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PRESIDENT NIXON'S TRIP TO CHINA AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

/ William H. Overholt

The 1971-1972 rapprochement between the United States and China occurred in a dramatic fashion which was heavily influenced by the personalities and exigencies of the moment. At the same time the rapprochement constituted the consummation of numerous historical trends. Muted signals and moves toward a less hostile relationship had occurred during the Kennedy and Johnson Administrations, but during the Nixon Administration the trends had gone far enough, and the administrations in both the United States and China had mustered sufficient courage, to implement rapid changes.

On the Chinese side, persistent hostility toward the Soviet Union and increasing fear of the rising potential of Japan combined with reduced fear of the U.S. and increased Chinese self-confidence made possible a fundamental shift in policy. The Chinese had long feared an American invasion, and that fear was very real despite its fallacy from an American perspective. The U.S. had aided the Kuomintang against the Communist Party during the civil war, had responded to a North Korean invasion of South Korea in part by blockading the Taiwan Straits (thus preventing completion of the Chinese civil war), had seemed to the Chinese to be on the verge of invading Manchuria under MacArthur's leadership as U.S. troops drove toward the northern border of North Korea, and had seemed to some Chinese likely to take advantage of its position in Vietnam to threaten China militarily. But recession of U.S. power from the Pacific and steady withdrawal from South Vietnam under the Nixon administration appear to have broken through the fear that prevented accurate perception of American policy and to have persuaded the Chinese that China itself was not threatened by American military forces. At the same time China was becoming increasingly confident as the sense of weakness and humiliation derived from its pre-1949 experiences of contact with the West receded into memory. Within the Chinese political elite Mao Tse-tung, who was hostile to the Soviet Union and inclined to stress domestic development over opposition to the United States, had succeeded in deposing Liu Shao-chi, whose proclivities seemed quite different. Likewise, Chou En-lai had succeeded in preserving the Foreign Ministry largely intact despite leftist attacks during the Cultural Revolution, and Cultural

Revolution fanaticism had given way to more moderate and institutionalized policies.

Just as China perceived a greatly reduced threat from the U.S., so increased experience and knowledge of China reduced American perception of possible Chinese threats to American interests. China's entry into the Korean War came to be interpreted as a defensive mistake in reaction to American mistakes, rather than as an aggressive act. The China-India war appeared not to have resulted from one-sided Chinese aggression. Previous fears of a Chinese invasion of Southeast Asia faded as analysis indicated that the Chinese probably did not have the slightest desire to invade Southeast Asia and that they probably lacked the capabilities for successful invasion even if they wanted to do so. Taiwan remained a clear object of PRC ambition, but internal cohesion, one of the world's most effective armies, and economic growth rates which rivaled Japanese records, all seemed to ensure the security of Taiwan despite a diplomatic debacle.[1] Moreover, the trend toward recognition of the PRC rather than Taiwan appeared inexorable.

Vietnam, domestic social issues, the rapid rise of Russian military power, and erosion of allied support for the U.S. policy of isolating China, all led Washington to seek reduction of hostility towards China wherever that hostility seemed gratuitous. In addition, American domestic politics came to allow greater flexibility in China policy than was previously possible. A near consensus on the need for change in China policy had developed among knowledgeable officials in the middle and lower levels of government, and with the advent of the Nixon Administration a new generation of senior advisors, who were not personally attached to the old policies, came to power. The new Republican President had less to fear from right wing pressures than his Democratic predecessors. A new generation of younger officials who had not held policy-making positions during World War II and the Korean War had led various opinion-leading elites through a fundamental change in attitude toward China. Thus domestically and internationally both China and the U.S. were prepared for change.

The celerity and drama of the Sino-American rapprochement ensured rapidity and breadth for the ramifications of the rapprochement. The President's trip to Peking opened communication, trade, and cultural exchanges, and agreed on certain principles of international conduct. American public opinion on China transformed almost overnight from diffuse ideological hatred to broad sympathy. Oriental furniture became fashionable, and baggy Chinese costumes became the rage in New York. February of 1973 brought elevation of communications to the level of quasi-ambassadorial liaison offices and expansion of cultural exchanges to include a tour by the Philadelphia Orchestra and other events.

The impending rapprochement may have precipitated or accelerated the U.S.S.R.-Indian friendship treaty and contributed independently to deterio-

[1] A Hudson Institute projection indicates that Taiwan should be able to sustain a billion dollar annual defense budget by 1980.

ration of relations between the U.S. and India. After all, President Nixon had visited India's most-feared enemy, China, following a Kissinger trip facilitated by the good offices of India's most immediate enemy, Pakistan.

