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Toward Strategic Alignment:
Sino-American Relations from Rapprochement to Normalization

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Report

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Richard Nixon's trip to China in February 1972 marked a diplomatic breakthrough for Sino-American relations after two decades of mutual animosity since the Korean War. Nevertheless, the bilateral relations underwent a long stalemate in the mid-1970s, before the United States and China finally reached normalization of relations in December 1978. The scholarship on Sino-American relations in the 1970s tends to focus on Nixon's visit or normalization of relations, without paying adequate attention to how Washington and Beijing dealt with the mid-decade deadlock. My report addresses this gap in the literature by analyzing the changing dynamism of Sino-American relations, determined first by Henry Kissinger and Mao Zedong, and later by Zbigniew Brzezinski and Deng Xiaoping. Kissinger sought to establish a triangular relationship with the Soviet Union and China, where the United States could manipulate the Sino-Soviet antagonism to improve its relations with both communist giants. With the failure of his initial idea of

creating an anti-Soviet united front with Washington, Mao, through his Three World theory, championed the Third World struggle against both superpowers in competition for global hegemony in the guise of détente. With Kissinger clinging to superpower détente and Mao determined to maintain a revolutionary China, their strategies were doomed to a stalemate. Unlike Kissinger, Brzezinski tried to create a bilateral structure, where the United States cooperated with China to confront the Soviet Union, which expanded its influence globally despite ongoing détente. Unlike Mao, Deng sought to replace revolution with development as China's national agenda, by emphasizing modernization, instead of the Three World theory, in Chinese foreign policy. Their global strategies necessitated mutual cooperation, creating momentum for normalization negotiations, especially after Brzezinski's trip to China in May 1978. The shifting dynamism in Sino-American relations from the Kissinger-Mao years to Brzezinski-Deng years, therefore, precipitated normalization of relations in the late 1970s.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Richard Nixon's visit to China in February 1972 was "a week that changed the world."¹ With his national security adviser Henry Kissinger, he met Chairman Mao Zedong, negotiated with Premier Zhou Enlai, and concluded his trip with the Shanghai Communiqué, which symbolized Sino-American rapprochement after two decades of mutual animosity.² Its statement that the United States and China opposed any attempt to seek hegemony in Asia, an implicit yet obvious warning against the Soviet Union, reshaped the Cold War paradigm by obscuring the ideological division line in international politics. The sensational public relations success of Nixon's trip, however, left many critical issues unsolved, including the Taiwan problem, which resulted in a long stalemate in Sino-American relations in the following years. Notwithstanding the establishment of the Liaison Offices in Washington and Beijing in 1973 as a prelude for embassies,³ not until December 1978 did the United States and China manage to normalize relations, although they publicly and privately articulated a shared desire for normalization. Far from approaching normalization, they could barely sustain the status quo in the bilateral relationship when Gerald Ford visited China in December 1975. In

¹ Richard Nixon, *RN: The Memoirs of Richard Nixon* (New York: Simon & Schuster Inc., 1978), 580.

² For the text of the Shanghai Communiqué, see *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Richard Nixon, 1972* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1972), 376–379.

³ Although it served as a backchannel channel to avoid interference from the State Department, Nixon emphasized that the USLO was "purely symbolic" and its importance was its "existence" because Kissinger, not director David Bruce, was to handle "important and sensitive issues" with China. Nelson D. Lankford, *The Last American Aristocrat: The Biography of Ambassador David K. E. Bruce* (Little, Brown and Company: Boston, 1996), Chapter 22. Nancy Tucker, *China Confidential: American Diplomats and Sino-American Relations* (Columbia University Press: New York, 2001), 293. *Foreign Relations of the United States* (hereafter *FRUS*), 1969-1976, Vol. XVIII, Document 30.

contrast to the much celebrated Shanghai Communiqué, press secretary Ron Nessen described Ford's trip as "more a matter of atmosphere than of substance,"⁴ a testament of U.S. and Chinese inability to reach agreements not only on Taiwan but also on broad strategic topics. Washington and Beijing could finally embark on the normalization negotiations when new momentum emerged under the new leaderships in both countries.

Although political scientists and journalists have produced extensive narratives on Sino-American relations in the 1970s,⁵ historians are now beginning to utilize newly available sources to explore the long process from rapprochement to normalization. The 2009 volume of *Diplomatic History*, for example, hosted a special forum entitled "Transforming the Cold War: The United States and China, 1969-1980," where three scholars discussed various aspects of normalization. Enrico Fardella focused on China's security concern over Vietnam and Deng's political struggle to explain China's compromises on the Taiwan issue. Breck Walker reevaluated Cyrus Vance's often-

⁴ *New York Times*, December 4, 1975.

⁵ Robert Ross used the negotiation theories to illuminate how the changing perceptions of relative balance of power between the United States and China affected the normalization process. Rosemary Foot adopted the constructivist theories in investigating the impact of a new U.S. view of China as neither menacing nor powerful in the 1960s on the various aspects of Sino-American relations in the following decade. James Mann utilized archival sources, secondary materials, and oral interviews to show how Sino-American relations evolved on a series of misunderstandings and misperceptions since rapprochement. Patrick Tyler wrote a more detailed, albeit less analytical, narrative of the bilateral relationship during the same time period as Mann's account through thorough archival research. Combined together, these works, though published more than fifteen years ago, offer overviews of Sino-American relations in the 1970s with considerable theoretical depth and factual accuracy. See Robert Ross, *Negotiating Cooperation: The United States and China, 1969-1989* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), Rosemary Foot, *Practice of Power: U.S. Relations with China since 1949* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), James Mann, *About Face: A History of America's Curious Relationship with China from Nixon to Clinton* (New York: Random House, 1998), and Patrick Tyler, *A Great Wall: Six Presidents and China* (New York: Public Affairs, 1999).

overlooked strategy for normalization with China. Brian Hilton illuminated the role of Jimmy Carter's vision for global stability in his decision to normalize relations with Beijing and sever relations with Taipei.⁶ Their works made groundbreaking contributions to the scholarship on Sino-American relations in the 1970s, which tended to concentrate on Nixon's trip and left its aftermath understudied.⁷ However, no scholar has analyzed the decade as a whole to elucidate the shifting dynamisms in the Sino-American relations from the deadlock in the mid-1970s to the breakthrough in the late 1970s. This paper intends to fill this gap in the literature by conducting a comprehensive examination of how Washington and Beijing successfully overcame the deadlock and normalized relations.

This paper examines currently available U.S. and Chinese materials. For U.S. sources, it utilizes the recently published volumes of *the Foreign Relations of the United*

⁶ Enrico Fardella, "The Sino-American Normalization: A Reassessment," *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 33, No. 4 (September 2009), 545-578. Breck Walker, "'Friends, But Not Allies'—Cyrus Vance and the Normalization of Relations with China," *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 33, No. 4 (September 2009), 579-594. Brian Hilton, "'Maximum Flexibility for Peaceful Change': Jimmy Carter, Taiwan, and the Recognition of the People's Republic of China," *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 33, No. 4 (September 2009), 595-613.

⁷ Recent works on Nixon's visit to China include: Gong Li, "Chinese Decision Making and the Thawing of U.S.-China Relations" and Michael Schaller, "Détente and the Strategic Triangle: Or 'Drinking Your Mao Tai and Having Your Vodka, Too'" in Robert Ross and Jiang Changbin, eds., *Re-examining the Cold War: U.S.-China Diplomacy, 1954-1973* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001). Chen Jian, *Mao's China and the Cold War* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001), Chapter 9. Evelyn Goh, *Constructing the U.S. Rapprochement with China, 1961-1974: From "Red Menace" to "Tacit Ally"* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), Chapter 5-9. Margaret MacMillan, *Nixon and Mao* (New York: Random House, 2007) Yukinori Komine, *Secrecy in US Foreign Policy: Nixon, Kissinger and the Rapprochement with China* (Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate Publisher, 2008) Yafeng Xia, *Negotiating with the Enemy: U.S.-China Talks during the Cold War, 1949-1972* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), Chapter 6-8. Chris Tudda, *A Cold War Turning Point: Nixon and China, 1969-1972* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 2012).

States as well as memoirs and oral history records, which enable detailed analysis of the decision-making processes during the Nixon, Ford, and Carter Administrations. Unlike a large part of the historiography, it also examines Chinese sources, most notably compiled manuscripts of Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping. In addition, it benefits from recently published memoirs and biographies of Chinese diplomats, such as Foreign Minister Huang Hua and chief of Chinese Liaison Office Zhai Zemin, who were involved in normalization negotiations. Furthermore, it consults secondary narratives written by Chinese historians with access to a wide range of underused documents, while paying attention to their bias toward the official historical interpretations. By examining these multi-language sources, this paper aims to illuminate concurrences and discrepancies between American and Chinese strategic visions, instead of the minute details of negotiations.

This paper particularly focuses on the impact of the changes of policy architects—from Henry Kissinger to Zbigniew Brzezinski in the United States and from Mao Zedong to Deng Xiaoping in China—on the dynamism of Sino-American relations. On one hand, Kissinger’s strategy aimed at exploiting Beijing’s insecurity vis-à-vis Moscow to draw it closer to Washington, which would in turn force Moscow to compromise on arms control negotiations. On the other hand, despite his pragmatism in diplomacy, Mao redefined China’s revolutionary identity through the Three Worlds theory, which championed the developing world against the superpowers. Kissinger’s and Mao’s strategies, therefore, left little, if any, room for normalization. Their successors, however, changed this

paradigm. Determined to counter Soviet activities in the Third World, Brzezinski sought to construct a de facto alliance with Beijing against Moscow, instead of racing them toward Washington in the triangular relationship. Using cooperation with the United States as leverage to transcend the Maoist legacy of his heir, Hua Guofeng, and set modernization as China's new agenda, Deng reoriented its diplomacy from revolution to development. The leadership change in the United States and China, therefore, provided both countries with a shared strategic priority in normalization for the first time since they embarked on building a new relationship with Nixon's 1972 trip.

Chapter 2: Kissinger's Triangular Strategy

Nixon and Kissinger saw China as one of their foreign policy priorities from the beginning of their administration. The president ordered a NSC study “exploring possibilities of rapprochement [*sic*] with the Chinese” soon after inauguration based on his philosophical conviction after extensive foreign trips from 1962 to 1967 that the United States “simply cannot afford to leave China forever outside the family of nations.”⁸ Washington should persuade Beijing that “it *must* change” because there was “no place on this small planet for a billion of its potentially most able people to live in angry isolation.”⁹ Kissinger soon supported Nixon’s idea of engaging with China, though from a more strategic standpoint. Frustrated by the superpower oligopoly of international politics, which enhanced the danger of a nuclear showdown, the national security adviser envisioned the triangular relationship between Washington, Moscow, and Beijing to facilitate a “rebalancing of the global equilibrium” by providing “flexibility for innovative diplomacy and consensus-building, rather than the enforced dominance of two bullies.” As the relative decline of U.S. power due to the Vietnam War and the relative rise of Soviet power due to its nuclear buildup compelled Washington to negotiate “balance of power” with Moscow, he intended the China opening to improve U.S. diplomatic leverage in superpower negotiations on global issues, especially arms control. Kissinger thus thought of Sino-American rapprochement as a diplomatic tool to make the

⁸ *Foreign Relations of the United States* (hereafter *FRUS*), 1969-1976, Volume XVII, 1969-1972, Document 3.

⁹ Richard Nixon, “Asia After Vietnam,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 46, No. 1 (October 1967), 111-25. Emphasis in original.

