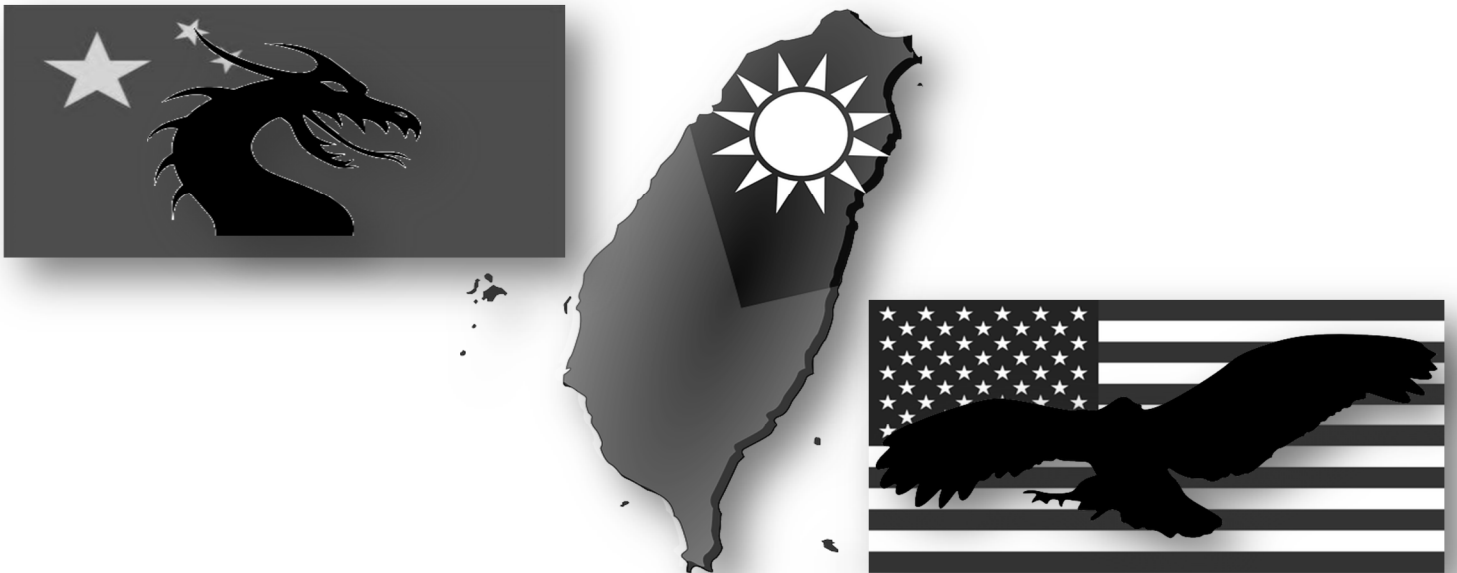


Taiwan Matters:

The Normalization of U.S.-PRC Relations

and the Taiwan Issue, 1977-1979



Marcel K. Will

For Jeanette who always gives me strength when I need it most.

Abstract

Relations between the United States of America and the People's Republic of China during the Cold War have always been important and very complicated. At times, they were openly hostile and later tacitly amicable. The major reason for the problematic character of the relationship has always been the Taiwan issue. Even when in the late 1970s the U.S. government under President Jimmy Carter tried to establish official diplomatic relations with the People's Republic - the so called normalization -, it was not a smooth process. The different positions of Washington and Beijing about Taiwan's status and America's relationship to the Kuomintang regime there led to stalemate and frictions. It took different rounds of secret negotiations before both sides could finalize a normalization agreement in late 1978 which led to the establishment of official diplomatic relations in 1979.

Accordingly, this study's major question is what President Carter's motivation was to risk the success of an objective as important as normalization, for the sake of preserving Taiwan's security. The thesis advanced here is that the Carter administration's tenacity becomes only understandable if one takes into account the American vision of itself as the dominant power in the Asia-Pacific region and the bilateral strategic set-up between the United States and China. If Taiwan was not controlled by Beijing, it could provide leverage against China. This mechanism is still working today, and it helps the United States to balance China's growing power and influence in Asia-Pacific. Therefore, Taiwan matters!

***Taiwan Matters: The Normalization of U.S.-PRC Relations
and the Taiwan Issue, 1977-1979***

Inaugural-Dissertation

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Taiwan Matters:
The Normalization of U.S.-PRC Relations
and the Taiwan Issue, 1977-1979

By Marcel K. Will

(Lahnstein/Germany, 2016)

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Finally, I want to make a last comment about the way I published this study. After contacting many different publishers in the United States and the United Kingdom, I realized that I would have to make too many changes in order to be able to publish this book with one of them. Thus, I decided to write a new book about the history of the Taiwan issue and its role in the relationship between China and the United States later. Maybe, this will be more suitable for a broader audience. In the end, I think that it is a good idea to make my work part of the internet where everyone interested in the subject can use it. I also invite my dear readers to any kind of critique and comments and welcome your input via email (ellessar979@web.de).

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Introduction

Sino-American relations have not been easy since the end of World War II, and this is still true for the relationship between Washington and Beijing today. During the Cold War, relations between the Chinese and Americans were entrenched in the rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union. First, the United States of America (USA) and the People's Republic of China (PRC) were ideological and geopolitical enemies; later they decided to create something like a tacit alliance in order to put pressure on the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). Nowadays the relationship is even more complex and defined by the People's Republic's emergence as a great power. On the one hand, China's rise challenges the United States' (U.S.) position as the dominant power not only in Asia-Pacific but also on a global scale. On the other hand, the growing importance of the PRC in the realms of diplomatic, political, economic, and cultural exchange in today's world makes the country essential for solving global problems. Thus, both sides endeavor to have a stable working relationship, instead of one that is exclusively defined by their different national interests.

The legal basis for current Sino-American relations was created under U.S. President Jimmy Carter and PRC Vice Premier Deng Xiaoping in the late 1970s when both countries established official diplomatic relations.¹ This event is also known and hereinafter referred to as normalization. Normalization was not an easy task to achieve. The governments of both countries negotiated hard with each other, and also faced a lot of domestic pressure. In China, Deng had to fight his way back to the top of the PRC leadership after he was demoted in the wake of Mao Zedong's death in the September of 1976. Jimmy Carter needed to deal with promises to China, made by former U.S. administrations, as well as with Congress' and the U.S. public's expectation that the president would maintain U.S. involvement in the Taiwan Strait in order to ensure Taiwan's security and American interests in

¹ Writing Chinese terms and names in English represents a problem for western authors because there exist different styles of Romanization. Throughout this book, I will mostly use the younger *Pinyin* system, instead of the more traditional *Wade-Giles* system. The exception to this rule are those terms and names which are better known in their traditional Romanization like Kuomintang (instead of Guomindang) or Chiang Kai-shek (instead of Jian Jieshi).

Asia-Pacific. As we will see, these expectations presented the biggest obstacle to develop official relations between the United States and the People's Republic.

The dominant problem of U.S.-PRC relations has always been the Taiwan issue. The island's unresolved political status and America's role as its protector have represented a huge problem for Beijing. Chinese observers see the U.S. involvement in the Taiwan Strait as an attempt to counterbalance and contain China's rise as a great power.² Many U.S. analysts admit that Washington has a strategic interest to remain involved in the Taiwan Strait.³ Accordingly, I am arguing that the close relationship the U.S. has with Taiwan serves to maintain the United States' dominant position in Asia-Pacific, by counterbalancing China's growing power and influence in the region.

As this study sets out to explain, this strategic interest did not emerge with the beginning of China's rise in the 1990s. Instead, this examination will show that the consideration to use Taiwan as a strategic hedge against the PRC has its foundation in the China policy of the Carter administration which was set up in the late 1970s. For Carter, his aides, and also U.S. Congress, Taiwan mattered. Sino-American normalization and the derecognition of the Republic of China (ROC) made it necessary for Washington to define the role of the United States in the Taiwan Strait, resulting in the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA). This U.S. law expressed America's concern about the security and de-facto independence of Taiwan, and has served as the legal foundation of the continuing U.S. involvement in the Taiwan Strait until today.

It has become conventional wisdom that the Chinese and American side agreed to establish official diplomatic relations because they saw this achievement as beneficial in their respective struggle with the USSR. From this point of view, normal relations between the People's Republic and the United States served strategic Cold War considerations.⁴ As long as Moscow presented the biggest chal-

² E.g. Wu Xinbo, "U.S. Security Policy in Asia: Implications for China—U.S. Relations" in: *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol. 22, No. 3 (December 2000), 489; Yong Deng, "Hegemon on the Offensive: Chinese Perspectives on U. S. Global Strategy" in: *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 116, No. 3 (Autumn, 2001) 353-354.

³ E.g. Bruce Gilley, "Not So Dire Straits: How the Finlandization of Taiwan Benefits U.S. Security" in: *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 89, No. 1 (January/February 2010), 56.

⁴ E.g. Jaw-ling Joanne Chang, *United States-China Normalization: An Evaluation of Foreign Policy Decision Making* (Baltimore: School of Law University of Maryland, 1986), 51; James Mann, *About Face: A History of America's Curious Relationship with China, From Nixon to Clinton* (New

lenge for Washington's and Beijing's national security, any ally, tacit or official, who opposed the Soviets helped to strengthen their respective strategic position.

While the archival record leaves no doubt that Cold War thinking had a big impact on both sides' approach towards normalization, focusing solely on this aspect neglects another important matter. Putting pressure on the Soviet Union was merely the trigger that brought Chinese and Americans to the negotiation table. It was their different positions on the aforementioned Taiwan issue that defined the normalization process. In particular, the Carter administration's position on the Taiwan issue demands a closer look. Washington's behavior concerning Taiwan during the negotiations and in their direct aftermath suggests that Carter and his aides took into account not only Cold War considerations for their decision-making.

The U.S political scientist Robert Ross argues that the Carter administration disregarded the PRC and the goal of normalization in the early stages of Carter's presidency.⁵ This claim is not correct. Carter's China experts began working on a strategy to normalize relations with the PRC even before his inauguration. The problem was, as I will show, that the White House faced different kinds of obstacles to developing a coherent strategy early on. The promises made to the Chinese by former administrations raised Beijing's expectations, weakening the bargaining position of the United States tremendously as the new administration had to honor these commitments to a certain degree. The PRC leadership's general inflexible attitude towards Taiwan further narrowed Washington's options. In addition, Carter could feel the domestic pressure concerning his China and Taiwan policy right from the beginning, completing the limitations on his leeway at home and abroad. Thus, it took some time for the White House to develop a strategy that would allow normalizing U.S.-PRC relations and preserving U.S. involvement in the Taiwan Strait.

In order to understand the normalization process and the foundation of the U.S. position on the Taiwan issue in the past and today, we need to explain how and why the Carter administration insisted on U.S. involvement in the Taiwan Strait, brushing aside all Chinese complaints and hereby risking the success of the

York: Alfred A. Knopp, Inc., 1999), 81; Robert S. Ross, *Negotiating Cooperation: The United States and China, 1969-1989* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 161.

⁵ Ross, "Negotiating", 118-119.

normalization initiative. Although official documents show that political decision-makers in China and the United States agreed that the Taiwan issue represented the biggest obstacle to normalization, historians and other researchers have not provided us to date with an adequate and convincing explanation for the U.S. government's insistence on a security relationship with Taiwan.

Scholars like Nancy Bernkopf Tucker, Karl-Gottfried Kindermann, and Robert Ross only point to the domestic pressure, Carter faced on the matter.⁶ It is true that the president and his aides followed a tightrope walk back in Washington when it came to normalization and the Taiwan issue. This argument, however, does not take into account that a failure of normalization would have had more serious repercussions at home, than any negative consequences for Taiwan could have. A failure of normalization would damage U.S.-China relations tremendously. It makes sense to assume that the Soviet Union would exploit such a situation to weaken the overall position of the United States. In the worst case, a failure of normalization could lead to a reemergence of the Sino-Soviet alliance of the early Cold War years. In an international system dominated by the rivalry between Washington and Moscow, any disadvantage for the United States strengthened the Soviet position, and would have led to much harsher critique against the Carter administration than an ostensible let-down of Taiwan.

The thesis advanced within this study is that the Carter administration's tenacity on the matter of Taiwan becomes only understandable if its analysis takes into account the American vision of itself as the dominant power in the Asia-Pacific region and the bilateral strategic set-up between the United States and the PRC. We must incorporate the long-term strategic thinking of the political decision-makers in the United States. This author therefore claims that the political elites in Washington expected China to become stronger over the decades following normalization, potentially even challenging the U.S. position in Asia-Pacific. A Taiwan, which Beijing did not control, could provide the United States with some leverage against China amidst Sino-American tensions. As we will see, political actors in Washington, inside and outside of the administration, therefore had a profound interest in keeping Taiwan out of the grasp of the PRC.

⁶ Nancy Bernkopf Tucker, *Strait Talk: United States-Taiwan Relations and the Crisis with China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), 101; Gottfried-Karl Kindermann, *Der Aufstieg Ostasiens in der Weltpolitik. 1840-2000* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 2001), 544-545; Ross, "Negotiating", 141.

I will further argue that the TRA demonstrated this attitude, constituting the U.S. involvement in the Taiwan Strait beyond normalization. In addition, the TRA also detached the Taiwan issue from Cold War significance because Taiwan no longer served as bulwark against communism in East Asia. As this thesis claims, after normalization close U.S. ties with Taiwan served to put pressure on the PRC in the following years. Since the TRA represents national law, binding the president in a way no international or bilateral treaty could, it has also become much more difficult for Beijing to demand that the United States cut all security ties with Taiwan. This has made the TRA the perfect tool for the United States to assure that the country could continue to play a role in the Taiwan Strait.

The unique character of the TRA also makes it imperative to reevaluate the way it came into existence. Most studies about normalization and the TRA see the law as some sort of Congressional punishment for the Carter administration because Congress wanted to guarantee Taiwan's security.⁷ However, Carter would have vetoed the TRA if he had deemed it in conflict with national interests. Instead, the administration's strategic considerations beyond the Cold War led the president to let Congress have its way.

This study argues that, while the administration might not have agreed with every detail of the TRA, the United States had a clear interest in expressing a stronger U.S. security commitment in the Taiwan Strait, allowing Congress to enact more binding security language in the new law. Some officials in the Carter administration even stated this point of view in Congressional hearings. One should therefore characterize the manner, in which the TRA was developed, as division of labor between the executive and legislative branches, rather than as a Congressional revolt against the president. In the end, the U.S. Congress was in a position to do things that the Carter administration could not do due to diplomatic constraints.

⁷ E.g. David Tawei Lee, *The Making of the Taiwan Relations Act: Twenty Years in Retrospect* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000)3; Alan D. Romberg, *Rein In at the Brink of the Precipice: American Policy Toward Taiwan and U.S.-PRC Relations* (Washington D.C.: Henry L. Stimson Center, 2003), 107; Patrick Tyler, *A Great Wall: Six Presidents and China. An Investigative History* (New York: Public Affairs, 1999), 273-274.

Goals and Arguments of This Study

The significance of the Taiwan issue arises from its character and meaning for the relations between China and the United States. The unresolved status of the island has been the most awkward and contentious element of the relationship. Many observers, like American historian Nancy Bernkopf Tucker, see this problem as the “single most dangerous challenge for the United States in the World.”⁸ The Taiwan issue is the one issue between Washington and Beijing that could lead to an armed conflict, because Taiwan possesses huge strategic and political importance for both nations. For the People’s Republic, the island is part of its own territory and the Chinese therefore consider the Taiwan issue to be a domestic affair. PRC leaders have always believed that giving up Taiwan would damage their prestige and could mean a considerable blow to China’s sovereignty. The United States has always seen Taiwan as an important asset to their position in Asia-Pacific. Thus, as accommodating as any U.S. administration has been about Taiwan in order to improve relations with the PRC, an abandonment of the island and an end to the U.S. involvement in the Taiwan Strait has never been part of American strategic thinking.

When the Carter administration pursued normalization, their approach did not include the abandonment of Taiwan. Carter and his aides were willing to make far reaching concessions to the Chinese. This included the acceptance of their preconditions to sever all official ties with the regime in Taipei, withdraw all American troops from Taiwan, and terminate the Mutual Defense Treaty (MDT) between the United States and the ROC. Domestic pressure and strategic considerations, however, did not allow the administration to cut all security ties with Taiwan. No representative of the White House, Department of State (DOS), or any other U.S. agency who had any influence on U.S. foreign policy pursued such an approach.

Normalization was an important goal for the Carter administration, motivated by an urge to gain a strategic advantage over the Soviet Union. The logic behind this thinking was the same as during the preceding rapprochement process of the early 1970s which culminated in Richard Nixon’s visit in China in February of

⁸ Bernkopf Tucker, “Strait”, 1.

1972. After the collapse of the alliance between the PRC and the USSR led to hostility between the two communist powers, the U.S. executive calculated that better relations with China would bring relative advantages in America's struggle against the Soviets.

Although it was not their only consideration, Jimmy Carter and his National Security Advisor (APNSA) Zbigniew Brzezinski followed this logic, and expected Sino-American normalization to have a similar effect as rapprochement had. While the common interest of Washington and Beijing in countering Soviet influence played an important role in their negotiations and willingness to accommodate each other, it was also clear that especially Carter, influenced by his Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, saw normalization in a broader context. Numerous times, Carter and his aides emphasized that normal relations with China did not only serve to put pressure on the Soviets by strengthening the so called *China card*, but were a necessity to cope with the political realities in Asia and the rest of the world.⁹ Particularly the Taiwan issue's sensitivity meant that Sino-American post-normalization relations lost their purely Cold War character and became more dimensional, not focusing solely on the containment of the Soviet Union.

A failure of normalization, on the other hand, involved the risk of alienating the PRC leadership to the degree that China would seek reconciliation with the Soviets, damaging the strategic position of the United States. The White House knew that the success of normalization was never a sure thing mostly because of Taiwan. The Chinese government had always opposed any U.S. interference in the Taiwan issue, and, from Beijing's point of view, arms sales or other U.S-Taiwan security ties were considered as interference. This became clear when only a few hours before the announcement of Sino-American normalization, Deng Xiaoping "agreed to disagree" on the matter of arms sales, postponing any discussions about the topic to a time after normalization. It was the Carter administration's determination to remain involved in the Taiwan Strait that forced the hand of the Chinese to either accept the U.S. position or let normalization fail.

⁹ The idea behind the term *China Card* was that Washington could use better relations with the PRC to put pressure on the Soviets. This tactic was to force Moscow to cooperate on different matters of significance as the SALT negotiations for example. In the late 1970s, many academic articles discussed the advantages and disadvantages of "playing the China Card": e.g. Chalmers Johnson, "The New Thrust in China's Foreign Policy" in: *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 57, No. 1 (Fall, 1978); Adam Ulam, "U.S.-Soviet Relations: Unhappy Coexistence" in: *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 57, No. 3 (1978).

The central goal of this study is therefore to explain, how the different positions on Taiwan shaped negotiations and discussions between the Chinese and Americans, and how this topic affected the outcome and the consequences of the normalization process. In this context, the major question is, what President Carter's and his aides' motivation was to risk the success of an objective as important and prestigious as normalization, for the sake of preserving Taiwan's security. How could the United States succeed in ensuring U.S. involvement in the Taiwan Strait beyond 1979? With regard to the latter question, this study also wants to find out how the TRA evolved and what role this U.S law was set to play for the U.S. involvement in the Taiwan Strait. Why did the Chinese leadership not let fail normalization when they faced Washington's tenacity about Taiwan and learned from the TRA, even though their reaction meant tacitly accepting the ongoing continuation of a U.S. security relationship with Taiwan?

In fact, Beijing valued the new relationship with the United States highly because it improved China's strategic position relative to the Soviet Union, and increased Chinese security. In addition, the United States could offer access to modern technologies. China needed to rise to great power status, and to this end it needed a stronger economy. Deng Xiaoping believed economic reforms and access to Western technology helped this purpose. Therefore, he allied with the Vice Chairmen of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Chen Yun and Li Xiannian who shared Deng's vision. They planned to modernize China's economy by liberalizing trade as well as by opening the country for foreign investments. This strategy granted a high priority to access to Western markets and their technology. Normal relations with the United States helped because it made buying American and Western European technology easier for China. Since Deng initialized the reform process, he linked his political position and prestige to the success of China's modernization and normalization with America. This fact indicates that Deng's considerations went beyond pure Cold War thinking.

One could assume that the Carter administration was aware of Beijing's priorities and knew about their leverage. However, archival material and other documents suggest that this is highly doubtful. Instead, Washington generally had little insight into the inner debates of the CCP. Regardless, Carter risked the success of normalization in order to save American involvement in the Taiwan Strait. With regard to the aforementioned problem that a failure of the normalization process

could lead to disadvantages in America's strategic position, the risk Carter and his aides took was unexpected. While Congress and the American public put some political pressure on the White House to ensure Taiwan's security, alienating the PRC and leaving a strategic advantage to the Soviet Union would lead to much heavier domestic pressure for the president and his aides. Therefore, domestic politics alone does not explain Carter's decision to remain involved in the Taiwan issue.

A broader perspective on the decision-making process of U.S. China policy at this time is helpful for understanding why the Carter administration insisted on an ongoing American involvement in the Taiwan Strait. While Taiwan's strategic role had declined within the framework of the Cold War, its relevance never entirely went away. Officials agreed that the future of Sino-American relations was impossible to foresee, and they knew that Taiwan could still be a strategic hedge against the PRC in the future. Moreover, it was clear that Beijing would spend vast resources to keep Taiwan in check. Such efforts would limit Chinese measures to counter American influence in the Asia-Pacific. While the administration was in no position to admit such considerations officially, the Congress could not only state these thoughts in public, but was also able to carve them in stone by passing the TRA as a consequence of Sino-American normalization.

The TRA allowed the United States to remain involved in the Taiwan Strait. It was a U.S. law passed by U.S. Congress, and hence not subject to international law. This made it much harder for the People's Republic to blame the Carter administration who thrust aside any Chinese complaints with reference to the political system of the United States and the restraints it put on the White House. In addition, other than the MDT, which it replaced, the TRA has left the decision for any kind of intervention in the Taiwan Strait completely to the USA, not allowing Taiwan to put diplomatic pressure on the United States. This made the law the perfect instrument for Washington to secure American involvement in the Taiwan Strait.

Since the beginning of the Cold War, Taiwan had been helping to keep communist China in check. The Carter administration and Congress concluded that the island was still useful for U.S. China policy. Normalization and the TRA changed the framework for U.S.-Taiwan relations and the meaning of the island. While the Taiwan issue was, until the late 1960s, entrenched in Cold War consider-

ations because the regime in Taipei served as an anti-communist bulwark in East Asia, rapprochement in the 1970s left it as a topic for negotiations between the Chinese and Americans until both sides achieved normalization in 1979. The experience with the Taiwan issue between 1949 and 1978-79 helped the U.S. administration to reevaluate the significance of Taiwan. While ideological considerations faded into the background and in spite of normalization, Taiwan could still serve to put pressure on the Chinese in the event of U.S.-PRC tension in the future. The negotiations and last minute concessions by Deng indicated as much. Moreover, Taiwan's location and the importance of the Taiwan Strait for international shipping made it prudent for Washington to keep the island out of the grasp of the PRC.

Since normalization in 1979, Taiwan has remained an important part of the American strategy to maintain its preponderance of power in the Asia-Pacific region. After normalization, the difference was that the Taiwan issue was not entrenched in the Cold War anymore. The issue morphed into a purely bilateral matter between the PRC and the United States, not related to the context of U.S. rivalry with the Soviets. The archival record suggests that the decision to maintain a security relationship with Taiwan was not influenced by Cold War considerations. If such thinking had dominated Carter's decision-making, the White House would have cut all security ties with Taiwan, as the rivalry with the USSR still dominated U.S. foreign policy. Instead, Washington opted for a preservation of U.S.-Taiwanese security ties, resulting in the TRA and a continuation of military and political U.S. support for Taiwan. The TRA took into account the future development of U.S.-China relations, as many observers in Washington believed that Deng Xiaoping's China of the year of 1979 could become a rival in the future. In such a case, Taiwan would serve as an instrument to contain the PRC and preserve U.S. dominance in Asia-Pacific.

Relevance and State of Research

In July 2009, U.S. President Barrack Obama stated “[t]he relationship between the United States and China will shape the 21st century, which makes it as important as

any bilateral relationship in the world.”¹⁰ This statement characterized today’s Sino-American relations as one of the most important issues for both countries’ foreign policy. Since the mid-1990s, different scholars from all over the world have published a huge amount of books and volumes that deal with China’s emergence as a new superpower and the way the United States is going to react to this challenge.¹¹ The same issue has been discussed in numerous journal articles and discussion papers.¹²

The scholarly interest in the relationship is mirrored by public concern, particularly in the U.S. According to polls by the PEW Research Center from 2011, Asia is nowadays the top focus of U.S. foreign policy, while the interest in Europe is declining. 34% of those interviewed were “very interested in news from China”, relegating France (6%), Germany (11%), Italy (11%), and even Great Britain (17%) to places further down the list.¹³ Other PEW polls from 2012 indicate that the U.S. public sees the relationship with the People’s Republic as a challenge for U.S. policy. 68% of those surveyed do not trust the PRC, and 66% characterize the country as a competitor to the United States. To sum up this pessimistic impres-

¹⁰ Speech, Barack Obama, “Remarks by the President at the U.S./China Strategic and Economic Dialogue”, 7/27/2009, http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-by-the-President-at-the-US/China-Strategic-and-Economic-Dialogue (accessed: 5/30/2014).

¹¹ E.g.: Richard Bernstein/Ross H. Munro, *The Coming Conflict with China* (New York: Knopf, 1997); Rosemary Foot, *China, the United States, and Global Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Aaron L. Friedberg, *A Contest for Supremacy: China, America, and the Struggle for Mastery in Asia* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2011); Robert S. Ross/Oystein Tunsjo/Zhang Tuosheng (ed.), *US-China-EU Relations: Managing the New World Order* (London: Routledge, 2010); David L. Shambaugh (ed.), *Tangled Titans: The United States and China* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publisher, 2013); Robert G. Sutter, *Shaping China’s Future in World Affairs: The Role of the United States* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996); Zhang Ming/Ronald N. Montaperto, *A Triad of Another Kind: The United States, China, and Japan* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999).

¹² E.g. Marc Beeson, “Can China Lead?” in: *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 34, No. 2 (2013); Charles Glaser, “Will China’s Rise Lead to War?” in: *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 90, No. 2 (March- April, 2011); Avery Goldstein, “Great Expectations: Interpreting China’s Arrival” in: *International Security*, Vol. 22, No. 3 (Winter, 1997-1998); Thomas Heberer/Anja D. Senz, *Die Rolle Chinas in der internationalen Politik. Innen- und außenpolitische Entwicklungen und Handlungspotenziale* (Bonn: Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik, 2006); John G. Ikenberry, “The Rise of China and the Future of the West,” in: *Foreign Affairs* 87, No. 1 (January-February, 2008); Jeffrey W. Legro, “What China Will Want: The Future Intentions of a Rising Power” in: *Perspectives on Politics*, Vol. 5, No. 3 (September, 2007); Robert S. Ross, “Beijing as a Conservative Power” in: *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 76, No. 2 (Mar. - Apr., 1997); Peter Rudolf, *Die USA und der Aufstieg Chinas. Die Strategie der Bush-Administration* (Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, 2006); Toshi Yoshihara/James R. Holmes, “Can China Defend a “Core Interest” in the South China Sea?” in: *Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 34, No. 2 (Spring, 2011).

¹³ PEW Research Center, “While focus on foreign problems lessens, U.S. public keeps its eye on China”, 11/04/2013, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2013/11/04/while-focus-on-foreign-problems-lessens-u-s-public-keeps-its-eye-on-china/> (accessed: 05/30/2014).

sion: in 2013, only 33% of interviewees had a favorable image of China.¹⁴ Such views suggest that the United States see themselves entrenched in a rivalry with the PRC, and the public opinion adds to the way the U.S. administration conducts its policy in Asia-Pacific and its relations with China.

Since 2011 the importance of the Asia-Pacific region has grown in U.S. strategic thinking. In an essay from 2011, former Secretary of State Hilary Clinton was one of the first U.S. officials who explained the necessity for the United States to focus their strategic attention on Asia-Pacific.¹⁵ Shortly before Clinton's article was published, former U.S. Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta announced that U.S. military presence in Asia would remain stable in spite of plans to cut the Pentagon's budget, something Barack Obama himself confirmed a few weeks later.¹⁶ Then in 2012, the United States sent a strong signal for their growing interest in the Asia-Pacific region by deploying a U.S. Marine Corps battalion in Australia.¹⁷ Analysts conclude that this shift was aimed mainly at China's rise, leading Beijing to intensify their "perceived sense of insecurity."¹⁸ Such actions suggest that the United States puts pressure on China in order to maintain its dominance in Asia-Pacific, but also to deter the PRC from pursuing an aggressive strategy in the region.

Despite the U.S. efforts in the region, it is difficult to point fingers at who is responsible for the rivalry between the PRC and the United States. Over the last decade, the PRC has followed a path that suggests growing ambition. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), Beijing has increased its military budget by 170% since 2004, spending an estimated amount of almost 190 billion U.S. dollars for its defense.¹⁹ Only recently, the PRC government renewed Chinese claims on big parts of the South China Sea, fueling the con-

¹⁴ PEW Research Center, "U.S.-China Relations: Key Data Points from Pew Research", 01/27/2014, <http://www.pewresearch.org/key-data-points/u-s-china-relations-key-data-points-from-pew-research/> (accessed: 05/30/2014).

¹⁵ Hilary Clinton, "America's Pacific Century" in: *Foreign Policy*, No. 189 (November, 2011).

¹⁶ Adam Entous, "U.S. Won't Cut Forces in Asia", 10/25/2011, *The Wall Street Journal*, <http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424052970204644504576650661091057424> (accessed: 06/04/2014); Jonathan Pearlman, "US will shift focus from Middle East to Asia Pacific, Barack Obama declares", 11/17/2011, *The Telegraph*, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/barackobama/8895726/US-will-shift-focus-from-Middle-East-to-Asia-Pacific-Barack-Obama-declares.html> (accessed: 06/04/2014).

¹⁷ Elisabeth Buhmiller, "Words and Deeds Show Focus of the American Military on Asia", 11/10/2012, *The New York Times*, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/11/world/asia/us-militarys-new-focus-on-asia-becomes-clearer.html?_r=0 (accessed: 06/04/2014).

¹⁸ Ely Ratner, "Rebalancing to Asia with an Insecure China" in: *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 36, No. 2 (Spring, 2013), 21.

¹⁹ Sam Perlo-Freeman/Carina Solmirano, "Trends in World Military Expenditure, 2013" in: *SIPRI Fact Sheet* (Solna: SIPRI, 04/2014), Table 1.

flict with Vietnam and the Philippines, while also provoking a diplomatic response from the U.S.²⁰ The potential for conflict exists, although the character of relations between the United States and the People's Republic appears much more complex. China expert Aaron Friedberg for example believes the “[...] contemporary U.S.-China relationship is clearly mixed, consisting of an array of cooperative and competitive elements.”²¹

The reason for this complexity lies in today's balance of power between these two major powers, but also in historical developments. We cannot understand today's U.S.-China relations, without understanding their past.²² The current relationship between Beijing and Washington is deeply ingrained in historical developments going back to the Cold War.

In particular, the normalization between the United States and the People's Republic in 1979 had a great influence on how the relationship has developed since that point in time. This event set up a framework that prevented both sides from solving the most controversial issue between them, the Taiwan issue. Official U.S.-PRC relations did not only mean a change of titles for the respective representatives in Washington and Beijing. It corrected an historical inconsistency, ending decades of secret interactions and indirect communication. Normalization also meant the transfer of America's diplomatic recognition from the ROC (Taiwan) to the PRC. At the beginning of the year 1979, the U.S. executive under Jimmy Carter recognized that the communist regime in Beijing was the only legitimate government of China. Moreover, Washington was now obligated to have only unofficial people-to-people relations with Taiwan. However, the new legal framework of U.S. relations with China and Taiwan did not prevent the United States from remaining involved in the Taiwan Strait. On the contrary, the TRA allowed Washington to maintain security ties with the island, guaranteeing constant quarreling between China and the U.S.

²⁰ David Brunnstorm/Lee Chyen Yee, “Chuck Hagel Accuses China Of 'Destabilizing' Asia Over South China Sea Claims”, 05/31/2014, *Huffington Post* (via Reuters), http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/05/31/chuck-hagel-china_n_5422982.html (accessed: 06/04/2014).

²¹ Aaron L. Friedberg, “The Future of U.S.-China Relations: Is Conflict Inevitable?” in: *International Security*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (Fall, 2005), 40.

²² The Historian Edward H. Carr sees the writing of history as a key for the understanding of the present, see: Edward Hallett Carr, *Was ist Geschichte* (Stuttgart: W. Kolhammer Verlag, 1963), 25-26.

In spite of the significance of normalization for the development of U.S.-China relations since the late 1970s, surprisingly, there are no historical studies which examine the normalization process exclusively, shedding light on the intertwining considerations, interests, and actions of the Carter administration and the Chinese leadership on the basis of archival documents and other historical sources. While the rapprochement process of the early 1970s has been subject of a number of studies, normalization is often examined only as a continuation of the same process.²³ Some studies remain within the framework of the Cold War,²⁴ and other analyses reach beyond the late 1980s and early 1990s.²⁵

China experts and political analysts began discussing normalization in journal articles and discussion papers shortly after the announcement of normalization. The topics of these analyses varied. Some dealt with the strategic implications of normalization, putting the new character of Sino-American relations into the bigger Cold War context by asking how normalization changed the strategic position of the United States vis-à-vis the Soviet Union.²⁶ Other papers discussed the conse-

²³ Studies with an exclusive focus on rapprochement: Evelyn Goh, *Constructing the U.S. Rapprochement with China, 1961-1974: From "Red Meance" to "Tacit Ally"* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Yukinori Komine, *Secrecy in US Foreign Policy: Nixon, Kissinger and the Rapprochement with China* (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing, 2008); Margaret McMillan, *Nixon and Mao: The Week That Changed the World* (New York: Random House, 2007); Chris Tudda, *A Cold War Turning Point: Nixon and China, 1969-1972* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2012)

²⁴ S. Mahmud Ali, *US-China Cold War Collaboration: 1971-1989* (Oxon: Routledge, 2005), Ralph Berger, *Die Normalisierung der diplomatischen Beziehungen zwischen den USA und der VR China, 1969-1979* (Frankfurt a.M.: Peter Lang, 2003); Nancy Bernkopf Tucker, "China and America: 1941-1991" in: *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 70, No. 5 (Winter, 1991); Foot, *Rosemary, Practice of Power: US Relations with China since 1949* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995); Han Nianlong (ed.), *Diplomacy of Contemporary China* (Hong Kong: New Horizon Press, 1990); Hilton, Brian P.: *'A Tolerable State of Order': The United States, Taiwan, and the Recognition of the People's Republic of China, 1949-1979* (Doctoral Dissertation, Texas A&M University, 2012); Ross, "Negotiating".

²⁵ Bernkopf Tucker, "Strait"; Richard C. Bush, *At Cross Purposes: U.S.-Taiwan Relations Since 1942* (Armonk: Sharpe, 2004); Warren I. Cohen, *America's Response to China: A History of Sino-American Relations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010); Harry Harding, *A Fragile Relationship: The United States and China Since 1972* (Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institute, 1992); Mann, "Face"; Su Ge, *美国对华政策与台湾问题* [American China Policy and the Taiwan Issue] (Beijing: World Knowledge Press, 1998); Robert G. Sutter, *U.S.-China Relations: Perilous Past, Pragmatic Present* (Plymouth: Rowman & Publisher, 2010); Tyler, "Wall"; Wang Chi, *The United States and China Since World War II: A Brief History* (New York: M.E. Sharp, Inc., 2013).

²⁶ E.g.: Chi Su, "U.S.-China Relations: Soviet Views and Policies" in: *Asian Survey*, Vol. 23, No. 5 (May, 1983); Ralph N. Clough, "Normalization and after: Relations with the United States" in: *International Journal*, Vol. 34, No. 4 (Autumn, 1979); Connie De Boer, "The Polls: Changing Attitudes and Policies Toward China" in: *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 44, No. 2 (Summer, 1980); Hong N. Kim/Jack L. Hammersmith, "U.S.-China Relations in the Post-Normalization Era, 1979-1985" in: *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 59, No. 1 (Spring, 1986); Michael Y. M. Kau/Michael S. Frost, "Military Ties with Communist China: A Questionable Card to Play" in: *Asian Affairs*, Vol. 9, No. 5/6 (May - Aug., 1982); Michel Oksenberg, "Reconsideration: A Decade of Sino-American Relations" in: *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 61 (Fall 1982); Jonathan D. Pollack, "The Implications of Sino-American Normalization" in: *International Security*, Vol. 3, No. 4 (Spring, 1979); Ross Terrill,

quences of normalization for Taiwan, coming to a variety of conclusions what the end of diplomatic U.S.-ROC relations, the so called derecognition, meant for the people on the island. Most of these authors argued that as long as the U.S. provided Taiwan with arms, the Taiwanese were in a position to remain out of the mainland's grasp.²⁷ As important as these articles are as a first wave of analysis, they are only based on public sources, interviews, and press coverage material, minimizing their value for a historical discussion and evaluation of Sino-American normalization. Nowadays, they could better serve as sources themselves, giving us an idea how normalization and the TRA were perceived in the immediate aftermath of events.

