



# Transatlantic relations and the Sino-US opening

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## Abstract

Using the Nixon tapes and the documentary record of US diplomacy, this article argues that the Sino-American opening came as a shock to US allies in Europe but nevertheless was viewed generally in a positive light by transatlantic partners. These sources corroborate other scholarship that the Nixon's surprise announcement in July 1971 of the opening to China was something of an irritant in Anglo-American relations. Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger's secret maneuvers stole some of the limelight from Prime Minister Edward Heath's efforts to upgrade London's relations with Beijing to the level of ambassador. Whereas Heath's government had kept US Secretary of State Rogers apprised of the efforts, Rogers was out of the loop in Washington and the Nixon administration did not reciprocate to London until right before the announcement. Finally, the announced intention of establishing diplomatic relations with Beijing opened something of a floodgate toward broader recognition of the People's Republic of China, even among traditional transatlantic partners, and disrupted Washington's efforts at promoting dual representation of Taiwan and the PRC at the United Nations.

**Keywords** Nixon · Kissinger · Heath · Pompidou · Sino-American rapprochement · China · USA · UK · France · Italy

## Introduction

Thus there will be no lack of disputes in the future; the inclusion of neutrals in a European Community, commercial and monetary questions, the recognition of China, and negotiations with the USSR on East–West relations...will be among the contentious issues over which the US and one or more of its allies will frequently disagree...The key question is whether disagreements on these matters could reach a degree of intensity likely to damage the present political

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relationship between the US and Western Europe or cause a paralysis or disintegration of the institutions through which it operates.

National Intelligence Estimate 20–1–69<sup>1</sup>

President Nixon was alone with Paul McCracken, the chairman of the president's Council of Economic Advisers (CEA), in the Oval Office on the morning of 22 July 1971. An economist with a Ph.D. from Harvard, McCracken was at the White House to discuss the status of the American economy, his tenure at the CEA, and, most significantly, his pending resignation from the council that November.<sup>2</sup> Neither man could resist the urge to talk about the US opening to China, which President Nixon had announced a week earlier. "The meeting between the leaders of China and the United States," Nixon had told the television audience in a short broadcast on 15 July, "is to seek the normalization of relations between the two countries and also to exchange views on questions of concern to the two sides." In that announcement, the president emphasized that the summit meeting to be held before May 1972 was not aimed against any nation, nor would it "be at the expense of our old friends."<sup>3</sup>

Nixon was in a chatty mood and rewarded McCracken's service on the CEA with a peek behind the curtain of his special adviser for national security affairs, Dr. Henry Kissinger's secret trip to China that had paved the way for the forthcoming summit meeting between the USA and the People's Republic of China (PRC). "As you can imagine," Nixon told McCracken, "it required the most remarkable one-man operation in history." "I say 'one man,'" Nixon immediately corrected himself, "We, of course, informed [Secretary of State William P.] Rogers just before so that he could inform—he had to inform [other] governments then."<sup>4</sup>

With pride in his voice, captured for posterity by his surreptitious taping system, Nixon confided that secrecy was key. "This worked because Kissinger and I, just without telling a soul, began to work it out, worked up all the [position] papers," Nixon continued, "There were plenty of games by asking people...for papers on things without their knowing why...And all the messages [between us] arrived through very, very, super-secret channels through third governments that...we could not disclose. And, also, they did not appear in the [news] papers."<sup>5</sup> For Nixon, the

<sup>1</sup> National Intelligence Estimate, December 4, 1969, [54], p. 85.

<sup>2</sup> Conversation between Richard Nixon and Paul McCracken, Oval Office (OVAL) Conv. No. 542-4, July 22, 1971, 10:51 am–11:36 am, National Archives and Records Administration (thereafter NARA) [32], Nixon [29]. The transcribed portion begins at 1 h:17 m:11 s. On McCracken's background, see his obituary [55].

<sup>3</sup> Nixon [37].

<sup>4</sup> OVAL Conv. No. 542-4.

<sup>5</sup> Nixon was referring obliquely to the role of Pakistan's leader, General Agha Mohammad Yahya Khan (Yahya), in brokering the Sino-American rapprochement. Nixon's mention of working papers for options on China may have been a reference to National Security Study Memorandum (NSSM) [30], p. 124, "Next Steps Toward the People's Republic of China," April 19, 1971, RNPLM, [https://www.nixonlibrary.gov/sites/default/files/virtuallibrary/documents/nssm/nssm\\_124.pdf](https://www.nixonlibrary.gov/sites/default/files/virtuallibrary/documents/nssm/nssm_124.pdf). Kissinger sent the NSSM to Secretary of State Rogers, Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird, and Director of Central Intelligence Richard Helms, conveying Nixon's "objective of furthering the improvement of relations," after Mao Zedong extended a surprise invitation to visit China for the U.S. table tennis team that was playing a tournament in Nagoya Japan two weeks earlier. Nixon reciprocated Mao's "Ping Pong diplomacy" at a news conference on 16 April by extending visas to Chinese table tennis players to visit the USA. On April 27, 1971,



payoff was, “the more impressive thing...the massive surprise...and the fact that it [was] the most significant diplomatic revolution...since the war, World War Two, time.”<sup>6</sup>

While France had reestablished diplomatic relations with Beijing in 1964 and the UK had a mission led by a chargé d'affaires (a level below that of ambassador) since 1954, Nixon claimed, “The British have an ambassador who’s never seen Mao Zedong. The French have an ambassador who’s never seen him, too.” Barely able to get a word in edgewise, McCracken added, “[With Henry as the contact] we probably had more face-to-face conversations with... [Chinese Premier] Zhou Enlai than [North Vietnamese representative] Le Duc Tho.” Nixon responded, “[More] than any other government. Oh, no question about it. Hell, he had twenty-one hours.”<sup>7</sup>

While it may be tempting to downplay Nixon’s claims about the significance of the Sino-American opening—and there were certainly elements of braggadocio and working to achieve the maximum amount of press play and political credit—the realignment of the international landscape certainly captured the popular imagination at the time. It also provoked some backlash, as the White House found out in December 1971 when the “Plumbers” of Watergate ignominy discovered that the Joint Chiefs of Staff had been spying on the White House and the National Security Council because of concerns about Nixon’s and Kissinger’s secret maneuvers.<sup>8</sup>

Participants have used the China opening to shape their legacies, Nixon foremost projecting his image as a pragmatic peacemaker to distract from the tarnish of Watergate.<sup>9</sup> China figures prominently in Henry Kissinger’s writings, including his three-volume memoirs and his more recent books *On China* and *World Order*.<sup>10</sup> Kissinger’s office in New York City is adorned with Chinese terra cotta warriors, vases, and silk-screen paintings. If visitors need a more subtle reminder, the office is also located in the same building as the China International Capital Corporation, China’s largest investment bank and a symbol of Beijing’s engagement in the world economy.<sup>11</sup>

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Footnote 5 (continued)

Kissinger received a message from Zhou Enlai passed via Yahya to Pakistan’s ambassador to the USA, Agha Hilaly, that the Chinese would publicly welcome President Nixon or his envoy for discussions.

