



## Vacillating between Revolution and Détente: Mao's Changing Psyche and Policy toward the United States, 1969–1976\*

After nearly twenty-two years of confrontation and hostility between the United States and the People's Republic of China (PRC), U.S. president Richard Nixon made his historic trip to China and met with Chinese supreme leader Mao Zedong in February 1972. Nixon's one week in China represented a profound turning point in U.S.-China relations. The historic Nixon-Mao handshake stood as a great diplomatic victory for Beijing as well. The Chinese leaders could now focus their attention on the Soviet threat and avoid fighting a possible two-front war. A Chinese Communist party (CCP) Central Committee (CC) document hailed the summit for its success in "utilizing [others'] contradictions, dividing up enemies, and enhancing ourselves," and credited this to Mao's "brilliant decision" to invite the U.S. president.<sup>1</sup> Nixon and Mao have often been given credit for achieving U.S.-China rapprochement in the early 1970s. Was Mao really a realistic leader as many have suggested?<sup>2</sup>

Soon after Nixon's China trip, there was a lull in Sino-American relations from 1972 to 1978. Nixon's initial opening to China was followed by a period in which the projected normalization of diplomatic ties between the two powers was allowed to languish.<sup>3</sup> Chinese scholars have argued that it is necessary to

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1. "CCP Central Committee: 'Notice on the Joint Sino-American Communiqué, March 7, 1972,' cited in Zhonggong Zhongyang wenxian yanjiushi [CCP Central Archives and Manuscript Division], ed., *Wenge shinian ziliao xuanbian* [Selected Collection of Materials on the Ten Years of the Cultural Revolution], vol. 1(B) (Feng Pingshan Library, The University of Hong Kong, May 1981), 167–71.

2. For works praising Mao Zedong's realism in foreign policymaking, see Gong Li, *Mao Zedong waijiao fengyunlu* [A Record of Mao Zedong's Diplomacy] (Zhengzhou, 1996), 196–206; Qian Jian, *Xiaoqiu zhuandong daqiu: Pingpang waijiao mubou* [Little Ball Moves Big Ball: Behind Ping-Pong Diplomacy] (Beijing, 1997), chap. 8; Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York, 1994), chap. 28; Robert Ross, *Negotiating Cooperation: The United States and China, 1969–1989* (Stanford, CA 1995), chap. 1; John W. Garver, *Foreign Relations of the People's Republic of China* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1993), 74–81.

3. For more information on this, see "The Setbacks in the Normalization of Sino-American Relations," in Wang Taiping, chief ed., *Zhonghua renmin gongheguo waijiaoshi*, 1970–

mention the role of Chinese domestic politics to understand the stagnation in addition to the negative effect of the Watergate incident and the hindering role of U.S.-Soviet détente on Sino-American relations. They contend, "China's domestic political situation took a turn for the worse. Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai's effort to rectify 'leftism' suffered a setback . . . China's criticism of the United States increased."<sup>4</sup>

Chinese scholars have examined how elite politics affected China's policy toward the United States in the Sino-American rapprochement process.<sup>5</sup> The historian Gong Li has especially noticed the contradiction between China's foreign policy stance and its propaganda rhetoric. He writes, "In the early 1970s, China's public statements on external affairs had 'a high-sounding radical revolutionary rhetoric' (*jijin de geming gaodiao* in Chinese). Mao Zedong labeled it 'firing empty cannon' (*fangkongpao*). This didn't change much even after Sino-American relations had achieved rapprochement."<sup>6</sup>

Nonetheless, no one has offered a coherent explanation of the successive shift in China's changing stance in foreign affairs as seen in the following phrases: from the world revolution proposition of "down with imperialists, revisionists and reactionaries" (*dadao dixiufan*), to "a policy of reconciliation with the United States" (*dui Mei hejie*), to "a horizontal line (*yitiaoxian*)" and "a big terrain (*yidapian*)" of "alliance with the United States to deter the Soviet Union (*lian Mei kang Su*)," to "the theory of 'three worlds' (*sange shijie lilun*)" which held high the banner of "opposition to both of the two superpowers (*fandui liangge chaoji daguo*).<sup>7</sup> In a recent study of China's elite politics during Mao's last years, the Australian scholars Frederick Teiwes and Warren Sun have argued, "[N]o area commanded more of Mao's attention and control than foreign affairs, but foreign policy produced virtually no divisions of substance over the entire 1972–76

1978 [A Diplomatic History of the People's Republic of China, 1970–1978] (Beijing, 1999), chap. 8, sec. v; "The Setbacks in Sino-American Negotiation on Establishing Diplomatic Relations and 'Communiqué on Establishing Diplomatic Relations'," in Qu Xing, chief ed., *Zhongguo waijiao wushinian* [Fifty Years of Chinese Diplomacy], chap. 11, sec. III (Nanjing, 2000). The first subtitle of this section is to the point: "The Falling Out of Office of Nixon and the Stagnation of the Sino-American Normalization Process."

4. Gong Li, "Tortuous Road to the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations—The Evolution of China's U.S. Policy, 1972–1978," in Gong Li, William C. Kirby and Robert S. Ross, eds., *Cong jiedong zouxiang jianjiao: Zhong Mei guanxi zhengchanghua jincheng zai tantao, 1969–1979* [From Rapprochement to the Establishment of Formal Diplomatic Relations: Re-exploring U.S.-China Normalization Process, 1969–1979] (Beijing, 2004), 129. For an English version of this book, see William C. Kirby, Robert S. Ross, and Gong Li, eds., *Normalization of U.S.-China Relations: An International History* (Cambridge, MA, 2006).

5. For an English article on this topic, see Yafeng Xia, "China's Elite Politics and Sino-American Rapprochement, January 1969–February 1972," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 8, no. 4 (Fall 2006): 3–28.

6. Gong Li, "China's High-level Decision-making and the Thaw of Sino-American Relations," in Jiang Changbin and Robert Ross, eds., *Cong duizhi zouxiang huanbe—Jingzhan shiqi de Zhong Mei guanxi zai tantao* [From Confrontation to Détente—Re-examining Sino-American Relations during the Cold War] (Beijing, 2000), 711. For an English version of this book, see Robert Ross and Jiang Changbin, eds., *Re-examining the Cold War: U.S.-China Diplomacy, 1954–1973* (Cambridge, MA, 2001).

period.” While the book provides important insights on major foreign policy events, notably Zhou Enlai’s political setbacks at the Politburo meetings in 1973 and the Politburo debate regarding dispatching Deng Xiaoping to the United Nations in April 1974, it has not offered a coherent explanation of the drastic shift in Chinese foreign policy stances and Mao’s changing psyche in the 1970s.<sup>7</sup>

Utilizing a substantial amount of recently available Chinese sources, most notably some sensitive documents from the Central Archives of China (*Zhongyang dang’anguan*),<sup>8</sup> this article attempts to explain these seemingly puzzling policy shifts. The authors contend that Mao was not a consistent strategic planner. Instead, this article demonstrates that Mao was constantly vacillating between promoting world revolution and seeking a détente with U.S. “imperialists.” Mao was psychologically uncomfortable and hesitant when he switched from his hard-line anti-American policy to a more reconciliatory approach. This switch was due to Mao’s perceived threat from the USSR and the lack of momentum in a hopeful world revolution. As soon as he sensed the hope of an immediate revolutionary build-up, Mao changed his mind and reverted to his revolutionary tendency. Mao’s half-heartedness in the pursuit of a détente with the United States explains why Beijing behaved the way it did in the period leading to the signing of the Shanghai Communiqué. Mao’s natural inclination was toward the worldwide revolution. This has been a pattern of behavior throughout his life.<sup>9</sup> The article also shows that Mao’s revolutionary instinct outlived the Mao-Nixon summit. When he did not see the expected intensification of Soviet-American conflict, Mao flip-flopped to his anti-American approach, which the theory of three worlds attempted to rationalize.

#### THE ZIGZAGS OF MAO’S AMERICAN POLICY IN THE LATE 1960S

The historian Michael Sheng argues that the 1958 Taiwan Straits Crisis reflected Mao’s opposition to Moscow’s policy of peaceful coexistence. It became the beginning of the end of the Sino-Soviet alliance.<sup>10</sup> With the belief that China was “the center of world revolution,”<sup>11</sup> Beijing berated the Commu-

7. Frederick C. Teiwes and Warren Sun, *The End of Maoist Era: Chinese Politics during the Twilight of the Cultural Revolution, 1972–1976* (Armonk, NY, 2007).

8. This article makes use of original documents from *Zhongguo zhongyang dang’anguan* [Central Archives of China, Beijing, hereafter cited as *CAC*] as well as collections of documents compiled and provided by CAC to selected party historians for internal use. Yang Kuisong worked at the Central Party School of the CCP for many years and has access to these original documents and internal editions.

9. As Michael M. Sheng pointed out a decade ago, the class-struggle ideology “became the foundation of the ‘psychological self’” for Mao and his generation as individuals, “and the Party as a group.” See Michael M. Sheng, *Battling Western Imperialism: Mao, Stalin, and the United States* (Princeton, NJ, 1997), 192–93.

10. Michael M. Sheng, “Mao and China’s Relations with the Superpowers in the 1950s: A New Look at the Taiwan Straits Crisis and the Sino-Soviet Split,” *Modern China* (October 2008): 477–507.

11. At the tenth plenary session of the Eighth Congress of the CCP in September 1962, Zhou Enlai declared, “The truth of Marxism-Leninism and the center of world revolution are

nist party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) for advocating “peaceful transition,” “peaceful coexistence,” and “peaceful competition,” which was the signature of the so-called Soviet revisionism.

