THE NEW COLD WAR HISTORY

John Lewis Gaddis, editor

MAO'S CHINA AND THE COLD WAR

CHEN JIAN

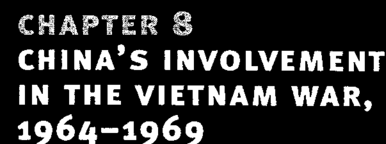
The University of North Carolina Press

Chapel Hill & London

is why, despite the fact that China is so far away from the Middle East and had so few practical interests there, Mao still found it necessary for Beijing to respond to the American-British intervention in Lebanon and Jordan in dramatic ways.

Equally revealing is Mao's attitude toward Moscow before and during the crisis. Although the Soviet Union was China's most important ally in the 1950s, Mao intentionally kept the Soviet leaders in the dark about the timing, course, and purpose of his actions against Taiwan. Particularly troublesome was Mao's consistent expression of contempt for the danger involved in the possibility that the crisis might lead to a nuclear catastrophe. The chairman certainly did not believe that the crisis would lead to such a dire situation—indeed, it was exactly because he did not believe so that he ordered the shelling. However, he enjoyed repeatedly bringing the topic—in his highly dialectic and philosophical manner—to the attention of the Soviet leaders. What Mao wanted was to challenge the moral courage and ideological values of the Soviet leaders, thus making them appear morally inferior. Consequently revolutionary China's centrality in the international Communist movement and in the world—since communism represented the future of the human race—would naturally be established and recognized.

For China 1958 turned out to be a year of great disaster. Following the failure of the Great Leap Forward, it is estimated that between 20 and 30 million Chinese people died in a three-year-long nationwide famine. The effects of the Taiwan Strait crisis were for China no less serious. In the wake of the crisis, the conflict between China and the United States intensified, the distrust between Beijing and Moscow deepened continuously, and the hostility between the mainland and Taiwan, especially in a psychological sense, increased dramatically. However, from Mao's perspective, his initiation and management of the crisis remained a successful case of promoting domestic mobilization by provoking international tension. The experience set a decisive precedent in Mao's handling of China's domestic and external policies in the 1960s, especially when he was leading China toward another crucial episode in his continuous revolution—the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. That, as is well known today, was a path toward another great disaster.



CHAPTER 8 CHINA'S INVOLVEMENT IN THE VIETNAM WAR, 1964–1969

The Vietnam War was an international conflict. Not only was the United States engaged in large-scale military operations in a land far away from its own, but the two major Communist powers, China and the Soviet Union, were also deeply involved. Scholars have long assumed that Beijing played an important role in supporting Hanoi's efforts to fight the United States. Because of the lack of access to Chinese source materials, however, it has been difficult for scholars to illustrate and define the motives, decision-making processes, magnitude, and consequences of China's involvement in the Vietnam War.

This chapter, as the continuation of the examination in Chapter 5 of China's connections with the First Indochina War, aims to shed some new light on China's involvement in the Vietnam War. It covers the five crucial years from 1964 to 1969, with emphasis on an analysis of the failure of an alliance that was once claimed to be "between brotherly comrades."

Background: Chinese–North Vietnamese Relations, 1954–1962

The 1954 Geneva agreement on Indochina concluded the First Indochina War but failed to end military conflicts in Southeast Asia. When it became clear that a peaceful reunification through the plebiscite scheduled for 1956 would be indefinitely blocked by Washington and the Ngo Dinh Diem government in Saigon, the Vietnamese Communist leadership decided in 1959–60 to resume "armed resistance" in the South.[1] Policymakers in Washington, perceiving that the battles in South Vietnam and other parts of Southeast Asia (especially in Laos) represented a crucial contest against further Communist expansion, continuously increased America's military involvement there.[2] Consequently, the Second Indochina War intensified.

Beijing was a main participant, as well as a beneficiary, of the Geneva agreement of 1954. China's policy toward the settlement of the First Indochina War reflected its strategic considerations at that time, which included a desire to

focus on domestic problems after the end of the Korean War, the need to take precautions against possible American military intervention in the Indochina area, thus preventing another direct Sino-American confrontation, and the need to forge a new international image to correspond with its new claims of peaceful coexistence.[3]

Because of these considerations, the Beijing leadership neither hindered nor encouraged Hanoi's efforts to "liberate" the South by military means until 1962. After the Geneva agreement was signed, the leaders in Beijing seemed more willing than their comrades in Hanoi to accept that Vietnam would be indefinitely divided. In several exchanges between top Beijing and Hanoi leaders in 1955–56, the Chinese advised that the most urgent task facing the Vietnamese Communists was how to consolidate the revolutionary achievements in the North.[4] In December 1955, Beijing's Defense and Foreign Ministries decided to recall the Chinese Military Advisory Group, which had been in Vietnam since July 1950. Peng Dehuai, China's defense minister, informed his Vietnamese counterpart, Vo Nguyen Giap, of this decision on 24 December 1955, and all members of the group returned to China by mid-March 1956.[5] In the summer of 1958 the VWP politburo formally asked Beijing's advice about the strategies for the "southern revolution." In a written response, the Beijing leadership emphasized that "the most fundamental, most important, and most urgent task" facing the Vietnamese was "how to promote socialist revolution and reconstruction in the North." "[R]evolutionary transformation in the South," according to Beijing, "was impossible at the current stage." Beijing therefore suggested that Hanoi adopt in the South a strategy of "not exposing our own forces for a long period, accumulating our own strength, establishing connections with the masses, and waiting for the right opportunities."[6] The nationwide famine following the failure of the Great Leap Forward forced the Beijing leadership to focus on domestic issues. During his meetings with Ho Chi Minh and Pham Van Dong, the DRV's prime minister, in Hanoi in May 1960, Zhou Enlai advised the Vietnamese that they adopt a flexible approach in the South by combining political and military struggles. He emphasized that even when military struggle seemed inevitable, political struggle was still necessary.[7] All of these developments indicate that Beijing's leaders were not enthusiastic about their Vietnamese comrades initiating military action in the South in 1959–60 and that the Vietnamese themselves made the decision "to resume the resistance."[8]

However, Beijing took no active steps to oppose a revolution in South Vietnam. The relationship between the PRC and the DRV was very close in the late 1950s and early 1960s, and the leaders from Beijing and Hanoi frequently visited each other and coordinated their domestic and foreign policies.[9] This close connection, as well as Beijing's revolutionary ideology, precluded the Chinese from hindering the Vietnamese cause of revolution and reunification. During this period, Beijing also implemented a propaganda campaign emphasizing that China was a natural ally of the oppressed peoples of the world in their struggles for national liberation. It would be inconceivable, in such a circumstance, for Beijing to impede the Vietnamese revolution. In addition, from a strategic point of view, since Sino-American relations experienced several crises during this period, especially in the Taiwan Strait in 1958, the Chinese leaders would not ignore the fact that intensifying revolutionary insurgence in South Vietnam might overextend America's commitment, thus improving China's position in its conflict with the United States in East Asia.[10]

Under these circumstances and in response to Hanoi's requests, China offered substantial military aid to Vietnam before 1963. According to one highly reliable Chinese source, during the 1956–63 period, China's military aid to Vietnam totaled 320 million yuan. China's arms shipments to Vietnam included 270,000 guns, over 10,000 pieces of artillery, 200 million bullets of different types, 2.02 million artillery shells, 15,000 wire transmitters, 5,000 radio transmitters, over 1,000 trucks, 15 planes, 28 naval vessels, and 1.18 million military uniforms.[11] Beijing's leaders used this material support rather than their direct military presence to show to their comrades in Hanoi their solidarity.

Beijing's Increasing Support to Hanoi, 1963–1964

Beijing's policy toward Vietnam began to take a radical turn in late 1962 and early 1963. In the summer of 1962, a DRV delegation led by Ho Chi Minh and Nguyen Chi Thanh visited Beijing. The Vietnamese summarized the situation in South Vietnam, emphasizing the possibility that with the escalation of military conflicts in the South, the United States might use air and/or land forces to attack the North.[12] The Chinese leaders were very much alarmed by this assessment. In a meeting with the DRV defense minister, General Vo Nguyen Giap, on 5 October, Mao Zedong emphasized that "in the past several years, we did not think much about whether or not the imperialists might attack us, and now we must carefully think about it."[13] Accordingly, Beijing offered to equip an additional 230 Vietnamese battalions.[14]

Beijing made general security commitments to Hanoi throughout 1963. In March, a Chinese military delegation headed by Luo Ruiqing, PLA chief of staff, visited Hanoi. Luo told Vietnamese leaders that if the Americans were to attack North Vietnam, China would come to its defense. The two sides also discussed how they should coordinate their operations in the event that

America invaded North Vietnam.[15] In May, Liu Shaoqi visited Vietnam, and in his meetings with Ho Chi Minh and other DRV leaders, he promised that if the war expanded as the result of their efforts to liberate the South, they could "definitely count on China as the strategic rear." [16] In September, the leaders of four Communist parties (Zhou Enlai from China, Ho Chi Minh, Le Duan, and Nguyen Chi Thanh from Vietnam, Kaysone Phomvihane from Laos, and D. N. Aidit from Indonesia) held an meeting in Chonghua, China's Guangdong province. In a keynote speech, Zhou Enlai pointed out that Southeast Asia had been the focus of a confrontation between international revolutionary and reactionary forces. He encouraged Communist parties in this region to promote an anti-imperialist, antifeudal, and "anti-camprador capitalist" revolution by mobilizing the masses and conducting armed struggles in the countryside. He also emphasized that China would serve as the great rear of the "revolution in Southeast Asia" and would try its best to support the anti-imperialist struggles by the people in Southeast Asian countries.[17]

Beijing's leaders certainly were willing to turn these promises into actions. In October, Kaysone Phomvihane, head of the Laotian People's Revolutionary Party (the Communist Party), secretly visited Beijing. He requested China's support for the Communist forces in Laos for their military struggles and base-area buildup. Zhou Enlai agreed to the request. As the first step, a Chinese work team, headed by General Duan Suquan, entered Laos early the next year "to investigate the situation there, as well as to prepare conditions for large-scale Chinese assistance." [18] At the end of 1963, after the Johnson administration demonstrated its intention to expand American military involvement in Vietnam, military planners in Beijing suggested that the Vietnamese strengthen their defensive system in the Tonkin Delta area. Hanoi asked the Chinese to help complete the construction of new defense works there, to which the Chinese General Staff agreed.[19]

Beijing extended its security commitments to Hanoi in 1964. In June, Van Tien Dung, North Vietnam's chief of staff and the person in charge of military operations in the South, led a delegation to Beijing. Mao told the delegation that China and Vietnam should unite more closely in the struggle against the common enemy. Referring to the crucial question of how China would respond if the war expanded to North Vietnam, Mao told the Vietnamese: "If the United States risks taking the war to North Vietnam, Chinese troops should cross the border [to enter the war]. It is better for our troops to be [called] volunteers. We may claim that they are organized by the people, and that the [PRC] government has no control over them. You may also organize your own volunteers and dispatch them to the South, and you may claim that

they have been organized by the people without the knowledge of President Ho." In analyzing the prospect of American intervention, the CCP chairman advised his Vietnamese comrades: "[T]he more you fear the Americans, the more they will bully you. . . . You should not fear, you should fight. . . . In my opinion, the less you fear [the Americans], the less they will dare to bully you." Liu Shaoqi, who was also present at the meeting, reiterated the chairman's message: "The less you fear them, the more they respect you. If China does not fear them, and if the Vietnamese people do not fear them, they will have to consider again and again before taking any action. . . . When they do something about Vietnam, they will have to think of China." [20]

One month later, in a conversation with Tran Tu Binh, Hanoi's ambassador to Beijing, Mao again used powerful language to promise to Hanoi that if the war expanded to North Vietnam, China would intervene: "We must be prepared. Both North Vietnam and China must be prepared. If they [the Americans] start bombing or landing operations [against North Vietnam], we will fight them. . . . If the United States attacks North Vietnam, that is not just your problem. They will have to remember that we Chinese also have legs. The Americans can dispatch their troops. Cannot we Chinese also dispatch our troops? From our country to your country, we take one step and we are already there." [21]

Believing that the war in Indochina was facing a crucial juncture, on 5–8 July 1964, Chinese, Vietnamese, and Laotian Communist leaders held a planning meeting in Hanoi to discuss how to evaluate the situation and to coordinate their strategies.[22] In assessing the possible development of the war in Indochina, the three delegations agreed that the United States would continue to expand the war in Vietnam by sending more land forces to the South and, possibly, using air forces to attack important targets in the North. Zhou Enlai promised that China would increase its military and economic aid to Vietnam, help train Vietnamese pilots, and, if the Americans were to attack the North, provide support "by all possible and necessary means." The Chinese premier emphasized that "if the United States takes one step, China will respond with one step; if the United States dispatches its troops [to attack the DRV], China will also dispatch its troops." [23] These words, together with Mao's promises to Van Tien Dung and Tran Tu Binh, indicate that Beijing's leaders were now more willing than before to commit China's resources to supporting their comrades in Indochina, and especially in North Vietnam, if the war expanded further.

There were profound domestic and international reasons behind Beijing's adoption of a more aggressive strategy toward the escalating conflicts in

Southeast Asia. First, Beijing's more enthusiastic attitude toward Hanoi has to be understood in the context of the rapid radicalization of China's political and social life in the 1960s. Since the early days of the PRC, Mao had never concealed his ambition to transform China into a land of universal equality and justice under the banner of socialism and communism. In the late 1950s, Mao's grand revolutionary plans led to the Great Leap Forward, which turned out to be a nationwide catastrophe. For the first time in Communist China's history, the myth of Mao's "eternal correctness" was called into question. Starting in 1960, with Mao's retreat to the "second line," the Beijing leadership adopted more moderate and flexible domestic policies designed for economic recovery and social stability (such as allowing the peasants to maintain small plots of land for their families). Mao, however, gave up neither his revolutionary plans nor his position as China's paramount leader. When China's economy began to recover in 1962, Mao called the whole party "never to forget class struggle" at the Central Committee's Tenth Plenary Session.[24] In early 1963, a "Socialist Education" movement began to sweep across China's cities and countryside, which would finally lead to the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution.[25]

Mao, informed by his previous experience, fully realized that creating the impression that China was facing serious external threats would help strengthen the dynamics of revolutionary mobilization at home, as well as legitimize his authority and controlling position in China's political life.[26] On a series of occasions from late 1962 to 1964, Mao repeatedly emphasized that China was facing an international environment full of crises, arguing that international reactionary forces were preparing to wage a war against China and it was therefore necessary for China to prepare politically and militarily for this coming challenge.[27]

In the meantime, Mao used the party's international strategy in general and its Vietnam policy in particular to win the upper hand in a potential contest with other party leaders who, in his view, had demonstrated a "revisionist" tendency on both domestic and international issues. Wang Jiaxiang, head of the CCP's International Liaison Department, was the first target of his criticism. In the spring and early summer of 1962, Wang submitted to the party's top leadership a series of reports on international affairs in which he argued that China should not allow itself to be involved in another Korean-style confrontation with the United States in Vietnam.[28] Mao quickly characterized Wang's ideas as an attempt to conciliate imperialists, revisionists, and international reactionaries and to reduce support to those countries and peoples fighting against imperialists. He stressed that the policy of "three conciliations and one reduction" came at the time when some leading CCP members had been frightened by the international reactionaries and therefore were inclined to adopt a "pro-revisionist" policy line at home. He emphasized that his policy, by contrast, was to fight against the imperialists, revisionists, and reactionaries in all countries and, at the same time, to increase support to anti-imperialist forces in other countries.[29] Mao would later use these accusations to challenge and overwhelm his other more prominent "revisionist" colleagues in the party's central leadership, especially Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping. It is not surprising, then, that with the reconsolidation of Mao's leadership role, there emerged a more radical Chinese policy toward Vietnam.

Beijing's new attitude toward the escalating Vietnam conflict was also closely related to the deteriorating relationship between China and the Soviet Union. The honeymoon between Beijing and Moscow in the 1950s ended quickly after the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU in 1956. The divergences were political, economic, ideological, and psychological. Mao strongly disagreed with Khrushchev's de-Stalinization, viewing it as evidence of "capitalist restoration" in the Soviet Union. Khrushchev's decision to withdraw Soviet experts from China, to cut Soviet assistance, to take a pro-New Delhi attitude during the Chinese-Indian border conflict in 1962, and not to share nuclear secrets with China further damaged the relationship.[30] In 1962 and 1963, the split between the two Communist giants was publicized, with Beijing and Moscow openly criticizing each other's lack of loyalty to Marxism-Leninism. As far as this rift's immediate impact on China's policy toward Vietnam is concerned, two points should be stressed. First, in order to guarantee that Hanoi would stand on Beijing's side, it became more important than ever for Beijing's leaders to give resolute backing to their Vietnamese comrades. Second, since Beijing was escalating its propaganda criticizing Moscow's failure to give sufficient support to revolutionary national liberation movements, Beijing's leaders must have realized that they would be seen as hypocritical if they themselves failed to offer support. In the context of the rapidly deteriorating relationship between China and the Soviet Union, Vietnam had become a litmus test for "true communism."

Beijing's new attitude toward Vietnam also grew out of its understanding of the central role China was to play in promoting revolutionary movements in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Ever since the victory of the Chinese revolution in 1949, the CCP leadership had believed that China's experience had established a model for the struggles of other oppressed peoples, and that the significance of the Chinese revolution went far beyond China's boundaries.[31] But in the 1950s and early 1960s, Beijing's interpretation was still subordinate to the "two-camps" theory, which contended that the center of the world

revolution remained in Moscow. With the emergence of Sino-Soviet split in the early 1960s, the Chinese changed their attitude, alleging that the center of the world revolution had moved from Moscow to Beijing. Applying China's experience of "encircling the cities by first liberating the countryside" to the entire world, Beijing viewed Asia, Africa, and Latin America as the "world's countryside." China, by virtue of its revolutionary past, was entitled to play a leading role in promoting revolutionary struggles in the "world cities."[32] Beijing's new policy toward Vietnam was certainly compatible with this line of thinking.

It is apparent that underlying Beijing's more radical policy toward Vietnam were the ambitious Maoist revolutionary programs of transforming China and the world. While the intensifying crisis situation in Vietnam in the early and mid-1960s posed an increasing threat to China's security interests, Mao's primary concern lay in the interplay between the changing situation in Vietnam and his grand plans of promoting China's continuous revolution. The vision of Beijing's Vietnam policy was never restricted to Vietnam itself. The policy seemed to have complicated aims: Mao and his comrades certainly hoped that the Vietnamese revolutionaries would eventually defeat the U.S. imperialists and their "lackeys," and it was thus necessary for Beijing to support their struggles, but it would be against Mao's interests if such support indeed led to a direct Chinese-American confrontation, which would thus sabotage his efforts to bring about the Cultural Revolution at home. American expansion of warfare in Vietnam would threaten China's security in general, but the war's expansion on a limited scale could provide Mao with much-needed stimulus to mobilize the Chinese population. Beijing's belligerent statements about war in Vietnam were certainly aimed at both Hanoi and Washington, but they were also aimed at the ordinary people in China.

After the Gulf of Tonkin Incident

Early in August 1964, Vietnamese torpedo boats purportedly twice attacked American naval vessels in the Gulf of Tonkin area. The Johnson administration immediately ordered retaliation with air bombardment of selected North Vietnamese targets.[33] As Chinese and Vietnamese leaders had been predicting for months, the war in Vietnam had reached a crucial turning point.