> In an interview given to C. L. Sulzberger, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was asked where Indo-U.S. relations went wrong after "the talk all these years of an American desire to rely on India as a counterpoise in Asia to China." She said she supposed that U.S. policy towards India changed when "U.S. policy towards China changed."[2]

The trip frightened the Russians and the North Vietnamese. On both sides a strong part of the motivation for rapprochement was fear of the Soviet Union. In the rapprochement China gained a great power for leverage against the U.S.S.R., while the U.S. gained a medium power for leverage against the U.S.S.R. and facilitated a sizeable redeployment of Chinese troops from the Taiwan Straits area to the Russian border. The U.S. also facilitated a possible later conjunction of Chinese and American policies to contain Soviet and North Vietnamese influence in Southeast Asia.

North Vietnamese chagrin over the rapprochement led North Vietnam to rely more heavily on Soviet strategic advice and aid. Both North Vietnam and the Soviet Union thereby became greater threats to China, and in consequence the Sino-American rapprochement was accelerated and the likelihood of Chinese containment of North Vietnam, in the event that North Vietnam should eventually defeat South Vietnam, was increased. At the same time the trips to Moscow and Peking made it appear to the North Vietnamese that they were in severe danger of being sold out by their larger allies. This, together with the improvement in Saigon's pacification programs, made drastic action necessary. The all-out attack on South Vietnam in May was an attempt to win before these trends converged, an attempt by North Vietnam to force her allies to provide greater support, and an attempt to sabotage President Nixon's trip to Moscow.[3] The failure of the May offensive, the historic and unexpected performance of the South Vietnamese at Hue and An Loc, and the ignominious and unexpected incompetence of North Vietnamese tanks, convinced North Vietnam to press for a cease-fire in hope that the political struggle would favor them more than the military struggle. This was the genesis of the eventual Vietnam cease-fire and the principal determinant of the timing of that cease-fire.

In the eyes of many allies, the rapprochement removed from American policy elements which they increasingly rejected and regarded as irrational.

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[2] *The Indian Express*, February 18, 1972.

[3] Contrast the White House denunciation at the time of the invasion, which assumed that the USSR was behind the invasion—in contrast to the interpretation that the offensive sought to embarrass the USSR into greater support for Hanoi and less cooperation with the U.S. This interpretation together with the magnitude of the North Vietnamese escalation and the intense USSR desire for rapprochement, explain Moscow's failure to react sharply to Nixon's counter-escalation of mining.

This reaction predominated in Europe. In Asia the hopeful prospects raised by the rapprochement were considerably dimmed by anger at lack of consultation and fear of apparent American weakness. The U.S. appeared weak because of the interaction between the rapprochement and the Vietnam War and because Peking successfully cast President Nixon in the role of the traditional tribute bearer while Peking pontificated on what the U.S. would have to concede. President Nixon went to Peking, not the Chinese leaders to Washington, and President Nixon's visits with Chairman Mao were treated in the manner of papal favors to an official of much lesser rank. American reporters referred to "Nixon and Chairman Mao," not to "Mao and President Nixon." Such nuances mattered little to Americans, but impressed more sensitive Asian ears. The Chinese successfully magnified this image of an American President seeking an audience with the leader:

> ... all the Chinese I talked to before the visit had the same reaction: "We did not invite Nixon," they said. "He asked to come." Unlike the Southeast Asian press, the Chinese press was polite enough to refrain from commenting on the humiliation which is entailed, especially in the Asian mind, when a president of the United States visits a country with which he has no diplomatic relations—more, a country whose downfall the U.S. has attempted to provoke for the past 20 years by all means short of open war.[4]

In the aftermath of the visit, despite the explanatory efforts of Marshall Green, virtually all American allies carried on intense debates regarding the value of close ties with the United States, and from Thailand to the Philippines the small countries of Asia sought expanded ties with China, the Soviet Union and East European countries.[5] A trend toward increasing diplomatic recognition of China, and severance of relations with Taiwan, was greatly accelerated by the Nixon trip. The visit also shocked some allies into policies which could lead to greater self-reliance by individual nations or to greater regional cooperation or both; for instance, the Philippines decided to increase her armed forces from 60,000 to 80,000 troops, and various regional organizations took on new life. The most dramatic and most important consequence of the rapprochement was the new willingness of North Korea and South Korea to agree on reunification as a principle and to take concrete steps to reduce hostilities. All of these decisions had domestic roots also, but the Peking trip created an atmosphere within which decisive changes were acceptable and expected.

Many of the smaller countries of Asia were sufficiently shocked by the trip, and sufficiently fearful of the ramifications of Washington's new willingness to deal with Peking over their heads, that they felt their security could only

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[4]Alexander Cassella, "Peking's Explanation Campaign," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, April 1, 1972, p. 12.