The mid-1980s saw the first broader studies about normalization, dealing exclusively with the U.S. perspective of the process. While these analyses were limited in their access to archival material like the aforementioned journal articles, they still added a new dimension to the debate, focusing mainly on the domestic aspects that influenced U.S. China policy in the late 1970s. The first was China expert Robert G. Sutter, who examines the thinking and behavior of policy makers in Washington D.C., arguing that President Carter alienated the Congress by conducting secret negotiations with the Chinese.²⁸ The political scientist Leonard A. Kusnitz uses the China policy as an example to explain the presidential administration's responsiveness to domestic public opinion.²⁹ The Taiwanese political scientist Jaw-ling Joanne Chang, on the other hand, uses a variety of complex theoretical models in order to find out how Washington approached its China policy in the 1970s, focusing on the timing of normalization, and the manner in which the Carter administration reacted to Beijing's three preconditions for normalization.³⁰

"US-China Relations" in: *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, No. 3 (Jan., 1980); Dennis Van Vranken Hickey, "U.S. Arms Sales to Taiwan: Institutionalized Ambiguity" in: *Asian Survey*, Vol. 26, No. 12 (Dec., 1986).

²⁷ E.g.: Thomas J. Bellows, "A Taiwan Perspective" in: *Asian Affairs*, Vol. 6, No. 6 (Jul. - Aug., 1979); Hungdah Chiu, "The Future of US-Taiwan Relations" in: *Asian Affairs*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (Sep. - Oct., 1981); J. Bruce Jacobs, "'Normalcy' after 'Normalization'" in: *Asian Survey*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (Jan., 1980); Gottfried-Karl Kindermann, "Washington between Beijing and Taipei: The Restructured Triangle 1978-80" in: *Asian Survey*, Vol. 20, No. 5 (May, 1980); Victor Hao Li, "The Status of Taiwan" in: *Asian Affairs*, Vol. 16, No. 3 (Fall, 1989); Leonard Unger, "Derecognition Worked" in: *Foreign Policy*, No. 36 (Autumn, 1979).

²⁸ Robert G. Sutter, *The China Quandary: Domestic Determinates of U.S. China Policy, 1972-1982* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1983).

²⁹ Leonard A. Kusnitz, *Public Opinion and Foreign Policy: America's China Policy, 1949-1979* (Westport: Greenwood, 1984).

³⁰ Chang, "United States".

While none of these studies put normalization in a historical context, each of the authors contributes to our understanding of this process, by concluding that the Carter administration struggled with the political situation at home. Sutter explains this struggle through the administration's estrangement from Congress.³¹ Kusnitzer explains the criticism about Carter's China policy with the shortcomings in the White House's preparation of the U.S. public for normalization.³² Chang also reasons that domestic pressure influenced U.S. China and Taiwan policy, because Carter and his predecessors were not powerful enough to push normalization through without political costs at home, which affected the timing of normalization.³³ Later studies which had at least access to a certain amount of archival material argued in a similar direction, emphasizing the meaning of internal problems in China and the United States.³⁴ Still, although domestic factors played an important role in China's and America's decision-making process, they cannot explain the whole process and the motivations behind it.

As mentioned above, many studies put the establishment of U.S.-PRC diplomatic relations in the context of the Cold War, arguing that the basic motivation for China and the United States to normalize their relations was their perception of the Soviet Union as a common threat. In the 1970s, the strategic set up of both countries allowed them to pursue a tactic along the line of "my enemy's enemy is my friend". Especially more recent works from the mid-1990s and early 2000s pursue this line of argument, namely authors like Richard C. Bush, Harry Harding, James Mann, and Patrick Tyler.³⁵ Rosemary Foot's study from 1995 adds that the rapprochement and normalization process served exclusively Washington's attempt to achieve global hegemony.³⁶ Such a perspective makes sense since an alliance between the Chinese and Americans, even a tacit one, put a lot of pressure on the Soviet Union.³⁷ Similar to the early 1950s, when political circles in Washington

³¹ Sutter, "China", 5.

³² Kusnitzer, "Opinion", 3.

³³ Chang, "United States", 177, 183.

³⁴ One example is Harry Harding who argues, it needed new leaderships in both countries, China and America, before normalization could be finalized, see: Harding, "Relationship", 5-6.

³⁵ Bush, "Purposes", 3-5; Harding, "Relationship", 9-10, 17; Mann, "Face", 11, 79-80; Tyler, "Wall", 230, 255

³⁶ Foot, "Practice", 1-2.

³⁷ There are studies that deal with the triangular relationship between China, the United States and the Soviet Union. In this context, China has often been seen as the decisive factor tipping the toe in favor of one side or another. E.g.: Nancy Bernkopf Tucker, "China as a Factor in the Collapse of the Soviet Empire" in: *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 110, No. 4 (Winter, 1995-1996); Robert S.

perceived the Sino-Soviet alliance as an immense threat to the U.S. position in the world and in Asia, close relations between the United States and the People's Republic were seen as a gain in relative power vis-à-vis the Soviets. Subsequently, a good relationship to the PRC stabilized the U.S. position in the world, and not only in Asia-Pacific. The Carter administration agreed with this view.

The only problem is that by focusing on the Soviet threat as motives for normalization, we cannot explain why both sides had such a hard time reaching agreement in their negotiations. If the Soviet Union represented such a danger to Chinese and American security, it appears that both sides had no reason not to cooperate with each other in order to counter Moscow's power. As explained above, the reason for the delay in finding an agreement was the Taiwan issue which is crucial to understanding Washington's and Beijing's approach to the normalization negotiations and their outcome.

America's relationship with Taiwan has always been the most contentious issue between Washington and Beijing. According to current research, this has not changed to date.³⁸ The U.S. role as protector of the regime in Taipei has been a constant source of Chinese disdain. Nowadays the Chinese public sees U.S. involvement in the Taiwan Strait as the most dangerous aspect of Sino-American relations.³⁹ The PRC neither understands nor accepts Washington's constant intervention in an issue that Beijing perceives as an internal affair. As a matter of fact, the Carter administration faced exactly the same accusations in the late 1970s when the normalization process was initiated.

Rosemary Foot (1995) and Ralph Berger (2003) do not see normalization as a genuine policy initiative but as the logical consequence of rapprochement.⁴⁰ They underestimate the Carter administration's efforts which led to the achievement of

Ross (ed.), *China, the United States, and the Soviet Union. Tripolarity and Policy Making in the Cold War* (New York: M.E. Sharp, 1993).

³⁸ E.g. Andrew Bingham Kennedy, "China's Perceptions of U.S. Intentions toward Taiwan: How Hostile a Hegemon?" in: *Asian Survey*, Vol. 47, No. 2 (March/April 2007); Cal Clark, "The U.S. Balancing Role in Cross-Strait Relations: The Irony of 'Muddling Through'" in: *Issues & Studies*, Vol. 42, No. 3 (September, 2006); Lin Cheng-yi/Denny Roy (ed.), *The Future of United States, China, and Taiwan Relations* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); Qingxin Ken Wang, "Taiwan in Japan's Relations with China and the United States after the Cold War" in: *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 73, No. 3 (Autumn, 2000); Denny Roy, *Taiwan: A Political History* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003); Chai Winberg, "The Taiwan Factor in U.S.-China Relations: An Interpretation" in: *Asian Affairs*, Vol. 29, No. 3 (Fall, 2002).

³⁹ William Lowther, "Taiwan Remains Source of China-US Conflict: Poll", *Taipei Times*, 12/14/2013, <http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/front/archives/2013/12/14/2003578979/2> (accessed: 05/30/2014).

⁴⁰ Foot, "Practice", 2; Berger, "Normalisierung", 23-24, 27.

normal U.S.-PRC relations. While Nixon's rapprochement policy and the Shanghai Communiqué were important and provided a basis for more cooperative U.S.-China relations, it was Carter who found a way to overcome the problem of the Taiwan issue.

Robert S. Ross sees the Cold War dynamic as the decisive factor that shaped normalization. His study from 1995 is also the first which incorporates the significance of Taiwan for the whole process. He argues that especially the Taiwan issue forced Washington and Beijing to constantly re-negotiate mutual cooperation, constantly threatening the successful conclusion of normalization negotiations.⁴¹ Alan D. Romberg (2003) agrees with this view, also stating that the United States has always had an honest interest in peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait.⁴² Brian Hilton's argument from his doctoral thesis from 2012 underlines the importance of the Taiwan issue for U.S.-China relations, claiming that Washington's Taiwan policy served solely to put pressure on the PRC, so that Beijing would alter its foreign policy.⁴³ Yet, none of these authors offers an explanation for why the Carter administration risked the failure of normalization, by insisting on security ties with Taiwan which culminated in the creation of a legal foundation for U.S. involvement in Taiwan's security beyond normalization, the TRA.

In 2005, Nancy Bernkopf Tucker explained Washington's interest in Taiwan with strategic considerations. She holds the view that, going back to the 1950s, the United States has always sought a strategic ambiguity towards Taiwan.⁴⁴ This means that the USA has always wanted to keep the KMT regime on its own side but sought for ways to prevent the situation in the Taiwan Strait from escalating. In a later work from 2009, Bernkopf Tucker develops her argument further, calling the U.S. approach "dual deterrence" because both the Communists and Nationalists should be prevented from attacking each other. As long as the PRC and the Soviet Union remained allies, she argues, such an approach worked well within the

⁴¹ Ross, "Negotiating", 1-2.

⁴² Romberg, "Brink", 7, 10-12.

⁴³ Hilton, "State". The full text of the doctoral thesis is not available at the moment. The information about its content is from the summary of Texas A&M University Libraries, <http://repository.tamu.edu/handle/1969.1/148148> (accessed: 2014/09/16).

⁴⁴ Nancy Bernkopf Tucker, "Strategic Ambiguity Or Strategic Clarity?" in: Nancy Bernkopf Tucker (ed.), *Dangerous Strait: The U.S.-Taiwan-China Crisis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 188-189.

framework of the Cold War, although the relationship between Washington and Taipei has always been influenced by a huge amount of mistrust.⁴⁵

While it is correct and important to put the U.S. commitment to Taiwan as well as the continuation of this commitment after normalization in a strategic context, we have to understand that the tenacity of the Carter administration and the Congress to remain involved in the Taiwan Strait went beyond pure Cold War considerations. With the achievement of normalization, on the one hand, Taiwan lost its value as a bulwark against communism in Asia. On the other hand, however, it remained valuable beyond the Cold War. A continued commitment did not only calm down any anxieties of other U.S. allies in the region like Japan and South Korea. It also served as a means to put pressure on China in the event of tensions between the two countries.

The decision-makers in the White House, the State Department and Congress were aware that the PRC's national interests were not congruent with American interests in Asia-Pacific in the long-term. Therefore, we have to understand that the TRA was more than just a Congressional intervention, aimed at damaging Carter's prestige and political position. The TRA constituted the United States' ability to maintain its influence on the situation in the Taiwan Strait for over 30 years. The motivation for this commitment was ingrained in the normalization process and the Carter administration's tenacity to ensure Taiwan's security.

Carter's insistence on a security relationship with Taiwan prevented the PRC and the United States from solving the matter. Instead, they agreed to ignore the Taiwan issue for the sake of normalization. As Huang Jing and Li Xiaoting (2010) argue, this was possible because in regards to the *One-China-principle* Washington accepted the PRC as the sole legitimate government of China. According to Huang and Li, this makes normalization an important breakthrough for the Taiwan issue.⁴⁶ However, they underestimate the significance of Taiwan for the U.S. position in Asia-Pacific. Since normal relations between Washington and Beijing meant that Taipei was relegated to have only unofficial relations with the United States, Taiwan's significance should have diminished. Instead, the United States still sought for a way to remain involved in the Taiwan Strait. The result of these efforts was the TRA, a law that allowed Washington to sell arms to Taiwan and

⁴⁵ Bernkopf Tucker, "Strait", 4-6.

⁴⁶ Huang Jing/Li Xiaoting, *Inseparable Separation. The Making of China's Taiwan policy* (Singapore: World Scientific, 2010), 3-4.

maintain a security relationship with the island, prompting complaints by the Chinese.

Some authors see the TRA as a result of political struggle between the Carter administration and U.S. Congress. Nancy Bernkopf Tucker claims in her important study from 2009 about the Taiwan issue that Carter's vagueness about the U.S. commitment to Taiwan's security forced the Congress to reject the administration's own Taiwan bill, developing the TRA with more explicit and provoking security language.⁴⁷ But the TRA must be seen in the broader context of strategic considerations. It was not only, as Hao Yufan wrote in 1997, a compromise between the executive and the legislative branch, enabled by the political system of the United States.⁴⁸ It was also not only, as David Tawei Lee (2000) claims, the result of Congressional sympathy for Taiwan.⁴⁹ Instead, the law was the result of a distribution of complementary roles. We have to ask what the Congress could do, and what the Carter administration could not due to diplomatic constraints. Assuming Washington had an honest interest in maintaining a security relationship with Taiwan, only Congress could create this framework. This allowed the United States to have such a military and political relationship with Taiwan. Rather than serving as a rebuke, the TRA has allowed Carter and his successors to give no ground on the Taiwan issue, without contradicting the legal agreements between the United States and the PRC.

While Congress played a major role in the creation of the TRA, its influence on Carter's actual China policy and the normalization negotiations was almost non-existent. Xu Guanqiu claims as much in his study from 2007 about Congressional influence on U.S.-China relations. In reality, however, Congressmen seldom fulfilled any official assignments despite multiple trips by different members of Congress to China during the late 1970s. At times, they acted as messengers for the Carter administration, or conveyed their own or Chinese views back to the White House and State Department, but Xu's argument that the Congress was not limited to its natural role as legislator appears exaggerated if we consider how much effort Carter and his aides put in keeping House and Senate out of the whole process.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Bernkopf Tucker, "Strait", 115.

⁴⁸ Hao Yufan, *Dilemma and Decision. An Organizational Perspective on American China Policy Making* (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies/University of California, 1997), 3-5.

⁴⁹ Lee, "Making", 198.

⁵⁰ Guanqiu Xu, *Congress and the U.S.-China Relations, 1949-1979* (Akron: The University of Akron Press, 2007), 9-10.

Instead, Congress began to play its role after the announcement of normalization, when Capitol Hill contributed to the shaping of the future relationship between Washington and Taipei.

Sources and Archival Material

This thesis endeavors to base its observations and analysis on archival material, using the existing literature about the topic of Sino-American normalization mainly to discuss interpretations and arguments. Writing about Chinese-American relations and the Taiwan issue, made it necessary to seek access to a variety of sources and archival material in different kinds of archives in China, Taiwan, and the United States. More than 30 years have passed since the achievement of Sino-American normalization and the passing of the Taiwan Relations Act, so that the retention period for most archival documents has expired. In China and Taiwan, however, legal restrictions for archival material differ from western standards. The access to material from the period of time, examined in this study, is heavily restricted, making it impossible to give a profound interpretation of the Chinese and the Taiwanese behavior during the normalization process. Therefore, this study is based mostly on material and documents from the United States, and here primarily on documents from the *Jimmy Carter Library* in Atlanta, Georgia, and the *National Archives II* (NARA) in College Park, Maryland.

The Office of the Historian of the U.S. Department of State has published a variety of volumes in the series *Foreign Relations of the United States* (FRUS) that deal with the relationship between the United States and the People's Republic, going back to the early 1950s. In this study about the period of time from 1977 to 1979, the volumes dealing with China from 1949 to 1968 served merely for descriptive means. The volumes covering 1969 to 1976 are not discussed in the main part of this study, but provide essential background information. A thorough understanding of the rapprochement process, started by the administration of Richard M. Nixon and continued by Gerald R. Ford, is necessary to understand Jimmy Carter's approach towards China, especially in the early period until August, 1977. Accordingly, volumes XVII, XVIII, and E-13 which deal with Nixon's and Ford's China policy held some analytical value and were consulted for analytical purposes. The

same is true about volume V about the U.S. policy in the United Nations (UN), which contains documents concerning the question of China's representation in the UN.

In 2013, the Office of the Historian published a variety of important documents about U.S.-China relations in Volume XIII of the series. The volume includes material about U.S. China policy from the complete period of Jimmy Carter's presidency from 1977 to 1980. It offers a wide breadth of memoranda, briefing papers, and negotiation protocols. As an introductory source, it was a valuable asset to the writing of this dissertation. The same can be said about volume VI about U.S.-Soviet relations, also published in 2013. However, since the space in such volumes is limited, the editors were not able to incorporate all relevant documents which are available in different American archives.

The largest collection of documents about the Carter administration's approach towards China and Taiwan can be found in the *Jimmy Carter Library* in Atlanta, Georgia. Of particular significance here is the material from Carter's National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski. He left two different collections. One consists of all declassified bureaucratic documents from his office with the title *National Security Affairs/Brzezinski Material*. The second collection, titled *Donated Historical Material/Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection*, was a gift by Brzezinski, consisting of material that he held personally important. These boxes include the memcons of his talks with Deng Xiaoping and other Chinese officials as well as the most important memoranda and reports he wrote to President Carter. Additionally, it includes all reports about the normalization negotiations. Another very important collection from the Carter Library is the so-called *Vertical Files*.⁵¹ They include important memoranda and memcons of talks between different U.S. and Chinese officials. The personal records of President Carter, the so called *Plains File*, do not include much declassified materials about China. Carter's personal notes and memoranda are not part of the accessible documents in this collection.

NARA in College Park, Maryland, also contains some important sources for enhancing our understanding of the Carter administration's China policy. While many documents of this period are still not declassified or processed, partly due to a lack of bureaucratic capacities to work through all of the material, especially Record Group (RG) 59 contains material valuable for the topic of this study. The

⁵¹ The title on the boxes only says *VF*.

collection *Records of Anthony Lake, 1977-1981* gives us insight into the early period of the administration's China policy and the development of its concept. Deputy Secretary of State Warren Christopher's collection *Records of Warren Christopher [sic], 1977-1980* consists of material about the development of the Taiwan legislation which culminated in the Taiwan Relations Act. Unfortunately, the personal records of Secretary of State Cyrus Vance were not available.

The *Library of Congress* in Washington D.C. has many different documents available which deal with Congressional actions during the normalization process and its aftermath. Most influential for this study were the protocols of Congressional hearings conducted by the House and Senate. They were important for the development of the Taiwan legislation after normalization, leading to the Taiwan Relations Act. Especially the Hearings of the House's Committee on Foreign Affairs, the House's Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs, and the Senate's Committee on Foreign Relations from February 1979 provide insight into the debate between administration and Congress concerning normalization and the future relationship of the United States and the people of Taiwan. Also of interest were these committees' reports to the Senate and House, as these documents provide the basis for the whole Congress' decision-making. Of minor importance are the actual debates in Congress because they did not incorporate any information that went beyond the aforementioned hearings.

Although this thesis deals mostly with the Presidency of Jimmy Carter, other presidential libraries and public archives in the United States were still consulted. The *Richard Nixon Library* in Yorba Linda, California and the *Gerald Ford Library* in Ann Arbor, Michigan hold numerous documents which are important for the rapprochement process in the early and mid-1970s. The archives of the *Hoover Institute* at Stanford University in Stanford, California, did not offer much material concerning Sino-American relations for the time after the 1950s and 1960s. The *Ronald Reagan Library* in Simi Valley, California, on the other hand, does not have any material about China from the time before 1980. The biggest challenge in the Reagan Library is that to date many documents have not yet been declassified. In addition, in order to consult these materials in the future, historians are required to make a Freedom of Information Act request, making significant research about the history of the Reagan administration's China policy very difficult.

Due to the reasons mentioned above, this study does not cover Chinese and Taiwanese perspective on the normalization process and its consequences in an extensive way. The *National Archives of the Republic of China* in Taipei has not declassified the bulk of material about the period of time important for this study. The same is true for the *Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs* (MOFA). The archives of the *Academia Sinica* in Taipei only have documents available until the year of 1975. The *Archive of the Foreign Ministry of the People's Republic of China* in Beijing which represents the most important archive for the history of the PRC's foreign relations has only declassified material from the period before the *Cultural Revolution* which begun in 1966. The *Second Historical Archives* in Nanjing contains only declassified records which deal with Sino-American relations until the early 1950s. Other state archives like the one of the CCP are not accessible to researchers. Municipal archives like the ones in Qingdao or Shanghai do not possess any material of significance for this study's topic.

Other international archives served this thesis to gain insight into the perspectives of non-involved actors, mainly in Europe. The *Federal Archive of the Federal Republic of Germany* in Koblenz as well as the *Political Archive of the German Foreign Office* in Berlin did not have many documents available about Sino-American relations. Germany's diplomatic focus was not aimed at this topic, and the material in the archives was limited to some reports from the German embassy in Beijing. Catalogue searches of the *National Archives of the United Kingdom* in Kew/London and the *Centre des archives contemporaines* in Fontainebleau led to the same conclusion, which is why their records had no impact on this thesis.

In addition to archival documents, the analysis in this study makes use of public resources, mostly accessible via the Internet. Most important among such sources were President Carter's speeches and press briefings which are accessible via *The American Presidency Project* established by the University of California at Santa Barbara. Other Internet sources were used on an individual basis after their background had been checked as thoroughly as possible.

This study also used articles from American, Chinese, and Taiwanese newspapers and magazines. Despite the use of these sources, the author does not claim to offer an in-depth analysis of the news coverage about normalization. The examination used mostly articles available via the database *Lexis Nexis* and other databases accessible via the internet. As background to how the negotiations were

framed in China, the author read accounts from the 人民日报 (People's Daily) and the 新华月报 (Xinhua Yuebao). The newspapers provided no substantive insight into the decision-making of the PRC leadership, but did show the propaganda used to communicate with the Chinese populace.

Interviews and other kinds of oral history did not play any role in this analysis.⁵² While the author conducted some interviews, mostly with Taiwanese and Chinese researchers, they were not used for analytical or descriptive purposes for two reasons. First, the interviews did not produce any insights beyond those found in available archival material or literature. Second, the interviews did not meet the methodological demands for the use of oral history, especially in a precarious political context like the triangular relationship between the U.S., the PRC, and the ROC.⁵³ Thus, the author decided to limit the sources for this study to written material.

Theoretical Approach

While historians are obligated to tell the story of the past, they are also obliged to provide some explanation for the object of their research. Yet, explaining human behavior, especially in the past, requires interpretation. Interpreting historical events, however, always happens on a subjective basis.⁵⁴ A theory can help to keep interpretations within a pre-determined framework, increasing the level of objectivity.⁵⁵ The following paragraphs serve as a theoretical frame to explain historic re-

⁵² One interview with former ROC foreign minister Dr. Frederick Chien provided some useful information, but was not incorporated due to technical issues. Moreover, his accounts can also be found in his autobiography: Frederick F. Chien, 錢復回憶錄 [Memoirs of Chien Fu] (Taipei: Tian xia yuan jian chu ban gu fen you xian gong si, 2005).

⁵³ Erin Jessee, "The Limits of Oral History: Ethics and Methodology Amid Highly Politicized Research Settings" in: *The Oral History Review*, Vol. 38, No. 2 (Summer/Fall, 2011). For an introductory reading about oral history, see: Lynn Abrams, *Oral History Theory* (New York: Routledge, 2010).

⁵⁴ Carr, "Geschichte", 11-13.

⁵⁵ For examples of historical studies applying theories from other fields of research, see: Michael J. Hogan, *The Marshall Plan: America, Britain and the Reconstruction of Western Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Michael H. Hunt, *Ideology and U.S Foreign Policy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987); Akira Iriye, *Cultural Internationalism and World Order* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997); Frank A. Ninkovich, *Modernity and Power: A History of the Domino Theory in the Twentieth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); Emily S. Rosenberg, *Spreading the American Dream: American Economic and Cultural Expansion, 1890-1945* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982); Paul W. Schroeder, *The Transformation of European Politics 1763-1848*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1994).

ality, and should help to understand the conclusions drawn in later chapters. This frame is mostly borrowed from the field of International Relations (IR)-theory, although we have to be careful how we apply such theories to a historical study.

According to the Cold War historian John Lewis Gaddis, IR-theories seek to predict the future. Thus, they produce generalizations in the sense of classical scientific methods by excluding variables that do not fit the model of the theory. Gaddis argues that this method leads to a departure from reality, and hence “generalizations of this kind perform badly when applied to the real world, which functions along behavioral, structural, and evolutionary axes simultaneously.” To Gaddis, theories are not able to incorporate the unpredictability of human behavior.⁵⁶

Since this author agrees with Gaddis’ view, it must be clear that the following theoretical considerations shall not serve as means to predict anything. Instead, I argue that IR theory offers a number of tools that can still help the study of historical events. First, theory of any kind helps to narrow the scope of possible interpretations.⁵⁷ Primary sources, the major empirical tool for historians, do not always contain information about the exact intentions of single actors, or by what motivations they were driven. In the context of the Carter administration, normalization, and the Taiwan issue, we find only indirect hints, at best.

Therefore, in the particular case of Sino-American normalization, the theoretical framework developed here shall guide us for the purposes of selection, order, and explanation.⁵⁸ The tools of selection and order make the task of explaining historical reality easier. Theories support the process of making sense of the sources and material used in this examination. Theoretical assumptions and conclusions serve as an additional basis besides the critical study of empirical evidence by offering logic and causality. In a way, theories help the development of hypotheses which can be tested with the help of historic material.

Methodologically as well as topically, this study is a contribution to the field of international history, dealing with questions concerning the decision-making of policy-makers in the United States, the People’s Republic of China, and the Republic of China. Due to a lack of primary sources, analysis of Chinese and

⁵⁶ John Lewis Gaddis, “International Relations Theory and the End of the Cold War” in: *International Security*, Vol. 17, No. 3 (Winter, 1992-1993), 55.

⁵⁷ Paul W. Schroeder, “History and International Relations Theory. Not Use or Abuse, but Fit or Misfit” in: *International Security*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (Summer, 1997), 70.

⁵⁸ Daniel Frei, „Einführung. Wozu Theorien der internationalen Politik?“ in: Daniel Frei (ed.), *Theorien der Internationalen Beziehungen* (München: Piper Verlag, 1973).

Taiwanese decision-making is constrained to public resources and existing literature. It also deals with the interactions between these three actors in the realm of international policy.

As I argue, the significance of the Taiwan issue for the process of normalization, on which this study is focusing, can only be understood if we go beyond the level of Sino-American diplomatic relations. Otherwise we overlook important matters and do not grasp the connection between these aspects of normalization. The theoretical framework shall therefore incorporate different levels of analysis, namely the level of the international system and the level of the actors themselves.⁵⁹ Otherwise, we cannot explain why Taiwan was so important for the U.S. in order to balance China's power.

First, we have to understand the structure of the international system during the normalization process because this defined the frame for the Chinese and American negotiators, influencing their preferences and their strategy. The nature of the international system matters because it gives us an idea how the power was distributed among the actors in this system, and what rules the system is subject to. This is important because political elites are aware of these conditions when they make decisions. The U.S. historian Zara Steiner for example argues, that a political leader asks "not how he can use the international system to achieve his goals but what kind of goals a workable international system allows him to pursue."⁶⁰ Politicians can easily find themselves manipulated by the nature of the international system because it sets the conditions for policy-makers and their policy options.

The political scientist Kenneth Waltz developed a theory, called Neorealism, which provides us with the necessary tools to understand the nature of the international system and its defining dynamics.⁶¹ Neo-realism seeks to explain how

⁵⁹ In the analysis of international relations, we usually distinguish three level of analysis: 1.) personal, 2.) actor, and 3.) system. For further reading see Kenneth Waltz, *Man, the State and War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959).

⁶⁰ Zara Steiner, "On Writing International History: Chaps, Maps and Much More" in: *International Affairs*, Vol. 73, No. 3 (Jul., 1997), 534.

⁶¹ Kenneth Waltz, *A Theory of International Politics* (Reading: McGraw Hill, 1979). Since then students of international relations have discussed and reviewed the theory critically, and some have adjusted and amplified it for their own purposes. Accordingly, today there exist different schools of thought of Neorealism calling themselves *offensive realism* or *defensive realism*. The main difference between these schools of thought is that the offensive realists argue that the anarchy of the international system does not produce enough security for states to feel safe, while defensive realists contradict this conclusion. For an introductory reading about offensive realism, see: John Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2001). For an intro-

the structure of the international system shapes the behaviour of states in the realm of international relations.⁶² It also claims that structural effects lead to similar behaviour by states.⁶³ This assumption results in the development of Waltz' so called *Balance of Power* paradigm. He argues that the anarchy of the international system, its units' pursuit of security, and the distribution of power among these units force them to compete for power which is not an abundant resource in the realm of international politics. Thus, states want to become as powerful as possible because this makes them more secure in the anarchy of the global self-help system, they exist in. They try to counterbalance (and to surpass) the power of their rivals.⁶⁴ In that context, it does not matter how a state gets stronger, whether by internal or external means. All that counts is to become stronger at all. This also applies to the situation of the United States and the People's Republic in the late 1970s.

As the U.S. historian Melvyn Leffler observes, the bipolar set-up of the international system saw the Soviet Union and the United States entrenched in a rivalry over political, cultural and economic influence all over the world. The roots of the antagonism between the Soviets and Americans did not only lie in differing national interests, but also in different visions how the international system should be shaped.⁶⁵ Both countries led their respective alliances either as benevolent hegemon or imperial dominator, neutralizing each other in a perceived equilibrium of power. The dominance of the U.S.-Soviet rivalry in the bipolar Cold War system and especially Moscow's power influenced U.S. and PRC decision-makers. China and the United States perceived the USSR as the biggest threat to their own security. This was actually what brought both sides to the negotiating table in the first place.

Decision-makers in Washington sought ways to gain an advantage vis-à-vis the Soviets. One way to achieve such an advantage was a more cooperative rela-

ductory reading about defensive realism, see: Stephen Walt, *The Origins of Alliances* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987).

⁶² Kenneth Waltz, "Evaluating Theories" in: *American Political Science Review* (Nr. 4, 1997), 915.

⁶³ According to Waltz, states are not the only actors in the international system, but they are the ones that matter the most (see: Waltz, "Theory", 93-94). In the case of Sino-American normalization and the Taiwan issue, this claim holds true, as all concerned major decisions were made by state actors in China, Taiwan and the United States. Moreover, non-state actors like the UN or non-governmental organizations did not play any role in the whole process because the Chinese and American governments kept their negotiations secret.

⁶⁴ Waltz, "Theory", chapters 5-6 (78-128).

⁶⁵ Melvyn P. Leffler, *For the Soul of Mankind: The United States, the Soviet Union, and the Cold War* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007), 3-4, 8.

tionship with the PRC. Having the PRC on America's side would shift the distribution of power in the United States' favour. This would improve the U.S. position worldwide, but most of all in Asia-Pacific. The same logic, however, should later suggest the continuation of U.S. involvement in the Taiwan issue because the unofficial alliance with Taiwan granted the United States an instrument to contain Chinese power in the future, just in case U.S.-China relations would deteriorate after normalization. While an alliance with the PRC led to relative gains vis-à-vis Moscow, the continuation of America's commitment to Taiwan's security made the U.S. position in the Asia-Pacific region stronger and hence the United States more powerful. In addition, as long as the island was not under the domain of the PRC, Beijing would spend vast resources to contain the regime in Taipei. China would not be able to use these resources against the United States.

The People's Republic found itself in an even greater dilemma after the end of the Sino-Soviet alliance in the early 1960s, having non-friendly and even hostile relationships to both superpowers. Improving China's security needed to begin with the rapprochement policy conducted by Nixon and Kissinger and Mao and Zhou. This policy enabled a tacit alliance between Chinese and Americans which aimed at containing Soviet influence in Asia. Closer ties with the United States in the shape of official diplomatic relations would further improve the PRC's strategic situation. In addition, only normalization would allow China to gain easier access to western technology which was important for the modernization of the country. Successful modernization would enable the PRC leadership to self-strengthen their country, making it more powerful and more secure.

As we see, structural constraints had a strong influence on the decision-making in Beijing and Washington. However, Neo-realism is not able (nor does it seek) to explain the internal circumstances in which an actor's decisions are made. In Waltz' theory, states are "black boxes" which only differ in the amount of power they possess.⁶⁶ For the purpose of this study, however, we need to open the "black box".⁶⁷ Otherwise, we cannot explain why the Carter administration put normalization at risk when they insisted to continue U.S. engagement in the Taiwan Strait,

⁶⁶ Waltz, "Theory", 95-97.

⁶⁷ Christopher Laney, *The Peace of Illusions: American Grand Strategy from 1940 to the Present* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 20-21.

and why the PRC regime accepted the TRA although the law virtually constituted the American role as a protector of Taiwan beyond the Cold War.

In order to open the “black box”, we need another IR theory that seeks to explain actors’ behaviour. The theory chosen for this study is Neoclassical Realism which provides us with a connection between the levels of the system and the actors. This connection arises from the political decision-makers’ perception of the distribution of power in the international system.⁶⁸ Structural constraints like the distribution of power can only take full effect if statesmen or other influential social groups within a state are aware of them.⁶⁹ Thus, it matters how policy makers in China and the United States perceived their environment, externally and internally. This is what makes human perception an important variable for the whole normalization process. How powerful a state is, and how powerful it can become due to certain actions, is connected to the way political decision-makers perceive the distribution of power in the international system. The amount of power which a nation’s decision-makers believe to possess influences how secure a state feels, and what kind of national preferences it develops.

Numerous times, Chinese leaders made clear to their American interlocutors that they were interested in more cooperation between the PRC and the U.S. in order to cope with the Soviet Union. The regime in Beijing saw Moscow and its allies like Vietnam as the biggest threat to China’s security. Moreover, Deng Xiaoping and his fellow party leaders were aware that the People’s Republic was too backwards and not powerful enough to deal with this threat alone. Self-strengthening was only possible with the help of the West, and it would take years to achieve the goals Deng and his allies at home had in mind. In the meantime, the broadening of the tacit alliance with the United States improved the Chinese strategic situation, deterring the Soviets from any aggressive measures against the PRC.

⁶⁸ For an introductory reading, see: Gideon Rose, “Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy” in: *World Politics*, Vol. 51, No. 1 (Oct., 1998). There exist different approaches to Neoclassical Realism which differ in the exact variables they use to make their predictions. However, they all incorporate the perception of the distribution of power as one of their main variables.

⁶⁹ William C. Wohlforth, *The Elusive Balance: Power and Perception During the Cold War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 1-2; Fareed Zakaria, *From Wealth to Power: The Unusual Origins of America’s Role in the World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 24. Zakaria and Wohlforth argue that statesmen are the core decision-makers for a nation’s foreign policy. Hence, their perception of power should be in the core of any explanation of foreign policy which is true for Sino-American normalization.

Washington pursued a more divergent strategy with its China policy, not only reducing normalization to a way to strengthen the *China card*. Yet, Carter and his aides saw this process and especially the achievement of normal relations with China still as a necessity to gain power vis-à-vis the Soviet Union. Closer relations with the PRC put pressure on the Soviets, forcing the Kremlin to cooperate with the United States in areas like arms control and regional conflicts. The decision-makers in Washington also were aware that Taiwan was a strategic asset for the U.S. position in Asia-Pacific. Since the U.S. administration was sure that the Chinese needed the United States more to improve their strategic situation, than the U.S. needed China, Washington took a calculated risk, forcing the PRC to accept U.S. involvement in the Taiwan Strait beyond normalization.

Washington's considerations were based on a second factor we should incorporate in this analysis: the historical experience of the United States with China and Taiwan. While Taiwan and the Kuomintang (KMT) regime presented something like a troublemaker for the United States due to Chiang Kai-shek's (CKS) ambition to reconquer the mainland during the 1950s, the island also served as a loyal ally and a bulwark against communism in East Asia. It helped to contain communist China and was an example for America's credibility and reliability as an ally, assuring Japan, South Korea and other American partners in the region that Washington would not disengage from the Asia-Pacific region. The experience of Taiwan's usefulness told the decision-makers in Washington that, even after normalization, the island possessed strategic value. Moreover, since history had demonstrated that American and Chinese interests were not always congruent, friction and even conflict between China and the United States had to be anticipated by American leaders. In such an event, Taiwan would prove to be a useful strategic hedge.

But the Carter administration's motives for a continuation of U.S. involvement in the Taiwan Strait did not end here. As the works of neoclassical realists suggest, we must incorporate a third variable to explain the White House's behavior concerning Taiwan. Political decision-makers have to take care that their decisions will be accepted at home. Otherwise, governments have problems accumulating enough resources to pursue the policy necessary to realize their decisions.⁷⁰ As

⁷⁰Zakaria, "Wealth", 9, 38.

Thomas Christensen argues, this is true for all political systems, democratic and non-democratic, since all governments have to achieve a certain amount of legitimization via mobilization, when implementing new and costly foreign policy strategies.⁷¹

The Carter administration knew right from the beginning that the U.S. public and especially U.S. Congress were very critical of any China policy that would force the United States to abandon its engagement in the Taiwan Strait. Although most Americans saw normalization as a positive development, they were concerned about the security of Taiwan. In order to find broad support for his China policy, Jimmy Carter had always made clear that he did not plan to abandon the Taiwanese, and U.S. officials conveyed this position to their Chinese interlocutors many times. For the U.S. public and Congress, normalization could only work if the United States were able to guarantee Taiwan's security, leading eventually to the TRA. Even if Carter had not wanted to maintain U.S. involvement in the Taiwan Strait, casting a veto against the TRA would have cost the U.S. president vast political resources at home, making future projects even more difficult. This risk added to the Carter administration's decision to develop a security relationship with Taiwan.

The need for legitimization also made China accept the TRA, though in the PRC's case the reasoning is much more complex. First of all, one should not underestimate the CCP's urge to solidify its rule over China. Of course, Beijing could never openly allow the United States to remain involved in the Taiwan issue, prolonging the period until China could be unified. But the PRC leadership was aware that the standard of living had to improve in China. Otherwise, the Chinese people would start questioning the legitimacy of the CCP's rule of the country. Therefore, it needed reforms and modernization in China, and the communist leaders saw normal relations with Washington as an important part of this approach. A higher standard of living would help the stabilization of the CCP's rule much more than the division of China along the Taiwan Strait could ever question it. This indicates that the issue of domestic legitimization also applies to China's decision to accept U.S.-Taiwan security relations and the TRA.

⁷¹ Thomas J. Christensen, *Useful Adversaries: Grand Strategy, Domestic Mobilization and Sino-American Conflict, 1947-1958* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 20-22.