<sup>6</sup> OVAL Conv. No. 542-4.

<sup>7</sup> OVAL Conv. No. 542-4.

<sup>8</sup> The spy ring was known as the “Moorer–Radford Affair,” after the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Thomas Moorer and a stenographer, Navy Yeoman First Class Charles E. Radford. While tracking down verbatim leaks from top-secret documents in investigative journalist Jack Anderson’s syndicated columns related to the India–Pakistan crisis and war in December 1971, the Plumbers, formally known as the White House Special Investigative Unit, discovered that Radford had purloined documents from burn bags and Kissinger’s briefcase and passed them to Admiral Moorer via the JCS-NSC liaison office, of which Radford was a part. The spy ring was first publicly exposed in congressional hearings in 1974, but was largely overshadowed at the time by Watergate. Colodny and Gettlin [5]. More recently, James Rosen, a former Fox news correspondent and the author of the biography of Nixon’s attorney general, John Mitchell, used the Nixon tapes and declassified documents to add detail and understanding to the Moorer–Radford affair. For example, see [41–43].

<sup>9</sup> Nixon [36, 38].

<sup>10</sup> Kissinger [12–17].

<sup>11</sup> Pompeo [40].



Moreover, over the last five decades scholars have debated not whether or not the China opening was significant, but rather how momentous it was.<sup>12</sup> Eminent diplomatic historian Robert Dallek wrote in *Nixon and Kissinger: Partners in Power*, “The opening to China is a largely celebrated event, usually cited as the most important achievement of Nixon’s and Kissinger’s foreign policy.”<sup>13</sup> Quoting the beloved character Spock in the 1986 film *Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home*, Margaret MacMillan said there was truth that “only Nixon could go to China.”<sup>14</sup> Using an array of international sources and presidential tapes, Chris Tudda, a historian at the US Department of State, has argued convincingly, “The rapprochement that occurred in the early 1970s fundamentally altered the dynamics of the cold war.”<sup>15</sup>

Many scholars have explored the concept and possible application by the Nixon administration of triangular diplomacy, exploiting the Sino-Soviet rift (which had degenerated into border clashes along the Ussuri River in 1969), and playing China and the Soviet Union off of each other. There is ample evidence, especially in the Nixon tapes that started in February 1971, that Nixon and Kissinger aimed to align with the weaker (China) against the stronger (the Soviet Union).<sup>16</sup> However, a word of caution is in order: the evidence really only began to build after the advent of “Ping Pong” diplomacy and the activation of a secret back channel between Beijing and Washington facilitated by Pakistan’s leader, General Agha Mohammad Yahya Khan, in April 1971.<sup>17</sup>

Fewer scholars still have looked at the impact of the Sino-American opening on US relations with its allies, at least beyond East Asia (particularly Taiwan and Japan).<sup>18</sup> An article in *Diplomacy and Statecraft* by K. A. Hamilton and another in *Diplomatic History* by Chi-Kwan Mark complement each other and describe London’s irritation about being kept in the dark by the Nixon White House at the same time the UK was attempting to upgrade its mission in China to an embassy.<sup>19</sup> Andrew Scott describes the cumulative effect of US–UK disagreements, often as a result of US action, in *Allies Apart: Heath, Nixon and the Anglo-American Relationship*.<sup>20</sup> Luke Nichter’s outstanding *Nixon and Europe* references China several

<sup>12</sup> Scholarship on Sino-American rapprochement is rich and varied, from broader studies on Sino-U.S. relations to focused diplomatic histories, biographies, and documentaries. For a small sampling, see [1, 2, 6, 8, 10, 11, 18, 21, 22, 46, 56].

<sup>13</sup> Dallek [6], xi.

<sup>14</sup> MacMillan [21], p. 338.

<sup>15</sup> Tudda [46], p. 210.

<sup>16</sup> Conversation between Nixon and John D. Ehrlichman, Executive Office Building (EOB) Conv. No. 317-6, January 24, 1972, 1:51–3:00 p.m, NARA, RMNPLM, WHT. In a National Security Council Senior Review Group meeting on May 15, 1969, Kissinger told the members, “History suggested to him that it is better to align yourself with the weaker, not the stronger of two antagonistic partners. It is not clear to him that you achieve better relations with the Soviets necessarily because of a hard policy toward China and vice versa.” Editorial Note, FRUS [48].

<sup>17</sup> Tudda [46], pp. 14–32; Moss [26], pp. 171–212.

<sup>18</sup> Tudda’s chapter 6, “Reassuring Allies and Pursuing the Moscow Summit,” focuses mainly on Japan, Taiwan, the Soviet Union and Nixon’s domestic, conservative allies. See: Tudda [46], pp. 104–119.

<sup>19</sup> Hamilton [9], pp. 117–135; Mark [23], pp. 876–903.

<sup>20</sup> Scott [44].



times, but focuses on five key facets of transatlantic relations, namely: the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO's) future, the collapse of the Bretton Woods economic system, Nixon's abortive "Year of Europe," European economic integration, and the Anglo-American special relationship.<sup>21</sup> While US relations with NATO have long been a topic of scholarly inquiry, as have bilateral relations between the US and western European powers, there has been markedly less interest about the effects of the Sino-American opening on those relations.<sup>22</sup>

In the broader historiography of transatlantic relations, the Nixon years are often viewed as something of a shift, if not a break, with the prior US policy of supporting European integration, reducing barriers to trade, and assuming that the European powers and the USA had the same shared basic interests in political, economic, and defense domains. Geir Lundestad has argued that the change was situational, with larger changes in economic relations, but it was also philosophical for the Nixon administration. Per Lundestad:

In 1971 the United States was for the first time in decades running a deficit not only in its balance of payments, but also in its balance of trade. These problems in turn led to the Nixon-[Treasury Secretary John] Connally economic measures of August 1971. The convertibility of the dollar into gold was suspended, the equivalent of a dollar devaluation, and a 10 per cent surtax was added on imported goods.<sup>23</sup>

For Lundestad, the Nixon administration had to resolve the situational tension that had developed between Washington's insistence that European economic integration take place within a transatlantic context (such as the European Community admitting the UK), and safeguarding American economic interests.<sup>24</sup> Andrew Moravcsik has argued similarly that international economics are multilateral in nature and that broader economic trends are causes of political commitments to European integration rather than consequences of it.<sup>25</sup> Insofar as scholars of transatlantic relations and European integration address the Nixon administration's opening to China, it may be seen as an acceptance of a declining US position in the world in relative economic and political terms and a rebalancing of relations with allies and adversaries alike.

