

**JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA AND
THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA ("SHANGHAI COMMUNIQUÉ,"
FEBRUARY 28, 1972)**

Introduction

In 1972 United States President Richard Nixon made his historic visit to the People's Republic of China. The two nations had not had diplomatic relations or trade relations since the founding of the People's Republic in 1949. The United States had regarded China as part of the Communist bloc and thus a target of containment. The People's Republic had regarded the United States as an aggressive enemy power. Beginning in the late 1960s, however, both sides showed interest in opening relations. Sporadic contacts developed into a more serious dialogue in late 1970 and early 1971, and by 1972, both sides were seriously interested in opening up relations.

President Nixon and his National Security Adviser, Henry Kissinger, viewed opening relations with China as a part of the strategy for withdrawing the United States from the Vietnam War. They also saw a strategic advantage to "playing the China card" in the Cold War against the Soviet Union. In China, Mao Zedong and his advisers were equally interested in achieving balance in their foreign relations by playing the United States against the Soviet Union, which they regarded as a threatening "hegemonist" and "revisionist" practitioner of "social imperialism."

The "Shanghai Communiqué" established the framework within which relations between the two countries could develop further and remains one of the fundamental bases of the U.S.-China relationship.

Document Excerpts with Questions

**Joint Communiqué of the United States of America and the People's Republic of China
("Shanghai Communiqué," February 28, 1972)**

President Richard Nixon of the United States of America visited the People's Republic of China at the invitation of Premier Chou En-lai of the People's Republic of China from February 21 to February 28, 1972. Accompanying the President were Mrs. Nixon, U.S. Secretary of State William Rogers, Assistant to the President Dr. Henry Kissinger, and other American officials.

President Nixon met with Chairman Mao Tse-tung of the Communist Party of China on February 21. The two leaders had a serious and frank exchange of views on Sino-U.S. relations and world affairs.

During the visit, extensive, earnest and frank discussions were held between President Nixon and Premier Chou En-lai on the normalization of relations between the United States of America and the People's Republic of China, as well as on other matters of interest to both sides. ...

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There are essential differences between China and the United States in their social systems and foreign policies. However, the two sides agreed that countries, regardless of their social systems, should conduct their relations on the principles of respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all states, non-aggression against other states, non-interference in the internal affairs of other states, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence. International disputes should be settled on this basis, without resorting to the use or threat of force. The United States and the People’s Republic of China are prepared to apply these principles to their mutual relations.

With these principles of international relations in mind the two sides stated that:

- progress toward the normalization of relations between China and the United States is in the interests of all countries;
- both wish to reduce the danger of international military conflict;
- neither 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; and
- neither is prepared to negotiate on behalf of any third party or to enter into agreements or understandings with the other directed at other states.

...

The two sides reviewed the long-standing serious disputes between China and the United States. The Chinese side reaffirmed its position: The Taiwan question is the crucial question obstructing the normalization of relations between China and the United States; the Government of the People’s Republic of China is the sole legal government of China; Taiwan is a province of China which has long been returned to the motherland; the liberation of Taiwan is China’s internal affair in which no other country has the right to interfere; and all U.S. forces and military installations must be withdrawn from Taiwan. The Chinese Government firmly opposes any activities which aim at the creation of “one China, one Taiwan,” “one China, two governments,” “two Chinas,” and “independent Taiwan” or advocate that “the status of Taiwan remains to be determined.”

The U.S. side declared: The United States acknowledges that all Chinese on either side of the Taiwan Strait maintain there is but one China and that Taiwan is a part of China. The United States Government does not challenge that position. It reaffirms its interest in a peaceful settlement of the Taiwan question by the Chinese themselves. With this prospect in mind, it affirms the ultimate objective of the withdrawal of all U.S. forces and military installations from Taiwan. In the meantime, it will progressively reduce its forces and military installations on Taiwan as the tension in the area diminishes. ...

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The two sides expressed the hope that the gains achieved during this visit would open up new prospects for the relations between the two countries. They believe that the normalization of relations between the two countries is not only in the interest of the Chinese and American peoples but also contributes to the relaxation of tension in Asia and the world. ...

Questions:

1. What common interests do the two powers acknowledge?
2. How do they deal with the issue of Taiwan?
3. Does the United States recognize here that Taiwan is a part of a single China and that the government of the PRC in Beijing is the government of that one China (and therefore has sovereignty over Taiwan)?