Beijing responded promptly to the incident. On 5 August, Zhou Enlai and Luo Ruiqing cabled Ho Chi Minh, Pham Van Dong, and Van Tien Dung, advising them to "investigate and clarify the situation, discuss and formulate proper strategies and policies, and be ready to take action." Without going into details, they proposed closer military collaboration between Beijing and Hanoi

to meet the American threat.[34] The same day, as a precautionary measure, the Central Military Commission and the General Staff in Beijing ordered the military regions in Kunming and Guangzhou (the two regions adjacent to Vietnam) and the air force and naval units stationed in southern and southwestern China to enter a state of combat readiness, advising them to "pay close attention to the movement of American forces, and be ready to cope with any possible sudden attack."[35]

In order to coordinate Chinese and Vietnamese strategies, Le Duan, VWP first secretary, secretly visited Beijing in mid-August. On 13 August at Beidaihe, he had a two-hour meeting with Mao Zedong, at which the two leaders exchanged intelligence information on the Gulf of Tonkin incident. Le Duan confirmed to Mao that the incident of 2 August was the result of a decision made by the Vietnamese commander at the site, and Mao told Le Duan that, according to Beijing's intelligence sources, the incident of 4 August was "not an intentional attack by the Americans" but was caused by "mistaken judgment" as the result of wrong information. While discussing the prospect of the war's expansion into North Vietnam, Mao pointed out: "It seems that the Americans do not want to fight a war, you do not want to fight a war, and we do not necessarily want to fight a war. Since none of the three sides wants to fight a war, the war will not happen." When a member of Le Duan's delegation mentioned that "the enemy is now making outcries to attack North Vietnam," Mao responded: "If the United States attacks the North, they will have to remember that the Chinese also have legs, and legs are used for walking." But the Chinese chairman also advised the Vietnamese that, no matter how unlikely, in case the Americans did send "several hundred thousand" troops to invade North Vietnam, the Vietnamese should give up some land in the coastal area and should fight a protracted war against the aggressors in the interior. "As long as the green mountains are there," commented the chairman, "you need not worry about firewood supplies." Le Duan told Mao that "the support from China is indispensable, it is indeed related to the fate of our motherland, and the Soviet revisionists only want to use us as a bargaining chip."[36]

While Mao was meeting Le Duan at the scenic Beidaihe, the Chinese air force was busy moving a large number of air and antiaircraft units into the Chinese-Vietnamese border area. On 12 August, the air force's Seventh Army headquarters was moved from Guangdong to Nanning, so that it would be able to take charge of possible operations in Guangxi and in areas adjacent to the Tonkin Gulf.[37] Four air divisions and one antiaircraft artillery division were moved into areas adjacent to Vietnam and were ordered to maintain combat readiness. In the following months, two new airfields were constructed in

Guangxi to serve the needs of these units. Beijing also designated eight other air force divisions in nearby regions as second-line units.[38]

Allen Whiting, relying on American intelligence information, argues that Beijing's transfer of new air units to the border area and the construction of new airfields there were carefully designed to deter further American expansion of war in the South and bombardment in the North.[39] This interpretation certainly deserves credit. As quoted above, Mao told Le Duan on 13 August that it was unlikely that the Americans would expand the war to North Vietnam.[40] In the same conversation, the Chinese chairman also mentioned that Beijing had transferred several air divisions and antiaircraft artillery divisions to Yunnan and Guangxi provinces and planned to construct new airfields in the Chinese-Vietnamese border area. It is interesting to note that the chairman then emphasized that "we will not make this a secret but will make this open."[41] A logical deduction from Mao's words is that, as Whiting has argued, Beijing intended to use these actions to deter the Americans.

Beijing's leaders also used these actions to assure their comrades in Hanoi of their backing, to allow themselves the time to work out the specifics of China's strategy toward the Vietnam War in light of Beijing's domestic and international needs, and to turn the tensions caused by an external crisis into a new driving force for a profound domestic mobilization.

Not surprisingly, then, Mao immediately used the escalation of the Vietnam War in August 1964 to revolutionize further China's political and social life, bringing about a "Resist America and Assist Vietnam Movement" throughout China. On 5 August, the Chinese government announced that "America's aggression against the DRV was also aggression against China, and that China would never fail to come to the aid of the Vietnamese."[42] Following the CCP Central Committee's instructions, according to the statistics of the Xinhua News Agency, over 20 million Chinese took part in rallies and demonstrations all over China on 7–11 August, protesting against "the U.S. imperialist aggression against Vietnam," as well as showing "solidarity with the Vietnamese people."[43] Through many such rallies and other similar activities in the next two years, the concept of "resisting America and assisting Vietnam" would penetrate into every part of Chinese society, making it a dominant national theme that Mao would use to mobilize the Chinese population along his "revolutionary lines."[44]

Several of Mao's internal speeches further revealed his mind-set. In mid-August 1964, the CCP Central Secretariat met to discuss the international situation and China's responses. In his addresses on 17 and 20 August Mao emphasized that the imperialists were planning to start a new war of aggression against China, and it was therefore necessary for China to fundamentally restructure its economic framework. Mao paid particular attention to the fact that, since most industry was then located in coastal areas, China was economically vulnerable to sudden attacks. To safeguard the industrial bases, Mao believed it necessary to move a large number of factories to the interior of the country and to establish the Third Front (*san xian*, that is, the industrial bases located in the interior). Meanwhile, in order to cope with the situation in Indochina, Mao called for rapid completion of three new railway lines—the Chengdu-Kunming line, the Sichuan-Guizhou line, and the Yunnan-Guizhou line, all of which would provide better connections between China's interior and the Chinese-Vietnamese border area. All of China's economic planning, Mao emphasized, should now be oriented toward China's national defense, to prepare for a coming war with the imperialists.[45]

The escalation of the Vietnam War in late 1964 thus triggered a profound transformation of the entire structure of China's national economy.[46] Following Mao's ideas, the CCP Central Committee discussed the need to establish a "Headquarters for National Economy and National Defense," with Mao Zedong and Liu Shaoqi as its co-commanders.[47] By early 1965, a large portion of the coastal industry had begun to move into the inner areas, and the emphasis of China's economic development changed from agriculture and light industry to heavy industry, particularly in the sectors related to the military build-up.[48] A large portion of China's population (especially in coastal areas) were affected by these changes, which, as Mao had intended, created a broad-reaching and intense revolutionary popular mentality in Chinese society and politics.

Defining China's Aid to Vietnam, Late 1964–Early 1965

In a strategic sense, the security commitments Beijing had previously offered Hanoi had been given in general terms. Thus in late 1964 and early 1965, Beijing's leaders needed to define the specifics of China's support to Vietnam in light of both how Mao perceived the country's domestic and international needs and the changing situation in Vietnam.

At first, as indicated by the conversations between Mao and the visiting Vietnamese delegations, Beijing's leaders seemed to believe that the "resolute struggles on the part of the Vietnamese people" would effectively prevent Washington from dramatically escalating the war in Vietnam.[49] Therefore, the Johnson administration's decisions in February and March 1965 to launch a sustained bombing campaign against North Vietnam (Operation Rolling Thunder) and deploy a growing number of ground forces in South Vietnam

came as an unpleasant surprise to Beijing's leaders. Mao and his comrades were forced to reconsider the implications of American actions in Vietnam and, accordingly, formulate Chinese strategies to deal with the worsening crisis. While doing so, Beijing's leaders were influenced by the lessons of the Korean War, as well as the assumption that the Americans would also learn from their experience in Korea.

In March and April 1965, top Beijing leaders held a series of discussions about the situation in Vietnam, putting special emphasis on whether Washington would further expand the war by bringing the ground war to North Vietnam and air/ground war to China. A speech made by Deng Xiaoping at a politburo meeting of 12 April, which was also attended by Liu Shaoqi and Zhou Enlai, revealed some of Beijing's basic considerations:

> It seems that the [American] bombardment will continue. The U.S. imperialists' first step was fighting a special war. According to the Vietnamese comrades, the [American] special war has reached a new stage. Our view is that the special war has failed and the war will be expanded. The American air bombardment has penetrated into the airspace only twelve kilometers south of Hanoi, and, if the bombardment continues, it is inevitable that even Hanoi, Hai Phong, and Thai Nguyen will become the targets. . . . [I]t is even possible for them, under the excuse of chasing after Vietnamese planes, to invade our airspace. . . . If this is allowed to continue, they will come to Yunnan and Guangxi. Then the war will expand to part of China, and then, to all of China.[50]

Deng Xiaoping also identified four possible ways the war could develop: "First, the war [could] be fought in South Vietnam; second, the war [could] be fought both in South and North Vietnam, and [could] be linked to the war in Laos; third, the war [could] be fought in our provinces neighboring Vietnam; or, fourth, the U.S. imperialists [could] fight a larger regional war with us, even including Korea."[51] In order to avert the worst-case scenario, Beijing's leaders decided to adopt three basic principles in formulating China's strategy. First, if the Americans went beyond the bombing of the North and used land forces to invade North Vietnam, China would have to send military forces. Second, China would give clear warnings to the Americans so that they would not feel free to expand military operations into the North, let alone to bring the war to China. Third, China would avoid a direct military face-off with the United States as long as possible; but it would not shrink from a confrontation.[52]

Guided by these principles, Beijing sent out a series of warning signals to Washington in spring 1965. On 25 March, the *Renmin ribao* (People's Daily) announced in an editorial that China was to offer "the heroic Vietnamese people any necessary material support, including the supply of weapons and all kinds of military materials" and that, if necessary, China was also ready "to send its personnel to fight together with the Vietnamese people to annihilate the American aggressors."[53] Four days later, Zhou Enlai made the same announcement at a mass rally in Tirana, the capital of Albania, where Zhou was making a formal visit.[54]

Beijing's most serious effort to warn Washington occurred on 2 April, when Zhou Enlai, visiting Karachi, Pakistan, asked President Mohammad Ayub Khan to convey several points to Washington: "(1) China would not take the initiative to provoke a war against the United States; (2) China means what it says, and China will honor whatever international obligations it has undertaken; and (3) China is prepared."[55] Since Ayub Khan's visit to Washington was later abruptly postponed by the Johnson administration,[56] Beijing tried other channels to make sure that the same message (but with a more clearly defined fourth point) would get to Washington. On 28 May, in a meeting with Indonesian first prime minister Subandrio, Zhou Enlai issued a four-point statement: "(1) China will not take the initiative to provoke a war against the United States; (2) China will honor what it has said; (3) China is prepared; and (4) If the United States bombs China, that means bringing the war to China. The war has no boundary. This means two things: First, you cannot say that only an air war on your part is allowed and the land war on my part is not allowed. Second, not only may you invade our territory, we may also fight a war abroad."[57] Three days later, Chinese foreign minister Chen Yi met with British chargé d'affaires Donald Charles Hopson, formally asking him to deliver the same four-point message to Washington: "(1) China will not provoke war with [the] United States; (2) What China says counts; (3) China is prepared; and (4) If [the] United States bombs China that would mean war and there would be no limits to the war." Chen Yi emphasized that Zhou Enlai had asked Ayub Khan to convey these messages to Washington but that since the Pakistani president's visit was canceled, "perhaps this message had not gotten through," so "he would be grateful if the British government would pass it on."[58]

It is apparent that Beijing's warning messages were carefully crafted. The explicit language of these messages left no doubt about what Beijing would do if Washington failed to listen to them. Particularly noteworthy is the addition of the fourth point in later messages, especially in the ones Chen Yi asked the British to convey to Washington, which Beijing's leaders believed certainly would not fail to reach top American policymakers. By making sure that Wash-

ington would under no circumstances misunderstand the meaning of these messages, Beijing's leaders hoped to prevent the war's expansion into North Vietnam and, in particular, into China.[59]

While sending out these warnings, Beijing's leaders were also preparing for a worst-case scenario. The same day, following the decision reached at the 12 April politburo meeting, the CCP Central Committee issued "Instructions for Strengthening the Preparations for Future Wars," a set of directives that ultimately was relayed to every part of Chinese society and became one of the most important guiding documents in China's political and social life for the rest of the 1960s. The document pointed out that the U.S. imperialists were escalating their military aggression in Vietnam and directly invading the DRV's airspace. This move represented a serious threat to China's safety. In light of the situation, the Central Committee emphasized, it was necessary for China to further its preparations for a war with the United States, and it therefore called on the party, the military, and the whole nation to be prepared both mentally and physically for the worst possibility. Supporting the Vietnamese people's struggle to resist the United States and save their country, the document concluded, was to become the top priority in China's political and social life.[60] This document served the dual purpose of mobilizing China's military and economic potential to deal with the possible worsening of the Vietnam War and of radicalizing China's polity and society by inspiring a revolutionary atmosphere at home.[61]

In the meantime, Beijing and Hanoi were discussing the specifics of their cooperation in the escalating war. In early April 1965, a Vietnamese delegation led by Le Duan and Vo Nguyen Giap secretly visited Beijing.[62] On 8 April, Liu Shaoqi, on behalf of the CCP Central Committee, met Duan and Giap. Duan, according to Chinese records, told his hosts at the beginning of the meeting that the Vietnamese "always believed that China was Vietnam's most reliable friend" and that "the aid from China to Vietnam was the most in quantity, as well as the best in quality." Liu thanked Duan and told him that "it was the consistent policy of the Chinese party that China would do its best to provide whatever was needed by the Vietnamese." Duan then stated that the Vietnamese hoped China would send volunteer pilots, volunteer troops, and other volunteers—such as engineering units for constructing railways, roads, and bridges—to North Vietnam. He emphasized that the dispatch of these forces would allow Hanoi to send its own troops to the South. Duan further expressed the hope that the support from China would achieve four main goals: restrict American bombardment to areas south of either the 20th or the 19th parallel; defend Hanoi and areas north of it from American air bombardment;

defend North Vietnam's main transportation lines; and raise the morale of the Vietnamese people. Following Mao's instructions, Liu agreed to most of Duan's requests. He told Duan that the CCP had made the decision that "it is our policy that we will do our best to support you. We will offer whatever you are in need of and we are in a position to offer." Liu also stressed that "if you do not invite us, we will not come; and if you invite one unit of our troops, we will send that unit to you. The initiative will be yours completely."[63]

In spite of these promises, there are clues that divergences existed between the two sides. First, although Duan asked for the dispatch of Chinese air force units (in the form of volunteer pilots) to Vietnam, the Chinese were reluctant to do this, at least at this stage.[64] Second, Duan invited the Chinese to play a role in defending Vietnam's transportation system and important targets in areas up to the 19th parallel, whereas the Chinese, as it turned out, would in most circumstances not let their antiaircraft troops go beyond the 21st parallel. Third, Duan requested China's assistance in constructing, maintaining, and defending both railways and roads in Vietnam, but, for whatever reason, the subsequent discussion between him and Liu involved only railways.

With the need to clarify further the scope and nature of China's support, Ho Chi Minh secretly visited China in May and June 1965. On 16 May, he met Mao Zedong in Changsha, the capital city of Mao's home province, Hunan. Ho expressed his gratitude for China's support and his satisfaction with the achievements of Le Duan's visit a month earlier. Then he clarified that the Vietnamese were determined "to take the main burden of the war by themselves." What the Vietnamese needed, Ho stated, was China's material and military support so that Hanoi could send its own people to fight in the South. Mao was ready to provide such assistance, and he promised Ho that China would offer "whatever support was needed by the Vietnamese." Ho then asked Mao to commit China's resources to building twelve new roads for Vietnam. Mao gave his consent immediately.[65]

To follow up on Ho's trip to China, Van Tien Dung visited Beijing in early June 1965. His meetings with Luo Ruiqing finalized the guiding principles and concrete details of China's support to Vietnam under different scenarios. If the war remained in its current status, that is, if the United States remained directly involved in military operations in the South while using only air force to bombard the North, the Vietnamese would fight the war by themselves and China would provide military and material support in ways that the Vietnamese had chosen. If the Americans used their naval and air forces to support a South Vietnamese invasion of the North, China would send its air and naval forces to support North Vietnam operations. If American land forces were directly

involved in invading the North, China would use its land forces as strategic reserves for the Vietnamese and carry on operations whenever necessary. Dung and Luo also had detailed discussions about the actual form China's military involvement would take depending on the situation. If the Chinese air force was to enter the war, the first option would be to use Chinese volunteer pilots and Vietnamese planes in operations; the second option would be to station Chinese pilots and planes on Vietnamese airfields and enter operations there; and the third would be to adopt the "Andong model,"[66] that is, when engaging in military operations, Chinese pilots and planes would take off from and return to bases in China. If Chinese land forces were to be used in operations in Vietnam, they would basically serve as a reserve force; but if necessary, Chinese troops would participate in fighting. Luo emphasized that the Chinese would enter operations in any of these forms according to the circumstances.[67]

Beginning in late May, in order to coordinate China's military and material support to Vietnam, Zhou Enlai chaired a series of meetings attended by governmental and military officials, who decided to establish two authorities in Beijing to take charge of making and implementing the Vietnam policy. The first body was a seven-person committee called the Leading Group on Vietnamese Affairs. Its initial members were Li Xiannian, a politburo member and vice premier in charge of economic and financial affairs; Bo Yibo, a politburo member and vice premier in charge of economic planning; Luo Ruiqing, chief of staff; Liu Xiao, deputy foreign minister; Yang Chengwu, deputy chief of staff; Li Qiang, minister of foreign trade; and Li Tianyou, another deputy chief of staff. Luo Ruiqing, until his purge in December 1965,[68] was the head of the group.[69] Its main tasks were to carry out the central leadership's grand strategy, to make decisions and suggestions on matters associated with Vietnam, and to examine and determine if any new support to Vietnam was necessary.

The second authority was called the Group in Charge of Supporting Vietnam under the Central Committee and the State Council. This group was composed of leading members from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Railway, Transport, Postal Service, Material Supply, and Foreign Trade; the Commissions of Economic Affairs, State Economic Planning, and Foreign Economic Affairs; and the PLA's General Political Department, General Logistics Department, General Staff, and different arms and branches. Yang Chengwu was appointed in charge of the group, with Li Tianyou his deputy. Its main tasks were to coordinate and implement the decisions made by the party and the State Council (through the Leading Group on Vietnamese Affairs) as they concerned support for Vietnam.[70]

The Chinese-Vietnamese cooperation during the Vietnam War demonstrated some notable features from the very beginning. First, unlike during the First Indochina War, in which Chinese military and political advisers were directly involved in the Viet Minh's decision making and Beijing was well aware of their every important move, the Vietnamese Communists did not let the Chinese interfere in decision making. If necessary, they would consult with or provide information to Beijing, but decision making was now completely in Hanoi's hands. Communist North Vietnam was a much more mature, independent, and self-confident international actor than the Viet Minh had been during the First Indochina War. Second, Beijing and Hanoi appeared to have reached a fundamental agreement in the spring and summer of 1965 that the Vietnamese would fight the war with their own forces; China's main role would be to guarantee logistical support and to defend the North, so that the Vietnamese could send as many of their own troops to the South as possible. Third, although top Chinese and Vietnamese leaders did consider the possibility of large-scale direct Chinese military involvement in Vietnam, the consensus seems to have been that unless the American land forces directly invaded the North, Chinese land forces would not be used in operations in Vietnam.

China's Aid to North Vietnam, 1965–1969

From 1965 to 1969, China's aid to Vietnam took three main forms: the dispatch of Chinese engineering troops for the construction and maintenance of defense works, airfields, roads, and railways in North Vietnam; the use of Chinese antiaircraft artillery troops for the defense of important strategic areas and targets in the northern part of North Vietnam; and the supply of large amounts of military equipment and other military and civilian materials.