To make its opposition to Soviet revisionism known to the world, Beijing’s anti-imperialist revolutionary practice intensified. China gave financial and moral support to revolutionary parties in small and weak countries, assisted Communist parties in China’s neighboring countries to launch violent revolutionary struggles, and opposed any attempt by Communists to gain power through peaceful means or to compromise with the U.S. “imperialists.”

Mao insisted on these policies despite their practical difficulties. After the Sino-Soviet open polemics in 1963, Mao severely criticized Wang Jiaxiang, the director of the International Liaison Department of the CCP Central Committee, for advocating a revisionist line of “three reconciliations and one reduction.”<sup>12</sup> Wang Jiaxiang was concerned about tactical issues in China’s foreign policy. On the issue of China’s Soviet policy, Wang contended that China should avoid raising any reference to difference and provoking disputes with the Soviets. In its relations with Western countries, including the United States, Wang argued that China should adhere to the principle of peaceful coexistence between countries with different social systems and that it was incorrect to claim “Peaceful coexistence is impossible given the existence of imperialism.” Regarding foreign aid, Wang pointed out, “We should support anti-imperialist struggle, national independence and people’s liberation movement of other countries. But we should be realistic and settle for what is practical, and act in accordance with our capabilities.”<sup>13</sup> Mao’s critique of Wang’s more realistic approach signaled the further radicalization of Chinese foreign policy: “exporting revolution” became Beijing’s preoccupation.

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now moving from Moscow to Beijing. . . . Now, we are not declining to shoulder the responsibility and are ready to take up the cudgels for the just cause.” *CAC*.

12. In 1964, Mao Zedong summarized Wang Jiaxiang’s suggestions as “‘three reconciliations and one reduction’, that is to reconcile with the imperialists, the revisionists and the reactionaries, and to reduce assistance to the struggle of the peoples of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. This is a revisionist line. It is an ‘international program’ undermining socialism.” See “Memorandum of Mao Zedong’s Conversations with the Japanese Communist Party Delegation,” March 23, 1964, *CAC*. Also see Cong Jin, *Qizhe fazhan de suiye* [Years and Months of Tortuous Development] (Zhengzhou, 1989), 577.

13. For Wang Jiaxiang’s suggestions, see the following documents. The first document “Our Views on Certain International Issues” and the second “Seeking Truth from Facts, and Acting According to One’s Capability” are included in Editors of *Wang Jiaxiang xuanji* [Selected Works of Wang Jiaxiang], *Huiyi Wang Jiaxiang* [Recollections of Wang Jiaxiang] (Beijing, 1985), 444–45 and 446–60. Other documents include “Report Requesting Instructions (from the Central Committee) on Several Important Principles regarding Our Mass Organizations at International Conferences,” and “How to Handle Miscalculating and Making Indiscreet Remarks in External Activities” in Xu Zehao, *Wang Jiaxiang zhuàn* [A Biography of Wang Jiaxiang] (Beijing, 2006), 366–70; Xu Zehao, *Wang Jiaxiang nianpǔ, 1906–1974* [The Chronology of Wang Jiaxiang, 1906–1974] (Beijing, 2001), 486–89.

The Great Cultural Revolution, starting in 1966, would push this foreign policy radicalization to its peak, campaigning for war against imperialists, revisionists, and reactionaries of all countries. At this juncture, the Sino-Soviet border clashes broke out in March 1969. The core leadership of the CCP was alerted to the possibility of a Soviet preemptive strike against China. At the Ninth Congress of the CCP in April 1969, China maintained an intransigent anti-imperialist and antirevisionist stance. Mao's second-in-command Lin Biao delivered the political report to the Congress, stating that China was "to prepare for war," especially for war with the Soviet Union.<sup>14</sup> After the conference, Mao, through Zhou Enlai, entrusted four veteran marshals, who had been sidelined during the Cultural Revolution, to study the international situation and analyze possible Soviet and/or U.S. moves against China and to submit reports. This indicates that Mao was not sure of his future policy toward the two superpowers.<sup>15</sup>

After learning that the Soviet Union might launch a preemptive nuclear strike, Mao laid out the strategy of "digging the cave deeply, accumulating grain extensively, and preparing for war and famine" (*shenwadong, guangjiliang, beizhanbeibuang*). Mao was preparing for a nuclear war. He ordered the transfer of CCP central leaders and central organizations from Beijing to various provinces to guard against a Soviet surprise attack. He also accepted the four marshals' proposal of "allying with Sun-Wu (hinting the United States) in the east, and resisting Cao-Wei (hinting the Soviet Union) in the north" (*donglian Sun-Wu, beiju Cao-Wei*, a popular ancient Chinese alliance stratagem). In accepting this policy, Mao gave no thought to the feeling of those revolutionary parties that had been faithfully following China's policy of anti-imperialism and anti-revisionism. He thus approved Zhou's proposal of promoting high-level Sino-American contact in order to "increase the suspicion of the Soviet revisionists, and to enlarge American-Soviet contradiction."<sup>16</sup>

Mao's initial motive to approve Zhou's proposal to deal with the United States was a tactical attempt to contain the Soviet Union and to avoid war. Although Mao saw the need for the policy shift toward a united front tactic, he was not ready to entirely abandon his traditional thinking of class struggle and world revolution. Moving toward a policy of talking with the Americans at the highest level, Mao de-emphasized his hard-line position on anti-imperialist revolution. He now attempted to win over the U.S. imperialists whom he

14. *Renmin ribao* [People's Daily], April 28, 1969.

15. For four marshals' Study Group, see Xia, "China's Elite Politics and Sino-American Rapprochement," 5–8.

16. Cited from Gao Wenqian, *Wannian Zhou Enlai* [Zhou Enlai's Later Years] (Hong Kong, 2003), 414. For an English version of the book, see Gao Wenqian, *Zhou Enlai: The Last Perfect Revolutionary, A Biography*, trans. Peter Rand and Lawrence R. Sullivan (New York, 2007), 310. The English version has been adapted for Western readers by adding the story of Zhou Enlai's earlier years prior to the Cultural Revolution and by elaborating the political context of the Cultural Revolution and the behavior of other actors.

considered the deadly enemy of the people of the world. He even went so far as to shake hands with American leaders. The reason why Mao took this step was also because he was extremely disappointed with the outcome of continually launching and fomenting world revolution in the preceding decade. Chinese-supported violent insurgencies in both Africa and Latin America failed to produce appreciable results. Only in China's periphery (Southeast Asia and South Asia), did violent struggle achieve limited success. These insurgencies were supervised and assisted and even directed militarily by the Chinese. Zhou Enlai even criticized the Vietnamese Communist Party, the only party with the strength and abilities to fight effectively. Due to Soviet involvement in the Vietnam War, Zhou felt that the Vietcong "failed to live up to expectations" (*bu zhengqi*). In fact, in late 1968, several months before the outbreak of the Sino-Soviet conflict at the Zhenbao Island, Mao had voiced doubts about his strategy of violent revolution. In his conversation with the Australian Communist Party leader Ted Hill, Mao showed his personal anxiety by repeatedly asking his visitors their opinions of the United States and the Soviet Union. He asked,

How will the imperialists act? That is to say, will they fight a world war? Not to fight [a world war] temporarily, but to fight after a little while? What is the feeling in your country about the American intention? How is your dealing with the European countries? According to Lenin, "Imperialism is war." They couldn't depart from war. If the United States and the Soviet Union really want to fight a big war, there are many difficulties. For example, both of them don't have a really large population [presumably by the Chinese standard]. It would be even fewer if they are dispersed. Furthermore, both the United States and the Soviet Union are afraid of nuclear war. Other advanced nations such as Great Britain, France, Germany, Italy, and Japan want no war. So, in the end, is it war or revolution? Does war precede revolution, or does revolution prevent war? In sum, the current status of no war and no revolution couldn't last for very long.<sup>17</sup>

At the time, Mao felt uncertain about the relationship between war and revolution. The Second World War had broken out only about twenty-one years after the end of WWI. By 1968, WWII had been over for twenty-three years, but there was still no sign of a third world war. Moreover, most of the world's Communist parties had grown hardly at all since the end of WWII in contrast to the rapid development of the international communist movement after WWI. There had also been a great slackening of revolutionary zeal. Not only had the former "world proletarian motherland"—the Soviet Union—become revisionist, but also more than one hundred communist parties of the world no longer accepted strict adherence to Marxism-Leninism. In recent

17. "Mao Zedong's Conversation with the Chairman of the Communist Party of Australia (Marxist-Leninist) Hill," November 28, 1968, *CAC*.



years, the Chinese party had shouldered the heavy responsibility of promoting and assisting the world revolution, only to witness a single spark not a prairie fire. The situation disheartened Mao. Thus, he was extremely puzzled and complained about “the current situation of neither war and nor revolution.”

The complaint was a manifestation of Mao's innermost revolutionary mindset. To Mao, the absence of a general war and revolution meant that communism was in danger. In view of the perceived threat from the USSR, Mao decided on making a 180-degree tactical transition in order to establish diplomatic contact with China's deadliest enemy—the United States. But when a new opportunity arose, or when there was a new political indication for a revolution, he would once again ignite his revolutionary aspirations. This was the reason for Mao's change of attitude in the spring of 1970 after China and the United States had already held talks to prepare for a higher-level diplomatic contact.