[5]A crucial exception was Indonesia, which fears the possible future influence of Indonesian Communist leaders presently being given refuge in China.

be ensured through serious new security measures. Support for regionalism and greater self-reliance were regrettably complemented by greater domestic authoritarianism in the Philippines, South Korea, and Thailand, and also to some extent in Cambodia and South Vietnam. The primary roots of the 1972 trend toward authoritarianism were domestic. Presidents Park and Marcos wanted to retain power despite constitutions which forbade their continuance in office. Thailand's oligarchy resented the constraints imposed by the new constitution and responded according to a scenario that Thais have experienced before. Thieu and Lon Nol continued to attempt to consolidate their power. In each case greater authoritarianism was seen as a way to improve law and order, increase stability, avoid immobilism, and maintain or increase economic growth. In Korea and to a lesser extent elsewhere more authoritarian government was argued to be more consistent with the national character.[6] But international considerations reinforced these arguments and broadened support for them. Reduced American military presence in Asia, reduced American pressure to broaden the popular base of governments, and intense fear of abandonment resulting from President Nixon's trip and from American rhetoric about multipolarity, all contributed to increasing authoritarianism.

By deciding to visit China, President Nixon implicitly acknowledged the People's Republic (PRC) as the *legitimate* rulers of China. This acknowledgment of legitimacy follows automatically from the visit, regardless of the continued absence of diplomatic recognition; moreover, it grants the Chinese the most important concession which they could have expected from the bargaining over recognition and thereby strengthens their hand in bargaining with the U.S. and others for normal diplomatic recognition. In return, the U.S. received Mao Tse-tung's personal imprimatur for the rapprochement. Given the importance of Mao Tse-tung as a symbolic figure, the imprimatur should greatly increase the durability and legitimacy of the rapprochement. In addition, U.S. recognition of the PRC as legitimate, together with U.N. acceptance of the PRC, could induce the Chinese to take a less revolutionary attitude toward the current world political structure.

In addition to increasing international acceptance of the legitimacy of the PRC, the entrance of the PRC into the U.N. could influence PRC foreign policy toward less revolutionary directions in a second, less obvious way. Prior to Peking's entry, many observers had speculated on the impact of China on the U.N., but it may turn out that the more important influences work in the other direction. The great and abstract doctrines of PRC foreign policy have served China adequately so long as she was relatively isolated. But service on the committees of the U.N., as well as detailed bargaining with other countries that have established relations with Peking, involves issues which are ideologically ambiguous. Various observers have noticed the extent

[6] A Korean government television advertisement showed a tiny Korean walking around in a huge Western-style coat, and commented that the Western coat was very nice but simply didn't fit the Korean. The political implications were universally understood.

to which Peking has remained silent in such committees, apparently unprepared to cope with such intricate, pragmatic bargaining. As the necessity for confronting such situations increases, pressure for institutionalization and stabilization of the foreign policy-making process in Peking will escalate inexorably, and pragmatic, incremental bargaining will occupy more and more of the time of policy makers. This argument must not be pushed too far. It does not mean that the PRC will within the foreseeable future become a supporter of the status quo, but it does—when combined with other trends—suggest a likely direction of change in PRC foreign policy.

As regards Taiwan, the PRC abandoned insistence on settlement of the Taiwan issue as a prerequisite to improved relations with the U.S. In return, the U.S. acknowledged the principle that Taiwan is essentially a Chinese issue—thereby laying to rest for the time being the previously popular argument that Taiwan should be treated as an independent nation because the majority of the Taiwanese (it is held) do not want to be ruled by either Nationalist or Communist Chinese. No concession except acknowledgment of the legitimacy of the PRC itself could have been more important to the PRC than this American acknowledgment of the legitimacy of treating Taiwan as an exclusively Chinese issue.

This concession was far more important to the Chinese than it appeared to Americans. When they negotiate, Americans tend to concentrate on specific actions, like movements of troops or exchanges of money, but the Chinese have always stressed the importance of fundamental principles and especially of legitimacy.

> I observed that another aspect of the Chinese approach that I didn't understand well was the matter of fundamental principles. I said, "You always insist on settling principles first. We believe in principles in the United States, but we think they are something you carry around in the back of the head, not talking about them very much. We think that in the interests of practical achievement it is sometimes a good idea not to let abstract ideas get in the way. We believe in settling principles last."
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> He said, "That is the great difference between us. When you aren't clear about principles, then you always have an endless number of petty arguments about details. That is why one doesn't divide into two for you. That is why you think that one divides into nineteen or thirty-four or forty-seven or more."[7]

In their negotiations with the so-called burgeois democratic parties in China prior to the Civil War, the Chinese Communists offered money and political support and other tangible concessions in exchange for acknowledgment by the other parties of the principle of Chinese Communist leadership over the other anti-Kuomintang parties. In the early days when all parties, including