As I am going to show, the interplay of these three variables helps us to explain why the Carter administration risked the failure of normalization in order to maintain the U.S. role as the protector of Taiwan. Since the records only offers indirect hints and not a complete explanation of the whole context of the U.S. behavior concerning Taiwan, theoretical abstraction allows us to see the connection between the perception of the distribution of power, the historical experience, and the necessity to legitimize the White House's China policy at home.

Structure of Dissertation

This thesis attempts to explain, how the United States and the People's Republic achieved normal relations, and what role the Taiwan issue played in this context. In order to do so, one needs to understand the historical roots of the problem, at first. They provided the basis for the Carter administration's leeway in their approach towards normalization. The first part of this study, chapter I, therefore deals with the development of U.S.-China relations after World War II. At this time, the United States was searching for its role in the Taiwan Strait after the Chinese Civil War. The goal of this chapter is to illustrate how the Chinese and Americans tried to manage their tense relationship in order to prevent an escalation, which could have had a global impact due to the Cold War framework that defined the first decades of Sino-American relations after 1945.

Chapter II also provides background information, dealing with the rapprochement process under U.S. Presidents Richard M. Nixon and Gerald R. Ford. The promises these former U.S. administrations had made to the Chinese influenced the whole normalization process and defined parts of the leeway that the administration under Jimmy Carter had for their own China policy. Moreover, the rapprochement process changed the character of the relationship between Washington and Beijing, not only lowering the level of conflict but creating something like a tacit U.S.-PRC alliance against the Soviet Union. Accordingly, rapprochement enabled normalization, although, as will be demonstrated, the latter cannot be seen simply as the continuation of the former.

After the historical background is covered, the study proceeds with its main part, the analysis of the normalization process. Chapter III provides us with an in-

sight into the early period of the Carter administration's China policy, explaining the development of its framework which culminated in the creation of Presidential Review Memorandum (PRM)-24. The subsequent chapter, chapter IV, describes the U.S. executive's opening moves towards the Chinese, demonstrating Washington's willingness to normalize relations. This development is framed by visits by Carter's most important foreign policy advisor to China, Secretary of State Cyrus Vance in August 1977 and National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski in May 1978. The chapter also makes clear how serious PRC officials were about their disdain for the American involvement in the Taiwan Strait.

Beijing's disapproval of the Carter administration's intentions to remain involved in the Taiwan issue played a major role in the actual negotiations about normalization. Chapter V deals with these negotiations and the problems both sides faced during their talks, before they finally reached an agreement. Chapter VI explains why and in which way the Carter administration endeavored to promote normalization to the international and U.S. public, using the historical visit of Deng Xiaoping to the United States as an instrument to boost public approval for normalization. Chapter VII is about the creation of a piece of legislation that allowed the United States to maintain people-to-people relation with Taiwan, but also to remain involved in the Taiwan Strait. The Taiwan Relations Act which stands in the center of this last main chapter ensured the United States' status as Taiwan's protector.

The final part presents a summary and also explains the outcome and consequences of normalization. The author discusses if the theoretical framework developed in this introduction broadened our understanding of the Chinese and American behavior concerning the Taiwan issue. Moreover, the chapter sheds light on the question of why the Carter administration's China and Taiwan policy was successful, and why the TRA should be not seen as a failure of the White House. The last part also includes this author's view on Taiwan as an ongoing, contentious issue between the U.S. and China and how that affects today's distribution of power in the Asia-Pacific region.

Chapter I: Managing the Conflict, 1945-1968

America's relationship to China after World War II was full of misunderstanding, tension, and hostility. The roots for the Sino-American drama lay in the result of the Chinese Civil War. Due to the communist victory, there existed two governments which claimed to represent all of China, one on the mainland and one on Taiwan. In 1949, the Communists ruled in Beijing and had the mainland with around 540 million people under their control, while the Nationalists controlled Taiwan with only around nine million people living on this island. It was a significant disparity, leaving Chiang Kai-shek and his regime in a bad position. But as we will see, ideological constraints and strategic Cold War considerations ensured CKS regime's survival, thanks to the intervention of the United States.

In the wake of the Cold War and due to growing anti-communist sentiments in the United States, Washington only recognized the regime on Taiwan, the Republic of China, even signing a defense treaty with Taipei in the mid-1950s. It was thus not surprising that it did not take long before the regime on the mainland, the People's Republic of China, developed strong animosities towards the United States, seeking an alliance with the Soviet Union. These actions eventually led to ongoing tensions between Washington and Beijing which were to last well into the late 1960s.

This chapter deals with the development of Sino-American relations between 1945 and 1968. To understand the process of normalization in the late 1970s, it is of utmost importance to understand how the conflict between the United States and the PRC emerged and what role the Taiwan issue played in this context. The historical experience of both sides influenced the course of the discussions between the Chinese and Americans from 1977 to 1978. Beijing even thought that the U.S. owed the People's Republic a debt due to Washington's behavior during this period of time. Interestingly, despite all the differences and the hostility of the 1950s and 1960s, U.S.-China relations never reached any extremes, neither culminating in a declared war nor leading to genuine friendship. Instead, we find a relationship of great vicissitude whose only constant was the different views of Beijing and Washington about the Taiwan issue.

Neither U.S. nor Chinese leaders had a plan how to handle the situation between their two countries after the end of the Chinese Civil War. Yet, over the course of the following decade, both regimes made decisions which prompted resentment and even hostility against each other. Ideological, political, and strategic considerations in Washington and Beijing defined the role of the Taiwan issue, linking this problem to the greater scheme of the Cold War. In the end, these considerations led to a chain of events that set the frame for the negotiations about normalization between the Carter administration and the PRC leadership around Deng Xiaoping in the late 1970s. Moreover, these experiences shaped the perceptions of the decision-makers and other political actors in Taiwan, China, and the United States, influencing their behavior during this process.

In the late 1940s, conflict between the U.S. and the PRC was not ascertained. The United States tried to mediate between Nationalists and Communists in an attempt to stabilize China and keep it out of the zone of influence of the Soviets. Even after the Nationalists had fled to Taiwan, the White House considered friendly relations with the regime in Beijing, but the events of the Korean War poisoned the relationship for years to come. This became evident during the two Taiwan Strait crises of the 1950s, when the U.S. commitment to protect Taiwan grew stronger, finally resulting in the U.S.-ROC Mutual Defense Treaty. However, both crises also demonstrated the limits of America's willingness to support CKS as the United States were not willing to risk a conflict with the Soviet Union.

In the aftermath of the crises, Washington and Beijing endeavored to prevent escalation between them. Different U.S. administration sought for ways to lower the tensions with the PRC in the 1960s. However, both countries became distracted by other problems, preventing them from pursuing any accommodating steps. The United States intervened in Vietnam and was drawn into a war which the superpower would not win, while the PRC tore itself apart during the *Cultural Revolution*. When in addition the tension with the Soviet Union grew more intense, the CCP regime had to fear for its very existence, forcing Beijing to change its foreign policy approach.

The Conflict Takes Shape

Traditionally the United States had pursued an “Open Door” policy in China.⁷² This meant that no other foreign power should control China which was regarded as a market area with unimaginable possibilities. All nations with commercial interests in China should enjoy the most favored nation status and have access to the Chinese market with equal trading opportunities. Although every great power of this period claimed its own zone of influence within China, the “Open Door” principle remained valid for the first decades of the 20th century. When the Japanese invasion of China threatened the free access to the Chinese market, the U.S. decided to intervene.

The main reason for U.S. military support for China was to keep the country out of Japan’s grasp, because an independent China was useful to detain Japan from becoming a hegemon in the Asian-Pacific region.⁷³ China served primarily as arena to pin down parts of the Imperial Japanese Army, so that they could not fight U.S. forces during the Pacific War. After the World War II China became more important as the Americans reacted to Moscow’s attempts to bring the CCP in position to take over the country. However, it quickly became apparent that Washington had problems to define China’s role in the upcoming antagonism with the Soviet Union.⁷⁴

At the end of World War II the United States emerged as the world’s most powerful nation. Its economic strength was unrivaled, its conventional military had proved its reliability, and country was the only one with access to nuclear weapons. Other allies, however, did not benefit from the victory over Nazi Germany. Although they belonged to the victors, the European powers France and Great Britain had suffered greatly under Hitler’s war. Their colonial empires started to disintegrate and their national economies were in a profoundly compromised state. Thus,

⁷² This idea was formulated by U.S. diplomat William W. Rockville, and implemented by Secretary of State John Hay in 1899. The “Open Door” principle became the guideline for the U.S. policy in China from the late 19th through the first half of the 20th century. For an introductory reading, see: Delber L. MacKee, *Chinese Exclusion versus the Open-Door Policy, 1900-1906* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1977).

⁷³ Kindermann, “Aufstieg“, 316. For a more detailed reading about the history of U.S.-Japan relations, see: Walter LaFeber, *The Clash: U.S.-Japanese Relations Throughout History* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1997).

⁷⁴ William Whitney Stueck, Jr., *The Road to Confrontation: American Policy Toward China and Korea, 1947-1950* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1981), 19.

they lost global influence and became, at least in some areas, dependent on the United States. All in all, the U.S. position had strengthened. Only one major problem remained.

The fourth member of the anti-Hitler coalition, the Soviet Union, was also able to strengthen its strategic position. While the country had suffered greatly under the German invasion, it still benefited from the postwar situation. The Soviets occupied most regions the Red Army had liberated from the Germans, and was incorporating these territories into its own zone of influence.⁷⁵ In order to strengthen its grasp of these areas, Moscow did not allow the development of democratic structures there. Instead, most Eastern European states were bound in obedience to the USSR and had to adopt a socialist form of government. This approach alienated the former members of the anti-Hitler coalition from each other, leaving the United States, Great Britain, and France on one side, and the Soviet Union on the other.

At this point, however, the United States had no interest in a global engagement. Neither U.S. Congress nor the American public seemed willing to support such efforts. Stalin's attempts to enhance the Soviet zone of influence to Turkey and Greece changed this attitude. Moscow's behavior seemed to prove the conclusion, which the U.S. diplomat George F. Kennan's had drawn in his *Long Telegram*, that Moscow pursued an expansionist policy, threatening the stability of Europe.⁷⁶ This perception led to a more interventionist approach in Washington's foreign policy, expressed in the *Truman Doctrine* which President Harry S. Truman made known to the public in his famous speech from March 12, 1947.⁷⁷ The *Truman Doctrine* aimed at containing the expansion of worldwide communism, leaving Moscow only the zone of influence it had already created.⁷⁸ For many Historians, the *Truman Doctrine* also marked the beginning of an antagonism that should affect international politics for more than 40 years.⁷⁹

⁷⁵ For an introductory reading about the Soviet strategy of occupying Eastern Europe, see: Caroline Kennedy-Pipe, *Stalin's Cold War: Soviet Strategies in Europe, 1943 to 1956* (Manchester: Manchester University Press 1995), chapter 3.

⁷⁶ Telegram, George Kennan to George Marshall, "Long Telegram", 02/ 22/1946, Harry S. Truman Administration File, Elsey Papers, http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/coldwar/documents/pdf/6-6.pdf (accessed: October 17, 2013).

⁷⁷ Speech, Harry S. Truman, "Recommendation for Assistance to Greece and Turkey", 03/12/1947, http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/doctrine/large/documents/pdfs/5-9.pdf#zoom=100 (accessed: October 17, 2013).

⁷⁸ John L. Gaddis, *Der Kalte Krieg. Eine neue Geschichte* (München: Siedler Verlag, 2007), 42-43.

⁷⁹ For a discussion about the origins of the Cold War and the responsibility for it, see: John L. Gaddis, *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press. 1997); Melvyn P.

In the early stages of implementing the new doctrine, the focus of the new strategy lay in Europe and the Middle East, demonstrated by the stationing of U.S. forces in these regions.⁸⁰ Another important instrument to support struggling regimes against communism was financial aid. The most important program of all was the *European Recovery Program* (ERP, also known as the Marshall Plan) which led to serious frictions between Soviets and Americans, especially in Germany.⁸¹ The U.S. engagement in Europe and other places deepened the Soviet-American conflict which also started to take shape in Asia.

Japan's defeat had left a power vacuum in Asia-Pacific, and the United States and the USSR struggled to fill the gap. China played a major role in these efforts but the internal conflict between Nationalists and Communists kept the country from getting some peace after the hard years of war with Japan.⁸² The ruling Nationalists were unable to stabilize the country. They could not bargain a compromise with the Communists and did not care to reform China's political and social-economic system. Instead, Chiang and his KMT clung to their power,⁸³ while the Communists who had close ties to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) demanded to be a part of the Chinese government after they also had fought the Japanese Imperial Army.⁸⁴

The United States had a strong interest in a stable China. The country should be free from Soviet influence. For that purpose, Washington was ready to approach the Chinese communists, although one such attempt by Truman's predecessor Franklin D. Roosevelt had already failed, because Chiang Kai-shek had convinced Roosevelt's emissary Patrick J. Hurley that the United States were better

Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration, and the Cold War* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), Arnold A. Offner, *Another Such Victory: President Truman and the Cold War, 1945-1953* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002); William Appleman Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1984).

⁸⁰ Waldo Heinrichs, "American China Policy and the Cold War in Asia: A New Look" in: E. I. Dorothy Borg/Waldo Heinrichs (ed.), *Uncertain years: Chinese-American relations, 1947-1950* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 282-283.

⁸¹ For further reading about the role of the ERP in the early stage of the Cold War, see: Leffler, "Preponderance", chapter 5.

⁸² For further reading about the Sino-Japanese War from 1937-45, see: Hsiung, James C./Levine, Steven I. (ed.), *China's Bitter Victory: The War with Japan, 1937-1945* (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, Inc., 1992).

⁸³ Stueck, "Road", 18.

⁸⁴ Victor Cheng's study demonstrates that the Communists took just erratically part in battles against the Japanese forces. In order to preserve their strength, they preferred some kind of guerilla tactics like they had done during the first part of the Chinese Civil War. See: Victor Shiu Chiang Cheng, "Imagining China's Madrid in Manchuria: The Communist Military Strategy at the Onset of the Chinese Civil War, 1945-1946" in *Modern China*, Vol. 31, No. 1 (Jan., 2005).

off by supporting the KMT unconditionally.⁸⁵ Assuming to have the full support of the United States, Chiang did not make a great effort to appease the CCP, and the Chinese Civil War, which was interrupted for the period of the war with Japan, flared up again.⁸⁶

The White House reacted with restraint to the conflict in China. The policy planners of the Truman administration did not believe that the United States could have a major influence on the outcome of the civil war, without getting too involved and maybe provoking a Soviet intervention.⁸⁷ Instead, the White House tried to prevent any escalation, sending former U.S. Army General Gorge C. Marshall as the president's personal emissary to China. He should mediate between the KMT and the CCP. At first, Marshall was even able to get the parties back to the negotiating table, but lack of trust and Chiang's refusal to share his power brought Marshall's mission to a quick end.⁸⁸

From the CCP's perspective, the failure of Marshall's initiative deepened the perception that they could not trust the United States. It confirmed Mao's view that U.S. policy after World War II was defined by reactionary and anticommunist groups, trying to control China via the KMT regime. In addition, Mao's ideology which mixed Marxist-Leninist theory with Chinese nationalism rejected any intervention by foreign powers in Chinese affairs, emphasizing China's territorial integrity and national sovereignty.⁸⁹ As we will see in later chapters, these ideas influenced the PRC's strict position concerning the Taiwan issue in the negotiations with U.S. officials about normalization. Chinese nationalism born from the experience of the 19th century made it difficult for the CCP to accept any American attempts to intervene in the Taiwan Strait.⁹⁰

⁸⁵ For further reading on Hurley's role in Washington's China policy during World War II see: Russel D. Buhite, *Patrick J. Hurley and American Foreign Policy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1973).

⁸⁶ For an introduction about the course of the Chinese Civil War, see: Johnathan D. Spence, *Chinas Weg in die Moderne* (München: DTV, 2001), chapters 14, 16, 18.

⁸⁷ Christensen, "Adversaries", 58-60.

⁸⁸ Kindermann, "Aufstieg", 318-319.

⁸⁹ Steven M. Goldstein, "Chinese Communist Policy Toward the United States: Opportunities and Constraints, 1944-1950" in: E. I. Dorothy Borg and Waldo Heinrichs (ed.), *Uncertain years: Chinese-American relations, 1947-1950* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 236-238. For an introductory reading about Mao's Cold War policy, see: Chen Jian, *Mao's China and the Cold War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), chapters 2-3.

⁹⁰ During the age of imperialism, China virtually lost its national sovereignty and parts of its territory to the imperial powers. For a culture that sees itself as the central part of the world, this experience did not only hurt China's pride. It also led to deeply founded anxieties and mistrust vis-à-vis foreign powers. For a more detailed reading about China and the imperial powers, see: Odd Arne

In reality, the Soviets intervened much stronger in the Chinese Civil War than the United States. A good example for Moscow's favoring of the CCP was the situation in Manchuria after Japanese forces had left and the Red Army had taken control of the region. The Soviets gave the complete military equipment left by the Imperial Army to the Communists, helping the CCP to transform their rather guerilla like army into a regular one with the capability to defeat the Nationalists.⁹¹ It was a decisive turning point in the development of the Chinese Civil War.

Still, the USA was reluctant to increase its support for the Nationalists, avoiding any kind of military involvement in the Chinese Civil War.⁹² George C. Marshall, who had become Secretary of State briefly after his return from China, was even reluctant to provide more financial aid for CKS's regime. It was the Congress who forced him to change his attitude, as Marshall needed Congressional support for the implementation of the ERP.⁹³ The influential senator Arthur Vandenburg (Rep-Michigan) made clear to the Secretary that China was a place where communism had to be contained, demonstrating that Congress held China important for the U.S. strategy to counter Soviet influence worldwide.⁹⁴ This intervention by members of Congress in the administration's China policy was only the first of many to come. The Nationalists had always had supporters on Capitol Hill, but now the influence of the so called *China bloc* started to grow because of the White House's dependence in budgetary matters.⁹⁵

Congress was not the only political player in Washington who argued in favor of extended aid for the KMT. The Secretary of the Navy, James Forrestal, believed Chiang could help to prevent further communist expansion in the world. The Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) shared this view in a policy paper from June 1947.⁹⁶ Forrestal and the JCS's conclusions were as much affected by strategic as by ideological considerations, something that did not remain concealed to CKS.

The KMT leader knew how to make use of the strong anticommunism in the United States, hiring professional lobbyists to affect American politicians and

Westad, *Restless Empire: China and the World Since 1750* (London: The Bodley Head, 2012), chapter 2.

⁹¹ Kindermann, "Aufstieg", 308-310.

⁹² Stueck, "Road", 12.

⁹³ Warren I. Cohen: "Acheson, His Advisor, and China, 1949-1950" in: E. I. Dorothy Borg and Waldo Heinrichs (ed.), *Uncertain years: Chinese-American relations, 1947-1950* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 13-14.

⁹⁴ Christensen, "Adversaries", 62-66.

⁹⁵ Stueck, "Road", 42.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 39-40, 44-45.

other social actors. This approach resulted in the emergence of the *China lobby* whose influence should grow over the next years.⁹⁷ Although Marshall maintained his adverse position, the growing pressure from the *China bloc* led eventually to an increase of U.S. aid for the Nationalists in 1948.⁹⁸ Chiang's supporters were even able to gain public approval for this approach since the U.S. public viewed the support of the KMT as part of the general U.S. campaign against worldwide communism.⁹⁹ Americans did not understand the difference between Soviet and Chinese communism. Similar to the views of political hardliners in Washington, their perspective was based on anti-communist sentiments and not on strategic considerations.¹⁰⁰ In this context, the U.S. historian Stephen Whitfield argues that the U.S. public reacted "phobic" to communism, overestimating the danger it presented in the United States.¹⁰¹ Anti-communism was one of the defining dynamics of U.S. foreign policy at this time.

In the end, even additional financial help from Washington could not save the Nationalists. U.S. aid was not nearly enough to have a sustainable impact on the KMT regime's position. After the communist forces had crossed the Yangtze River in April 1949, the Nationalists had to retreat from the Chinese mainland and fled to Taiwan. In October then, Mao Zedong proclaimed the People's Republic of China with its capital in Beijing. Now, the Truman administration had to make the decision whether they would accept CKS's defeat, resulting in the recognition of a new regime in China, or whether they would help the KMT to survive and perhaps even reconquer the mainland.

Truman and especially his new Secretary of State, Dean Acheson, entertained the idea of coming to an understanding with the CCP, keeping the new Chinese regime from allying with the Soviet Union.¹⁰² The idea was to bait Mao with trade agreements, a seat in the United Nations, and diplomatic recognition.¹⁰³ Since the growing anti-communism in U.S. public did not allow Washington to make far reaching concessions to the CCP regime, Acheson also wanted to put pressure on

⁹⁷ Nancy Bernkopf Tucker, "Nationalist China's Decline and Its Impact on Sino-American Relations, 1949-1950" in: E. I. Dorothy Borg and Waldo Heinrichs (ed.), *Uncertain years: Chinese-American relations, 1947-1950* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 163-166.

⁹⁸ Kindermann, "Aufstieg", 323.

⁹⁹ Stueck, "Road", 52.

¹⁰⁰ Christensen, "Adversaries", 83-84, 100-101.

¹⁰¹ Stephen J. Whitfield, *The Culture of the Cold War* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), 3-4.

¹⁰² Christensen, "Adversaries", 85.

¹⁰³ Cohen, "Acheson", 32-33 et al.

Beijing, by stopping the financial aid for those regions in China that were under communist control.¹⁰⁴ At Mao's command, PRC Premier Zhou Enlai approached the Americans, offering a chance to come to a mutual understanding. However, when the United States denied to recognize the PRC regime and rejected to stop its supplies for the KMT, Acheson's plan was ultimately moribund. Moreover, instead of containing Japanese militarism, Washington seemed to encourage the development armed forces in Japan. In Mao's view, these efforts aimed to contain communist China.¹⁰⁵ Washington's ambiguous behavior and the Chinese leader's mistrust against the United States prevented any cooperation between the PRC and the U.S. governments. The PRC had to look for help elsewhere.

In Mao's opinion, only the USSR was able to provide China with the support the country needed to rebuild its economy. The PRC regime had already indicated that it would join the Soviet bloc. In his "Lean to One Side" speech from July 1 in 1949, the CCP's chairman made clear that the People's Republic would stay on the Soviet Union's side in its struggle to change the capitalistic world order. This intention made a stable relationship between Washington and Beijing very unlikely.

The U.S. administration had failed to develop a coherent strategy for its China policy. The administration's *China White Paper* from August 1949 did not only come too late, but served less the development of an effective China policy but rather to "set the facts straight on the difficult situation in China."¹⁰⁶ The president and his aides wanted to thwart the accusation of having lost China.¹⁰⁷ Simultaneously, the document's critical assessment of the KMT regime made clear that

¹⁰⁴ Gordon H. Chang, *Friends and Enemies: The United States, China, and the Soviet Union, 1948-1972* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 19.

¹⁰⁵ Michael H. Hunt, "Mao Tse-tung and the Issue of Accomodation with the United States, 1948-1950" in: E. I. Dorothy Borg and Waldo Heinrichs (ed.), *Uncertain years: Chinese-American relations, 1947-1950* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 203-209.

¹⁰⁶ William A. Rintz, "The Failure of the China White Paper" in: *Constructing the Past*, Vol. 11, Issue 1 (2009), <http://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1121&context=constructing> (accessed: 09/20/2014).

¹⁰⁷ The Chinese historian Chen Jian claims Washington never had a real chance to prevent Mao from joining the Soviet side during the Cold War. Instead, ideological considerations and inner-Chinese dynamics guided the CCP chairman's approach towards foreign policy, see: Chen, "Mao's", 38-39.

Chiang's attempts to gain more support from the White House had failed.¹⁰⁸ Thus, discussions among U.S. agencies about the defense of Taiwan were not surprising.

Acheson and the DOS still believed that keeping the PRC from a formal alliance with Stalin was possible, if the United States would reduce its support for the Nationalists.¹⁰⁹ Washington's diplomats also feared that further help for the defense of Taiwan would lead to a direct military involvement in the Taiwan Strait.¹¹⁰ Secretary of Defense Louis Johnson and the JCS disagreed, arguing that Taiwan was easy to defend and too important for the shipping routes in the Asia-Pacific region.¹¹¹ In spite of Congressional critique, it was Truman who ended these discussions in early 1950 when he made clear in a public speech that his administration had no plans to intervene in the Chinese Civil War, and would not establish any military cooperation with the regime on Taiwan.¹¹²

The president's statements encouraged Acheson to hold his famous *Press Club Speech* on January 12, 1950. In his speech, the Secretary defined the U.S. defensive perimeter in the Asian-Pacific region, without including Korea or Taiwan.¹¹³ This should later have repercussions when North Korea attacked the South. However, at this time, Acheson's words had only an impact in Washington where his ideas were heavily criticized. In addition, the attitude towards the KMT regime in Taiwan changed within the Truman administration after the anti-communist Dean Rusk had become Second Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs. Step by step, defending Taiwan against an invasion from the mainland became part of U.S. China policy.¹¹⁴ In the end, it was the anti-communist atmosphere at home that spoiled the Acheson's plans.

The PRC's image in the United States had never been good. Besides anti-communist sentiments, the case of Angus Ward who had been U.S. Consul to Shenyang undermined the U.S. public's view of China. In 1948/49, Ward and his

¹⁰⁸ Chiang Kai-shek had even sent his wife Soong May-ling to the U.S. in late 1948 in order to get the U.S. Congress to put more pressure on the U.S. government. See: Bernkopf Tucker "Nationalist", 151-152, 169-170.

¹⁰⁹ Cohen, "Acheson", 39.

¹¹⁰ John L. Gaddis, "The Strategic Perspective: The Rise and Fall of the „Defensive Parameter“ Concept, 1947-1951" in: E. I. Dorothy Borg and Waldo Heinrichs (ed.), *Uncertain years: Chinese-American relations, 1947-1950* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 77-78 81-84.

¹¹¹ Christensen, "Adversaries", 105-109.

¹¹² Speech, Harry S. Truman, 01/05/1950, "The President's News Conference", <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=13678#axzz2iRxyJq00> (accessed: 10/22/2013).

¹¹³ Speech, Dean Acheson, 01/12/1950, "Speech on the Far East", <http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/speech-on-the-far-east> (accessed: 10/22/2013).

¹¹⁴ Christensen, "Adversaries", 128-130.

staff members were put under house arrest for over a year after PRC officials had accused them of espionage.¹¹⁵ In the spring of 1950, Beijing also decided not to pay back the 800 million U.S. dollars of debts China had contracted with the United States. The PRC government's argument on the matter was that these terms had been negotiated between the KMT and the U.S. administration. They were therefore not legally binding for the People's Republic.¹¹⁶ This last event made U.S.-PRC accommodation impossible. The Truman administration was stuck with CKS and his regime in Taiwan.

The drama of losing China concluded when the People's Republic and the Soviet Union signed the *Sino-Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Alliance and Mutual Assistance* on February 14, 1950.¹¹⁷ It became clear that the postwar China policy of the United States had not achieved any of its goals. It had neither kept Mao and his CCP from beating the Nationalists, nor had Washington been able to keep the PRC from an alliance with Moscow.¹¹⁸ Although it is highly doubtful that it had ever been possible to win communist China over for the U.S. struggle against the Soviet Union, the Truman administration's indecisive and ambiguous policy towards the CCP and the KMT helped to lose China. Now, the U.S. government had to decide how much it was willing to invest in order to prevent the loss of Taiwan.

From Conflict to Hostility

The Sino-Soviet friendship treaty secured considerable loans for the People's Republic, enabling Mao and his young government to start working on the solution of China's economic problems. However, although Beijing and Moscow enhanced the level of cooperation, both sides maintained reservations towards each other. Stalin saw Mao very critical because he was worried about the Chinese nationalism which the chairman of the CCP had mixed into the socialist teachings. Such nationalism could lead to more ambition within the communist bloc, questioning the Soviet Union's leadership role. The CPSU leader's anxiety was not limited to the political

¹¹⁵ For further reading see: Herbert W. Briggs, "American Consular Rights in Communist China", in: *The American Journal of International Law*, Vol. 44, No. 2 (Apr., 1950).

¹¹⁶ Chang, "Friends", 31-33.

¹¹⁷ For a detailed history of the Sino-Soviet treaty, see: Dieter Heinzig, *The Soviet Union and Communist China, 1945-1950: The Arduous Road to the Alliance* (Armonk: M.E. Sharp, Inc., 2004).

¹¹⁸ Kindermann, "Aufstieg", 324-325.

and strategic level but had also a personal dimension. He did not want to share the role of the leader of international communism, and Mao's charisma fueled by his ideological autonomy promoted such a development.¹¹⁹

Mao still seemed to consider a working relationship with the United States in order to keep China's strategic options more flexible and less dependent on the Soviets. Moscow, hence, feared that the PRC leader could become the next Tito.¹²⁰ In 1948, The Yugoslavian leader, Josip Broz Tito, had decided after quarrels with Stalin to leave the Soviet bloc. In the aftermath, the U.S. administration, which had not suspected Tito's move at this time, supported his regime to keep Yugoslavia out of the grasp of the Soviet Union.¹²¹ It was a warning for the Soviets that the loyalty of their communist allies was not guaranteed. They were aware that losing another ally would weaken the USSR's strategic situation considerably, especially since Moscow saw China as the motor for the socialist revolution in Asia.¹²²

In the meantime, the level of militarization in U.S. foreign policy increased, thanks to anti-communists like the aforementioned Dean Rusk and others. This had also an influence on Washington's attitude towards Taiwan. National Security Council (NSC) Report-68 from April, 1950 was the political manifest of the militarization process.¹²³ While the document did not often mention China, the draft had direct implications for U.S. China policy. NSC-68 broadened the horizon of America's anti-communist struggle and directed it towards East Asia. Director of Policy Planning for the State Department Paul Nitze, the main author of NSC-68, argued that a shift in the balance of power in Asia would have negative implications for the strategic position of the United States. The JCS supported Nitze's view, adding in another report that Taiwan served to stabilize the American strategic position in

¹¹⁹ Christensen, "Adversaries", 147-148.

¹²⁰ Washington had indeed hoped to lure the Chinese communists away from the Soviet Union's influence, see: Gaddis, "Perspective", 69-70.

¹²¹ For further reading, see: Lorraine M. Lees, *Keeping Tito Afloat: The United States, Yugoslavia, and the Cold War* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997).

¹²² Eva-Maria Stolberg, *Stalin und die chinesischen Kommunisten 1945-1953: Eine Studie zur Entstehung der sowjetisch-chinesischen Allianz vor dem Hintergrund des Kalten Krieges* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1997), 264.

¹²³ For further reading on the academic discussion about NSC-68, see: Steven Casey, "Selling NSC-68: The Truman Administration, Public Opinion, and the Politics of Mobilization, 1950-51" in: *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 29, Issue 4 (September, 2005); John L. Gaddis/Paul Nitze, "NSC 68 and the Soviet Threat Reconsidered" in: *International Security*, Vol. 4, No. 4 (Spring, 1980); Samuel F. Wells, "Sounding the Tocsin: NSC 68 and the Soviet Threat" in: *International Security*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (Fall, 1979).

East and Southeast Asia.¹²⁴ The first result of this new policy was growing financial aid for the KMT regime. The U.S. support for Taipei should even increase when the Korean War broke out.

The Korean peninsula had not played a major role in Washington's strategic considerations after World War II. The United States deemed the country as too underdeveloped to be of any importance.¹²⁵ Still, U.S. decision-makers did not want the country to fall under Soviet influence. Therefore, Washington negotiated with the Soviets in order to come to an agreement about Korea. However, the United States and the Soviet Union were unable to find consensus. Korea was divided, and put under the trusteeship of the United Nations.¹²⁶ Shortly after U.S. and Soviet troops had withdrawn from Korea, the leader of communist North Korea, Kim Il-Sung, asked Stalin for permission and support for an attack on the south in order to reunify the peninsula.

At first, Moscow reacted cautiously since Stalin did not want to risk any open conflict with the United States. Only Acheson's aforementioned *Press Club Speech* changed the Soviet leader's attitude, as the U.S. Secretary of State had not included Korea in the American defensive perimeter. Acheson's statement left the Soviets with the impression that they did not have to care about any U.S. retaliation. After the Chinese had made no objections to Kim's plans, Moscow gave up its restraints and assured the North Korean leader of Soviet aid for the attack.

North Korea's invasion started in June 1950 and was very successful. Within six weeks, communist troops had captured 90 percent of the South Korean territory. However, other than from the communist bloc expected, the attack triggered a harsh reaction by the United States who forced the UN to sanctify a multinational intervention under U.S. leadership. Stalin's hopes, that the Soviet Union could easily enhance its zone of influence, did not materialize. In this situation with the chance for a strategic advantage vanished, the Soviets could only prevent an escalation of the conflict in Korea.

¹²⁴ Chang, "Friends", 69-71.

¹²⁵ Kindermann, "Aufstieg", 338-339.

¹²⁶ For a full account of the origins of the Korean War, see: Bruce Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War, Volume I: Liberation and the Emergence of Separate Regimes 1945-1947* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981); idem, *The Origins of the Korean War, Volume II: The Roaring of the Cataract 1947-1950* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1990).

The communist attack in Korea seemed to prove Nitze's argument. Foreign policy analysts in Washington were convinced that the USSR stood behind North Korea's actions. They also saw the strategic position of the United States eroding. The loss of Korea could threaten Japan, the only fully industrialized nation in Asia and an important piece of U.S. security strategy in Asia-Pacific. Furthermore, Washington had to demonstrate U.S. credibility as the dominant power in East Asia.¹²⁷ Hence, President Truman made three decisions. First, he sent U.S. troops to Korea to fight the communists. Second, he increased the U.S. aid for France in its struggle in Indochina. Finally, the president ordered the Seventh Fleet to the Taiwan Strait in order to keep the Chinese communists from an attack on the island. Now, in spite of all former U.S. reluctance to become involved in the Chinese Civil War, Taiwan and its Nationalist regime became a centerpiece of Washington's containment policy in East Asia. Due to the war in Korea, the island was pushed right into the middle of the Cold War.

Truman's decision to send troops to Korea, and the Seventh Fleet to the Taiwan Strait, filled Beijing with suspicion. The Chinese leaders believed the American actions were the first step of a campaign to drive communism out of Asia. This thinking was fueled by the blockade of the Taiwan Strait through the Seventh Fleet, something that Mao interpreted as an U.S. intervention in the Chinese Civil War and a new level of hostility.¹²⁸ The development of the war in Korea made things worse. As Mao's advisors had predicted, U.S. forces landed close to the 38th parallel, apparently seeking to reunify Korea after the defeat of Kim's troops. Beijing was afraid that U.S. troops would occupy all of Korea after the war. This scenario was much more threatening for the PRC leadership than the defeat of the North Korean regime itself.¹²⁹ Thus, when the U.S. led troops of the United Nations crossed the 38th parallel and approached the River Yalu, the stream that divides Korea and China, Chinese leadership decided to enter the war.

Washington ignored Beijing's indirect warnings. Subsequently, Un and South Korean forces crossed the 38th parallel, easily defeating the North Korean army. This triggered a Chinese response. Divisions of the PRC, who officially had the status of volunteers and not official troops of the People's Liberation Army

¹²⁷ Kindermann, "Aufstieg", 345-346; Chang, "Friends", 76.

¹²⁸ Christensen, "Adversaries", 160-161; Chang, "Friends", 77-78.

¹²⁹ Christensen, "Adversaries", 149, 157-159.

(PLA), took the troops of South Korea and the United Nations by surprise. The PLA was able to push their opponent back deep into South Korean territory. After some mutual counterattacks, a military stalemate emerged similar to the situation in World War I.¹³⁰ Due to the military impasse, only a political solution could resolve the conflict. Unfortunately, a lack of trust and the feeling of great sacrifices on all sides postponed such a solution, and protracted this war beyond any sense of rational strategy.

The lack of direct communication lines prevented both sides, Chinese and Americans, to explain their interests and behavior in a manner that made it clear to the other side that its prejudices and fears were unwarranted. Beijing did not pursue any expansionist goals, but China's entrance in the Korean War confirmed Washington's believe that Mao and his regime was a Soviet puppet.¹³¹ The Truman administration was so blinded by its urge to counter any sort of communist aggression that it did not consider the Chinese desire for territorial integrity and national security.

Beijing, on the other hand, had not been able to convey its warnings in a fashion that the United States would reconsider its military approach. Moreover, the Chinese leadership itself ignored American warnings not to intervene in Korea. In fact, the U.S. administration had hinted several times that the Korean War should remain limited to the Korean peninsula.¹³² Finally, the lack of empathy for the Chinese ideological perceptions, and the lack of communication due to political and diplomatic reasons were responsible for the deepening of U.S.-PRC hostility during the Korean War.

The Chinese participation in the war made it impossible for the Truman administration to even consider concessions to the Chinese because the USA could not afford to appear weak, something that became apparent during the armistice talks. Anticomunist currents in Washington around Senator Joseph R. McCarthy (Rep-Wisconsin) and General Douglas MacArthur put too much pressure on the president. Therefore, the White House was not willing to give in to Beijing's demands about Taiwan and the United Nations. U.S. support for CKS's regime would

¹³⁰ For a detailed look on the development of the Korean War, see: William Stueck, *The Korean War: An International History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).

¹³¹ Chang, "Friends", 77-78.

¹³² Christensen, "Adversaries", 153-154, 165-166.

not stop and the PRC would not enter the UN. For strategic and ideological reasons, Taiwan was not expendable anymore, and U.S. Congress made sure that the executive knew this.

While the Truman administration had been able to define the basic strategic interest of the United States, namely containing Soviet power on a global scale, the White House was not able to dictate the way this goal was pursued, at least not exclusively. As Thomas J. Christensen points out, the anti-communist attitude in the United States did not allow the Truman administration to “make public distinctions between strongpoints and peripheral interests.”¹³³ Since the American executive needed public and Congressional support to raise the defense budget in order to implement its grand strategy of opposing Soviet expansionism, the Truman administration needed to make political compromises, accommodating demands of the U.S. public. One such compromise was the increasing support for the KMT regime in Taiwan.¹³⁴ As we will see in the following chapters, the search for compromises between executive and legislative branch became the defining dynamics in Washington’s Taiwan policy over the next decades. Sacrificing Taiwan in order to rescue Korea or even Europe was impossible because Congress would never allow it. The White House had to find other ways to end the Korean War.