The Dispatch of Chinese Engineering Troops

In his visit to China in April 1965, Le Duan made it clear that in order to strengthen Vietnam's war potential it was essential to improve and expand the railway system in the North and to keep the system working under the American air attack. He asked the Chinese for assistance both in constructing new railways and in maintaining and defending the railway system.[71] On 17 April 1965, when Le Duan's delegation was in Moscow, the North Vietnamese General Staff cabled the Chinese General Staff, requesting that Chinese engineering troops be sent to the offshore islands in the Tonkin Gulf area to take responsibility for constructing the defense system there.[72] The Chinese General Staff, following the order of the CMC, decided on the next day to establish the Chinese People's Volunteer Engineering Force (CPVEF), which was composed

of some of China's best engineering units[73] and would carry out the tasks of building and rebuilding railways, building defense works, and constructing airfields in Vietnam.[74] On 21 and 22 April, respectively, Luo Ruiqing and Yang Chengwu met with Vo Nguyen Giap, confirming that Chinese engineering troops would soon be sent to Vietnam.[75]

After a series of discussions, on 27 April 1965, the Chinese and Vietnamese governments signed an agreement that provided that China would help Vietnam construct new railways and supply Vietnam with transportation equipment. According to this and a series of supplementary agreements thereafter, China was to offer assistance on a total of 100 projects. Among the most important were rebuilding the Hanoi-Youyiguan Railway and Hanoi–Thai Nguyen Railway, which involved transforming the original meter-gauge rail to one of standard gauge, and adding dozens of new stations, bridges, and tunnels; building a new standard-gauge railway between Kep and Thai Nguyen to serve as a circuitous supplementary line for both the Hanoi–Thai Nguyen and Hanoi-Youyiguan lines; constructing a series of bridges, ferries, temporary railway lines, and small circuitous lines in the northern part of North Vietnam; and reinforcing eleven important railway bridges to make sure they could better withstand air attacks and natural flooding.[76]

During Ho Chi Minh's meeting with Mao Zedong in Changsha on 16 May 1965, Ho asked Mao to commit China's strength to the construction of twelve roads in North Vietnam, to which Mao agreed.[77] Following Mao's instructions, the PLA General Staff quickly worked out a preliminary plan to send around 100,000 Chinese engineering troops to Vietnam for road construction. On 25 May, Zhou Enlai chaired a meeting to discuss the plan. He told the participants that since the Americans were expanding the war in Vietnam, they would naturally increase their efforts to cut off the North's support to the revolutionary forces in the South. It was therefore necessary for Hanoi to send more of its own people to reinforce the transportation corridors in lower Laos. For this reason, it was also necessary for China to take over the primary responsibility of consolidating and expanding the road capacities in North Vietnam, and in the northern part in particular. Yang Chengwu then reported to the meeting that the PLA General Staff had two different plans for dispatching troops to Vietnam. The first one, Ho Chi Minh's suggestion, would involve the construction of all twelve roads at the same time, which would require more than 100,000 engineering troops. The second plan involved concentrating first on the construction of five to seven of the most needed roads, which would require an initial dispatch of around 80,000 troops. Yang recommended the

second plan, which Zhou also favored. The meeting concluded with the decision that the two plans would be presented to the Vietnamese simultaneously, but the Chinese would make it clear that they favored the second.[78]

A Vietnamese governmental delegation for transportation affairs visited Beijing in late May and insisted on their original plan. The Chinese quickly yielded. On 30 May, the Chinese and Vietnamese delegations signed a formal agreement stipulating that China would send its engineering troops to build and rebuild twelve roads in North Vietnam and to link them to China's road system. During construction, China would also be responsible for defending its engineering units against American air attack.[79]

Following these agreements, the CMC and PLA General Staff issued a series of orders to mobilize Chinese troops in May and June 1965.[80] Beginning in early June 1965, seven divisions of CPVEF units entered Vietnam during different periods.

The first division of the CPVEF was composed of six regiments of China's best railway corps (another two would join after August 1968), one railway prospecting team, and around a dozen antiaircraft artillery battalions. At its peak, the total strength of the division reached 32,700. It began arriving in Vietnam on 23 June 1965, and most of its units stayed until late 1969. According to Chinese statistics, when the last unit left Vietnam in June 1970, the division had completed 117 kilometers of new railway lines, rebuilt 362 kilometers of old lines, built 39 new rail bridges and 14 tunnels, and established 20 new railway stations.[81]

The second division of the CPVEF consisted of three engineering regiments, one hydrology brigade, one maritime transportation brigade, one communication engineering brigade, one truck transportation regiment, and a few antiaircraft artillery units, with a total strength of over 12,000 men. It entered Vietnam on 6 June 1965 and was the first group of Chinese engineering troops to assume responsibilities there. Its main tasks were to construct permanent defense works and establish communication systems on fifteen offshore islands and eight coastal spots in the Tonkin Gulf area. The division was also called on to fight together with North Vietnamese troops in the event that the Americans invaded the North.[82]

The CPVEF's third division was mainly comprised of Chinese air force engineering troops. Its main task was to build in Yen Bay a large air base, which would allow the use of jet planes, and an underground plane shelter. The Vietnamese originally requested this project in January 1965, and in May, the advance team of the third division arrived in Yen Bay to make surveys. The main

force of the division entered Vietnam in November 1965. The air base was completed in May 1969, and the underground plane shelter in October of the same year; then the division quickly left Vietnam.[83]

The fourth, fifth, and sixth divisions of the CPVEF were all comprised of road construction engineering troops under the command of the independent "Road Construction Headquarters under the CPVEF" and totaled over 80,000 soldiers. The five engineering regiments of the fourth division, who were from the Guangzhou Military Region, were given the task of rebuilding the main road linking Pingxiang and Jinxi, both in China's Guangxi province, to Cao Bang, Thai Nguyen, and Hanoi. The main task of the five regiments of the fifth division, who were from the Shenyang Military Region, was to construct a new road from Lao Cai, a town bordering China's Yunnan province, to Yen Bay, and to link it with the road to Hanoi. The six regiments of the sixth division were from the Kunming Military Region and the Railway Corps and were responsible for the construction of a new road from Wenshan in Yunnan to link the road constructed by the fifth division. They were also assigned to construct a new road along the Vietnamese-Chinese border so that all the main north- and southbound highways would be connected. All these divisions, which had their own antiaircraft artillery units, entered Vietnam in October–November 1965 and returned to China by October 1968.[84] The statistics offered by an official Chinese military source show that they built or rebuilt seven roads with a total length of 1,206 kilometers, 395 bridges with a total length of 6,854 meters, and 4,441 road culverts with a total length of 46,938 meters. In addition, a total of 30.5 million cubic meters of earth and stone were involved in completing these projects.[85]

The CPVEF's seventh division, which was slated to replace the second division and entered Vietnam in December 1966, was composed of three construction and engineering regiments and several antiaircraft artillery battalions and had over 16,000 soldiers. The division's main tasks were to construct permanent underground defense works in the Red River delta area and build underground plane shelters for Hanoi airport. The division completed these tasks and left Vietnam in November 1969.[86]

In addition to these engineering troops, in accordance with a July 1965 agreement between Beijing and Hanoi, China sent a communication engineering brigade to Vietnam in October of the same year. The brigade was mainly engaged in the repair and construction of the communication system in the Lai Chau–Son La–Dien Bien Phu area. Before the brigade returned to China in July 1966, according to Chinese sources, it had erected a total of 894 kilometers of telephone lines and constructed four carrier telephone stations.[87]

Beijing's dispatch of Chinese engineering troops to Vietnam occurred mainly between late 1965 and late 1968. These troops were assigned the tasks of constructing defense works, roads, and railways in the northern part of North Vietnam. Most of their projects were located in areas north of Hanoi, and none of them was south of the 20th parallel. The majority of the troops left Vietnam before the end of 1969, and by July 1970 all of them had returned to China.

The Use of Chinese Antiaircraft Artillery Troops

During Le Duan's visit to China in April 1965 and Ho Chi Minh's meeting with Mao Zedong on 16 May 1965, the Vietnamese requested that China send antiaircraft artillery troops to Vietnam. In Van Tien Dung's meetings with Luo Ruiqing in early June 1965, Dung specifically requested that China send two antiaircraft artillery divisions to defend Hanoi and the areas north of Hanoi in the event that the American air force struck there. Luo agreed.[88]

On 24 July 1965, the Vietnamese General Staff telegraphed the Chinese General Staff, formally requesting that China send "the two antiaircraft artillery divisions that have long completed their preparations for operations in Vietnam. The earlier the better. If possible, they may enter Vietnam on 1 August." The next day, the Chinese General Staff cabled the Vietnamese General Staff, saying that China would send two antiaircraft artillery divisions and one regiment to Vietnam immediately, and that these units would take the responsibility of defending the Bac Ninh–Lang Son section of the Hanoi-Youyiguan Railway and the Yen Bay–Lao Cai section of the Hanoi–Lao Cai Railway, two main railways linking China and North Vietnam. On 1 August 1965, the Sixty-first and Sixty-third Divisions of the Chinese antiaircraft artillery forces entered Vietnam from Yunnan and Guangxi respectively.[89]

The Sixty-first Division arrived in Yen Bay on 5 August. Four days later, it was put into action against American F-4 fighter-bombers for the first time. Using 37 mm and 85 mm antiaircraft guns, they shot down one F-4, which, according to Chinese records, was the first American plane to be downed by Chinese antiaircraft units. The troops of the Sixty-third Division entered the Kep area and engaged in their first battle with the Americans on 23 August. Reportedly, they shot down one American plane and damaged another.[90]

From early August 1965 to March 1969, a total of sixteen divisions (sixty-three regiments) of Chinese antiaircraft artillery units, with a total strength of over 150,000 men, engaged in operations in Vietnam. These units, which entered Vietnam in eight separate stages, were mainly from the artillery forces, the air force, the navy, and, in some cases, the Kunming and Guangzhou Mili-

tary Regions. Following their experience during the Korean War, the Chinese military leadership adopted a rotation strategy for these troops—usually a unit would stay in Vietnam for around six months and then be replaced by another. These units were deployed to defend strategically important targets, such as critical railway bridges on the Hanoi-Youyiguan and Hanoi-Lao Cai lines, and to provide cover for the Chinese engineering troops. There is no evidence that any of these units were engaged in operations south of Hanoi or in the defense of the Ho Chi Minh Trail. The last unit of Chinese antiaircraft artillery forces left Vietnam in mid-March 1969. Chinese records claim that these troops had fought a total of 2,154 battles and were responsible for shooting down 1,707 American planes and damaging another 1,608.[91]

It is interesting to note that the Chinese air force was never directly engaged in operations over Vietnamese territory even though Chinese antiaircraft artillery troops were sent there. Nevertheless, there is evidence that this arrangement had been discussed by Chinese and Vietnamese leaders in the spring and summer of 1965. Was this noninvolvement a product of Hanoi's reluctance to allow the Chinese air force access to Vietnamese airspace or a reflection of Beijing's desire to restrict China's military involvement in Vietnam? Or were there more complicated or hidden factors at work? Unfortunately, Chinese source materials now available provide no definite answer to these questions.

We now know, though, that Beijing's policy toward American planes invading Chinese airspace underwent a major change in early 1965. Before the end of 1964, the guideline for Chinese policy toward invading American planes was to avoid direct confrontation. A CMC order dated 25 June 1963, for example, made it clear that when an American military vessel or plane entered Chinese territorial water or airspace, the Chinese commanding officer should pay more attention to the political, rather than the military, consequences of his reaction. The officer should therefore be cautious in taking actions, even at the expense of losing military opportunities, in order to avoid putting China in a politically and diplomatically disadvantageous position. The CMC reiterated its previous instructions as late as January 1965, when Chinese air forces on the Chinese-Vietnamese border area entered combat readiness in response to the Gulf of Tonkin incident. In addition, an order dated 11 January 1965 emphasized that Chinese air units in southern China should be restrained when American military planes entered China's airspace and that they should take off to monitor the movement of the American planes but not to attack them.[92]

The situation changed in early April 1965. On 8 and 9 April, two groups of American fighters invaded the airspace over China's Hainan Island. Following the CMC's instructions, four Chinese planes took off to monitor the Americans,

and the Americans reportedly opened fire on the Chinese. On 9 April, Deputy Chief of Staff Yang Chengwu reported the two incidents to Zhou Enlai and Mao Zedong, suggesting that the Chinese air force should "give a firm strike" to American planes invading China's airspace. That afternoon Mao ordered the air force and the navy to send their best units to southern China and the South China Sea, to unify their command system, and to strike the Americans firmly if they invaded China's air.[93] On 17 April, the CMC issued a new order formally implementing Mao's instructions.[94] From this time to November 1968, according to Chinese statistics, the Chinese air force engaged in 155 operations against American planes invading China's airspace, shooting down twelve American fighters and other planes (unmanned reconnaissance planes not included).[95] Although the exact motive behind this change of Chinese attitude is not clear, the effect of the new policy seems evident. By responding unhesitatingly to incursions into Chinese airspace, Beijing sent a clear warning signal to the Americans while demonstrating to their comrades in Hanoi their resolve in dealing with the American threat.

Military and Other Material Support to Vietnam

When Chinese troops entered Vietnam, China's military and other support to Vietnam increased dramatically. Mao issued explicit instructions that supporting Vietnam should be given top priority. On 25 May and 2 June 1965, Mao stressed that China's economic structure should be further transformed in order to "prepare for coming wars."[96] Late in July, in the context of the escalating military conflicts in Vietnam, China's State Planning Council decided to make the strengthening of national defense and "preparing for an early and major war with the imperialists" the central task of China's third five-year plan. The council decided also that the Chengdu-Kunming Railway, which was designed to improve travel between China and Vietnam, should be completed by the end of 1969.[97]

One Chinese source reveals the contents of an agreement signed on 11 June 1967 by Liao Kaifen, deputy director of the Logistical Department of the Kunming Military Region, and his Vietnamese counterpart, the deputy head of the logistical bureau of the People's Army of North Vietnam's (PANV's) Northwestern Military Region, in which China offered material support to Vietnamese troops stationed in upper Laos in 1967. The total number of Vietnamese troops there, as claimed by the Vietnamese side, was 1,870. In addition to weapons and other military equipment, China pledged to equip the Vietnamese forces right down to the level of supplies for personal hygiene: 5,500 sets of uniforms, 5,500 pairs of shoes, 550 tons of rice (0.8 kilogram per per-

TABLE 1. CHINA'S MILITARY AID TO VIETNAM, 1964–1975

	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975
Guns	80,500	220,767	141,531	146,600	219,899	139,900	101,800	143,100	189,000	233,600	164,500	141,800
Artillery pieces	1,205	4,439	3,362	3,984	7,087	3,906	2,212	7,898	9,238	9,912	6,406	4,880
Bullets (thousands)	25,240	114,010	178,120	147,000	247,920	119,170	29,010	57,190	40,000	40,000	30,000	20,060
Artillery shells (thousands)	335	1,800	1,066	1,363	2,082	1,357	397	1,899	2,210	2,210	1,390	965
Radio transmitters	426	2,779	1,568	2,464	1,854	2,210	950	2,464	4,370	4,335	5,148	2,240
Telephones	2,941	9,502	2,235	2,289	3,313	3,453	1,600	4,424	5,905	6,447	4,633	2,150
Tanks	16	–	–	26	18	–	–	80	220	120	80	–
Ships	–	7	14	25	–	–	–	24	71	5	6	–
Aircraft	18	2	–	70	–	–	–	4	14	36	–	20
Vehicles	25	114	96	435	454	162	–	4,011	8,758	1,210	506	–
Uniforms (thousand sets)	–	–	400	800	1,000	1,200	1,200	1,200	1,400	1,400	1,400	–

Source: Li Ke and Hao Shengzhang, *Wenhua dageming zhong de jiefangjun,* 416.

son daily), fifty-five tons of pork (2.4 kilograms per person monthly), twenty tons of salt, twenty tons of fish, twenty tons of sesame and peanuts, twenty tons of white sugar, 6.5 tons of soy sauce, 8,000 toothbrushes, 11,000 tubes of toothpaste, 24,000 bars of regular soap, 10,600 bars of scented soap, and 74,000 cases of cigarettes. Altogether, this agreement covered 687 items, including such things as Ping-Pong balls, volleyballs, pens, mouth organs, and sewing needles.[98]

China's supply of weapons and other military equipment to Vietnam sharply increased in 1965. Compared with 1964, the supply of guns nearly doubled, from 80,500 to 220,767; gun bullets increased almost five times, from 25.2 million to 114 million; pieces of different types of artillery increased over three times, from 1,205 to 4,439; and artillery shells increased nearly six times, from 335,000 to 1.8 million. The amount of China's military supplies fluctuated between 1965 and 1968, although the total value of material supplies remained at roughly the same level. But then in 1969–70, a sharp drop occurred, at the same time that all Chinese troops were pulled back. Not until 1972 would there be another significant increase in military supplies delivered to Vietnam from China, but for reasons very different from those behind China's support from 1965 to 1969.[99]

From 1965 through 1969, China's aid to Vietnam was substantial. Over 320,000 Chinese engineering and antiaircraft artillery forces (the peak year was 1967, when 170,000 Chinese troops were present in Vietnam) were directly engaged in the construction, maintenance, and defense of North Vietnam's transportation system and strategically important targets, especially in areas north of the 21st parallel.[100] Such support allowed Hanoi to use its own manpower for more essential tasks, such as participating in battles in the South and maintaining the transport and communication lines between the North and the South. Moreover, Beijing's support, as both Allen Whiting and John Garver point out, played a role in deterring further American expansion of war into the North.[101] It is therefore fair to say that, although Beijing's support may have been short of Hanoi's expectations, if it had not been provided, the course, and even the outcome, of the Vietnam War might have been different.

The Widening Gap between Beijing and Hanoi, 1966–1969

Any analysis of China's involvement in the Vietnam War must ultimately address a single, crucial question: why did Beijing and Hanoi enter the war as close allies—"brotherly comrades" in the oft-repeated words of Ho Chi Minh—yet become bitter adversaries a few short years after the war's conclusion?

In retrospect, the foundation of the cooperation between Beijing and Hanoi in the 1960s was tenuous because their respective policies were driven by distinct priorities. Whereas how to unify their country by winning the war was for the Vietnamese the overriding aim, China's Vietnam strategy, as discussed earlier, involved complicated factors such as Mao's desire to use the Vietnam conflict to promote China's continuous revolution. Not surprisingly, when large numbers of Chinese engineering and antiaircraft artillery troops entered Vietnam in late 1965, problems between the two countries began to develop. As the Vietnam War went on, differences of opinion turned into friction, and sometimes confrontation. The rift between the Communist neighbors continued to deepen until Beijing, offended by Hanoi's decision to begin negotiations with the United States in Paris, recalled all of its troops from Vietnam.

The first sign of disharmony appeared over disagreements regarding the role that the Chinese troops were to play in Vietnam and the proper relationship between Chinese troops and local Vietnamese. When Chinese troops entered Vietnam, they were exhorted to "use every opportunity to serve the Vietnamese people." The underlying assumption was that not only was China providing military support, it also had a political mission. It was therefore important for Chinese soldiers to play the role of model while in Vietnam, thus advancing China's image as the great promoter of proletarian internationalism. Such efforts, however, were often thwarted by Vietnamese authorities. The Chinese units found that the services they intended to provide to local Vietnamese people, especially those offered by Chinese medical teams, were intentionally blocked by Vietnamese officials.[102] Several such incidents were reported to Mao in late August 1965, only two months after the first Chinese units had entered Vietnam. Mao instructed Chinese troops in Vietnam "not to be too enthusiastic [in offering service to the Vietnamese]."[103]

As it turns out, however, such a precaution did little to improve the situation. The feeling of solidarity between Beijing and Hanoi waned quickly. This subtle change in attitude is illustrated by the personal experiences of the commanding officers of the CPVEF's Second Division. In June 1965, when the division entered Vietnam, the commanding officers were invited to Hanoi, where they were warmly received by Ho Chi Minh, Pham Van Dong, and Vo Nguyen Giap. But the division representatives reported that the atmosphere in Hanoi when they left in October 1966 had cooled significantly. They felt that "something was wrong in the Chinese-Vietnamese relationship."[104]

The deteriorating relationship between Beijing and Moscow, together with the beginning of the Cultural Revolution in China, triggered more tension and conflict between Beijing and Hanoi. Until the mid-1960s, Beijing assumed that the VWP was on China's side in the struggle against the "Soviet revisionists."[105] But Hanoi and Moscow established closer ties as the Vietnam War progressed. After Khrushchev was ousted by his colleagues in October 1964, Moscow began to provide Hanoi with substantial support and called on socialist countries to adopt a unified stand in supporting Vietnam.[106] On 11 February 1965, the Soviet prime minister, Alekei N. Kosygin, stopped in Beijing on his way back from Vietnam to meet Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai. He suggested that China and the Soviet Union stop the polemic between them so that they would take joint steps to support the struggle of the Vietnamese people. Mao refused Kosygin's suggestion, asserting that his debates with the Soviets would last for another 9,000 years.[107] Since the Kosygin visit, Hanoi had become silent in its criticism of "revisionism."[108]

Mao's linking of the polemic against Moscow to the inner-party struggle taking place in China at the time further complicated the situation. In February and March 1966, a high-ranking Japanese Communist Party delegation headed by Miyamoto Kenji, the JCP's general secretary, visited China and North Vietnam in an attempt to promote an "anti-imperialist international united front" including both China and the Soviet Union. Learning that Hanoi had demonstrated great interest in this idea, CCP delegation, headed by Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping, managed to work out an agreement with Miyamoto, according to which China would eventually join this "international united front." However, Mao, who had not attended the meeting but had been kept abreast of its progress, intervened suddenly at the very last moment, claiming that neither Liu Shaoqi nor Deng Xiaoping had been authorized to speak for the CCP. He insisted that the Soviet Union had become the most dangerous enemy of the peoples of the world and called for the establishment of an "anti-imperialist and antirevisionist international united front."[109] Mao would later relate this event to his earlier criticism of Wang Jiaxiang, charging that both Liu and Deng had become China's "revisionists." With Mao's criticism of Liu's and Deng's handling of the Miyamoto mission came the first indication to the outside world that a profound division had emerged among top CCP leaders. As it soon turned out, both Liu and Deng would become the main targets of the Cultural Revolution.