Soviet Union “more malleable” and help the United States “overcome the trauma of Vietnam.”¹⁰

Kissinger’s triangular diplomacy was predicated upon Beijing’s insecurity vis-à-vis Moscow. With the United States withdrawing from Vietnam and the Soviet Union intimidating China with its nuclear forces, Moscow superseded Washington as Beijing’s primary enemy. Kissinger extrapolated that when China feared the Soviet Union than the United States, its “self-interest” would “impel it to cooperate with the United States.”¹¹ As early as mid-1969, he concluded that Beijing would ultimately moderate its antagonistic attitude, “seeking improved relations with the U.S. and/or Japan, in part as a counter-balance to Soviet pressures.”¹² Despite contradicting remarks of Chinese officials, Kissinger’s conviction of China’s fear of the Soviet Union deepened as the bilateral negotiations proceeded in secrecy. Kissinger reported to Nixon on his return from China in October 1971 that although the Chinese tried to “downgrade the Russian factor,” “their dislike and concern” was “obvious.”¹³ As Nixon’s trip approached, he even surmised that Beijing would drop its ideological claims, especially on Taiwan, out of its fear of Moscow. Kissinger emphasized to Nixon on the eve of his departure that the Chinese would be “firm on principle but willing to be flexible on details” about Taiwan because they needed the United States “because of a threatening Soviet Union.”¹⁴ Despite his

¹⁰ Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, 730.

¹¹ Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, 729.

¹² *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. XVII, Document 23.

¹³ National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book (hereafter NSAEBB) No. 70, Document 20.

¹⁴ NSAEBB No. 70, Document 27.

failure to soften the language in the Shanghai Communiqué, which largely recognized Chinese claims on Taiwan, Kissinger maintained that Zhou “left no doubt that he feared Soviet expansionism above all.”¹⁵

As a corollary to his conviction of China’s need of U.S. security guarantee, Kissinger underestimated China’s sensitivity to the Taiwan problem from the onset of bilateral negotiations. Despite Zhou’s depiction of “the U.S. occupation of Taiwan” as “only one outstanding issue between us” in early 1971, he underplayed it as “a standard formula,” as China was “interested above all in the Soviet challenge.” He anticipated that the Chinese would not insist on U.S. withdrawal from Asia because they “desperately wanted us in Asia as a counterweight to the Soviet Union.”¹⁶ Although Zhou reemphasized in May that “the first question to be settled” was “the question of the concrete way of the withdrawal of all the U.S. Armed Forces from Taiwan and Taiwan Straits area,” Kissinger took the omission of the defense treaty as an indication that China would allow the United States to sustain diplomatic relations with Taiwan.¹⁷ His optimism, however, proved to be groundless in initial negotiations with Zhou, who demanded Kissinger to “recognize the PRC as the sole legitimate government of China and not make any exceptions” in a joint communiqué.¹⁸ Kissinger’s emphasis on Soviet threat failed to alleviate Zhou’s stubbornness on the status of Taiwan, although he could settle with an ambiguous phrase “All Chinese on either side of the Taiwan Strait maintain

¹⁵ Kissinger, *White House Years*, 1073.

¹⁶ NSAEBB No. 66, Document 9. Kissinger, *White House Years*, 701, 702, 705.

¹⁷ NSAEBB No. 66, Document 26. Kissinger, *White House Years*, 727.

¹⁸ NSAEBB No. 66, Document 34.

there is but one China and that Taiwan is a part of China.” To be accurate, Kissinger understood from his first contact with the Chinese that he could do “little more than damage limitation by reaffirming our diplomatic relations and mutual defense treaty” in the face of Chinese intransigency.¹⁹ Nonetheless, he dismissed the Taiwan language in the communiqué as rhetorical and concluded that the “overwhelming impression” of Zhou and Mao was that “continuing differences over Taiwan were secondary to our primary mutual concern over the international equilibrium.”²⁰ Kissinger’s optimism on the Taiwan problem reached its height in January 1973, when the Paris Peace Treaty finally ended the Vietnam War, thereby removing the geopolitical bottleneck to normalization. An elated Kissinger told Nixon that although Sino-American normalization would eventually necessitate a nullification of the defense treaty, China regarded Taiwan as “subsidiary” compared to its imminent desire for “protection against Russia.”²¹

Based on these assumptions, Kissinger started to race Moscow and Beijing for a closer tie with Washington after the announcement of Nixon’s trip in July 1971. While promoting détente with the Soviet Union, he sought to take advantage of China’s perceived insecurity in order to persuade it to improve its relationship with the United

¹⁹ NSAEBB No. 66, Document 40.

²⁰ Kissinger, *White House Years*, 1074. Though stipulating the future U.S. withdrawal from Taiwan, the Shanghai Communiqué meant no more than a “beginning of a long process” that he would not have to solve immediately. William Burr, ed., *The Kissinger Transcripts: The Top Secret Talks With Beijing and Moscow* (New York: The New Press, 1988), 40-43, “Memorandum of Conversation, Top Secret,” December 13, 1971.

²¹ *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. XXVIII, Document 5.

States. On one hand, he shared details of U.S.-Soviet arms control negotiations with the Chinese in the hope of alleviating their animosity toward U.S.-Soviet cooperation. On the other hand, he attempted to deepen their concern that Washington “might find Peking expendable” after achieving “our objective with Moscow,” namely the SLAT Agreement.²² Having secured the summit in Moscow, Kissinger warned Zhou in October 1971 that a U.S. “settlement with the Soviet Union” would have “the objective consequences of increasing your problem” because it would “free itself in Europe so it can concentrate on other areas,” namely China.²³ In January 1972, in the wake of the Indian-Pakistan war, Deputy National Security Adviser Alexander Haig also suggested to Zhou that the Soviet Union sought to “encircle the PRC with unfriendly states,” trying “first to neutralize the People’s Republic and then turn on us.”²⁴ Moreover, Kissinger expected the Moscow summit in May 1972 to “shake them [the Chinese] up” even further.²⁵ Kissinger reiterated to Zhou in June that the “objective consequence” of the superpower summit was “to free Soviet policy for a greater role in Asia by producing relaxation in Europe,” while the United States would nonetheless “oppose Soviet adventures in Asia, and in particular pressures that might be directed against the People’s Republic.”²⁶ In February 1973, when the signing of the Prevention of Nuclear War (PNW) Agreement was approaching, Kissinger further highlighted Soviet “hegemonial

²² Kissinger, *White House Years*, 763.

²³ NSAEBB No. 66, Document 13.

²⁴ NSAEBB No. 70, Document 24.

²⁵ *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. XVII, Document 222, footnote 5.

²⁶ *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. E-13, Document 139.

[sic] aspirations” toward the “whole Asia-Pacific region” and Europe’s “peaceful illusion,” which enabled the Soviet Union to aim at “the East.”²⁷ These remarks illuminate Kissinger’s bargaining tactics to utilize Soviet malign intentions to move Beijing closer to Washington, which would in turn urge Moscow to make concessions in arms control negotiations.

These pillars of Kissinger’s triangular strategy—a conviction of Chinese fear of the Soviet Union, exploitation of it to draw China closer to the United States, and dismissal of Taiwan as a secondary issue—evolved through rapprochement negotiations and functioned well until mid-1973. Stunned by Kissinger’s secret visit to Beijing, the Soviet Union agreed on the summit date in April 1972 after long procrastination.²⁸ Likewise, distressed by Soviet assistance to India and its invasion of East Pakistan in December 1971, China refrained from postponing Nixon’s visit despite U.S. bombing of North Vietnam, contrary to its decision to cancel Kissinger’s visit in August 1973 due to mounting tension in Cambodia. Positioned at the most advantageous point of the strategic triangle, Washington, therefore, successfully urged Moscow and Beijing to compete for its favor, which resulted in the SALT Agreement and the Shanghai Communiqué. Détente with the Soviet Union and rapprochement with China developed hand in hand further into early 1973, when Washington and Beijing declared in their joint statement

²⁷ *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. XVIII, Document 5.

²⁸ A few days after Nixon’s announcement of his future trip to China, Soviet ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin even asked Kissinger if Soviet indecisiveness on the summit facilitated his secret trip. *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. XIII, Document 288.

that the time had come for “accelerating the normalization of relations.”²⁹ Kissinger even stated to Nixon that with the “Soviet threat growing, the Vietnam War over and age crowding the Chinese leadership,” the United States and China had “now become tacit allies.”³⁰ Nonetheless, contrary to Kissinger’s assertion that China was “closest to us in its global perceptions,”³¹ the Chinese chairman had different ideas.

²⁹ *New York Times*, February 23, 1973.

³⁰ *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. XVIII, Document 18.

³¹ *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. XVIII, Document 19.

Chapter 3: Mao's Revolutionary Strategy

Mao's changing policy toward the United States reflected China's domestic and foreign challenges in the late 1960s. Internally, he sought to correct the excesses of the Cultural Revolution, which jeopardized China's social order, by de-radicalizing domestic politics.³² Externally, the Sino-Soviet border clash convinced Mao of the need to put aside ideological differences and pursue a conciliatory approach toward the United States in order to cope with Soviet nuclear threat.³³ As many scholars pointed out, the domestic and international realities forced the chairman to suppress his revolutionary impetus while accentuating geopolitical realism in Chinese foreign policy.³⁴ Nonetheless, Mao, in fact, never abandoned his revolutionary ideal until his death. Far from admitting China's vulnerabilities, he described Sino-American rapprochement as the ultimate success of his long-term struggle against U.S. imperialists. In his view, the decline of U.S. hegemony, exemplified by the quagmire in Vietnam and the ejection of Taiwan from the United Nations, compelled Nixon to come to China.³⁵ Upon hearing Nixon's triumphant remark that his trip to China changed the world, Mao satirically observed, "I think the world

³² See Jian Chen, *Mao's China and the Cold War* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001), Jeremi Suri, *Henry Kissinger and the American Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007).

³³ Yang Kuisong, "The Sino-Soviet Border Clash of 1969: From Zhenbao Island to Sino-American Rapprochement," *Cold War History*, 1.1 (August 2000), 21-52.

³⁴ See, for example, Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York, 1994), chapter 28. Robert Ross, *Negotiating Cooperation: The United States and China, 1969-1989* (Stanford, CA 1995), chapter 1. John W. Garver, *Foreign Relations of the People's Republic of China* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1993), 74-81.

³⁵ Jin Chongji, *Zhou Enlai zhuan* (Beijing: Zhonggong wenxian chubanshe, 2008), 1851-52.

changed him.”³⁶ The chairman, therefore, achieved Sino-American rapprochement without fundamentally altering his worldview and tried to shape post-Cultural Revolution China on the basis of his revolutionary ideal.

Mao’s growing antagonism toward Soviet global adventurism underlay China’s foreign policy after Nixon’s visit. While dismissing détente as “impossible” because the superpowers were “compelled to go forward with arms race,”³⁷ Beijing attempted to create a global anti-Soviet alliance. In February 1973, he urged Kissinger to forge “a horizontal line,” consisting of the United States, Japan, China, Pakistan, Iran, Turkey, and Western Europe, to “commonly deal with a bastard [the Soviet Union].”³⁸ Mao, in essence, used the possibility of Sino-American alliance to persuade Kissinger to limit détente and assume the responsibility of global containment of the Soviet Union, with China defending the Asian flank. The Foreign Ministry internally justified this new strategy by insisting that an improved relationship with Washington, while upholding its principles on Taiwan, would “benefit the struggle against the Soviet revisionists.”³⁹ Citing Mao at the Tenth National Congress in late August, Zhou further advocated aligning with the United States as “necessary compromise” of “a revolutionary nation.”⁴⁰ There was, however, a caveat to the chairman’s idea of an anti-Soviet alliance with the

³⁶ Hua Huang, *Qinli yu jianwen: Huang Hua huiyilu* (Beijing: Shijie zhishi chubanshe, 2008), 167.

³⁷ *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. XVII, Document 231.

³⁸ *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. XVIII, Document 12.

³⁹ Foreign Ministry, *Waijiao Tongbao*, 12, February 24, 1973, cited in Gong Li, “Tongxiang jianjiao zhi lu de jiannan bashe—1972-1978 nian de zhongguo duimei zhengce,” *Party Literature*, No 2, 2002, 70.