In view of the recent contact with the United States, the Politburo on February 12, 1970, passed a resolution welcoming the U.S. government's decision to send a ministerial-level representative or presidential envoy to Beijing to negotiate with the Chinese leaders. After Mao approved, the Chinese negotiator Lei Yang informed the U.S. envoy of Chinese government's decision at the ambassadorial talk in Warsaw on February 20. But on March 18, in Cambodia, General Lon Nol staged a military *coup d'état*, overthrowing the government of Prince Norodom Sihanouk, the Cambodian head of state. On March 30, Nixon sent U.S. troops to Cambodia, thereby expanding the war from Vietnam and Laos to all Indochina. This U.S. move also ignited strong domestic antiwar demonstrations in the United States. Mao, who had been disheartened with the no-revolution situation, was obviously excited by this turn of events in Indochina. He anticipated that the anti-American response by the Southeast Asian nations would accelerate revolutions in those countries.<sup>18</sup>

During April and May, Mao repeatedly urged a more militant revolutionary foreign policy upon Zhou Enlai. He said, “The current international situation has developed to the high tide of world revolutionary movement of anti-U.S. imperialists and its running dogs. We must make use of it.” In his meetings with the Vietnamese and Laotian Communist party leaders, Mao confidently claimed: “Southeast Asia is not the only hornet's nest;” “In my view, the people of the world are going to rise up, including people in the imperialist countries;” “Can we believe there were only the October Revolution, the Chinese Revolution, the Vietnamese Revolution and the Laotian Revolution, but no revolution in other places? It is impossible;” and “If there is no revolution in other places, then Marxism-Leninism is no longer efficacious.” Thus, “the main tide of the current world is revolution.”<sup>19</sup>

18. Xia, “China's Elite Politics and Sino-American Rapprochement,” 9–13.

19. “Mao Zedong's Conversation with Le Duan,” May 11, 1970, and “Mao Zedong's Conversation with Kayson Phomvihan,” July 7, 1970, cited in Li Danhui, ed., *Zhongguo yu Yinduzhina zhanzheng* [China and the Indochina War] (Hong Kong, 2000), 317–24.

In response to Mao's latest shift, the CCP Politburo held another meeting on Sino-American relations. It decided to postpone the Sino-American ambassadorial talk. It also issued a statement in Mao's name, supporting international anti-American revolutionary struggles, calling for a Supreme People's Conference of delegates from three countries and four sides of Indochina,<sup>20</sup> and calling for mass rallies and demonstrations in China. Mao and Lin Biao would be present at the mass rally in Beijing to express support. Mao's response to the Politburo proposal was to "Act accordingly."<sup>21</sup>

With the Sino-American rapprochement about to take place, Mao flatly suspended contacts between the two countries and attended the mass rally in Beijing on May 20. At the mass rally, he exhorted Sihanouk to resist U.S. intervention in Cambodia. The public announcement stated, "People of the World, Unite to Defeat the U.S. Aggressors and all their Running Dogs." He specifically emphasized, "The current tide in the world is toward revolution."<sup>22</sup> The new diplomatic approach toward the United States was only a tactical tool. Mao's world revolution ideals and zeal lingered.

#### "FIGHTING IS FIGHTING, AND DIPLOMACY IS DIPLOMACY"

By the second half of 1970, after the United States had withdrawn from Cambodia, the situation in Southeast Asia had returned to the status quo (before the U.S. invasion in March). Zhou Enlai and his associates wanted to renew contact with the United States and reopen possible Sino-American rapprochement. To help accomplish this mission, on July 10 Beijing released Bishop James Walsh, an American citizen who had been imprisoned in China since 1958 on espionage charges. This was Beijing's signal to the United States that the PRC was still interested in improving relations. In the fall, Mao's old friend Edgar Snow, a leftist American journalist and writer, and his wife were invited to China to view the annual National Day celebration parade from the wall of the Forbidden City overlooking Tiananmen Square. They were escorted by Zhou to meet Mao and stood at the chairman's side throughout the parade. Snow was the first American to be given such an honor. Zhou Enlai put down his written instructions on the Foreign Ministry's report on the arrangements for Snow: "I propose that the Chairman grant an interview to Snow in the next few days." Mao consented, but disregarded an immediate interview with Snow, which did not happen until

20. A Supreme People's Conference of delegates from three countries and four sides of Indochina, including delegates from North Vietnam, South Vietnam, Laos and the exiled Cambodian government of Sihanouk was held in April 1970. All four sides were anti-America and supported by China.

21. Li Ping et al., *Zhou Enlai nianpu, 1949–1976* [Chronology of Zhou Enlai, 1949–1976], vol. 3 (Beijing, 1997), 367 (hereafter ZENP).

22. Zhongyang wenxian yanjiushi & Zhonghua renmin gongheguo waijiaobu [The Division of Central Archives and Manuscripts and the Foreign Ministry of the PRC], eds., *Mao Zedong waijiao wenxuan* [Selected Diplomatic Papers of Mao Zedong] (Beijing, 1994), 584.



mid-December. It appears that he was not psychologically ready for such a tactical adjustment (to improve relations with the United States).<sup>23</sup>

Mao's attitude towards relations with Burma further demonstrates that he was not prepared either psychologically or at the policy level for rapprochement with the United States. The Burmese government sent envoys to Beijing with the intent of restoring diplomatic relations with China. Zhou Enlai was in favor of Sino-Burmese rapprochement. At that time the Burmese Communist Party (BCP) was engaged in a revolutionary struggle with Chinese aid. So the effect of such a diplomatic demarche on the BCP had to be handled with great delicacy by the Chinese. In order to facilitate the process, Zhou and the Foreign Ministry proposed that Mao personally explain China's position to the BCP leaders. To meet this end, the Chinese officials arranged for the vice chairman of the BCP, Thakin Ba Thein Tin, to view the National Day celebration parade from the wall of the Forbidden City overlooking Tiananmen Square with high-ranking Chinese officials as well as to personally meet with Mao on October 1, 1970. Mao informed Thakin Ba Thein Tin that the Burmese Ne Win government wished to restore diplomatic relations with China, which had been suspended since 1967. Although Mao was in favor of restoring Sino-Burmese relations, he clearly stated: "The factions led by Ne Win (current Burmese prime minister) and U Nu (former prime minister) are both anti-communism and anti-people;" "Even if we restore state-to-state relations with Ne Win government, it wouldn't affect your fighting . . . If you make a big effort to do some concerted aggressive fighting, with the result of taking over a large part of Northeast Burma with 100,000 or 200,000 plus inhabitants, it would be much easier. You will have earned the right to speak;" "Fighting is Fighting, and Diplomacy is Diplomacy;" and "We have diplomatic relations with more than 40 countries. Basically, we rely on the people of these countries, not their governments. The Soviet Union relies on those governments, not the people."<sup>24</sup>

In late 1970, Mao showed a similar ambivalence when it came to relations with the United States. It was only gradually that he decided on a relaxation of tension with the United States, and this was largely due to the efforts of President Richard Nixon. Starting in October 1970, Nixon continuously signaled that he would like to improve relations with China. Not only did he publicly express his wish to visit China, but he also ask the presidents of Pakistan and Romania to relay to the Chinese side that he would like to send high-level representatives to secretly visit Beijing.<sup>25</sup> This offered Mao an opportunity for

23. Cited in Kong Dongmei, *Gaibian shijie de rizi—Yu Wang Hairong tan Mao Zedong waijiao wangshi* [In the Era of a Changing World: Talking about Mao Zedong's Diplomatic Past with Wang Hairong] (Beijing, 2006), 63–64. For Snow's visit to China in 1970, see also Huang Hua, *Qinli yu jianwen—Huang Hua huiyilu* [Personal Experience and Eyewitness Account—Memoir of Huang Hua] (Beijing, 2007), 149–55.

24. "Mao Zedong's Conversation with the Burmese Communist Party Vice Chairman Thakin Ba Thein Tin," October 1, 1970, *CAC*.

25. Wang, *Zhonghua renmin gongheguo waijiaoshi*, 350–51.

policy transformation, but he still needed a suitable excuse. Thus, he was pondering this issue time and again. Until December 18, after reading an article by Snow in the Italian edition of *Time* expressing the view that China was establishing a much broader anti-imperialist united front, not excluding the Americans, Mao's thinking was suddenly enlightened. Mao was instantly excited by this article, according to the recollection of Wu Xujun, Mao's head nurse (a group of nurses and female attendants worked on 24-hour shifts in turn at Mao's quarters in his later years). He lost sleep for the night and asked his nurse on duty to phone his grandniece Wang Hairong, who was then an official in the Protocol Department in the Foreign Ministry, instructing her to have Snow in for a conversation.<sup>26</sup>

What Mao had to tell Snow was simple. Nixon needed help in order to come to China. He had written letters and asked others to relay the information to the Chinese government to allow him to come. Because Nixon was the representative of the most reactionary monopoly capitalism, he was not likely to deceive. He had dared to adopt the policy of rapprochement with China, defying the political climate and sentiment in his country. This would be a great opportunity to resolve the toughest issues, like the Taiwan question. "The centrists and leftists wouldn't do it. We can only resolve it with Nixon." Mao did not have much hope for the resolution of the Taiwan issue. However, as he believed that he could force Nixon to resolve some other issues, he decided to make good use of this opportunity. According to Mao, "It's all right to talk well. It's also OK if we cannot talk well. It's OK to quarrel, but it's also all right not to quarrel . . . All fine."<sup>27</sup>

The message was clear. The political effect of having the Americans visit China was very profound. Mao, Zhou Enlai, and officials in the Foreign Ministry, who were actively promoting contact with the United States, became hesitant. This hesitancy was particularly revealed in the subsequent event called the "ping-pong diplomacy."<sup>28</sup>

Although the Chinese government had already been signaling the United States for reconciliation, it was baffled by the request to visit China from the U.S. ping-pong team, which was participating in the thirty-first international table tennis tournament in Nagoya, Japan in late March 1971. On April 3, the Foreign Ministry, after careful deliberations, declined the U.S. request. In its report to the CCP CC, it suggested that it would not be politically advantageous for the Chinese to invite the American ping-pong team to visit China, first on the ground that "the U.S. leftists and dignitaries have not yet visited China." This did not sit well with Zhou, but Zhou dared not voice his objection, so he sent for Mao's decision. After receiving the report, Mao remained undecided. It

26. Kong, *Gaibian shijie de rizi*, 64–66.

27. *Mao Zedong waijiao wenxuan*, 592–94; Huang, *Qinli yu jianwen*, 154.