The failure of the Miyamoto mission further distanced Hanoi from Beijing. Beijing's leaders, while feeling increasingly uneasy about Hanoi's lack of interest in keeping a distance from Moscow, noted with surprise that the Vietnamese media began to use China's invasions of Vietnam in the past to

spur patriotism among ordinary Vietnamese people. Convinced that the Vietnamese were in fact inclined toward Moscow, Beijing's leaders were genuinely offended.[110]

Among Chinese sources now available, two accounts indicate that sharp differences had emerged in 1966 between Beijing and Hanoi as the result of Hanoi's improving relations with Moscow. The first details China's reaction to Hanoi's gestures of friendship toward Moscow. In March 1966, Le Duan led a VWP delegation to attend the CPSU's Twenty-third Congress. During his visit, he reportedly described the Soviet Union as his "second motherland." When Beijing's leaders learned of this, they were "angrily shocked." A few months later, the Vietnamese requested that the CPVEF's Second Division stay longer in Vietnam after it had completed its original assignments, but the Chinese turned down the request and the Second Division returned to China in July 1966. One Chinese source points out that this move was designed to demonstrate Beijing's anger toward Le Duan's praise of the Soviets in Moscow.[111]

The second account more directly reveals Chinese resentment of Hanoi giving any priority to the Soviets. In early 1966, a Chinese cargo ship, *Hongqi* (Red Flag), was assigned to carry materials in aid to Vietnam. As the ship approached the Hai Phong port it was stopped so that a Soviet cargo ship, which arrived later than the Chinese, could enter the port first. As the result of this delay, *Hongqi* was exposed to an American air raid and was severely damaged. When Le Duan visited China in April, Zhou Enlai insisted that Duan explain why Vietnam had given the Soviet cargo ship an unfair priority. Duan, according to Chinese sources, was greatly embarrassed. He was made to promise that the Vietnamese would not allow the same thing to happen again, as well as repeatedly praise the importance of the Chinese support, before Zhou would turn to other topics.[112]

The rift between Beijing and Hanoi deepened as North Vietnam received more support from Moscow. In addition, Beijing would not agree to cooperate with the Soviets in establishing a united transport system, as suggested by Moscow, to handle Soviet materials going through Chinese territory.[113] China did help deliver Soviet materials to Vietnam, but only on the condition that the operation would be placed under Beijing's direct control and would be interpreted as a favor from Beijing to Hanoi.[114] The Vietnamese obviously did not appreciate such an attitude. By 1968, it became evident to the Chinese that Hanoi was growing closer to Moscow than to Beijing. When a series of conflicts occurred between Chinese troops and Soviet military personnel in Vietnam, the Vietnamese authorities took the Soviets' side, alleging that the Chinese "had impinged upon Vietnam's sovereignty."[115]

Hanoi's deep involvement in other parts of Indochina, and especially in Laos, was another reason for suspicion and friction between the Chinese and the Vietnamese. Historically the relationship between Communists in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia had been very close (they once belonged to the same Indochina Communist Party). This was not a problem for the Chinese during the First Indochina War. But the situation became quite different during the second war. After a Chinese working team arrived in Laos in early 1965, the members reported to Beijing that the Vietnamese virtually controlled the Laotian People's Revolutionary Party and viewed the presence of the Chinese team as a threat to Hanoi's interests there.[116] In addition, in September 1968, apparently under pressure from Hanoi, Kaysone Phomvihane suggested that Li Wenzheng, the head of the Chinese team at that time, take a vacation back in China. Beijing interpreted this suggestion as an indication that the Chinese team's presence was no longer appreciated, and they ordered the withdrawal of the team.[117]

The changing situation in China in 1968–69, as well as China's changing relationship with the two superpowers, made the Beijing leadership feel less obligated to continue the same level of support to Vietnam. As discussed before, when Mao decided to commit a large portion of China's military and other material resources to backing the Vietnamese Communists in 1964 and 1965, he was preparing to start the Cultural Revolution, which began to sweep across China in the summer and fall of 1966. But by 1968 and 1969, China's domestic situation and Mao's needs had changed. The ongoing Cultural Revolution destroyed Mao's perceived opponents within the party leadership, but, at the same time, it brought Chinese society, as well as the Communist state and party apparatus, to the verge of total collapse. As a sign of the fading status of Mao's continuous revolution, the chairman began to call the country back to order in 1968–69.[118] In the meantime, the relationship between Beijing and Moscow deteriorated, leading eventually to a border clash between the two countries in March 1969. The perception that the "Soviet social-imperialists" were China's most dangerous enemies gradually came to dominate Beijing's strategic thinking. Starting in early 1969, Beijing's top leaders, and Mao and Zhou in particular, began to reconsider the role the United States could play in China's security.[119] These changing domestic and international conditions significantly altered the underlying assumptions of Beijing's policy toward the Vietnam War, making a radical approach to the conflict obsolete.

Consequently, all the accumulated tensions between Beijing and Hanoi culminated with one crucial question: Should Hanoi engage in negotiations with the United States for a possible peaceful solution of the war? From the

very moment Hanoi demonstrated a vague interest in negotiating with the Americans Beijing expressed a strong objection.[120] In several conversations with Vietnamese leaders in late 1967 and early 1968, Beijing's top leaders advised Hanoi to stick to the policy of military struggle.[121] When Pham Van Dong visited Beijing in April 1968, for example, Mao and other Chinese leaders repeatedly emphasized to him that "what could not be achieved on the battlefield would not be achieved at the negotiation table."[122] But Beijing now found that its influence over Hanoi's decision making had become so limited that Hanoi would go its own way. Zhou Enlai commented during a talk with a Vietnamese delegation headed by Xuan Thuy in early May 1968 that Hanoi's agreement on starting negotiations with the Americans was "too fast and too hurried."[123] Not surprisingly, Beijing maintained a displeased silence during the initial exchanges between Hanoi and Washington throughout 1968. The distrust, or even disgust, between Beijing and Hanoi was most explicitly revealed in a 17 October 1968 meeting between Chen Yi and Le Duc Tho, Hanoi's chief negotiator with the Americans in Paris. The Chinese and Vietnamese leaders accused each other of making basic errors in handling the issues of negotiating with the Americans:

> *Chen Yi:* Since last April, when you agreed to the United States' partial cessation of bombing and held peace talks with the Americans, you have lost the initiative in the negotiations to them. Now, you accept quadripartite negotiation. You [have] lost to them once more. . . .
>
> *Le Duc Tho:* On this matter, we will wait and see. And the reality will give us the answer. We have gained experience over the past fifteen years. Let reality judge.
>
> *Chen Yi:* We signed the Geneva accord in 1954 when the United States did not agree to do so. We withdrew our armed forces from the South to the North, thus letting the people in the South be killed. We at that time made a mistake in which we [Chinese] shared a part.
>
> *Le Duc Tho:* Because we listened to your advice.
>
> *Chen Yi:* You just mentioned that at the Geneva conference, you made a mistake because you followed our advice. But this time, you will make another mistake if you do not take our words into account.[124]

This exchange reads like a replay of the heated debate between Chen Yi—with Mao sitting beside him—and Khrushchev on 2 October 1959, when both Chinese and Soviet leaders blamed each other for allegedly committing fundamental mistakes in assessing the international situation and formulating policies and strategies. That meeting, as it turned out, became a landmark event

Chinese party and government delegation visiting Hanoi, March 1971. From left to right in front row: Nguyen Duy Trinh, Vo Nguyen Giap, Ye Jianying, Pham Van Dong, Zhou Enlai, Le Duan, Qiu Huizuo, Le Thanh Nghi, Hoang Van Hoan. Xinhua News Agency.

symbolizing the existence of an unbridgeable chasm between Beijing and Moscow.[125] In the Chen-Tho conversation quoted above, one can sense the extreme tension in their language, although the meeting minutes do not specifically describe the emotions of the two leaders. At about the same time, Chinese engineering troops and antiaircraft artillery units began to leave Vietnam.

The Failure of an "Alliance between Brotherly Comrades"

By late 1969, except for a small number of Chinese engineering units engaged in the final stages of construction projects that had lasted for years, all Chinese engineering and antiaircraft artillery troops had left Vietnam. In July 1970, the last Chinese units returned to China.[126] China's military and material support to Vietnam continued, but the quantity began to drop in 1969 and 1970 after it peaked in 1968. In Beijing's and Hanoi's open propaganda, the assertion that China and Vietnam were "brotherly comrades" could still be heard from time to time, but the enthusiasm disappeared.

Before the Paris Peace Accords concluded in January 1973, there was another wave of Chinese support for Hanoi. In May 1972, Beijing honored Hanoi's request for more military aid when the Nixon administration started another round of bombardment of key North Vietnamese targets and mined the Hai Phong harbor.[127] But this episode was short-lived. Chinese-Vietna-

mese relations again cooled down after the signing of the Paris Peace Agreement, and the two countries immediately fell into a series of disputes after the Vietnamese Communists won their country's unification in 1975. Four years later, when Vietnamese troops invaded Cambodia, Beijing responded by using its military forces to attack Vietnam "to teach Hanoi a lesson." It turned out that after committing much of China's resources to supporting the Vietnamese Communists, Beijing had created a new enemy, and a comprehensive confrontation characterized the relationship between Beijing and Hanoi throughout the 1980s. In this sense, the Vietnam War was also a "lost war" for Beijing.

What were the causes? One may argue that the Chinese-Vietnamese relations had been under the heavy shadow of the past conflicts between the two countries. One may point out that from a geopolitical perspective there existed potential conflict between Beijing's and Hanoi's interests in Southeast Asia. One may also refer to the escalating Sino-Soviet confrontation, which made the maintenance of the solidarity between Beijing and Hanoi extremely difficult. One may even find the "brotherly comradeship" itself a source of contention: if Beijing and Hanoi had not been so close, they would have had fewer opportunities to experience the differences between them; too intimate a tie created more opportunities for conflict.

However, a more fundamental reason can be found in the logic of China's foreign policy and security strategy. As argued in this chapter, China's foreign policy was always an integral part of Mao's continuous revolution, which aimed to promote the revolutionary transformation of China's "old" state and society and to pursue new China's central (but not dominant) position in the international community. Beijing's support of Hanoi had a critical connection to Mao's desire to use the tensions caused by the crisis in Vietnam to stimulate the mass mobilization that was essential for the Cultural Revolution and to establish revolutionary China's influence and reputation in Southeast Asia and other parts of the world. When Beijing tried to carry out a Vietnam policy designed with these goals in mind, it immediately encountered paradox. On the one hand, in order to create the momentum for the ongoing continuous revolution, as well as to establish Beijing as a model of international anti-imperialist struggles, the Beijing leadership stressed the danger of a war with the United States and its determination to fight against it. It asserted repeatedly that China would support Vietnam by any means, "even if it meant making heavy national sacrifices." On the other hand, however, Beijing's actual policy choices were limited: at a time when the Cultural Revolution could throw China into nationwide turmoil, it was simply impossible for Mao and his comrades to allow China to enter a direct confrontation with the United

States (unless American land forces invaded North Vietnam or China), and Mao's idealism had to yield to that reality. From a Vietnamese perspective, though, there was a huge gap between Beijing's words and deeds (in spite of China's enormous military and material support), and the gap widened with the development of the Vietnam War.

From a historical-cultural perspective, Beijing's seemingly revolutionary and idealistic policy toward Vietnam ironically had been penetrated by an age-old Chinese ethnocentrism and universalism. While Beijing's leaders, and Mao in particular, emphasized repeatedly that the Vietnamese should be treated as "equals," the statement itself revealed the Chinese revolutionaries' strong sense of superiority and that they believed that they had occupied a position from which to dictate the values and codes of behavior that would dominate their relations with their neighbors. In the realm of the Chinese-Vietnamese relations, although Beijing had never pursued political and economic control in Vietnam (which was for the Chinese too inferior an aim) and its huge military and material aid was seldom accompanied by formal conditions, Beijing asked for something bigger, that is, the Vietnamese recognition of China's morally superior position. In other words, what Beijing intended to create was a modern version of the relationship between the Central Kingdom and its subordinate neighbors. This practice effectively reminded the Vietnamese of their problematic past with the Chinese. When Beijing reduced its support to Hanoi in the wake of China's changing domestic and international situations, Vietnam's suspicion of China developed into aversion. And when Vietnam's unification made it possible for the regime in Hanoi to confront China's influences, the aversion turned into hostility. The Chinese, on the other hand, found it necessary to "punish" their former comrades in order to defend their heavily wounded sense of superiority. The result was the final collapse of the "alliance between brotherly comrades."

CHAPTER 9 THE SINO-AMERICAN RAPPROCHEMENT, 1969–1972

He said he was not a complicated man, but really very simple. He was, he said, only a lone monk walking the world with a leaky umbrella.
—Edgar Snow after interviewing Mao Zedong (18 December 1970)

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

Not until the late 1980s did we learn through newly released Chinese documents that it was Mao Zedong who personally ordered the publication of Nixon's address.[2] The likely reason behind the chairman's order was a point the U.S. president made in his speech: the United States was willing to develop relations with *all* countries in the world.[3] The Chinese chairman, who had been paying attention both to the U.S. presidential election and to Nixon as a presidential candidate, immediately caught the subtext of Nixon's statement.[4] Perhaps he ordered the publication of the U.S. president's address to reveal that he had noticed Nixon's message.[5]

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

The conventional interpretation of Beijing's rapprochement with the United States emphasizes the role strategic/geopolitical considerations played. Scholars favoring this interpretation usually argue that when the Soviet Union had emerged as the most serious threat to the PRC's security interests, especially to China's border safety in the north and northeast, it was impossible for Beijing's leader to maintain simultaneously the same level of discord with the United States. By achieving a rapprochement with Washington, Beijing's leaders drastically improved China's strategic position vis-à-vis the Soviet threat, thus serving China's security interests.[6]

Indeed, Beijing's rapprochement with Washington yielded considerable improvements in China's strategic position, as well as its international status. The simple fact that the PRC, after being excluded from the United Nations for over two decades, gained its position at the UN in October 1971 proves the enormous strategic value of the Sino-American rapprochement to Beijing. This chapter, however, argues that the geopolitics-centered interpretation alone does not fully reveal the complicated reasons behind Mao's decision to improve relations with the United States. In order to achieve a better understanding of the issue, this chapter places the Sino-American rapprochement in the context of the fading status of Mao's continuous revolution. It is important to note that the Sino-American rapprochement came at a time when the Cultural Revolution and the more general enterprise of Mao's continuous revolution had been declining. This chapter argues that a profound connection existed between these two phenomena and that the interpretation emphasizing the strategic/geopolitical element will make better sense if its link to the end of Mao's continuous revolution is properly comprehended.

China in 1968–1969: Deteriorating Security, Fading Revolution

Undoubtedly China in 1968–69 was facing a rapidly worsening security situation. The contention between China and the United States, which began at the very moment of the PRC's establishment, seemed more intense than

ever before. In response to the escalation of the Vietnam War and increasing American military involvement in it, Beijing dispatched large numbers of engineering and antiaircraft artillery forces to North Vietnam while providing the Vietnamese Communists with substantial military and other support.[7] Beijing and Washington thus were in danger of repeating their Korean War experience—when they were both dragged into a direct military confrontation. Such security threats from China's southern borders were made worse with the sustained military standoff between the CCP and the GMD across the Taiwan Strait, as well as by Japan's and South Korea's hostile attitudes toward the PRC. Consequently, Beijing perceived that, from Bohai Bay to the Gulf of Tonkin, all of China's coastal borders were under siege.[8]

The security situation along China's long western border with India was no better. Since the Chinese-Indian border war of 1962, Beijing and New Delhi each regarded the other as a dangerous enemy. Although India, in the wake of its humiliating defeat in the 1962 clash, was not in a position to threaten Chinese border safety militarily, it was more than capable of damaging Beijing's reputation as a self-proclaimed "peace-loving country" among Third World nations. It was also likely to pin down Beijing's valuable resources and strategic attention in China's remote western areas.[9]

The worst threat to China's border security existed in the north, from a former ally—the Soviet Union. Since the late 1950s, significant differences between Chinese and Soviet leaders had begun to develop in the wake of the Soviet leader Khrushchev's de-Stalinization campaign. Starting in the early 1960s, along with the escalation of the great Sino-Soviet polemic debate, the disputes between Beijing and Moscow quickly spread from the ideological field to state-to-state relations.[10] The hostility between the two Communist giants flared into hatred when the Cultural Revolution swept across China, with Beijing and Moscow each regarding the other as a "traitor" to true communism. Since 1965, both countries had continuously increased their military deployments along their shared borders. By 1968–69, each side had amassed several hundred thousand troops along the border areas that, only less than a decade ago, had been boasted as a region characterized by "peace and eternal safety."[11]

China's already extremely tense security situation dramatically worsened in March 1969, when two bloody conflicts erupted between Chinese and Soviet border garrison forces on Zhenbao Island (Damansky Island in Russian), located near the Chinese bank of the Ussuri River. This incident immediately brought China and the Soviet Union to the brink of a general war, and, reportedly, the Soviet leaders even considered conducting a preemptive nuclear strike against their former Communist ally.[12]

Chinese soldiers patrolling at Zhenbao Island, March 1969. Xinhua News Agency.

Given the dramatic deterioration of China's security situation in 1968–69, it is not surprising that Beijing's leaders had to improve their nation's security environment by making major changes in China's foreign policy and security strategy. The scholars who have argued that the Sino-American rapprochement represented a calculated effort by Beijing to counter the grave Soviet threat have the support of strong historical evidence. However, although this interpretation makes good sense in explaining why in 1968–69 it was *necessary* for Beijing to make major changes in Chinese foreign policy and security strategy, it does not explain how and why it became *possible* for Beijing's leaders to achieve such changes in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Historically, how to deal with the United States was for Beijing not just a foreign policy issue but rather an issue concerning the very essence of the Chinese revolution. From the moment that the "new China" came into being, Beijing's leaders regarded the United States as China's primary enemy. They consistently declared that a fundamental aim of the Chinese revolution was to destroy the "old" world order dominated by the U.S. imperialists. Through endless propaganda campaigns and constant indoctrination efforts, Beijing had portrayed the United States as the "bastion of all reactionary forces in the world," as responsible for sinking China into the abyss of national humiliation in modern times, and as keeping China divided after the "libera-

tion" of the Chinese mainland by supporting the GMD in Taiwan after 1949. For almost two decades, the United States had been thoroughly demonized in the Chinese popular image. As a result, the theme of "struggling against U.S. imperialism" had occupied a central position in Mao's efforts to legitimize his continuous revolution and was frequently invoked by the CCP to mobilize hundreds of millions of ordinary Chinese to participate in Mao's revolutionary movements—most recently, the Cultural Revolution.[13] Beijing's pursuit of fundamental changes in Chinese policy toward the United States therefore was fraught with political hazards, not least of which was possible detriment to the legitimacy of the Chinese Communist revolution. It seemed that unless Beijing's leaders were willing to make basic compromises in their commitments to the anti-imperialist Communist ideology, it would be impossible for them to pursue a rapprochement with the United States.

In explaining why Beijing was able to achieve such comprises, scholars favoring the geopolitics-centered interpretation have argued that for policymakers in *any* country, ultimately, ideological beliefs do not matter if they are in conflict with vital "national security interests." In the case of Mao's China, these scholars believe that despite Mao and his comrades' strong commitment to Marxist-Leninist ideology, they were willing to sacrifice this ideological faith if it was in conflict with China's "national security interests." Therefore, according to these scholars, ideological beliefs as essential agents in foreign policymaking are only of secondary importance compared to geopolitics and security concerns.[14]

These arguments, however, have ignored two important factors. First, Beijing's leaders were pursuing a rapprochement with the United States within the context of radically redefining their concept of imperialism by identifying the Soviet Union as a "social-imperialist country" and arguing that Moscow had replaced Washington as the "bastion of reactionary forces in the world." Second, in terms of the relations between ideology and security concerns the Sino-American rapprochement was less a case in which ideological beliefs yielded to the security interests than one in which ideology, as an essential element shaping foreign policy decisions, experienced subtle structural changes as the result of the fading status of Mao's continuous revolution.