⁴⁰ *People’s Daily*, September 1, 1973.

United States: it derived from his theory of “utilizing contradiction and defeating [the enemies] one by one.” In other words, it aimed at cooperating with the lesser evil to defeat the greater evil, while continuing to oppose both superpowers for their ambition for hegemony. As Yang Kuisong and Xia Yafeng pointed out, the revolutionary rhetoric that the chairman mobilized to promote the new strategy was not “empty cannons” but “a true reflection of Mao’s psyche.”⁴¹ Mao’s geopolitical pragmatism, therefore, coexisted with his revolutionary vision.

Nevertheless, Mao’s idea to form a global anti-Soviet alliance turned out to be short-lived. As it became clear that Washington would not prioritize its relationship with Beijing to that with Moscow, the chairman gradually yet resolutely kept a distance from the United States and turned to his long-time ideal of an international united front. The Prevention of Nuclear War Agreement in June 1973 was the turning point: the Chinese denounced the agreement as “out-and-out domination by the two world powers” to “monopolize nuclear weapons, maintaining nuclear superiority and make nuclear threats” against weaker countries to “force them into spheres of influence of either this or that hegemony” so that the “two hegemonies may have a free hand in dividing up the world.”⁴² Mao’s talk with Zambian President Kenneth Kaunda late February 1974, where he first laid out the Three Worlds Theory, symbolized his abandonment of the “horizontal line.” The chairman categorized the United States and the Soviet Union as “the First

⁴¹ Yang Kuisong and Xia Yafeng, “Vacillating between Revolution and Détente,” *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 34, No. 2 (April, 2010), 410, 412.

⁴² *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. E-13, Document 148, Vol. XVIII, Document 36.

World” with numerous nuclear weapons and great wealth, their allies as “the Second World” with fewer nuclear weapons and wealth, and the rest as “the Third World” with few nuclear weapons and little wealth.⁴³ Deng Xiaoping elaborated on the new revolutionary theory in his speech at the U.N. General Assembly in April 1974. He declared that the superpower hegemonic competition in disguise of détente “extends over the entire globe,” arousing “strong resistance among the Third World.” As a member of the Third World, China would always support the struggle of “the oppressed peoples and oppressed nations” as “our bounden internationalist duty.”⁴⁴ Contrary to the “horizontal line,” Mao now put the two superpowers in the same category, against which China should form an international united front.

As Yang and Xia pointed out, the Three Worlds Theory indicated a certain degree of retreat from the radical discourse during the height of the Cultural Revolution. Faced with the apparent impossibility of worldwide revolution in the aftermath of Sino-American rapprochement, Mao replaced “class struggle” with “interstate relations” in his analytical framework of the world situation due to “pragmatic considerations” of “national security.” “Chinese foreign policy,” they argued, “started to move further and further away from a foreign policy dominated by revolutionary ideology.”⁴⁵ However, the Three Worlds Theory still revealed the chairman’s persisting revolutionary zeal, most notably his vocal insistence on the “great disorder under heaven.” As Deng argued in his

⁴³ Zhonggong zhongyang wenxian yanjiushi, *Mao Zedong waijiao wenxuan* (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, Shijie zhishi chubanshe, 1994), 600-601.

⁴⁴ *New York Times*, April 12, 1974.

⁴⁵ Yang and Xia, “Vacillating between Revolution and Détente,” 420-22.

U.N. speech, “revolution” continued to be “the main trend in the world today,” and “people of all countries must get prepared” for “the danger of a new world war” because détente was “nothing but an empty talk” to conceal the “irreconcilable” contradiction between the superpowers. Mao himself started to emphasize the inevitability of a superpower war in December 1973, when he declared in a Politburo meeting, “Prepare for war! Internal and external wars will both come! I can still fight a few wars.” War would result from the demise of détente, as the chairman told Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere in March 1974, “I am afraid it [arms limitation] is a bit difficult. In short, this world is unstable... They talk about peace now, but it may lead to another war.” Mao also told Ex-President Nixon in February 1976, “The United States has interests to protect in the world. The Soviet Union wants to expand. This is impossible to change. In the era where class exists, war is a phenomena between two peace.”⁴⁶ These remarks attest to Mao’s apocalyptic vision: the ultimate collapse of the superpower détente due to their inherent desire for hegemony would precipitate a war with catastrophic consequences to the whole world. China should thus expose the deceitful nature of their peaceful gestures and unite the Third World in preparation for the doomsday. To be sure, Mao could not reinstate the ultra-left rhetoric of worldwide revolution, which would disrupt the political stability at home and isolate China abroad. Nevertheless, the chairman remained passionate for his revolutionary pursuit to the maximum extent possible within the limit of practical considerations.

⁴⁶ Zhonggong zhongyang wenxian yanjiushi, *Jianguo yilai Mao Zedong junshi wengao* (Beijing: Junshi kexue chubanshe, Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 2010). 388, 394, 401.

Mao's shift from the "horizontal line" to the Three Worlds Theory had domestic repercussions. First, the failure of a "horizontal line" was accompanied by political attack on Zhou in late 1973. Mao started to alienate the premier when he criticized the Foreign Ministry report in June 1973, which characterized the PNW Agreement as "a stronger atmosphere of U.S.-Soviet domination."⁴⁷ The chairman complained to Zhang Chunqiao and Wang Hongwen, two Politburo members who would soon form the Gang of Four, that the "unsatisfactory" report focused on "the superficial," namely the superpower collusion, while ignoring "the essence," that is, "great chaos, great disintegration, and great reshuffle" due to the superpower competition.⁴⁸ Mao further reprimanded Zhou for his failure to reject Kissinger's proposal to establish "a hot line" and share military intelligence on Soviet troops in November 1973.⁴⁹ With his confidence in U.S. intentions rapidly fading, the chairman warned that China "should not form a military alliance with the United States."⁵⁰ He also instructed Zhou to hold a Politburo meeting from late November to mid-December, where Jiang Qing, Mao's wife, denounced him as "right-wing capitulationist" willing to compromise with the Americans. Mao expressed his satisfaction with Zhou's public disgrace as a result of political crackdown, which, to a certain degree, reflected his grudge against the premier's international prestige.⁵¹ More

⁴⁷ Yang and Xia, "Vacillating between Revolution and Détente," 410-11.

⁴⁸ Gao Wenqian, *Wannian Zhou Enlai*, (Carle Place, New York: Mingjing chubanshe, 2003), 454.

⁴⁹ *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. XVIII, Document 55.

⁵⁰ Gao, *Wannian Zhou Enlai*, 464.

⁵¹ Gao, *Wannian Zhou Enlai*, 466-67. Frederick C. Teiwes and Warren Sun, *The End of the Maoist Era: Chinese Politics during the Twilight of the Cultural Revolution, 1972-1976* (Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2007), 90-91.

important, however, the infeasibility of a “horizontal line” compelled the chairman to distance China from the United States so that he could attack both superpowers for their hegemonic competition. He now had to discredit Zhou, an embodiment of conciliatory policy toward the United States, at home before promoting the Three Worlds Theory abroad. Mao’s new revolutionary strategy, therefore, played a far more decisive role in precipitating Zhou’s downfall than his personal envy.

Second, the ideological scope of the Three Worlds Theory shaped Mao’s political maneuvers in from late 1973 to late 1975. On the one hand, recognizing that China could not afford another Cultural Revolution, he kept the Gang of Four in check. Mao suffocated the radicals’ schemes to gain the political upper hand on the moderates, especially Zhou and Deng, including the attempted Eleventh Two-Line Struggle in December 1973, the Criticize Ling, Criticize Confucius Campaign throughout 1974, the Fengqing Ship Incident in October 1974, the Anti-Empiricism Campaign in March 1975, and the Criticize Shuihu Campaign in August 1975. He criticized Jiang for forming “a small sect of four” and her “own government (becoming a shadow president)” out of “thirst” for chairmanship. The chairman even demanded his wife to submit a self-criticism on her political ambition for the Fourth National People’s Congress in January 1975, where she failed to place his political allies in key party positions.⁵² On the other hand, Mao steadily promoted Deng since his restoration in early 1973 after the purge during the height of Cultural Revolution, because he served the chairman’s political

⁵² Shuo Fan, *Ye Jianying zai feichang shiqi, 1966-1976* (Beijing: Huawen chubanshe, 2002) 409-11. Jin Chongji, *Zhou Enlai zhuan*, 1892, 1902-03, 1908, 1918-19.

purposes. Deng could restore stability and unity in Chinese politics without exposing himself to the Gang of Four's political attack, as he was not connected with disgraced figures such as Liu Xiaogi and Lin Biao. In addition, he could also help promote Mao's new revolutionary strategy abroad after Zhou's downfall.⁵³ The chairman, therefore, not only gave him significant party positions, varying from a Politburo membership to the First Vice Premiership, but also designated him as Zhou's successor as China's chief diplomat. Symbolically, he sent Deng to the U.N. General Assembly in April 1974 as a spokesperson of his Three Worlds Theory despite Jiang's opposition.⁵⁴ With clear backing from Mao, Deng, in cooperation with growingly feeble Zhou, promoted his ambitious modernization agendas for various fields in 1975, including agriculture, industry, military, literature, and education.⁵⁵ Nevertheless, Deng's growing emphasis on development, which put revolution on the backburner, antagonized Mao, who remained unwilling to abandon China's revolutionary identity. The debate on the legacy of the Cultural Revolution loomed as the critical issue in late 1975. The aging chairman urged Deng to support his view of the Cultural Revolution as "seven-tenths right and three-tenths wrong" or "basically accurate and fair." When he equivocally rejected to issue a pro-Cultural Revolution resolution in mid-November, Deng lost Mao's support, which

⁵³ Cheng Zhongyuan and Xia Xingzhen, *Qianzou: Deng Xiaoping 1975 nian zhengdun* (Shijiazhuang: Hebei renmin chubanshe, 2009), 6-16.

⁵⁴ Yang and Xia, "Vacillating between Revolution and Détente," 417-18.

⁵⁵ The result of Deng's modernization projects includes: the agricultural production increased by 4.6% from 1974 despite natural disasters; the industrial production increased by 15.1%; investment in construction reached 39,200 million U.S. dollars; foreign trade reached 14,750 million U.S. dollars. Cheng and Xia, *Qianzou*, 269-71.

led to the Criticize Deng Campaign in December and his third purge in April 1976.⁵⁶ Although Mao protected Deng from the Gang of Four at first in an attempt to de-radicalize domestic politics, the chairman nonetheless never hesitated to abandon Deng when his modernization programs came to threaten China's revolutionary identity. Mao, in other words, chose to sacrifice China's political stability and economic development for his lifelong loyalty for the revolutionary cause.

Mao's foreign and domestic policy from Sino-American rapprochement to his death shows his unyielding will to make China an active creator of the revolutionary world order, instead of a passive reactor in the triangular relationship. Internationally, he promulgated the Three Worlds Theory in hope to enhance China's global leadership in navigating the "great disorder under heaven." American scholar William Kintner best summarized the chairman's ideological worldview in early 1976: "the Chinese strategy for achieving global ascendancy" was aimed at "mobilizing the Third World" against both "the capitalist-imperialist power" and "the social-revisionist power" in preparation for "the ultimate conflict" between them.⁵⁷ At home, Mao manipulated the political rivalry between Deng and the Gang of Four to pursue revolutionary foreign policy without domestic chaos. However, he eventually tilted the political balance in favor of the radicals when Deng's critical attitude toward the legacy of the Cultural Revolution, prioritization of economic construction over class struggle, and acceptance material

⁵⁶ Luo Yingsheng, *Qiao Guanhua zhuan: hongse waijiaojia de beiai rensheng* (Beijing: Wenhua yishu chubanshe, 2012), 291-93.