Using the Nixon tapes and the documentary record of US diplomacy, this article argues that the opening to China came as a shock to US allies in Europe but nevertheless was viewed generally in a positive light by transatlantic partners—or at least, that was the message the White House received. These sources corroborate the scholarship of Andrew Scott, K.A. Hamilton, and Chi-Kwan Mark that the "one-man show" Kissinger and Nixon conducted out of the White House, to the exclusion

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<sup>21</sup> Nichter [33], p. 5.

<sup>22</sup> For example, see a revealing article on the relationship between Nixon and Pompidou where China is mentioned, but the opening to China is not discussed: Trachtenberg [45], pp. 4–59.

<sup>23</sup> Lundestad [20].

<sup>24</sup> Lundestad, 99.

<sup>25</sup> Moravcsik [24, 25].



of the Department of State, was an irritant in Anglo-American relations. Lastly, it was simply unrealistic to expect traditional American allies to support Washington's efforts to prevent Taiwan's expulsion from the United Nations (UN) when the trajectory of Sino-American rapprochement was publicly clear. Indeed, the announced intention of establishing diplomatic relations with Beijing opened something of a floodgate toward broader recognition of the People's Republic of China and disrupted Washington's efforts at promoting dual representation of Taiwan and the PRC at the UN.

Although Nixon is often remembered for his "three out of three" foreign policies of opening to China, ending US involvement in the Vietnam War, and achieving détente with the Soviet Union, he had a deep background in US relations with its European allies.<sup>26</sup> As Luke Nichter has written, "Transatlantic relations were one of the few issues other than Vietnam, China, and the Soviet Union handled personally by President Nixon and Henry Kissinger. Both men had long experience with Europe, going back to the Marshall Plan, the founding of NATO, and American support of the European integration movement."<sup>27</sup> US–European relations also faced a series of challenges when Nixon ascended to the presidency in January 1969.

Whether it was the commitment and coordination of member states to the NATO, the British position "in" or "out" of Europe, the breakdown of the Bretton Woods system of exchange rates pegged to the US dollar and backed by gold, or European potential as an economic competitor and center of power vis-à-vis the USA, transatlantic relations faced a number of complicating factors. To his credit, Nixon recognized that there are occasionally opportunities in adversity and aimed to reinvigate transatlantic ties.

Out of the wreckage of two world wars we forged a concept of an Atlantic community, within which a ravaged Europe was rebuilt and the westward advance of the Soviets contained. If tensions now strain that community, these are themselves a byproduct of success," Nixon wrote in *Foreign Affairs* in 1967.<sup>28</sup> Publishing in *Foreign Affairs*, considered a mouthpiece of official policy, was an ironic choice for Nixon, who behind closed doors resented his alleged exclusion by the so-called 'Eastern Establishment.' After his defeat in the 1962 California gubernatorial race and 'last press conference' retreat from politics, Nixon had worked on his political comeback. The *Foreign Affairs* piece, which was later seen as containing a germ for the opening to China, was part of that campaign. In 1967, private citizen Nixon had suggested, "Without

<sup>26</sup> Kissinger told Nixon "Well, you got three out of three, Mr. President," after a breakthrough in negotiations with the North Vietnamese on October 11–12, 1972. Editorial Note citing EOB Conv. No. 366–6, 7:05 and 8:46 p.m., October 12, 1972, in FRUS [50], p. 123. The author worked on the transcript of the conversation while serving as a contract historian at the U.S. Department of State. The conversation was one of the most challenging to transcribe accurately because of the audio quality.

<sup>27</sup> Nichter [33], p. 2.

<sup>28</sup> Nixon [35]. Republished in FRUS [48].



turning our backs on Europe, we have now to reach out westward to the East, and to fashion the sinews of a Pacific community.<sup>29</sup>

Although Nixon had his eye of Asia, US–European relations remained close to his heart. Nixon’s first foreign trip as president was to NATO headquarters in Brussels, followed by official visits in London, Bonn, Berlin, Rome, and Paris. The subject of China came up several times in Nixon’s conversations with western European leaders during the trip, although the most extensive and candid conversation about China probably was between Nixon and French President Charles de Gaulle.

Looking at the world scene, de Gaulle, the elder statesman, saw the Soviet threat declining in Europe because of Moscow’s concerns over China. Europe, de Gaulle noted, was in a much better position in 1969 than it had been even ten years earlier. Nixon responded that while “a lineup of the Soviets, Europe and the U.S. against Chinese...might be a good short-range policy,” it was better over the “longer range...that our interests might perhaps best be served by recognizing that China and the USSR were two great powers and it might be better to develop parallel relationships with them.”<sup>30</sup>

After going off on several tangents, de Gaulle returned to the subject of China. While Paris had formal relations with Beijing, it had “not brought them much advantage except perhaps economically and a bit culturally.” The “ebullition” of Mao’s Cultural Revolution had constrained a real improvement in relations, but China was an emerging power “in industry, in technology, in nuclear matters.” De Gaulle counseled:

The West should try to get to know China, to have contacts and to penetrate it. We should try to get them to sit at the table with us and offer them openings. The French felt that this was the best policy and we could see what conclusions could be drawn. If the U.S. began to have relations with China this would mean that China would probably get into the UN. This would have much effect and a lot of dust would be stirred up but he did not believe that the overall results would be bad.<sup>31</sup>

De Gaulle’s pragmatic viewpoint was also somewhat prescient. Nixon held de Gaulle in high esteem since the former had served as vice president under Dwight Eisenhower. The two men had maintained a correspondence in and out of power, and eventually, Nixon shifted US policy to meet China half way, as de Gaulle had suggested.<sup>32</sup> However, in 1969 the discussion was a reminder that Washington and its allies did not always have the same approach or interests.

As president, Nixon sought to reorient the position of the USA in the world while avoiding a retreat to what he saw as dangerous isolationism. He did not want the USA to turn its back on Europe; rather, he recognized that there would be occasional

<sup>29</sup> Nixon [35].

<sup>30</sup> Memorandum of Conversation [between President Nixon, General De Gaulle, Mr. Andronikov, and MG Walters], 1 March 1969, FRUS [53].

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Barber [4].



disagreements and opposing interests between Washington and its allies. The key was to coordinate when there were overlapping interests and to prevent disagreements prevent disagreements from undermining the institutions in which the USA and its European allies participated.