In Leninist vocabulary, "imperialism" represented the "highest stage" in the development of capitalism. Therefore, an imperialist country had to be capitalist in the first place; thus, few would ever call the Soviet Union "capitalist" given its overwhelmingly socialist/Communist-dominated economic and political structures. However, in the wake of the great Sino-Soviet polemic debate, Beijing claimed that capitalism had been "restored" in the Soviet Union

with the emerging dominance of a new "privileged bureaucratic capitalist class."[15] During the height of the Cultural Revolution, and especially after the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968, Beijing charged that the Soviet Union had become a "social-imperialist country." Consequently, both in the Chinese Communist definition of the "main contradiction" in the world and in Chinese propaganda, "Soviet social-imperialism" gradually replaced "U.S. imperialism" to become the primary and most dangerous enemy of the world proletarian revolution.[16] Within this new theoretical framework, U.S. imperialism remained China's enemy but no longer the primary one.

Such basic changes in Beijing's definition of "imperialism" did not take place simply as a justification of Chinese efforts to counter the escalating Soviet threat to China's security interests, they were determined by the essence of the Cultural Revolution. Indeed, according to Mao, the fundamental reason that he initiated the Cultural Revolution was to prevent a Soviet-style "capitalist restoration" from taking place in China.[17] Beijing thus would have to identify the Soviet Union as an imperialist/capitalist country. In addition, excluding the Soviet Union completely from the revolutionary camp would help guarantee China's central position in the world proletarian revolution.

All of these changes had provided the much needed ideological space for Beijing to justify a rapprochement with the United States. In Maoist political philosophy, which had been heavily influenced by the traditional Chinese political culture emphasizing the necessity of "borrowing the strength of the barbarians to check the barbarians," it was always legitimate to pursue a "united front" with a less dangerous enemy in order to focus on the contest against the primary enemy.[18] Since Beijing identified the "social-imperialist" Soviet Union as the most dangerous among all imperialist countries in the world, a rapprochement with the imperialist United States, an enemy now less dangerous in comparison, became feasible and justifiable for Beijing's leaders even in ideological terms.

In a deeper sense, Beijing was also able to pursue a rapprochement with Washington because, for the first time in the PRC's history, Mao's continuous revolution was losing momentum due to the chairman's *own* reasons. A belated socialization phenomenon finally was taking its bite to reduce the vigor of Mao's revolution.

From a historical perspective, the Cultural Revolution represented the climax of Mao's efforts to transform China's "old" state and society through extensive mass mobilization. Mao initiated the Cultural Revolution for two purposes. First, he hoped that it would allow him to discover new means to promote the transformation of China's party, state, and society in accordance

with his ideals—that China should be transformed into a land of prosperity and universal justice and equality. Second, he desired to use it to enhance his much weakened authority and reputation in the wake of the disastrous Great Leap Forward. In the chairman's mind, his strengthened leadership role would best guarantee the success of his revolution.[19]

By carrying out the Cultural Revolution, Mao easily achieved the second goal, making his power and authority absolute. But he failed to get any closer to achieving his first goal. Although the power of the mass movement released by the Cultural Revolution destroyed both Mao's opponents and the "old" party-state control system, it was unable to create the new form of state power Mao desired so much for building a new society in China.[20] Despite all of this, however, Mao was ready to halt the revolution in 1968–69.

In summer 1968, Mao dispatched the "Workers' Mao Zedong Thought Propaganda Team" to various universities in Beijing to reestablish the order that had been undermined by the "revolutionary masses." At the Qinghua University, the Red Guards, who were once Mao's main instrument for initiating and carrying out the Cultural Revolution, responded by opening fire on the team. It was at this point that Mao decided it was time to dismantle the Red Guards movement, thus leading his continuous revolution to a crucial turning point.[21] For almost two decades, "mobilizing the masses" had been the key for Mao to maintain and enhance the momentum of his revolution; but now the chairman openly stood in opposition to the masses in an upside-down effort to reestablish the Communist state's control over society. It was against this background that, with the chairman's repeated pushes, the notion of China being "the center of the world revolution," which had been prevailing since the beginning of the Cultural Revolution, began to disappear in Maoist discourse.[22] In the meantime, Mao completely stopped talking about the role "tension" could play in stirring up revolutionary spirit and creating a revolutionary environment. Instead, he frequently emphasized the importance of "consolidating" the achievements of the Cultural Revolution—which, in reality, meant no more than strengthening his own authority and political power.[23] These were critical signs that Mao's China as a revolutionary state, after being an uncompromising challenger to the "old world" (and attempting to transform China's "old" state and society) for two decades, was now beginning to demonstrate a willingness to live with the yet-to-be-transformed "old" world order. In other words, a "socialization" process—to borrow a critical concept from David Armstrong—had been eroding the Maoist revolution.[24] It was within this context that, when the security threat from the Soviet Union escalated

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

The First Probe: Reports by the Marshals

Since the 1950s, Mao's main source for information about the outside world had been *Cankao ziliao*, an internally circulated journal edited by the Xinhua News Agency.[25] Late in 1967, he noticed an article written by Richard Nixon, in which the former U.S. vice president claimed: "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. There is no place on this small planet for a billion of its potentially most able people to live in angry isolation."[26] Reportedly, Mao not only read the article himself but also recommended it to Zhou Enlai, commenting that if Nixon was to become the next president, U.S. policy toward China might possibly change.[27] Yet this was a time that both the Cultural Revolution and American intervention in Vietnam were peaking. For the moment, neither Beijing nor Washington did anything to reduce the hostility between them.[28]

The first sign of change appeared in November 1968, when the United States proposed to resume the stagnant Sino-American ambassadorial talks in Warsaw. China responded positively and with "unprecedented speed."[29] Then, in January 1969, Mao ordered the publication of Nixon's inaugural address. One month later, however, because Washington provided asylum to Liao Heshu, a Chinese chargé d'affaires in the Netherlands who defected to the West in February 1969, Beijing canceled the ambassadorial talks that had been scheduled to resume on 20 February.[30]

Although we cannot know exactly what Mao was thinking when he showed some interest in dealing with the United States, one thing is certain: the chairman now was turning more of his attention to international issues, trying to understand the orientation of Moscow's and Washington's global strategies in the wake of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968. Late in 1968 and early in 1969, in a series of conversations with foreign visitors to China, the chairman revealed his deep concern about the expansionist nature of Soviet foreign policy. Indeed, he tried hard to comprehend the significance of Soviet behavior, wondering aloud if the Soviet invasion should be interpreted as the prelude to a more general war. In the chairman's view, now "all under the heaven is in great chaos."[31]

It was against this background that Mao asked four veteran military commanders, Marshals Chen Yi, Ye Jianying, Xu Xiangqian, and Nie Rongzhen,

all of whom had been excluded from the decision-making inner circle during the Cultural Revolution and were then "conducting investigation and study" at four factories in Beijing, to "pay attention to" international affairs. In late February, Zhou Enlai, following Mao's instructions, told Chen Yi and the other three marshals to meet "once a week" to discuss "important international issues" in order to provide the party Central Committee with their opinions.[32] The four marshals began to meet on 1 March, and, by late March, they had held four meetings. The first meeting was a general discussion. The next three were held after the Sino-Soviet border clash at Zhenbao Island, so the discussion focused on assessing the implications of the clash and analyzing Soviet strategy toward China. On 18 March, the marshals finished their first report, "An Analysis of War Situation in the World"; eleven days later, they had completed their second report, "The Zhenbao Island as a Tree in the Forest of the Whole World." In both reports, the marshals cast doubt on the notion that the Soviet Union was ready to wage a major war against China since this would "require the mobilization of at least three million troops." They also pointed out that the focus of the American-Soviet global dispute was "the competition over oil resources in the Middle East" and that before the situation there had been resolved, the Soviet Union could not easily turn its main strategic attention to China. Their main policy suggestions focused on upgrading the troops' training level, strengthening the militia forces, and further developing China's national defense industry. Nowhere in the reports did the marshals refer to the sensitive question of adjusting Chinese policy toward the United States.[33]

We do not know whether Mao had read the two reports. At the CCP's Ninth National Congress held from 1 to 24 April, the party leadership, while emphasizing the danger of a major war with "social-imperialists" and "imperialists," continued harsh attacks on the United States. In the main political report delivered by Lin Biao, then China's second in command and Mao's designated successor, there was nothing to indicate that Beijing had changed its attitude toward the United States.[34]

Lin's report, however, was prepared for a public audience. When Mao wanted a more sophisticated understanding of the changing world situation, he again turned to the four marshals. Right after the conclusion of the Ninth Congress, Mao instructed the marshals to resume regular meetings to "study the international situation."[35] The marshals were reluctant to accept the mission since the party congress had already defined China's foreign policies. If they simply repeated the official statement, the "study" would be meaningless;

but if they presented something new, they risked being charged with "challenging" the party's established policy. In order to dispel the marshals' doubts, Zhou Enlai told them in mid-May that Mao assigned them this task because the international situation was "too complicated" to fit the Ninth Congress's conclusions. Zhou also asked the marshals not to be "restricted by any established framework" in their thinking and to try to help Mao to "gain command of the new tendency in the strategic development" in the world. Zhou stressed that Mao decided to assign them the task because they were marshals and had much experience and superb strategic visions.[36] The premier also appointed Xiong Xianghui and Yao Guang, two experienced high-ranking diplomats, to assist the marshals in conducting discussions and drafting reports.[37]

The marshals began to meet on 7 June 1969. On 11 July they submitted a comprehensive report, "A Preliminary Evaluation of the War Situation," to Mao and the Central Committee. They argued that the United States and the Soviet Union were "two 'brands' of representatives of the international bourgeoisie class." While taking China as their enemy, they took "each other as the enemy" too. For them, "the real threat is the one existing between themselves." Since both the United States and the Soviet Union were facing many difficulties at home and abroad, and since the focus of the strategic confrontation between them existed in Europe, stressed the marshals, "it is unlikely that U.S. imperialists and Soviet revisionists will launch a large-scale war against China, either jointly or separately."[38] Because the marshals focused their attention on whether China was facing a serious war threat, they did not further probe into the question of adjusting Chinese foreign policy.

After the marshals adjourned on 11 July, several signs indicated that subtle changes were taking place in Washington's attitude toward China. On 21 July, the U.S. State Department announced that it was relaxing restrictions on American citizens traveling to China; five days later, Prince Norodom Sihanouk, Cambodia's chief of state, conveyed a letter by Senator Mike Mansfield to Zhou Enlai, in which the veteran American politician expressed the desire to visit China to seek solutions to the "twenty-year confrontation" between the two countries. Moscow also proposed a meeting between top Chinese and Soviet leaders around the same time.[39]

To better understand these new developments, the marshals resumed their discussions on 29 July. In addition to contemplating the possibility of "intentionally utilizing the contradictions between the United States and the Soviet Union," they believed that not only should border negotiations with the Soviet Union be held in order to strengthen "our position in the struggle against

Zhou Enlai (right) *and Aleksei Kosygin at the Beijing airport, 11 September 1969. Xinhua News Agency.*

America" but other policy options should also be considered. However, they did not believe that the time was right to accept Mansfield's request to visit China and proposed to "let him wait for a while."[40]

Before the marshals could put these opinions into writing, another major border clash, one larger than the two clashes at Zhenbao Island in March, occurred between Chinese and Soviet garrisons in Xinjiang on 13 August, in which an entire Chinese brigade was eliminated.[41] Beijing reacted immediately to this incident, and to other signs indicating that Moscow probably was preparing to start a major war against China. On 28 August, the CCP Central Committee ordered Chinese provinces and regions bordering the Soviet Union and Outer Mongolia to enter a status of general mobilization.[42] The marshals, meanwhile, still believed it unlikely for the Soviet Union to wage a large-scale war against China, but, at the same time, they emphasized the need for Beijing to be prepared for a worst-case scenario. Within this context, Chen Yi and Ye Jianying mentioned that in order for China to be ready for a major confrontation with the Soviet Union, "the card of the United States" should be played. In another written report, "Our Views about the Current Situation," completed on 17 September, they pointed out that although Moscow indeed was intending to "wage a war against China" and had made "war deployments," the Soviet leaders were unable "to reach a final decision because of political considerations." They proposed that in addition to waging "a tit-for-tat struggle against both the United States and the Soviet Union," China should use "negotiation as a means to struggle against them," and then perhaps the Sino-American ambassadorial talks should be resumed "when the timing is proper."[43] After submitting the report, Chen Yi confided some of his "unconventional thoughts" to Zhou Enlai, proposing that in addition to resuming the ambassadorial talks in Warsaw, China should "take the initiative in proposing to hold Sino-American talks at the ministerial or even higher levels, so that basic and related problems in Sino-American relations can be solved."[44]

We do not know exactly how Mao responded to these reports. Yet the fact that the chairman, through Zhou Enlai, encouraged the marshals to present ideas that were not necessarily consistent with the general foreign policy line set up by the party's Ninth Congress is revealing enough. Apparently, what the chairman wanted to get was exactly such "unconventional thoughts." According to Mao's doctor, Li Zhisui, the chairman said in August 1969: "Think about this. We have the Soviet Union to the north and the west, India to the south, and Japan to the east. If all our enemies were to unite, attacking us from the north, south, east, and west, what do you think we should do? . . . Think again. Beyond Japan is the United States. Didn't our ancestors counsel negotiating with faraway countries while fighting with those that are near?"[45]

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

Opening Moves

In fall 1969, there existed no channel of communication between China and the United States. The last meeting of the Sino-American ambassadorial talks was held in Warsaw in January 1968, which since had been indefinitely suspended. Therefore, when President Nixon intended to let the Chinese know of his "readiness to open communication with Peking [Beijing],"[46] he had to travel a circuitous path. During an around-the-world trip beginning in late July 1969, the U.S. president talked to Pakistani president Mohammad Yahya Khan and Romanian leader Nicolae Ceauşescu, both of whom had good relations with Beijing, asking them to convey to the Chinese leaders his belief that "Asia could not 'move forward' if a nation as large as China remained iso-

lated."[47] When Zhou Enlai received the message from Yahya Khan via Zhang Tong, Chinese ambassador to Pakistan, he commented in a report to Mao on 16 November 1969: "The direction of movement of Nixon and [Henry] Kissinger is noteworthy."[48] But Beijing made no immediate response to the message.

Washington took the first substantial move toward reopening channels of communication with Beijing on 3 December 1969, when the American ambassador to Poland, Walter Stoessel, following Nixon's instructions, approached a Chinese diplomat at a Yugoslavian fashion exhibition in Warsaw. The diplomat, caught off guard, quickly fled from the exhibition site. However, Stoessel was able to catch the Chinese interpreter, telling him in "broken Polish" that he had an important message for the Chinese embassy.[49]

This time Beijing's response was swift. After receiving the Chinese embassy's report on the American ambassador's "unusual behavior," Zhou Enlai immediately reported it to Mao, commenting that "the opportunity now is coming; we now have a brick in our hands to knock the door [of the Americans]."[50] The premier acted at once to let the Americans know of Beijing's interest in reopening communication with Washington.

In mid-October, the U.S. consulate in Hong Kong had inquired with Guangdong provincial authorities about the conditions of two Americans who had been held in China since mid-February, when their yacht had strayed into China's territorial water off Guangdong. Early in November, the Chinese Foreign Ministry, regarding the American inquiry as an "intentional probe designed to see how China would respond," proposed that the two Americans be released "at a suitable time," and that the American embassy in Warsaw be informed of the release. The proposal had sat on Zhou's desk for almost one month until 4 December, when the premier decided to approve the Foreign Ministry's proposal. Two days later, after Mao approved Zhou's decision, the two Americans were freed.[51]

In the meantime, the Chinese embassy in Warsaw followed Beijing's instructions to inform the American embassy by telephone that Lei Yang, Chinese chargé d'affaires, was willing to meet Ambassador Stoessel. On 11 December 1969, Lei and Stoessel held an "informal meeting" at the Chinese embassy, at which the American ambassador, in addition to proposing a resumption of the ambassadorial talks, asked the Chinese to "pay attention to a series of positive measures the American side has taken in recent months."[52] The next day, after receiving Lei's three reports detailing the discussions, Zhou, while proposing to Mao to "hold off" resuming formal talks with the Americans "for a while" so as to "watch reactions from various sides," immediately met with K. M. Kaiser, the Pakistani ambassador to China. Through him, he asked Yahya Khan to inform Washington that "if President Nixon intends to resume contacts with China," he should first try to use the "official channel of communication in Warsaw."[53] One week later, Zhou's message was delivered by Agha Hilaly, Pakistani ambassador to the United States, in Washington.[54]

On 8 January, Lei and Stoessel held another informal meeting at the American embassy in Warsaw. The two sides agreed to resume the ambassadorial talks on 20 January, which would be held in turn at the Chinese and American embassies.[55] When the Sino-American ambassadorial talks formally resumed on 20 January at the Chinese embassy, Stoessel expressed Washington's intention to improve relations with China, stating that, in order to have a "more thorough discussion" on "any question" related to Sino-American relations, Washington was willing to dispatch an envoy to Beijing or accept one from the Chinese government in Washington. Lei Yang, already having received detailed instructions from Beijing concerning how to deal with different scenarios, replied that if Washington was interested in "holding meetings at higher levels or through other channels," the Americans might present more specific proposals "for discussion in future ambassadorial talks."[56]

The second formal meeting between Lei and Stoessel was scheduled to be held at the American embassy on 20 February 1970. Top leaders in Beijing carefully prepared for it. On 12 February, Zhou Enlai chaired a politburo meeting to draft instructions and prepare speech notes for Lei Yang. The politburo decided that Lei should inform the American side that "if the U.S. government is willing to dispatch a minister-level official or a special envoy representing the president to visit Beijing to explore further solutions to the fundamental questions in Sino-American relations, the Chinese government will receive him." The decision was approved by Mao on the same day.[57] When Lei met with Stoessel on 20 February, he highlighted the Taiwan issue, emphasizing that Taiwan was part of Chinese territory and that "withdrawal of all U.S. armed forces from the Taiwan Strait area" and the "solution of the Taiwan issue" were the preconditions for "fundamentally improving Sino-American relations." The Chinese chargé d'affaires, though, also mentioned that China was willing to "consider and discuss whatever ideas and suggestions" the American side would present to "reduce tensions between China and the United States and fundamentally improve the relations between them in accordance with the five principles of peaceful coexistence." In particular, he informed the American ambassador that the Chinese government "will be willing to receive" a high-ranking American representative in Beijing.[58]

This meeting turned out to be the last one of the decade-long Sino-Ameri-

can ambassadorial talks. After the meeting, President Nixon, eager to bring contact with Beijing to a higher and more substantial level, conveyed (again through Yahya Khan) the following message to Beijing: "We prepare to open a direct channel of communication from the White House to Beijing. If Beijing agrees [to establish such a channel], its existence will not be known by anyone outside the White House, and we guarantee that [we have] the complete freedom to make decisions." Zhou Enlai received the message on 21 March and commented: "Nixon intends to adopt the method of the [American-Vietnamese] negotiation in Paris and let Kissinger make the contact."[59]

But Nixon's message arrived at a bad time. Just a few days before, Prince Norodom Sihanouk, while on an annual vacation abroad, was removed by the National Assembly as Cambodia's chief of state, and the pro-American general Lon Nol became the head of the new government. Sihanouk went to Beijing and established an exile resistance government. In the meantime, the Khmer Rouge, now a Sihanouk ally, dramatically increased military activities in Cambodia with the cooperation of North Vietnamese troops. These new developments in Indochina complicated Washington's and Beijing's efforts to move forward with communications. On 24 March, in a report to Mao and Lin Biao, Zhou Enlai proposed to postpone the next Sino-American ambassadorial meeting until after mid-April; Mao approved.[60] In April, because Taiwan's vice premier Jiang Jingguo (Jiang Jieshi's son) was to visit the United States, the State Department found it "unwise to schedule talks with Peking [Beijing] in Warsaw within two weeks before or ten days after the trip," and thus the meeting date again was postponed to 20 May.[61]