⁵⁷ *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. XVIII, Document 138.

wealth in socialism nonetheless jeopardized Mao's ideals. In this sense, the temporary halt on Deng's modernization programs was "an inevitable tragedy" for "the CCP and Chinese people," as Zhongyuan Cheng and Xia Xingzhen put it.⁵⁸ Though constrained by pragmatic considerations, Mao's China, in short, remained a revolutionary China.

⁵⁸ Cheng and Xingzhen, *Qianzou*, 303-05.

Chapter 4: Kissinger-Mao Stalemate

Although Kissinger saw no obstacle for normalization in November 1973, when he observed “the close identity between you [Nixon] and the Chinese leaders’ strategic perspectives,”⁵⁹ the inherent contradiction deepened between his triangular strategy and Mao’s revolutionary strategy. With U.S.-Soviet arms control negotiations developing, Kissinger had to alleviate Beijing’s accusation that Washington sought to “reach out to the Soviet Union by standing on Chinese shoulders,” a scathing analogy of U.S. exploitation of China as leverage to negotiate with the Soviet Union.⁶⁰ To this end, he made numerous attempts to maintain the momentum for normalization by reinforcing the existing tactics of demonizing the Soviet Union to draw China closer to the United States. In June 1973, Kissinger confided Leonid Brezhnev’s “formal and more explicit proposal” for joint sabotage of China’s growing nuclear capabilities to Huang Zhen, the chief of the Chinese Liaison Office. He noted that the Russians were “more brazen and brutal than I would have thought possible.”⁶¹ Against this backdrop, Kissinger proposed to set up “a hot line” and share intelligence information on Soviet forces in November, a tantamount to a quasi-military alliance.⁶² In addition, he warned Huang in July 1974 of another secret Soviet proposal for “a treaty of friendship and cooperation to go to each other’s assistance if either was attacked by a third party,” which he claimed was targeted at

⁵⁹ *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. XVIII, Document 62.

⁶⁰ Zhou first used this phrase in February 1973. *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. XVIII, Document 8.

⁶¹ *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. XVIII, Document 41.

⁶² *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. XVIII, Document 55.

China.⁶³ Furthermore, he informed Deng in November of another Soviet proposal to prevent Beijing and Tokyo from “becoming too close,” another Soviet ploy to isolate China in Asia.⁶⁴ In countless other occasions, Kissinger repeatedly emphasized Soviet antagonism against China to stimulate its sense of insecurity vis-à-vis the “polar bear.”

Nonetheless, Kissinger’s tactics failed, as China became less and less concerned about Soviet threat. First, the possibility of Soviet invasion had significantly diminished since the Sino-Soviet border clash in 1969. The CIA predicted in November 1973 that a possibility of Soviet preemptive attack on China was “quite low, say on the order of 1 in 10.”⁶⁵ They concluded that although Sino-Soviet rapprochement was “highly unlikely” through 1980, a war was also improbable, which might make China “less interested in improving relations with the US.”⁶⁶ To validate these studies, Deng pointed out that Soviet troops were “scattered” over the long border and thus impossible to invade China.⁶⁷ Mao also complained to former British Prime Minister Edward Heath, “They [the Soviet Union] have only few soldiers, but you Europeans fear them so much!”⁶⁸ Second, to counter Kissinger’s warning on Soviet ambition in Asia, the Chinese maintained that Moscow was “making a feint to attach the West.” “The Soviet Union only says it will attack China,” he averred to French Foreign Minister Maurice Shuman in

⁶³ FRUS, 1969-1976, Vol. XVIII, Document 82.

⁶⁴ FRUS, 1969-1976, Vol. XVIII, Document 95.

⁶⁵ *NIE*, 11/13/73, “The Sino-Soviet Relationship: the Military Aspects,” September 20, 1973.

⁶⁶ *NIE*, 11/13/6-73, “Possible Changes in the Sino-Soviet Relationship,” October 25, 1973.

⁶⁷ FRUS, 1969-1976, Vol. XVIII, Document 78.

⁶⁸ *Mao Zedong waijiao wenxuan*, 602-606.

July 1972, “but in reality it wants to engulf Europe.”⁶⁹ The chairman also told Belgian Prime Minister Leo Tindemans that the Soviet Union would “not dare invade China now” because its “main strategic focus is on Europe and the Middle East.”⁷⁰ Kissinger’s attempts to convince the Chinese otherwise all failed, as they insisted on Moscow’s hidden ambition in Europe as a “point of major importance.”⁷¹

As discussed above, Mao did indeed anticipate a war; nonetheless, it would occur only when the Soviet Union neutralized Europe through détente. The Chinese thus became increasingly critical of U.S. conciliatory policy toward the Russians, which they believed assisted Soviet design for global hegemony. Chinese antagonism reached its peak in October 1975, three months after the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe in Helsinki, when Deng called the conference “European *Insecurity* Conference” and analogized it to the infamous Munich Appeasement. He maintained that the Soviet Union had “two big weaknesses,” namely the shortage of food grains and the industrial and technological backwardness, which would compromise Soviet war capabilities despite its military might. Deng criticized the United States for covering, instead of capitalizing on, their weaknesses through détente, thereby expediting the arrival of war. To repudiate Kissinger’s emphasis on China’s insecurity and need to stay close to the United States, Deng declared that it “fears nothing under heaven or on earth” and “will not ask favors from anyone,” especially “nuclear protection [by other countries].”

⁶⁹ *Jianguo yilai Mao Zedong junshi wengao*, 381.

⁷⁰ *Jianguo yilai Mao Zedong junshi wengao*, 397.

⁷¹ *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. XVIII, Document 119.

Countering the argument that China was “afraid of an attack by the Russians,” he asserted, “As a friend, I will be candid and tell you that this assessment is wrong.”⁷² Deng thus maintained that China “opposed” but was “not afraid” of Soviet potential aggression, although Kissinger never fully trusted his remarks.

With the United States appeasing Soviet hegemonic ambitions, Mao initiated a domestic campaign for war preparation, mobilizing the masses to “dig tunnels deep, store grains everywhere, and never seek hegemony.” Since Mao first announced this plan in December 1972,⁷³ the Chinese people constructed large-scale underground tunnels with manpower and exhibited them to foreign guests as a sign of their determination to prepare for a war following the collapse of superpower détente. “Dig tunnels deep, store grains everywhere, and never seek hegemony” was, therefore, a domestic derivative of Mao’s global strategy, underscored by the Three Worlds Theory. Shanghai Public Transportation Company’s Construction Reception Office wrote a revealing report in October 1975 on its mission to show construction sites of underground tunnels to foreign guests. In receiving twenty-eight foreign groups from twenty-two countries, the office “promoted ‘dig tunnels deep,’ Chairman Mao’s great thoughts on strategic idea and people’s war.” The report claimed that the propaganda inspired foreign guests from the Third World to “reinforce their anti-imperial, anti-colonial, and anti-hegemonic belief”

⁷² *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. XVIII, Document 122. Bracket in original.

⁷³ *Jianguo yilai Mao Zedong junshi wengao*, 383.

and from the Second World to “unite the majority and isolate the two hegemons.”⁷⁴ Opposition to superpower détente and consequential war, therefore, enabled Mao to maintain China’s revolutionary quality at home.

The strategic discord overshadowed the tactical side of normalization negotiations, namely the Taiwan question, which Kissinger continued to assume a “relatively minor internal Chinese dispute.”⁷⁵ In November 1973, he shared with Zhou his tentative plan to withdraw U.S. forces from Taiwan and normalize relations with Beijing without severing the diplomatic relations with Taipei, if they could find “a formula” consistent with the One-China Principle.⁷⁶ However, this idea proved unrealistic in April 1974, when Deng asserted that normalization was possible only “on the basis of the Japanese pattern,” that is, cutting off diplomatic relations with Taiwan. Responding to the vice premier’s insistence on the Japan model, Kissinger suggested an alternative plan in November to have an embassy in Beijing and a liaison office in Taipei. Deng, however, answered that his “imagination” were “still a variation of one China and one Taiwan,” as a Taiwan liaison office would symbolize its political representation. He thus declared that time was “not ripe yet to solve this [Taiwan] question,” because there was “quite a distance between our two sides.” In addition, Deng unveiled the three principles for

⁷⁴ “Renzhen zuohao waibing jiedai gongzuo, xuanchuan Mao zhuxi weida zhanlue xixiang,” B120-3-68-3, Shanghai Municipal Archive.

⁷⁵ Kissinger, *White House Years*, 1062.

⁷⁶ *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. XVIII, Document 56. For China’s internal debates on the Taiwan issue, see Tyler, *A Great Wall*, 1967-74. The One-China Principle referred to China’s insistence that there was only one China and Taiwan was part of China.

normalization—abolishing the U.S.-Taiwan defense treaty, withdrawing U.S. troops from Taiwan, and severing diplomatic relations with Taiwan—which would stifle Sino-American relations in the following years.⁷⁷ Despite the apparent deadlock, Ford could not possibly take a political risk on the Taiwan question in the face of mounting pressures at home and abroad in early 1975. U.S. global posture deteriorated because of the fall of the Saigon regime in Vietnam, the demise of the Khmer Republic in Cambodia, and the intensifying civil war in Angola, while conservative Republicans staged political attacks on the administration, resulting in the removal of several moderate Republicans from the cabinet in November.⁷⁸ Instead of compromising on China’s three principles, the vulnerable president had to “reaffirm our commitments to Taiwan” in a press conference.⁷⁹

Normalization thus remained out of sight in mid-1975, when the second presidential visit was approaching in December. This compelled U.S. policymakers to reconsider their negotiation objectives. Senior staff in the State Department and the NSC crafted a joint memorandum in July, which admitted that the Chinese “may not want to move on normalization at this time” and instead suggested a “sustaining” summit to

⁷⁷ *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. XVIII, Document 94.

⁷⁸ The cabinet changes include: Brent Scowcroft replacing Henry Kissinger as National Security Adviser; George H. W. Bush replacing William Colby as Director of Central Intelligence; Donald Rumsfeld replacing James Schlesinger as Secretary of Defense; and Dick Cheney succeeding Rumsfeld as White House Chief of Staff. This event was soon dubbed “Halloween Massacre.”

⁷⁹ *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Gerald R. Ford, 1974* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1975), 641-652.

preserve the momentum, however limited, for normalization.⁸⁰ Kissinger also showed pessimism in discussing the memorandum with its authors. “We’re better off saying we don’t think we’re quite ready,” he observed, “I see no flexibility on Taiwan.”⁸¹ However, U.S. policymakers still upheld their premise that China’s fear the Soviet Union underpinned Sino-American relations. The joint memorandum discussed how Washington could assure Beijing of the validity of its assessment of Soviet belligerence in Asia. Kissinger also believed that the bilateral relationship was still “based on their fear of the Russians.” Even after Deng denounced détente in October, he still defended the triangular diplomacy in asserting to Ford, “Good relations with the Soviet Union are the best for our Chinese relations—and vice versa.”⁸² China’s accusation of U.S. appeasement was, Kissinger argued, “a disagreement over tactics rather than any difference in our fundamental assessment of the primary threat to the national security of either of our countries.” He attributed “the degree of pressure they [the Chinese] feel under from Moscow” and “their estimate of our ability to act as a world power—especially against the Russians,” along with U.S. determination for normalization, to Beijing’s attitude toward Washington.⁸³ “I think we should tell the Chinese I am going to Moscow,” he told Ford before his December visit, “The Soviet angle is what keeps the Chinese under control.”⁸⁴ Kissinger, therefore, held to his triangular strategy, however

⁸⁰ *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. XVIII, Document 112.

⁸¹ *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. XVIII, Document 113.

⁸² *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. XVIII, Document 129.

⁸³ *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. XVIII, Document 132.