28. For an English discussion of the ping-pong diplomacy, see Xia, "China's Elite Politics and Sino-American Rapprochement," 11–17.

took him two days to endorse the report. Mao was still pondering his decision after the report was sent back to the Foreign Ministry. Mao's nurse offered a vivid and careful recollection. That evening, Mao seemed to be disturbed.

On the evening after the report was returned, Mao took sleeping pills ahead of time. I had dinner together with him at about 11:00 pm. After dinner, Mao was so fatigued that he slumped over the table in a stupor as the pills had begun to take effect. But suddenly, I heard him mumbling. It took me a while to understand that he wanted me to phone Wang Hairong at the Foreign Ministry. His voice was low and vague. "To invite the American team to visit China."

The nurse was not sure of Mao's instruction and asked loudly and questioned, "Does your word count after taking sleeping pills?" Mao was anxious, saying with a waving hand, "Yes, it counts, every word counts. Act promptly, or it will be too late!"<sup>29</sup>

The difficulty of the reversal of policy from anti-imperialism to reconciliation with the United States could also be seen from the Politburo report of May 29, 1971, to Mao Zedong and Lin Biao. Since Mao had made the decision, the CCP CC formally set the issue of establishing Sino-American contact as an agenda item. The main concern of the Chinese side was how to most profitably utilize this opportunity to resolve the Taiwan issue.<sup>30</sup> But the Politburo report had to address the issue whether the Sino-American rapprochement would affect the anti-imperialist movement. Thus, the report endeavored to address this issue in the following manner.

First, on the American people's revolutionary struggle, because "it is hard to anticipate the possibility of seizing political power through violent revolution in the United States in the next few years," it would not create a negative impact on the American people's revolutionary struggle if the United States and China established normal diplomatic relations. On the contrary, the report argued,

On the eve of the Great Chinese Revolution in 1924–1927, on the one hand, the Soviet Russia sent representatives to help Sun Yat-sen reorganize the Chinese Nationalist Party (Guomindang, GMD) and carry out GMD-CCP cooperation; on the other, it sent diplomatic envoys to Beijing to carry on diplomatic negotiations with the Beiyang government. Such a diplomatic line adopted by Lenin played the role of mobilizing the Chinese people.

Second, on the war of resistance against the United States in Indochina, the Sino-American contact "might create a short-term 'ripple' to the Indochina War

29. Lin Ke, Xu Tao, and Wu Xujun, *Lishi de zhenshi—Mao Zedong shenbian gongzuo ren yuan de zhengyan* [The True Life of Mao Zedong—Eyewitness Accounts by Mao's Staff] (Hong Kong, 1995), 308.

30. For the May 1971 CCP CC Politburo debate regarding Kissinger's secret visit, see Xia, "China's Elite Politics and Sino-American Rapprochement," 17–21.

and the Paris Peace talks, but the progress in the Sino-American discussions would eventually enhance Hanoi's position at the Paris Peace talks. This would force Washington to withdraw troops from Indochina because Nixon had realized that the focus of Soviet-American rivalry was in Europe and the Middle East rather than in the Far East."

Third, on the spirit of Chinese people's anti-imperialism and anti-revisionism, the current situation was the result of "the victorious result of our struggles against imperialists, revisionists, and reactionaries," as well as the "inevitable outcome of the internal and external crises facing the U.S. imperialists and the competition for world hegemony between the United States and the Soviet Union." So the negotiations might produce a positive outcome. If negotiations succeeded, the "competition between the two superpowers" would be fiercer. If the negotiation failed, the "reactionary face" of the U.S. imperialists would be further exposed, and "our people's consciousness" would be further enhanced.<sup>31</sup> This report not only provided the rationale to Mao's decision on the Sino-American rapprochement, it also reflected the CCP leadership's psychological need to justify the switch away from the previous commitment to world revolution. Mao and his associates were obviously uneasy about this turnabout.

Acting on the spirit of the Politburo report, the Chinese side received U.S. presidential envoy Henry Kissinger in both July and October of 1971. During their talks, Zhou and Kissinger focused their discussion on the Taiwan issue. Zhou secured much-needed, although not completely satisfactory, U.S. assurances regarding Taiwan. Kissinger assured Zhou that the United States would soon disengage itself from Taiwan, and that the Nixon administration would not seek "two Chinas" or a "one China, one Taiwan" policy, would not support Nationalist action against the mainland, and would not support a Taiwanese independence movement. Zhou also presented China's three conditions for normalization. These involved the acknowledgment of the PRC as the sole legitimate government of China and Taiwan as a province of China; the withdrawal of American forces from Taiwan by a fixed deadline; and the abrogation of the 1954 U.S.-Republic of China Mutual Defense Treaty. Kissinger agreed to the first demand by indicating that the acknowledgment of the PRC as the sole legitimate government could only be achieved in Nixon's second term. He declared that troop reductions in Taiwan could begin once the war in Vietnam ended and circumvented the third condition by noting that it was a historical issue and would be solved by history.<sup>32</sup>

31. "The Central Committee Politburo's Report on the Sino-American Negotiations" (drafted by Zhou Enlai), May 29, 1971, cited in *Wenge shinian ziliao xuanbian*, vol. 1 (B), 122-25.

32. Yafeng Xia, *Negotiating with the Enemy: U.S.-China Talks during the Cold War, 1949-1972* (Bloomington, IN, 2006), 186-87.

The next item on the agenda was to draft a communiqué on Nixon's visit to China. From the formulation of the agreement, we can see Mao's concern did not emphasize what compromises the Americans would make regarding the Taiwan issue and how to announce the common U.S.-China consensus on Taiwan. What concerned Mao most was that the communiqué, as the public declaration of the Sino-American rapprochement, could not just be "bullshit" (*pigongbao*). According to Mao, the so-called "bullshit communiqué" was one that gave the impression that China was indeed compromising with the United States and thus gave up its previous Marxist-Leninist revolutionary position.

On October 20, Mao warned Zhou regarding this issue. Accordingly, Zhou repudiated the U.S. draft and instructed the Foreign Ministry to prepare a new draft. But Mao was still unsatisfied with the Foreign Ministry draft. He said that China's revolutionary position was not adequately reflected in the new draft, which was "not a bit on airs" (*yidian shenqi ye meiyou*). Mao stated sharply, "I have said many times that the international situation is that all under Heaven is in great chaos, so it is desirable to let each side speak out for itself." If the American side wanted to talk about "peace, security, and no pursuit of hegemony," Mao continued, the Chinese side should emphasize "revolution, the liberation of the oppressed peoples and nations in the world, and no rights for big powers to bully and humiliate small countries." Mao acknowledged that stressing these goals was no more than "firing empty cannons"; yet he stressed, "All of these points must be highlighted; and anything short of that would be improper."<sup>33</sup>

Mao's intention was obvious. He still wanted to act on the principle, which he elaborated to the BCP leader Thakin Ba Thein Tin on October 1, 1971, "Fighting is Fighting, and Diplomacy is Diplomacy." That is, the normalization of diplomatic relations with the United States would not affect China's basic position of assisting world revolutionary movements. At Mao's insistence, the joint U.S.-China communiqué (the Shanghai Communiqué) issued at the end of Nixon's trip to China on February 28, 1972, contained contrasting statements. While China affirmed its support for wars of national liberation and social revolution, the United States affirmed its commitment to peace.<sup>34</sup> A CCP CC circular hailed the summit. It stated,

During the negotiations, we didn't compromise our principles. Not only did we indicate our concern on the Taiwan issue, but also indicated our continuous support to the three countries and four sides in Indochina. If the United States did not cease its aggression, we would continue to support the people in Indochina at war. In the communiqué, we take "a clear-cut stand, insist on

33. Wei Shiyan, "Kissinger's Second Trip to China," in Pei Jianzhang, chief ed., *Xin Zhongguo waijiao fengyun* [Winds and Clouds in New China's Diplomacy], vol. 3 (Beijing, 1994), 67–69. Also Xia, *Negotiating with the Enemy*, 179.

34. Xia, *Negotiating with the Enemy*, 211.

our consistent principled position, expose the slander of the Soviet revisionists and encourage the people of the world.”<sup>35</sup>

THE IMPRACTICAL THOUGHT OF “ALLIANCE WITH THE U.S. TO  
DETER THE SOVIET UNION” AND ITS INEVITABLE SETBACKS

It seems that China received instant gratification in its foreign relations from its reconciliation policy with the United States. Due to the change in U.S. attitude, the UN General Assembly voted, by an overwhelming majority, to let Beijing have China’s seat at the United Nations and expel Taiwan from it on October 25, 1971. In 1971, fourteen countries established diplomatic relations with China. In 1972, the number was seventeen, and these were mostly developed countries—European countries and Japan. Over the years, the PRC insisted that countries not recognize Taiwan in order to establish formal diplomatic relations with Beijing. Mao, who was accustomed to the strategy of “defeating the enemies one by one” (*gege jiepo*) in military and in united front work, was obviously excited. He thus put forth a strange concept. He was thinking of utilizing Sino-American common concern over Soviet expansionism to establish a geopolitical complex of countries he termed a “strategic line,” which extended from Europe through Turkey, Iran, and Pakistan to China, Japan and the United States. This geopolitical complex also included many countries outside the line as well. Mao thought that this plan might be able to defeat the Soviet Union as its first objective.