Early in May, Nixon ordered American troops in South Vietnam to conduct a large-scale cross-border operation aimed at destroying Vietnamese Communist bases inside Cambodia. On 16 May, Zhou Enlai chaired a politburo meeting to discuss the situation in Indochina. The participants decided that the Sino-American ambassadorial meeting scheduled for 20 May in Warsaw should be postponed, that a statement would be issued in Mao's name to support the anti-American imperialist struggle throughout the world, and that anti-American protests and rallies would be held in major Chinese cities.[62] On 18 May, Beijing announced the postponement of the Sino-American talks in Warsaw. Two days later, when a million Chinese held a protest rally at Tiananmen Square, Mao issued a statement written in tough anti-American language, calling for "the people of the world to unite and defeat the U.S. aggressors and all their running dogs."[63]

Despite Beijing's renewed anti-American propaganda, the Nixon administration decided not to give up its effort to open channels of communication with China. In analyzing Mao's statement for Nixon, Kissinger found that "in substance . . . it is remarkably bland. . . . [I]t makes no threats, offers no commitments, is not personally abusive toward you [Nixon], and avoids positions on contentious bilateral issues."[64] On 15 June, Vernon Walters, military attaché at the American embassy in Paris, followed Washington's instructions to approach Fang Wen, the Chinese military attaché there, asking the Chinese to open another "confidential channel of communication" since the "Warsaw forum was too public and too formalistic."[65] But Beijing was not ready to come back to the table at the moment. On 16 June, at a politburo meeting chaired by Zhou Enlai, CCP leaders decided that, "given the current international situation," the ambassadorial talks in Warsaw "will be postponed further" and that only the Chinese liaison personnel would continue to maintain contacts with the Americans.[66] But Beijing did not want to allow the process toward opening relations with Washington to lose momentum completely. On 10 July, Beijing released Bishop James Walsh, an American citizen who had been imprisoned in China since 1958 on espionage charges.[67]

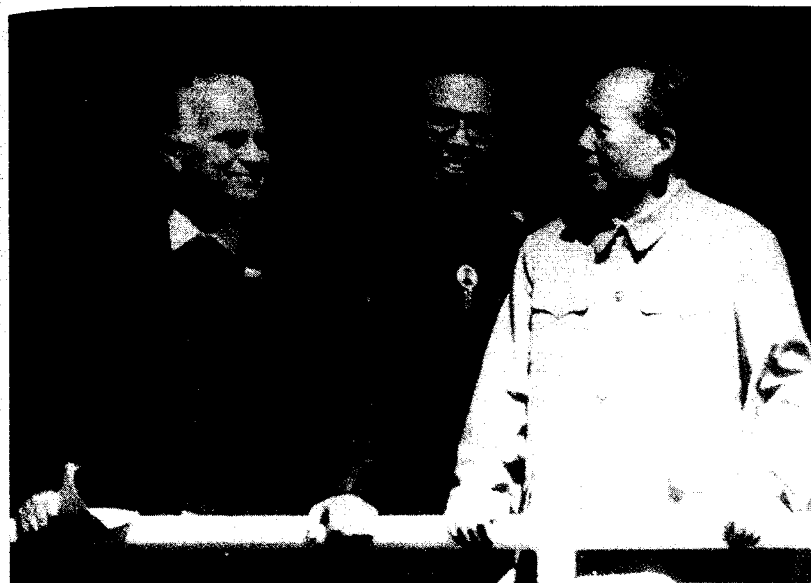
Beijing slowed the pace of opening communications with Washington in summer of 1970 not just because Nixon had ordered the invasion of Cambodia. A potential storm was brewing between two of China's most powerful men, Mao Zedong and Lin Biao, which forced the chairman to turn his main attention to domestic, and especially inner-party, affairs. After the party's Ninth Congress in April 1969 Lin's relations with the chairman turned sour, and they deteriorated rapidly during the summer of 1970. In designing China's new state structure reflecting "the achievements of the Cultural Revolution," Lin, as Mao's designated successor and China's second in command, argued that Mao should reclaim the position as chairman of the state, which, in Mao's eyes, reflected Lin's own ambition to occupy the position himself.[68] The struggle between Mao and Lin escalated significantly in the summer of 1970, leading to a de facto showdown between Mao and several of Lin's main supporters at a party Central Committee plenary session held from 23 August to 6 September at Lushan, the mountain summer resort for top party leaders. At one point, it seemed that Lin and his followers gained the support of most Central Committee members and that only after Mao personally addressed the plenary session did he control the situation.[69] This major power struggle at the Lushan conference occupied much of Mao's time and energy, making it difficult for him to take new steps in pursuing contacts with the Americans. Consequently, the process of opening relations with the United States was again deferred.

The Role of Edgar Snow

Mao began to refocus his attention on the Americans after he had temporarily stalled what he called "a serious struggle within the Central Committee" at the Lushan conference.[70] Like Nixon, Mao was not happy with the "formalistic" nature of the Warsaw channel. In contrast to the U.S. president, though, the Chinese chairman probably was ambivalent about entering direct secret contacts with Washington by receiving a high-level American envoy in Beijing. Because of some complicated concerns—to be discussed below—Mao, though willing to establish secret connections with Washington, did not want to follow the pace set by and communicate under terms defined by Washington.

In October and November 1970, Beijing received more overtures from Washington through Pakistan and Romania indicating that Nixon remained willing to dispatch a high-ranking representative to China.[71] Beijing's leaders decided to respond positively to these messages. On 14 November, Zhou Enlai told President Yahya Khan, who was in China for a state visit, that "if the American side indeed has the intention to solve the Taiwan issue," Beijing would welcome the U.S. president's "representative to Beijing for discussions." The premier also emphasized that this was the first time Beijing's response "has come from a Head, through a Head, to a Head."[72] One week later, in a meeting with Romanian vice premier Gheorghe Radulescu, Zhou asked China's "friends in Bucharest" to convey to Washington that the Chinese government would welcome Nixon's representative, or even Nixon himself, to Beijing to discuss "solving the Taiwan issue" and improving Sino-American relations.[73] Interestingly, Zhou also advised the Pakistanis and Romanians to hold the message for a while before delivering it to Washington. As a result, the Pakistanis did not convey the message to Washington until 9 December, and the Romanians, even later, not until 11 January 1971. Kissinger reported in his memoirs that he had found such delay puzzling.[74] The likely reason for the delay was that Mao, for the purpose of legitimizing the coming changes in Sino-American relations, was planning to make an initiative in his own way, and his vision had fallen on the American writer Edgar Snow.

Snow had been a friend of Mao and the Chinese Communists since the mid-1930s, when he visited the Chinese Communist base areas in northern Shaanxi province and interviewed Mao and many other CCP leaders. His highly acclaimed book, *Red Star over China*, published in 1938, helped create a positive image of the Chinese Communist revolution both within and outside China. After the PRC's establishment, Snow visited China in 1960 and 1965 and continued to write about the "great achievements" of Mao's "long revolution."[75]



Mao Zedong and Edgar Snow (far left) *looking down at Tiananmen, 1 October 1970. Between Mao and Snow is Chinese interpreter Ji Chaozhu. Xinhua News Agency.*

During the Cultural Revolution years, Snow attempted several times to revisit China, but he was unable to get a Chinese visa. The situation suddenly changed in August 1970. Snow, then living in Switzerland, received several urgent calls from Huang Zhen, the Chinese ambassador to France who was also one of the American writer's old friends. When Snow arrived at the Chinese embassy in Paris, he was urged by Huang to reapply for visiting China. The Chinese ambassador, in response to the American writer's complaint that Beijing had ignored him in previous years, told him that the invitation "comes from the top," promising that "he will be treated as a distinguished guest by Chairman Mao himself."[76]

On 1 October 1970, when Snow and his wife were invited to review the annual National Day celebration parade at the top of the Gate of Heavenly Peace, they were escorted by Zhou Enlai to meet Mao and stand by the chairman's side. A picture of Snow and Mao together was later printed on the front page of major Chinese newspapers.[77] Mao was sending a message, which he intended not only for the Americans but also for people all over China. Kissinger mentioned in his memoirs that Washington completely ignored this signal because the Chinese "overestimated our subtlety."[78] But, from Mao's perspective, it

was more crucial for the Chinese people to notice it. For over two decades, the United States had been thoroughly demonized in the minds of Chinese people by the CCP's widespread anti-American propaganda campaigns and indoctrination efforts. Now, since the chairman was planning to pursue a new relationship with the United States, he would need to create a new American image in the Chinese people's minds. A subtle signal such as this one would serve to gradually prepare the Chinese people psychologically for big changes in Sino-American relations.[79]

Mao obviously did not invite Snow to Beijing merely to take a publishable photo, however. He also planned to use Snow in pursuit of larger goals. After several delays, the chairman received Snow on 18 December for a lengthy interview.[80] As far as the prospect of Sino-American relations was concerned, Mao's most noteworthy statement during the interview was that he was willing to receive Nixon in Beijing. The chairman told Snow that Beijing was considering allowing Americans of all political persuasions—Left, Right, and Center—to come to China. He particularly emphasized that he would like to welcome Nixon in Beijing because the U.S. president was the person with whom he could "discuss and solve the problems between China and the United States." The chairman made it clear that he "would be happy to meet Nixon, either as president or as a tourist."[81] After the interview, Snow received a copy of the interview transcribed by the Chinese interpreter Tang Wensheng (Nancy Tang) but was advised not to publish it "at the moment." Snow did not publish the interview "with the use of direct quotation" until April 1971.[82] According to Nixon, however, Washington "learned of Mao's statement [on welcoming Nixon to Beijing] within days after he made it."[83]

Kissinger regarded Mao's talks with Snow as another signal to Washington and speculated that the main reason that Beijing provided Snow with a verbatim transcript of the interview without permitting him to publish it right away was because the Chinese leaders wanted to heighten the signal's authenticity when it reached Washington.[84] In actuality, Mao's calculations were again related to his domestic concerns.[85] The chairman's five-hour interview with Snow covered a wide range of issues. In addition to Sino-American relations, he particularly focused on the Cultural Revolution. As the chairman had done on many other occasions, he argued compellingly that the Cultural Revolution was absolutely necessary because it exposed the "bad elements" by creating chaos "all under the heaven." But he also mentioned that he did not favor two tendencies prevailing during the Cultural Revolution: one was "not telling the truth," and the other was "the maltreatment of captives" in an "all-round civil war." This rare confession from the chairman on the fading status of the Cultural Revolution was also linked to his ongoing political struggle with Lin Biao. Implicitly targeting his designated "heir and successor" and the "Cultural Revolution star," the chairman claimed that it was too much and ridiculous for him to be called the "Great Teacher, Great Leader, Great Supreme Commander, and Great Helmsman" and that "one day every title will be eliminated except for the title 'Teacher.'"[86] Throughout the interview, Mao jumped freely between domestic and international topics, implying that improving relations with the United States would have to be closely interwoven with major changes in China's political and social life.[87] Indeed, when Mao was being interviewed by Snow, both the Americans and the Chinese people must have been his designated audience. Ironically, it appears that although he consciously defended the Cultural Revolution as much as he could, on a subconscious level he was virtually saying farewell to this most radical phase of his continuous revolution.

The transcript of Mao's interview with Snow was another masterpiece from the chairman designed to influence the minds of the Chinese masses. The content of this message, though, was different from that of any of the chairman's previous ones in that, rather than trying to encourage the people to enter a revolutionary movement, it attempted to convince them of the need to end an existing one. The chairman knew that such messages had to be delivered to the party and the nation in calculated ways. Indeed, Snow was the chairman's carefully picked agent—by having a well-known American sympathizer of the Chinese Communist revolution deliver the message, the chairman, as he had done so many times in his long political career, was staging an unconventional political drama, one that he hoped would justify the rapprochement with the Americans and convince the Chinese masses that his revolution was still alive. As does any drama, this one needed a climactic episode to produce its maximum effect. This episode was something Mao much needed but could not plan well in advance, although he must have believed that it would emerge during the course of events. Indeed, in a few months, that dramatic event took place, and it was what would be recorded in history as the "Ping-Pong diplomacy."

The Ping-Pong Diplomacy

In the first several months of 1971, the exchanges between Beijing and Washington turned quiet. Although both sides were willing to upgrade the discussions between them to higher levels, neither the Chinese nor American leaders seemed to know exactly how to take the next step. One major obstacle was determining the issues that should be on the discussion agenda. The differences between Beijing and Washington were tremendous in this regard. For Beijing's

leaders, the key issue was America's military intervention in Taiwan. They had argued for over two decades that in order to improve Sino-American relations, Washington had to stop meddling in China's internal affairs. For Washington, however, the key to resolving the Taiwan issue lay in Beijing recognizing that the Guomindang had effective control over Taiwan and agreeing that any resolution of the matter must be reached by peaceful means. The Chinese and Americans also differed significantly on other international issues, such as how to end the military conflict in Vietnam, how to deal with the division between North and South Korea, and how to evaluate Japan's reemergence as an economic giant. On none of these questions was it easy for the two sides to reach a compromise. In fact, during their initial contact in Warsaw early in 1970, they had already found that the gaps between them were as wide as ever.[88] In order to close the gaps, both sides believed it necessary to hold bilateral meetings at higher levels. Before such talks could begin, policymakers in Beijing and Washington spent the early months of 1971 assessing diplomatic options and formulating negotiation strategies.[89]

In the meantime, both the Chinese and Americans were waiting for the opportunity to take the next step. This was especially important for Beijing. In addition to weighing the pros and cons of reaching a rapprochement with Washington strategically and geopolitically, Beijing's leaders, and Mao in particular, needed to find a "triggering event" that would allow them to mobilize and gain the Chinese people's support for establishing a new relationship with the United States. It was against this background that in April 1971 an opportunity appeared almost suddenly in Nagoya, Japan, where the Chinese Ping-Pong team was participating in the Thirty-first World Table Tennis Championships.

In 1967 and 1969, because of the chaos of the Cultural Revolution, Chinese table tennis players—the best in the world—failed to show up at the world championships. Late in 1970, Chinese players began to reappear in international competitions. Early in 1971, Koji Goto, president of the Japanese Table Tennis Association, visited China to invite the Chinese to participate in the forthcoming world championships in Nagoya.[90] From the beginning, Beijing regarded whether to dispatch a team to Japan as a political issue, especially because this would be the first time since the height of the Cultural Revolution that a Chinese sports team would attend a major international event. The opinions among Chinese sports and foreign affairs officials were by no means unanimous. For several reasons, such as the fear that the Chinese players might have to play with players representing the "puppet regimes" in South Vietnam and Cambodia and that they might be attacked by the right-wing

elements in Japan, the leaders of the Foreign Ministry and National Commission on Sports almost decided not to let the Chinese team go to Japan.[91] Zhou Enlai and Mao Zedong in particular, however, finally decided that "our team should go."[92]

In the early 1970s, table tennis was the most popular sport in China and the only one in which the Chinese players could defeat anyone in the world. Not surprisingly, Chinese participation in the Nagoya championships turned out to be a big national event, causing widespread "Ping-Pong fever" throughout China's cities and countryside. When the Chinese players won one gold medal after another (they eventually won four golds out of seven events), the fever rose higher and higher. Through the extensive media coverage of the championships—which was rare for this kind of event during the Cultural Revolution years—millions and millions of ordinary Chinese paid close attention to Nagoya.[93] In the meantime, the Chinese team leadership, who had been instructed to make two to four phone calls back to Beijing every day, kept top leaders in Beijing abreast of any new development in Nagoya.[94]

During the course of the championships, Chinese and American players had several unplanned encounters. On 27 March, the Chinese players talked to a few American players at the championships' opening reception. The next day, officials of the Chinese delegation telephoned Beijing, reporting that "some American players were very friendly to our players at yesterday's reception, and had talked a lot."[95] Three days later, Graham B. Steenhoven, manager of the American delegation, encountered Song Zhong, general secretary of the Chinese delegation, at an International Table Tennis Association meeting break. Reportedly, Steenhoven mentioned that only two weeks earlier the U.S. State Department had terminated all restrictions on the use of American passports for traveling to China and asked Song "if the American players could have the opportunity to visit China to learn from the Chinese players." Officials of the Chinese delegation met the same evening to discuss the "implications" of Steenhoven's comments, and they decided to report to Beijing that "the Americans want to visit China."[96] Officials at the Chinese Foreign Ministry and National Commission on Sports treated the report seriously. After carefully discussing the matter, they concluded in a report on 3 April that "the timing now is not yet mature for the Americans to visit China, and the Americans should be advised that there will be other opportunities in the future." The report was sent to Zhou Enlai for approval.[97] On 4 April, Zhou endorsed the report, remarking in the margin, "[We] might ask them [the American players] to leave their mailing addresses with us, and might tell their chief representative that we Chinese people firmly oppose the activities aimed at

Chinese Ping-Pong player Zhuang Zedong presents American player Glenn Cowen with an embroidered silk scarf at the Thirty-first World Table Tennis Championships, Nagoya, Japan, 4 April 1971. Xinhua News Agency.

making 'two Chinas' or 'one China and one Taiwan.' " The premier, however, was uncertain about his decision and sent the report to Mao for the chairman to make the final ruling.[98]

While Zhou was writing these remarks in Beijing, another incident occurred between Chinese and American players. On the afternoon of 4 April, Glenn Cowen, a nineteen-year-old American player from Santa Monica College in California, accidentally boarded a bus carrying Chinese players. The Chinese all smiled, but no one extended him a greeting. Suddenly, three-time world champion Zhuang Zedong approached him, presenting him with an embroidered scarf with a picture of scenic Yellow Mountain on it as a gift. Zhao Zhenghong, the head of the Chinese delegation, tried to stop Zhuang, but Zhuang told him: "Take it easy. As the head of the delegation you have many concerns, but I am just a player. It doesn't matter." [99] Five minutes later, Cowen and the Chinese players got off the bus in front of a crowd of journalists, who most likely had gathered because it was such a big matter for the Chinese and American players to be on the same bus and friendly to each other. The next day, Cowen returned the favor by offering Zhuang a T-shirt with the Beatles' popular slogan "Let It Be" on it as a gift.[100] Again, the exchange was caught by journalists and cameras.

In Beijing, Mao had been following the events in Nagoya from the start. According to the memoirs of Wu Xujun, the chairman's chief nurse, even before the competition started the chairman had instructed her to read to him all foreign news reports published in *Cankao ziliao* with references to activities of the Chinese team in Nagoya. Wu recollected that during the championships, the chairman was constantly excited, was losing sleep, and did not have much of an appetite. Wu noted that Mao's state was usually a sign that he was thinking about big decisions.[101] Zhou's report regarding the American players visiting China had been sitting on Mao's desk for more than two days when, on 6 April, the chairman finally approved it and returned it to the Foreign Ministry.[102] Yet the chairman's concerns were far from over. When Wu read to him foreign news reports about the encounters between Zhuang Zedong and Cowen, the chairman's eyes "suddenly turned bright." He asked Wu to read the reports again, commenting that "Zhuang Zedong not only plays good Ping-Pong but knows how to conduct diplomacy as well." That evening Mao went to bed at around eleven o'clock after taking several sleeping pills. But before he fell asleep, he suddenly called Wu to his bed, asking the chief nurse to call Wang Hairong at the Foreign Ministry immediately and to "invite the American team to visit China." [103] Wu did not at first trust her own ears because the chairman had reversed completely the decision he had endorsed when his mind had been clear. But the chairman, despite being under the strong influence of medicine, insisted Wu make the phone call. Only after confirming that the chief nurse indeed had made the call did the chairman allow himself to get to sleep.[104]

Mao's sudden change of mind caused a sleepless night for Zhou Enlai and many others at the Foreign Ministry and National Commission on Sports.[105] The next day, Chinese officials with the Ping-Pong team in Nagoya received the order from Beijing to extend an invitation to the American table tennis team to visit China.[106] Upon learning of the invitation, the White House immediately approved it.[107] The Americans' activities during their visit to China were widely covered by the Chinese media. Indeed, the matches between Chinese and American players received live television and radio coverage.[108] The highlight of the visit was a meeting held on 14 April between the American team, together with teams from four other countries, with Zhou Enlai at the Great Hall of the People, at which the premier announced, "[Y]our visit has opened a new chapter in the history of the relations between Chinese and American peoples." [109] A few hours after Zhou met with the American players, Washington announced five new measures concerning China, including the termination of the twenty-two-year-old trade embargo. In a few short days, Ping-Pong diplomacy had completely changed the political atmosphere between China and the United States, making the theme of improving relations

between the two countries—as Kissinger put it—"an international sensation" that "captured the world's imagination."[110]

Although we have no way of knowing exactly what had changed Mao's mind on the evening of 6 April, we have reasons to believe that such a decision, again, was made not only for international concerns but also for domestic considerations. When the Americans were playing China's most popular and strongest sport in front of a huge Chinese audience (especially if radio and television audiences were included) it was almost as if a modern version of the ritual procedures related to the age-old Chinese "tribute system," wherein the foreign barbarians came to China to pay tribute to the superior Chinese emperor, was taking place. The Chinese players were very friendly toward the Americans, even allowing them to win quite a few matches. In the eyes of the Chinese audience, though, this was not just an indication of friendship but also, and more importantly, a revelation of superiority. Mao's efforts to guide popular opinion culminated in the Chinese media's widespread reporting of a conversation between Zhou Enlai and the American player Cowen: According to the media, when Cowen asked the premier about his opinion on American hippies, the premier provided him with some sophisticated advice, combining an understanding of the "desire on the part of youth to try new things" with profound philosophical observations on "the rules in the development of human history." Zhou then, reportedly, received a bunch of flowers from Cowen's mother, who wanted to thank the premier for "educating her son."[111] Nothing could produce more penetrating symbolic power than this story showing how a member of capitalist America's decadent "lost generation" found answers to questions about the truth of life in socialist China.