[7]Joseph Kraft, "A Reporter in China: The Right Road and the Wrong Road," *The New Yorker*, May 6, 1972, p. 110.

the Communists, were weak it appeared that the bourgeois democratic parties were obtaining more advantages from their relationship with the Communists than the Communists were. However, in the aftermath of the Civil War these previous acknowledgments of Communist leadership greatly assisted the Communists in legitimizing the reorganizations which were forced upon the bourgeois democratic parties. Clearly the PRC hopes to duplicate this kind of triumph in its relations with Taiwan and has received the legitimacy it desires from the U.S. However, if the crunch comes for Taiwan it will come a long time in the future because of Taiwan's current unity and military strength, or it will be primarily peaceful, and in either case the U.S. need not suffer any serious losses of any kind. The shock of President Nixon's trip to Peking may have increased the staying power of the Taiwan regime if the increased domestic unity and emphasis on economics that constitute Taiwan's domestic reaction to the shock are consolidated.

The trip also muddied the diplomatic waters in the triangle between Taipei, Tokyo, and Peking. Japan's severance of official diplomatic relations with Taipei, a direct consequence of the trip, created antagonism between the two capitals so intense that Japan Air Lines soon felt it necessary to take special precautions against sabotage on every flight to and from Taiwan. A consensus rapidly developed in Japan that Taiwan would inevitably evolve toward a position as a province or autonomous region of the PRC, and one American newspaper reporter went so far as to claim that he had strong evidence of a Peking-Tokyo deal according to which Japan would retain its commercial advantages in Taiwan and Peking would recognize its ambitions for political hegemony there.[8] Japan began backing away as quickly as possible from its defense commitments regarding South Korea and Taiwan in order to facilitate its own rapprochement with the PRC, and in the first week of March 1973, Peking began a series of attempts to win the support of Taiwanese dissidents; such attempts had always failed almost totally in the past, and Peking had long abandoned them, but now apparently Peking saw conditions as sufficiently different to warrant new efforts.

Analytically separable from the consequences of the President's trip and of the rapprochement are the consequences of the way the rapprochement was announced to the world. Both sides successfully preserved secrecy regarding the forthcoming rapprochement, and secrecy maximized the impact of the announcements on public opinion and may have minimized opposition to the rapprochement from domestic groups and allies of both the U.S. and China. On the other hand, Kissinger's presence in Peking assured Nationalist defeat in the U.N. and may have precipitated the Soviet-Indian Friendship Treaty. Most American allies in Asia were seriously disturbed by the lack of prior consultation even though many of them welcomed the rapprochement. The reaction in Japan was particularly severe because of the importance of

[8]Selig S. Harrison, "Japan, China Agree on Taiwan Dealings," *Washington Post*, 26 February 1973. This claim requires further substantiation.

the China issue in Japanese politics and because of interaction with other frictions the Japanese have had with the United States.

U.S. friction with Japan antedates the events of late 1971 and early 1972. The U.S. has complained about Japan's slow trade liberalization, its slow revaluation of the yen, its inability to keep secrets, and Prime Minister Sato's failure to honor promises regarding textile concessions, and these complaints have been exacerbated by some personal animosities between American and Japanese officials. But the events of the Nixon Administration have marked a turning point in U.S.-Japanese relations because of the intensity and frequency with which the two parties, but particularly the U.S., have administered shocks to one another.

President Nixon's first ambassador to Japan was a Middle East expert who lacked the stature and position and reputation of such earlier ambassadors to Japan as Edwin O. Reischauer and U. Alexis Johnson; not surprisingly, the Japanese felt demoted and insulted. At a time when the U.S. was pressing on Japan the virtues of free or liberalized trade, the U.S. imposed on Japan textile and steel import quotas; from a bargaining perspective such quotas may have been entirely reasonable, but they seemed inconsistent to Japanese who constantly heard free trade arguments from Washington. The U.S. persuaded the Japanese to co-sponsor a U.S. resolution to retain Taiwan's place in the General Assembly but then sent Kissinger to Peking at the time of the vote. Not only did such an action appear to the Japanese as a betrayal but it was taken despite apparent assurances given to the Japanese that we would do no such thing. During the previous year Japanese officials had repeatedly expressed fears that the U.S. would move toward China without previously informing Japan, and three weeks before the announcement of the China trip the Prime Minister requested assurances of prior consultation. He was told that the U.S. would make no move toward recognition of China without previous consultation. Still uneasy, Prime Minister Sato asked Herman Kahn whether the Ambassador's word could be trusted, and received assurances that it could. Again the Japanese felt betrayed, and it is beside the point to argue that we did not recognize China; sending the President to China was clearly a move in the direction of recognition.