Fortunately, the other global superpower helped Washington out. Moscow had also a strong interest in an end of the Korean War, because Stalin did not believe the original goal of unifying Korea under the banner of communism was possible anymore.¹³⁵ Instead the risk of escalation grew, and the Soviets did not want to take such a risk. Thus, the Soviet leader forced China and North Korea to start talking with the Americans about an end of the war. In an informal meeting, George F. Kennan and the Soviet ambassador at the United Nations, Jacob Malik, found enough common ground for the beginning of armistice negotiations. The talks started in Kaesong on July 8, 1951. Due to disagreement about the future borders between the two Koreas and especially the repatriation of prisoners of war, it still took two years to end the conflict. On July 27, 1953, all involved actors except South Korea signed the armistice agreement.

¹³³ Ibid., 181-182, 187.

¹³⁴ Xu, “Congress”, 54-56. For a general introduction to the interplay between White House and Congress, see: John Rourke, *Congress and the Presidency in U.S. Foreign Policymaking: A Study of Interaction and Influence, 1945-1982* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1984).

¹³⁵ Haruki Wada, “The Korean War, Stalin’s Policy, and Japan” in: *Social Science Japan Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (April, 1998), 22.

After all those years of battle and millions of deaths, Korea remained divided. Nothing had changed. Korea was not the only country in East Asia that two different national governments laid claim to. China remained divided as well, and the CCP had not given up its desire to finish the KMT regime off. Therefore, it did not take long until the next Asian crisis occurred. This time it was in the Taiwan Strait, and the United States was forced to make a decision how far its engagement in Asia went.

Managing the Cultivation of Tension

The escalation of the Korean War and the Chinese intervention deepened the animosities between Washington and Beijing to the degree of hostility and armed conflict. At the same time, both sides had been reluctant to let the situation escalate to a full scale war. Still, Beijing saw President Truman's order to send the Seventh Fleet to the Taiwan Strait as means to weaken the communist rule over China. From Beijing's point of view, Truman's decision confirmed what Mao and other Chinese leaders had claimed all the time: the United States had intervened in the Chinese Civil War on behalf of the Nationalist regime. Fearing further communist expansion, Washington, on the other hand, answered the intervention of Chinese volunteers in Korea with increased military and financial aid for CKS's regime in Taiwan. The goal was to strengthen the position of the anti-communist bloc in East Asia, by making it impossible for the PLA to conquer the island.

This U.S. attitude was illegal and hostile in Beijing's view. The Chinese leadership argued the division between China and Taiwan was not the result of an international agreement but of the civil war, and thus an internal affair. Still, since Mao perceived the United States as the biggest threat for China's national security, it made sense to ease tensions between Washington and Beijing. In this context, Mao hoped to dissuade the U.S. government from further help for Taiwan. This approach was part of the long-term strategy of the PRC.¹³⁶ The best chance for PRC officials to talk with U.S. leaders about their relationship and the Taiwan issue

¹³⁶ Zhang Baijia, "The Changing International Scene and Chinese Policy toward the United States, 1954-1970" in: Robert S. Ross and Jiang Changbin (ed.), *Re-Examining the Cold War: U.S.-China Diplomacy, 1954-1973* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 48-50.

was the Geneva Conference in 1954 where all global major powers met to settle the issues in Korea and Indochina.¹³⁷

The People's Republic wanted to make use of the conference in order to gain more international recognition. In addition, Beijing sought for more independence from the Soviet Union in its foreign policy after Stalin had died in March 1953. A first step was Zhou Enlai's development of the *Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence* which should guide Chinese foreign policy for the following decades. Beijing demanded respect for its national sovereignty and territorial integrity. Nations should agree on mutual non-aggressions. No nation should intervene in another nation's internal affairs. The foundation of relations between states should be equality and mutual benefit. Finally, all nations should exist in peaceful co-existence.¹³⁸ Regarding Taiwan, this meant that the United States had to stop its involvement, leaving the KMT regime on its own.

Washington's approach to China and Taiwan did not change. In 1952, the Republican and former U.S. Army General Dwight D. Eisenhower won the presidential elections. He assumed office on January 20, 1953, and pursued an even harder line against communism than his predecessor. During the election campaign Eisenhower and his fellow Republicans had blamed Truman's containment policy as too global, too passive and too defensive, weakening the United States abroad and at home.¹³⁹ Enhancing the idea of containment, the new Republican administration wanted to pursue a "roll-back" strategy that aimed to drive the communists out of those countries that had recently fallen under their rule. Such an approach did not allow disengaging from the Taiwan Strait.

The new U.S. president's strict position towards communist China did not mean that Washington granted CKS unconditional support. While the United States

¹³⁷ For an account about the discussion about Indochina at the Geneva Conference, see: Robert F. Randle, *Geneva 1954: The Settlement of the Indochinese War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969). For the discussions about Korea, see: Henry W. Brands, Jr., "The Dwight D. Eisenhower Administration, Syngman Rhee, and the 'Other' Geneva Conference of 1954" in: *Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. 56, No. 1 (Feb., 1987); J. Y. Ra, "The Politics of Conference: The Political Conference on Korea in Geneva, 26 April-15 June 1954" in: *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 34, No. 3 (Jul., 1999). For an account of the Chinese approach to the conference, see: Zhai Qiang, "China and the Geneva Conference of 1954" in: *The China Quarterly*, No. 129 (Mar., 1992).

¹³⁸ The five principles were codified for the first time in an agreement between India and China from April, 1954. They were later adopted and enhanced to ten points in the final declaration of the Asian-African Conference in Bandung in April, 1955. For an introductory reading about the development of these principles, see: Mark Chi-kwan, *China and the World Since 1945: An International History* (Oxon: Routledge, 2012), chapter 3.

¹³⁹ Kindermann, "Aufstieg", 356.

sent military advisors to Taiwan and almost doubled the financial aid for the Nationalists,¹⁴⁰ the willingness to put pressure on the CCP regime was limited. The White House did not want to risk any further destabilization in East Asia. One example for Eisenhower's restraint was his rejection of the KMT's plans to reconquer the mainland.¹⁴¹ Another example was the administration's public statement that the off-shore islands Quemoy, Matsu and Dachen belonged to China although the Nationalists used them as defensive strongholds. From Washington's point of view, only the status of Taiwan and the Pescadores remained unsettled due to their history as Japanese colonies.¹⁴² Similar to Acheson's comments about Korea and the U.S. defensive perimeter in early 1950, these words did not have the effect Washington hoped for. Instead, they offered Beijing a chance to weaken CKS and his regime.

Facing domestic criticism for not having liberated Taiwan already, Mao decided that it was time to clamp down on the Nationalists.¹⁴³ He explained his plans to the CCP's Politburo in July, 1954. The PLA was to attack the KMT's strongholds on the small islands close to the mainland's coast in order to weaken Chiang's capabilities to strike against the mainland. Moreover, the chairman concluded such an attack would demonstrate to the Americans, how costly it was to defend Taiwan and the off-shore outposts. The goal was to keep Washington from a defense treaty with Chiang Kai-shek.¹⁴⁴

Before the military actions against the Nationalists began, the PRC leadership conducted a propaganda campaign which started with an editorial in the 人民

¹⁴⁰ Kindermann, "Aufstieg", 393.

¹⁴¹ Chang Su-Ya, "Unleashing Chiang Kai-Shek? Eisenhower and the Policy of Indecision Toward Taiwan, 1953", Taiwan Central Study Academy (1991), http://www.mh.sinica.edu.tw/mhdocument/publicationdetail/publicationdetail_874.pdf (accessed: 10/30/2013), 383, 386.

¹⁴² Chang, "Friends", 113-117.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 118-120.

¹⁴⁴ Zhang, "Changing", 49-50. Other scholars like Gordon H. Chang or Gong Li present a more diverse set of goals. For further reading see: Gordon H. Chang and He Di, "The Absence of War in the U.S.-China Confrontation over Quemoy and Matsu in 1954-1955: Contingency, Luck, Deterrence" in: *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 98, No. 5 (Dec., 1993); Gong Li, "Tension Across the Taiwan Strait in the 1950s: Chinese Strategy and Tactics" in: Robert S. Ross/Jiang Changbin (ed.), *Re-Examining the Cold War: U.S.-China Diplomacy, 1954-1973* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001). There are even authors who question if Mao was a rational decision-maker at all, and had any concrete goals in mind, when he ordered the attacks on the Nationalists outposts, see: Michael M. Sheng, "Mao and China's Relations with the Superpowers in the 1950s: A New Look at the Taiwan Strait Crises and the Sino-Soviet Split" in: *Modern China*, Vol. 34, No. 4 (Oct., 2008).

日报 (People's Daily) entitled "We Must Liberate Taiwan!" on July 23.¹⁴⁵ The campaign ran for several months until on September 3, 1954, the PLA began shelling the off-shore islands. In spite of the aggressive PRC propaganda, this move was unexpected for Washington, forcing the U.S. leadership to decide how far their commitment to Taiwan went. Similar to the situation in Korea, this was not only a matter of strategic considerations but also of the United States' credibility and reliability as an ally. To Eisenhower, it was a question of prestige.¹⁴⁶

By adopting a strong stance against the PRC's actions, Washington tried to deescalate the situation. In an attempt to deter the PRC from further aggression, the White House did not only condemn China's actions and emphasized the American resolve to defend Taiwan and the Pescadores. The U.S. administration also threatened to use nuclear weapons against China and entertained publicly the idea of an intervention by U.S. forces in the Taiwan Strait.¹⁴⁷ With this belligerent rhetoric, Washington wanted to protect Taiwan, but also sought to prevent a new war with China.

The developments in Asia since the early 1950s led the Eisenhower administration to reevaluate the strategic value of Taiwan. After the French withdrawal from Indochina, there were not many allied forces left in East Asia. In order to counterbalance the expansion of communism in the region, Eisenhower thought the United States and its allies needed CKS and the ROC troops.¹⁴⁸ This thinking added to the so called "New Look" doctrine which based on nuclear deterrence and America's resolve to maintain the status-quo not allowing any further expansion of worldwide communism.¹⁴⁹ The threat of massive retaliation was combined with the strengthening of regimes and groups that were opposing communism in places of strategic interest for the United States. The White House's new approach put Tai-

¹⁴⁵ Chang/He, "Absence", 1509.

¹⁴⁶ Memcon, "Memorandum of Telephone Conversation Between the President and the Acting Secretary of State", 9/6/1954 in: United States Department of States, FRUS, 1952-1954, Volume XIV, Part 1, China and Japan (in two parts), <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1952-54v14p1/d280> (accessed: 09/20/2014).

¹⁴⁷ Chang, "Friends", 120-121.

¹⁴⁸ Kindermann, "Aufstieg", 397.

¹⁴⁹ For more details about Eisenhower's foreign policy and the "New Look" doctrine, see: Saki Dockrill, *Eisenhower's New-Look National Security Policy, 1953-61* (New York: St. Martin's, 1996); Peter J. Roman, *Eisenhower and the Missile Gap* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995).

wan in an altered strategic context, making the island and its regime an important aspect of the administration's grand strategy.¹⁵⁰

In the critical situation of late 1954, Washington was now ready to negotiate a defense treaty with Taiwan demonstrating its commitment to Chiang's regime and the fight against communism. If the attack on the KMT outposts had aimed to prevent an official alliance between the United States and the Republic of China on Taiwan, Beijing had failed. On December 2, 1954, Washington and Taipei signed a Mutual Defense Treaty.¹⁵¹ The agreement limited the defensive obligation of the United States to the Taiwanese main island and the Pescadores islands. Moreover, it was just a defense alliance, and did not include the promise to support a nationalist invasion of the mainland.¹⁵²

The Treaty was exactly what Mao had wanted to avoid. Yet, neither Quemoy nor Matsu nor the Dachen were included in the agreement. This encouraged Beijing to continue its attacks, focusing now on an invasion of the Dachen islands after the PLA had already conquered Yijiangshan Island. However, the attack had to be postponed several times, because Mao wanted to prevent direct clashes with the U.S. forces, operating in the area. The Chinese leadership had to wait for Washington to make its next move.

In a compromise typical for the U.S. China policy of the first decade after World War II, Eisenhower opted to leave the Dachens to the mainland. At the same, in an attempt to appease CKS, the president promised to defend Quemoy and Matsu. After harsh arguments between U.S. and ROC officials, Chiang gave in and ordered the withdrawal from the Dachens.¹⁵³ The assurances about the other offshore strongholds served to save U.S. credibility as an ally and found their expression in the so called *Formosa Resolution*.¹⁵⁴ The resolution meant a "blank check" for the U.S. president on behalf of Taiwan's defense, linking Eisenhower's own

¹⁵⁰ Christensen, "Adversaries", 194.

¹⁵¹ An interesting account of the goals and considerations of the Taiwanese side can be found in: Lin Hsiao-Ting, "U.S.-Taiwan Military Diplomacy Revisited: Chiang Kai-shek, Baituan, and the 1954 Mutual Defense Pact" in: *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 37, Issue 5 (Nov, 2013).

¹⁵² Taiwan Documents Project, "Mutual Defense Treaty between the United States of America and the Republic of China" (12/02/1954), <http://www.taiwandocuments.org/mutual01.htm> (accessed: 10/28/2014).

¹⁵³ Telegram, "Telegram from the Ambassador in the Republic of China (Rankin) to the Department of State", 01/23/1955 in: FRUS, 1955-1957, Volume II, China, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1955-57v02/d32> (accessed: 09/20/2014).

¹⁵⁴ Resolution, "Joint Resolution by the Congress", 1/29/1955 in: FRUS, 1955-1957, Volume II, China, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1955-57v02/d56> (accessed: 09/20/2014).

credibility and prestige to the security of Chiang's regime. Nonetheless, the U.S. administration still wanted to prevent an escalation and another conflict with the Chinese communists, searching for a diplomatic solution of the crisis.

Again, the Soviet Union helped Washington out. After the Soviets had indicated that Moscow did not want any further escalation of the crisis, Beijing appeared more open for a diplomatic solution. Since Stalin's death in March 1953, the Soviet leadership had been occupied by internal rivalries, diminishing the Soviet resources for a conflict with the United States. Even after Nikita Khrushchev had successfully concluded the internal struggle with Lavrentiy Beria, the new first secretary of the CPSU still faced a rivalry with Georgy Malenkov which was not resolved until early 1955.¹⁵⁵ Therefore, the Kremlin made clear to Beijing that the Soviet Union would not support any further attacks on the KMT's outposts because the off-shore islands were a local problem not worth the risk of a full scale war with the United States.¹⁵⁶ Since Mao had always claimed the Taiwan issue to be an internal affair, he could not argue with Moscow's point of view. Besides, the PRC was too dependent from Soviet aid for the further development of its economy.¹⁵⁷ Beijing could not afford any resentment between the two communist regimes and followed Moscow's advice.

In the end, Beijing demonstrated its willingness to lower tensions in the Taiwan Strait via different actions of good will. First, at the Bandung Conference, Zhou Enlai announced his government's willingness to solve the crisis in the Taiwan Strait peacefully. He suggested the continuation of the ambassadorial talks which had started at the Geneva Conference. The Chinese Prime Minister wanted to use the talks with the Americans to gain more respect for the PRC's government and make Washington more sensitive for the situation in the Taiwan Strait. Later, Beijing also released several U.S. citizens out of Chinese custody.¹⁵⁸ Finally, the

¹⁵⁵ For more details about the power struggle in the Kremlin after Stalin's death, see: Vladislav M. Zubok, *A Failed Empire: The Soviet Union in the Cold War from Stalin to Gorbachev* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), chapters 2-3.

¹⁵⁶ Chang, "Friends", 129.

¹⁵⁷ As John K. Fairbanks argues, China's economic dependency from the Soviet Union is evidenced by a reversal of Chinese trade patterns after World War II. Before 1945, China sold its agricultural products to Japan and Europe, but after 1949 the Soviet Union and other socialist countries became the Peoples Republic main trading partners, see: John K. Fairbanks, *The United States and China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), 401.

¹⁵⁸ Li, "Tension", 152-154.

PLA stopped the shelling of Quemoy and Matsu on May 1 1955, ending the military period of the first Taiwan Strait Crisis.

At first, Washington rejected Zhou's offer to continue the ambassadorial talks.¹⁵⁹ However, John F. Dulles later changed his mind. The talks could continue as long as any discussion about Taiwan's status was excluded due to the absence of ROC officials. The U.S. Secretary of State saw the talks as a possibility to further deescalate the situation in the Taiwan Strait, and buy some time on the matter. Although the Taiwan issue was of utmost importance for the Chinese, they agreed for the sake of progress. In August, 1955, the ambassadorial talks continued. Although they never led to an agreement about Taiwan's status, the regular meetings between PRC and U.S. officials served as a direct channel of communication between Washington and Beijing until the 1960s.

The course and result of the first Taiwan Strait Crisis led to different consequences for the further development of Sino-American relations and particularly the Taiwan issue. Taipei was now assured of the United State's support which was the result of a lack of alternatives for Washington. However, the U.S. executive had also demonstrated the limits of U.S. commitment to defend the ROC regime as the Eisenhower administration had done all it could to avoid an escalation of the situation. As Nancy Bernkopf-Tucker argues the difficulties to control its allies on Taiwan caused Washington to develop the policy of strategic ambiguity, which should deter both sides of the Taiwan Strait from attacking each other.¹⁶⁰ Another consequence was that the White House's threat to use nuclear weapons in order to defend Taiwan led Mao to the decision to develop a Chinese nuclear arsenal.¹⁶¹

The latter became necessary after Moscow had made clear that the Soviet Union's nuclear arsenal did not serve the PRC's purpose to solve the Taiwan issue. From Mao's point of view, the U.S. commitment to the security of Taiwan went further than Moscow's readiness to stand behind its Chinese ally. This conclusion set the root for the Sino-Soviet conflict which eventually led to hostility between the two communist countries in the late 1960s. Another drawback was that Mao

¹⁵⁹ The ambassadorial talks between U.S. and PRC officials had begun parallel to the Conference in Geneva in 1954 but were postponed after only a few meetings because Washington wanted the ROC to participate as an equal. For further reading see: Xiao Yufeng, *Negotiating with the Enemy: U.S.-China Talks During the Cold War, 1949-1972* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006).

¹⁶⁰ Nancy Bernkopf Tucker elaborated this thesis in her previously cited article about the United States' ambiguous approach towards Taiwan, see: Bernkopf Tucker, "Ambiguity".

¹⁶¹ Bernkopf Tucker, "Strait", 14-15.

had failed in his attempt to prevent a formal U.S.-ROC alliance. At least, this made the American behavior concerning Taiwan more predictable for the Chinese. All in all, it was a disappointing end of the crisis. Yet, there was no need for PRC leaders to admit defeat in the Taiwan Strait because they could sell the whole operation as a success to the Chinese people, after winning back the Dachen Islands. Hence, new attempts to weaken CKS's regime were not excluded.

In the years after the crisis, the Eisenhower administration reiterated the limits of its commitment in the Taiwan Strait. NSC 5723 from October 1957 made clear that Taipei should not provoke the PRC. The United States did not support any plans to reconquer the mainland. U.S. military aid for CKS's regime was mainly limited to non-offensive measures. Fortunately, the MDT gave Washington a de-facto veto against military adventures by the Nationalists. In Robert Accinelli's opinion, this made the treaty "a highly useful diplomatic instrument in keeping Chiang's armed forces in check, thereby promoting stabilization in the Taiwan Strait."¹⁶² However, NSC 5723 also emphasized that the KMT regime remained an important ally. In the context of Eisenhower's *domino theory*, this meant that Taiwan was of strategic value, its protection part of the United States' struggle against the Soviet Union and worldwide communism.

In the late 1950s, Beijing faced different problems that weakened the position of the CCP's regime considerably. The Sino-Soviet alliance started to deteriorate in the middle of 1958 due to differing ideological and political attitudes in Beijing and Moscow. Furthermore, China faced a difficult economic situation. The first Chinese five-year-plan (1953-57) had demanded a great effort by the Chinese people, uncovering the great imbalance between the sectors of agriculture and industry in China's economic system. Thus, in order to accelerate the industrialization and modernization of China, Mao and his aides decided to start an economic and social campaign. They called it the *Great Leap Forward*.¹⁶³

To distract the people in China from the great sacrifices, Mao's plan would ask of them, the Chinese leadership sought to create a new crisis in the Taiwan Strait. The idea was to provoke an American intervention, so that the United States

¹⁶² Robert Accinelli, "A Thorn in the Side of Peace" - The Eisenhower Administration and the 1958 Offshore Islands Crisis" in: Robert S. Ross and Jiang Changbin (ed.), *Re-Examining the Cold War: U.S.-China Diplomacy, 1954-1973* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 111.

¹⁶³ For further reading about the *Great Leap Forward*, see: Spence, "Chinas", chapter 21.

could serve as a powerful enemy stereotype. Furthermore, a success at the cost of the Nationalists could help the CCP's regime's legitimacy at home.¹⁶⁴ On July 17, 1958, the PRC leadership ordered the shelling of Quemoy and Matsu. The bombardment started several weeks later on August 23, and took the KMT troops by total surprise, killing around 600 men in the beginning. After the experience of the first crisis, Mao wanted to avoid a direct conflict with the United States. Therefore, he ordered to avoid any American casualties.¹⁶⁵ Although it took some time, the White House did not disappoint the CCP Chairman, reacting harshly to the attack.

On September 4, the Eisenhower administration announced its resolve to fulfill its duty as an ally. The loss of their strongholds and the troops stationed there would mean a tremendous setback for the Nationalists, weakening the anti-communist resistance in Asia. Eisenhower therefore ordered the Seventh Fleet to escort supply convoys for Chiang's troops on Quemoy and Matsu. Under the impression that the Chinese would not risk a full scale war with the United States, the president also wanted the American forces in the region to stand ready for "war operations". This order served to deter the Chinese side from any further escalation.¹⁶⁶ The message for the Chinese communists should be loud and clear: The United States was ready to defend the Nationalist outposts.

This demonstration of U.S. resolve and Soviet signals to Beijing that Moscow did not endorse the Chinese attempts to conquer the KMT outposts brought the Second Taiwan Strait Crisis to a quick end in October. The PLA lacked the capabilities for an amphibious assault on the small islands anyway, especially with the U.S. Navy blocking the Taiwan Strait. Since there seemed nothing more to gain for the PRC, Zhou Enlai suggested to Washington the continuation of the ambassadorial talks in Warsaw. This gave both sides a chance to sort out a diplomatic solution, something the White House welcomed.

Although both sides were still not able to agree about Taiwan's status, they were able to settle the crisis. Washington promised to stop U.S. escorts for the nationalist supply convoys, as the PRC stopped the shelling of the islands.¹⁶⁷ Yet, this new crisis had demonstrated how unstable the situation in the Taiwan Strait was.

¹⁶⁴ Christensen, "Adversaries", 205.

¹⁶⁵ Li, "Tension", 156-158.

¹⁶⁶ Chang, "Friends", 184-185; Accinelli, "Thorn", 117-118.

¹⁶⁷ Accinelli, "Thorn", 123.

This problem would not go away as long as the KMT regime had troops on Matsu and Quemoy.

In the aftermath of the crisis the White House urged CKS to withdraw his forces from the islands, but the ROC leader refused. Chiang's argument was that his regime's legitimacy to rule Taiwan based on the idea of reunification with the mainland. A withdrawal from the off-shore strongholds would appear as a withdrawal from this idea. According to CKS, the effect of the loss of Matsu and Quemoy "on the morale on Taiwan would be so serious that the defense of Taiwan itself would crumble."¹⁶⁸ The U.S. administration had to find another way to stabilize the Taiwan Strait.

Dulles found a solution. Washington forced the ROC to sign a joint communiqué, in which the regime denounced the use of force to re-gain the mainland.¹⁶⁹ Taipei's renunciation was the final piece to deescalate the crisis.¹⁷⁰ In return, Washington agreed that the security of Taiwan was linked to Quemoy and Matsu. According to Gottfried Karl Kindermann and Robert Accinelli, this promise incorporated the KMT outposts into the framework of the MDT.¹⁷¹

Interestingly, Mao seemed to agree with his old adversary Chiang about the importance of KMT forces on the off-shore islands. The communist leader was afraid that a withdrawal of the Nationalists' troops meant the beginning of the separation of Taiwan from the mainland which could result in a *Two-China-policy*. Therefore, despite all the belligerent rhetoric at Warsaw, the Communists took steps to prevent the KMT from leaving Quemoy and Matsu.¹⁷² Both, the Communists and Nationalists, wanted to prevent the United States from conducting any kind of *Two-China-policy*, an idea the DOS had unsuccessfully tinkered with before but that was vetoed by Eisenhower. Mao's and Chiang's rejection of an American *Two-China-policy* established a tacit agreement between them about the *One-*

¹⁶⁸ Memcon, John Foster Dulles, 10/21/1958 in: FRUS, 1958-1960, Volume XIX, China, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1958-60v19/d197> (accessed: 09/20/2014).

¹⁶⁹ Joint Communiqué, 10/23/1958 in: FRUS, 1958-1960, Volume XIX, China, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1958-60v19/d209> (accessed: 09/20/2014).

¹⁷⁰ Leonard H. D. Gordon, "United States Opposition to Use of Force in the Taiwan Strait, 1954-1962" in: *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 72, No. 3 (Dec., 1985), 652.

¹⁷¹ Kindermann, "Aufstieg", 482; Accinelli, "Thorn", 134.

¹⁷² Christensen, "Adversaries", 196-198.

China-principle.¹⁷³ This principle had a major impact on the Chinese-American rapprochement process that was initiated by Richard Nixon over a decade later.

The Second Taiwan Strait Crisis consolidated the status-quo of the Taiwan issue. Washington demonstrated its resolve to defend Chiang's regime, and indicated to their allies the limits of the U.S. commitment. The latter helped to stabilize the situation in the Taiwan Strait, by preventing the KMT from any military aggression against the PRC. This was the only advantage Beijing gained from the crisis. The regime in Taipei had not been weakened, and the Chinese had to learn again that the Soviet Union pursued its own interests in order to prevent a major conflict with the United States. Moreover, Moscow denied the PRC access to modern nuclear technique. This attitude, further ideological differences, and the PRC's refusal to allow the Soviet navy permanent access to Chinese ports led to dissonances in Sino-Soviet relations.¹⁷⁴ Worst of all, the *Great Leap Forward* failed, leading to a famine in China which killed around twenty million people between 1959 and 1962. Mao was able to remain in power, but his plan had not led to the kind of self-strengthening, he had intended.¹⁷⁵

Both crises in the Taiwan Strait demonstrated, how far away the Taiwan issue was from being settled. The rift between all involved actors deepened. Beijing's attacks on the off-shore outposts of the KMT regime increased the level of U.S. engagement in the Taiwan Strait. However, in their outcomes, they helped to stabilize the situation in East Asia, minimizing the risk of new escalations in the region. Washington and Beijing were able to manage their hostile relationship, even establishing with the Warsaw talks a direct line of communication in the process.

Searching for New Ways

In the early 1960s, Mao shifted his attention from economic planning to social and ideological considerations. The late 1950s had been very difficult for the PRC. The economic development went slower than expected, and the relationship with the

¹⁷³ Li, "Tension", 170-171.

¹⁷⁴ Christensen, "Adversaries", 207-209.

¹⁷⁵ Spence, "Chinas", 687-688.

Soviet Union became more difficult. It was a time when Mao realized that the CCP had to fan the flame of class struggle anew in China. The result was the so called “Learn from Lei Feng” campaign of 1963, a program that should teach the Chinese society the basic values of socialism. Mao also criticized attempts of economic reformers like Liu Shaoqi and Chen Yun as revisionist, and blamed CPSU First Secretary Khrushchev’s idea of a *peaceful coexistence* with the capitalist West from 1956 as responsible for the problems in China. According to Beijing, the Soviet “revisionism” prevented the successful continuation of the international socialist revolution, which had repercussion for socialism in China.¹⁷⁶ This criticism did not only serve as an explanation for the problems in the country but was also an attempt to question the leading role of the Soviet Union among socialist states.

Sino-Soviet relations had been deteriorating since the late 1950s, and this process continued in the early 1960s. While the PRC claimed the Sino-Soviet alliance to work well, numerous encounters about ideological and political questions between Chinese and Soviet officials at international conferences proved the growing rift between the two biggest socialist countries. The main battle ground for those arguments was the question of Albania’s striving for more independence from Soviet influence. Since Beijing wanted to outlive Moscow, the PRC decided in 1961 to support Albania with industrial equipment and generous financial aid although the situation of the Chinese economy remained difficult. An even more obvious sign for the Sino-Soviet dissent was that the Soviet Union withdrew all experts who worked in China as advisors in the fields of economics, engineering, and military.¹⁷⁷ The relationship was seriously damaged, and Beijing had to be more careful in its foreign affairs if it wanted to avoid international isolation.

The situation in the United States in the early 1960s was different and marked by political change. The main reason for this impression was the change in the White House from a Republican to a Democratic executive. In 1960, the Democrat John F. Kennedy (JFK) had beaten the Republican hardliner Richard M. Nixon in the elections for the succession of Eisenhower. Many people believed the new administration was going to alter U.S. China policy as even the Taiwan-friendly Congress realized that Washington’s approach to Beijing had to become

¹⁷⁶ Li Jie, “Changes in China’s Domestic Situation in the 1960s and Sino-U.S. Relations” in: Robert S. Ross/Jiang Changbin (ed.), *Re-Examining the Cold War: U.S.-China Diplomacy, 1954-1973* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 296-299.

¹⁷⁷ Spence, “Chinas“, 693-694.

more flexible. However, neither Kennedy nor his successor Lyndon B. Johnson (LBJ) were strong enough to enforce concessions to a communist country against Congressional opposition. Furthermore, JFK remained skeptic about the PRC whose aggressive behavior and belligerent rhetoric alienated him. The Chinese success to develop its own nuclear capabilities did not help to lessen Kennedy's concerns that China could threaten the balance of power in Asia.¹⁷⁸

Still, when Washington learned about the rift in the relationship between Beijing and Moscow, the White House considered its options how to realize better U.S.-China relations. It was clear that Congress would not accept all of them. Access for the PRC to the UN for example was out of question. Due to domestic pressure, the Kennedy administration pursued the same policy on this matter as the previous administrations. In a private letter, JFK promised to CKS the United States would do all it could to keep the Communists out.¹⁷⁹ The easiest way to keep this promise was to treat China's representation as an *Important Question*. That way, it would need a two-thirds majority in the General Assembly (UNGA) to change the status-quo.¹⁸⁰ Getting one-third of the member states to vote against the People's Republic was easy to achieve for Washington. At this time, the United States could still expect to have enough allies in the UNGA for a vote in their favor. In the end, the PRC had to wait another decade until it could enter the United Nations. In the meantime, the White House had to look for other ways to improve its relationship with the Chinese communists.

The Kennedy administration, and later the Johnson administration, focused their efforts now on the development of trade relations as well as the improvement of travelling authorization for U.S. citizens who wanted to go to China. The trade embargo against China had existed since the Korean War, and it was more restrictive than the one against the USSR or other Eastern European countries. However, the White House's insistence that Beijing had to ask Washington for economic help postponed any improvements. It took until the late 1960s before the United States

¹⁷⁸ Foot, Rosemary, "Redefinitions: The Domestic Context of America's China Policy in the 1960s" in: Robert S. Ross/Jiang Changbin (ed.), *Re-Examining the Cold War: U.S.-China Diplomacy, 1954-1973* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 281-282.

¹⁷⁹Letter, "Letter From President Kennedy to President Chiang", 4/17/1961 in: FRUS, 1961-1963, Volume XXII, Northeast Asia, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v22/d21> (accessed: 09/21/2014).

¹⁸⁰ For further reading on the matter of the Chinese representation in the United Nations, see Foot, "Practice".

sold the first food and medical supplies to China. It needed even several more years, before medical personnel and scientists were allowed to travel from the U.S. to China, and some additional time before the USA invited Chinese journalists to the United States.¹⁸¹ Even in these rather low profile matters, Washington was not able to develop a basis for trustworthy relations with the People's Republic. The only real tangible concession from the Kennedy administration came on the matter of Taiwan.

After two severe Cold War crises (Berlin 1961 and Cuba 1962) which had tested global stability to its limits, Kennedy wanted to make sure that it would not come to a third crisis of such extent. In his opinion, the Taiwan Issue represented a very volatile matter. An escalation of the situation in the Taiwan Strait seemed always possible. Moreover, the growing tension in Southeast Asia occupied the United States too much to "babysit" Chiang. JFK wanted stability in the Taiwan Strait. When Washington learned that the Nationalists prepared an attack on the mainland in an attempt to exploit the failure of the *Great Leap Forward*, it became necessary "to put the Nationalists on a leash". During the ambassadorial talks in Warsaw, the Kennedy administration even informed the PRC that the U.S. did not support a Nationalist attack against the mainland.¹⁸² It was not the first time that JFK took a stance against Taiwan. As U.S. Senator in Congress, Kennedy had voted against the *Formosa Resolution*, leaving CKS with the impression U.S.-ROC relations would deteriorate during Kennedy's presidency.

Despite Kennedy's plans to visit Taiwan, the different interests of the U.S. and ROC governments led to an incremental erosion of their relationship. This development continued after Johnson had replaced the assassinated JFK as president. From CKS's point of view, the U.S. dismissal of his "recover-the-mainland campaign" was responsible for France's establishment of diplomatic relations with the PRC in 1964. The situation for Taiwan became even worse when the PRC detonated its first atomic bomb in the same year.¹⁸³ Now, the KMT leader urged the U.S. leadership to destroy all nuclear facilities on the mainland, but LBJ rejected such

¹⁸¹ Foot, "Redefinitions", 271-274.

¹⁸² Steven M. Goldstein, "Dialogue of the Deaf? The Sino-American Ambassadorial-Level Talks, 1955-1970" in: Robert S. Ross and Jiang Changbin (ed.), *Re-Examining the Cold War: U.S.-China Diplomacy, 1954-1973* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 228-229.

¹⁸³ For more details about the development of the PRC's nuclear arsenal, see: John Wilson Lewis/Xue Litai, *China Builds the Bomb* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988).

plans. As a final blow to U.S.-ROC relations, Washington entertained the idea of a *Two-China-Policy*, but Chiang was able to convince Washington to abandon this idea. As Nancy Bernkopf Tucker argues, at this point, relations between Washington and Taipei were in a dismal state.¹⁸⁴

Washington's and Taipei's interests differed vastly from each other, and were even contradicting at times. It was Taiwan's dependency on American support that prevented the U.S.-ROC alliance from breaking apart. It also helped that, in 1966, the PRC started one of the most radical and self-destructive campaigns of all time: the *Cultural Revolution*. The radicalization of China and the deepening involvement of the United States in Vietnam helped Washington and Taipei to renew the common ground of their relationship as their interests became more congruent again. Still, Washington's occupation with other more pressing problems (Vietnam for example) made the containment of communist China a low priority. The CCP regime simply did not represent a direct threat to U.S. key interests at the time. This way, the Taiwan issue was reduced to a bilateral problem, diminishing Taiwan's strategic value in the context of the Cold War. his development helped the process of normalization later.

The search for new ways in U.S.-China relations proved difficult because the Kennedy and the Johnson administration were too weak to defy domestic opposition against concessions towards communist China. The War in Vietnam added to these problems. However, the level of conflict between the United States and the People's Republic diminished significantly. Washington did not have to manage the hostility with China anymore, as the probability of an escalation between the two countries dwindled due to the restraint of Chiang and the de-facto ending of the Sino-Soviet alliance. Nonetheless, an improvement of Sino-American relations became impossible because of the *Cultural Revolution* and the self-chosen international isolation of the PRC.

¹⁸⁴ Bernkopf Tucker, "Strait", 22-25.

China's Self-Isolation

Since 1964, the situation for Beijing had improved. After the first successful nuclear test in October of the same year, China's status in the international system had advanced to the status of a nuclear power. This boosted the Chinese strategic position overnight because it granted the country some level of nuclear deterrence, making China less susceptible for coercions from foreign powers, mainly the Soviet Union.¹⁸⁵ This success also underlined Beijing's claim that the U.S. containment policy had failed. Communist China had been able to rise to major power status despite Washington's attempts to bring the CCP's regime down. After the disaster of the *Great Leap Forward*, Mao had been under pressure but now the Chinese leader's political prestige was reinstated. The nuclear program promoted the technological development in the country and helped the Chinese economy to recover, strengthening the legitimacy of the communist regime.¹⁸⁶ It was a good situation to approach the United States in order to avoid international isolation, but Washington seemed occupied by other problems.

The change in the White House from JFK to Lyndon B. Johnson after Kennedy's death had not led to a change in Washington's China policy. The new U.S. president was too concerned to appear weak and did not risk concessions toward any communist regime. Therefore, he quickly abandoned the idea to initialize foreign minister level talks with the PRC because this would have provoked Congressional critique. Another reason for the Johnson administration's decision was that Beijing supported North Vietnam with military equipment. Washington had a genuine interest to prevent further friction in the Taiwan Strait and elsewhere due to the intensifying conflict in Vietnam. LBJ, however, lacked the political courage to pursue an active improvement of Sino-American relations, which could increase the level of flexibility in U.S. Asia policy.¹⁸⁷ When in 1966 the PRC leadership

¹⁸⁵ This might be the reason why the nuclear program was not affected by the Cultural Revolution. It was too important for the PRC's security, see: Liu Yawei, "Mao Zedong and the United States: A Story of Misperception, 1960-1970" in: Li Hongshan/Hong Zhaohui (ed.), *Image, Perception, and the Making of U.S.-China Relations* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1998), 211-212.

¹⁸⁶ Li, "Changes", 300-301.