In an interagency-coordinated National Intelligence Estimate on Europe, the USA, and the Soviet Union from December 1969, the US intelligence community assessed there would “be no lack of disputes in the future” between the USA and its European allies. In addition to the expansion of the European Community, including countries that were not NATO members, the recognition or non-recognition of China was a potential sticking point between Washington and allied capitals. Occasional disagreements and divergent interests between allies were natural; the question was not whether or not disagreements would occur, but rather their severity and their effect on transatlantic institutions.<sup>33</sup>

While France and Great Britain had some semblance of diplomatic relations with Beijing, as did the Netherlands, other US allies were moving to recognize Beijing and admit the People’s Republic of China to the United Nations when Nixon became president in January 1969.<sup>34</sup> In particular, the recognition of the PRC by Canada and Italy was nettlesome for the Nixon White House.<sup>35</sup> In the case of Italy, Foreign Minister Pietro Nenni announced Rome’s intention to recognize Beijing “so precipitately” in January 1969 that it reportedly provoked surprise among Italian diplomats.<sup>36</sup> In contrast, Canada’s move was more measured. Canada informed the USA of its intention almost immediately after Ottawa’s Cabinet ministers decided to pursue recognition of the PRC. Furthermore, Canada initially indicated that it did not intend to change its stance on the “Important Question”—that expelling Taiwan would require a two-thirds vote rather than a simple majority in the UN General Assembly—and that it was a moot point so long as Beijing did not aim to join the UN.

Canadian Ambassador to the US Edgar Ritchie stressed the decision “was not [an] unfriendly act toward [the] US but was being done for Canadian reasons.” “Canada had been trading with China for a long time,” Ambassador Ritchie explained, “Many Canadians thought it illogical to have trade and not relations, that is, not recognize

<sup>33</sup> National Intelligence Estimate, December 4, 1969, FRUS [53], p. 85.

<sup>34</sup> As a speaker of Mandarin who had audiences with Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai, the *chargé d’affaires* at the Dutch Embassy to the PRC, Jacobus Jerome (J. J.) Derksen, offered to serve as a channel between Washington and Beijing in February 1970. However, Derksen’s effort to establish contact between the U.S. and the PRC failed to gain any traction from the viewpoint of the Nixon administration. After several failed communications, Kissinger informed the Dutch government in December 1970 that Washington had no objections to Derksen being recalled from Beijing, “where he has been a disappointment to his government.” After Kissinger’s secret trip to China in July 1971, Dutch Ambassador to the USA Rijnhard Van Lynden asked Kissinger if Derksen had played any role in the Sino-American rapprochement. In a message relayed via NSC Deputy Alexander Haig to Van Lynden, Kissinger declared that Derksen “had no role in matters leading to the trip to Peking, that no messages were ever received through him, and that we have not used his services for some time.” See: Memorandum From the President’s Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon, February 5, 1970, FRUS [51].

<sup>35</sup> Canada officially recognized the PRC in October 1970, while Italy recognized it in November 1970.

<sup>36</sup> Telegram from the Embassy in Italy to the Department of State, FRUS [53], p. 620.



what is there.”<sup>37</sup> (The Canadian Government kept the Nixon administration apprised of its moves with Beijing as recognition came closer, but still provoked Nixon’s ire.<sup>38</sup>)

Nixon and Kissinger gave less notice to America’s transatlantic allies with Kissinger’s secret “Polo I” trip in July 1971. As Nixon had told McCracken, it was Secretary of State William Rogers who was tasked with informing other governments.<sup>39</sup> Unfortunately for the secretary, he had only been apprised of the secret maneuvers by his bureaucratic rival, Henry Kissinger, after the national security advisor was in China. To soften the blow, Rogers was invited to the president’s home in San Clemente, California. It was in California where Kissinger gave Rogers a “sanitized” account of the trip after he had briefed the president.<sup>40</sup>

As Nixon’s chief of staff, H.R. “Bob” Haldeman recorded in his diary on July 12, 1971, the president had put the compound on lockdown from any press contacts or communications with journalists. Nixon “went through the list of people to be informed and agreed that we should inform the British, French, Germans, Australians, Koreans, Taiwan, of course, the Thais, South Vietnam, Japan, and India.” Reflecting his negative views on other countries in the western hemisphere, Nixon specified, “No Latin Americans...definitely not Canada.” Rogers and Deputy National Security Advisor Alexander Haig would inform the ambassadors “just 15 min before the President [went] on the air.” Nixon also ordered advance notice of his announcement be given to several aides so they could monitor the response to the news broadcast, in addition to a select group of politicians and friendly conservative columnists.<sup>41</sup> The circle of trust was small.

Following the July 15 announcement, Nixon pushed to maintain positive spin on Kissinger’s trip. According to Kissinger, Nixon “pressured” Haldeman to “treat the event as an unrivaled opportunity to ‘sell’ Nixon, embellishing the drama into an epic poem.” Haldeman, a former advertising executive, was able to browbeat the White House staff to accept “that history happens, it is not invented, and that this time, anyway, Presidential restraint was the best public relations policy,” as Kissinger recalled.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Telegram from the Department of State to the Embassy in Canada, February 7, 1969, FRUS [53], pp. 381–383.

<sup>38</sup> Memorandum of Conversation, September 24, 1969, FRUS [53], pp. 399–401.

<sup>39</sup> OVAL Conv. No. 542-4.

<sup>40</sup> Kissinger [13], p. 761.

<sup>41</sup> H.R. Haldeman, Diary Entry: July 12, 1971, H. R. Haldeman Diaries Collection (Haldeman Diary), RNPLM, online: <https://www.nixonlibrary.gov/%E2%80%9C>, <https://nixonlibrary.gov/sites/default/files/virtuallibrary/documents/haldeman-diaries/37-hrhd-audiocassette-ac10b-19710712-pa.pdf%22>; audio also available: <https://www.nixonlibrary.gov/%E2%80%9C>, <https://nixonlibrary.gov/sites/default/files/virtuallibrary/documents/haldeman-diaries/37-hrhd-audiocassette-ac10b-19710712-pa.mp3%22>. According to Kissinger, Rogers developed a scenario to start briefing allies an hour before the president’s announcement, starting with Japan. Kissinger [13], p. 758. Kissinger’s primary task was to inform Soviet Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin, Kissinger’s negotiating partner in a secret back channel, about the bombshell announcement. See: Moss [27].

<sup>42</sup> Kissinger [13], p. 758.



For foreign powers, transatlantic partners included, Nixon moved to assuage the surprise. The president invited diplomats to the White House and ordered a letter-writing campaign to heads of state to express gratitude about support for Washington's move, reassure them of the US role in the world, and further explain his motivations.