⁸⁴ *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. XVIII, Document 133.

stalemated it proved to be. Normalization became practically impossible prior to Ford's election defeat, as China also entered an uncertain period of leadership transition in early 1976.

Chapter 5: Brzezinski's Bilateral Strategy

Brzezinski's global strategy had already matured before joining the Carter Administration. As a political scientist at Columbia, he endorsed Nixon and Kissinger's China policy in the rapprochement stage for its impact on the Soviet Union, despite his criticisms on their neglect of Asian and European allies. However, his concept of "the global equilibrium" differed from that of his former academic rival at Harvard. Unlike Kissinger's vision of the multipolar world, "the world is, and is likely to remain, a bipolar one," with middle powers, including China, Europe, and Japan, affecting their power balance, due to overwhelming economic and military power of the superpowers.⁸⁵ As Sino-American relations encountered a long stalemate after Nixon's trip, Brzezinski criticized U.S. inaction to widen the bilateral relationship for fear of endangering détente. He even advocated strengthening China by providing military technology to improve the strategic position of Washington against Moscow.⁸⁶ While Kissinger's triangular strategy tried to race Moscow and Beijing toward Washington, Brzezinski envisioned a bilateral strategy for competition with the Soviet Union, where China played a significant role. When he came to office in January 1977, one of Brzezinski's primary concerns was "to improve America's strategic position" "primarily in relationship to the Soviet Union," which he perceived to be expanding its global influence with military buildup. "An

⁸⁵ Zbigniew Brzezinski, "The Balance of Power Delusion," *Foreign Policy*, no. 7 (Summer 1972).

⁸⁶ Charles Gati, ed., *Zbig: The Strategy and Statecraft of Zbigniew Brzezinski* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), 87-88.

improvement in the U.S.-Chinese relationship” would thus serve “the strategic interest of the United States.”⁸⁷

Determined to expedite the development of Sino-American relations, Brzezinski advocated rapid moves toward normalization from early on, although other issues, especially the Panama Canal Treaty, occupied U.S. diplomacy in the first months of the Carter administration. He argued in June 1977 that among various measures to improve the bilateral relations, “addressing the Taiwan issue first (though not necessarily solving it immediately)” was “the best sequence.”⁸⁸ Brzezinski clarified his rationale for early normalization in July, when he explained to Carter “the plain fact” that “our parallel strategic interests against the Soviet Union, *not* bilateral interests, provide the impetus to our relationship with China.”⁸⁹ In addition, the Presidential Directive 18, entitled “US National Strategy,” reflected his strategic view on the world. It envisioned that “in the foreseeable future,” the superpower relations would “continue to be characterized by both competition and cooperation.” PD-18 recommended that while seeking arms control, the United States should maintain strong global posture politically, economically, and militarily to “counterbalance” “Soviet military power and adverse influence in key areas, particularly Europe, the Middle East, and East Asia.”⁹⁰ Brzezinski strengthened his advocacy for countering the Soviet Union by normalization with China in late 1977 to

⁸⁷ Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Power and Principle: Memoirs of the National Security Adviser, 1977-1981* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1983), 3.

⁸⁸ *FRUS*, 1977-1980, Vol. XVIII, Document 31.

⁸⁹ *FRUS*, 1977-1980, Vol. XVIII, Document 42. *Italic in original.*

⁹⁰ Presidential Directive 18, August 27, 1977, Carter Presidential Library & Museum Online Collections.

early 1978, when Moscow intensified its anti-U.S. activities in the Horn of Africa. He insisted on restoring “reciprocity” in the superpower relationship, as opposed to “SALT without linkage,” which referred to Kissinger and Vance’s policy to separate détente from Soviet adventurism in the Third World.⁹¹ “Timing of normalization [with China],” Brzezinski thus later recollected, “was definitely influenced by the Soviet dimension” because it would be “valuable in helping Moscow understand the value of restraint and reciprocity” in global affairs.⁹²

Brzezinski’s push for an early normalization caused internal controversies in the Carter administration, especially for his relationship with Vance. As Walker pointed out, Vance, to be accurate, advocated normalization with Beijing as “highly desirable” for “our strategic position,” contrary to his prevalent portrait as an opponent to Brzezinski’s China initiative. He nonetheless feared that using the China card to threaten Moscow would embolden the Russians and destroy détente. Vance thus conceived of a new relationship with China as “friends and not allies.”⁹³ In order to replace Vance’s prudent approach with his bold approach, Brzezinski started to request his own visit to China in late 1977. He explicitly demanded it from Carter in his weekly report in February 1978. He pointed out that because of “Chinese rigidity” and U.S. “excessive sensitivity to the

⁹¹ Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 178-190.

⁹² Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 196-97.

⁹³ Breck Walker, “‘Friends, But Not Allies’—Cyrus Vance and the Normalization of Relations with China,” *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 33, No. 4 (September 2009), 593-94. *FRUS*, 1977-1980, Vol. XVIII, Document 26. For conventional description of Vance’s opposition to Brzezinski’s China policy, see, for example, Harding, *A Fragile Relationship*, 73-75; Ross, *Negotiating Cooperation*, 111-16; Tyler, *A Great Wall*, 246-48.

Soviets,” the United States had “slighted the Chinese connection.” Nevertheless, it should now cultivate “the consultative relationship—resting quite frankly on a shared concern over Soviet aggressiveness.” Brzezinski then asked the president to send him to China “to engage in quiet consultations” on strategic issues, “thereby also sending a signal to the Soviets which might prove helpful on such matters as the Horn or SALT.”⁹⁴

Brzezinski’s bilateral strategy obtained support in the administration in early 1978. For example, Chief of U.S. Liaison Office Leonard Woodcock, who expressed his willingness to receive Brzezinski in Beijing, concurred with him on the necessity to give a higher priority to “the global-strategic” tie with China and criticized the lack of formal relations as “founded on an obvious absurdity.”⁹⁵ Secretary of Defense Harold Brown also advocated Brzezinski’s visit as a response to the lack of Soviet reciprocity in détente, calling for U.S. preparedness to “upset the Soviets as much as they have upset us by their actions in the Horn.”⁹⁶ Most important, Carter himself tilted toward a harder approach toward Moscow. In fact, he supported Brzezinski’s forthcoming approach toward normalization even prior to Vance’s trip in August 1977. He told his top advisers in July, “My own inclination is to be bold about it. My experience in life has been that it never pays to procrastinate... Let’s get our ducks in a row and get it over with.” Carter nonetheless opposed to Kissinger’s approach to “knock the Soviets” in negotiations with China and preferred a sincere bilateral dialogue based on mutual candor. He thus

⁹⁴ *FRUS*, 1977-1980, Vol. XVIII, Document 77, footnote 6.

⁹⁵ *FRUS*, 1977-1980, Vol. XVIII, Document 77. See also footnote 2. *The Washington Post*, February 2, 1978.

⁹⁶ *FRUS*, 1977-1980, Vol. XVIII, Document 83.

instructed Vance to adhere to U.S. principles during his visit to China, such as Taiwan's security, arguing that he could "afford to be patient."⁹⁷ Carter also kept distance from Brzezinski's bilateral strategy, as evident in his clear rejection of transfer of military technology to and preferential trade treatment of China.⁹⁸ Nevertheless, an impasse in SALT and Soviet activities in Africa did harden his attitude toward Moscow. His speech at Wake Forest University in March 1978 emphasized U.S. military capabilities to match up with the Soviet Union and insisted that détente must be "comprehensive" and "reciprocal."⁹⁹ As a result, not only did Carter authorize Brzezinski's trip to China in March but also approve the initiation of normalization negotiations via Woodcock in summer.

Brzezinski saw his trip in May 1978 as an opportunity to restore momentum for normalization based on his bilateral strategy. He began the negotiation with the Chinese by declaring that Washington "has made up its mind" on normalization. He emphasized the "complementary interests in insuring the world is free of hegemony" to persuade the Chinese to "cooperate again [as in WWII] in the face of the common threat for one of the central features of our era is the emergence of the Soviet Union as a global power." Rejecting the Chinese categorization of the United States as a hegemonic power on par

⁹⁷ *FRUS*, 1977-1980, Vol. XVIII, Document 41, 43.

⁹⁸ Although Carter did not intend to use the China card against the Soviet Union, he expected China to "quietly sway some third-world countries" to turn away from Moscow and cooperate with Washington. Jimmy Carter, *Keeping Faith: Memoirs of a President* (New York: Bantam Books, 1982), 195.

⁹⁹ *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Jimmy Carter, 1978* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1975), 529-535. Unlike Brzezinski, however, Carter never intended Sino-American normalization to offend the Soviet Union. He thus clearly answered "no" to Woodcock's proposal to include the anti-hegemony clause in the joint communiqué. "I'm doubtful on this," he argued, "if it patently aggravates the Soviets." *FRUS*, 1977-1980, Vol. XVIII, Document 166.

with the Soviet Union as “wrong,” he provided detailed briefing on U.S. global strategy to show its will and ability to counter Soviet political and military expansion.¹⁰⁰ As discussed later, the Chinese, especially Foreign Minister Huang Hua, by and large expressed doubts about Brzezinski’s bilateral worldview; instead, they warned that continuing “appeasement” of Moscow while using Beijing as “a pawn” in SALT negotiations would prove unsuccessful. However, he did confirm that Washington and Beijing shared “the strategic interests” in cooperating “to cope with the Polar Bear.” Brzezinski thus responded to Huang’s criticisms that in spite of tactical disagreements, he was “struck” that “the fundamentals of our relationship and the fundamentals of our worldview” were, “in large measure, of agreement.”¹⁰¹ Reporting his China visit to Carter, Brzezinski underplayed disagreements and overstated common viewpoints. He maintained that Chinese “were more relaxed about American resolve vis-à-vis the Soviets” than before and did not “lecture us” and “scorn our weakness.” Although U.S. ability to change China’s worldview, especially its mistrust in détente, was “likely to prove only partially effective,” their “hostility toward the Soviet Union” provided a common ground for cooperation.¹⁰²

Affirming Sino-American strategic commonality, albeit magnified by Brzezinski’s confirmation bias, Taiwan remained the tactical focus for normalization

¹⁰⁰ *FRUS*, 1977-1980, Vol. XVIII, Document 108.

¹⁰¹ *FRUS*, 1977-1980, Vol. XVIII, Document 109.

¹⁰² *FRUS*, 1977-1980, Vol. XVIII, Document 113. Brzezinski even omitted his thorny conversation with Huang Hua, whose remarks, as discussed below, revealed distance between U.S. and Chinese worldviews.

negotiations. He emphasized the importance of a public statement on a peaceful resolution for U.S. domestic purposes, while the Chinese rejected a public pledge. Deng did mention that it was “quite all right” that Washington would express its hope for a peaceful resolution, but added that it “should not make it a precondition” and Beijing would state its view that the Taiwan question was its internal affairs. Chairman Hua Guofeng, Mao’s successor, also refused to make a commitment to a peaceful resolution because doing so “is still the creation of one China, one Taiwan, or two Chinas.”¹⁰³ Blinded by his confirmation bias again, Brzezinski nonetheless misinterpreted Deng and Hua’s remarks and reached a misinformed conclusion that China would tolerate U.S. arms sales to Taiwan as a quid pro quo for its rejection of assurance for peaceful settlement.¹⁰⁴ Brzezinski thus reported to Carter that the Chinese offered two choices—“either to continue arms sales to Taiwan after normalization without receiving a Chinese statement indicating their intent to resolve the Taiwan issue peacefully, or no further U.S. arms sales coupled with a Chinese declaration of peaceful intent.”¹⁰⁵ In the face of Chinese apparent reluctance on a peaceful resolution, continuous arms sales to Taiwan remained the only practical choice. Although his assumptions were biased toward the

¹⁰³ *FRUS*, 1977-1980, Vol. XVIII, Document 110, 111.