¹⁸⁷ For an introductory reading on the Vietnam War from an American perspective, see: Marilyn B. Young, *The Vietnam Wars, 1945-1990* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991); Marc Frey, *Geschichte des Vietnamkriegs: Die Tragödie in Asien und das Ende des amerikanischen Traums* (München: Beck, 1999). For an introductory reading from the Chinese perspective, see: Zhai Qiang, *China and the Vietnam Wars, 1950-1975* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

initialized the *Cultural Revolution*, all chances for an improvement of U.S.-China relations disintegrated into thin air.

In an attempt to intensify the class struggle within the Chinese society, Mao developed the idea of a *Cultural Revolution* whose ideological justification became known as the “May 16 Notification”. The true reason for Mao’s initiative was the attempt to assure his own political position, by weakening the party leadership.¹⁸⁸ Concerning the Chinese foreign policy, the *Cultural Revolution* meant a shift of the decision-making from the Politburo to the *Cultural Revolution Group* which consisted exclusively of leftist supporters of Mao.¹⁸⁹ This step did not only weaken the party leadership but also limited Zhou Enlai’s influence on foreign policy matters as he and foreign minister Chen Yi were publicly criticized on several occasions. Several other leaders of the foreign ministry were replaced by members of the *Cultural Revolution Group*, without consulting Zhou or Mao. The consequence of Zhou’s and his aides diminishing influence was a radicalization of Chinese foreign policy with the questionable highlight of an attack on the office of the British chargé d’affaires on August 23, 1967 in Beijing.

While this event prompted Mao and Zhou to push the influence of the radicals back, the damage was already done. The PRC was internationally isolated as Zhou had to admit on March 15, 1968. Even worse, the PRC had helped this development when the country had called back its ambassadors from all over the world. Only when the domestic problems caused by radical factions became too difficult to handle, Mao called for an end of the radicalization. Pulling back from his former radical views, he ordered the leftists to bring “the great disorder under heaven” under control.¹⁹⁰ Still, it took until the 9th Party Congress in April 1969 before the reign of the *Cultural Revolution Group* came to an end. The election of a new Central Committee and Politburo led to a new shift in the decision-making process.¹⁹¹ The new situation lifted a great burden from Zhou and his aides though it did not solve all problems of the PRC’s foreign policy.

¹⁸⁸ For a more detailed reading on the Cultural Revolution, see: Barnouin, Barbara/Yu Changgen, *Ten Years of Turbulence: The Chinese Cultural Revolution* (London: Kegan Paul International, 1993); Paul Clark, *The Chinese Cultural Revolution: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

¹⁸⁹ Maurice Meisner, *Mao's China and After: A History of the People's Republic* (New York: The Free Press, 1999), 314-315.

¹⁹⁰ Li, “Changes”, 307-308.

¹⁹¹ For further reading about Chinese foreign policy during the Cultural Revolution, see: Barbara Barnouin and Yu Changgen, *Chinese Foreign Policy During the Cultural Revolution* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).

Even after the level of radicalization of the *Cultural Revolution* had dropped significantly, foreign policy making remained complex and difficult in the PRC. Too many agencies provided the Chinese leaders with information and analytical material, hampering the decision-making process considerably. All decisions were still discussed and ultimately made in the Politburo.¹⁹² At least, the PRC leadership made some changes. The foreign ministry became again responsible for diplomatic questions and all ambassadors were sent back to their posts. In addition, Zhou Enlai received more competences which reinstated national interests and not radical ideology as the guiding basis for Beijing's foreign policy.¹⁹³

The *Cultural Revolution* made an improvement of Sino-American relations impossible. The PRC's belligerent rhetoric during these years and the threat to attack Japan left the Johnson administration's China experts irritated. The biggest problem, however, was that Beijing suspended the Warsaw talks.¹⁹⁴ The Chinese decision took Washington not only by surprise but also limited the U.S. administration's options in its China policy.

In spite of the belligerent tones from Beijing which appeared rather ritually than threatening, Johnson saw the China threat diminishing. The war in Vietnam and the nuclear arms race were more important concerns for the U.S. As a consequence, the White House developed three modest goals for its China policy. First, Washington wanted to stop the PRC's support for the North Vietnamese and the Vietcong. Second, the Johnson administration tried to improve the U.S. image in China. Third, the administration strove to lay down the basis for better Sino-American relations after the *Cultural Revolution*.¹⁹⁵

Washington was mainly interested to prevent the PRC from a direct intervention in Vietnam. As long as U.S. ground forces did not invade North Vietnam, Beijing would not feel threatened. The White House was willing to overlook China's, according to the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), purely defensive support for Vietnam.¹⁹⁶ Although LBJ wanted to avoid any friction with the PRC, the Chi-

¹⁹² Gong Li, "Chinese Decision Making and the Thawing of U.S.-China Relations" in: Robert S. Ross/Jiang Changbin, *Re-Examining the Cold War: U.S.-China Diplomacy, 1954-1973* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 324-325.

¹⁹³ Li, "Changes", 309.

¹⁹⁴ Goldstein, "Dialogue", 230.

¹⁹⁵ Robert D. Schulzinger, "The Johnson Administration, China, and the Vietnam War" in: Robert S. Ross/Jiang Changbin (ed.), *Re-Examining the Cold War: U.S.-China Diplomacy, 1954-1973* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 255-256, 259-261.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 238-241, 245.

nese overall restraint allowed him to order the extension of airstrikes against North Vietnam (Operation *Rolling Thunder*).¹⁹⁷ Beijing's calmness about Vietnam suggests that the PRC wanted to prevent an escalation of the situation as much as Washington.

China had a strong interest in a quick end of the Vietnam War. Beijing feared that U.S. troops could invade North Vietnam, representing a direct threat to Chinese territory. This could lead to a similar situation as during the Korean War when U.S. led troops crossed the 38th parallel. Moreover, the CCP's regime was afraid that Moscow's influence in Southeast Asia could increase if North Vietnam won the war. Hence, the PRC was genuinely interested to contain the conflict, without direct involvement. In this situation, Beijing used a double-edged strategy. On the one hand, the Chinese regime made unequivocally clear to Washington under which conditions China would have no other choice than to militarily intervene. On the other hand, when Moscow suggested that the PRC should increase its support for Hanoi, this appeal was denied, demonstrating how deep the rift between the former allies had become.

The mid-1960s had left Washington and Beijing with a chance to improve their bilateral relations. The degree of hostility had significantly decreased, and both countries shared a desire to avoid any escalating conflict between them because both sides were occupied with other issues that bound valuable resources. Unfortunately, these same issues prevented Beijing and Washington from concrete measures to improve their relationship. Instead, they again managed their mutual aversion. While the United States was deeply entrenched in the war in Vietnam, the PRC was caught in self-inflicted international isolation due to the *Cultural Revolution* and the quickly declining relationship with the USSR. Especially the latter, however, should open a chance for the improvement of Sino-American relations, a chance which LBJ's successor Richard M. Nixon was going to grasp.

¹⁹⁷ For a detailed account of Operation *Rolling Thunder* and the air war in Vietnam, see: Ronald B. Frankum Jr., *Like Rolling Thunder: The Air War in Vietnam, 1964-1975* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005).

Conclusion and Discussion

The political struggles between Americans and the Chinese began for two reasons. The first reason was the aforementioned Taiwan issue that one can trace back to the fight between the nationalist KMT under Chiang Kai-shek and the CCP under Mao Zedong. As soon as the Chinese Civil War broke out shortly after the surrender of the Imperial Japanese Army, Washington decided to support the KMT's regime, which was the official government of China at this time. However, when the civil war ended with the victory of the Communists in 1949, the United States did not accept this outcome. Washington declined to recognize the new communist government in Beijing, and continued instead to have official diplomatic relations with the Nationalists who had fled to Taiwan.

In this context, we have to ask if the Truman administration could not have done more, either to save the nationalist regime, or prevent the alienation from the Chinese communists. At times, Truman and his aides appeared too hesitant out of fear to provoke the Soviet Union. Washington should have either provided the Nationalists with the aid needed, or accommodated the Communists after their victory. Thomas J. Christensen correctly argues that although there was no chance for friendship between Washington and Beijing, an opportunity for a working relationship existed. All it needed was the official recognition of the PRC regime.¹⁹⁸ Instead, the Truman administration appeared indecisive and confused in its China policy. In addition, anti-communist sentiments in the U.S. were too strong. In the end, any chance for U.S.-PRC cooperation completely disintegrated after Mao's decision to have an alliance with the Soviet Union.

The emergence of the antagonism between the United States and the Soviet Union, hence, represents the second reason for the problems between the People's Republic and the United States. The U.S.-Soviet rivalry eventually led to a bipolar system in the world with a liberal-capitalistic bloc led by the United States on the one side, and the totalitarian-communist bloc led by the Soviet Union on the other. This constellation forced most nations on the globe to choose their side in the conflict. The young PRC regime was no exception and finally opted to "lean to one

¹⁹⁸ Christensen, "Adversaries", 138-139.

side”, allying itself with the Soviet Union.¹⁹⁹

In this situation, the Chinese Nationalists became an attractive ally for the United States, an assessment that was confirmed when the PRC entered the Korean War in late 1950. Taiwan helped to contain communism in East Asia, and kept the PRC in check. As Nancy Bernkopf Tucker puts it, while the Taiwan issue was the result of the unsettled Chinese Civil War, the American involvement in the Taiwan Strait based mainly upon the anti-communist ethos of the Nationalists and the American search for allies in the global conflict with Moscow.²⁰⁰ Thus, from a U.S. point of view, the regime in Taiwan represented all of China. Certainly, this did not reflect political realities, but ideology and power politics entrenched the Taiwan issue now into the Cold War, leaving Chinese and Americans stuck in a conflict for decades to come.

While Sino-American relations between 1945 and 1968 were mostly defined by conflict, Washington and Beijing still endeavored to keep the level of escalation as low as possible. Thus, the degree of animosity varied but led never to the *ultima ratio*. Both sides were afraid that a full scale war would cost too much. Beijing was afraid, the PRC regime could lose control over China, and the United States wanted to prevent an intervention by the Soviet Union which could easily escalate to a Third World War. This was too dangerous due to the huge nuclear arsenals, Americans and Russians had at their disposal.

The Taiwan issue stood in the center of dissent between the U.S. and the PRC leadership. Although the island had proven its strategic usefulness as a bastion against the spread of communism in the region, different U.S. administrations had made clear the limits of America’s willingness to support Chiang. This did not mean that the United States seriously considered giving up Taiwan as the political costs at home and within the western alliance would have been too great. But both crises in the Taiwan Strait demonstrated how fragile the situation there was. Therefore, if the White House wanted to preserve stability in Asia-Pacific, it was imperative to avoid any escalation in the Taiwan Strait. Washington could not allow the regime in Taipei to provoke the mainland.

¹⁹⁹ On July 1, 1949, Mao Zedong held a speech in which he made clear that the People’s Republic would see the Soviet Union as its natural ally, see: “The Mao Regime” in: Richard John Lufano/William Theodore De Bary, *Sources of Chinese Tradition: From 1600 Through the Twentieth Century, Vol. 2* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 452-453.

²⁰⁰ Bernkopf Tucker, “Strait“, 11-12.

In the early 1960s, the Kennedy administration made it known to the PRC that it would not support any attempts by the Nationalists to re-conquer the mainland. The “leashing” of CKS, however, was not an overture for rapprochement plans, as Nancy Bernkopf Tucker argues, but had rather the character of a pragmatic Cold War decision.²⁰¹ JFK wanted to signal America’s good will to Beijing in an attempt to lower tensions with China, making use of the developing frictions between the Soviet Union and the People’s Republic.

Different developments during this period, however, prevented Washington from exploiting the Sino-Soviet rift. The Vietnam War and later the *Cultural Revolution* ruined any hopes for the establishment of a Sino-American working relationship, which could lead to long-term stability. The conflict in Vietnam and the negative image of communist China in the U.S. left no leeway for rapprochement. The start of the *Cultural Revolution* in China and constant threats to intervene in Southeast Asia made such a development impossible. In the meantime, China’s conflict with the Soviet Union deepened, and the country launched itself into self-inflicted international isolation.

Considering the course of Sino-American relations after World War II and the reasons for its conflictual character, it seems obvious that the only chance for real reconciliation between the United States and the People’s Republic lay in a compromise about Taiwan. However, due to political constraints at home and abroad, the Chinese and Americans were not able to find one. This problem did not vanish during the years of rapprochement and normalization, when strategic considerations forced both countries to weigh the benefits of a partnership. Their different views about Taiwan allowed Chinese and Americans, even in times of a de-facto alliance, to become only lukewarm with each other, adding to the difficulties both sides faced when they negotiated about normalization.

²⁰¹ Bernkopf Tucker. “China and America”, 83.

Chapter II: Breaking New Grounds, 1969–1976

Sometimes history seems to have its own sense of irony. After World War II the relationship between the United States and the People's Republic was defined by mistrust, hostility, and conflict. The different social orders in each country prevented their political leaders to search for ways of reconciliation. Out of fear of escalation, Washington and Beijing endeavored to keep the level of conflict manageable, avoiding full scale war with each other. However, ideological and cultural differences affected both sides' mutual perception; therefore it is not surprising that only simultaneous strategic re-evaluations on both sides enabled positive change. The Cold War influenced most strategic consideration in Washington and Beijing. The aforementioned irony lies in the question of who conducted this change in Sino-American relations.

The Republican President Richard M. Nixon had always been one of the most fervent advocates of an uncompromising attitude towards "Red China". For many people in Washington, he was the epitome of American anti-communism.²⁰² However, he should be the president who altered U.S. relations with the PRC. This superficial contradiction is explained by the fact that Nixon also was a *realpolitiker* who had understood that China could play a more useful role in America's Cold War struggle. This insight led him to develop, together with Henry Kissinger, the policy of rapprochement. In the end, Nixon did not only change the U.S. attitude toward the PRC but was also the first American president to make a state visit to China. Nevertheless, interferences of domestic politics in China and the United States as well as the ongoing differences about Taiwan prevented Nixon and his successor Gerald R. Ford from achieving their China policy's ultimate goal: the establishment of diplomatic relations with Beijing.

This chapter serves to explain the rapprochement process, the Nixon administration started in 1969. This process which lasted until 1976 was the precursor to the normalization of Sino-American relations in 1979. While the Carter administration suffered heavily under the promises made by Nixon and Ford which limited Carter's leeway in his administration's negotiations with Beijing, it needed a catalyst to enable the Chinese and Americans to bring their relationship to a new level, especially if they wanted to use their new relationship to put pressure on the Soviet

²⁰² Héron Marquéz, *Richard M. Nixon* (Minneapolis: Lerner Publication, 2003), 42.

Union. Nixon's approach was the result of changes in the strategic environment of the United States, and the PRC shared this perception. The Soviet Union had closed the power gap to the United States and represented the biggest threat the security of America and China. Sino-American cooperation therefore made strategic sense.

Rapprochement ended the virtual standstill in U.S.-China relations which had occurred since the beginning of the Cultural Revolution, helping to lower the tensions between Chinese and Americans beyond anything both sides had experienced since the end of World War II. However, the success of rapprochement was never a sure thing because political differences between Washington and Beijing still existed. This time, not only the Taiwan issue represented a problem but also the U.S. intervention in Vietnam. The Nixon administration wanted to end this war, and thought the regime in Beijing could assist in the solution of the conflict.

The biggest problem for the White House was to communicate with the PRC. After a somewhat adventurous exchange of indirect signals with the Chinese, the U.S. president sent his National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger to Beijing in order to explain his intention of forging better ties with China. The Chinese welcomed Kissinger with open arms and were willing to cooperate with the United States. The ultimate success of Kissinger's mission was that the PRC leadership around Mao and Zhou invited the president to visit China in 1972. This success was enabled because both sides left the Taiwan issue mostly out of their talks, focusing on their common interests, and agreeing to disagree on the matter. This enabled the so called Shanghai Communiqué which should present the legal basis of Sino-American relations until the accomplishment of normalization in 1979.

Nixon's visit and the communiqué constituted the peak of the rapprochement process as the relationship between Washington and Beijing started to stall, after the establishment of liaison offices in 1973. From then on, both sides found it harder to ignore the profound differences between them. The Chinese insistence that the Americans had to give up its security relationship with Taiwan was unacceptable for the Nixon and the Ford administration. Congressional and public support for Taiwan was still too strong, the political risk too unpredictable.

After the Watergate scandal reached the White House and forced Nixon to resign, his successor Gerald R. Ford lacked the political strength to make any unpopular decisions concerning Taiwan. Political turmoil in China after the death of Mao Zedong added to the problematic situation. The new PRC leaders were neither

willing nor able to make any concessions to the Americans, which could help them to cope with the opposition in Washington. When the power struggle in Beijing ended in late 1976, the political landscape in the United States had also changed. Now, the Democrat Jimmy Carter sat in the Oval Office, and while he also strove for normalization with China, he had a more precise notion of what he was willing to concede to the Chinese concerning Taiwan than his predecessor Ford. As the main part of this book will show, Carter's only problem was that the Chinese expected him to pick up, where Nixon, Ford, and Kissinger had left off.

The Idea of Rapprochement

The 1960s were turbulent years for China and the United States as both nations battled problems at home and abroad. In the People's Republic's case it was the Cultural Revolution and the conflict with the Soviet Union.²⁰³ At the same time, the United States was losing an unpopular war in Vietnam that transformed the American culture and society by questioning America's social order.²⁰⁴ Both countries' experience of inner and external crises which was unprecedented in their respective history led both political leaderships to search for new ways to strengthen their respective strategic situation. This discretion forced them to question the current state of U.S.-Chinese relations, opening the path to rapprochement.

As Nancy Bernkopf Tucker argues, the American rapprochement policy was neither a coincidence nor a sudden idea that came out of nowhere. Structures which could help the process already existed. Polls of the 1960s suggested that the U.S. public favored the development of a two-China policy that could also offer a chance for better relations with the PRC. In this context, though suspended, the ambassadorial talks in Warsaw could provide a basis for direct communication. Furthermore, since the PRC had not collapsed, politicians in Washington became aware of China's possible strategic meaning in America's struggle with the Soviet Union. Especially the Sino-Soviet split gave the United States hope that approach-

²⁰³ For an introductory reading about the Sino-Soviet conflict, see: Lorenz M. Lüthi, *The Sino-Soviet Split: Cold War in the Communist World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008); Sergey Radchenko, *Two Suns in the Heavens: The Sino-Soviet Struggle for Supremacy, 1962-1967* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009).

²⁰⁴ For an introductory reading on this topic, see: Robert Buzzanco, *Vietnam and the Transformation of American Life* (Malden: Blackwell Publishers, 1999).

ing the Chinese could help the American overall position in the realm of the Cold War.²⁰⁵ Michael Schaller adds to this last argument that the end of the Sino-Soviet alliance led Washington to doubt the image of the “monolithic communist bloc” without a conflict among its cornerstones.²⁰⁶ All these arguments led U.S. leaders to think about new strategies in U.S. China policy.

Surprisingly, it was the Republican and well known anti-communist Richard M. Nixon who finally altered the U.S. attitude towards China when he became president in 1969. In the wake of *détente*, he initiated, assisted by his National Security Advisor Henry A. Kissinger, a rapprochement policy toward Beijing to gain advantages over the Soviets.²⁰⁷ In fact, Nixon mentioned his new found perspective on China in an article he had written for *Foreign Affairs* in 1967: “Taking the long view, we simply cannot afford to leave China forever outside the family of nations...”²⁰⁸ Nixon argued that communist China still represented a threat to all non-communist nations in Asia. However, he did not think that isolating the most populous country in the world would help to restrain Beijing’s aggressive behavior. Instead he suggested “pulling China back into the world community -but as a great and progressing nation, not as the epicenter of world revolution.”²⁰⁹ The article did not completely abandon anti-communist rhetoric, but it was a first hint that the American attitude towards “Red China” could change.

This was also indicated by the so called *Nixon doctrine* (also known as *Guam doctrine*) from July 1969.²¹⁰ The new doctrine stated that while the United States would contain Soviet power on a global scale, regional powers had to manage their security by themselves. U.S. troops should not fight again for the preservation of a foreign regime like they did in Vietnam. It was the beginning of the reduction of U.S. engagement in Asia. This approach should also reduce the costs of the United States’ struggle against the Soviet Union after the White House had

²⁰⁵ Bernkopf Tucker, “Strait”, 32-33.

²⁰⁶ Michael Schaller, *The United States and China in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 171.

²⁰⁷ For an introductory reading about the early stages of the *détente* process, see: Keith L. Nelson, *The Making of Detente: Soviet-American Relations in the Shadow of Vietnam* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995).

²⁰⁸ Richard M. Nixon, “Asia after Viet Nam” in: *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 46, No. 1 (Oct., 1967), 121.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 123.

²¹⁰ For an introductory reading about the Nixon Doctrine and its influence on U.S. foreign policy, see: Robert S. Litwak, *Détente and the Nixon Doctrine: American Foreign Policy and the Pursuit of Stability, 1969-1976* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

realized that it had lost relative power compared to its rival.²¹¹ In order to incorporate the PRC into this new approach, the president ordered the preparation of a study about U.S. China policy which should also include “[a]lternative U.S. approaches on China and their costs and risks.”²¹² It was another indication that the United States was exploring new ways to change its China policy.

The Chinese interest in better relations with the United States resulted from the international isolation the country had been facing since the split with the Soviet Union and the initialization of the *Cultural Revolution*. After a short border conflict in 1969 that included skirmishes at the river Amur, Beijing was very concerned about the Soviet Union’s nuclear capabilities.²¹³ A report by four high ranking officers of the PLA from September 17, 1969 stated that the Soviet Union and not the United States imposed the biggest threat to China’s security. The Soviet Union was seen as a “socialist imperialist” country. It was the first time that an official document acknowledged something like this. This conclusion meant the de-facto end of the Sino-Soviet alliance although the bilateral friendship treaty expired later in 1979.²¹⁴

In this situation, Mao had to face an inconvenient truth. If the People’s Republic was not able to improve its relations with at least one superpower, China was threatened by a two-front war. The PRC leadership eventually opted for better relations with the United States in order to deter the Soviets from any potential attack against China. Thus, Beijing sent signals to Washington, indicating that they were ready to talk.²¹⁵ This decision marked the end of the People’s Republic’s strive for the victory of world socialism. Now, the regime looked for its own survival and pursued *realpolitik*, relegating ideological considerations to the background.

²¹¹ Robert S. Ross, “U.S. Relations with China” in: Ezra F. Vogel/Ming Yuan/Tanaka Akihiko (ed.), *The Golden Triangle of the U.S.-China-Japan Triangle 1972-1989* (Cambridge: Harvard East Asian Monographs, 2002), 80; Michael Schaller, “Détente and the Strategic Triangle Or, ‘Drinking your Mao Tai and Having Your Vodka, Too’” in: Robert S. Ross/Jiang Changbin (ed.), *Re-examining the Cold War. U.S.-China Diplomacy, 1954-1973* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 363-365.

²¹² Memo, “National Security Study Memorandum 14”, 2/5/1969 in: FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969-1972 (Washington D.C.: United States Printing Office, 2006), 8.

²¹³ Wang Zhonchun, “The Soviet Factor in Sino-American Normalization, 1969-1979” in: William C. Kirby/ Robert S. Ross/Gong Li (ed.), *Normalization of U.S.-China Relations: An International History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 157-158. For another perspective on the border clash between Chinese and Soviets, see: Lyle J. Goldstein, “Return to Zhenbao Island: Who Started Shooting and Why It” in: *The China Quarterly*, No. 168 (Dec., 2001).

²¹⁴ Tudda, “War”, 35.

²¹⁵ Li, “Changes”, 310-311.

In this early period of rapprochement, the Nixon administration decided not to leave the Taiwanese completely in the dark about its plans. When the new U.S. ambassador to Taiwan, Walter P. McCaughy, met Chiang Kai-shek for the first time on December 17, 1969, he indicated that the United States was searching for new ways to deal with mainland China. Yet, McCaughy added the United States would still ensure Taiwan's security. Surprisingly, Chiang reacted cautiously, admitting that the global system was changing. The Generalissimo was aware that objecting to U.S. plans would only lead to problems between Taipei and Washington.²¹⁶ Thus, he opted for restraint.

The image of the regime in Taiwan was not very positive in the United States. In spite of the impressive economic development of the Taiwan which was sponsored by U.S. aid of 100 million U.S. dollars between 1950 and 1965, the KMT failed to take steps to democratize the political and social system on the island. According to Nancy Bernkopf Tucker, the KMT regime was certain that Washington still saw Taiwan as a bastion against the Soviet Union and communism in East Asia. Similar to U.S. allies in Latin America, the relationship between the United States and the Republic of China had its foundation in a common anti-communist sentiment and strategic considerations, not in a shared social and cultural vision.²¹⁷ Thus, Taipei thought political changes were not necessary to continue the security relationship with the United States.

In late 1969 and early 1970, however, U.S.-ROC relations were unproblematic. The United States had no intention to let the relationship deteriorate. For example, a memorandum for Vice President Spiro T. Agnew contained a report which stated that the United States still valued its security relationship with Taiwan.²¹⁸ A message from December 1969 conveyed by U.S. Ambassador McCaughy to the ROC leadership echoed this sentiment. While the U.S. administration "believed that it had an obligation to take every practicable and prudent step to lower tensions in the area [East Asia]", the United States did not plan to reduce its engagement in the Asia-Pacific region: "The U.S. was not changing its attitude of

²¹⁶ Jay Taylor, *The Generalissimo. Chiang Kai-shek and the Struggle for Modern China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), S. 547-548.

²¹⁷ Bernkopf Tucker, "Strait", 11-12, 33-34. For an introductory reading about U.S. policy in Latin America, see: Martha L. Cottam, *Images and Intervention: U.S. Policies in Latin America* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1994).

²¹⁸ Report, "Republic of China – Military Assistance and Force Reorganization", 12/8/1969, "V.P. Agnew's trip Dec 1969-Jan 1970 Republic of China" folder, Box 81, National Security Council Files, Richard Nixon Library.

vigilance or its posture of readiness to carry out its commitments in the area.”²¹⁹

Nixon himself also tried to calm down Taipei’s anxieties. In spring 1970, ROC Vice Prime Minister Chiang Ching-kuo (CCK) went to the United States for a ten day state visit, discussing Taiwan’s security with U.S. officials. In a meeting with Nixon, CCK warned that the Chinese communists would use force against Taiwan, planning a surprise attack on the island. Nixon did not take this threat seriously but assured the Taiwanese that the United States still stood by its treaty commitments.²²⁰ According to Nancy Bernkopf Tucker, Chiang was not convinced of the Nixon administration’s loyalty but believed the USA would continue to defend Taiwan.²²¹ Considering, Nixon’s plans for a new China policy, this was all the ROC regime could ask for.

Chiang’s assessment that the United States would stand to its commitment concerning Taiwan’s security was shared by PRC Prime Minister Zhou Enlai. In his opinion, the United States was not to abandon Taiwan any time soon. Thus, he preached to communist cadre patience on the matter, arguing national principles like the Taiwan issue did not prevent the PRC from progressing. This kind of restraint should also help the Nixon administration to keep the public pressure in the United States low. This was important because domestic opponents could still prevent the U.S. president from pursuing a conciliatory course of action towards the PRC.²²²

Zhou’s calculations seemed to work. Washington reacted positively to Chinese restraint, reducing the number of destroyer patrols in the Taiwan Strait. In an attempt to calm down any protests from Taipei, the White House claimed this move to be a consequence of budgetary constraints. Simultaneously, however, Kissinger asked the Pakistanis to inform the Chinese about this step.²²³ The Nixon administration wanted to make use of everything that helped to convince the PRC of Washington’s honest interest to improve Sino-American relations. More such steps followed, as Nixon’s new China policy took shape.

²¹⁹ Memcon, Walter McConaughy, 12/17/1969 in: FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969-1972 (Washington D.C.: United States Printing Office, 2006), 148.

²²⁰ Memcon, “United States Relations with the Republic of China“, 04/21/1969 in: FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969-1972 (Washington D.C.: United States Printing Office, 2006), 198, 200.

²²¹ Bernkopf Tucker, “Strait”, 38-39.

²²² Gong Li, “The Difficult Path to Diplomatic Relations. China’s U.S. Policy, 1972-1978” in: William C. Kirby/ Robert S. Ross/Gong Li (ed.), *Normalization of U.S.-China Relations: An International History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 117.

²²³ Tudda, “War”, 37.

The Uncertainties of Indirect Communication

At first, the White House used indirect channels to signal their readiness for talks to the Chinese. These channels went through Romania and Pakistan.²²⁴ The first attempt of the Nixon administration to send a direct signal occurred at a reception in the Yugoslavian embassy in Warsaw in late 1969. At the end of the event, U.S. Ambassador Walter Stoessel followed the Chinese delegation to convey the message that the United States was willing to talk. Zhou Enlai decided to accept this offer, and both sides agreed to re-start the Warsaw talks.²²⁵

The Chinese Political scientist Gong Li and the U.S. historian Chris Tudda agree that the Chinese leadership saw the talks as a chance to improve the PRC's relations with the United States. Such a step could help to counter the Soviet threat, to make progress on the issues of Taiwan and Vietnam, and to lessen China's international isolation. The situation became even more promising after Nixon had conceded that his administration would not oppose any settlement between the mainland and Taiwan as long as this would be accomplished by peaceful means.²²⁶ Former ROC ambassador in Washington D.C. James Shen states in his memoirs that the KMT regime was concerned about the re-start of the Warsaw talks.²²⁷

Nixon and Kissinger, however, did not believe these talks to have real substance.²²⁸ The president did not want to use the Warsaw channel anymore. Instead, he wanted to develop a direct communication line between himself and the Chinese that would not involve people outside the president's inner circle. Therefore, Ambassador Stoessel told the Chinese on January 20 –only a few weeks after the re-

²²⁴ Margaret MacMillan, *Nixon and Mao. The Week that Changed the World* (New York: Random House, 2007), 172-175; Mirecea Munteanu, "Communication Breakdown? Romania and the Sino-American Rapprochement" in: *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 33, No. 4 (September, 2009).

²²⁵ Jia Qingguo/Zhang Baijia, "Steering Wheel, Shock Absorber, and Diplomatic Probe in Confrontation. Sino-American Ambassadorial Talks Seen from the Chinese Perspective" in: Robert S. Ross/Jiang Changbin (ed.), *Re-Examining the Cold War: U.S.-China Diplomacy, 1954-1973* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 195; Gong, "Decision", 332-333.

²²⁶ Gong, "Decision", 329; Tudda, "War", 47,49.

²²⁷ James Shen, *The U.S. & Free China: How U.S. Sold out Its Ally* (Washington D.C.: Acropolis Books, 1983), 66.

²²⁸ Footnote 3 indicates such a view, see: Memo, "Informing the Soviets of our Talks with the Chinese", Helmut Sonnenfeldt to Henry Kissinger, 12/11/1969 in: FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969-1972 (Washington D.C.: United States Printing Office, 2006), 146.

start of the talks- that Nixon wanted to send an U.S. emissary to China for confidential high level talks.²²⁹ As the Chinese authors Jia Qingguo and Zhang Baijia claim, this development was accelerated when the PRC postponed any new meetings in Warsaw after U.S. troops had started operations in Cambodia.²³⁰

The importance of the Warsaw talks decreased. They were substituted for talks in Paris. Here, Nixon's personal confidant, the Military Attaché of the U.S. embassy General Vernon Walters, met several times with the Chinese. Simultaneously, Nixon and Kissinger extended the use of the Pakistani channel. Over the course of 1970, the Nixon administration conveyed different messages to the PRC this way. According to Chris Tudda, at the same time, the White House missed the significance of the American journalist Edgar Snow's visit of China's National Day celebration in August 1970. Snow talked to Zhou and Mao there, and the Chinese leaders wanted to signal subtly their interest in improved Sino-American relations.²³¹ In November, the Pakistani President Yahya Khan told the PRC leaders on behalf of Nixon that the U.S. president was looking to improve relations with China. It took some time before Khan conveyed the Chinese reaction to the White House, but they responded positively. Beijing's only condition for further talks was that the United States would withdraw its troops from Taiwan. Although the Americans signaled readiness for reconciliation about the Taiwan issue, a withdrawal was too much to agree with. Thus, it needed some more time before direct talks could start.²³²

Instead of furthering direct communication, Chinese and Americans went back to the approach of indirect signals to demonstrate their willingness for better relations. First, in March 1971, the USA lifted all restrictions for Americans who wanted to travel to China.²³³ A month later, the PRC regime invited the American ping-pong team who was playing in Japan at this time to an exhibition game in China -the beginning of the so called "ping-pong diplomacy".²³⁴ Although the his-

²²⁹ MacMillan, "Nixon", 170.

²³⁰ Qingguo/Zhang, "Wheel", 197.

²³¹ Tudda, "War", 59-60, 62-63. For a more detailed account of Snow's visit in China, see: John M. Hamilton, *Edgar Snow: A Biography* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003).

²³² MacMillan, "Nixon", 175.

²³³ *Ibid.*, 176.

²³⁴ The Japanese historian Mayumi Itoh argues that it was the Japanese table tennis officials Goto Koji who enabled the beginning of the "ping-pong diplomacy" by negotiating with the Chinese to attend the World Championship tournament in Nagoya in 1971. For further reading see: Mayumi

torian Wang Guanhua argues the PRC made extensive use of the “ping-pong diplomacy” during the period of the *Cultural Revolution*, it was the way Beijing used this instrument to approach the United States, which made it famous.²³⁵

The invitation to the American team became a huge public relations success, and both sides saw a chance to initiate political talks. Shortly thereafter, at the end of April, the Chinese repeated their invitation for a “special envoy” of President Nixon who could discuss the Taiwan issue. According to Henry Kissinger, the Chinese leaders asked for Secretary of State William P. Rodgers, President Nixon, or Kissinger himself. For the sake of secrecy, Nixon decided to send his APNSA. According to Chris Tudda, this preference was the result of Nixon’s consideration that it was easier to control Kissinger than Rodgers, because Kissinger had a lower political profile than the Secretary of State. On May 10, the White House replied to the Chinese, emphasizing the secret talks should contain more than only the Taiwan issue.²³⁶ It was the chance, Kissinger had been waiting for.

In the meantime, the CCP’s leadership discussed its next steps concerning the developments in Sino-American relations. A Politburo report from May 25, 1971 revised by Zhou contained eight points that constituted the Chinese position toward rapprochement with the United States. The Americans had to withdraw their troops from Taiwan, and had to recognize that the island was part of China and the settlement of the Taiwan issue an internal affair. The PRC would try to liberate Taiwan by peaceful means, but would also oppose any kind of *Two-China-policy*. These were the basic conditions for the establishment of diplomatic relations. As long as the United States would not pursue a *Two-China-policy*, Beijing was willing not to raise the UN-representation issue. Sino-American trade relations could be resumed, if the United States would withdraw its troops from Taiwan. Finally, the report stated that Washington needed to remove its troops from Vietnam, Korea, Japan and Southeast Asia. The document also contradicted concerns that rapprochement would harm China’s interests or lessen its people’s will to oppose capitalist imperialism, by arguing this diplomatic course would strengthen

Itoh, *The Origin of Ping-Pong Diplomacy: The Forgotten Architect of Sino-U.S. Rapprochement* (New York: Palgrave-MacMillan, 2011).

²³⁵ Wang Guanhua, “‘Friendship First’: China’s Sports Diplomacy in the Cold War Era” in *Journal of American-East Asian Relations*, Vol. 12, No. 3-4 (Fall-Winter 2003), 146-147.

²³⁶ Henry Kissinger, *China. Zwischen Tradition und Herausforderung* (München: Bertelsmann Verlag, 2012), 245-246; Tudda, “War“, 80.

China. The next step was to invite a member of the Nixon administration to China.²³⁷

Although the U.S. had not accepted the PRC's precondition about Taiwan yet, Zhou Enlai welcomed the idea of a visit by a U.S. official in public. He believed Washington would adopt a new position on the Taiwan issue, making rapprochement possible.²³⁸ In Zhou's opinion, the whole process was about leaving issues like Taiwan aside, and emphasizing common interests instead.²³⁹ Zhou's conclusion echoed the thinking of the aforementioned report by the four PLA officers who had argued that forgoing an agreement with Washington concerning the Taiwan issue was the "prerequisite" for improved Sino-American ties.²⁴⁰

As Gong Li claims, Mao and Zhou disagreed about this aspect. Due to severe pressure from the leftists within the Chinese leadership around Mao's wife Jiang Qing, the chairman thought Zhou to be too accommodating concerning Taiwan. At this time, leftists like the *Gang of Four* or the *Lin Biao Clique* dominated the ideological debate in China. The *Gang of Four* consisted of Jiang Qing, the political theorist Zhang Chunqiao, the Politburo members Yao Wenyuan, and Wang Hongwen. They were allied with Lin Biao who was vice premier of the PRC and the most likely candidate for Mao's succession, before he fell in disgrace in 1971. Both groups needed domestic disorder as well as tense relations to both superpowers in order to maintain their influence, while simultaneously limiting Zhou's. However, while Qing and her ally Lin Biao opposed rapprochement with the United States, they also realized that they could not stop this development since Mao wanted better relations with Washington.²⁴¹ High level talks with the United States would happen, and Henry Kissinger visited China from July 9-11, 1971.

²³⁷ Gong, "Decision", 345-347; Tudda, "War", 75-76.

²³⁸ Qingguo/Zhang, "Wheel", 197.

²³⁹ Qingguo, "Relations", 114/116

²⁴⁰ Tudda, "War", 35.

²⁴¹ Gong, "Decision", 325-327; Li Jie, "China's Domestic Politics and the Normalization of Sino-U.S. Relations, 1969-1979" in: William C. Kirby/ Robert S. Ross/Gong Li (ed.), *Normalization of U.S.-China Relations: An International History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 57, 60; Zhang, "Politics", 39.