Following a meeting with Ambassador Soedjatmoko of Indonesia, Nixon and Kissinger discussed a separate secret trip to France from which the national security adviser had just returned. Kissinger had met with Chinese Ambassador to France Huang Zhen on July 26 to discuss setting up a channel via the Chinese embassy in Paris to set up a summit-planning trip to Beijing in October 1971.<sup>43</sup> Kissinger described the warm welcome he had received from Ambassador Huang and Nixon compared the Chinese and the Russians. "The Chinese are a great people," Nixon expounded, whereas, "The Russians have no...ability to be graceful. They are such a crude bunch of people. Uncivilized, aren't they? [...] They either go hog wild, on the one hand, or...brutal on the other." Nixon then got to the point:

**Nixon:** I had an idea about letter writing, if you could make a note of it, a reminder for the staff meeting: Get [presidential speechwriter Raymond] Price to do some of the writing...He's got a big staff over there—

**Kissinger:** Yeah.

**Nixon:** —because we have this diplomatic gobbledygook on it, too. I thought a note should go to those foreign leaders who said graceful things about this visit. Don't you think I might say...that I appreciate it?<sup>44</sup>

Nixon then suggested a handwritten note to thank Yahya for using his good offices to facilitate the Sino-American exchanges and also to get Pakistan's ambassador to the USA, Agha Hilaly, in see the president.<sup>45</sup> Kissinger advised, "Also, drop a note to [French President Georges] Pompidou to thank him...for all these other meetings<sup>46</sup>...And give him a little fill-in on the trip, make him feel good...And maybe a note to [West German Chancellor Willy] Brandt, the son-of-a-bitch, but it would help." Nixon explained:

**Nixon:** I was thinking note to several leaders around the world. [It's cheap stuff] but it's a world leadership thing. And maybe it's just thanking them.

<sup>43</sup> Memorandum of Conversation [between Kissinger, Huang Chen, Tsao Kuei Sheng, Wei Tung, MG Vernon Walters, and Winston Lord], July 26, 1971, FRUS [51], pp. 465–468.

<sup>44</sup> OVAL Conv. No. 547-6, July 27, 1971, 11:05 am–11:32 am, NARA, RMNPLM, WHT, online: [http://nixontapeaudio.org/chron1/rmn\\_e547b.mp3](http://nixontapeaudio.org/chron1/rmn_e547b.mp3). The transcribed portion starts at 0 h:25 m:29 s.

<sup>45</sup> Nixon's hand-written letter to Yahya, dated August 7, 1971, is published in [3] selected and edited by Aijazuddin. Nixon met with Ambassador Hilaly on July 29, 1971. The Nixon taping system captured the conversation, which is: OVAL Conv. No. 551-6, July 29, 1971, 11:50 am–12:20 pm, NARA, RNPLM, WHT, online: [http://nixontapeaudio.org/chron1/rmn\\_e551b.mp3](http://nixontapeaudio.org/chron1/rmn_e551b.mp3). The conversation starts at 1 h:07 m:37 s. See also: President Richard Nixon's Daily Diary [31]: July 29, 1971, NARA, RNPLM, online: <https://www.nixonlibrary.gov/sites/default/files/virtuallibrary/documents/PDD/1971/056%20July%2016-31%201971.pdf>.

<sup>46</sup> Kissinger was referring to Pompidou's providing cover for U.S. meetings in France not just with the Chinese, but also the North Vietnamese.



**Kissinger:** Um-hmm.

**Nixon:** It'd be two levels of notes. Then I was thinking of notes. See, everybody has seen the fact that we have written, they said, [Taiwanese leader] Chiang Kai-shek.

**Kissinger:** Yeah.

**Nixon:** Let's—Now, I think we're in a position to write [Japanese Prime Minister Eisaku] Sato.<sup>47</sup>

**Kissinger:** You must.

**Nixon:** To write—Huh?

**Kissinger:** You should. Definitely—

**Nixon:** You see my point? I think you could write Sato...What do you think of that—?

**Kissinger:** I think it's excellent and I'll get it done this week—

**Nixon:** [...] Let Price go through these guidelines as to what he wants. Would you just get that? And it seems to me we appreciated it, and then put in a little as to what the visit means seeking relations and the rest. For example, and maybe reassure them somewhat as we do...that we want to build our interest in a stable peace in this part of the world and so forth, because...I don't want them to think the United States is bugging out of the world, and we must not let this happen.<sup>48</sup>

Later the same day, July 27, Nixon met again with Kissinger and reiterated the letters of the heads of states was “a good idea” related to “[conserving] world leadership.” Nixon again raised the idea of letters to French President Pompidou and British Prime Minister Edward Heath. Kissinger suggested filling in Heath “personally,” but noted that he did not have plans to get to Europe in the near future. Nixon replied it was good enough to do so “when an opportunity is presented.”<sup>49</sup>

Despite public statements of support for Nixon's China move and outreach efforts after the announcement, there was understandable unhappiness that the White House had not reciprocated allied efforts of keeping Washington apprised of any changes to China policy. The UK's Deputy Under-Secretary of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), Sir Stanley Tomlinson, wrote, “On the whole, the way the Peking visit was handled from the outset seems to me to provide a model of how the leading power in a great alliance ought not to act.”<sup>50</sup> British Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs Sir Alec Douglas-Home's private secretary, John Graham, assessed, “As far as HMG are concerned, it is legitimate to feel a little hurt that the Americans did not see fit to give us real advance notice of the President's decision particularly in view of the trouble we have taken to keep the Americans informed of the development in the thinking of our own China policy.”

<sup>47</sup> Nixon's letter to Sato is published in “Letter from President Nixon to Japanese Prime Minister Sato,” August 3, 1971, FRUS [52].

<sup>48</sup> OVAL Conv. No. 547-6.

<sup>49</sup> OVAL Conv. No. 548-3, July 27, 1971, 2:29 pm–3:05 pm, NARA, RMNPLM, WHT, online: [http://nixontapeaudio.org/chron1/rmn\\_e548a.mp3](http://nixontapeaudio.org/chron1/rmn_e548a.mp3).

<sup>50</sup> Quoted in K.A. Hamilton, “A ‘Week that Changed the Word,’” 118.



It was little solace that the State Department, with which the FCO had been coordinating, had been excluded from Nixon's policy shift.<sup>51</sup> Indeed, the UK had actually delayed its efforts to upgrade to embassy at Secretary of State Rogers' request, only to discover that the Chinese negotiating position had hardened after Nixon's China announcement.

Transatlantic positions on Beijing's representation in the United Nations had begun to diverge long before the announcement of Kissinger's trip to China; the shock may have inadvertently accelerated the PRC's admittance to the UN and Taiwan's expulsion. On 28 July 1971, Nixon met with Vice President Spiro Agnew, Secretary of State Rogers, and Kissinger in the Oval Office. The men discussed the predicament the USA faced at the UN:

**Nixon:** I think you encourage them to take the standpoint of the realists on the thing. We have, believe me, because we have checked it out and if we could save Taiwan's [UN] Security Council seat we would do it. We do not have the votes, because the British have deserted...The Canadians have deserted, and the Italians, on the Important Question thing. If you can't get the Important Question thing, then they're in...Now, the point is: what do you do on the other thing, the expulsion thing? And there...by making that a two-thirds vote, you think we might be able to hold then. That means...that Taiwan would not be expelled. It's a tough one. But, still.