During his meeting with Kissinger on February 17, 1973, for the first time, Mao proposed the plan. Mao said, “We were enemies in the past, but now we are friends. Not only did the Soviet threat to Europe and Asia exist, but also it is growing.” Mao proposed his strategy of establishing “a horizontal line—the U.S.—Japan—China—Pakistan—Iran—Turkey and Europe” in order to “commonly deal with a bastard [the Soviet Union].” Mao later proposed the concept of “a big terrain” during a meeting with the Japanese foreign minister Masayoshi Ohira in early January 1974, referring to those countries adjacent to the “horizontal line.”<sup>36</sup>

Moving from a policy of rapprochement with the United States to one of “alliance with the United States to deter the Soviet Union” was, to some extent, the application of the Maoist united front tactics. Since the war of resistance against Japan, Mao explicitly pointed out, “On the whole, we are anti-imperialists. But we also need to formulate different diplomatic tactics based on the extent of harmfulness and whether it is presently damaging. The basic principles are ‘to win over the majority, to oppose the minority, to utilize

35. “CCP Central Committee Circular on the Joint Sino-American Communiqué, 7 March 1972,” cited in *Wenge shinian ziliao xuanbian*, vol. 1 (B), 167–71.

36. William Burr, *The Kissinger Transcripts: The Top Secret Talks with Beijing and Moscow* (New York, 1998), 83–101; Gong Li, *Deng Xiaoping yu Meiguo* [Deng Xiaoping and the United States] (Beijing, 2004), 104–09. In the published minutes in English, which had been supplied by the Chinese, there is no mention of “China,” but the word is in the Chinese record.





**Figure 1:** Director of the PRC's Liaison Office in the United States, Ambassador Huang Zhen (right) and his wife Zhu Lin (second from left) arrived at the Mayflower Hotel, Washington, here photographed together with his deputy Han Xu (left) and the manager of the hotel (second from right) on 29 May 1973. Permission granted by World Knowledge Press.

contradictions and to defeat [the enemies] one by one'.<sup>37</sup> The Chinese government continued publicly calling for "opposing the hegemony of the two superpowers [the Soviet Union and the United States] and great power politics," and "resolutely supporting the revolutionary struggle of the revolutionary people of all countries." But it adopted a policy of attempting to ally with the United States.<sup>38</sup> The Chinese government was forced to offer a reasonable interpretation on the internal logic of these apparently conflicting policies.

The Foreign Ministry soon provided an interpretation to justify a U.S.-China agreement to establish liaison offices in each other's capitals<sup>39</sup> and Mao's tactics of "a horizontal line" and "a big terrain." On February 25, the CCP CC transmitted a document prepared by the Foreign Ministry. The document states as follows:

37. Mao Zedong, "On Policy," December 25, 1940, *Mao Zedong xuanji* [Selected Works of Mao Zedong] (one-volume edition) (Beijing, 1964), 761–62.

38. "New Year Message," *Renmin ribao*, January 1, 1973. Huang Hua revealed in his memoir that the Chinese government, with Mao Zedong's approval, decided to retain all those anti-U.S. wall posters on the route from the airport to the Diaoyutai guesthouse during Kissinger's two trips to Beijing in 1971. John Holdridge, who was a National Security Council (NSC) staffer accompanying Kissinger on these trips and knew the Chinese language, was especially upset with wall posters such as "Down with U.S. imperialists and all reactionaries!" See Huang, *Qinli yu jianwen*, 162.

39. In May 1973, in an effort to build toward the establishment of formal diplomatic relations, the United States and the PRC established the United States Liaison Office in Beijing and a counterpart PRC office in Washington, DC. Huang Zhen, the director of the Chinese Liaison Office, arrived in Washington on May 29, 1973 (Figure 1).

The improvement in Sino-American relations will not change China's principled position of opposing the two superpowers of the United States and the Soviet Union. In the future, China's foreign policy will continue to oppose the two superpowers. This will not be a paralleled opposition, but should distinguish between primary and secondary targets. Currently, the target to struggle and to expose is Soviet revisionism. Thus, the improvement in Sino-American relations will be beneficial to our struggle against the Soviet revisionists.<sup>40</sup>

Another example will definitely help understand the CCP logic. In answering the Albanian guests' query as to why China suddenly chanted the anti-U.S. imperialism note in June 1970, Zhou Enlai explained, "This [the United States] is a target for struggle during a certain period of time. In actuality, it exposes and isolates the Soviet revisionists as well."<sup>41</sup> From the CCP's perspective, this explanation was completely logical.

The interpretation of the Foreign Ministry was in accordance with Mao's theory of "utilizing contradiction and defeating [the enemies] one by one" and of grasping the main direction of struggle. However, not everyone could appreciate Mao's decision. A large number of the world's revolutionary parties and leftist groups, including the Albanian leaders, who had been following China's position of countering imperialism and revisionism, raised strongly worded doubts concerning the reversal of China's foreign policy. What irked Mao most was that U.S.-Soviet relations improved in spite of his efforts to the contrary. An important precondition for better U.S.-China relations and "alliance with the United States to deter the Soviets" was Mao's belief that the U.S.-Soviet differences were much greater than their ability to compromise and conspire against China. China was presented with a substantial possibility of "utilizing the contradiction and defeating them one by one." However, Nixon's visit to the Soviet Union in May 1972, Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev's return visit to the United States in June 1973, and the signing of several treaties greatly improved U.S.-Soviet relations.<sup>42</sup> This put Mao in an awkward position. The U.S.-Soviet détente confirmed the correctness of the criticism and accusations against the CCP by the Party of Labor of Albania and other small Communist parties. It seemed to prove that Mao's new policy toward the United States was indeed a blunder.

These new developments in U.S.-Soviet relations also attracted the attention of Zhou and the Foreign Ministry. The Department of American and Oceanic Affairs of the Foreign Ministry put together a research report titled "A Preliminary Analysis on Nixon-Brezhnev Talks," which was published on June 28, 1973 in *New Information* (an internal journal of the Foreign Ministry), issue 153. The article argued that the U.S.-Soviet talks were "more deceitful" and created "a

40. Gong, "Tortuous Road to the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations," 126.

41. Gao, *Wannian Zhou Enlai*, 423.

42. *Ibid.*, 286.

stronger atmosphere of U.S.-Soviet domination around the world.”<sup>43</sup> This article stressed U.S.-Soviet collusion, which was especially annoying to Mao. Mao was outraged and severely criticized the Foreign Ministry, implicating Zhou.

On July 4, Mao called in Zhang Chunqiao (a Politburo member and radical leader, who was then in charge of drafting the political report of the Tenth Party Congress) and Wang Hongwen (a Politburo member and radical leader, who was then being groomed to be Mao’s successor), excluding Zhou and other leaders from the Foreign Ministry. Mao severely criticized the diplomatic work of the Foreign Ministry. Although he did not mention Zhou by name, Mao obviously directed his remarks at Zhou. Mao angrily said,

Recently, the United States and the Soviet Union held a meeting. The view from the Foreign Ministry was not as good as those from several overseas embassies. There has been something very unsatisfactory in the Foreign Ministry’s work. I often say “great chaos, great disintegration and great reshuffle” (*dadongdang, dafenhua, dagaizu*). But suddenly, the Foreign Ministry called it “great deception and domination.” It pays attention to the superficial and neglects the essence.

Mao told Zhang and Wang, “As you are not old, you’d better study foreign languages so that you can avoid being deceived by those ‘lords and masters [in the Foreign Ministry]’. Once being deceived, you might end up in their ‘pirate ship’.”<sup>44</sup>

Why was Mao so irritated and making such a big fuss over an expression of views on routine foreign affairs issues? It is worth noting that while criticizing the Foreign Ministry, Mao frankly stated why he approved rapprochement with the United States. He declared,

The Albanians were determined not to allow the American withdrawal from Vietnam because they believed that “the tempest of world revolution is in Asia. The storm of Asian revolution is in Vietnam. If war ends, it is terrible. That is opportunism—right opportunism.” It was collusion with the U.S. imperialists. “The one who purposefully colluded with U.S. imperialists, Japan, Western Germany, and Great Britain is I. What could you do to me?” “Lenin told us on several occasions, when [you] encountered bandits, either you would be killed or you surrendered your pistol and car. He insisted that you surrender your pistol and car. In the future, [you] may eradicate the bandits, and retrieve your pistol and car.” The Albanians said, “‘Revolutionaries can’t make compromises, no matter under what circumstance.’ What

43. Cited in Zong Daoyi, “The Beginning and the End of ‘No. 153 Issue of *New Information Incident*’ in the Foreign Ministry in 1973,” *Dangshi yanjiu ziliao* [Materials on Party History Research], No. 5 (2001). Also see Gong, *Deng Xiaoping yu Meiguo*, 116–17.

44. “Minutes of Mao Zedong’s Talk with Zhang Chunqiao and Wang Hongwen,” cited in Gao, *Wannian Zhou Enlai*, 454. Also see ZENP, vol. 3, 604.

item of Marxism does this belong to?" After the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, [the Soviet government] encountered both internal and external threats. In order to avoid a two-front war, "Lenin advocated that [Russia] cede territory, pay indemnities and sign a [humiliating] peace treaty." "It turned out that [Russia] didn't have to cede territory and pay indemnities. The peace treaty was just a piece of waste paper."

