material progress underlying the American socio-political order were drawn to a society built upon opposite principles. Others were either wary of intellectual imperialism in judging China by Western liberal values or susceptible to a “who-are-we-to-lecture-others” attitude, both

indicative of the eroding confidence in America’s own moral credentials during the Vietnam War. As Americans regained their faith in the universality of liberal values in the early 1980s, they began to criticize China’s illiberal regime and lack of human rights. Such a psychological change was reinforced by America’s more favorable position in the Cold War and also fed with more first-hand experience of China through longer and freer trips to the once-closed country.\footnote{167} Just as Americans’ China Craze during the honeymoon phase of the Sino-American rapprochement overcompensated for negative stereotypes of the past, their assertion ten years later that Communism failed China lacked historical perspectives and once again reimposed their own value system on a foreign society without qualification. At the same time, the domestic context of social protests and reforms certainly colored the public’s value judgment towards their own country and, by comparison, foreign countries.

Turning to Chinese attitudes towards America, John Pomfret claims that Chairman Deng Xiaoping’s 1979 visit to the United States covered by China’s state media had a domestic impact comparable to Nixon’s 1972 trip to China. Chinese diplomats and reporters described the American society in the \textit{People’s Daily} with glowing terms, marveling at its wealth, quick pulse of life, optimism and pragmatism. American culture was also in fashion. The Chinese youth took English lessons, watched \textit{Garrison’s Gorillas} and read \textit{Gone with the Wind} with such enthusiasm that Deng attacked all of this as part of “spiritual pollution” from the West at the second plenary session of the Twelfth Party Congress in October 1983. The anti-spiritual pollution campaign was also short-lived, ended by Premier Zhao Ziyang’s 1984 trip to the United States. The \textit{People’s Daily} even defended the American lifestyle against accusations of moral degradation, declaring “What is this so-called capitalist lifestyle anyway? A materially abundant life is not

\footnote{167. Ibid., 257-260.}
necessarily corrupt.” The tension between the Chinese government’s fear of losing the public’s faith in its socialist system and the Chinese people’s fascination with American values and culture during the rapprochement resurfaced during this America Craze. The shift in the popular discourse of the United States in China from an imperialist enemy to a country respected for its material wealth and individualism was no less dramatic than that which had occurred to the Americans ten years earlier. It also went hand in hand with China’s domestic economic reform since 1978 that decollectivized agriculture, opened the country to foreign investment and permitted the growth of a private sector under Deng’s leadership.

Despite the cycles of demonization, idealization and disillusionment, mutual understanding had deepened since the Sino-U.S. rapprochement in the early 1970s. When leaders on both sides first entertained the possibility of re-establishing bilateral relations, they were confronted by the other society’s radically different ideological principles, political dynamics and media system. American diplomats’ limited access to information on Chinese politics and Chinese leaders’ egotistical biases in interpreting American politics prevented both sides from fully leveraging domestic politics to their diplomatic advantage. Nevertheless, Nixon and Kissinger ingeniously cited domestic difficulties to bargain for Chinese concessions while Zhou and Qiao cleverly presented themselves as Nixon’s political allies despite advances made by his political opponents. The public in both countries also found it difficult to reconcile with the rapprochement’s break from Cold War enmity of the past. The Americans simply replaced one set of negative stereotypes of the Chinese society with another set of positive ones – the miraculous acupuncture anesthesia, the noble quest for social equality and the revived protestant

work ethic, to name a few. Likewise, the Chinese insisted on a line dividing the “irredeemable” American government as a focus of their struggle, albeit by peaceful means, from the “oppressed” American people to befriend in international solidarity. Over time, however, more Americans began to see a multi-faceted Chinese society through TV images and tourism and more Chinese ultimately recognized and embraced the merits of America’s market economy.

The Sino-U.S. rapprochement also presented a valuable case study for interactions between domestic politics and international relations. Not only did negotiators’ grasp of domestic politics either in their own or in the other country strengthen their hands in top-level negotiations, but politicians and intellectuals also debated the foreign policy of rapprochement with their domestic agendas and political standing in mind. For American conservatives, the restored relationship with China had a danger of legitimizing liberal social politics and even symbolized another victory of the domestic liberal elite. At the same time, they also discovered in China the social order that appeared missing in America, not to mention that their favorable presidential candidate, Nixon, reaped considerable transaction benefits from initiating the widely popular rapprochement policy. For Chinese radicals, the rapprochement represented both an ideological and a political defeat to moderates who held a more pragmatist view towards foreign policy, but Jiang Qing also took advantage of visiting American author Roxanne Witke to publicize her side of the story to the Western audience. Furthermore, Mao intended the rapprochement to reinvigorate, rather than undermine, the Cultural Revolution. Opportunity, again, accompanied danger even for the rapprochement’s opponents.

The American media spotlight has now turned to China’s potential rivalry with the United States. In April 2018, President Donald Trump announced his intention to impose a 25 percent tariff on Chinese imports. In response to a separate White House plan to tax Chinese
steel and aluminum imports, the Chinese government also unveiled retaliatory measures on American imports. Curiously, The New York Times quoted Paola Masman, a supporter of Trump’s trade agenda, making a familiar historical analogy, “The age of appeasement must end.” It seems that the image of China as an outlawed aggressor, this time with regards to international trade rules, was back in vogue and that the fear of war, this time of a trade war, again reverberated in the American media. It is a fitting time to revisit the initial years of this bilateral relationship, to evaluate the domestic drivers of a major foreign policy change and to explore its impacts on domestic politics and public sentiments.

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