**Agnew:** That's a tough one.

**Rogers:** We may lose that.

**Nixon:** Yeah.

**Rogers:** We have to recognize that we may lose altogether—

**Nixon:** [Fuck], we're gonna fight.<sup>52</sup>

After the vice president and secretary of state left the Oval Office, Nixon met with US Ambassador to Pakistan Joseph Farland, who was an intermediary between President Nixon and Yahya to pass along messages to and from the Chinese. Nixon revisited his concerns about the United Nations for the ambassador:

**Nixon:** I have great passion for Taiwan, for Chiang Kai-shek, Madame Chiang, the whole group. They're great people. And they've been our great friends... But, on the other hand, our problem there is that looking at the only thing that's, as far as their survival is concerned, is that they're going to get rolled at the UN this year. We had a hell of a time keeping them last year, you know, on the Important Question...This year they're going to get rolled because the British, the Canadians, and the Italians—all of them have all of them have jumped ship...As much as we [can] do, this allows us at least to make a fight for them, for keeping them from being expelled. That's about it.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>51</sup> Quoted in Mark [23], p. 890.

<sup>52</sup> OVAL Conv. No. 549-25, July 28, 1971, 3:05 pm–4:54 pm, NARA, RNPLM, WHT, online: [http://nixontapeaudio.org/chron1/rmn\\_e549c.mp3](http://nixontapeaudio.org/chron1/rmn_e549c.mp3). The transcription begins at 0 h:51 m:16 s.

<sup>53</sup> OVAL Conv. No. 549-25, [http://nixontapeaudio.org/chron1/rmn\\_e549c.mp3](http://nixontapeaudio.org/chron1/rmn_e549c.mp3). This portion begins at 1 h:37 m:28 s. Surprisingly, OVAL Conv. 549-25 includes the meetings with Agnew and Rogers and the



Prior to the “fight” at the UN General Assembly session in October 1971, Nixon moved to build support in the effort to prevent the expulsion of Taiwan. While the Canadian and British positions precluded their support for the Important Question, the White House saw some room for maneuver by the Italian government of Prime Minister Emilio Colombo. After delivering a personal demarche to Colombo over Italy’s support to the US position, US Ambassador to Italy Graham Martin noted that certain elements of the prime minister’s coalition were favorable to the US stance. In a meeting on 22 October with US Ambassador to the UN George H.W. Bush and Alexander Haig, Secretary Rogers told Nixon that a presidential phone call to Prime Minister Colombo was “the only thing...that’ll make a difference,” and Italy was “a very key vote.”<sup>54</sup>

Later that afternoon, Nixon called Colombo to make a personal appeal to the Italian prime minister. With a State Department interpreter translating simultaneously, Nixon tried to enlist Rome’s support:

**Nixon:** Well, I want to say to the Prime Minister that I appreciate this difficult problem. I also would emphasize that this vote, of course, will be watched in, in the whole world, and I think it would be very unfortunate if the United States and Italy, the two countries that on all the issues of Europe and on most of the great issues in the world have stood together...it would be very unfortunate if we were to split. And so, I would hope that in the consideration with his Cabinet tomorrow that the Prime Minister, if possible, could help the United States on this vote. We consider it very important that the precedent not be established that by a simple majority a country or government can be expelled from the United Nations. It goes far beyond the China question. It goes to the whole matter of expelling countries. And we think it should require a two-thirds vote. That’s why we think an ‘aye’ vote on the Important Question [IQ] is so important.

**Colombo:** Well, I wish to assure you, Mr. President, that I will do everything within my efforts to assure that our position is as close as possible to that of the United States...On any score—at any rate, I do hope to avoid having to vote against the IQ.”<sup>55</sup>

The White House efforts came to naught on October 25, 1971. First, the General Assembly rejected a US-backed resolution that would have required a supermajority, or two-thirds, to admit or expel members. The General Assembly then rejected another American proposal to remove language from a longstanding Albanian proposal that would have required the expulsion of Taiwan. The coup de grâce was the acceptance of the unaltered Albanian proposal to admit the PRC and expel Taiwan,

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Footnote 53 (continued)

later meeting between Nixon and Farland (i.e., NARA does not list the two distinct meetings as separate conversation numbers).

<sup>54</sup> Editorial Note references OVAL Conv. No. 599-17, October 22, 1971, FRUS [54], p. 720.

<sup>55</sup> Editorial Note references White House Telephone Conv. No. 12-88, October 22, 1971, 5:40 pm–5:59 pm, FRUS [53], pp. 721–722.



with 75 in favor, 35 against, and 17 abstentions. The USA found itself on the losing side, while the UK, Italy, France, Canada, Portugal, and other US allies voted in favor of the resolution.<sup>56</sup>

Nixon and Kissinger discussed the fallout several days after the vote. Nixon seemed unaware that his announcement in July had undercut British negotiations with Beijing and may have been a factor in London's position. When discussing the prospects of the USA joining a European head-of-state meeting scheduled for January 1972, Kissinger told Nixon, "Now, Heath apparently...really has his standard up against us, partly because of our economic measures, partly because he thinks our China initiative screwed him out of some big play he was going to make on recognition, or upgrading his embassy from a chargé status to an embassy status." Kissinger continued, "Well, it was a very cold response. So, I don't think we ought to go back to him." Kissinger recommended talking with Pompidou and Brandt. Again missing the significance of the White House action on the UK's China policy, Nixon and Kissinger blamed the aggrieved party:

**Nixon:** But Heath is probably disturbed?

**Kissinger:** That Heath is a stubborn, uh...

**Nixon:** And we've done a hell of a lot for him. I mean, after the way they screwed us on the Rolls Royce deal,<sup>57</sup> and so forth [unclear]—

**Kissinger:** And they played a nasty role in the UN.<sup>58</sup>

Like Nixon's surprise China announcement in July, London and Washington's opposing stances in October at the UN on the admission of the PRC and expulsion of Taiwan inflamed relations on both sides of the Atlantic. As Chi-Kwan Mark has written, Heath expressed his discontent about Anglo-American relations in a draft memorandum to British Foreign Secretary Sir Alec Douglas-Home in early November 1971. "The present method of conducting foreign relations, political, military and economic, [by the Nixon White House] has completely undermined confidence in the United States," Heath wrote. Nixon's China announcement was made "suddenly without any consultation" with the UK, and the result was that "the price for

<sup>56</sup> United Nations [47], pp. 25, 126–133; "Resolution 2758: Restoration of the lawful rights of the People's Republic of China in the United Nations," *United Nations General Assembly—Twenty-sixth Session*, [http://www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/2758\(XXVI\)](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/2758(XXVI)).