Operation Polo

Kissinger's trip which was named *Operation Polo* should remain secret. Again, the Americans used their Pakistani allies to make the necessary arrangement. During a visit to Pakistan, Kissinger faked illness and remained in seclusion so he could secretly board a plane to China. When he and his aides touched Chinese soil in July 1971, they faced self-assured Chinese officials who did not show any signs of tension. In his book about China, Kissinger describes the whole setting as part of the traditional Chinese diplomacy which uses hospitality, ceremony and personal relations as diplomatic instruments.²⁴²

Personal relations are, according to Richard H. Solomon who was a member of the NSC at this time, the most important aspect of Chinese negotiation behavior.²⁴³ The idea is to charm the most important person of a foreign delegation into sympathy for Chinese culture and China's national interests. For that purpose, Chinese diplomats pick out one guest who has significant influence on the decision-making process of their interlocutors. This person shall not only feel comfortable but also appraised. The last step of this approach is to add a personal note to the relationship, strengthening the bond between one or more Chinese officials and the target person. In the case of rapprochement, the person picked by the Chinese was Kissinger. As we will see, during the process of normalization, PRC officials chose President Carter's APNSA Zbigniew Brzezinski for the same reasons, Zhou chose Kissinger.

The archival record suggests that Zhou did not lose time to befriend Kissinger, attempting to build a personal relationship as quickly as possible. Early on, during his first meeting with the APNSA, Zhou tried to charm his counterpart by demonstrating his sharp intellect and ironic humor.²⁴⁴ Zhou's attitude appealed to Kissinger, mirroring much of his self-image as an intellectual strategist with a fine sense of irony. In his report to Nixon, Kissinger called Zhou even a "heroic stat-

²⁴² Kissinger, "China", 250.

²⁴³ Richard H. Solomon, *Chinese Negotiating Behavior: Pursuing Interests Through 'Old Friends'* (Washington D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, 1999), 4.

²⁴⁴ Memcon, Henry Kissinger, 7/9/1971 in: FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969-1972 (Washington D.C.: United States Printing Office, 2006), 359-361.

ure.²⁴⁵ Comparing Zhou and Mao, he writes that “Mao dominated every meeting. Zhou filled it with light.”²⁴⁶ Leaving all political tactics aside, Zhou’s and Kissinger’s sympathy for each other meant a good beginning for the talks.

Nixon wanted Kissinger to demonstrate restraint on the matter of Taiwan avoiding any far reaching debate about this issue. Still, the Chinese side was eager to discuss this matter, blaming the U.S. side for its involvement in the Taiwan Strait. Zhou made clear that, if normal relations between Washington and Beijing should become reality, the United States “must recognize the PRC as the sole legitimate government of China and not make any exceptions.” The Chinese Prime Minister also reiterated the PRC’s demand that all U.S. troops had to withdraw from Taiwan.²⁴⁷ He repeatedly emphasized that Taiwan was the most important issue between the United States and the PRC, stating that “by the time we have established diplomatic relations the treaty between the U.S. and Chiang Kai-shek [the MDT] should not have any effect.”²⁴⁸

With these blunt words, Zhou had taken the initiative and forced Kissinger’s hand. The APNSA was very accommodating towards the Chinese, admitting that without the Korean War “Taiwan would probably be today a part of the PRC.” He also assured Zhou that the Nixon administration would not pursue a *Two-China-policy*, and was willing to reduce U.S. troops on Taiwan. Subsequently, however, Kissinger made clear that “[t]here’s no possibility in the next one and a half years for us to recognize the PRC as the sole government of China in a formal way.”²⁴⁹ The *China lobby* in Washington would oppose any concessions to Beijing at the cost of Taiwan. As the APNSA explained, the concessions already promised by Kissinger were only possible because Nixon had a broad power base in the right wing of the Republican Party.²⁵⁰ Yet, to “sweeten” the prospects for the Chinese,

²⁴⁵ Memcon, Henry Kissinger, 7/10/1971 in: FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969-1972 (Washington D.C.: United States Printing Office, 2006), 415.

²⁴⁶ Translation by the author as the original quote is in German: “Mao dominierte jede Versammlung. Zhou erfüllte sie mit Licht.”, see: Kissinger, “China”, 254.

²⁴⁷ Memcon, Henry Kissinger, 7/9/1971 in: FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969-1972 (Washington D.C.: United States Printing Office, 2006), 367-369.

²⁴⁸ Memcon, Henry Kissinger, 7/11/1971 in: FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969-1972 (Washington D.C.: United States Printing Office, 2006), 446.

²⁴⁹ Memcon, Henry Kissinger, 7/9/1971 in: FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969-1972 (Washington D.C.: United States Printing Office, 2006), 367-369, 372.

²⁵⁰ Memo, Henry Kissinger to Richard Nixon, 7/14/1971 in: FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969-1972 (Washington D.C.: United States Printing Office, 2006), 453.

Kissinger indicated that full normal relations could be established after Nixon's reelection.²⁵¹

Both sides also discussed a state visit to China by the U.S. president. The American side was afraid the Chinese could make such a visit dependent on progress on the Taiwan issue. Fortunately, the PRC government did not set any preconditions about Taiwan for Nixon's visit but Zhou believed "that there must be a certain direction of efforts as a result of the visit, because we [the PRC] have always viewed the question of Taiwan as our internal affair which we must solve ourselves." This was encouraging to Kissinger who also emphasized that the idea for Nixon's visit resulted from a Chinese initiative which the U.S. administration was "happy to accept."²⁵² President Nixon was going to visit China in February 1972. Kissinger himself would go to China in October 1971.²⁵³ Finally, both sides agreed that future communication would run over the respective embassies in Paris because U.S. military attaché Walters was, according to Kissinger, "[...] completely our [Nixon's] man."²⁵⁴ Kissinger left China in a good mood, writing later that his talks with Zhou had "laid the groundwork for you [Nixon] and Mao to turn a page in history."²⁵⁵

The Chinese side also had to be satisfied with the result of Kissinger's visit. According to Yongshin Kim, they were very reluctant to mention the Soviet threat because Beijing did not want to limit its bargaining position on matters such as Taiwan and Vietnam. Since Kissinger brought up the issue, they were still able to discuss ways how the United States and the PRC could help each other to put pressure on the Soviets.²⁵⁶ On the matter of Taiwan, Kissinger made more concessions than Beijing had expected. Jia Qingguo and Zhang Baijia argue Beijing was willing to accept a partial solution of the Taiwan issue due to its hope for Sino-American

²⁵¹ Memcon, Henry Kissinger, 7/10/1971 in: FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969-1972 (Washington D.C.: United States Printing Office, 2006), 412.

²⁵² Memcon, Henry Kissinger, 7/10/1971 in: FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969-1972 (Washington D.C.: United States Printing Office, 2006), 401, 410.

²⁵³ Memo, Henry Kissinger to Richard Nixon, 8/16/1971 in: FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969-1972 (Washington D.C.: United States Printing Office, 2006), 476 (particularly footnote 3); Memo, Henry Kissinger to Richard Nixon, 9/13/1971 in: FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969-1972 (Washington D.C.: United States Printing Office, 2006), 481.

²⁵⁴ Memcon, Henry Kissinger, 7/11/1971 in: FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969-1972 (Washington D.C.: United States Printing Office, 2006), 441, 443.

²⁵⁵ Memo, Henry Kissinger to Richard Nixon, 7/14/1971 in: FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969-1972 (Washington D.C.: United States Printing Office, 2006), 454.

²⁵⁶ Yongshin Kim, "Manipulating the 'Balance of Power': Historical Reappraisal of the Sino-U.S. Rapprochement" in: Guo Suijian/Guo Baogang (ed.), *Thirty Years of China-U.S. Relations. Analytical Approaches and Contemporary Issues* (Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2010), 26-28.

rapprochement. The PRC regime believed that better relations between China and the U.S. would improve the chances of reunification with Taiwan. Close U.S.-PRC relations would leave the KMT regime isolated, or at least, due to its dependency on the United States, in a weaker position than before. This would be advantageous to Beijing in the long run.²⁵⁷

The United Nations Debacle

From the White House's perspective, the concessions to the PRC were necessary although the USA did not plan to abandon Taiwan. Therefore, when Kissinger's trip became public, Nixon decided on advice of Secretary of State William Rogers to explain Washington's plans to the ROC's new ambassador in the United States, James Shen.²⁵⁸ The president sent Kissinger to speak with the KMT official. The APNSA expressed regret about the secrecy concerning his trip to China calling it "painful" not to inform the Taiwanese who "were our [America's] loyal friends." He continued his ingratiating by naming the regime in Beijing "fanatical maniacs" who were not better than the Soviets. Several times, Kissinger made clear that the Nixon administration's plans to accommodate China had nothing to do with Taiwan but would only be born out of strategic necessity. In order to further assure the ROC regime of the White House's good intentions, Kissinger promised to keep Taipei informed about the progress of U.S.-PRC talks as long as access to such information was limited to Ambassador Shen, Chiang Kai-shek and Chiang Ching-kuo.²⁵⁹

While Kissinger enveloped himself in a cloak of dramatics and ingratiating, he bluntly lied to Shen, claiming the Taiwan issue did not play a major role in the context of the Nixon administration's new China policy and the talks with the Chinese. The APNSA must have held the Taiwanese either naïve or did not trust them to keep calm, so that he did not mention Washington's willingness for concessions to the PRC regime concerning America's military presence on Taiwan. Moreover,

²⁵⁷ Qingguo/Zhang, "Wheel", 198.

²⁵⁸ Tudda, "War", 73-74.

²⁵⁹ Memcon, "Dr. Kissinger's Discussions with Ambassador Shen on the President's Visit to Peking", Henry Kissinger, 7/27/1971 in: FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969-1972 (Washington D.C.: United States Printing Office, 2006), 468-470.

Kissinger claimed the United States had not indicated a readiness to accommodate the communists on the matter of UN-representation.²⁶⁰ In truth, the APNSA had conveyed the Nixon administration's willingness to grant the PRC access to the United Nations.

Kissinger's attempts to calm Taipei's concerns made sense from the Nixon administration's point of view. Taiwan had many friends in the United States, who could potentially stir up some trouble for Nixon. Thus, the White House endeavored to appease the Taiwan Lobby and conservatives in Washington.²⁶¹ In August 1971, still 56% of Americans saw the PRC as the most dangerous nation in the world.²⁶² This made it necessary to sell cooperation with communist China in small and digestible portions to the U.S. public. It was imperative to avoid the impression that rapprochement with China would happen at Taiwan's expense, and the UN question was one issue where the administration had to act in this spirit.

Chris Tudda summarizes the problem by arguing that the UN-representation issue was a two-edged sword for the Nixon administration. On the one hand, Washington could not leave the PRC out, if they wanted to pursue rapprochement seriously. On the other hand, voting against Taiwan's interests would alienate a loyal ally, and raise the *China lobby's* anger at home. However, Nixon, Kissinger, and even Rogers did not see any alternative to voting in Beijing's favor in the event of a vote about the China representation. Later, they would have to vote against the expulsion of the ROC in order to save America's face.²⁶³ This dilemma made the upcoming decision in the UN even more difficult.

Since the end of 1970 increasing diplomatic pressure from allies of the United States had influenced Washington's considerations to accept the PRC in the UN, as long as Taiwan could remain in the UN, too.²⁶⁴ The concept that both Chinese governments would have a seat in the UNGA was called *dual representation*. Since Nixon deemed better U.S. relations with China vital for the strategic position of the United States at this time, he opted to pursue this approach.²⁶⁵ Although

²⁶⁰ Ibid., 469.

²⁶¹ Tudda, "War", 97, 99-100.

²⁶² Kusnitz, "Opinion", 138.

²⁶³ Tudda, "War", 105.

²⁶⁴ Nancy Bernkopf Tucker, "Taiwan Expendable? Nixon and Kissinger Go to China" in: *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 92, No. 1 (Jun., 2005), 127-128, 130; Kissinger, "Memoiren", 820-821.

²⁶⁵ Richard M. Nixon, *Memoiren* (Köln: Ellenberg Verlag, 1978), 573.

Nixon's plans could alienate the PRC, according to Nancy Bernkopf Tucker, he "wanted to maintain geopolitical leverage against Beijing [...] by keeping Taipei in the General Assembly."²⁶⁶ Washington's *dual representation* approach presented a dilemma for the KMT regime's claim to represent all of China. Nevertheless, Taipei was willing to agree as long as it would keep the seat in the Security Council (UNSC).²⁶⁷ Taipei hoped that the *Important Question* procedure, which led to the requirement of a two-third majority in favor of the PRC's entrance, would save the ROC's claim for sole representation of China in the UN.

The State Department left no stone unturned to convince other countries to keep Taiwan in the United Nations, eventually convincing Japan to co-sponsor the American resolution concerning the *Important Question* and *dual representation*.²⁶⁸ Still, the DOS also warned that due to the "PRC's continuing skillful application of pressures and of intense Chirep [Chinese representation] activity in New York..." success for the U.S. resolution was not guaranteed.²⁶⁹ The skeptical mood did not change over the course of the following weeks as a memorandum by Rodgers indicates.²⁷⁰

In the end, nothing could help Taiwan's cause. As U.S. diplomats had expected, the vote about the U.S. government's resolutions was lost on October 25. While cautious assessments had suggested that the U.S. could win the *Important Question* vote, some last minute shifts in the Arab bloc led to a defeat by four votes.²⁷¹ Later that day, the Albanian resolution which sought to expel Taiwan and grant the PRC access to the UN was adopted by a large majority of votes. Beforehand, the ROC government made things worse when Foreign Minister Zhou Shukai stated in front of the UNGA that "[i]n view of frenzy and irrational behavior in this hall, [the] del[egation] of China [ROC] has decided not to take part in any further proceedings of this Assembly."²⁷² Then, the Taiwanese delegation left.

²⁶⁶ Bernkopf Tucker, "Taiwan", 132.

²⁶⁷ Shen, "U.S.", 58, 60-62.

²⁶⁸ Telegram, Richard Sneider to William Rodgers, 09/22/1971 in: FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume V, United Nations, 1969-1972 (Washington D.C.: United States Printing Office, 2004), 816.

²⁶⁹ Telegram, George Bush to William Rodgers, 09/28/1971 in: FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume V, United Nations, 1969-1972 (Washington D.C.: United States Printing Office, 2004), 819.

²⁷⁰ Memo, William Rodgers to Richard Nixon, 10/12/1971 in: FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume V, United Nations, 1969-1972 (Washington D.C.: United States Printing Office, 2004), 828.

²⁷¹ Telegram, George Bush to William Rodgers, 10/25/1971 in: FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume V, United Nations, 1969-1972 (Washington D.C.: United States Printing Office, 2004), 854.

²⁷² Telegram, George Bush to William Rodgers, 10/26/1971 in: FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume V, United Nations, 1969-1972 (Washington D.C.: United States Printing Office, 2004), 857.

This act of self-sabotage put the final nail into the coffin of the ROC's inclusion in the world organization.

Taipei's insistence on the seat in the UNSC demonstrated a lacking sense of reality. The regime forced other countries to choose between Taipei and Beijing. Many UN member states were not willing to accept the ROC regime's claim to speak for hundreds of millions Chinese people although these people were not ruled by the KMT regime. The Taiwanese's denial of political realities made it impossible for U.S. officials to keep Taiwan in the UN although Washington's policy had contributed to the outcome. The biggest impact in this context was Kissinger's decision, supported by Nixon, not to reschedule his second trip to China.²⁷³ As different scholars claim, this signaled to the world that rapprochement with China was more important than Taiwan's seat in the UN, undermining all diplomatic efforts.²⁷⁴

The debacle about the Chinese representation issue demonstrated the difficulties the U.S. administration was facing when it tried to improve relations with the PRC, on the one hand, but was also endeavoring to maintain its close relations with Taiwan, on the other. It was the same dilemma every administration thereafter had to face for their China and Taiwan policy. The UN question was only one aspect where the Taiwan issue had a great impact on U.S.-China relations. Ignoring that his policy had contributed to the ROC's expulsion, Richard Nixon states in his memoirs that he was surprised and disappointed about this result.²⁷⁵

The rapprochement process, however, benefited from the PRC's entry to the UN. Beijing's representatives at the UN gave the White House another private channel to the Chinese. In fact, Kissinger met the PRC ambassador at the UN, Huang Hua, several times to discuss different political issues, not informing the State Department about this practice.²⁷⁶ The first such meeting occurred only two weeks after the UN vote.²⁷⁷ Nonetheless, the White House still used the Paris chan-

²⁷³ Kissinger, "Memoiren", 819, 825.

²⁷⁴ Bernkopf Tucker, "Taiwan Expendable", 130; MacMillan, "Nixon", 216; Ross, "Negotiating", 43.

²⁷⁵ Nixon, "Memoiren", 573.

²⁷⁶ Macmillan, "Nixon", 219.

²⁷⁷ Memo, Henry Kissinger to Richard Nixon, 11/26/1971 in: FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969-1972 (Washington D.C.: United States Printing Office, 2006), 595-598. Kissinger had another such meeting with PRC ambassador Huang Hua in early December when they had an elaborate exchange about the tensions between India and Pakistan, see: Memcon, Henry Kissinger,

nel more frequently, as General Walters' discussions in Paris were of major importance to organize Kissinger's second trip.²⁷⁸

Kissinger's Second Trip

During Kissinger's second trip the Chinese and Americans discussed mainly the circumstances of President Nixon's upcoming visit in China. Of central importance were the negotiations about the communiqué Nixon and Zhou should sign at the end of the trip. As previous meetings with Chinese officials had indicated, the Taiwan issue and the status of the island represented the biggest obstacle for agreement. Early on, in an attempt to demonstrate U.S. resolve to remain involved in the Taiwan Strait, Kissinger made clear that the United States would not give up its relations with Taiwan. The APNSA explained to Zhou that the Chinese would not respect the United States if Washington abandoned an old loyal ally like Taiwan.²⁷⁹ Of course, this did not convince the Chinese Prime Minister, and the negotiations became a test for Kissinger's political and physical constitution.

Kissinger explained that the president would confirm the concessions, the APNSA had made during his first visit, including U.S. willingness to gradually reduce its military personnel from Taiwan. Kissinger also asked Zhou if "the People's Republic can on its own, in the exercise of its own sovereignty, declare its willingness to settle it [the Taiwan issue] by peaceful means [...]," because this would make the situation for the U.S. administration much easier.²⁸⁰ Zhou turned this request down after a somewhat lengthy explanation, referring to the Chinese view that the status of Taiwan was determined and that the issue was a Chinese affair and hence for the Chinese to resolve.²⁸¹ At this point, Kissinger signaled that the U.S. was willing to concede in a joint communiqué that the status of Taiwan was determined in the sense "that there's only one China and that Taiwan is part of

10/10/1971 in: FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969-1972 (Washington D.C.: United States Printing Office, 2006), 608-620.

²⁷⁸ Kissinger, "Memoiren", 824-825.

²⁷⁹ Kissinger, "Memoiren", 831.

²⁸⁰ Memcon, Henry Kissinger, 10/21/1971 in: FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969-1972 (Washington D.C.: United States Printing Office, 2006), 505.

²⁸¹ Ibid., 508-509.

that China.”²⁸² This was the farthest reaching concession the U.S. side could make, without risking critique from the *China lobby* in Washington.

Later, the Chinese explained for the first time the conditions under which the establishment of diplomatic relations with the United States would be possible. First, the United States had to withdraw all its military personnel from Taiwan. Secondly, Washington had to terminate the Mutual Defense Treaty with the ROC. Thirdly, the United States needed to cut its diplomatic ties with the ROC government.²⁸³ The Nixon administration and any subsequent administration had to accept these so called preconditions if they wanted normal relations with China. Hence, they played an important role in the early period of the Carter administration’s China policy in the late 1970s, limiting the political leeway for Jimmy Carter significantly.

The whole discussions about Taiwan and the drafting of the communiqué made apparent that Beijing was not willing to let the White House “off the hook” concerning the Taiwan issue. According to Kissinger, Zhou pressed for a language in the communiqué that was unacceptable to the Nixon administration. The fundamental difference between Washington’s and Beijing’s objectives was that the Chinese wanted the language concerning Taiwan as explicit as possible while the U.S. delegation wanted to leave it ambiguous.²⁸⁴ According to Kissinger, PRC officials were ready to incorporate the fundamental differences between Chinese and Americans in the communiqué.²⁸⁵ While this approach was very unusual for a joint communiqué, the APNSA believed it served the U.S. better than a conventional communiqué which stressed only vaguely the consensus between two sides. He reasoned that the Chinese approach reflected the reality of Sino-American relations which would increase the credibility of the parts where both sides agreed.²⁸⁶

The negotiations with the Chinese left Kissinger convinced that “the Chinese leadership is committed to a course leading toward an improvement of relations with the U.S.” In his opinion, drawbacks would lead to fights among PRC

²⁸² *Ibid.*, 510.

²⁸³ *Ibid.*, 511-512.

²⁸⁴ Memo, Henry Kissinger to Richard Nixon, 11/1971 in: FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969-1972 (Washington D.C.: United States Printing Office, 2006), 536.

²⁸⁵ Memo, Henry Kissinger to Richard Nixon, undated in: FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969-1972 (Washington D.C.: United States Printing Office, 2006), 560-561.

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 564-565.

leaders.²⁸⁷ This was significant because especially the leftists in Beijing did not support rapprochement. If Washington did not want to face the Chinese radicals, they had to make sure that Zhou Enlai and his supporters looked convincing because only this way rapprochement could succeed.

After his return to Washington, Kissinger met with ROC officials to brief them about his trip, and as before, he lied to them. This approach fitted Kissinger's previous instructions to his subordinates that U.S. officials should not to speak honestly to their Taiwanese counterparts about future developments in U.S. China policy.²⁸⁸ Of course, Kissinger wanted to prevent any uproar in U.S.-ROC relations, and he also repeated U.S. assurances that the United States "wanted them [the ROC] to stay alive, and to maintain their integrity and their identity." The Nixon administration would try "to support them [Taiwan], and to keep them in as many international organizations as possible."²⁸⁹

In spite of all skepticism, this had to be encouraging news for the ROC. The regime planned to strengthen its bilateral relations with the United States and Japan in the aftermath of the UN debacle, and thus needed Washington's support.²⁹⁰ However, the Taiwanese were also aware of Kissinger's double play, as Shen's criticism in his memoirs suggests. Kissinger's assurances of his deep felt friendship did not appear genuine to Shen, and the ROC ambassador appeared annoyed by Kissinger's exaggerated self-confidence.²⁹¹ Yet, the Taiwanese could not afford to appear offended, as the regime in Taipei was relegated to a wait-and-see-approach, completely dependent on the benevolence of the United States.

Washington's reassurances also demonstrated that the White House had an honest interest to keep CKS and his regime in line.²⁹² The island was still important

²⁸⁷ Memo, Henry Kissinger to Richard Nixon, 10/29/1971 in: FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969-1972 (Washington D.C.: United States Printing Office, 2006), 523.

²⁸⁸ Nancy Bernkopf Tucker, *China Confidential. American Diplomats and Sino-American Relations, 1945-1996* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 315.

²⁸⁹ Memcon, Henry Kissinger, 11/15/1971 in: FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969-1972 (Washington D.C.: United States Printing Office, 2006), 591.

²⁹⁰ Memcon, Henry Kissinger, 10/29/1971 in: FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969-1972 (Washington D.C.: United States Printing Office, 2006), 581-582.

²⁹¹ Shen, "U.S.," 75-78.

²⁹² Kissinger renewed these assurances in a meeting with ROC Foreign Minister Chou Shu-kai in late December, 1971, see: Memcon, Henry Kissinger, 12/30/1971 in: FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969-1972 (Washington D.C.: United States Printing Office, 2006), 630. President Nixon did the same in a private letter for Chiang Kai-shek, see: Telegram, Department of State to the Embassy in the Republic of China, 01/01/1972 in: FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969-1972 (Washington D.C.: United States Printing Office, 2006), 635.

for U.S. policy in the Far East. Moreover, rapprochement could only be successful if the White House was able to maintain a close relationship with Taiwan, guaranteeing the island's security and the KMT regime's survival. Otherwise, the U.S. public and Congress would not endorse Nixon's policy. These considerations were reflected in the final shape of the joint communiqué of Americans and Chinese which Nixon should sign at the end of his visit in China.

A Moment of History

On February 21 1972, Richard Nixon and his wife Pat walked down the stairs of Air Force One to touch Chinese soil as the first “first couple” in the history of the United States.²⁹³ It was a moment of history, and Nixon was fully aware of it. He was under the scrutiny of the entire world. Thus, during a previous conversation with Kissinger, the president made clear that “[t]he [China] trip must succeed.”²⁹⁴ Hence he ordered Deputy National Security Advisor Alexander M. Haig to warn the Chinese “that there [should] be no public embarrassment to the president as a result of his visit to Peking.”²⁹⁵ The Nixon administration had worked tirelessly towards this trip, and they needed a success to bring the president's rapprochement policy to a climax.

In early January, Nixon sent Kissinger's aide and former General Alexander Haig for final discussions about his trip to China. Although they talked mostly about the technical aspects of the president's visit, Haig also emphasized that the domestic situation in the United States made it difficult for the White House to be publicly accommodating concerning Taiwan, as “the Left has been joined in a strange wedding with those conservative elements who are strong supporters of Taiwan.” Haig thus urged the Chinese to adopt a language in the joint communiqué that would be “less truthful and somewhat less precise” concerning the status of

²⁹³ For a detailed account of Nixon's visit in China, see: MacMillan, “Nixon”.

²⁹⁴ Memcon, Conversation Between President Nixon and his Assistant for National Security Affairs, 2/14/1972 in: FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969-1972 (Washington D.C.: United States Printing Office, 2006), 665, 670.

²⁹⁵ Memcon, Alexander Haig, 1/3/1972 in: FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969-1972 (Washington D.C.: United States Printing Office, 2006), 642.

Taiwan.²⁹⁶ To Washington's relieve, Zhou Enlai seemed willing to make concessions "because as we [the PRC] have mentioned before we are always willing to get the work done as best as possible because you must work with a view toward the future."²⁹⁷

Maybe, it helped that Mao Zedong did not show any deeper interest to discuss matters of dissent with Nixon when they met shortly after the president's arrival in Beijing. The CCP's chairman pretended not to be willing to discuss matters like Taiwan, Vietnam, and the Soviet Union but only questions of philosophical scope, claiming "[a]ll those troublesome problems I don't want to get into very much." Indeed, as the record suggests, Nixon and he talked about these issues rather superficially, agreeing in the end that neither side presented a threat for the other.²⁹⁸ This attitude indicated a division of labor among PRC leaders. Similar to the situation, the Carter administration faced in the late 1970s, the PRC's head of state (and chairman of the CCP) played the role of an elder statesman and philosopher while lower ranked PRC leaders were responsible for practical matters and political negotiations.

Accordingly, Nixon's talks with Zhou Enlai were more substantial. The president was very accommodating concerning Beijing's conditions for further progress in Sino-American relations. However, he also underlined that the final withdrawal from Taiwan depended on how much "progress is made on the peaceful resolution of the" Taiwan issue. Furthermore, Nixon indicated that due to domestic restraints his administration was forced to express a certain degree of support for Taiwan. The Chinese had to play along with this. As he told Zhou empathically, the U.S. president did "not want to be forced when I return to the United States, in a press conference or by Congressional leaders, to make a strong basically pro-Taiwan statement because of what has been said here."²⁹⁹ Fortunately, the PRC premier demonstrated sympathy for the U.S. administration's position, stating that the Chinese "have already waited over twenty years -I am very frank here- and can wait a few more years [for reunification with Taiwan]."³⁰⁰ It was a good sign for

²⁹⁶ Ibid., 638-643.

²⁹⁷ Ibid., 647.

²⁹⁸ Memcon, Richard Nixon, 2/21/1972 in: FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969-1972 (Washington D.C.: United States Printing Office, 2006), 712, 716.

²⁹⁹ Memcon, Richard Nixon, 2/22/1972 in: FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969-1972 (Washington D.C.: United States Printing Office, 2006), 697-698.

³⁰⁰ Ibid., 712.

the Americans, and Nixon expressed in his memoirs his satisfaction with Zhou's words and the final draft for the joint communiqué.³⁰¹

Parallel to Nixon's meetings with Mao and Zhou, other U.S. officials met their Chinese counterparts to discuss more technical matters. According to Gong Li, all PRC officials reported back to Mao who made the final decisions.³⁰² In one of these meetings, PRC Foreign Minister Ji Pengfei explained to his counterpart Rogers that normal relations between the PRC and the U.S. required that Washington would "recognize the PRC as the sole legal government of China." Furthermore, all U.S. troops had to be removed from Taiwan, and the Mutual Defense Treaty to be terminated.³⁰³ Any U.S. administration that pursued diplomatic relations with the PRC had to accept these requirements, as Carter and his aides were to find out a few years later.

The Shanghai Communiqué, however, did not contain any hints that the Nixon administration was willing to break up its security relationship with Taiwan. Instead, the document said that "the Taiwan question is the crucial question obstructing the normalization of relations between China and the United States", proving that Chinese and Americans had not found common ground about the matter of Taiwan.³⁰⁴ Furthermore, Washington was able to achieve its goal to use an ambiguous language in the communiqué, and the PRC did not succeed in forcing the USA to accept Taiwan's status as province of China, as the Nixon administration only acknowledged "that all Chinese on either side of the Taiwan Strait maintain there is but one China and that Taiwan is a part of China."³⁰⁵

The ambiguous language of the Shanghai Communiqué resembled much more the ideas of the U.S. side than of the Chinese. Evelyn Goh and Robert Ross share this assessment, arguing the document did not only prevent a stalemate of the rapprochement process but also served the U.S. position on the Taiwan issue because Washington did not have to accept the Chinese view that Taiwan was a part

³⁰¹ Nixon, "Memoiren", 588.

³⁰² Gong, "Decision", 354.

³⁰³ Memcon, "Counterpart Meetings Between the Secretary of State and the Foreign Minister of the People's Republic of China—II", 2/23/1972 in: FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969-1972 (Washington D.C.: United States Printing Office, 2006), 755-756.

³⁰⁴ Communiqué, "Joint Communiqué of the United States of America and the People's Republic of China", 02/28/1972, Taiwan Document Project,

<http://www.taiwandocuments.org/communique01.htm> (accessed: 07/22/2014).

³⁰⁵ Ibid.

(or better a province) of the People's Republic.³⁰⁶ Li Xiaoting and Huang Jing go even a step further, claiming that the ambiguous formulation gave Washington some sort of veto power concerning the settlement of the Taiwan issue in the event of any unilateral changes, either in Beijing or Taipei. The aforementioned language indicated that Washington would reject any non-peaceful settlement, limiting the PRC's chances to reunify China along the Taiwan Strait significantly.³⁰⁷

Still, as Gong Li says, the communiqué served both sides, because it also improved China's strategic situation vis-à-vis the Soviet Union. That was the view, Zhou Enlai expressed in a report from March 1.³⁰⁸ Zhou's assessment is not surprising, as the communiqué strengthened the pragmatic circles around him. His political prestige was bound to the success of rapprochement—a similar situation as Deng Xiaoping would face in 1978 during the normalization process. Mao's support guarded Zhou's back, containing the ultra-leftist's influence. As Li Jie explains, the strengthening of the pragmatic circles in Beijing opened the way for three important developments. First, many old cadres who were purged during the *Cultural Revolution* were reinstated. Secondly, China's economic reconstruction could begin. Thirdly, Deng Xiaoping re-emerged for the first time from the depth of the Chinese province, constituting his image as political weeble.³⁰⁹

The Shanghai Communiqué should herald the start of a new era of Sino-American relations. It did not only constitute the de-facto alliance between PRC and United States against Moscow, but also served as legal basis for the future conduct of this relationship. The document offered both sides a beacon of orientation, and expressed their common interests after decades of hostility and mistrust. Especially PRC officials became never tired to remind their U.S. counterparts of the spirit of the communiqué, an experience which the members of the Carter administration would make, too. In the end, Chinese and Americans achieved a diplomatic and strategic success, helping their situation vis-à-vis the Soviet Union.

³⁰⁶ Goh, "Constructing", 200-201; Ross, "Negotiating", 41-42.

³⁰⁷ Huang/Li, "Seperation", 81.

³⁰⁸ Gong, "Decision", 355.

³⁰⁹ Li, "China's", 63-64.

The Spirit of Shanghai

The Shanghai Communiqué proved the success of rapprochement, as it had a worldwide impact and brought strategic benefits for the Chinese and Americans. It marked the peak of Nixon's China policy, but also contained the fundamental problems that should prevent the U.S. and PRC from normalizing their relations in the aftermath. The ambiguous language and the deep going differences about Taiwan should not be the only obstacles to the establishment of official diplomatic relations but they contributed massively to the later development of dissent. Nonetheless, Chinese and Americans handled the first year after signing the communiqué very well, honoring the spirit of Shanghai, even establishing liaison offices in Washington and Beijing in May 1973. The latter indicated that normal U.S.-China relations were within reach.

The honeymoon between Chinese and Americans, made the regime in Taipei feel uncomfortable. A report by the MOFA underline this thinking.³¹⁰ Nevertheless, the ROC did not search for new allies, expecting the United States to keep its security commitments to Taiwan. Thus, when ROC foreign minister Zhou Shukai suggested that Taipei needed to approach the Soviets, President Chiang reacted harshly and made clear in a public statement that Taiwan would not be interested in an alliance with Moscow. This action proved Taiwan's firm stand on the side of the United States, no matter what was to happening elsewhere. Being politically pragmatic, CKS even saw something positive in the whole situation, reasoning that U.S.-China rapprochement diminished the threat of an attack from the mainland for at least 10 years. Such stability could help the regime to attract foreign investors, supporting the continuance of political and economic reform.³¹¹

It is difficult to assess the reasons why the Nationalists did not look for new ways to assure their security. The ROC regime even welcomed Nixon's reelection in late 1972 because his policy appeared much more stable to Taipei than the one

³¹⁰中華民國外交部，1971，《外交部施政成果報告表-801.3/009》，中華民國外交部，頁16-17。[MOFA, 1971, "The General Report of the Administration's Achievements in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs"-801.3/009, 16-17, MOFA, Academia Sinica, Taipei, Taiwan].

³¹¹ Taylor, "Generalissimo", S. 578-579. For an introductory reading about the development of Taiwan's society and economy since the 1970s, read: Robert Ash/John W. Garner/Penelope B. Prime (ed.), *Taiwan's Democracy. Economic and Political Challenges* (New York: Routledge, 2011); Liqun Cao/Lanying Huang/Ivan Y. Sun, *Policing in Taiwan. From Authoritarianism to Democracy* (New York: Routledge, 2014).

of a Democratic president.³¹² One reason for this attitude was certainly Chiang's profound anti-communism. Taiwan's status as a bulwark against the spread of communism in East Asia had always been an important political asset for the regime. Another reason might have been that Taipei was widely isolated. Japan followed the U.S. example, attempting to normalize its relations with Beijing, and other major powers had no interest to risk their good relations with the PRC. Finally, Chiang and his aides surmised that Taiwan had still influential friends in Washington who would make sure that the United States was not to abandon the island. Discussions of ROC Ambassador Shen with Kissinger and Nixon indicated as much.³¹³ Here, especially Nixon made clear that the KMT regime had no other choice than to accept the U.S. position, advising Chiang "not be belligerent" against the PRC, and "not quarrel with our statement to the effect that there is a [U.S.] commitment" to Taiwan's security, because this could "force an eventual failure, which would not be in anybody's interests" due to "a tremendous isolationist movement developing in this country."³¹⁴ In other words, Nixon told the Taiwanese to calm down and shut up.

In the meantime, Washington and Beijing worked on the implementation of the Shanghai Communiqué. Unfortunately, U.S.-China trade did not benefit that much from these efforts, as the PRC was still too poorly developed.³¹⁵ Nonetheless, the Chinese leadership was satisfied with the way the Americans implemented the communiqué and, although the U.S. side had not fulfilled the three Chinese preconditions yet, agreed to establish liaison offices in Beijing and Washington in February 1973. These offices gave Sino-American relations an official character and improved the communication between Chinese and Americans. In May, they were opened. David K. E. Bruce became the first Chief of the U.S. Liaison Office - George H.W. Bush became his successor in 1974-, while Huang Zhen became the first head of the PRC Liaison Office, later succeeded by Han Xu.

³¹² 中華民國外交部，1972.7~1975.12，《中美關係重要文件-412/0027》，中華民國外交部，頁 7-9。[MOFA, 1972.7-1975.12, "Important Documents of U.S.-Taiwan Relations"-412/0027, 7-9, MOFA, Academia Sinica, Taipei, Taiwan].

³¹³ Memcon, Henry Kissinger, 3/1/1972 in: FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969-1972 (Washington D.C.: United States Printing Office, 2006), 825-830; Memcon, Richard Nixon, 3/6/1972 in: FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969-1972 (Washington D.C.: United States Printing Office, 2006), 832-840.

³¹⁴ Memcon, Richard Nixon, 3/6/1972 in: FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969-1972 (Washington D.C.: United States Printing Office, 2006), 837-838.

³¹⁵ Kailai Huang, "The Role of American Business in Sino-American Normalization" in: Guo Suijian/Guo Baogang (ed.), *Thirty Years of China-U.S. Relations. Analytical Approaches and Contemporary Issues* (Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2010), 162.

The Elusiveness of Normal U.S.-PRC Relations

After the establishment of liaison offices in Beijing and Washington, Sino-American relations stalled. The profound differences between Chinese and Americans about Taiwan made taking steps towards normalization difficult. In addition, the United States was to experience a political crisis of seismic proportions when the recently reelected Richard Nixon had to resign in the wake of the Watergate scandal.³¹⁶ But political upheaval occurred also in China after the death of Mao Zedong in September 1976. The leftist *Gang of Four* grasped for power in Beijing and forced the moderate circles to get defensive. Li Jie argues that these power struggles hampered the decision-making process in China significantly and made Sino-American normalization impossible.³¹⁷ It was this mix of internal problems in the political systems of China and the United States as well as bilateral friction which contributed to the elusiveness of normalization and a postponement beyond the presidential terms of Nixon and Ford.