Mao added, "Although we compromised with Jiang Jieshi twice, in the end, are we the winner?"<sup>45</sup>

With this in mind, it is not difficult to understand the reason why Mao continued his elevated revolutionary rhetoric while he was advocating reconciliation with the United States. These revolutionary words were not the equivalent, as Mao had told Nixon, of firing "empty cannons," but rather were a true reflection of Mao's psyche.<sup>46</sup> With Mao's insistence, Zhou, in the political report to the Tenth Congress of the CCP in August 1973, stated clearly from the very beginning Lenin's theses on imperialism and proletarian revolution, insisting that "The [Revolutionary] era has not changed. The basic principles of Leninism are not out-dated, which remain the theoretical basis guiding our thinking today." Meanwhile, Zhou's report specifically emphasized Mao's views on the international situation, declaring "The main feature of the current international situation is great chaos under Heaven. The rising wind forebodes the coming storm." It continued, "The U.S.-Soviet scramble for world supremacy is the key. They talk about disarmament every day, but move their armies each day. The aim is to contend for supremacy. They collude even while struggling. Collusion leads to even fiercer contention. Contention is absolute and long-term. Collusion is relative and temporary."<sup>47</sup>

However, whether Mao's view on U.S.-Soviet relations fit reality or not, his strategic design of "alliance with the United States to deter the Soviets," "a horizontal line" and "a big terrain" was not a realistic goal. Mao was disheartened to see the frequency of U.S.-Soviet summits resulting in positive outcomes as evidenced by the signing of treaties. During Kissinger's sixth visit to China (his first as Secretary of State) of November 10–14, 1973, in a meeting with Kissinger on November 12, Mao came to realize that the United States was in a very advantageous position and no longer in dire need of the China card after its exit from the Vietnam quagmire. Mao began the conversation by discussing

45. Li, *Zhongguo yu Yinduzhina zhanzheng*, 50.

46. For an English version of Zhou Enlai's setbacks on the foreign affairs front from May–July 1973, see Teiwes and Sun, *The End of the Maoist Era*, 85–93. Teiwes and Sun have suggested that Mao's furious reaction was simply an opportunity to get at Zhou, "in part due to the belief that Zhou was unreliable concerning the Cultural Revolution, but perhaps even more as a reflection of the jealousy" of Western reports praising Zhou Enlai's diplomacy. As the authors note, "The Chairman gave vent to his anger, and made clear that he was in charge of PRC foreign policy." See *ibid.*, 90–91.

47. Zhou Enlai, "Report at the 10th Congress of the CCP," *Renmin ribao*, September 1, 1973.

the Soviet threat to China. Kissinger seized the opportunity to emphasize a possible Soviet attack on China and declared that the United States would not allow a violation of China's security. Mao, a man with a strong sense of self-respect, felt he was being forced into a defensive position. He felt resentful and humiliated.<sup>48</sup>

In fact, in January 1972, the condescending attitude of the Americans had been apparent when Deputy National Security Adviser Alexander Haig led an advanced team to China to make technical arrangements for President Nixon's trip to China. Haig relayed Nixon's and Kissinger's view that the United States was determined to defend China's viability (*shengcun*) when the Soviet Union was encircling China in the Asian subcontinent. After learning of the U.S. view from Zhou, Mao angrily said, "Encircling China? I need them to rescue me, how could that be? . . . They are concerned about me? That is like 'the cat weeping over the dead mouse!'" Thus, Mao asked Zhou to be tough with the Americans, insisting that he change the phrase "the people desire progress" into "the people desire revolution" in the draft U.S.-China communiqué for Nixon's trip to China. Mao noted, "They [the Americans] are just too afraid of revolution. The more frightened they are, the more we want to mention it. If the negotiation breaks off because of this, it doesn't matter. I think they will come back again in a few years."<sup>49</sup>

Mao's reaction to Haig's statement during his visit to China was profound. This made his reaction to Kissinger very cautious and made Mao greet his words with skepticism. As a consequence, it was not surprising that Mao vented his anger. Learning Mao's position, Wang Hairong and Tang Wensheng, who were always at Mao's side when Mao was meeting foreign guests, were put on political alert. Mao had been using them as his inside agents to check on Zhou at the Foreign Ministry. In a hastily arranged meeting on the evening of November 13, 1973, Kissinger discussed possible Sino-U.S. military cooperation with Zhou. He suggested that the United States and China "sign between us an agreement on accidental nuclear war" and "also establish a hotline."<sup>50</sup> Zhou did not make a firm commitment, as he had to ask for Mao's decision. When going to seek Mao's approval, Zhou was told that Mao was asleep. The next day at the time of Kissinger's departure, Zhou told the Americans that the two sides would each

48. Burr, *The Kissinger Transcripts*, 183–84. Pang Xianzhi and Jin Chongji, chief eds., *Mao Zedong zhuàn, 1949–1976* [A Biography of Mao Zedong, 1949–1976], vol. 2 (Beijing, 2003), 1669–70.

49. Wei Shiyan, "The Course of Haig's Advance Team to China in Preparation for Nixon's Visit to China," in Pei Jianzhang, ed., *Xin Zhongguo waijiao fengyun*, vol. 3, 78–79.

50. Burr, *The Kissinger Transcripts*, 204. However, the Chinese did not respond to Kissinger's offer. It was not until 1998 that they would sign a hot line agreement with the United States. Kissinger hints, "[S]ome voices in Peking may have asserted that China was 'tilting' too far toward the United States." He believed that Mao's policy was coming under great pressure. Whether his proposal and Zhou's interested response encouraged some influential Chinese to conclude that the leadership was going too far is not known. Burr, *The Kissinger Transcripts*, 206. We now know this is not the case. It was Mao himself who rejected the U.S. offer.

appoint a representative to further explore the issue of Sino-American military cooperation.<sup>51</sup> When Zhou's interpreter Tang Wensheng and assistant Wang Hairong reported to Mao that Zhou was too weak and incompetent in his talk with Kissinger, Mao assumed that Zhou had departed from the correct stand and had accepted U.S. nuclear protection in the event of a Soviet nuclear attack on China.

On November 17, Mao gathered Zhou and other officials from the Foreign Ministry, including Wang Hairong and Tang Wensheng. Mao criticized the recently signed Sino-American communiqué as "no good." Mao warned Zhou not to be deceived by the Americans. "[We] ought to be mindful of the United States. [We] tend to be 'left' while struggling with them, and 'right' when cooperating with them. I am of the opinion that, basically [we] should do nothing with them. By this, I mean, [we] should not form a military alliance with the United States." When talking about the meeting between Zhou and Kissinger, Mao said, "Someone wants to lend us an umbrella. We don't want it, a protective nuclear umbrella."<sup>52</sup> Mao further proposed that the Politburo hold meetings to criticize and expose Zhou.

From November 21 to December 5, several sessions of enlarged Politburo meetings were held to denounce Zhou, which were unprecedented. The purpose was to expose and criticize the so-called Right Capitulationism while Zhou had presided over diplomacy toward the United States in the last several years. Zhou's so-called transgressions were summarized as follows:

Generally speaking, [Zhou] forgot about the principle of preventing "rightism" while allying with [the United States.]. This is mainly because [he] forgot about the Chairman's instructions. [He] over-estimated the power of the enemy and devaluated the power of the people. [He] also failed to grasp the principle of combining the diplomatic line with supporting revolution.<sup>53</sup>

These unprecedented high-level political meetings to criticize Zhou would be difficult to understand without examining Mao's complex inner conflict and psyche. Mao, who had fought for his whole life to restore China's rightful place in the world of nations, could not accept a protective foreign power. This was especially true for the United States, which had been publicly demonized in China for more than twenty years. When Mao felt humiliated in his dealing with

51. Ibid., 211.

52. Gao, *Wannian Zhou Enlai*, 463–64; Gong, *Deng Xiaoping yu Meiguo*, 123–24.

53. This summary originated from what Qiao Guanhua transmitted to the Foreign Ministry officials after the Politburo meeting. Although Qiao did not state clearly that these were the opinions of the Politburo, we are certain that these were not Qiao's personal opinions and basically were an outline of Politburo decisions. See *Wang Youping huiyilu* [unpublished, Kuisong Yang's personal collection]. Wang Youping was a senior diplomat and China's ambassador to North Vietnam in early 1970s. Also see Gao, *Wannian Zhou Enlai*, 466–67.



the United States, he wanted to disgrace Zhou as a means of venting his personal frustration. He was suspicious of the actual achievements of the Sino-American rapprochement, which he originally supported and Zhou advocated. He was also intent on transferring responsibility for the possible failure of his reconciliation policy toward the United States to Zhou.<sup>54</sup> As Gao Wenqian has suggested, "To preserve his credentials to the end, Zhou bowed to the critique/struggle at these meetings and performed the necessary self-criticism, pouring filthy water all over himself."<sup>55</sup> After such an organized political struggle and criticism of Zhou, it is hardly difficult to predict China's perception and attitude toward the United States.

#### THE PROPOSITION OF THE THEORY OF "THREE WORLDS"

Mao's strategic thinking of "a horizontal line" and "a big terrain" with the intent of "alliance with the United States to deter the Soviet Union" was only transient. Although Mao raised this topic during a meeting with Japanese Foreign Minister Masayoshi Ohira in early January 1974, he no longer connected this with the issue of combined opposition to the Soviet Union. Only about a month and half later, Mao proposed the theory of "three worlds." He no longer mentioned the concepts of "a horizontal line" and "a big terrain".