<sup>57</sup> Heath indicated his concerns to Nixon about Rolls Royce going bankrupt and its delays and cost overruns with delivering jet engines to Lockheed. See: Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon, February 3, 1971, FRUS [53], pp. 1004–1005. Nixon's saying the U.S. had been "screwed" may have been a reference to the dissolution of the Rolls-Royce company, the British government's purchase of portions of the core business (as Rolls-Royce Limited), and the subsequent sale of the holdings to the British Aircraft Corporation.

<sup>58</sup> OVAL Conv. No. 606-3, October 28, 1971, 5:54 pm–6:36 pm, NARA, RMNPLM, WHT, online: [http://nixontapeaudio.org/chron2/rmn\\_e606b.mp3](http://nixontapeaudio.org/chron2/rmn_e606b.mp3). The transcribed portion begins at 0 h:57 m:46 s. Possibly referring to the British, but also smaller powers that had voted to expel Taiwan, Nixon told Kissinger, "Henry, let me tell you, though, let's—we can say all we want about the vote. We will not forget. As I told you, I want, I want that whole list looked over to reward and punish." Kissinger responded, "I am." Nixon replied, "I will never see one of those bastards vote against us again." Ibid, transcription began at 0 h:59 m:48 s.



[reaching] an agreement with the Chinese has now been raised against us.”<sup>59</sup> Heath never sent the draft to the foreign secretary. As Chi-Kwan Mark assessed, “For all their outrage at the Nixon shocks, Heath and Douglas-Home were coolheaded enough to conclude that what mattered most to Britain was to bring Communist China into the family of nations. Unlike Taipei or Tokyo, both of which were deeply concerned about its security implications, London shared Nixon’s strategic objective of US–China rapprochement.”<sup>60</sup>

In early December, Nixon and Kissinger expressed their unhappiness with Heath because of the UK’s abstention from a vote at the UN to refer debate on the India–Pakistan War from the Security Council, where it faced repeated Soviet vetoes, to the General Assembly.<sup>61</sup> In a late-night telephone call, Kissinger explained the vote to the president:

**Kissinger:** The British and French abstained. I can understand the French. The British, we ought to put it to Heath that if he keeps this up—

**Nixon:** Jesus Christ.

**Kissinger:** —we’ll have no choice but to treat them like just another country.

**Nixon:** Oh, we’re treating them like just another country anyway, right? [With] the way they’re acting, I mean what the hell? You know, when you come right down to it, why should we stand up for him on something like Rhodesia<sup>62</sup> which really affects votes in our country, whereas something like Pakistan... sure as hell doesn’t affect votes in England.

**Kissinger:** John Connally told you—I must have told you—that they were the toughest in Rome.<sup>63</sup>

**Nixon:** Oh, yes, yes. Yes, he told me. I know about that...I put it to John [that] they were more Gaullist than the French.<sup>64</sup>

Despite the ruffled feathers, Nixon and Heath met in Bermuda on December 20–21, 1971, to discuss a range of issues, including the aftermath of the India–Pakistan War. The two leaders also coordinated on China policy, with the UK government committing to upgrading relations with the PRC after Nixon’s summit meeting in Beijing scheduled for February 1972. While Nixon and Kissinger did not offer an

<sup>59</sup> As quoted in Mark [23], p. 897.

<sup>60</sup> Mark [23], p. 897.

<sup>61</sup> See: Pace [39].

<sup>62</sup> A month earlier, the UN General Assembly had called on the U.S. to comply with sanctions against Rhodesia that had started in 1966. The British and the USA voted against the resolution. See: Eddie Michel [28], pp. 138–161; *Yearbook of the United Nations, 1971*, p. 103; Conversation Among President Nixon, the White House Chief of Staff (Haldeman) and the President’s Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger), November 18, 1971, FRUS [53].

<sup>63</sup> Connally came under pressure about the issue of the gold price and foreign exchange convertibility at the G-10 ministerial meeting in Rome from November 30 to December 1, 1971. See: Editorial Note, FRUS [49].

<sup>64</sup> White House Telephone Conv. No. 16-37, December 7, 1971, 11:31 pm–11:41 pm, NARA, RMN-PLM, WHT, online: [http://nixontapes.org/hak/1971-12-07\\_Nixon\\_016-037.mp3](http://nixontapes.org/hak/1971-12-07_Nixon_016-037.mp3). The transcribed portion is at 02 m:11 s.



apology for failing to coordinate with London on China policy, they attempted an explanation. According to the US memorandum of the meeting:

After some remarks on China policy by Dr. Kissinger, the President emphasized to Prime Minister Heath that “We feel that you should take an active role in world affairs. We must have better communications. We should reach some sort of agreement on general objectives. As for China, when you have two enemies, we want to tilt towards the weaker, not towards the stronger—though not in a way that we can be caught at it.” The President went on to discuss why we had to keep the bureaucracy in the dark as we went about setting up the first Kissinger trip. “We’d like to keep you informed on a personal basis,” he stressed to the Prime Minister. Dr. Kissinger explained why it was not possible to inform allied governments any sooner before the July 15 announcement. The ROC had a better claim to advance notice than the Japanese had, but they would have leaked it. The Japanese themselves have the leakiest government in the world, so we couldn’t afford to give them advance word.<sup>65</sup>

Neither Nixon nor Kissinger displayed any awareness of Heath’s efforts to upgrade relations with the PRC. Similarly, the president and his national security advisor missed the opportunity to explain why Washington’s relations with London were qualitatively different from US relations with other allies. As Chi-Kwan Mark has written, “In a word, the special relationship between Britain and the USA, damaged by the Nixon shocks, was restored somewhat by their common objectives of building a strong Europe within the Atlantic alliance and of integrating Communist China into the emerging multipolar world order.”<sup>66</sup>

Franco-American relations were more sanguine about the US opening to China. Before Nixon met with Heath, he had the first of his “heads-of-major-governments” meetings with President Pompidou in the Azores on December 13, 1971. The two presidents were in almost complete agreement that Moscow’s fears over China were a driving factor in an improvement in US–Soviet and European–Soviet relations. For Nixon, China “was a major power with the largest population in the world...a mini economic power with a production less than half of Japan’s...a mini nuclear power in relation to the USSR.” Nevertheless, “twenty years from now China will be a major nuclear power if they so wish.” Nixon asked, “Do we allow that to come about with China isolated?” The American told his French counterpart he “had made this choice to himself with his eyes open to seek by necessity a peaceful relationship” with Beijing.<sup>67</sup>

Nixon and Kissinger seemed less concerned other transatlantic partners. As described above, Nixon focused his efforts on ameliorating shock of his China announcement to allies that were most directly affected, such as Taiwan and Japan; transatlantic allies like Canada and Italy were not affected, in Nixon’s assessment,

<sup>65</sup> Memorandum for the Record, December 20, 1971 [7]. Underlining in the original source.