¹⁰⁴ First, he interpreted Deng’s remark that U.S. maintenance of full commercial relations would keep Soviet influence from Taiwan after normalization as his tacit approval of continuous arms sales. Second, he understood Hua’s criticism on U.S. demand on a peaceful resolution despite its arms sales to Taiwan as an indication of tolerance for arms sales in the absence of a public pledge for peaceful resolution.

¹⁰⁵ *FRUS*, 1977-1980, Vol. XVIII, Document 113.

bilateral strategy, Brzezinski's determination for Sino-American cooperation, therefore, pushed momentum for normalization,

Chapter 6: Deng's Reformist Strategy

With the historical mission to make China “strong and rich,” Deng Xiaoping sought to transform Mao’s China into a new country, whose national interest lied not in revolution but in modernization and internationalization.¹⁰⁶ In his memoir, Foreign Minister Huang Hua analyzed Deng’s diplomatic thoughts, which served as a de facto anti-Maoist manifesto. First, Deng presumed that a world war resulting from Soviet aggression after the fall of détente was “not inevitable.” Based on the assumption that “peace and development” were “the two main trends in today’s world,” he shifted China’s focus from war preparation to reform movements widely known as *gaige kaifang*. Second, contrary to Mao, Deng criticized “self-isolation” as “no good” for “development of a country” and strived to obtain “foreign assistance” while maintaining “self-reliance” where possible. Third, he redirected Chinese antipathy from superpower hegemonic competition to Soviet unilateral belligerence. “As international situations changed” due to Soviet worldwide expansion, especially in Southeast Asia, “our relations with the U.S. gradually improved,” precipitating a decisive tilt through normalization.¹⁰⁷ Although Huang argued that Deng inherited the Maoist thoughts, his diplomatic philosophy, in reality, contradicted Mao’s revolutionary ideals.

¹⁰⁶ Ezra Vogel, *Deng Xiaoping and the Transformation of China* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press, 2011), 10-14. Vogel points out that Deng understood that the causes of China’s problems were not only Mao himself but also “deep flaws in the system that had produced Mao and had led to the disastrous Great Leap Forward and Cultural Revolution,” which convinced him of the necessity of China’s modernization. Vogel, *Deng Xiaoping*, 44-45.

¹⁰⁷ Huang Hua, *Qin Li Yu Jian Wen: Huang Hua Huiyilu* (Beijing, Shijie zhishi chubanshe, 2008), 206-210.

Deng's pursuit for modernization and internationalization started before his third purge. In April 1975, he lamented to U.S. House Speaker Carl Albert and House Republican Leader John Rhodes that China remained "very under-developed." To reach "a relatively developed standard at the end of the 20th century," he envisioned, "China needs a peaceful international environment to build our country."¹⁰⁸ Deng reiterated to another U.S. congressional delegation in August that the Chinese "do not want a war" because it needed "a good international environment to develop itself."¹⁰⁹ Furthermore, in January 1976, he told visiting U.S. female congressmen his hope that "there is a good international relations in the next hundred years, which would enable us to establish our country."¹¹⁰ On the basis of a peaceful international environment, Deng advocated foreign technology import to achieve modernization. Upon his restoration as a standing member of the politburo in July 1977, Deng began emphasizing foreign technology as a foundation for the Four Modernizations,¹¹¹ naming his policy "borrowing the West" as opposed to the Gang of Four's allegation as "worshipping the West" or "crawling to the West."¹¹² He declared at the National Political Consultative Conference in March 1978 that China had entered "a new developmental era," where its "revolutionary united front" should achieve "the great march toward the Four Modernizations," "an unprecedented

¹⁰⁸ Zhonggong zhongyang wenxian yanjiushi, *Deng Xiaoping sixiang nianbian* (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 2011), 11-12.

¹⁰⁹ *Deng Xiaoping sixiang nianbian*, 29-30.

¹¹⁰ *Deng Xiaoping sixiang nianbian*, 46.

¹¹¹ The Four Modernizations refers to modernization of industry, agriculture, defense, and technology.

¹¹² See, for example, *Deng Xiaoping sixiang nianbian*, 91.

great project and a very far-reaching revolution” in Chinese history.¹¹³ Moreover, Deng defended the Four Modernizations as compatible with China’s long-term emphasis on self-reliance, when he maintained at the National Science Conference in March that although China should maintain “independent spirit and self-reliance,” “independent spirit is not self-isolation, and self-reliance is not blind exclusion.” Since scientific technology is “the humanity’s shared asset,” “any race or nation” should learn “modern scientific technology of others.”¹¹⁴ A peaceful environment and the Four Modernization, therefore, underpinned Deng’s vision for new China.

Deng’s reformism, however, confronted Chairman Hua’s vision, which copied Mao’s revolutionary ideals. Since his political legitimacy hinged solely on Mao’s short handwritten note prior to this death, “If you manage, I am relieved,” the new chairman promised to maintain his predecessor’s policy.¹¹⁵ In his first meetings with regional leaders in October 1976, Hua expressed his intention to “manage based on the past directions,” namely Mao’s teachings, including support for the Cultural Revolution.¹¹⁶ In February 1977, an article entitled “Study the Documents and Grasp the Main Points” further revealed Hua’s loyalty to Maoism, most clearly shown in his Two Whatever’s thesis. Connecting Mao’s arguments on class contradictions, criticisms on the Gang of Four, and warning against war with imperialism and social imperialism, Hua declared to respect “whatever policy Chairman Mao decided” and “whatever instruction Chairman

¹¹³ *Deng Xiaoping sixiang nianbian*, 107-08.

¹¹⁴ *Deng Xiaoping sixiang nianbian*, 110-113.

¹¹⁵ *People’s Daily*, October 25, 1976.

¹¹⁶ *Deng Xiaoping gaibian zhongguo*, 68-70.

Mao made.”¹¹⁷ He further supported Mao’s legacy in his political report at the Eleventh National Congress in August, in which he asserted that “stability and unity” did not mean that China “no longer needs class struggle,” because “continuous revolution under the proletariat dictatorship” persisted even after the victory in “the first” Cultural Revolution against the Gang of Four. As long as class struggle exists, China should repeat “big political revolutions” as instructed by Mao. Hua, in essence, pledged to continue the Maoist struggle to eradicate “capitalists and capitalism” until establishing the true “communism.”¹¹⁸

Hua also set Mao’s revolutionary worldview, most notably the Three World Theory, as the guiding principle for his foreign policy. He declared in the Eleventh National Congress, “As factors for revolution continuously increase, factors for war also clearly increased.” He also pointed out the “unalterable” fact that “they [the Soviet Union] seek advantage everywhere, while the U.S. has vested interests to protect,” which made a war “inevitable.” In denouncing détente, he warned against “carry a stone and drop it on feet,” an analogy for alleged U.S. attempts to direct “the new czar” eastward, only expediting the outbreak of war. Hua also reemphasized “dig tunnels deep, store grains everywhere, and never seek hegemony,” Mao’s slogan for uniting the Third World for war preparation. He pledged to implement “Chairman Mao’s revolutionary diplomatic line” by reinforcing “our alliance with the world’s proletariats, oppressed peoples, and Third World countries” to “form a widest united front against U.S. and Soviet

¹¹⁷ *People’s Daily*, February 7, 1977.

¹¹⁸ *People’s Daily*, August 23, 1977.

superpower hegemony.”¹¹⁹ Hua also told Brzezinski in May 1978 that since “no drastic change” occurred in the world situations, “our views” that it was “impossible to avoid the war entirely” would “remain the same.” As “revolutionary optimists,” the Chinese, he insisted, would “make preparations” for war, “upset the strategic deployment of Soviet aggression,” and “call the attention of the world’s people to the danger of the Soviet Union launching a war of aggression.”¹²⁰ Hua’s strategy for revolutionary China, therefore, clashed with Deng’s strategy for reformist China.

Deng began his political campaign against the Two Whatevers soon after its announcement, though only among his political allies until mid-1978. He pointed out to Wang Zhen in May 1977 that the Two Whatevers contradicted Maoism. Maoism, he insisted, was “a system of thought” to “study and apply” to the changing situations, instead of a fixed dogma.¹²¹ Deng initiated his public dissent in May 1978, when he published an article entitled “Practice is the Only Standard to Examine the Truth.” Citing

¹¹⁹ *People’s Daily*, August 23, 1977.

¹²⁰ Foreign Minister Huang most vociferously defended Chairman Hua’s official doctrine and stressed the continuity in the Chinese worldview. He announced to Carter in February 1977 that post-Mao China would uphold the late chairman’s policy to stay “vigilant and prepared” to “brown the Soviet Union in a vast ocean of people’s war” in case of the inevitable war caused by the “unalterable” fact that “they [the Soviet Union] seek advantage everywhere, while the U.S. has vested interests to protect.” He also claimed to Vance in August 1977 that “the danger of war” was “increasing instead of decreasing,” as superpower rivalry for “world hegemony” became “more fierce,” with détente as “camouflage.” He emphasized, “We will continue to implement Chairman Mao’s revolutionary line in the field of foreign affairs.”¹²⁰ Huang repeated these points to Brzezinski in May 1978. “In the present world,” he observed, “the world is undergoing great turbulence and change” due to “revolutionary factor,” namely independence movements and superpower rivalry. As U.S. appeasement of the Soviet Union was “giving wings to a tiger to strengthen it,” he anticipated a war as an “objective law of development independent of man’s will.” *FRUS*, 1977-1980, Vol. XVIII, Document 111.

¹²¹ Zhonggong zhongyang wenxian yanjiushi ed. *Deng Xiaoping wenxuan* (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1994), Vol. 2, 38-39.

Mao's words as Hua did, he argued that theories, including Maoism, "should constantly undergo reexamination through practice" because "integration of theory and practice" was "Marxism's only basic principle." He emphasized Mao's constant efforts to revise "what proved to be mistaken or contradict with the reality."¹²² Furthermore, Deng claimed at the PLA's National Conference in June that "seek truth from facts (*shishi qiushi*)" was "Maoism's origin and fundamental" and "Marxism's living soul." Theories separate from the reality would deteriorate into "dogmatism and metaphysics," precipitating "a failure of revolution."¹²³ Deng, therefore, justified his Four Modernization as a Maoist policy in the new era of development and criticized Hua's Two Whatever for its neglect of the practical reality.

His ambition for transforming Mao's China motivated Deng to shift the focus of its foreign policy. First, Deng replaced revolution with development as the focal point of his talks with delegations from the Third World, although refraining from openly contradicting the Three World Theory. He told a Yugoslavian delegation in April 1978 that China would strive to "achieve the Four Modernizations by the end of the 20th century and make our science and technology closer to the world's modern standard."¹²⁴ "Scientific technology itself does not have class nature," he pointed out to a Malagasy delegation in May, "so we should make all modern technology and modern achievements

¹²² *Guangming Ribao*, May 11, 1978.

¹²³ *Deng Xiaoping wenxuan*, Vol. 2, 113-25.

¹²⁴ *Deng Xiaoping sixiang nianbian*, 124-25.

in the world as the starting point of our development.”¹²⁵ Deng further emphasized to an Algerian presidential emissary in May that the Third World should “unite together and use the time acquired for development.”¹²⁶ He also assured Rwandan President Juvénal Habyarimana in June that China could “assume more internationalist missions,” especially its “responsibility to the Third World,” only after “developing itself.”¹²⁷ Moreover, Deng insisted to Rumanian Ambassador Nicolae Gavrilesco that with technology and capital of developed countries, China should “accelerate the speed of development” to demonstrate “socialism’s superiority” to capitalism through “development of production and enhancement of civilian lives.” He concluded that to do otherwise would mean an “empty politics.”¹²⁸ Thus, development, not revolution, came to dominate Deng’s discourse on the Third World.