The U.S. had to announce currency changes and import surcharges without consultation, because of adverse consequences of the speculation that would have resulted from premature disclosure. Moreover, thoughtful Japanese had long understood the need for revaluation of the Yen.[9] But the troubled atmosphere amplified the impact of these announcements on Japan. In addition, resentment was magnified by America's inadvertent timing of the announcement to coincide with the anniversary of Japanese surrender in World War II and by the U.S. Ambassador's statement to Japanese businessmen that the surcharge was directed primarily at Japan. In the wake of the

[9]A Hudson Institute survey revealed that about thirty books had been published in Japan on the need for revaluation during the previous year, and that about forty magazine articles on the subject had appeared the previous month.

shock came Jack Anderson's exposes of important proposals by Kei Wakaizumi and of the Japanese role in the Cambodian relief fund, as well as the appointment of a second ambassador to Japan amid widespread publicity that he was being appointed because the previous ambassador had not been sufficiently tough on Japan.[10] Then the Japanese, who had been viewing the postwar reconstruction of Vietnam as a major opportunity to initiate a strong Japanese economic and political role in Southeast Asian diplomacy, found themselves excluded from the relevant negotiations.

The Japanese responded hastily to the Nixon shocks. Ambassador Fukuda warned Washington of the possible unraveling of the Japanese-American alliance as a result of the way the China initiative had been handled. Japan also sent missions to Hanoi and to Pyongyang and invited Brezhnev to Tokyo. In early 1973, Prime Minister Tanaka committed himself to a Moscow visit. Japan recognized Bangladesh at an early date when such recognition was an embarrassment to the U.S. and also recognized the Mongolian People's Republic. The Emperor went on a visit to Europe in search of new ties but received a relatively harsh reception in several European countries. This search for new ties culminated (at least temporarily) in Japanese recognition of the PRC and severance of diplomatic ties with Taiwan. There ensued a period of intense hostility between Tokyo and Taipei and a period of jittery U.S. nerves over the extraordinary warmth of Prime Minister Tanaka's reception in Peking.[11] The Secretary General of Japan's Liberal Democratic Party summed up Japanese frustrations in an angry February 26, 1973, speech saying that Japan was being left out of crucial consultations.

These unfortunate incidents overshadowed more encouraging events such as the construction of a hot line between Washington and Tokyo and the return of Okinawa. Under other circumstances the return of Okinawa would have dominated the news and would have improved relationships between the two countries. In the context of 1971-72, return of Okinawa merely dampened temporarily the increasing waves of difficulty between the two nations. Late 1972 saw continued economic friction, but also heightened awareness in the U.S. of the importance of Japan. Both sides issued repeated friendly statements, and the Japanese began a series of friendly gestures including endow-

[10]Despite this inauspicious beginning, the new ambassador was widely acknowledged in early 1973 to have achieved better working relationships with the Japanese.

[11]The impact of this extraordinary warmth was multiplied by the intense hostility Peking had expressed toward Japan for a year after October 1971. The previous hostility may have been exaggerated because it was part of Chou En-lai's case for inviting President Nixon to China, because it was part of the case against Lin Piao, and because it consisted in part of personal grudges against Prime Minister Sato. The subsequent warmth was magnified by Tokyo's desire to forestall the possibility of Japan's receiving a declining share of the PRC's trade after Nixon's visit, by the urgent domestic need for Japanese leaders to demonstrate initiative and success in foreign policy, by China's fear of increasing friendliness between Japan and the U.S.S.R., by a possible PRC desire to further attenuate the U.S.-Japanese alliance by following the Nixon shock with a Tanaka shock, and possibly by a simple decision that gratuitous hostility to Japan was no more rational than gratuitous hostility to the U.S. and that the success of the Nixon visit foreshadowed a similar success for a Tanaka visit.

ment of a chair at Harvard and of a cultural exchange program with the U.S.

While moving closer to China the U.S. has attempted to maintain a strong alliance with Japan, but the effect of the China policy has been to weaken seriously our ties with Japan, and our courteous attempts to placate Japan have been inadequate to restore Japanese confidence in the American alliance. This conflict between China policy and Japan policy is a classic and recurrent conflict in American relations with Asia and is so important that it justifies a brief historical digression.