In spite of all the dissent between the KMT regime and the Nixon administration, Taipei saw Nixon's reelection in November 1972 as a good sign because Chiang and his cohorts did not trust the Democrats. Furthermore, although the U.S. did not sell the new F-4 Phantom jetfighter to the ROC, Washington approved considerable sales of modern military equipment to the island.³¹⁸ In fact, military assistance for Taiwan was to increase between 1973 and 1976.³¹⁹ This decision was somewhat surprising because PRC Prime Minister Zhou Enlai had made clear during Kissinger's China trip in February 1972 that military assistance to Taiwan "should be phased out over time."³²⁰ It was the first time that the Chinese had made this aspect of U.S.-ROC relations an issue, but it should not be the last time. Military sales became an important part of the American security relationship with Taiwan after normalization in 1979.

³¹⁶ For an introductory reading about the Watergate scandal, see: Keith W. Olson, *Watergate: The Presidential Scandal That Shook America* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2003).

³¹⁷ Li, "China's", 66.

³¹⁸ Taylor, "Generalissimo", 582-583.

³¹⁹ Memo, Richard Kennedy to Henry Kissinger, 4/7/1973 in: FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume XVIII, China, 1973-1976 (Washington D.C.: United States Printing Office, 2007), 240.

³²⁰ Memo, Henry Kissinger to Richard Nixon, 3/2/1973 in: FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume XVIII, China, 1973-1976 (Washington D.C.: United States Printing Office, 2007), 220.

Selling more military equipment to Taiwan had two reasons. First, the PRC increased the pressure on Taipei to start talks about the political reunification.³²¹ More military assistance for the ROC should strengthen the regime's resistance to such talks, indicating that the Nixon administration had no interest in negotiations between Beijing and Taipei. Secondly, the arms sales served political needs at home. From late 1973 on, conducting China policy became difficult for Nixon. Although the administration tried to deal with other matters, *Watergate* occupied the president and his aides more and more.³²² The Chinese were aware of the events around the scandal as a conversation between Deng Xiaoping and Kissinger—since September 1973, Secretary of State—indicated in April 1974. The vice premier was concerned *Watergate* could influence Sino-American relations, although “[s]uch an issue is really incomprehensible to us [PRC leaders].”³²³ Deng's concerns proved prophetic, as Sino-American relations lost their momentum over the course of 1974.

In this situation, Kissinger, who served Gerald Ford as Secretary of State, tried his best to end the stalemate. After his new interlocutor, Vice Premier Deng Xiaoping, had threatened a non-peaceful solution of the Taiwan issue and urged the Americans to accept the *Japanese formula* in order to break the stalemate,³²⁴ Kissinger declared during his China visit in November 1974 the general willingness of the United States to accept the three Chinese preconditions (severance of U.S.-ROC official ties, withdrawal of all U.S. troops, and termination of the MDT). In addition, he promised the use of the *Japanese formula*. In return, the Secretary of State only asked for a Chinese statement that the Taiwan issue would be solved peacefully³²⁵

In spite of the far reaching concessions by the Ford administration, the Chinese saw no reason to be obliging themselves. A statement about Beijing's willingness to solve the Taiwan issue peacefully was out of question. Deng made clear that the PRC could not “undertake any commitments or make any promises in in-

³²¹ Memo, Richard Solomon to Henry Kissinger, 4/2/1973 in: FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume XVIII, China, 1973-1976 (Washington D.C.: United States Printing Office, 2007), 238.

³²² Nixon, “Memoiren”, 793-794.

³²³ Memcon, Henry Kissinger, 4/14/1974 in: FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume XVIII, China, 1973-1976 (Washington D.C.: United States Printing Office, 2007), 489.

³²⁴ Li, “China's”, 73-77. The PRC developed the *Japanese formula* when Japan normalized its relations with Beijing, allowing Tokyo to conduct commercial and cultural relations with Taiwan on a non-governmental basis.

³²⁵ Memcon, Henry Kissinger, 11/26/1974 in: FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume XVIII, China, 1973-1976 (Washington D.C.: United States Printing Office, 2007), 580.

ternal affairs like when and how we will do or establish things that pertain to internal affairs [reunification].”³²⁶ This fundamental argument brought him to the conclusion that “time is not ripe yet to solve this question [Taiwan issue], because according to your formula, it would not be possible for us to accept this method of normalization.”³²⁷ This was not only a question of foreign policy but also one of domestic politics. Deng Xiaoping was in a difficult position. He had just come into office after Zhou Enlai, ill from cancer, had convinced Mao to appoint him as vice premier, responsible for Sino-American relations. Therefore, Deng stood under scrutiny from the leftists, and he needed a breakthrough in his negotiations with the U.S. in order to strengthen his position at home.³²⁸

In their November talks, both sides demonstrated the fundamental issues between them. The U.S. executive was neither willing nor able to make any concessions concerning the security relationship with Taiwan, while the CCP regime could not commit itself to a peaceful solution of the Taiwan issue, fearing for its prestige, legitimation, and territorial integrity. If the PRC and U.S. governments wanted to establish normal relations, it needed one side to make huge concessions but neither government was in a position to do so.

Nixon’s successor, Gerald R. Ford, lacked the political capital in Washington to make any far reaching concessions concerning Taiwan.³²⁹ Considering the way the Ford administration had treated the Taiwanese before, constantly denying ROC officials any kind of information, warnings, or consultations about U.S. China policy, these concerns appear surprising, especially because Taipei already perceived its relationship with the United States as deteriorating.³³⁰ Still, it was impossible for Ford to leave Congress and U.S. public with the impression that he was willing to sell out Taiwan. This lack of political leeway was the reason, why he did not expect a substantial outcome from his visit to China.³³¹

³²⁶ Memcon, Henry Kissinger, 11/27/1974 in: FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume XVIII, China, 1973-1976 (Washington D.C.: United States Printing Office, 2007), 631.

³²⁷ Memcon, Henry Kissinger, 11/26/1974 in: FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume XVIII, China, 1973-1976 (Washington D.C.: United States Printing Office, 2007), 582.

³²⁸ Coincidentally, he should face a similar situation later, when the PRC conducted actual negotiations with the Carter administration about normalization. In the late 1970s, Deng had just re-emerged to the center of power in Beijing, initializing economic reform and modernization in China.

³²⁹ Berger, “Normalisierung“, 393-394; Bernkopf Tucker, “Strait“, 72; Robert, “Relations“, 85.

³³⁰ Nancy Bernkopf Tucker, *Taiwan, Hong Kong, and the United States, 1945-1992. Uncertain Friendships* (New York: Twayne Publisher, 1994), 126-128.

³³¹ Memcon, Gerald Ford, 10/31/1975 in: FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume XVIII, China, 1973-1976 (Washington D.C.: United States Printing Office, 2007), 834.

It was this weakness together with the political turmoil in the PRC that saved the regime in Taipei. Neither Washington nor Beijing were in a position to make the necessary concessions. Ford's trip to China in December 1975 made this obvious. The president only tried to console the Chinese with the promise that "after the election [in November 1976] we [the U.S.] will be in a position to move much more specifically toward the normalization of relations..." Ford even suggested to do so "[...] along the model perhaps of the Japanese arrangement..."³³² These words were virtually a promise to the Chinese that Washington would settle with the *Japanese formula*. This concession should later significantly limit the Carter administration's leeway vis-à-vis the PRC because Beijing took this promise as the minimum condition for normalization.

Chinese concessions towards the United States concerning Taiwan were also not possible in late 1975. At the end of year, the leftists gained ground, when Mao harshly criticized Deng in public for his failure to achieve progress in Sino-American relations. Matters became even worse for Deng due to Mao's illness, which led to a leadership crisis in the PRC. When Lin Biao died in 1971, after his attempt for a coup d'état had failed, Mao had not anointed a new candidate for his succession. It had always been the chairman who had kept the balance between the pragmatic and leftist circles in Beijing. According to Li Jie, it was Mao's omission to organize his succession which "enabled Jiang Qing and other leftists to attack Zhou Enlai and Deng Xiaoping." In the end, the *Gang of Four* prevailed, and Deng was demoted after Zhou had died in January 1976. The result was political turmoil, which ended after Mao's death in September of the same year. After some struggle among the Chinese leadership, the *Gang of Four* was dislodged. Now, the political situation in Beijing allowed another push toward normalization.³³³ The problem for the Chinese was that the U.S. officials who had made all those aforementioned promises to them were not in office anymore. A new administration under the recently elected Democrat Jimmy Carter replaced them.

³³² Memcon, Gerald Ford, 12/4/1975 in: FRUS, 1969-1976, Volume XVIII, China, 1973-1976 (Washington D.C.: United States Printing Office, 2007), 895.

³³³ Li, "China's", 76-77.

Conclusion and Discussion

The idea for rapprochement originated from the Nixon administration's realization that the power gap between the United States and the Soviet Union was diminishing. Containing the Soviet Union alone was deemed too costly, and the White House searched for new ways to share this burden. In this situation, Nixon pursued different measures to improve the situation of the United States, and, according to Michael Schaller, rapprochement with the People's Republic was only one of them. The whole approach of *détente* and rapprochement helped Nixon to achieve three important political goals; first, the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) agreement with the Soviets, second, the end of the war in Vietnam, and third, he got reelected in 1972.³³⁴

The Chinese pursued similar interests as Washington when they decided to improve their relations with the United States. Since the USSR represented a huge threat to China's security, closer relations with the other superpower could help to improve the PRC's strategic situation. However, neither Beijing nor Washington ever sought a formal alliance. Their respective social systems and their national interests were too different. Their antagonism to the Soviet Union only allowed them to look beyond these fundamental issues so far as it helped them to put pressure on Moscow.³³⁵

This problem became visible in the negotiations about the Shanghai Communiqué during Kissinger's second trip to China. The discussions between Zhou Enlai and the APNSA made it clear that the Taiwan issue was the most controversial matter between Chinese and Americans. Since the communiqué would state the official views of both sides, neither Beijing nor Washington could commit themselves to a language, which would contradict their respective political interests. The PRC could not allow the United States to remain involved in a matter that they considered a pure Chinese affair, while the White House could not risk alienating the U.S. public, Congress and American allies in Asia-Pacific. On the other hand, both sides realized that they had to find a compromise. The solution was to present

³³⁴ Schaller, "Détente", 363-365, 386.

³³⁵ Qingguo, "Relations", 109

their different views on the matter of Taiwan in separate statements attached to the joint communiqué.³³⁶

Yet, it seems as if the Nixon administration was still too eager to please their Chinese counterparts. As Rosemary Foot suggests, the U.S. administration gave away too much too early. Nixon and his aides appeared obsessed by the idea to gain advantages vis-à-vis the Soviet Union. This impression is fueled by the secrecy and centralization of the whole U.S. decision-making process, which made the development of a full scale bargaining strategy even more difficult. Therefore it was easy for Beijing to adopt a less reconciliatory position, exploiting the lack of cohesion in the U.S. administration.³³⁷ The White House's eagerness to court the Chinese is even more surprising because both Nixon and Kissinger seemed aware that China could become a superpower in the future.³³⁸ Both weighed strategic and political consequences thoroughly, but did not really consider the consequences of their concessions to the PRC. Their promises, however, fueled Chinese expectations. Once Washington had made several concessions, Beijing was under the impression the PRC did not have to give something in return. This attitude later made it much more difficult for the Carter administration to put pressure on the Chinese during the normalization process.

³³⁶ Kissinger, "Memoiren", 832-833.

³³⁷ Rosemary Foot, "Prizes Won, Opportunities Lost. The U.S. Normalization of Relations with China, 1972-1979" in: William C. Kirby/ Robert S. Ross/Gong Li (ed.), *Normalization of U.S.-China Relations: An International History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 114-115.

³³⁸ Kim, "Manipulating", 29.

Chapter III: Settling on a China Policy, January 1977- June 1977

When Jimmy Carter became the 39th President of the United States of America on January 20, 1977, he had a very precise notion of what kind of foreign policy he wanted to conduct. He sought to improve the global situation in general and strengthen the American position in the world in particular. He did not realize how difficult it would be to navigate through the shallows of the seas of politics of Washington D.C. Despite being narrowly elected after grueling primary battles in both parties, Carter considered his victory a mandate. Yet, he underestimated the importance of gathering allies and resources before beginning work on contentious policy goals. The early stages of his presidency already indicated that the fate of his plan to normalize U.S. relations with the People's Republic would become a painful political lesson.

In this chapter I examine the internal and external pressures the Carter administration faced during their first months in office, and how this experience shaped the administration's development of a strategy for its China policy. I will show that, while Sino-American relations had stalled since the establishment of liaison offices in 1973, the former administrations under Nixon and Ford had agreed with the Chinese leaders to a stiff framework. Carter had difficulties to overcome this framework since he had to honor the idea of continuation in American foreign policy. Due to the far-reaching promises Nixon and Ford had made concerning future American ties with Taiwan, Carter's options to assure Taiwan's security were severely limited. The Chinese inflexibility to allow the United States close relations with Taiwan added further limitations, and made it much harder for the Carter administration to cope with Taiwanese and Congressional demands regarding the assurance of security to the island.

This Chinese inflexibility and wide-spread pressure, not a lack of purpose by Carter, delayed the formation of a coherent normalization strategy that would have allowed the Carter administration to approach normalization earlier than it eventually did. Nancy Bernkopf Tucker argues the Carter administration's China policy was off to a "false start" because the administration was indecisive and una-

ble to deal with the domestic pressure they faced.³³⁹ This observation completely underestimates Carter's determination to approach China and the Taiwan issue early in his presidency.

The archival record shows that it took some time for officials of the Carter administration to gain access to the China material from the Nixon and Ford administrations. As soon as they had worked through the documents, they immediately began working on the process of normalization. In fact, some of Carter's advisors had already begun to assess the administration's options toward China.

Archival and other material further suggests that Carter and his aides were careful in their approach. Nonetheless, Carter's China experts had developed a strategy paper for the administration's China policy no later than May 1977. This paper which became publicly known as Presidential Review Memorandum-24 would outline the principles of the Carter administration's approach towards Sino-American normalization and the Taiwan issue. PRM-24 considered normalization with the PRC to be an important point in U.S. containment of the Soviet Union. A key difference in PRM-24 from previous strategy papers was the inclusion of minimum requirements the Chinese had to meet -something neither Nixon nor Ford had included out of fear of alienating Beijing.

By mid-1977, the Carter administration was not only willing but also well-prepared to begin serious talks with the People's Republic about the normalization. Therefore, Robert Ross's and Patrick Tyler's argument that the Carter administration was apparently delaying the process because it was confident with the status-quo is an exaggeration.³⁴⁰ It is true that President Carter did not put all his administration's efforts into the China initiative due to other objectives in his foreign policy agenda. His administration, however, dealt with the matter continuously, not forcing anything. Since it was so early in Carter's presidency, it was not feasible for the administration to prioritize normalization more than they currently were.

I argue that Carter's careful approach was intentional deliberateness rather than delay or acceptance of the status-quo. The White House needed more information and a better understanding of the Chinese perspective. Consequently it needed preliminary high-level talks to test the administration's strategy. The visit

³³⁹ Bernkopf Tucker, "Taiwan Expandable", 131; idem, „Strait“, 101.

³⁴⁰ Ross, "Negotiating", 114-115, 119; Tyler, "Wall", 241.

of Secretary of State Cyrus Vance to Beijing in August 1977 would serve as an initial trial-run for Carter's approach.

The Great Wall of the Past

Nancy Bernkopf Tucker argues that Jimmy Carter's China policy was off to a slow start because it took several months before the White House published its first strategy paper on China. It took even longer until the first top official of the Carter administration visited Beijing in order to talk about the possibility of normalization.³⁴¹ My research suggests this delay was not the result of a lack of priority. It was rather the consequence of a conundrum of different problems the new administration faced, and which were not easy to overcome. The expectations for further progress in Sino-American relations for the Carter administration were, on the contrary, very high. A paper of the Democratic Party for the presidential campaign of 1976 stated: "Our [U.S.] relations with China should continue to develop on peaceful lines, including early movement toward normalizing diplomatic relations [...]."³⁴² Carter himself made clear during the first Presidential Campaign Debate with Gerald Ford in October 1976 that he "would certainly pursue the normalization of relationships with the People's Republic of China."³⁴³ In his memoirs, he repeats that the establishment of official diplomatic relations with Beijing was an important goal for his administration.³⁴⁴

However, normalization was only one of Carter's foreign policy goals. He pursued a multitude of ambitious objectives which were not only supposed to improve the strategic situation of the United States but also to alter the way U.S. foreign policy was conducted. The new president sought to highlight human rights in American foreign policy, promote peace in the Middle East, find a new arrangement for the Panama Canal, and revive the *détente* process with the Soviet Un-

³⁴¹ Bernkopf-Tucker, "Strait", 90.

³⁴² Platform, Democratic Party, The American President Project, 'Democratic Party Platform of 1976', 07/12/1976, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=29606> (accessed: 10/08/2014).

³⁴³ Debate, The American President Project, 'Presidential Campaign Debate', 10/06/1976, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=6414&st=China&st1=> (accessed: 10/08/2014).

³⁴⁴ Carter, "Faith", 188-189.

ion.³⁴⁵ Since Carter could be sure that all of these objectives would lead to domestic debates, he required vast political resources both at home and overseas. He could not use this reservoir exclusively for normalization. This underlines the importance of the third factor delineated from Neoclassical Realism: the need to legitimize a certain policy and find acceptance for it at home. The administration had to accumulate enough resources to assert its political goals even against domestic opposition. This was to have a profound and continuing impact on Carter's China and Taiwan policy.

Carter and his aides were aware that Sino-American normalization was a highly delicate matter. The designated Secretary of State, Cyrus Vance, indicated as much in a memorandum from before the elections: "The issue of 'normalization' is very complex and must be approached with caution [...] I do not think we have to rush." One of the reasons for Vance's caution was his concern about the leadership struggles in China after Mao's death.³⁴⁶ National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski described the new leadership around Hua Guofeng later as more "traditional" and "somewhat unimaginative". In his opinion, this made Chinese concessions concerning matters of dispute such as the subject of Taiwan very unlikely.³⁴⁷ The uncertainties of the PRC's leadership situation left Washington also questioning how reliable China would be in the mid- and long-term. In this situation, the Carter administration recognized that they needed to be patient to see which group among the PRC's leadership would prevail. In the meantime, the Carter administration could pursue other goals.

Since Carter's foreign policy agenda was so ambitious, the president had to consider his tactics carefully in order to achieve all of his goals. The administration needed to be patient, and approach each issue step-by-step. Each attempt to achieve one of the president's objectives, subtracted from the political resources which the administration needed to legitimize its policy. Within Washington's political system with its balance between executive and legislative branches, this limitation of

³⁴⁵ For an introductory reading about Carter's foreign policy in general, see: Betty Glad, *An Outsider in the White House: Jimmy Carter, His Advisors, and the Making of American Foreign Policy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009); Scott Kaufman, *Plans Unraveled: The Foreign Policy of the Carter Administration* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2008).

³⁴⁶ Memo, Overview of Foreign Policy Issues and Positions, Cyrus Vance, 10/24/1976, "TL Sensitive Vance/President 12/78-1/79" folder, Box 17, Records of Anthony Lake, 1977-1981, RG 59, NARA.

³⁴⁷ Memo, Zbigniew Brzezinski to Jimmy Carter, 04/22/1977, "Weekly Reports [to the President]. 1-15: [2/77-6/77]" folder, Box 41, Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection, Jimmy Carter Library.

resources had a direct impact on the timing of Carter's China policy and the eventual delay of normalization. The new administration did not only face the problem of timing its China policy correctly, it also had to account for the legacies of the previous administrations. Mutual historical experience, the second factor from Neoclassical Realism, had a strong influence on the White House's options vis-à-vis the Chinese.

Carter's predecessors had already made considerable concessions to Beijing that substantially limited the president's leeway. This problem became clear even before Carter and his aides assumed their new positions. At a reception in Washington, departing Secretary of State Henry Kissinger personally introduced his designated successor Cyrus Vance to China's Chief of the liaison office Huang Zhen. The meeting happened in Kissinger's office in the State Department in early January, before Vance was officially Secretary. In that meeting, much to Vance's surprise, when Huang stressed the three preconditions his government had set for normalization, Kissinger agreed with Huang.³⁴⁸ The Chinese ambassador also openly criticized some of Carter's statements concerning Taiwan and the *One-China-principle*, claiming his remarks run "counter to the principles of the Shanghai Communiqué." Not yet in office, all Vance could do was to state that Carter stood "firmly behind the implementation of the Shanghai Communiqué as the guiding principle which should govern our bilateral relations."³⁴⁹ What else could he have said since Kissinger's 'introduction' to Huang had severely limited Vance's options?

The meeting demonstrated that the Carter administration could not expect the Chinese to show much flexibility on the matter of normalization, particularly concerning the Taiwan issue. Due to statements and assurances of the previous administrations, the Chinese had precise expectations on what the new American government had to do if it wanted to move towards normalization. These expectations based on the historical experience of PRC officials with former administrations and added to the limitations of Carter's China policy in its early stage.

Vance's meeting with Kissinger and Huang also demonstrated that the administration had to know what exactly the state of Chinese-American relations was.

³⁴⁸ The United States had to fulfill three conditions. Washington should sever all diplomatic ties with the regime on Taiwan, withdraw all U.S. troops from the island, and terminate the Mutual Defense Treaty from 1954.

³⁴⁹ Memorandum of Conversation, Henry A. Kissinger, 01/08/1977, "China MR-NLC-98-215 (1)" folder, Box 40, Vertical Files (VF), Jimmy Carter Library.

Thus, the first task for the administration's China experts after assuming office was to search through all available material about the former administration's handling of Sino-American relations. Since the previous negotiations between Washington and Beijing had not taken place in a public environment, Carter and his aides had to learn the details of the framework, which constituted Washington's current relationship to the People's Republic. Michel Oksenberg, a scholar from the University of Michigan appointed as senior staff member of the National Security Council, was assigned to this task. As Patrick Tyler describes in his book, Oksenberg and other officials of the Carter administration had to search different archives and agencies all over the country to get all relevant documents together.³⁵⁰ This alone cost the White House valuable time in its development of a coherent China strategy.

After having problems to get complete access to all the necessary material, Oksenberg found the former administration very accommodating on the matter of Taiwan. When Nixon had accepted Beijing's aforementioned five principles in his meetings with Mao and Zhou, this wide ranging concessions changed former American positions on Taiwan, and was "[a]bsolutely crucial and behind the language of the Shanghai Communiqué."³⁵¹ Unless Carter did not want to harm America's credibility as a negotiating partner, he had to honor the former administration's concession at least to some extent, although this would further limit his options.

The situation got even worse when the Carter administration realized that Henry Kissinger had already stated U.S. willingness "to complete normalization along the lines of the Japanese solution [...]."³⁵² This solution referred to the *Japanese formula* that was implemented when Japan and the PRC had established diplomatic relations in 1972. It had allowed Tokyo to retain economic and cultural relations with Taiwan on the basis of non-governmental people-to-people relations. Kissinger's commitment to the *Japanese formula* made it far more difficult for the Carter administration to preserve America's role as the patron of Taiwan's security. Under these conditions, Beijing could easily decline any American involvement in Taiwan's future security. Furthermore, the *Japanese formula* represented a huge set-

³⁵⁰ Tyler, "Wall", 236-237.

³⁵¹ Memo, Michel Oksenberg to Zbigniew Brzezinski, 02/04/1977, "China MR-NLC-98-215 (1)" folder, Box 40, Vertical Files (VF), Jimmy Carter Library.

³⁵² Ibid.

back for any plans the Carter administration had to save certain aspects of its official relations with the ROC regime like the establishment of a liaison office in Taipei.

The record demonstrated that both former administrations, Nixon's and Ford's, had established a rigid framework that allowed Carter only limited room to maneuver, particularly on the matter of Taiwan. This rigidity caught the members of the Carter administration by surprise, delaying the conception of a strategy concerning the normalization of relations with the People's Republic. However, such a strategy was necessary if the Carter administration was to enter serious talks about normalization. The problem for Carter was that not only past decisions added to the Carter administration's difficulties, but historical experiences as well.

As their predecessors before them, the officials of the Carter administration could not escape the pressure to maintain close relations with Taiwan and to make sure keeping the island out of the grasp of communist China. Otherwise, it would be impossible to legitimize normal relations with the PRC. Some circles within the United States watched vigilantly for any signs of American concessions to Beijing, which could weaken U.S. ties to Taiwan. Just a few weeks in office, Carter's aides received first warnings of how sensitive this issue was.

A letter written by Yale professor and former Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs in the Johnson administration Eugene V. Rostow was only one example of attempts to raise the administration's awareness for the Taiwan issue. Rostow claimed that the end of formal U.S.-Taiwan security relationship would be "a disaster – a global catastrophe, weakening the deterrent credibility of all American security commitments."³⁵³ Letters like Rostow's demonstrated that broad circles in the American elite still sympathized with Taiwan. The ROC regime was not only an ideologically more suitable friend than the communist mainland but also a strategic asset for the American position in Asia. The Carter administration had to be careful what it was going to say in public about its plans for Taiwan. The domestic pressure did not leave Carter much flexibility and further limited his options. It would need a major effort to get the American public and Congress to accept Sino-American normalization if this meant any change in Washington's relationship to Taipei.

³⁵³ Letter, Eugene V. Rostow to Cyrus Vance, 02/01/1977, "CO 34-1 Executive 1/20/77-1/20/81" folder, Box CO-15, Subject Files Countries, Jimmy Carter Library.

Only a few weeks in office, the Carter administration faced a wall of problems whose foundation was built on the decisions and experiences of the past. The need to find acceptance for the president's normalization plans added to the difficulties. This "Great Wall" consisted of three major problems that would accompany the whole process of normalization. First, the Chinese side did not appear flexible on the matter of Taiwan because Beijing saw the Taiwan issue as an internal affair. Beijing even believed that the U.S. owed the Chinese because Washington had been intervening in Chinese affairs for so long. This position made Chinese concessions concerning Taiwan unlikely. Second, the domestic pressure the White House faced was heavy. Taiwan still had many supporters throughout all circles of the American elites. This made it more difficult for Carter himself to make concessions to Beijing concerning Taiwan. Finally, Carter discovered that the former administrations had made far reaching promises to Beijing, particularly on the matter of Taiwan. Those promises had to be taken into account in order to maintain continuity in U.S. foreign policy and to avoid any harm to America's international credibility. Of course, this further limited the Carter administration's flexibility.

The Importance of the Soviet Threat

After the Carter administration had identified the major obstacles to quick progress on the matter of normalization with Beijing, Carter and his aides had to evaluate how they wanted to proceed with their China policy. It was imperative to develop a concept that would allow the administration to pursue the matter at a pace that would be in stride with its general agenda. Yet, as Neoclassical Realism suggests, the first thing the administration had to assess was what impact the normalization of relations with Beijing would have on the international distribution of power and on the global position of the United States. Unfortunately, not all members of the administration agreed in their assessment of China's importance.

The differences among Carter's aides became already visible in the higher levels of the administration. Carter's two most important foreign policy advisors Secretary of State Cyrus Vance and National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski did not agree on the strategic significance of Sino-American normalization. Vance was more cautious concerning the effects of normalization on the over-

all strategic situation. He doubted that China “might be a useful counterweight to the Soviet Union.”³⁵⁴ Nonetheless, the Secretary of State also believed in “the ultimate goal of normalization of diplomatic relations” with China since this country “constituted a political, economic and cultural weight in the world that the United States could not ignore [...and] that had an important role to play in the final quarter of the twentieth century.”³⁵⁵ For Vance, normalization was highly desirable, but not only for the sake of strategic advantages vis-à-vis the Soviet Union. Normalization was an end to itself that would prove its significance in the future.

Brzezinski did not share this view. He was of Polish descent and seemed to have a particular aversion towards everything that was Russian. He had also been a constant critic of *détente*.³⁵⁶ In his opinion, Washington should make use of any advantage vis-à-vis Moscow to weaken the Soviet Union. Carter’s APNSA was convinced that concerns about the USSR had caused Nixon’s rapprochement policy in the early 1970s.³⁵⁷ Accordingly, Brzezinski saw normalization as “a key strategic goal of the new Administration...” that would bring advantages for the United States’ struggle against the Soviet Union. Yet, as Brzezinski was aware, this dimension of Sino-American relations could not be discussed publicly.³⁵⁸ Consistent with the Neorealist premise that the most powerful actors within the international system stay in a contest for power, Brzezinski wanted Sino-American normalization to strengthen the *China card* in the power play against the Soviets.

During the early stages of Carter’s presidency, Brzezinski’s view did not prevail. Carter claims in his memoirs, following Vance’s line of argument, he wanted the American China policy to be independent from its policy towards the Soviet Union.³⁵⁹ Establishing diplomatic relations with the People’s Republic had its own merits as it could offer new chances for U.S. trade with China. Moreover, as Brian Hilton suggests, Beijing could help the Carter administration to improve

³⁵⁴ Vance, “Choices”, 78-79.

³⁵⁵ Memo, Overview of Foreign Policy Issues and Positions, Cyrus Vance, 10/24/1976, “TL Sensitive Vance/President 12/78-1/79” folder, Box 17, Records of Anthony Lake, 1977-1981, RG 59, NARA; Vance, “Choices”, 78-79.

³⁵⁶ Brzezinski’s academic writing indicates as much, see: Zbigniew Brzezinski, “The Nature of the Soviet System” in: *Slavic Review*, Vol. 20, No. 3 (Oct., 1961); Idem, “The Framework of East-West Reconciliation” in: *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 46, No. 2 (Jan., 1968); Idem, “The Deceptive Structure of Peace” in: *Foreign Policy*, No. 14 (Spring, 1974).

³⁵⁷ Memo, Zbigniew Brzezinski to Jimmy Carter, 02/04/1977, “China MR-NLC-98-215 (1)” folder, Box 40, Vertical Files (VF), Jimmy Carter Library.

³⁵⁸ Brzezinski, “Power”, 196.

³⁵⁹ Carter, “Faith”, 188.

global peace and stability.³⁶⁰ In a memorandum to Carter from early February 1977, even Brzezinski admitted that better relations with the PRC had helped to stabilize the American position in East Asia significantly after the U.S. had been struggling to keep out of armed conflicts there for 25 years.³⁶¹ Having China on America's side influenced the distribution of power in the nation's favor and would be advantageous in Carter's pursuit of other objectives. Normalization was therefore a political necessity. The only problem was that the administration was not able to conclude when and under which circumstances it could achieve this goal.

Beijing had already signaled its readiness to talk about full normalization. The mutual interest was there. The new administration could take the initiative, but Carter had also to be careful. According to Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs William Gleysteen, Beijing's first impression of the Carter administration's policy was not a positive one. Gleysteen argued that the administration's efforts to ensnare the Soviets early on had alienated the Chinese. Moreover, Beijing perceived Carter's former statements concerning the Taiwan issue during the presidential campaign as directed against the PRC, violating the spirit of the Shanghai Communiqué. Hence, Gleysteen thought, the president's first meeting with the Chinese Ambassador Huang Zhen was important in order to set the tone for the future of the relationship.³⁶² It was important for Carter to demonstrate his seriousness about normalization as well as a basic understanding of the Chinese position.

Another problem was Carter's emphasis of human rights. According to Mevyn Leffler, this matter should become "the central, theme of his foreign policy."³⁶³ Yet, the questions of human rights in China and morality in U.S. foreign relations were not going to play a significant role in the normalization process.³⁶⁴ It needed until the 1990s before this topic became important for U.S.-China rela-

³⁶⁰ Brian Hilton, "Maximum Flexibility for Peaceful Change": Jimmy Carter, Taiwan, and the Recognition of the People's Republic of China in: *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 33, No. 4 (September, 2009), 598-599.

³⁶¹ Memo, Zbigniew Brzezinski to Jimmy Carter, 02/04/1977, "China MR-NLC-98-215 (1)" folder, Box 40, Vertical Files (VF), Jimmy Carter Library.

³⁶² Memo, Michael Oksenberg to Zbigniew Brzezinski, 02/18/77, "China (People's Republic of) 1-2/77" folder, Box 8, NSA Brzezinski Material Country File, Jimmy Carter Library.

³⁶³ Leffler, "Soul", 263.

³⁶⁴ For an introductory reading about Carter's human rights approach, see: Hauke Hartmann, *Die Menschenrechtspolitik unter Präsident Carter: moralische Ansprüche, strategische Interessen und der Fall El Salvador* (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2004), 43-63. For more information about the implementation of human rights in U.S. foreign policy, see: Mary E. Stuckey, *Jimmy Carter, Human Rights, and the National Agenda* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2008).

tions.³⁶⁵ The Chinese leadership did not understand the emphasis of moral standards in Carter's foreign policy because they had a complete different understanding of ethics and human rights.³⁶⁶ As we will see in later chapters, Beijing repeated its differing views concerning human rights, choking off any discussions about this topic. Under these circumstances, it was not prudent for Carter to insist on his sophisticated position on human rights vis-à-vis China, relegating this issue to a time after normalization. Thus, in his meeting with Huang, the president did not mention this theme at all.

Carter spoke with the PRC ambassador on February 8, 1977. Although Carter writes in his memoirs that the meeting demonstrated that "the United States and China would soon be ready to move towards normal relations", it was merely an exchange of views on the strategic situation in the world like the Middle East and southern Africa. Carter and Huang mostly avoided any direct talk about normalization. The Chinese ambassador and the U.S. president agreed that the "basis of our relations will be the Shanghai Communiqué." This was important since the Chinese side was not sure if the new president honored the results of the negotiations between the former U.S. administrations and Beijing. Carter also expressed his hope for "a strong movement toward normalization."³⁶⁷ However, as true as this desire was, Carter's gesture was only a weak demonstration. In reality, he lacked the true conviction that normalization was quickly to occur. The differences on the matter of Taiwan still seemed hard to overcome.

This perception was the reason for Carter's restraint. From his point of view, the meeting had shown how far away both sides were on, according to Huang, "[t]he crucial question" of Taiwan. While Carter expressed his understanding for the Chinese position that the Taiwan issue was "an internal matter", he also made clear that the United States had "a long-standing hope and expectation that it can be settled in peaceful ways." Carter's statement urged Huang to repeat Beijing's claim that "[n]o outside power has the right to interfere" on the matter of

³⁶⁵ Mann, "Face", 81-82. For a more detailed reading about the development of human rights in China, see: Marina Svensson, *Debating Human Rights in China: A Conceptual and Political History* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002). For an introductory reading about human rights in the PRC's foreign policy and its relations to the United States, see: Ming Wan, *Human Rights in Chinese Foreign Relations: Defining and Defending National Interests* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001).

³⁶⁶ Memo, Michel Oksenberg to Zbigniew Brzezinski, 02/04/1977, "China MR-NLC-98-215 (1)" folder, Box 40, Vertical Files (VF), Jimmy Carter Library.

³⁶⁷ Carter, "Faith", 188; Memcon, Jimmy Carter, 02/08/1977, "China MR-NLC-98-215 (1)" folder, Box 40, Vertical Files (VF), Jimmy Carter Library.

Taiwan. The Chinese diplomat even argued that due to “a bunch of counter-revolutionaries on the island, it seems there is no other way [to solve the Taiwan issue] than by force.” Carter was concerned about Huang’s words. Thus, after realizing the gravity of the differences between China and the United States about the question of Taiwan, he urged his interlocutor to “move to other concerns.”³⁶⁸ Carter’s delaying tactic demonstrated that his administration was not yet ready to confront Beijing with the president’s differing ideas about the future of Taiwan in general, and U.S.-Taiwanese ties in particular.

Carter wanted to avoid any deeper friction with Beijing before serious talks about normalization had even begun. He was aware that the U.S. bargaining position was not very strong due to the promises made by Nixon and Ford. However, the baseline of his position about the Taiwan issue became apparent. While Carter obviously accepted the Shanghai Communiqué as the foundation of Sino-American relations, he did not seem willing to follow his predecessor’s conciliatory line of policy toward the PRC. In particular, he avoided the acceptance of Beijing’s three preconditions for normalization (withdrawal of U.S. troops from Taiwan, severance of all diplomatic ties with Taipei, and abrogation of the MDT).

Instead, he conceded his understanding of the Chinese position on the matter, which “had been presented to us on my occasions.”³⁶⁹ It was clear that no matter how much emphasis Beijing put on the Soviet factor, Taiwan remained the decisive aspect in Sino-American relations. But Carter could not hope to influence Chinese views without having established a coherent strategy of normalization first. Therefore, it made sense to divert Huang from the differences between their positions in order to find more common ground. This helped to keep the communication lines open between Chinese and Americans.

The common ground shared by Washington and Beijing was their respective antipathy against the Soviet Union. Both sides believed that closer bilateral relations would increase their power at the cost of Moscow. In fact, after Carter’s suggestion to talk about other issues than normalization and Taiwan, Huang used the opportunity to criticize Carter’s attempts to revive *détente* as “a Munich-like thinking [...that] lulls the people and causes them to lose their militant will.” He emphasized what a threat the Soviet Union was to the United States and particular-

³⁶⁸ Memcon, Jimmy Carter, 02/08/1977, “China MR-NLC-98-215 (1)” folder, Box 40, Vertical Files (VF), Jimmy Carter Library.

³⁶⁹ Ibid.

ly Western Europe. The latter, he characterized as “soft, weak, and disintegrated.” From Beijing’s point of view the Western European allies “should be stronger” since the “U.S. alone also may not be strong enough” to counter Soviet expansionism.³⁷⁰ These words reflect the neoclassical realist assumptions, that actors develop their national interests in accordance with their perception of the distribution of power. Huang’s words implicated that the People’s Republic could be a strong ally for the United States, influencing the balance of power in Washington’s favor. What he did not mention, though, was that the United States could do the same for the PRC.

The White House was going to use the argument that the United States needed strong allies in the discussions with PRC leaders about security ties between Washington and Taipei. The U.S. side was to argue that the American support for Taiwan served the global credibility of the United States and its image as a reliable ally. Both aspects were important in order to keep the Soviet Union in check, something that was also in the interest of the PRC.