Second, Deng emphasized strategic concurrence with the United States from the viewpoint of economic and geopolitical realism. Economically, he connected, albeit subtly, Sino-American normalization to the Four Modernization. He expressed his wish to “import modern technology and experience around the world” to Henry Jackson in February 1978. “If Sino-American relations normalize early,” he hypothesized, “our trade can develop faster.”¹²⁹ He also told U.S. reporters at United Press International in May that China was “prepare to absorb the world’s modern technology, including from the

¹²⁵ *Deng Xiaoping wenxuan*, Vol. 2, 111-12.

¹²⁶ *Deng Xiaoping sixiang nianbian*, 131-32.

¹²⁷ *Deng Xiaoping sixiang nianbian*, 139-40.

¹²⁸ *Deng Xiaoping sixiang nianbian*, 141-42.

¹²⁹ *Deng Xiaoping sixiang nianbian*, 105-06.

United States,” which would “facilitate bilateral relations to develop and contribute to normalization.”¹³⁰ Deng further revealed his interest in U.S. technology in his talk with a U.S. scientific delegation led by Frank Press, Carter’s science and technology adviser, in July. “We hope to absorb your technology,” he frankly opined, “We should now learn from developed countries, including you.”¹³¹ Although the lack of diplomatic relationship inhibited full economic cooperation, Deng thus regarded normalization with the United States as a key for his Four Modernizations. Geopolitically, he underscored commonalities and underplayed disagreements in the bilateral relationship. To be sure, Deng opposed U.S. appeasement of Soviet global aggression, which he claimed further emboldened the “polar bear.” However, unlike Mao and Hua, Deng’s hostility toward the Soviet Union led him to embrace a strategic alliance with the United States, instead of a revolutionary struggle against both superpowers. He observed to Vance that Beijing and Washington had “quite a few points in common” in “global strategy,” namely the shared interest in containing Moscow.¹³² Denouncing the Soviet Union for “using China as a pawn in order to gain one thing from the U.S.,” he also insisted to Brzezinski that normalization would create “a difference in strength” in “our efforts to cope with the polar bear.”¹³³ Although his demands on the Taiwan issue showed the same rigidity as the

¹³⁰ *Deng Xiaoping sixiang nianbian*, 129-30.

¹³¹ *Deng Xiaoping sixiang nianbian*, 147-148.

¹³² *FRUS*, 1977-1980, Vol. XVIII, Document 50.

¹³³ *FRUS*, 1977-1980, Vol. XVIII, Document 110.

official line, which refused to offer any guarantee for a peaceful resolution,¹³⁴ it remained a tactical issue for Deng, whereas opposition to the Soviet Union provided the geopolitical background for Sino-American normalization. He thus told Brzezinski in that if Carter “made up his mind” to abide by the three principles, Beijing and Washington could “sign the document on normalization at any time.” Brzezinski’s bilateral strategy and Deng’s reformist strategy, therefore, concurred on the strategic interest in Sino-American normalization, thereby finally setting normalization negotiations in motion.

¹³⁴ Like Hua and Huang, Deng argued that the resolution of the Taiwan problem was an “internal affair” of China. He also criticized U.S. request for a statement on a peaceful resolution as “a retreat” from the Shanghai Communiqué and refused to “exclude the forceful liberation of Taiwan under military means.”

Chapter 7: Brzezinski-Deng Breakthrough

The six months from Brzezinski's visit in May 1978 and the signing of normalization in December saw a growing strategic alignment between the United States and China, as Deng replaced Hua as China's de facto leader. Michel Oksenberg, an East Asia specialist at NSC, played an instrumental role in crafting U.S. policy to facilitate Deng's political ascendancy. A keen observer of Chinese politics and diplomacy at the University of Michigan, he pointed out in the wake of Kissinger's secret visit in 1971 that China's changing policy toward the United States was "embodiments or representatives of various social interests in China," especially the political swings between those against the West and those receptive to the West.¹³⁵ In early 1975, as uncertainties about Chinese domestic politics and foreign policy increased, he identified "institutional legacies of the Cultural Revolution" as one of the most contentious issues for the post-Mao leadership.¹³⁶ When he came into office, Oksenberg saw a chance that U.S. cooperative policy toward China could empower the pro-Western, anti-Cultural Revolution group in China, especially Deng, in their struggle against the anti-Western, pro-Cultural Revolution faction. As normalization negotiations temporarily stalled in August 1978, he thus called Brzezinski and Carter's attention to Deng's "anti-Maoist" policies, including his purge of Lin Biao-sympathizers in the military and abrogation of the Sino-Soviet treaty, contrary to Hua's stress on "the Maoist heritage." Deng's "bold leadership" to set China on "a less

¹³⁵ Michel Oksenberg, "The Strategies of Peking," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 50, Issue 1, 15-29.

¹³⁶ Michel Oksenberg, "For Peking: Gradual Progress, Reappraisals," *Los Angeles Times*, February 23, 1975.

easily reversible course” away from Maoism, he also pointed out, left him “in an exposed position,” which necessitated Deng to achieve “some easy, generally noncontroversial victories” in foreign policy to bolster his political legitimacy. Deng would thus “wrap flexibility in rhetoric” in negotiations with the United States.¹³⁷ Oksenberg also analyzed China’s strategy to “build a durable, world-wide anti-Soviet consensus.” The Chinese, he observed, “nailed the coffin shut” for the Russians and turned to the West for “hectic” modernization and “rapid abandonment of Maoist principles.” China was “leaning to one side again—this time our side,” he concluded.¹³⁸ In November, Oksenberg further urged Brzezinski to use U.S. influence on Chinese domestic politics in favor of Deng, as he initiated attacks on Hua’s allies, most notably Wang Dongxing. Deng threw “many balls in the air” but could not “drop any of them” due to his political vulnerability. Oksenberg, therefore, maintained that Washington ensure that Deng “should win” through a series of pro-Deng policies, which would culminate in normalization.¹³⁹

Concurring with Oksenberg’s advice, Brzezinski promoted a strategic alliance with China to assist the rise of Deng. Besides high-level economic and technological delegations to China,¹⁴⁰ U.S. decision to take distance from Vietnam contributed to the

¹³⁷ *FRUS*, 1977-1980, Vol. XVIII, Document 128.

¹³⁸ *FRUS*, 1977-1980, Vol. XVIII, Document 130.

¹³⁹ *FRUS*, 1977-1980, Vol. XVIII, Document 153.

¹⁴⁰ Three delegations deserve particular attention. First, Secretary of Agriculture Robert Bergland visited China in November to discuss various exchanges, including grain purchase and technological cooperation. He later informed Carter, “What is most significant in all of this is an apparent decision by the leadership of the PRC not to permit the absence of normalization stand in the way of expanded trade and cooperation in the agricultural area.” See *FRUS*, 1977-1980, Vol. XVIII, Document 156. Second, the aforementioned visit by Frank Press, the “most high-powered science/technology delegation ever sent by the United States to any foreign country,” also sent a “powerful signal” for

growing momentum for normalization. In late 1978, Vietnam amassed military pressure on Cambodia and accepted a Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with the Soviet Union, alienating its former Chinese ally.¹⁴¹ In his NSC Weekly Report in July, Brzezinski criticized the initiative for normalization with Hanoi for coming “at the wrong time and in the wrong context.” “You need to choose,” he insisted to Carter, “Vietnam or China.” He recommended postponing the normalization because China was “incomparably more important to us.”¹⁴² The Carter Administration, however, was divided on this issue, with Carter and Vance in support of normalization. “Guilt feelings over the Vietnamese war,” Brzezinski observed in October, caused “the evident desire of Cy and Holbrooke to move on this issue rapidly.” Carter nonetheless insisted, “I don’t have guilt feelings & I want to move re VNam,” and even reprimanded Brzezinski, “Zbig—You have a tendency to exalt the PRC issue.”¹⁴³ Nevertheless, China’s emphatic warning on the Vietnam issue soon changed Carter’s opinion. Huang Zhen asserted in October that Vietnam “hired itself out to the Soviet Union” to obtain “regional hegemony,” while the Soviet Union “exploited the ambitions of Vietnam to realize its aggression.” “Giving economic aid to Vietnam means supporting the Soviet Union,” he insisted, “It is better to let the Soviet Union

U.S. determination for normalization. Third, Secretary of Energy James Schlesinger, the former anti-Soviet Defense Secretary in the Ford administration, visited China in November to discuss cooperation on petroleum production. His anti-Soviet views “delighted” the Chinese, engendering “further impetus” for normalization. See Brzezinski, *Power and Principle*, 226.

¹⁴¹ The rift between China and Vietnam widened even during the Vietnam War. See, for example, Chen, *Mao’s China*, chapter 8.

¹⁴² *FRUS*, 1977-1980, Vol. XVIII, Document 126.

¹⁴³ *FRUS*, 1977-1980, Vol. XVIII, Document 143.

shoulder the Vietnam burden.”¹⁴⁴ In November, CIA Director Stansfield Turner also pointed out China’s growing opposition to U.S. attempts to “draw Vietnam economically or politically away from the USSR,” which it concluded as “no use.” “Disappointment over US normalization with Vietnam at this time,” he warned, “could provide ammunition to those in China who might eventually oppose China’s opening to the US.”¹⁴⁵ Faced with the necessity to maintain the strategic alignment with China, Carter, therefore, decided to delay normalization with Vietnam.

Deng reciprocated U.S. efforts by further promoting the Four Modernizations at home and abroad. Domestically, he utilized large-scale conferences for political campaigns for his reformist agendas. Deng pointed out at the All China Federation of Trade Unions in October that the Four Modernization was “a great revolution” to “fundamentally change our country’s economic and technological backwardness” and “further reinforce the proletariat dictatorship.” He encouraged the audience to make “the maximum efforts” to obtain “technological and managerial knowledge for modernization” in order to make “exceptional contribution” to China’s reform.¹⁴⁶ In addition, Deng proposed to abandon any blind pursuit of static dogmas and initiate new practices for the dynamic reality at the Central Work Committee in December. “Revolutionary spirit is very precious,” he maintained, “but revolution occurs on the basis of material interest.” Exclusive emphasis on “the spirit of sacrifice, not material interest,” meant not revolution

¹⁴⁴ *FRUS*, 1977-1980, Vol. XVIII, Document 138.

¹⁴⁵ *FRUS*, 1977-1980, Vol. XVIII, Document 155.

¹⁴⁶ *Deng Xiaoping wenxuan*, Vol. 2, 134-39.

but “spiritualism.” Deng also pointed out that although Mao’s revolutionary achievements “could never disappear,” he was “not free from shortcomings.” He called for an investigation of the Cultural Revolution from the viewpoint of “scientific history,” contradicting Hua’s attitude of full endorsement.¹⁴⁷ Internationally, the biggest success came in October, when Deng visited Japan following the signing of the Sino-Japanese Peace and Friendship Treaty.¹⁴⁸ He envisioned to Prime Minister Fukuda Takeo, “the more we develop, the greater the possibility for cooperation with your country,” and expressed his hope for the impact of the treaty to “exceed our initial expectations.” Extolling the anti-hegemony clause in the joint statement targeted at the Soviet Union, he promised that China would “realize the Four Modernizations, become a strong socialist country, and yet never seek hegemony.”¹⁴⁹ Furthermore, while in Japan, Deng expressed his “hope” to “go to Washington.” While it took “one second” to complete the Peace and Friendship Treaty, he reportedly told the Japanese, it would take only “two seconds” for Sino-American normalization.¹⁵⁰

Deng’s political rise vis-à-vis Hua culminated in the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh CCP Central Committee in mid-December. While calling the Four Modernizations as “one extensive, deep revolution” that would change “production relations, managerial methods, and activity and thought methods” that no longer fit the

¹⁴⁷ *Deng Xiaoping wenxuan*, Vol. 2, 140-53.

¹⁴⁸ China abandoned its claims during the Sino-Japanese War from 1937 to 1945 in exchange for economic aid and technological assistance, which contributed to its modernization programs.