Mao moved quickly to fit this new Chinese popular mood toward America into the orbit of the relations he was planning to pursue with the United States. The chairman looked to Snow once again. In addition to permitting the American writer to publish his interview in the West, the chairman ordered that the complete transcript of the interview—in which he said that he was willing to meet Nixon in Beijing—be relayed to the entire party and the whole country.[112] Mao's maneuvers, as it turned out, further prepared the Chinese people politically and psychologically for the forthcoming transformation of Sino-American relations.

Kissinger's Secret Trip to Beijing

In the wake of the Ping-Pong diplomacy, Beijing and Washington immediately worked on plans for the high-level meeting that had been discussed since late 1970. The Pakistani channel continued to play a crucial role in facilitating communications between the two sides. On 21 April, Beijing sent a message to Washington that reiterated that Taiwan was "the principal and prerequisite problem, which had to be resolved before any relations could be restored." In the meantime, Beijing's leaders also made it clear that they were "now interested in direct discussions" as a means of reaching settlement and thus willing to "receive publicly in Beijing a special envoy of the president of the United States (for instance, Mr. Kissinger) or the U.S. secretary of state or even the president of the U.S. himself for a direct meeting and discussion."[113]

The White House received the message on 27 April. Although Nixon found that "in some important respects this message raised as many problems as it solved," he and Kissinger immediately began to work on formulating Washington's response. Because of domestic political considerations, Nixon thought it necessary for the contact with Beijing "to be kept totally secret until the final arrangement for the presidential visit had been agreed upon." In terms of who should be the person to go to China, he decided that Kissinger was the best choice.[114] On 10 May, Kissinger handed Washington's formal reply to Pakistani ambassador Hilaly to deliver to Beijing. The message stated that because of the importance Nixon had attached to normalizing relations with China, he was prepared to accept Zhou Enlai's invitation to visit Beijing "for direct conversations" with PRC leaders. It also proposed that Kissinger undertake a preparatory secret visit sometime after 15 June to begin a preliminary exchange of views and arrange an agenda for Nixon's visit. Beijing received the message on 17 May.[115] Three days later, when Washington and Moscow reached a procedural breakthrough in the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks, Kissinger asked the Pakistanis to convey an advance copy of the U.S.-Soviet agreement to Beijing, with an accompanying message stating that Washington would "conclude no agreement which would be directed against the People's Republic of China."[116]

After receiving these messages, Mao instructed Zhou Enlai to chair a politburo meeting to work out the Chinese responses.[117] On 25 May, Zhou called a meeting attended by leading members of the Foreign Ministry to discuss the technical issues involved in responding to Nixon's messages.[118] The next day, the politburo met to consider Beijing's specific strategies toward improving Sino-American relations. Zhou followed Mao's instructions to deliver a keynote speech at the meeting, pointing out that the United States had reached the peak of its power after the end of the Second World War and thus could willingly interfere with "anything anywhere in the world" at that time. However, U.S. power had declined in recent years. America's intervention in Vietnam had lost the people's support, forcing Washington to withdraw American

troops gradually from Vietnam. In the meantime, America's economic position and, as a result, its political influence in the world had begun to decline. Under these circumstances, speculated Zhou, American leaders had to consider whether to continue their "going-all-out" policy or to reduce America's international involvement. As the first step toward the second choice Washington needed to get out of Vietnam, and the Americans thus found it necessary to establish contact with China. These developments, stressed the premier, had provided China with "an opportunity to improve Sino-American relations," which "will be beneficial for the struggle against imperialist expansionism and hegemonism, beneficial for maintaining peace in Asia as well as in the world, and beneficial for maintaining our country's security and pursuing the unification of the motherland in peaceful ways."[119]

The decisions reached by the politburo were summarized in a report drafted by Zhou Enlai after the meeting, which established eight "basic principles" regarding Kissinger's and Nixon's proposed visits to China:

1. All U.S. armed forces and military installations should be withdrawn from Taiwan and the Taiwan Strait area in a given period. This is the key to restoring relations between China and the United States. If no agreement can be reached on this principle in advance, it is possible that Nixon's visit would be deferred.
2. Taiwan is China's territory, and the liberation of Taiwan belongs to China's internal affairs. No foreign intervention should be allowed. Japanese militarism in Taiwan should be strictly prevented.
3. We will strive to liberate Taiwan in peaceful ways and will carefully work on the Taiwan issue.
4. The activities aimed at making "two Chinas" or "one China and one Taiwan" should be firmly opposed. If the United States is willing to establish diplomatic relations with China, it must recognize the People's Republic of China as the sole legal government representing China.
5. If the previous three conditions have not been met, it is not suitable for China and the United States to establish diplomatic relations, and a liaison office can be established in each other's capital.
6. We will not initiate the question concerning [China's seat in] the UN. If the Americans touch upon this question, we will make it clear that no arrangement involving "two Chinas" or "one China and one Taiwan" is acceptable to us.
7. We will not initiate the question concerning Sino-American trade. If the Americans touch upon this question, we will discuss it with them after the principle of American troops withdrawing from Taiwan has been accepted.
8. The Chinese government stands for the withdrawal of U.S. armed forces from the three countries in Indochina, Korea, Japan, and Southeast Asia, so that peace in the Far East will be maintained.[120]

These basic principles clearly demonstrated that Beijing's leaders, though willing to improve relations with the United States, were not quite ready to make major compromises with Washington, especially on the Taiwan issue. Such an attitude was not surprising given the profound chasm that had existed between Beijing and Washington for over two decades. In addition, because the politburo fully understood the importance of justifying the decision to pursue a rapprochement with the United States, it knew too well that the decision should not leave any impression that it had softened the party's fighting attitude toward U.S. imperialism. The report thus specifically enumerated several possible outcomes of opening relations with the United States, arguing that a Sino-American rapprochement would impair the American people's struggle against the "monopoly capitalist ruling class" and would enhance Hanoi's position at the Paris talks, thus forcing American troops to withdraw from Indochina. In particular, the report argued that the opening of Sino-American communications represented the "victorious result of our struggles against imperialism, revisionism, and reactionary forces," 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." If the opening succeeded, the "competition between the two super powers" would be more fierce; if the opening failed, the "reactionary face" of U.S. imperialism would be further exposed, and "our people's consciousness" would be further enhanced.[121]

On 29 May, Mao approved Zhou's report.[122] The same day, the premier, again via the Pakistani channel, sent Beijing's formal responses to Washington, informing the Americans that Mao was looking forward to "direct conversations" with Nixon "in which each side would be free to raise its principal issue of concern" and that Zhou welcomed Kissinger to China "for a preliminary secret meeting with high-level Chinese officials to prepare for and make necessary arrangements for President Nixon's visit to Beijing."[123] Nixon received the message four days later, commenting, "This is the most important communication that has come to an American president since the end of World War II."[124]

In order to prepare for Kissinger's visit, Beijing established a special task force headed by Zhou to deal with all kinds of technical and logistical issues.[125] In the meantime, Beijing's leaders paid special attention to further justifying to party cadres and members the decision to open Sino-American relations. Beginning at the end of May, the CCP leadership convened a series of meetings, including a working meeting attended by more than two hundred "responsible cadres" from Beijing and other parts of China, to relay to them the party's new policy toward the United States. Zhou stressed that it was Nixon and Kissinger who were coming to Beijing, thus "it is not we who need something from them, but they who need something from us."[126] This tone dominated Beijing's efforts to explain the Sino-American opening to ordinary party members and people throughout the following months.

After careful planning, Kissinger secretly visited Beijing from 9 to 11 July. During the forty-eight hours he stayed in Beijing, he met with Zhou and other high-ranking Chinese officials in six meetings lasting for a total of seventeen hours.[127] The two men quickly established respect for each other. While Zhou found Kissinger "very intelligent—indeed a Dr.," Kissinger found Zhou "one of the two or three most impressive men I have ever met."[128] Although Beijing had repeatedly emphasized that unless progress could be reached on the Taiwan issue no other question would be discussed, Zhou had a flexible attitude. The most important breakthrough was reached on the first day, when each leader tried to comprehend the other's basic stand. Kissinger spent much time explaining Washington's policies on a series of international issues, including the Taiwan question. He stated that Washington would withdraw two-thirds of U.S. armed forces from Taiwan after the end of the Vietnam War and would continue to withdraw more troops from Taiwan in concert with further improvements in Sino-American relations. Contrary to the statement made by the State Department only a few months earlier that Taiwan's status was "unsettled," Kissinger made it clear that the United States acknowledged Taiwan as part of China and would not support Taiwan's independence. Within this context, he emphasized that Washington firmly believed that the Taiwan issue should be solved in a peaceful manner. In explaining Washington's policy toward Indochina, Kissinger told the Chinese that the Nixon administration was committed to ending the Vietnam War through negotiations and thus was willing to establish a timetable to withdraw American troops from South Vietnam, if America's honor and self-esteem were protected. Zhou seemed satisfied with Kissinger's statement on Washington's recognition of Taiwan as part of China. Although he continued to emphasize that all American troops must withdraw from Taiwan and the U.S.-Taiwan treaty must be abolished, he also stated that the differences between Beijing and Washington should not prevent the two sides from living in peace and equality.[129]

Immediately after the meeting, Zhou briefed Mao. The chairman's reaction was interesting. When he learned that Washington would withdraw some but not all of American troops from Taiwan, he commented that it would take some time for a monkey to evolve into a human being, and that the Americans were now at the ape stage, "with a tail, though a much shorter one, in his back." More important, the chairman told the premier, was the Indochina issue. "We are not in a hurry on the Taiwan issue because there is no fighting there," stated the chairman. "But there is a war in Vietnam and people are being killed there. We should not invite Nixon to come just for our own interests." The chairman instructed the premier not to focus on specific issues the next day but to "brag to" (*chui* in Chinese) Kissinger about the big "strategic picture," that "although all under the heaven is in great chaos, the situation is wonderful." In particular, Mao instructed, Zhou should tell the Americans that China was prepared "to be divided by the United States, the Soviet Union, and Japan, with them all coming together to invade China."[130]

Mao's attitude determined that Kissinger's visit would not fail. Although Kissinger stated that the United States would neither withdraw all its troops from Taiwan nor abolish the U.S.-Taiwan treaty immediately, the chairman paid more attention to what Washington would do—withdrawing U.S. forces from Taiwan gradually, acknowledging Taiwan as part of China, and not supporting Taiwan's independence. For the chairman, Kissinger had *already* made the most important concessions—had begun the process of changing from "monkey" to "human being"—and Mao was willing to provide the Americans with the time needed to complete the change in policy. Since Beijing had always viewed the Taiwan issue as the single, most important obstacle for restoring relations with the United States, such an attitude on the chairman's part meant that the Taiwan issue no longer would block Zhou and Kissinger from reaching an agreement on the agenda for Nixon's visit. Within this context, the chairman, as he always did when dealing with a superpower (which used to be the Soviet Union, and, now, the United States), consciously or unconsciously attempted to demonstrate his superior vision and moral standard. By making Vietnam, rather than Taiwan, a priority, Mao intended to exhibit Beijing's altruism in handling important international issues. By the same token, through highlighting the hypothesis that China might face a simultaneous attack from the Soviet Union, Japan, and the United States at a time of "chaos all under the heaven," Mao meant not only to force Kissinger to define Washington's strategic purposes in East Asia but also, and more importantly,

to remind the Americans not to ignore China's centrality in dealing with world affairs in general and in solving Asian/Pacific issues in particular.

Following the chairman's instructions, Zhou completely changed his approach the next day. Using ideologically aggressive language to draw a picture of "great chaos all under the heaven," the Chinese premier presented Beijing's "principal stands" on a series of international issues, including Vietnam, India, Japan, Korea, and Taiwan, challenging Washington's policy toward them. Zhou's "fierce litany" (in Kissinger's words), however, was not designed to block the negotiations but, in a sense, to complete a particular "ritual procedure" that was needed for socialist China to reach a compromise with imperialist America. Thus when Kissinger returned with a point-by-point rebuttal of Zhou's presentation, the premier's attitude changed again. Toward the end of the meeting, he proposed that the two sides discuss the date for Nixon to visit China, and, with little bargaining, an agreement was reached: Nixon would come in spring 1972.[131]

Because Zhou was to host a reception for a North Korean delegation visiting Beijing that evening,[132] Huang Hua, the Chinese ambassador to Canada, was assigned to draft with Kissinger a joint announcement of Nixon's visit to China. When Huang, who was late to the meeting, finally arrived,[133] he proposed a draft indicating that Nixon had solicited the invitation to China for the purpose of discussing the Taiwan issue as a prelude to normalizing Sino-American relations. When Kissinger made it clear that such a draft was absolutely unacceptable, Huang proposed a thirty-minute recess at 1:40 A.M. so that the Chinese could "rework on the language." At 3:00 A.M. the Americans were told that Huang would not come back until 9:00 A.M. Kissinger was puzzled by all of this. What he did not know was that Huang failed to return because he needed to get Mao's approval for a new draft to present to the Americans, but the chairman had already gone to bed.[134] When the meeting was resumed at 9:40 A.M., Huang presented a new draft, which Kissinger immediately found agreeable. It stated that Zhou Enlai extended the invitation "knowing of President Nixon's expressed desire to visit the People's Republic of China" and that the purpose of his visit "is to seek the normalization of relations between the two countries and also to exchange views on questions of concern to the two sides."[135] Thus Kissinger was able to send a one-word telegram to Washington, "Eureka," which, as agreed upon in advance, indicated that his Beijing trip was a success.[136] On 15 July, Beijing and Washington announced simultaneously that Nixon was to visit China "at an appropriate date before May 1972."

The Shock Wave of the "Lin Biao Affair"

Kissinger's trip to China shocked America's Asian allies; it also brought about suspicion, and even tension, between China and its allies and close friends. On 13–14 July, Zhou Enlai visited Hanoi to inform the Vietnamese Communist leaders of Beijing's contacts with the Americans. Within twenty-four hours, he held three meetings with Le Duan and Pham Van Dong. Zhou emphasized that it was Beijing's belief that, from a long-term perspective, Beijing's improved relations with Washington would help policymakers in Washington to better understand the reality that America's global strategic emphasis lay in Europe, rather than in Asia, and in turn would enhance Hanoi's bargaining power at the negotiation table.[137] Early on the morning of 14 July, Zhou flew to Pyongyang to brief the North Korean Communist leader Kim Il-sung, and, after having two meetings lasting for seven hours, flew back to Beijing in the evening.[138] Late the same evening, he met with and briefed Prince Sihanouk, who was then the leader of Cambodia's anti-American exile government in Beijing.[139] On 17 July, Zhou met with Xhorxihi Ropo, Albania's ambassador to China, and explained to him Beijing's new policy toward the United States.[140] Although Zhou must have tried his best to defend Beijing's new policy, it appears that he had barely convinced many of those who listened to him. The Vietnamese regarded Beijing's contact with Washington as China "throwing a life buoy to Nixon, who almost had been drowned."[141] Albania, which had been China's closest Communist ally during the Cultural Revolution, adopted an even harsher attitude, claiming that the Chinese had "betrayed" the cause of the world proletarian revolution.[142]

However, these international difficulties must have meant almost nothing to Mao in comparison with the huge domestic political storm that had been brewing during the same period. The potential for a battle between Mao and Lin Biao that might have distracted the chairman from taking action toward the United States in summer 1970 did not disappear after the Lushan conference. From late 1970 to mid-1971, Mao tried to uncover the "conspiracy activities" of several high-ranking party and military leaders within Lin Biao's inner circle, an endeavor that gradually exposed Lin himself.[143]

Kissinger's secret trip to Beijing occurred at the same time that the Mao-Lin contest had reached a crucial juncture. Late on the evening of 9 July, when Zhou Enlai and his assistants briefed Mao about the meetings with Kissinger, the chairman left the topic to spend more than one hour investigating whether or not several of Lin's close followers in the PLA's General Staff had made serious "self-criticism." When he learned that none of them had done

so, he announced that "the struggle beginning at the Lushan conference has not finished yet" and that "behind them [Lin's followers] there is a big plot."[144] Late in August, the chairman began an inspection tour of south China, during which he repeatedly criticized Lin, revealing that he was preparing to have a political showdown with the man who, only two years earlier, had been designated as his "heir and successor." Reportedly, upon learning of Mao's activities, Lin's son, Lin Liguo, who had organized a squadron loyal to himself and his father, decided to stake everything on a desperate gamble—at his order, his squadron tried, but failed, to assassinate the chairman when he was returning to Beijing by train. Early on the morning of 13 September, Lin, his wife, and his son boarded a plane to flee from Beijing. A few hours later, the plane crashed in Mongolia.[145]

While much is still unknown about Lin Biao's exact motives for fleeing Beijing on 13 September 1971, the Lin Biao affair had influenced the development of the Sino-American rapprochement in two important respects. First, Lin Biao's downfall represented one of the biggest political crises in the PRC's history. Although Lin Liguo's alleged coup attempt was crushed and Lin Biao died, this was by no means Mao's victory. Since the early days of the Cultural Revolution, Lin had been known in China as Mao's "closest comrade-in-arms" and "best and most loyal student." He was handpicked by the chairman to be his "heir and successor." His reported betrayal not only completely buried the myth of Mao's "eternal correctness" but also, and more seriously, further withered Mao's fading continuous revolution. Under these circumstances, Mao was even more in need of a major breakthrough in China's international relations, one that could help boost the chairman's declining reputation and authority while enhancing the Chinese people's support for Mao's Communist state—if not necessarily for Mao's Communist revolution.

Second, Lin Biao's downfall might have removed a political obstacle as well as provided additional political justification for Beijing to improve relations with the United States. Although our knowledge about Lin Biao's exact attitude toward Sino-American rapprochement remains limited because of the lack of reliable sources, several official Chinese sources have pointed out that Lin opposed improving relations with the United States.[146] This claim appears to have the support of other available materials. For example, although Zhou Enlai almost always sent his reports on the United States to both Mao and Lin for approval, we almost never see any response from Lin. If silence implies objection, Lin's downfall certainly meant that a powerful opponent to Sino-American rapprochement had been eliminated. What is more certain is that Lin's ruin inevitably enhanced the position of Zhou Enlai, a strong advocate

of opening China's relations with other parts of the world in general and the United States in particular. Therefore, we may safely conclude that although the Lin Biao affair began as a serious challenge to Mao, it turned out to be favorable to the Sino-American rapprochement.