Mao's theory of "three worlds" is fundamentally different from the idea of "a horizontal line" and "a big terrain." He described his new thinking on international issues in a meeting with Zambian President Kenneth Kaunda on February 22, 1974. Mao said, "The United States and the Soviet Union belong to the First World; the middle elements, such as Japan, Europe, and Canada, belong to the Second World; and we are the Third World." "All Asia except Japan belong to the Third World, all Africa the Third World, all Latin America the Third World."<sup>56</sup> With Mao's approval, Deng Xiaoping elaborated Mao's theory of "three worlds," which further refined Mao's ideas, in his speech at the sixth special session of the UN General Assembly on April 10, 1974 (Figures 2 and 3).

54. For an English version of the December 1973 Politburo meeting denouncing Zhou Enlai, see Teiwes and Sun, *The End of the Maoist Era*, 124–39. Teiwes and Sun offer a somewhat different interpretation of this event. They noted, the reasons "for Mao's strong reaction to Zhou's handling of the Kissinger talks remain relevant—a cumulative dissatisfaction with the Premier's performance since late 1972, a genuine, if unreasonable, perception of undignified behavior in negotiations with the US, and jealousy over Zhou's domestic and international prestige." They also mentioned Mao's long-held prejudice against Zhou. Mao believed, "[W]hatever Zhou's administrative abilities, and however much his loyalty could be relied on, he was ideologically weak." See *ibid.*, 138. On the question of Mao's and Zhou's individual roles in Sino-American rapprochement and their real attitudes during this period, it is still a heatedly debated topic among scholars. We argue that Zhou Enlai is obviously a sponsor and promoter of the policy, but not an initiator and decision-maker.

55. Gao, *Zhou Enlai*, 243.

56. *Mao Zedong waijiao wenxuan*, 600–601. For an English article on the theory of "three worlds," see Herbert S. Yee, "The Three World Theory and Post-Mao China's Global Strategy," *International Affairs* 59, no. 2 (Spring 1983): 239–49.



**Figure 2:** Vice Premier Deng Xiaoping delivering his speech at the sixth special session of the UN General Assembly on 10 April 1974. Permission granted by World Knowledge Press.



**Figure 3:** Delegates from other countries came forward to congratulate Deng Xiaoping after his speech at the UN General Assembly on 10 April 1974. Permission granted by World Knowledge Press.

Conventional wisdom holds that Deng Xiaoping had a close relationship with Zhou Enlai, which might be dated to their work-study days in France in the 1920s. Deng's rehabilitation and restoration of power in the 1970s was mainly due to Zhou's effort. Gao Wenqian has challenged this assertion, claiming that Deng was Mao's protégé since 1930s. Deng's political rise before the Cultural Revolution was due to Mao's blessing. Vilified as "China's second largest Khrushchev," Deng was purged by Mao at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution but was treated much more leniently than Liu Shaoqi, who was second only to Mao from 1949 to 1960 in PRC politics. Deng's rehabilitation in early

1973 was Mao's scheme to counterbalance Zhou's political influence in the wake of the Lin Biao incident.<sup>57</sup>

On March 20, 1974, Mao asked Wang Hairong, then assistant foreign minister, to relay his choice of Deng Xiaoping to lead a Chinese delegation to attend the sixth special session of the UN General Assembly to Zhou. Mao wanted the Foreign Ministry to incorporate his choice in a report requesting instruction.<sup>58</sup> However, at a Politburo meeting in late March to discuss the Foreign Ministry report, which proposed Deng Xiaoping as the head of the Chinese delegation, and Qiao Guanhua and Huang Hua as his deputies, Jiang Qing, who was Mao's wife and the leader of the radicals during the Cultural Revolution, voiced objection to this proposal on the grounds of "security" and Deng's "busy work schedule." Even after Mao certified the Foreign Ministry report, Jiang continued pursuing her agenda.<sup>59</sup>

Jiang demanded that Wang Hairong withdraw the report and name a ministerial-level official to lead the delegation. Even after Wang told her that it was Mao's decision, Jiang continued to nag at her. The exact purpose of Jiang's daring challenge to Mao's decision remains unknown. It seems that she wanted Mao to know that she was interested in foreign affairs. Mao was dying and perhaps she was testing her political limits. Perhaps she did not want Deng to have the opportunity to become an internationally known Chinese leader, which could be detrimental to her personal ambition to the highest political power. After he was apprised of Jiang's activities, Mao was enraged and sent Jiang a stern warning: "It is my idea to send Comrade Deng Xiaoping abroad to [attend the conference]. Take care to be prudent and cautious! Don't oppose my suggestion!"<sup>60</sup> Jiang concurred.

It seems that Mao's decision to appoint Deng Xiaoping to head the Chinese delegation was primarily because of his trust in Deng's ability and his belief that Deng was the best person for the mission. Deng had represented the Chinese side during the Sino-Soviet polemics of the 1960s. Deng's performance had won Mao's praise over the years. As the theory of "three worlds" was closely related

57. Gao, *Wannian Zhou Enlai*, 469–71.

58. Gao Wenqian has suggested, "Zhou felt personal disappointment about this lost opportunity, undoubtedly his last, to represent the Chinese people to the world community at the UN, but he was even more concerned about the message that Mao's decision to send Deng in his stead conveyed to the Chinese nation." See Gao, *Zhou Enlai*, 258. We disagree with Gao's assertion on two counts. First, Zhou Enlai was an internationally known senior Chinese statesman. A chance to speak at the United Nations would not be crucial for him; second, Zhou was already too sick to travel abroad. To him, Deng Xiaoping was a good choice.

59. Teiwes and Sun note, "Jiang averred that she was not opposing Deng, but there was an MAC [Military Affairs Commission] conference on Li Desheng's case that Deng had to attend. What she expected of Deng at this meeting was left unstated, but she clearly believed he was indispensable." They have also suggested, "The Premier's reaction illuminates another aspect. Although party to Mao's deception, Zhou sought to limit Deng's time abroad, advocating to the Chairman a one-week trip rather than the three weeks in the MFA [Ministry of Foreign Affairs] proposal." See Teiwes and Sun, *The End of the Maoist Era*, 184.

60. Gong, *Deng Xiaoping yu Meiguo*, 130–31.

to China's foreign policy and China's effort to establish an international united front, Mao was eager to have his new concept presented to the world at an important international gathering. Thus, Mao decided to send an experienced and trusted high-level official for this mission.<sup>61</sup>

In his speech at the UN General Assembly, Deng said that Mao's main views were the following:

There exist three interdependent and mutually exclusive aspects—the three worlds. The United States and the Soviet Union belong to the first world; developing countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America, and other parts of the world belong to the third world; developed countries in between belong to the second world. The United States and the Soviet Union, the two superpowers, attempt to dominate around the world. They try to put those developing countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America under their control through various means. They also want to bully other less powerful developed countries. The two superpowers are the largest international exploiters and oppressors—the origins of new world war . . . As the two superpowers want to scramble for hegemony, there exist irreconcilable contradictions between the two. Either you subdue me, or I will subdue you. Collusion and compromise are partial, temporary and relative. Contention is total, long-term and absolute . . . Acting without evidence, many over-evaluate the strengths of the two superpowers, and devalue the strengths of the world people. It is not the two superpowers who are really powerful; rather it is those people from the third world countries who unite and dare to fight and win.<sup>62</sup>

It is not very difficult to understand that the hub of Mao's new theory was no longer "alliance with the United States to deter the Soviet Union." Nor was a reappearance of those world revolutionary propositions such as "anti-imperialists and anti-revisionists," or "down with the imperialists, revisionists and reactionaries." The core of the new theory was to ally with various nations against the Soviet Union and, to a lesser extent, against the United States. Mao modified his strategy from a united front with the United States to a united front against both the United States and the Soviet Union. China was to rely neither on the United States nor the developed countries in Europe or Japan, or revolutionary parties of the world, but mainly on governments of the developing countries in the third world.

As the new theory differed from the recently abandoned transient ideas of "a horizontal line" and "a great terrain," it took Mao a much longer time and repeated deliberation to propose the theory of "three worlds," as Zhou Enlai observed.<sup>63</sup> Early in 1946, in anticipation of a possible confrontation between

61. Ibid., 129.

62. *Renmin ribao*, April 12, 1974.

63. Qu, *Zhongguo waijiao wushinian*, 373.

the United States and the Soviet Union, Mao had proposed his theory of “intermediate zone,” stressing that there was a large “intermediate zone” in addition to the two opposing superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union. Since the founding of the PRC in 1949, Mao and the CCP “immediately proclaimed that revolutionary China, as a natural ally of the ‘oppressed peoples’ in the intermediate zone, would hold high the banner of anti-imperialism and anti-colonialism, challenging the United States and other Western imperialist/colonial powers.”<sup>64</sup>

Since the Sino-Soviet split in the 1960s, Mao’s categorization of the “intermediate zone” had expanded. He had started to accept the wording of “third world,” frequently mixing up the two concepts. As the phrase “the third world” had a specific implication, he proposed the phrase “intermediate forces” in 1970, declaring “the first intermediate force is the third world,” while England, France, Germany, and many others are the “second intermediate force.”<sup>65</sup> It was in 1973 that Mao changed the concept from the “intermediate zone” to the theory of “three worlds.” During this year, he first accepted the contemporaneous interpretation, clearly defining the boundary of his concept of the “third world.” He stated with certainty that the “third world” referred to nations widely known as the “developing countries” and that China was a developing country. This was the first time that Mao clarified China’s position in the world political structure since the onset of the Soviet-American Cold War. This was such a new concept in Chinese political discourse that the Foreign Ministry sent Mao’s new instruction to Chinese envoys overseas.<sup>66</sup>

To a large extent, the theory of “three worlds” was a product of Mao’s thinking on the international united front. It was his analytical framework on how to distinguish friend from foe in the international political struggle. Mao needed a new framework as China’s standing in the Soviet-American Cold War structure was changing. Failed efforts to ignite world revolution led Mao to question his grouping of all “imperialists, revisionists and reactionaries” as enemies. The theory did not coalesce until 1974 when the disintegration of a China-centered anti-imperialist and antirevisionist bloc in the wake of the Sino-American rapprochement became a reality. For this reason, it was no longer possible to jump-start the throttle valve of world revolution. Mao also came to realize that his idea of “a horizontal line” and “a great terrain” was unrealistic. The most logical thing for him to do was to return to his familiar thinking pattern of the international united front, further utilizing his class struggle mode of thinking, emphasizing the roles of the oppressors and the oppressed. He thus transformed his “intermediate zone” theory to the new theory of “three worlds,” which placed a greater emphasis on class relations.