Since the founding of the American republic, American policy toward Asia has consisted primarily of a China policy together with other lesser (implicit or explicit) policies which are dovetailed to the China Policy. This has been true both in the pre-World War II eras when we attempted to maintain a friendly posture toward China and in the postwar period when we maintained a hostile posture toward China. The exception which proves the rule was the period of war with Japan. This tying of Asia Policy to China policy was rational during the period roughly from the founding of the U.S. to the opening of Japan by Perry, but ever since that time America's economic and strategic interests in Asia have focused primarily on Japan. Not surprisingly the combination of Sinocentric policy with Japanocentric primary interests has continually caused gratuitous conflict with Japan. While dozens of examples could be cited, we shall here focus briefly on the two major American policies toward Asia in the first half of the twentieth century, namely the Open Door Policy of 1900 and the post-1922 Washington Conference system.

The Open Door Policy[12] as originally enunciated sought to insure American commercial access to China on the basis of equality with the major powers and without subjecting the U.S. to the large military and economic cost of maintaining a sphere of influence in China. As a sop to public opinion fearful of American intervention in the Boxer Rebellion and of a possible American attempt to acquire a sphere of influence, the Secretary of State circulated on the day before the Democratic Convention a circular which pledged the U.S. to seek to maintain the territorial and administrative integrity of China. The U.S. government did not take this policy seriously, as shown by subsequent intervention in the Boxer Rebellion and requests for a coaling station at Samsah Bay. But the American public and Japan did take the policy seriously. In accordance with this policy, Japan subsequently requested American support against the Russian incursion into Manchuria.

[12]For further details on Open Door, cf. George Kennan's *American Diplomacy* (New York: Mentor, 1952). The usual interpretations of the Open Door Policy stress the two sets of notes regarding open trade and support for the territorial and administrative integrity of China. For analytic purposes it is far more useful to view the third note, indicating to Japan that we would not expend any substantial resources in support of our policy, as being of at least equal importance in defining a doctrine that was to influence U.S. decisions for nearly two generations. This third line of the Open Door Policy is partially reincarnated in the third line of the Nixon Doctrine—which emphasizes that we will at least initially rely on local manpower.

The American reply, which announced that the U.S. was unwilling to support its policy at the risk of hostilities, compromised China's territorial and administrative integrity. These Japanese demands, and subsequent American denunciations of those demands which expressed American moral feelings but not an American willingness to expend resources on implementing its policy, antagonized the Japanese without bringing any benefits whatsoever to either the Chinese or the Americans. The subsequent history of the Open Door Policy continued to consist primarily of moralistic American denunciations, and American unwillingness to expend resources to implement its principles. The benefits to China and the U.S. of the Open Door Policy up until 1922 were at best insignificant and probably nil, whereas the costs to the U.S. in terms of Japan's antagonism and in terms of loss of credibility resulting from continual backing away from stated policy, were very high.

Having continually backed off from its stated China policy because of the costs of offending Japan, particularly during negotiation of the Versailles Treaty, the U.S. attempted through the Washington Conference of 1922 to accomplish its aims regarding China and to build a stable multipolar system in the Pacific around its new China Policy. The context of the Washington Conference was a basically stable but eroding Diplomacy of Imperialism in which each of the imperial powers nibbled at China but did not bite off large chunks for fear of the reactions of the other powers. The Washington Conference sought to transform a diplomacy of empires into a diplomacy of nations by means of covenants which guaranteed the strengthening of China and the withdrawal of imperial powers from China.[13] At the conference all past treaties were abolished, and in particular the Anglo-Japanese alliance which tied Japan into the Diplomacy of Imperialism was broken at American insistence. A five power naval treaty imposed fixed ratios on the navies of the major powers and thereby limited naval competition. Chinese debts, which had served as the lever by which imperial powers manipulated China, were to be internationalized in accordance with a five power treaty, and the strengthening of the Chinese government was to be assured by increasing Chinese tariff revenues in accordance with a nine power treaty. Various imperial powers promised to withdraw from the extraterritorial positions in China. Considerable euphoria accompanied these historic treaties which were held to assure dissolution of the immoral imperialist system and construction of a just and peaceful new multipolar system of nations.

The distasteful diplomacy of imperialism indeed passed from the scene, but the euphoria attending the new system proved disastrously misdirected. In their concentration on the China crisis, the Washington powers had failed to recognize that the Soviet Union's building up of the Kuomintang Party assured disunity in China and the inability of China to function as a nation in accordance with the assumptions of the Washington system. Rapid inflation of the Chinese currency adversely affected Japan, which held exten-

[13]This account leans heavily on Akira Iriye, *After Imperialism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965).

sive Chinese notes, and prevented agreement on internationalization of Chinese debts because Japan's interests conflicted with those of Britain and the U.S., who did not hold extensive Chinese notes. Fearing a confrontation with Japan, the U.S. did not hold a conference in accordance with the treaties to iron out currency differences. Increase of Chinese tariffs was prevented because France insisted on payment in gold of the Boxer Indemnity prior to implementation of the nine power treaty. Isolated, fearful, terribly dependent on external resources, involved in a new diplomatic game with no visible rules, and lacking the security previously assured by the Anglo-Japanese alliance, Japan eventually decided to seek self-sufficiency by invading Manchuria. Subsequently the U.S. denounced Japan's invasion of China and embargoed crucial strategic goods for Japan. Pearl Harbor followed shortly.[14]