Closing Moves

Not surprisingly, although the shock wave of the Lin Biao affair brought China's political situation into unprecedented chaos,[147] Mao, with Zhou's assistance, decided to continue the course toward rapprochement with the United States. The communications between Beijing and Washington became more direct after Kissinger's trip: in addition to the Pakistani channel, a new secret "Paris channel" was established. Vernon Walters and Huang Zhen, American and Chinese ambassadors to France, were assigned by Washington and Beijing to serve as messengers.[148]

In order to settle important details for Nixon's visit, Kissinger openly visited Beijing on 20–26 October. During his seven-day stay in Beijing, he and Zhou Enlai held ten meetings, which lasted a total of twenty-three hours and forty minutes.[149] In addition to exchanging opinions on a host of international issues and resolving specific items related to Nixon's visit (such as media coverage), the most difficult challenge facing the two leaders was to work out a draft summit communiqué. Before coming to China, Kissinger had prepared a draft in which he emphasized the common grounds shared by Beijing and Washington while using vague language to describe the issues on which the two had sharp differences. On the evening of 22 October, when Kissinger handed the draft to Zhou, the Chinese premier's first response was that although the draft was unsatisfactory, it could serve as the basis for discussion. When the two met again on the morning of 24 October, however, Zhou's attitude had changed dramatically. Declaring the American draft "totally unacceptable," the premier pointed out that the communiqué must reflect the fundamental differences between Beijing and Washington and not present an "untruthful appearance."[150]

Behind this dramatic change was Mao himself. As he was listening to Zhou's brief on his meetings with Kissinger on the evening of 23 October, the chairman told the premier, "I have said many times that all under the heaven is 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," the chairman continued, then 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." The chairman acknowl-

edged that stressing these goals was no more than "firing an empty cannon," yet he stressed at the same time that "all of these points must be highlighted; anything short of that is improper."[151]

Mao's sensitivity toward, as well as insistence upon, producing a summit communiqué that would "truthfully" reflect China's overall position revealed his determination not to allow Nixon's visit to jeopardize his revolution's image at home and abroad. More important, though, Mao aimed to demonstrate to the Americans his moral superiority in handling important international issues. What the Americans had proposed was a conventional agreement, one that would make the chairman's unprecedented acceptance of Nixon's visit look like no more than an ordinary diplomatic venture. The chairman wanted to emphasize the drama of the visit and thereby put the Chinese in an "equal" (as Mao defined the term), thus more superior, position vis-à-vis the Americans.

When, on the evening of 24 October, Kissinger received the Chinese draft communiqué that had been approved by Mao, his first reaction was disbelief. But when he had finished reading this document full of "empty cannons" and had time to reflect, he "began to see that the very novelty of the [Chinese] approach might resolve our perplexities."[152] The two sides then started working on a mutually acceptable draft that not only defined common grounds but also used clear yet moderate language to state each side's views on important issues. The most difficult in this regard was, of course, Taiwan. When Kissinger departed from Beijing on 26 October, the two sides had reached agreement on almost all points except for a few specific expressions concerning Washington's attitude toward Taiwan.[153]

When Kissinger was in Beijing, the United Nations General Assembly voted with the support of an overwhelming majority to let Beijing have China's seat at the UN and expel Taipei from it. This development was immediately propagated throughout China as a "great victory" of Chinese foreign policy as well as an indication of the "significant enhancement" of the PRC's international status and reputation.[154] In internal indoctrinations, the "victory" was also linked to Mao's "brilliant decision" to open relations with the United States. At a time when Mao and his revolution had suffered the loss of the Chinese people's inner support in the wake of the Lin Biao affair, the breakthrough in China's external relations, which allowed Beijing's leaders to proclaim that Mao's revolution had indeed transformed China from a weak country into a prestigious world power, played an increasingly important role in providing legitimacy to Mao's Communist regime.

Within this context, when Alexander Haig, Kissinger's deputy on the national security staff, visited China in early January 1972 to make the final technical preparations for Nixon's visit, he inadvertently offended his Chinese hosts. At a meeting with Zhou Enlai on 4 April, Haig delivered an assessment from Nixon and Kissinger about the recently concluded India-Pakistan crisis, which made clear that in managing the crisis the American leaders were concerned about China's viability and believed that maintaining it was in the fundamental interests of the United States. When Zhou reported the meeting to Mao, the chairman commented: "Why should our viability become America's concern? . . . If China's independence and viability should be protected by the Americans, it is very dangerous [for us]."[155] On 6 January, Zhou formally told Haig that he was "greatly surprised" by the American leaders' concern for "protecting China's independence and viability." It was Beijing's firm belief, the premier asserted, that "no country should depend upon a foreign power in maintaining its own independence and viability" because the dependent country "would become that [foreign] power's subordinate and colony."[156] Such emphasis—or overemphasis—on Beijing's determination to maintain China's independence and self-esteem reflected the CCP leaders' understanding of the importance of the viability issue in legitimizing the Communist regime in China.

On 21 February, Nixon arrived in Beijing. He had hardly settled down at the guest house when Zhou Enlai informed him that Mao was ready to meet him. The conversation between the Chinese chairman and the U.S. president lasted one hour and seems not to have had a central focus.[157] The chairman refused to get into details of any specific issues, announcing that he would only "discuss philosophical questions." It appears that the chairman was eager to demonstrate his broad vision, showing the Americans that not only was he in total control of matters concerning China, but he also occupied a privileged position to comprehend and deal with *anything* of significance in the known universe. In a sense, what was most meaningful for the chairman was not the specific issues he would discuss with the U.S. president but the simple fact that Nixon and Kissinger came to *his* study to listen to *his* teachings. The chairman probably was revealing some of his truest feelings when he said that he had "only changed a few places in the vicinity of Beijing." Yet, at the bottom of his heart, he also must have believed that he had indeed changed the world—had he not, the "head of international imperialism," would not have come to visit his country in the first place.

The Taiwan issue remained the key to finalizing the text of the joint communiqué, which Kissinger and Qiao Guanhua, China's vice foreign minister and one of Zhou's main associates, were responsible for composing. The main

Zhou Enlai greets Richard Nixon at the Beijing airport, 21 February 1972. Xinhua News Agency.

challenge was finding a mutually acceptable expression of the United States' stand toward the linkage between Washington's agreement to withdraw U.S. troops from Taiwan and Beijing's commitment to a peaceful settlement of the Taiwan issue. Although this was a sensitive issue for the Chinese because they had to stick to the principle that anything concerning Taiwan "belonged to China's internal affairs," they showed flexibility by allowing compromises to be reached.[158]

On 28 February, the Sino-American joint communiqué was signed in

Mao Zedong and Richard Nixon shake hands at Zhongnanhai, Beijing, 21 February 1972. Xinhua News Agency.

Shanghai. This was an unconventional document in that in addition to emphasizing common grounds, it also highlighted differences between Beijing and Washington, with each side expressing in its own way its basic policies toward important international issues. From Beijing's perspective, such a format best served China's fundamental interests. In a geopolitical sense, Nixon's visit did establish the framework in which a strategic partnership could be constructed between China and the United States. The Shanghai communiqué announced that neither Beijing nor Washington "should seek hegemony in the Asia-Pacific region and each is opposed to efforts by any other country or group of countries to establish such hegemony"—a statement implicitly targeting the Soviet Union. More importantly, especially for Mao, the unique format of the communiqué allowed China not only to remain a revolutionary country but also to claim an equal footing with the United States in the world. Not just for propaganda purposes did Beijing claim that Mao had won a "great diplomatic victory."

Yet this was not a victory for international communism. As one of the most important events in the international history of the Cold War, the Sino-

American rapprochement, along with the deterioration of relations between Beijing and Moscow, caused the most profound shift in the international balance of power between the two contending superpowers. Whereas the great Sino-Soviet rivalry (first in the ideological field and then in military and strategic spheres) further diminished Moscow's capacity to wage a global battle with the United States, the Sino-American rapprochement enormously enhanced Washington's strategic position in its global competition with the Soviet Union. More importantly, the great Sino-Soviet split buried the shared consciousness among Communists and Communist sympathizers all over the world that communism was a solution to the problems created by the worldwide process of modernization. Nothing could be more effective in destroying the moral foundation of communism as an ideology and a revolutionary way of transforming the world than the self-denial of such possibility through the mutual criticism of the Communists themselves. Although the Cold War did not end until the late 1980s and early 1990s, when both the Soviet Union and the Communist bloc collapsed, one of the most crucial roots of that collapse certainly can be traced to the reconciliation between Beijing and Washington in 1969–72.

EPILOGUE
THE LEGACIES OF CHINA'S COLD WAR EXPERIENCE

Mao Zedong died on 9 September 1976. After a short period of leadership transition (1976–78), with Hua Guofeng serving as the nominal party and state head, Deng Xiaoping ascended in the late 1970s to become China's paramount leader.[1] China has since experienced a profound derevolutionization process, which has undermined Mao's revolution both as an ideal and as a reality, and has sunk the Communist state into an ever-deepening legitimacy crisis.

That Mao's revolutionary enterprise had lost people's inner support had become evident during the chairman's last years of life. Following the Lin Biao affair in 1971, a societywide "crisis of faith" began, causing millions and millions of everyday Chinese to question the ultimate benefits of the continuous revolution that prevailed in China for over two decades. When tens of thousands of ordinary men and women occupied Tiananmen Square early in April 1976 to mourn the late premier Zhou Enlai, who had died in January of that year, they meant to demonstrate the profound popular dismay over the economic stagnation and political cruelty conferred on the Chinese people by the chairman's revolution. Mao, who was then only a few months away from "the moment of departing to meet Karl Marx," ordered a dramatic crackdown of the masses at the square.[2] By reacting this way, the chairman virtually was admitting that his revolutionary enterprise aimed at placing a new social order in the hearts and minds of his own people had failed.

Deng Xiaoping was purged by Mao, for the second time in the Cultural Revolution, during the 1976 Tiananmen incident. The purge, though, allowed Deng to understand better than Mao the depth of the widespread moral crisis existing among ordinary Chinese. When he reemerged to become China's new ruler, he immediately abandoned Mao's class-struggle-centered discourse and his practice of continuous revolution, placing at the top of his agenda modernizing China's industry, agriculture, national defense, and science and technology. Following his pragmatic "cat theory"—"black cat or white cat, so long

as it catches mice, it is a good cat"—Deng allowed economics to take precedence over politics, hoping that the improvement of people's standard of living would help bring legitimacy back to the Communist state.[3]

Along with implementing these domestic changes, the Chinese government under Deng's leadership dramatically reduced and, finally, stopped its support to revolutionary/radical nationalist states and movements in other parts of the world while adopting a new, open approach in China's external relations. Throughout the Maoist era, China maintained only minimal exchanges with other countries. Starting in the late 1970s and early 1980s, Deng took several important steps, including dispatching Chinese students to study abroad, promoting China's international trade, and welcoming foreign investments in China, to open China's door to the rest of the world.[4] As a result, the interconnections between China and the outside world have increased significantly, strengthening the interdependence between China and other parts of the world (especially the West). More than two decades before, Mao's China entered the Cold War as a revolutionary country, in its own terms defining many key aspects of the Cold War—and the Cold War in Asia in particular. With Mao's death and the end of his revolution as well as Deng's altering the basic courses of China's external policies, the Cold War in Asia—as far as some of its fundamental features are concerned—virtually came to an end in the late 1970s, almost one decade before the conclusion of the global Cold War.

But the legacies of China's Cold War experience will not fade away easily. A conspicuous example is the CCP's one-party reign, which has persisted during the post-Mao age. In addition, China's reform and opening policies, not surprisingly, have been highly unbalanced: Emphasis has been placed on the economic and technological fields, leaving politics and ideology a forbidden zone. Indeed, despite Beijing's general abandonment of revolutionary discourses during the post-Mao age, the CCP leadership has repeatedly called upon the party and the whole nation to fight against the influence of "bourgeoisie liberalization," warning ordinary Chinese people to boycott the "spiritual pollution" of Western influence as a side effect of China's opening to the outside world.[5] As has been identified by many China scholars, the huge gap between this political stagnation and the rapid social and economic changes brought about by the reform and opening process was one of the most important causes underlying the Tiananmen tragedy in 1989.[6]

In international affairs, the legacies of China's Cold War experience have been reflected in Beijing's frequent criticism and occasional challenge to the existing Western-dominated international economic and political order. Post-Mao Chinese leaders have consistently claimed that under no circumstances will the Chinese government allow foreign powers to impose their values on China's external behavior, or to use their norms to interfere with China's internal affairs. Since the Tiananmen bloodshed in 1989, the increasing criticism by other countries, especially those in the West, of Beijing's human rights abuses and hard-nosed policy toward Tibet and, more recently, Taiwan, have further offended Beijing's leaders. Beijing has persistently rebutted such criticism, claiming it to be a continuation of Western countries' interference with matters within the jurisdiction of Chinese sovereignty.[7] In these ways, a "Cold War" of another kind has continued between China and the West since the formal ending of the global Cold War in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Behind China's behavior is the profound influence of the lingering Chinese "victim mentality." As has been pointed out throughout this volume, the Chinese have consistently regarded their nation as a victimized member of the Western-dominated international systems in modern history. During the Cold War period, this belief served as one of the most important reasons behind Mao's China's revolutionary behavior. The Chinese victim mentality persists today, as revealed in the Chinese responses toward NATO's mistaken bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade in May 1999. Despite repeated U.S. explanations and apologies, the Chinese government, with the apparent support of a majority of the Chinese people, claimed the bombing to be an "American plot" designed to humiliate and intimidate China and the Chinese people. As a result, the government-controlled Chinese media resumed using Cold War language to denounce "Western imperialism" and "U.S. hegemonism."[8] A decade after the end of the global Cold War, China is no longer a revolutionary country, but it is not a real "insider" of the international community either.

Many Western analysts have been concerned about the orientation of China's future development, worrying that if China becomes stronger economically and militarily, it will pose a serious threat to world peace and stability in the twenty-first century. In a few extreme cases, the PRC is equated with Hitler's Germany, and the crisis scenario that could be created by the "China threat" is compared to "a Cold War as bad as the last."[9] They thus argue that in order to change China into a more "responsible" or, at least, less dangerous, member of the international community, it is necessary to "constrain" or to "contain" China, so that Beijing's leaders will be forced to behave less aggressively under pressure from without.

However, as is indicated in this volume, the reality is that China's external behavior has been primarily shaped by domestic concerns—both under Mao and continuously in the post-Mao era. Here is one of the biggest para-

doxes facing both China and the rest of the world today: Although China is increasingly growing into a prominent world power, thus bearing considerable regional and global responsibilities, the orientation of China's external behavior is determined less by its connections with important regional or global issues than by an agenda overwhelmingly dominated by domestic dilemmas and challenges.

In this respect, Beijing's harsh attitude toward Taiwan—an issue created during the Cold War—is highly revealing. Despite facing great international pressures, Beijing's leaders have stubbornly refused to renounce military force as a possible means to resolve the Taiwan issue. Every time Beijing is criticized for maintaining such a coercive policy, its leaders have argued that the Taiwan issue is an internal Chinese problem and that their adoption of a Taiwan policy that does not exclude the use of force is necessary for maintaining China's sovereignty and territorial integrity.[10]

What should be emphasized is that, underlying Beijing's inflexible policy toward Taiwan is, again, the impact of the deepening legitimacy crisis facing the Chinese Communist state in the post-Cold War era. From a historical perspective, the CCP has justified its one-party reign by emphasizing two of the Chinese Communist revolution's fundamental missions: that the revolution would create in China a new, Communist society characterized by universal justice and equality; and that it would change China's status as a weak country and revive its central position on the world scene. Mao's revolution, although failing to end political privilege in Chinese society, succeeded in creating an egalitarian situation (though accompanied by poverty) in China's economic life. The post-Mao derevolutionization process, in challenging the economic poverty left over by Mao, has created sharp divisions between the rich and the poor within Chinese society, thus undermining Maoist egalitarianism both as an ideal and as a social reality. The Chinese Communist Party today, as the political scientist Thomas J. Christensen points out, "has all but obliterated the second of the two adjectives in its name."[11] As a consequence, the legitimacy of the Chinese *Communist* regime is seriously called into question.

Under these circumstances, the Chinese Communist state must attach more importance to the Chinese revolution's second mission in its effort to legitimize its existence. Appealing to the victim mentality among the Chinese people, the CCP has justified its one-party reign by promoting the view that without the CCP's successful revolution, China would have remained a weak, corrupt, and divided country with no status on the world scene. Consequently, maintaining China's unification and sovereignty becomes an issue of utmost importance for the CCP, and Taiwan represents a crucial test case in this regard.

In a deeper sense, this legitimacy crisis is not just one entangling the Chinese Communist state; it epitomizes a fundamental puzzle facing Chinese society in the post-Cold War era: If the ideology embodied in communism can no longer bind the nation together and direct the nation's path toward modernity, which "ism" (if any) could take over the mission? The lack of an answer to this basic question has caused a lingering moral crisis among the Chinese population (especially the younger generation). What is more, although this moral crisis has arisen from the failure of the Chinese Communist state, one of its direct political consequences is that it enhances the popular conviction that the Chinese Communist government must remain in power. The logic is simple: without the Chinese Communist regime—despite all of its deficiencies—things in China could get worse and, in the worst-case scenario, the Chinese nation and Chinese society could even suffer total disintegration.

The CCP's legitimacy crisis and the Chinese moral crisis not only reflect the uncertainty and extreme complexity of the course of China's political, economic, and social changes in the post-Cold War age but also increases the difficulty involved in predicting the role China will play in international affairs in the twenty-first century. Indeed, China's role in international affairs depends upon the outcome of China's political, economic, and social transformations.

China's hope of emerging from the shadow of the Cold War lies in the fate of the ongoing reform and opening (derevolutionization) process—only with its success will China become a genuine "insider" of the international community and consistently play the role as a coordinator and promoter of regional and global peace and stability. This process, indeed, involves the greatest transformation—political, economic, social, and cultural—China has ever experienced in its history. Two decades after its inauguration, the process presents tremendous challenges for the Chinese people, causing profound frustrations for China's intellectuals (especially in the face of the deepening moral crisis). The triumph of this transformation may lead China to economic prosperity, social stability, and political democratization. Indeed, these three goals of the process are closely interrelated—a China that is increasingly becoming an integral part of the regional and world economic system will have a larger stake in maintaining regional and global peace and stability; and a Chinese society that is dominated by a strong middle class will be more receptive to democratic political institutions characterized by checks and balances. At the same time, the triumph of the process will create an environment in which the Chinese "victim mentality" may gradually lose its appeal, enabling China to emerge as an equal member and a genuine "insider" of the international

community. Such a China will play a highly positive role in security, economic, and environmental affairs in the Asia-Pacific region and the whole world.

By contrast, the failure of the process could lead to China's disintegration—this is particularly true since how to identify "China" remains a tough challenge for the Chinese people.[12] If the process fails, in a worst-case scenario, China's nuclear arsenal could get out of control; China's efforts to protect its environment could completely collapse; over a billion Chinese could make neighboring regions panic by creating huge migratory flows; and it would be impossible for China to play a key role in promoting regional and world stability and peace.

As far as the possible outcome of this process is concerned, the first fifteen to twenty years of the twenty-first century will be crucial. This is largely due to the anticipated result of two important developments. First, Chinese leaders, as well as a majority of Chinese scholars, have targeted the years 2015–20 as a deadline for achieving a series of goals in improving China's economy, polity, environment, and quality of life. Second, in fifteen to twenty years, the last generation of Chinese leaders who grew up in the Chinese revolutionary era will have disappeared completely from the central stage of Chinese politics. As a result, a new generation of Chinese leaders, who have gained their education and political experience in a more open environment, will find it much less difficult to commit themselves to transforming China into a true democracy and thus enabling China to become a true "insider" of the international community.

Although it is impossible for other countries (and those in the West in particular) to dictate the basic direction of China's derevolutionization process, there are things that can be done to help facilitate China's continuous integration into the international community and to help China rid itself of the last influences of the Cold War:

- Great and consistent efforts should be made to understand China's perspectives and problems; under no circumstances should a "second Cold War" be waged against China.
- Exchanges with China should be greatly strengthened in all areas, especially in economic and cultural fields, and the Chinese "victim mentality" should be handled with deep sensitivity.
- China's contributions to regional and global peace and stability should be adequately acknowledged and properly encouraged.
- Long-term perspectives should be adopted in formulating strategies and policies toward China. We should never be frustrated by China's lack of sufficient change in the short run; we should never surrender an attitude of goodwill toward China.
- China should not be regarded as a passive reactor to outside influence; in order for China to play a stabilizing role in Asia-Pacific and global affairs, the international regimes should reform themselves by incorporating China's specific concerns and values.

The Cold War ended a decade ago, and now is the time finally to say farewell to its legacies. In looking into China's future, there is reason for optimism to prevail. In the final analysis, we must remember that China is one of the oldest and most continuous civilizations in the world. We should have confidence in the Chinese people's ability to make rational choices for their nation's future development, as well as to define the role their nation should play in regional and global affairs in the twenty-first century.