¹⁴⁹ *Deng Xiaoping sixiang nianbian*, 183-185.

¹⁵⁰ *FRUS*, 1977-1980, Vol. XVIII, Document 157, footnote 3.

reality, the final statement stopped using “the erroneous slogan” of “taking class struggle as the central task” on the ground that “large-scale stormy mass class struggle” should not damage “the political situation of stability and unity necessary for socialist modernization buildup.” On the historical interpretation of the Cultural Revolution, the statement not only denounced the Gang of Four’s attack during the Anti-Deng Campaign and the Tiananmen Incident but also cleared criticisms on many purged members, including Peng Dehuai,¹⁵¹ confirming their positive contribution to the party. Furthermore, the statement negated blind deification of Mao as “not compatible with” the late chairman’s “long-term self-evaluation” and concluded that the party leadership should “integrate the universal principle of Marxism and Maoism and specific practices of the socialist modernization” in accordance with the reality.¹⁵² The statement was tantamount to a tacit yet comprehensive criticism on the Two Whatever, facilitating the quiet leadership transition from Hua to Deng without visible confrontations, which Vogel calls “succession without coronation.”¹⁵³ More important, Deng’s rejection of Two Whatever symbolized China’s metamorphosis from a revolutionary nation to a reformist nation.

Despite the strategic concurrence, the tactical issue of Taiwan nonetheless caused disagreements between Washington and Beijing toward the signing of normalization. The U.S. side was divided on the problems of a peaceful solution and arms sales. While Carter insisted on “no restraints on our trade with Taiwan (not single out arms or any

¹⁵¹ Peng Dehuai was the commander of the People’s Liberation Army during the Korean War, who was purged by Mao for his criticism on the Great Leap Forward in 1957.

¹⁵² *Deng Xiaoping sixiang nianbian*, 206-208.

¹⁵³ Vogel, *Deng Xiaoping*, 247-48.

other item)” and advised on “a unilateral (& uncontested) statement” on it, Woodcock and Oksenberg regarded it as “extremely difficult” to obtain Chinese “peaceful intent toward Taiwan” or its consent to “remain completely silent” to U.S. statements on a peaceful solution and arms sales, though still hopeful for tacit tolerance of arms sales.¹⁵⁴ The Chinese validated the latter perspective as the negotiation proceeded. In his September meeting with Zhai Zemin, the new chief of the Chinese Liaison Office, Carter clarified his intention to retain full economic ties with Taiwan, including “the restrained sale of some very carefully selected defensive arms,” in a way that maintained “the prospects of peace in the region and the situation surrounding China.” Although refraining from demanding an explicit confirmation, he also asked Zhai not to “contradict” U.S. statement on a peaceful settlement.¹⁵⁵ The Chinese, however, remained adamant. Huang criticized Vance in October for trying to “reproduce in a new form the formula already rejected by the Chinese side,” which directly or indirectly legitimized Two Chinas. “Such a policy of contravening the spirit of the Shanghai Communiqué and of interfering in China’s internal affairs,” he asserted, “only shows that you have not yet made up our mind to normalize Sino-U.S. relations.”¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁴ *FRUS*, 1977-1980, Vol. XVIII, Document 119, 121, 123. Woodcock in August after a third meeting Huang “avoided any explicit reference to arms sales.” “may be indicating a loophole for some form of access to U.S. arms.” Woodcock in September after a fourth meeting “Clearly the arms sales issue will be a difficult one to surmount, but for the moment the Chinese do not seem to be slamming the normalization door in our face over this issue, even while sketching out a position that is substantially at odds with our own.” See *FRUS*, 1977-1980, Vol. XVIII, Document 141.

¹⁵⁵ *FRUS*, 1977-1980, Vol. XVIII, Document 135.

¹⁵⁶ *FRUS*, 1977-1980, Vol. XVIII, Document 138.

Disagreements over peaceful settlement and arms sales became even thornier as the negotiation approached its target date in December. The Chinese expressed their “emphatic objection” to arms sales after normalization and rejected any commitment to peaceful settlement as “impossible” due to potential domestic opposition.¹⁵⁷ However, their guarantee to “refrain from objecting” to U.S. hope for a peaceful solution in the joint communiqué kept Brzezinski’s optimism on arms sales alive. “The wording [in their objection to arms sales] strongly implies a Chinese acknowledgement that arms sales will continue,” he insisted to Carter, “the Chinese ‘object’ but will not let the fact prevent normalization.”¹⁵⁸ Despite “serious differences” caused by Deng’s protest against any arms sales, Woodcock also envisioned that he would do so “within the context of a normalized relationship” so as not “fundamentally to affect our relationship.” “We cannot agree on the arms sales question,” he concluded, “but we can agree to disagree.”¹⁵⁹ The United States and China, therefore, finally reached an agreement on normalization on December 15. The joint communiqué not only declared the establishment of U.S.-Chinese relations and the severance of U.S.-Taiwanese relations but also stipulated opposition to “efforts by any other country or group of countries to establish such hegemony,” an apparent allusion to the Soviet Union following the precedence of the Shanghai Communiqué. On Taiwan, Washington and Beijing announced respective statements, where the former expressed its “interest in the peaceful resolution of the

¹⁵⁷ *FRUS*, 1977-1980, Vol. XVIII, Document 159.

¹⁵⁸ *FRUS*, 1977-1980, Vol. XVIII, Document 162.

¹⁵⁹ *FRUS*, 1977-1980, Vol. XVIII, Document 169, 170.

Taiwan issue,” while the latter asserted that it was “entirely China’s internal affair.”¹⁶⁰ Besides the concurrence between Brzezinski’s and Deng’s global strategies, the Sino-American normalization was, therefore, also predicated upon the delicate mutual understanding on Taiwan, which would underpin the bilateral relations for the next decades.

¹⁶⁰ *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Jimmy Carter, 1978* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1979), 2266. *New York Times*, December 17, 1978.

Chapter 8: Conclusion: A Shift in Sino-American Strategic Dynamism

As discussed, although the Taiwan issue posed tactical difficulties, the changing dynamisms between U.S. and Chinese global strategies determined Sino-American relations in the 1970s. Kissinger's triangular strategy of racing Moscow and Beijing for better relations with Washington failed to function as envisioned in the face of Mao's revolutionary strategy of championing the Third World in opposition to superpower hegemony, creating the long stalemate in the 1970s. Evelyn Goh uses the "discursive entrapment" effect to explain Kissinger's lasting belief in China's desire for U.S. deterrence against the Soviet Union despite contradicting evidence. Once he created the discourse on Beijing's "realist" fear of Moscow, it established a self-reinforcing process that underpinned his China policy throughout his tenure.¹⁶¹ To be more accurate, however, Kissinger's persisting assumption of China's fear was not merely a product of his doctrinal inflexibility. He could not reconsider his presumption because it served the bedrock for his triangular strategy, which would become dysfunctional if China stopped fearing the Soviet Union and desiring U.S. security guarantee. Nevertheless, before Ford's visit, Mao criticized U.S. policy as "using Soviet threat to frighten China, utilizing advanced technology and military aid as enticement, and inducing China to serve its Soviet policy."¹⁶² His analysis was, to a large extent, correct. The aging chairman thus tapped both his shoulders and told Ford, "We see that what you are doing is leaping to

¹⁶¹ Evelyn Goh, "Nixon, Kissinger, and the "Soviet Card" in the U.S. Opening to China, 1971-1974," *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 29, No. 3 (June 2005), 475-502.

¹⁶² Fan Zhonghui and Liu Haifeng, *Jiangjun, Waijiaojia, Yishujia: Huang Zhen zhuan* (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian chubanshe, 2007), 563.

Moscow by way of our shoulders, and these shoulders are now useless.”¹⁶³ Mao’s China, in other words, would never serve a stepping-stone in the triangular relationship as envisioned by Kissinger.

To be fair, as Kissinger argued, agitated U.S. domestic politics after the Watergate scandal did affect Sino-American relations negatively. The hostile Congress preempted U.S. responses to Soviet activities in the Third World and raised the political price for compromise on Taiwan, thereby contributing to the Chinese perception of U.S. “ineffectualness” as a weak power “with an unelected President facing a hostile Congress.”¹⁶⁴ However, although Mao never understood U.S. politics behind Nixon’s resignation, calling it “nonsensical,” Deng clarified to Kissinger that the Chinese “never attached any importance to what you [the Americans] call the Watergate event.” The crucial issue was, he maintained, “how we deal with the Soviet Union,” that is, “a question of strategy—a question of global strategy.”¹⁶⁵ Kissinger attempted to deal with Moscow within the framework of his triangular diplomacy, namely by using China as leverage for détente, while the Chinese refused it. Despite the paralysis in U.S. domestic politics, we should, therefore, still attribute the discord in U.S. and Chinese global strategies to their stillborn relationship.

Brzezinski’s bilateral strategy to forge a de facto alliance with China, on the other hand, corresponded with Deng’s reformist strategy of using Sino-American normalization

¹⁶³ *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. XVIII, Document 124.

¹⁶⁴ Kissinger, *On China*, 292-93, 348-56.

¹⁶⁵ *FRUS*, 1969-1976, Vol. XVIII, Document 58, 122.

to replace revolution with development in China's diplomatic priority. Brzezinski's China policy supported his global strategy to compete with the Soviet Union. As the bilateral discussions proceeded, he envisioned that "growing collaboration with China" would establish "a new framework of stability in the Far East" akin to that in Europe "for the first time" after the World War II. U.S. alliance systems in Europe, East Asia, and the Middle East would enable the United States to deal with the "Indian Ocean littoral states," "the areas of likely instability and potential conflict" due to Soviet interventions. Sino-American normalization, Brzezinski concluded, thus contributed to "a more stable U.S.-Soviet relationship."¹⁶⁶ Normalization, however, would not have been possible without the subtle mutual understanding on the Taiwan problem. Nancy Tucker and Enrico Fardella attribute Deng's passion for the Four Modernizations and geopolitical concern over Vietnam to his "desperate need for normalization," as shown in his compromise on Taiwan.¹⁶⁷ This latter issue did contribute to normalization, which enabled China to "teach Vietnamese a lesson" through limited invasion in early 1979 with U.S. acquiescence.¹⁶⁸ However, more fundamental for Deng's forthcoming attitude toward normalization was his decision to de-revolutionize Chinese diplomacy by abandoning the Third World struggle against both superpowers and pursuing development through economic cooperation with the West. Due to the strategic context, Deng "opted for

¹⁶⁶ *FRUS*, 1977-1980, Vol. XVIII, Document 143.

¹⁶⁷ Rosemary Foot, "Prizes Won, Opportunity Lost," in William Kirby, Robert Ross, and Gong Li, eds., *Normalization of U.S.-China Relations: An International History* (Cambridge, MA, 2005). Enrico Fardella, "The Sino-American Normalization: A Reassessment," *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 33, No. 4 (September 2009), 545-578.

¹⁶⁸ *FRUS*, 1977-1980, Vol. XVIII, Document 207. See also Vogel, *Deng Xiaoping*, 282.

movement rather than legalistic quibbling over details,” as Woodcock observed, and leave the Taiwan problem unsolved, while not compromising on China’s long-held position.¹⁶⁹ The shifting dynamisms in Sino-American relations from the Kissinger-Mao era to the Brzezinski-Deng era, therefore, facilitated both countries to overcome the long impasse and achieve a convergence of national interests on normalization.

¹⁶⁹ Hopeful for China’s tacit acceptance of U.S. arms sales to Taiwan, Woodcock pointed out that Deng “has clearly committed his personal prestige to accomplishing normalization within a near-term time frame on terms that could easily be interpreted in China and abroad as compromising long-held Chinese positions.” *FRUS*, 1977-1980, Vol. XVIII, Document 167.

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