A surprising number of close parallels occur between the 1922 Washington Conference system and the emerging 1972 system. In both situations a multipolar system was emerging amid expectations that the new system would be peaceful and that economic competition would replace military competition. In both eras the principal diplomatic move was a great U.S. initiative toward China intended to bring China into full membership in an emerging multipolar system. In both emerging systems the American initiative toward China damaged American relationships with Japan, and the broken Anglo-Japanese alliance of 1922 paralleled the strained U.S.-Japanese alliance of 1972. In both emerging systems Japan suffered currency crises with the other powers and damaged trade interests. Likewise Japan in both cases felt extremely dependent on external markets and sources of raw materials and felt isolated and fearful, despite the absence of a specific and immediate military threat. The 1922 Naval Treaty, like the non-proliferation treaty of a half century later, appeared excessively restrictive and unfair to Japan although it seemed fair to the other powers. Both periods saw the U.S. insufficiently attentive to the activities of the Soviet Union because its attention was excessively focused on the details of Asian crises. In 1922 the U.S. attempted to construct a stable system around the assumption of a unified China, despite the existing disunity in China, and in 1972 the U.S. sought to construct a stable system around the assumption of eventual stability in Southeast Asia despite the current instability.

Of course there are also fundamental differences between the 1922 and emerging 1972 systems. In 1972, the Japanese have in their memories the World War II defeat, the neighbors of Japan are relatively much stronger than in 1922, and the world has gone nuclear. These differences imply that the impact of Japan's rapid and unsettling growth, together with the potential for a fearful and isolated and rearmed Japan, will be different. There is no substantial likelihood of a return to the Japanese invasions of the 1930s and 1940s, but dangers nonetheless remain for the U.S. and for the world in any

[14]This brief account is intended to highlight specific diplomatic errors, not to provide a balanced summary of the origins of the war. Such an account would, for instance, have to stress trends in Japanese domestic policies.

policy which would leave Japan standing alone because American attention was fastened on China or on attempts to minimize short-term costs regardless of the long-term consequences. Japan could rearm and take an anti-American or even Russian-aligned posture. Japan could turn the vigorous but healthy and stimulating economic competition in the Pacific into a cut-throat political contest which would slow the growth of all countries in the Pacific Basin, including Japan and the United States. Japan could rearm and frighten China and the Soviet Union into a frantic arms race, thereby defeating all of the initiatives of the past few years. At a later date Japan could, in accordance with its defensive emphasis, deploy a satellite laser system to destroy opponents' missiles as they leave the ground. Such a system would quickly produce a dangerous arms race and a terribly unstable world strategic situation. Resulting Chinese and Soviet fears could stimulate a renewed Sino-Soviet alliance and cold war. These comments are intended not to instill fear of Japan, but as a warning of the dangers involved in the creation of a system in which a relatively weak China is partially incorporated into the international system at the cost of inadvertently locking Japan out. China *can* be drawn into the system *without* isolating Japan.

The Sinocentrism of American policies in Asia results from selected and distorted perception. On the map, Asia appears as a gigantic China surrounded by a sprinkling of lesser countries. China's population is awesome. China's exotic and frequently violent politics compel public attention.[15] China's poverty makes her appear still more exotic. Japan appears smaller on the map, has a smaller population, and with the exception of the war and immediate pre-war years has possessed less exciting domestic politics. Japan's industrial society seems closer to our own and thus, superficially and fallaciously, less exotic and more comprehensible. Thus it is not surprising that the public regards Asian politics as Chinese politics plus a few lesser themes, that businessmen have throughout our history been awed by the prospects of selling one pair of shoes to each Chinese while a far larger Japanese market suffered neglect, or that the staff of the National Security Council included at the time of the decisions regarding President's trip to China three China specialists and no Japan specialist.[16] Thus it occurs that, although American economic and longrun security interests in Asia have throughout this century focused primarily on Japan, American foreign policies in Asia have typically focused on China—with the rule-proving exception of the period of war with Japan during which the American war

[15]As an example of the relative ability of China and Japan to draw American attention, the writer, as program director and chairman of the Harvard China Conference in 1967 and 1968, found that one could draw a large crowd to a China Conference but could not imagine drawing a similar crowd to a comparable Japan conference.