64. Chen Jian, *Mao’s China and the Cold War* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2001), 5.

65. “Mao Zedong’s Conversation with the Burmese Communist Party Vice Chairman Thakin Ba Thein Tin,” October 1, 1970, *CAC*.

66. Cited in Wang Youping *buiyilu*.

Again, Mao changed his mind from a united front including the United States to counter the Soviets to a united front against both the United States and the Soviet Union.

Now Mao's emphasis on class relations did not have its basis in social relations, but rather in state relations. Only in this way could he claim to continue to pursue revolution while breaking away from his previous world revolution ideology. According to the world revolution analytical model, the class analysis method was to combine social relations with international relations. This change in Mao's attitude resulted in the slogan of "anti-two super-powers." The slogan of "down with imperialists, revisionists and reactionaries of all countries" was modified. Now, from the angle of the international united front, it was necessary to separate social relations from international relations. The criterion was anti-United States and anti-Soviet Union—the two super-powers. Thus, the reactionaries of all countries became the natural objects to win over.

It is difficult to imagine that such a shift would live up to the expectations of Mao, who was extolling "class struggle as the guiding line" in domestic politics. Thus, we could see the predicament and embarrassment of Mao, who was then in the process of such a transformation. To act on his theory of "three worlds," China tried to gradually develop diplomatic relations with those foreign governments that had formerly been regarded as "reactionaries of all countries" because of their hostility to communism. In May 1974, China decided to establish diplomatic relations with Malaysia. On May 29, two days before the announcement of establishing diplomatic relations, Mao met the visiting Malaysian prime minister, Tun Abdul Razak, who clearly raised an issue: the main purpose of his mission was, on the occasion of the establishment of Sino-Malaysian relations, to ask the Chinese government to help terminate the violent revolutionary struggle that the Communist Party of Malaya (CPM) was engaging in along the Malaysia-Thailand border. At first, Mao offered an excuse, saying, "This is tough, too troublesome . . . We have had no contact [with them] for many years." Razak proposed, "If you have contact with the CPM, please tell them to stop fighting. Come out from the shadow to help build up a happy and unified country." Mao insisted, "This is hard. They don't listen to us." Razak pressed on and said, "Then we will be forced to attack them." Mao said, "That is your internal affair, we cannot interfere." Razak picked up Mao's argument, "Then I will tell them that you no longer have relations with them. You have already recognized our government . . ." Mao obviously was in an awkward position, but responded at once, "Why no relations? [We] cannot say that!" Razak refused to change his tack and continued his argument, "I'll tell them that I talked with you about this. You said you have no relations with them. These are our internal affairs." Mao was unyielding, saying "No relations! We cannot say that! But we'll not interfere with your internal affairs. . . . If you say no relations, then it is not good!" Razak probed further, saying, "There was relationship in the past, but not any longer." Mao responded immediately,



"There is relationship now and in the future! Because we are all communists! Why no relations?"<sup>67</sup>

The CPM was a small party with close connection to the CCP. Chin Peng, the general secretary of the CPM, was then living in Beijing. About ten years before, it was Mao who had encouraged the CPM to return to the forest to engage in violent struggle. Now, in order to form an international anti-hegemony united front, China established diplomatic relations with the Malaysian government, who suppressed the CPM. Mao clearly sided with the CPM while attempting to placate the Malaysian government.

Of course, no matter which side Mao's ideology and emotion tilted to, to choose rulers not revolutionaries was the only option for China's modified foreign policy in international political relations. Although Mao was reluctant, he had no better alternative. In July 1973, Mao frankly told Marien Ngouabi, the president of the Republic of the Congo, "We really wanted to overthrow you all because we supported revolutions and revolutionary people [in those years]. But those people couldn't overthrow you and failed to live up to our expectations. We have no other alternative but to deal with you."<sup>68</sup>

From this quote and from Zhou's criticism of the Vietcong for "fail[ing] to live up to expectations," it seemed that Mao's retreat from previous world revolutionary policies was out of pragmatic considerations. However, in these two cases of "fail[ing] to live up to expectations," one emphasizing comparison in strength, the other emphasizing revolutionary nature, one thing is certain: Mao had backed away from his world revolutionary viewpoint and position. Despite his proposition of "a horizontal line" and "a big terrain," Mao had not changed his revolutionary ideals and beliefs. Only because of the limited achievements of previous revolutionary practice, and the disintegration of a world revolutionary camp after China's reconciliation policy toward the United States, did Mao come to realize that it was impossible to rely on "those people."

After the establishment of the theory of "three worlds," it was out of tune to stress "revolution" in international politics. In 1974, Mao eventually compromised on this position. In a discussion with Zhou and his associates on the international situation, Mao conceded, "Now we may not mention that the current world tide is revolution."<sup>69</sup> From then on, this viewpoint, which had been publicized in the Chinese press for more than ten years, disappeared. No matter what Mao had in mind, Chinese foreign policy started to move further and further away from a foreign policy dominated by revolutionary ideology.

After the death of Mao in 1976 and the advent of the Deng Xiaoping era several years later, the theory of "three worlds" was no longer relevant. This

67. "Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai's Conversations with Malaysian Prime Minister Razak," May 29, 1974, cited in *Wenge shinian ziliao xuanbian*, vol. 1 (C), 43–54.

68. "Mao Zedong's Conversations with Marien Ngouabi, the President of the Republic of the Congo," July 29, 1973," cited in *Wenge shinian ziliao xuanbian*, vol. 1 (B), 222–24.

69. Cited in Xu Dashen, chief ed., *Zhonghua renmin gongheguo shilu* [A Factual Record of the People's Republic of China] (Changchun, China, 1994), 1159–60.

is mainly because the core of the theory of “three worlds” created a united front in state-to-state relations among Third World governments. The main goal of a united front diplomacy was to protect China’s national interests. With the disappearance of the world revolution goal, the anti-hegemony point in the theory of “three worlds” became superfluous. It is not surprising that the theory of “three worlds” disappeared from the Chinese media in the Deng Xiaoping era.

## CONCLUSIONS

Scholars interested in Chinese foreign policy in the 1970s have given their attention to how Mao successfully transformed China’s foreign policy from “anti-imperialism and anti-revisionism” to “alliance with the United States to deter the Soviet Union.” Their conclusion is simple: the threat from the Soviet Union compelled Mao to put primary emphasis on national interests and to cooperate with the United States, China’s former enemy. But almost no one has attempted to connect this policy to the subsequently proposed theory of “three worlds” and to show the link between the two. And no one has endeavored to answer the perplexing question: how did Mao adjust to the transformation of his own role? A professional revolutionary, who had stressed his ambition as the leader of world revolution since the 1960s and had declared “U.S. imperialism” a sworn enemy, abruptly abandoned his consistent class position and moved toward a nationalistic stand, placing national interests first. This was a very difficult adjustment for Mao and for his many followers, either at the level of ideas and policies or in psychological feeling. As this article demonstrates, Mao’s new political stance experienced a tortuous road or a transitional period.

From the above narrative and analysis, we conclude that Mao created no miracle in Sino-American relations in his last years, just as he had previously failed to successfully handle Sino-American relations. After years of pursuing his doctrine of “class struggle,” Mao had brought Sino-Soviet relations to the brink of war in 1969. To a great extent, Mao was compelled to adopt a tactic to protect China’s national security interests. He decided to exploit the opportunity presented by Nixon to temporarily relax tension with the United States, which was opportunistic on his side. He did not lessen his nationalistic pride or realize that his doctrine of “class struggle” was seriously flawed. As he was so familiar with the doctrine of “class struggle,” Mao reverted to his familiar method of united front strategy in order to adjust his policy. The so-called united front strategy, in essence, is one of Maoist “class struggle” tactics to solve the problem of imperialist aggression. When he was obliged to receive the olive branch from the American government, formerly the no. 1 enemy, Mao was not going to follow the policy of *détente* to its fullest extent. He was always aware of the fundamental differences between China and the United States. He was also very sensitive to any compromise he had to make toward the United States. He felt obligated to propose the theory of “three worlds” to distinguish China from the

United States and the Soviet Union in order to maintain China's independent image under the Sino-Soviet-U.S. Cold War structure. This would also leave leeway for him to return to the policy of class revolution at a future time.

Mao was never a great diplomat. He was recalcitrant and rarely deviated from the doctrines of class analysis and "class struggle" in understanding and interpreting international affairs and international relations. Although Mao never overemphasized China's role in the U.S.-Soviet Cold War, it was his so-called principle of strength that prompted his decision to adjust China's diplomatic tactics. When he believed that China was powerful enough, Mao would adhere to the doctrine of class revolution. When he came to realize that China was in a disadvantageous power position in the international power struggle, Mao would move away from class revolution and make efforts to establish a united front in order to protect China's strength. But Mao had a constant and consistent goal: China was the model for the "liberation" of all the oppressed nations and peoples of the world.