<sup>66</sup> Mark [23], p. 898.

<sup>67</sup> Memorandum of Conversation [between Nixon, Pompidou, Mr. Andronikof, Major General Walters] December 13, 1971, FRUS [53], pp. 564–575.



but could serve a purpose at the U.N. or be praised for moral support for the administration's move.

At its core, the Nixon–Kissinger opening to China reflected the administration's relationship with secrecy. The use of back channels, compartmentalization, and misdirection enabled Nixon's China move and allowed the White House to maximize political credit, simultaneously add anxiety and increase cooperation with the Soviet adversary, and reorient the Cold War. However, the flip side of the same coin was the shock to the US foreign policy bureaucracy and allies.

It is worth noting that while the exact timing of the Nixon administration's moves may have been a surprise in July 1971, astute European observers probably had seen a shift in US policy on the PRC as eventual, if not inevitable. European countries, including the United Kingdom, France, and the Netherlands, had had a longer period of engagement with the People's Republic of China than the USA. Transatlantic partners read Nixon's article in *Foreign Affairs* in 1967, in which the future president warned, "Taking the long view, we simply cannot afford to leave China forever outside the family of nations, there to nurture its fantasies, cherish its hates and threaten its neighbors."<sup>68</sup> They also witnessed that, during his time out of office, Nixon took several, well publicized, round-the-world trips and had talked about China. Even leaving Nixon aside, the larger shift of the USA toward the Pacific region, and away from Europe, began under the Kennedy and Johnson administrations as the USA became increasingly embroiled in Vietnam and at odds with many of its traditional transatlantic allies. Thus, complete surprise could hardly have been genuine, and a skeptical view is probably warranted on the public responses from European capitals.<sup>69</sup>

Nixon was consistently clear about his desire for secrecy. For example, in late June 1971, Nixon and Kissinger had a conversation about the British view on the release of the *Pentagon Papers* by the *New York Times*. Although the *Pentagon Papers* did not implicate the Nixon administration in the decisions that got the USA embroiled in the Vietnam conflict, the concern that the government could not keep its secrets triggered strong fears in the White House. The timing may also have been a contributing factor to the administration's anxieties, coming weeks before Kissinger's secret trip to China and amidst the Strategic Arms Limitations Talks with the Soviets. When Nixon asked about the British view on the *Pentagon Papers*, Kissinger told the president that London was "really...worried...because they are getting some pressures, domestically, too, about the Official Secrets Act." Applying the same lens to London through which he viewed the issue, Nixon replied, "Well, they know that there's no diplomacy that's effective unless it's secret."<sup>70</sup>

<sup>68</sup> Nixon [35].

<sup>69</sup> Kissinger's secret "Polo I" trip in July 1971 was nearly exposed before he departed from Pakistan to China. According to Winston Lord, Kissinger's aide who accompanied him on the trip, there had been a news service reporter who thought he had seen Kissinger at the Islamabad Airport, but the reporter's editor had killed the story [19].

<sup>70</sup> Conversation between Nixon and Kissinger, OVAL 529-14, June 27, 1971, 8:18 pm–9:14 pm, NARA, RMNPLM, WHT, online: [http://nixontapeaudio.org/chron1/rmn\\_e529a.mp3](http://nixontapeaudio.org/chron1/rmn_e529a.mp3). The transcription begins at 1 h:06 m:20 s.



In his memoir, *White House Years*, Kissinger seemed somewhat conflicted about the efforts the Nixon administration took to ensure secrecy. “Nixon feared leaks and shrank from imposing discipline,” Kissinger recorded, “But he was determined to achieve his purposes; he thus encouraged procedures unlikely to be recommended in textbooks on public administration that, crablike, worked privily around existing structures.” Kissinger reminded readers—and has reminded audiences for five decades—that the style suited Nixon, the man at the top. The academic-turned-policy-maker-turned-*eminence-grise* wrote: “In 1971 and 1972 these methods produced the SALT breakthrough, the opening to China, a Berlin agreement, the Peking and the Moscow summits without any setback.”<sup>71</sup>

For Kissinger, the ends justified the means. Like any good academic, however, Kissinger had some caveats. “The results should be judged on their merits,” Kissinger wrote, “though I recognize a price was paid in the manner of their achievement and though I do not believe it should be repeated.”<sup>72</sup> Kissinger also recollected a memorandum he received after the secret trip to China from William Safire, a presidential speechwriter and later *New York Times* columnist. Safire suggested Kissinger might wish to remember a quote by Dag Hammarskjöld, the second Secretary-General of the UN: “The most dangerous of all moral dilemmas: When we are obliged to conceal truth in order to help the truth be victorious.”<sup>73</sup>

Kissinger’s appraisal seems correct forty years after the publication of *White House Years*. The opening to China realigned the international landscape. Beijing has made enormous strides in its integration and role in the world. The methods of the opening, however, certainly added some tensions into transatlantic relations and US relationships with other allies. The full accounting includes collateral damage, in addition to the primary goals, and whether or not it has been mitigated over time. On the last part, transatlantic relations have had their ups and downs, but on the whole have expanded. The Cold War has been over for a generation. NATO remains intact and has grown, much to Russia’s consternation; the European Economic Community has evolved into the European Union and multiplied many fold; and, the USA still has extensive trade with European allies and partners, with deep social, cultural, and economic ties. There are still differences of opinion on trade balances, the British position inside or out of the EU, economic competition, and other issues, but the institutions seem to be surviving and even thriving.

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## Compliance with ethical standards

**Conflict of interest** This article includes original transcribed excerpts from the Nixon tapes, which are the author’s interpretation; others may have different interpretations of what was said. Minor omissions are de-

<sup>71</sup> Kissinger [13], p; 806.

<sup>72</sup> Kissinger [13], p. 806.

<sup>73</sup> Kissinger [13], p. 763.



noted with ellipses (...) and larger or more substantive omissions with bracketed ellipses ([...]). Interruptions or false starts are denoted with an em-dash (—). Editorial comments and text where the transcription was less certain appear within brackets ([ ]). Each transcript has been reviewed multiple times. Readers are encouraged to consult the audio; time codes are included for transcribed portions that correspond to audio that is available online. The author worked with Luke Nichter and the National Security Archive to make the complete declassified digital audio available online at <http://nixon tapes.org/>.

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