[16]It should be recorded that the State Department was intensely aware of the delicacy of U.S.-Japanese issues in early 1971. At a May 1971 Scholar-Diplomat Conference which this writer attended this delicacy was the principal subject of addresses by several of the Department's top diplomats, and Chinese issues were muted by comparison. But State Department views were, in this case as in many others, not an important influence on key decisions.

effort was hindered by excessive concern over events in China and by futile efforts to turn Chiang Kai-shek's China into a great power.

In addition to the characteristically Sinocentric structure of America's Asian policies, one must note the volatility of American images of China and Japan.[17] For forty years Americans have perceived that there was one country in the Pacific which was inherently pacifist and friendly to the U.S. and another country which was inherently aggressive, militaristic and opposed to everything America stood for. Moreover, American intellectuals and others have penned learned treatises maintaining that these fundamental characteristics derived from the nature of the countries and the national character and child-rearing practices of the people. But 30 years ago the pacifist country was China and the aggressive country was Japan, as several observers have frequently noted. Such total transformations of the images of China and Japan are not confined to recent decades but are characteristic of an America which has always been titillated by the exotica of Asia but has remained, even at the highest levels, relatively uninformed about the details of Asian life. The volatility of American images of these great Asian nations has never been so clearly demonstrated as during the past year, a year which began with most Americans expressing beliefs in the implacable hostility of China and ended with a fad for things Chinese.

To this observation regarding the volatility of American images of China and Japan one need only add the observation that the American initiatives toward China and shocks to Japan in the past year have been more intense than their Open Door and Washington Conference counterparts which induced a mostly unrequited American affection for China and a relationship with Japan which was consistently unfriendly and sometimes bitterly hostile. The Peking Conference of 1972 could well foreshadow a return to normality in relationships with Asia, that is a return to unrequited friendship for China and hostility toward Japan, just as the Nixon Doctrine signals a return to normality in our scrutiny of the costs of Asian involvement. (The policies advocated by McGovern would have greatly accelerated the tendencies toward total military withdrawal from the Pacific and resultant isolation of Japan; in their Sinocentrism, their scrutiny of costs, and their inability to come to grips with the intricacies of the Japanese-American relationship, President Nixon and McGovern displayed in 1972 differences of degree rather than of kind.) The steps suggested by Americans of both parties to deal with Japan's interests consist almost exclusively of the kinds of pro forma and cosmetic actions against which the Japanese ambassador to the U.S. warned so eloquently before the Commonwealth Club of San Francisco on January 10, 1972:

> Certainly the most important and dramatic element in the Far East is President Nixon's planned trip to China. This can and should be a very significant contribution to peace and stability in Asia. But it might—

[17]Akira Iriye details these images in *Across the Pacific* (Harcourt, Brace and World, 1967).

> however unintentionally and contrary to American desires—be the beginning of a process of unravelling our mutual security in the Far East. Which of these two possibilities becomes a reality, in my opinion, will depend in very large measure on the real nature of U.S.-Japanese relations in the critical period to come. If our consultation and collaboration are intimate and substantial, and they repose on mutual confidence, then I believe we can view the future with optimism. But if they should become largely pro forma and cosmetic, then I would worry about what the future holds in store. Both of us have far too much at stake to risk getting out of tandem on the important subject of China.

Although cosmetic consultations will not decelerate the dissolution of the Japanese-American partnership, dissolution is not inevitable. A systematic program of supporting Japan's security needs and promoting its political interests could reinstitutionalize the alliance. Moreover, although there are tradeoffs between American relationships with Japan and with China, most of the present and future benefits of rapprochement with China and the Soviet Union are retainable despite increased emphasis on the relationship with Japan. In fact, a rapprochement with China which included extremely careful coordination of Japanese and American policies on Taiwan and recognition of China and related issues could quite conceivably produce rapid improvement of relationships with China together with systematic reinstitutionalization of the American-Japanese relationship.

If China is wise it will not try to exact too high a price, in terms of American relations with Japan, for rapprochement with the United States. Isolation of Japan will detract from China's security in the long run, because an isolated Japan will rapidly become a great military power. Likewise the U.S. must learn from its past mistakes to focus its Asian policies on Japan, and not to sacrifice long-run relationships with Japan for tactical advantages in China and Southeast Asia. Given these axioms, rapprochement with the PRC can continue. Diplomatic relationships with Japan will become looser, but that loosening reflects the success of the U.S. policy of building up Japan and is appropriate to Japan's status as a great economic power and an autonomous nation. The military alliance can be preserved within a context of diplomatic flexibility. Economic relations will continue to be intensely competitive, but increasingly both sides realize that the competition takes place within monetary and other rules of the game which are far more important and mutually beneficial than the competition; the rules create an expanding pie, and the competition over shares of the pie is far less important than making sure that we do not drop the whole pie.

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