It was helpful for the Carter administration to learn about China’s fear of the Soviet Union as it demonstrated that the Chinese needed Washington to counterweigh the Soviets. Huang Zhen’s statements in his meeting with the president had made Beijing’s anxieties clear although he had not expressed them explicitly. If Beijing wanted to improve its strategic situation, there was no alternative to approaching Washington because Sino-Soviet accommodation was unlikely.

Beijing’s emphasis of the Soviet threat gave the Carter administration some kind of leverage in its dealings with Beijing. While the Carter administration hoped that better relations with China would lead to advantages vis-à-vis the Soviet Union, the Soviet threat was not the only aspect of importance in Carter’s thinking. It was rather a useful instrument to remind the Chinese that they needed Washington at least as much as Washington needed the PRC. The *Soviet Card* increased Washington’s bargaining power, although it was wise not to overplay it when moving towards normalization. As Michel Oksenberg had stated before, the Chinese critique of Carter’s *détente* policy made it necessary to eradicate the Chinese leadership’s concerns that Washington and Moscow could come to an arrangement at the

³⁷⁰ Memcon, Jimmy Carter, 02/08/1977, “China MR-NLC-98-215 (1)” folder, Box 40, Vertical Files (VF), Jimmy Carter Library.

cost of the PRC. Otherwise, further improvement of Sino-American relations would become difficult.³⁷¹

In Oksenberg's opinion, the Carter administration had to lessen Beijing's worries about an anti-Chinese Washington-Moscow-axis. The best way to calm the Chinese down was to move towards normalization. Further stalemate in Sino-American relations would only weaken the U.S. position. Oksenberg argued the administration had "to develop the strategy for making the effort to normalize relations with Peking."³⁷²

The Early Stage of Developing a China Policy

Many people worked on the China strategy of the Carter administration. It was a difficult topic. All major agencies concerned with foreign and security policy had their own China experts who expected to contribute to the administration's China policy. According to the former U.S. diplomat Harry E.T. Thayer, the most important people concerned with this matter were Richard Holbrooke, William Gleysteen, Burt Levin, Harvey Feldman, Paul Kreisberg, Donald Anderson, Lynn Pascoe (all DOS), Michel Oksenberg (NSC), and Morton Abramowitz (Department of Defense [DOD]).³⁷³ While this abundance of expertise might have added to the interagency struggles that occurred occasionally, it also gave the administration different views for the development of its normalization strategy and the way it should deal with the Taiwan issue.

In December 1976, Cyrus Vance had already taken first steps to develop a strategy for the Carter administration's China policy and the establishment of normal relations with Beijing. He installed a team consisting of Richard Holbrooke, Anthony Lake, William Gleysteen and Michel Oksenberg to examine the whole issue. In spring 1977, this group came up with a memorandum, which the Secretary of State sent to the president for further review on April 15.³⁷⁴ It was a decisive step in the development of the Carter administration's China policy. The memo-

³⁷¹ Memo, Michael Oksenberg to Zbigniew Brzezinski, 01/19/77, "China (People's Republic of) 1-2/77" folder, Box 8, NSA Brzezinski Material Country File, Jimmy Carter Library.

³⁷² Memo, Michel Oksenberg to Zbigniew Brzezinski, 02/08/1977, "China MR-NLC-98-215 (1)" folder, Box 40, Vertical Files (VF), Jimmy Carter Library.

³⁷³ Bernkopf Tucker, "China Confidential", 321.

³⁷⁴ Vance, "Choices", 76-77.

randum had a major impact on the conception of the normalization policy since it elaborated many aspects that should guide the administration's position during the eventual negotiations with the People's Republic.

Vance's first argument reflects Neorealist assumptions that actors within the international system seek to gain more power than their most obvious rivals in order to improve their strategic position and increase their level of security. Vance believed "that in terms of our strategic position normalization is highly desirable", because closer relations with China allowed Washington to put pressure on the Soviets. This would improve the American position vis-à-vis Moscow. The Secretary of State also concluded that the United States would currently enjoy better relations with Moscow and Beijing than these nations had with each other, and normalization with the PRC would help the U.S. "to deal most effectively with any change in the Moscow-Peking leg of the triangular relationship."³⁷⁵ Although the improvement of U.S.-PRC relations served bilateral purposes, we should not deny its significance for the improvement of America's strategic position. Closer relations with China made the United States more powerful in relation to the Soviet Union.

Vance identified another reason to move swiftly towards normalization with Beijing. Better Sino-American relations could have a positive influence on peace and stability in East Asia. Although normalization could improve Washington's dialogue with Beijing about global issues, Vance was sceptical that the Chinese would be willing to support U.S. efforts to solve problems like the situation on the Korean peninsula or the further development of international arms controls.³⁷⁶

Echoing the neoclassical realist argument that any government has to legitimize their decisions, the Secretary of State's biggest concern was how to sell normalization and its consequences to the U.S. public. He put it this way: "While the American people overwhelmingly favour ties with Taiwan, they also overwhelmingly favour better relations with the PRC." Vance knew that the Carter administration was under close scrutiny on the matter. This observation was confirmed by public opinion polls conducted in April 1977. The interviewees were asked how important it was for them that the U.S. would continue to ascertain the security of the people of Taiwan. Over 60 percent saw this matter as "very" or "fairly im-

³⁷⁵ Memo, Cyrus Vance to Jimmy Carter, 4/15/1977, "China (People's Republic of) 3-6/77" folder, Box 8, NSA Brzezinski Material Country File, Jimmy Carter Library.

³⁷⁶ Ibid.

portant” while only 22 percent felt it was “not particularly important” or “not important at all”.³⁷⁷

Vance still thought the administration had to pursue normalization. He argued this achievement “would enhance trade and cultural exchange prospects” with China. But in order to achieve normalization, Washington had to make concessions to Beijing concerning Taiwan; first of all, the acceptance of the PRC’s three preconditions. Vance knew that “a demonstrable ‘sell-out’ of Taiwan would evoke a serious outcry” in the U.S. public.³⁷⁸ This public ambiguity constituted the core of the dilemma Carter faced within the domestic debate.

The necessity for concessions towards the PRC at the cost of Taiwan was not easy to explain to U.S. citizens. As Vance wrote, this task became even more difficult due to “[t]he emergence of the human rights issue as a major American foreign policy concern...” A later State Department memorandum echoed these concerns. The diplomats argued that the new administration’s emphasis of human rights made it much harder to justify cutting all government-to-government ties with Taiwan. To large parts of the U.S. public, it seemed certain that, for the people of Taiwan, falling under the control of “Red China” would inevitably endanger their human rights.³⁷⁹ Due to Carter’s claim that the American “moral sense dictates a clear-cut preference for those societies which share with us an abiding respect for individual human rights”, his foreign policy was not only measured by political but also moral standards.³⁸⁰ Taiwan was much closer to the hearts of the American people than the communist mainland could ever be. Carter had to be careful how to deal with the Taiwan issue.

Indeed, Vance’s paper explicitly stated that “the only obstacle to normalization is the Taiwan question.” This conclusion did not come as a surprise since Beijing’s aforementioned preconditions for the beginning of normalization negotiations all concerned the official relationship between the United States and the regime on Taiwan. Furthermore, Beijing was only willing to accept private relations

³⁷⁷ Quoted after Jean A. Garrison, “Explaining Change in the Carter Administration’s China Policy: Foreign Policy Adviser Manipulation of the Policy Agenda” in: *Asian Affairs*, Vol. 29, No. 2 (Summer, 2002), 84-85 and footnote 5.

³⁷⁸ Memo, Cyrus Vance to Jimmy Carter, 4/15/1977, “China (People’s Republic of) 3-6/77” folder, Box 8, NSA Brzezinski Material Country File, Jimmy Carter Library.

³⁷⁹ Memo, Richard Holbrooke/Anthony Lake to Cyrus Vance, 7/29/1977, “TL Sensitive 7/1-9/30/77” folder, Box 17, Records of Anthony Lake, 1977-1981, RG 59, NARA.

³⁸⁰ “Inaugural Address”, Jimmy Carter, January 20, 1977, The American President Project, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=6575> (accessed: 10/28/2014).

between Americans and the Taiwanese but not official government-to-government relations. Therefore, as Vance pointed out, the Carter administration had to “consider whether American interests will be best served by continuing our formal involvement in the Peking-Taipei problem or whether we should start to disengage, maintaining substantial support for ROC military capabilities [...]”³⁸¹

The question for Carter and his aides was not whether the United States should stay involved in the Taiwan Strait, as this went without saying, but whether this involvement had to maintain a formal character. As Vance’s memorandum put it, “the security of Taiwan does not rest primarily on our present treaty assurances.”³⁸² Indeed, it was possible for Washington to protect Taiwan, even without official relations and a defence pact because as past experiences during the Taiwan Strait crises in the 1950s had demonstrated, it mainly needed the political will to detract Beijing from any aggression.

Michel Oksenberg, a member of the NSC staff, had implied the same point in an earlier memorandum. He argued that the Carter administration had two viable options to deal with the Taiwan issue. Either Washington would develop an informal security relationship with Taiwan that the Chinese would tacitly tolerate, or Washington would develop a security relationship, without discussing the matter with Beijing at all.³⁸³ Of course, it was easier for Washington to handle the situation if Beijing would accept the Carter administration to develop direct security ties with Taiwan. Such security ties mainly meant the sales of U.S. arms to the island.

Whichever approach Carter would choose, the United States would not leave Taiwan all by itself. Vance made clear that Beijing had to meet some “minimum requirements for normalization.” This was a rather vague description, and the administration had to develop these requirements in more detail. If Beijing would reject Washington’s conditions, both sides faced “an indefinite postponement of diplomatic relations.”³⁸⁴ Although Vance knew that such a stalemate could endanger the normalization process, he still suggested limiting U.S. concessions to the Chinese.

³⁸¹ Memo, Cyrus Vance to Jimmy Carter, 4/15/1977, “China (People's Republic of) 3-6/77” folder, Box 8, NSA Brzezinski Material Country File, Jimmy Carter Library.

³⁸² Ibid.

³⁸³ Memo, Michael Oksenberg to Zbigniew Brzezinski, 2/18/77, “China (People's Republic of) 1-2/77” folder, Box 8, NSA Brzezinski Material Country File, Jimmy Carter Library.

³⁸⁴ Memo, Cyrus Vance to Jimmy Carter, 4/15/1977, “China (People's Republic of) 3-6/77” folder, Box 8, NSA Brzezinski Material Country File, Jimmy Carter Library.

Vance's memorandum indicated that, for the sake of Taiwan's security, the Carter administration was ready to risk the failure of normalization. Keeping Taiwan out of the mainland's grasp was a deep concern for the Carter administration. Vance did not believe that they "should feel so compelled to establish diplomatic relations with Peking that we jeopardize the well-being and security of the people of Taiwan." In order to ascertain the latter, the U.S. had to "maintain a military supply relationship with Taipei." Subsequently, it needed "continuing government-level ties, however disguised, [...] to help sustain Taiwan's prosperity and stability..."³⁸⁵ Taiwan's security had to be ensured before normalization could be initiated.

Vance did not want to achieve Sino-American normalization – as desirable as it was - at the cost of the American involvement in the Taiwan Strait. As the crises in the 1950s had suggested, only the American involvement could guarantee stability in the region. Vance, therefore, argued that since the Chinese leadership "will not give us assurances on a peaceful settlement of their differences with Taipei", it was imperative to make clear that Washington would never tolerate a military solution of the Taiwan issue "even leaving open the possibility of direct intervention" of the United States.³⁸⁶ In fact, the Taiwan Strait crises of the past had demonstrated that a military solution of the Taiwan issue could easily escalate. A new crisis could destabilize East Asia. This was not in the interest of the United States because it would force the country to intervene on behalf of its allies. All of these deliberations showed that neither Vance nor his staff were ready to give up on Taiwan. Even after the derecognition of the Republic of China in favor of the People's Republic, there had to be some sort of U.S. involvement in the Taiwan Strait.

Vance's considerations of Taiwan's security also confirmed the importance of the Carter administration's perception of the distribution of power in Asia-Pacific. Washington thought that as long as Beijing did not control Taiwan, it did not control some of the most important shipping lanes in the region, improving the PRC's strategic situation enormously. In addition, the KMT regime was a traditional ally of the United States, helping to constitute Washington's status as domi-

³⁸⁵ Ibid.

³⁸⁶ Ibid.

nant power in the Asia-Pacific region. Taiwan was too valuable for the United States in terms of global and regional strategy.

The Secretary of State's April memorandum summed up the situation Washington faced when it would negotiate with the Chinese about normalization. It demonstrated that Vance and his team had a pretty good idea about the consequences of any further accommodation between Washington and Beijing. The Taiwan issue was a matter of principle for the Chinese who had demonstrated their inflexibility on this topic in numerous meetings with U.S. officials before. The Carter administration had to find a way of breaking through the Chinese "shell" in order to get its minimum requirements fulfilled. Otherwise, it was impossible to ascertain Taiwan's security. Failing in this regard would make it much harder for Carter to gain the public support he needed in order to finalize and later implement normalization.

The early stages of the development of the Carter administration's China policy demonstrated the importance of the Taiwan issue. Still, the advantages of normalization easily outweighed the problems, which the White House would face during this process. The most delicate task was to find a way to protect Taiwan on an unofficial legal basis. Otherwise, it would be difficult to convince the American people and the U.S. allies of the long-term advantages of normalization. As a later memorandum of the DOS concluded, the short-term benefits of normalization would favor the PRC. Hence, the administration needed all political allies it could muster in order to legitimize its approach and the sacrifices it was going to make.³⁸⁷ Facing such odds, it was clear that the Carter administration had to deal with the Taiwan issue and the Taiwanese empathically. Otherwise, the risk of antagonizing the American public towards normalization grew. Surprisingly, Carter and his aides decided to mostly avoid contacts with officials from Taipei.

Ignoring the Taiwan Lobby's and the Congress' Disruptions

The first scapegoat of Jimmy Carter's approach was the ambassador of the Republic of China, James Shen. After shaking hands once with Carter at a White House

³⁸⁷ Memo, Richard Holbrooke/Anthony Lake to Cyrus Vance, 7/29/1977, "TL Sensitive 7/1-9/30/77" folder, Box 17, Records of Anthony Lake, 1977-1981, RG 59, NARA.

reception for all foreign ambassadors stationed in Washington on the day of the president's inauguration, he was never to meet Carter again. Shen, who was an alumnus of the University of Missouri, felt downgraded and humiliated. These feelings were even exacerbated when Carter met the chief of the PRC liaison office only a few weeks after he had assumed office.³⁸⁸ The White House then turned down Shen's request to meet Vice President Walter F. Mondale.³⁸⁹ Instead, he only was allowed to meet Under Secretary of State Philip Habib, who presented the ROC ambassador with a *fait accompli* by explaining that the Carter administration would continue to pursue normalization. The U.S. diplomat also clarified that the Taiwanese could not expect to be briefed on U.S.-PRC negotiations as it had been the case during previous administrations.³⁹⁰ This episode demonstrated that instead of being careful with the Taiwanese, the Carter administration had chosen to leave them completely out of the normalization process.

This was not the first time that Taipei faced adversity from the United States. After Washington and Beijing had agreed on the Shanghai Communiqué in 1972, Kissinger had decided to limit the ROC ambassador's access to the major decision-makers of U.S. foreign policy. At first, the Carter administration had considered to change this practice, which appeared "unnecessarily harsh." But since the administration did not want to send the wrong signals to the PRC before the beginning of any "serious dialogue with Peking", the White House decided to follow Kissinger's example. Subsequently, the administration did not grant James Shen or any other ROC official access to high officials of the U.S. administration.³⁹¹ After realizing that they had no access to the American executive branch, the ROC leadership had to resort to its contacts in the legislative branch.³⁹²

The president was aware of Taiwan's influence on members of the U.S. Congress. It was something he was very critical about, seeing it as one of the reasons why former administrations had not finalized normalization. As he argues in his memoirs, "[i]n the absence of constant presidential leadership, Taiwanese lob-

³⁸⁸ Shen, "U.S.", 205-206.

³⁸⁹ Memo, Michael Hornblow to Dennis Clift, 02/24/1977, "CO 34-1 Executive 1/20/77-1/20/81" folder, Box CO-15, Subject Files Countries, Jimmy Carter Library.

³⁹⁰ Telegram, Department of State/Washington D.C. to U.S. Embassy/Taipei, 2/16/1977, "China (Republic of China) 1/77-5/78" folder, Box 11, NSA Brzezinski Material Country File, Jimmy Carter Library.

³⁹¹ Memo, Michael Hornblow to Dennis Clift, 02/24/1977, "CO 34-1 Executive 1/20/77-1/20/81" folder, Box CO-15, Subject Files Countries, Jimmy Carter Library.

³⁹² Shen, "U.S.", 214.

byists seemed able to prevail in shaping United States policy on this fundamental issue [Sino-American normalization] in the Far East.” It was something he had experienced himself after he had won some primaries in 1976 when people who were close to him were suddenly invited by the ROC regime to visit Taiwan in order to influence Carter’s decisions about China and Taiwan.³⁹³ According to Brian Hilton, “Carter’s disdain for lobbying predated his presidency” as it was the consequence of “his earlier legal battles against ballot stuffing and corrupt party bosses in the Georgia state senate.”³⁹⁴ However, in the context of Washington’s China policy the reasons for Carter’s rejection of the Taiwanese lobbying exceeded his personal opinion.

Carter kept the Taiwanese out of the decision-making process to define his policy toward the People’s Republic and the Taiwan issue on his own terms. The president did not want anyone to spoil his approach. Moreover, Carter was afraid that he could experience the same setbacks previous presidents had faced when the Taiwan Lobby played a major role that “progress toward full relations [with China] was put on a hold.”³⁹⁵ It was almost as if Carter feared that Taipei’s influence in Washington could dispute his place in the history books.

Carter’s argument was not unfounded as only a few months after he had assumed presidency, Taipei started the first disruptive actions. Documents from the ROC’s National Archives from 1976 show that the MOFA planned an aggressive diplomatic campaign for 1977 to influence the new U.S. administration. The goal was to emphasize the mutual interests of Washington and Taipei and manipulate U.S. public in Taipei’s favor.³⁹⁶ Chiang Ching-kuo, who had replaced his father after his death in 1975 as main decision-maker in the KMT leadership, was aware of Carter’s human rights policy. Hence, Taipei planned to undermine Beijing’s image, by making use of the president’s moral standards.³⁹⁷ The KMT regime wanted to demonstrate to the U.S. president how little the leadership in Beijing cared for human rights.

³⁹³ Carter, “Faith”, 187-188.

³⁹⁴ Hilton, “Flexibility”, 610.

³⁹⁵ Carter, “Faith”, 187.

³⁹⁶中華民國外交部, 1976.01.01~1977.03.31., 《駐美各館六十五年度及六十六年度工作計畫檢討報告—0065/410.15/0103/001》, 中華民國外交部 [MOFA, 1976/01/01-1977/03/31, “The Review Report of the Work Plans of the Embassy and Consulates in the U.S. during 1976 and 1977”-0065/410.15/0103/001, MOFA, National Archives of the ROC].

³⁹⁷ Memo, Jerry Schecter to Zbigniew Brzezinski, 01/29/1977, “CO 34-1 Executive 1/20/77-1/20/81” folder, Box CO-15, Subject Files Countries, Jimmy Carter Library.

The result of Taipei's attempts was the so called "Shanghai letter" from March 13, 1977. The letter contained complaints about the human rights situation in China saying that "[t]he Chinese mainland today is a hell on earth" whose people lived like slaves. The author asked Carter to "support us [the Chinese people] with the same commitment you gave to the Soviet human rights leader..."³⁹⁸ The document was originally sent from a presumed citizen of Shanghai named Hung Yen-chr to Derek Davies, editor of the *Far Eastern Economic Review*. Assuming the letter was genuine, Davies forwarded it to the White House, asking the president "to extend your concern for human rights to the Chinese People's Republic."³⁹⁹ Experts of the State Department doubted the authenticity of the letter, and the president did not answer it personally. Instead, an official from the DOS informed Mr. Davies in a polite but very sterile manner that the administration had no intentions to act on the matter.⁴⁰⁰ This reaction demonstrated the trend that human rights were never to play a role within the negotiations of Sino-American normalization.⁴⁰¹ The Taiwanese had to look for other ways to influence the administration.

Taipei tried to approach people who shared the president's political values. Therefore, the KMT leadership invited a delegation from the state of Georgia for the second anniversary of Chiang Kai-shek's death. In Zbigniew Brzezinski's opinion, it was an attempt by the Taiwanese "to cultivate an image of good relations with the President's home state." Such a development would make Beijing to believe that Carter sympathized with the dead KMT leader, not respecting the PRC leadership's disdain for the generalissimo. Such an impression would damage the administration's efforts to accommodate Beijing since, according to Brzezinski, "[t]his kind of publicity would run counter to our foreign policy efforts at the pre-

³⁹⁸ Letter, Hung Yen-chr [Shanghai resident] to Jimmy Carter, 03/13/1977, "CO 34-2 Confidential 1/20/77-12/31/78" folder, Box CO-17, Countries, Jimmy Carter Library. Only a few days before, Carter had met exiled Soviet dissident Vladimir Bukovsky telling the human rights activist that the his administration would take the situation of human rights in the Soviet Union seriously. See: Raymond L. Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation: American-Soviet Relations from Nixon to Reagan* (Washington D.C.: Brookings, 1994), 629.

³⁹⁹ Letter, Derek Davies to Jimmy Carter, 03/23/1977, "CO 34-2 Confidential 1/20/77-12/31/78" folder, Box CO-17, Countries, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁴⁰⁰ Memo, Peter Tarnoff to Zbigniew Brzezinski, 04/26/1977, "CO 34-2 Confidential 1/20/77-12/31/78" folder, Box CO-17, Countries, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁴⁰¹ It is impossible to say if the letter was really from a citizen of Shanghai. However, this is irrelevant for the described context because what matters is the American reaction or better to say non-reaction to the issue. Despite all claims to incorporate ideals and moral standards in his foreign policy, in the context of Sino-American normalization, Carter failed to live up to the expectations he had set himself.

sent time, which seek to maintain good relations with Taiwan while strengthening our relations with the People's Republic of China." While he could not forbid the delegation to attend the celebrations in Taipei, the National Security Advisor asked the State Department to deter the representatives from Georgia to "use the name of the President" in the whole context.⁴⁰² Brzezinski prevailed and was able to avoid further damage.

It became obvious to ROC leaders that they could not manipulate the U.S. executive directly. Therefore, Taipei tried to mobilize the U.S. public in order to influence the decision-making in the White House. The regime in Taiwan used a wide range of actions to do so, including a letter-writing campaign of 200.000 people.⁴⁰³ Indeed, this campaign appeared successful to a certain degree as many important people of America's public life responded to Taipei's call, by writing to their contacts within the administration. Many influential people within American business circles reacted to Taipei's call. One of them was Robert Murphy, chairman of *Corning International Corp.*, who wanted to make the U.S government aware of the "beneficial and profitable general relationship [...] with Taiwan." In Murphy's opinion, the Carter administration should be careful and keep in mind that "[w]hatever form of recognition the United States may eventually accord the People's Republic of China, it is urgently in our [national] interest to sustain the status of Taiwan."⁴⁰⁴ But not only businessmen asked the Carter administration to be considerate of Taiwan's needs.

Many academics wrote to different members of the executive in order to convey their views about the PRC and Taiwan. Franz Michael from the George-Washington University for instance expressed his concern that the administration could make a mistake due to "the pressure by some well-meaning people to complete so-called normalization [with the PRC] by sacrificing Taiwan."⁴⁰⁵ Michael was only one of many academics who favored Taiwan in this whole issue. There were many others. But the list of Taipei's supporters stretched beyond elitist circles.

⁴⁰² Memo, Zbigniew Brzezinski to Jack Watson, 03/26/1977, "CO 34-1 Executive 1/20/77-1/20/81" folder, Box CO-15, Subject Files Countries, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁴⁰³ Bernkopf Tucker, "Taiwan, Hong Kong", 130.

⁴⁰⁴ Letter, Robert Murphy to Jimmy Carter, 08/03/1977, "CO 34-1 Executive 7/1/77-12/31/77" folder, Box CO-16, Countries, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁴⁰⁵ Letter, Franz Michael to Zbigniew Brzezinski, 07/25/1977, "CO 34 General 1/20/77-1/20/81" folder, Box CO-15, Subject Files Countries, Jimmy Carter Library.

Even groups that basically supported normalization like the *American Legion*, a union of U.S. veterans, who supported Carter's "efforts to promote peace and trade with the People's Republic of China", warned that "under no circumstances should the United States abandon our good and faithful ally, the Republic of China (Taiwan) and we urge a continuation of U.S. diplomatic relations and treaty commitments with Taiwan."⁴⁰⁶ This pledge was another example for the ambivalence of the American public on the matter. In fact, not many people and groups argued against normalization with China in general but many of them were concerned about Taiwan and the American commitment to protect the island. All these interventions on behalf of the ROC regime demonstrated the closely connected network of supporters Taiwan had assembled in the United States over the previous decades.

This was also true for political entities as Taipei was able to convince several state and municipal parliaments to pass resolutions that insisted on the continuation of American ties to Taiwan.⁴⁰⁷ One example was the State of New York whose legislature passed a resolution that "commends the United States Government for maintaining its continuous and historic policy of support for the freedom and security of the Republic of China and its courageous, industrious people."⁴⁰⁸ The ROC still knew how to make sure that the Taiwan issue remained on the radar of American public life.

Such episodes showed that criticism and advice for Carter's normalization plans came from different sides. In some cases like the aforementioned letter by Robert Murphy, President Carter felt compelled to assure those people personally that he "intend[ed] to maintain economic and cultural relations and other appropriate ties with the people on Taiwan", and that the president did "not intend to jeopardize their chance for a peaceful, prosperous future."⁴⁰⁹ However, in most cases the administration did not seem to care, and ignored the concerns of U.S. citizens.

⁴⁰⁶ Telegram, William J. Roberts to Jimmy Carter, 07/29/1977, "CO 34 General 1/20/77-1/20/81" folder, Box CO-15, Subject Files Countries, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁴⁰⁷ Diverse resolutions to Jimmy Carter, "CO 34-1 Executive 7/1/77-12/31/77" folder, Box CO-16, Countries, Jimmy Carter Library; Diverse resolutions to Jimmy Carter, "CO 34-1 Executive 1/20/77-1/20/81" folder, Box CO-15, Subject Files Countries, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁴⁰⁸ Resolution, "Legislative Resolution commending the Government of the United States of America for maintaining support for freedom and security of the people of the Republic of China", State of New York, 07/06/1977, "CO 34-1 Executive 7/1/77-12/31/77" folder, Box CO-16, Countries, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁴⁰⁹ Letter, Jimmy Carter to Robert Murphy, 09/07/1977, "CO 34-1 Executive 7/1/77-12/31/77" folder, Box CO-16, Countries, Jimmy Carter Library.

It was U.S. Congress which mainly worried Carter because that was the one political agency that could successfully prevent the establishment of diplomatic relations with the People's Republic. Carter needed the legislative branch to assert his policy, not only his China initiative but also other objectives. Congressional acceptance of his China policy was therefore imperative. Thus, the administration had to be cautious in its dealings with the ROC. While Brzezinski concluded in one of his weekly reports to Carter based on a memorandum by Michel Oksenberg that "[t]he Taiwan Lobby does not constitute a major obstacle to normalization [...]", he still conceded that "[s]ome staunch supporters [of Taiwan] exist on the Hill..."⁴¹⁰ Indeed, multiple instances proved the existing Congressional support for Taiwan.

One example was a memorandum for Carter from the Democratic Senator Henry M. Jackson (Dem-Washington). Jackson supported Carter's plans for normalization because Chinese and Americans were "strategically useful to each other". Yet, he also insisted on continuing relations with Taiwan. Senator Jackson was convinced that due to America's strategic usefulness for Beijing, Washington should be able to achieve an agreement with the PRC "which would enable us [the U.S.] to establish full diplomatic relations with Peking while retaining a full range of economic and cultural ties with Taiwan, including arms sales."⁴¹¹ While Jackson's advice was rather supportive, the administration also faced open critique from other members of the Congress.

A letter from Congressman Sinclair W. Burgener (Rep-California) from August 1, 1977 signed by 53 members of the House of Representatives, including a handful of Democrats asked the Carter administration to meet ROC Ambassador James Shen to hear Taiwan's point of view. The White House still refused such a meeting, even though the Congressmen had indicated that termination of the defense treaty with Taiwan would not find Congressional support: "[H]ow can we abrogate such a treaty [the MDT] for the sake of informal representations by the PRC that a 'peaceful settlement' of the China question [meant is the Taiwan issue] will take place?"⁴¹²

⁴¹⁰ Memo, Zbigniew Brzezinski to Jimmy Carter, 07/29/1977 in: FRUS, 1977-1980, Volume XIII, China (Washington D.C.: United States Printing Office, 2013), 122.

⁴¹¹ Memo, Henry M. Jackson to Jimmy Carter, 08/05/1977, "CO 34-2 Executive 7/1/77-9/30/77" folder, Box CO-17, Countries, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁴¹² Letter, Clair W. Burgener to Jimmy Carter, 08/01/1977, "CO 34-1 Executive 7/1/77-12/31/77" folder, Box CO-16, Countries, Jimmy Carter Library.

Another letter from Dawson Mathis (Dem-Georgia) signed by 28 members of the House of Representatives made clear that the United States did “not only have a moral obligation to honor our mutual defense treaty with our long-time friend and ally, the Republic of China, but that it is in the long range security of our own nation to this commitment.”⁴¹³ It would not be the last time that Taiwan’s security was linked to national security and strategic interests of the United States.

Some other members of the Congress found harsher words for the idea of normalizing Sino-American relations at the cost of Taiwan than Burgener or Mathis. John M. Ashbrook (Rep-Ohio), member of the House of Representatives, called Carter’s plans a “betrayal of the basic principles Americans hold dear”, and blamed the Carter administration to ignore “our best interests and those of our friends [Taiwan] to try to impress those [the PRC] who are the slavemasters of 800 million people.” Moreover, Ashbrook argued that cutting Washington’s security relationship with Taiwan would weaken the overall position of the United States: “By abandoning Free China U.S. policy does not exhibit strength.”⁴¹⁴

William L. Dickinson (Rep-Alabama), another member of the House of Representatives went a step further, presenting the preservation of U.S. ties with Taiwan as a matter of morality. Hence, the congressman openly claimed to forgo on normalization at all since the People’s Republic “is still a totalitarian Communist dictatorship.” Dickinson further argued that only “[a]micable relations should be maintained with the PRC, if possible, but not wholly on their terms” because Beijing would “need us [the U.S.] more than we would need them...”⁴¹⁵

It is difficult to measure how much of the Congressional support for Taiwan was the result of the aforementioned Taiwanese efforts and how much was political tactic, pragmatic intentions, or even pure anti-communism on the part of conservative politicians like Barry Goldwater Jr. (Rep-California), John Ashbrook, or William Dickinson. Nancy Bernkopf Tucker states the Taiwan Lobby’s influence was very limited, arguing that “Taiwan could prevent recognition [of the PRC] only if it

⁴¹³ Letter, Dawson Mathis to Jimmy Carter, 08/03/1977, “CO 34-1 Executive 7/1/77-12/31/77” folder, Box CO-16, Countries, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁴¹⁴ Report, “Washington Report”, John M. Ashbrook, 08/10/1977, “CO 34-2 Executive 7/1/77-9/30/77” folder, Box CO-17, Countries, Jimmy Carter Library. This report was attached to a letter by Ashbrook to Jimmy Carter in which the congressman criticized Senator Edward Kennedy’s speech about China before the World Affairs Council of Boston from August 15, 1977 (See: Letter, John M. Ashbrook to Jimmy Carter, 08/20/1977, “CO 34-2 Executive 7/1/77-9/30/77” folder, Box CO-17, Countries, Jimmy Carter Library).

⁴¹⁵ Letter, William L. Dickinson to Jimmy Carter, 08/23/1977, “CO 34-2 Executive 7/1/77-9/30/77” folder, Box CO-17, Countries, Jimmy Carter Library.

could cause a revolt in Congress, which it could not...” Instead, as her argument continues, Taipei was only able to prevent abandonment.⁴¹⁶ However, as we will see, this was not necessary because Carter had no plans to disengage from the Taiwan Strait and leave Taiwan on its own.

It is clear that the strategic advantages, which Washington could gain via normalization with the PRC, outweighed Taiwan’s worries by far. This precluded the majority of the Congress to reject normalization in general. As the American diplomat Charles Freeman Jr. who served in the Nixon, Ford, and Carter administration says, any Congressman “with any strategic sense” knew that China’s strategic value as a counterweight to the Soviet Union was simply too high.⁴¹⁷ A complete “revolt” of the Congress was therefore unlikely but the legislative branch could still cause problems for the Carter administration.

The statements in the aforementioned letters from Capitol Hill made clear that the administration could not expect Congress to watch how the president proceeded with normalization in a way that could do any harm to the American interests in the Taiwan Strait. As the previously quoted letters indicated, different circles in the Congress presented a wide range of arguments in favor of the preservation of America’s ties with Taiwan. They stressed the island’s strategic, economic, and political value for the United States. Some congressmen even went as far as calling it a moral duty to ensure Taiwan’s security. But did the Carter administration really care about the Congress’ opinion?

Legitimizing U.S. China policy was an important part of the equation. Since gaining support for normalization itself was not too problematic, the more pressing question was how the White House would deal with Taiwan and the legislative branch. Subsequently, Carter and his aides tried to delay the moment when they had to deal with the public and the Congress concerning normalization and the Taiwan question. The goal was to keep the political costs low. Hence, secrecy would become an important aspect of the administration’s tactic. As Neoclassical Realism suggests, the White House was aware that the political stakes were high and that it needed a lot of effort in order to accumulate enough resources to make normalization with the PRC and derecognition of the ROC work.

⁴¹⁶ Bernkopf Tucker, “Strait”, 100.

⁴¹⁷ Bernkopf Tucker, “China Confidential”, 320.

The Carter administration's approach of delay and secrecy indicated that the Carter administration was afraid of Congressional interventions. According to Brzezinski, this anxiety influenced Carter's and his aides' discussions about the course of normalization.⁴¹⁸ Because Carter had to assemble public and Congressional support in order to legitimize his policy, he could not ignore the Congress completely. Yet, this did not change the administration's policy in the aftermath. As a letter from the Assistant to the President for Congressional Liaison Frank Moore to Representative Dickinson shows, the White House barely tried to appease its Congressional critics stating only that it planned "to retain active economic, cultural and other relations with Taiwan."⁴¹⁹ Such platitudes, however, left the impression that the Carter administration did not seem to take Taipei's concerns for its future seriously, though, as I will show, this was not the case. But why did the Carter not make his intentions to continue the American engagement in the Taiwan Strait clear in public?

There is more than one answer to this question. First and foremost, the president could not afford to alienate the People's Republic in this early period of the normalization process when negotiations had not even begun. It was important to prevent Beijing from thinking that the American involvement in the Taiwan issue would only change in name but not in substance. In this case, the PRC leadership would at least publicly question the administration's seriousness about normalization. Moreover, such a maximum demand by Washington would reduce the flexibility of the Carter administration because getting anything less than a strong U.S.-Taiwan security relationship after normalization would appear as a weak result for the White House. Such an outcome would result in outrage of those people who did not want any kind of change in U.S.-ROC relations at all. Due to Nixon's and Ford's promises to PRC officials, the Carter administration's leeway for its China policy was already significantly limited. Giving a public statement about his administration's intentions to remain involved in the Taiwan Strait would only further reduce Carter's policy options as it would lead to frictions between Washington and Beijing.

The second reason for Carter's reluctance to state his intentions concerning Taiwan publicly was of a political nature. There was no guarantee that the Con-

⁴¹⁸ Brzezinski, "Power", 200.

⁴¹⁹ Letter, Frank Moore to William L. Dickinson, 09/01/1977, "CO 34-2 Executive 7/1/77-9/30/77" folder, Box CO-17, Countries, Jimmy Carter Library.

gress and the administration's political opponents would cease criticizing Carter's China policy. Carter had already hinted, even before he became president, that he "would never let that friendship with the People's Republic of China stand in the way of the preservation of the independence and freedom of the people on Taiwan."⁴²⁰ As we have seen, conservative circles nonetheless criticized his plans for normalization. The administration needed time to convince a critical mass of Congressmen of the price normalization would cost. This price was derecognition of the ROC and only unofficial relations with Taiwan in the future. The problem was that a public debate about normalization and the Taiwan issue would disrupt Carter's China policy. Public pressure would prevent the administration to make the necessary concessions to the Chinese concerning Taiwan. Without American concessions like the acceptance of the PRC's three preconditions, the president would not be able to achieve normalization at all.

Finally, the Carter administration wanted to prevent any disruptive actions by the Taiwanese. While a strong statement about the preservation of U.S.-Taiwan security ties would alienate Beijing, such a statement would also encourage Taipei to further torpedo Carter's efforts for normalization. It was therefore necessary to tame the Taiwanese and their friends in the United States in order to keep as many options as possible open to the White House. The best way to do so was to ignore Taiwan and his supporters. From this point of view, I argue that the White House had nothing to gain from being honest about its commitment toward Taiwan's security. Therefore, Carter and his aides had no reason to put much effort into accommodating U.S. Congress and the regime in Taipei. Instead, they widely ignored the legislative branch and the Taiwan Lobby for as long as possible in order to avoid a premature heating up of the public debate about the topic.

The Carter administration's lack of empathy for Taiwan was based on a feeling of superiority vis-à-vis Taipei. A memorandum written in Brzezinski's name by Oksenberg confirmed this attitude. Oksenberg argued the administration should proceed with its plans for normalization, ignoring any disturbances by Taipei because "all the bargaining leverage is on our [U.S.] side." The KMT regime simply needed U.S. support in order to secure its survival. Therefore, as the paper

⁴²⁰ Commission on Presidential Debates, "The Second Carter-Ford Presidential Debate", 10/06/1976, <http://www.debates.org/index.php?page=october-6-1976-debate-transcript> (accessed: 01/02/2014).

advised, the Carter administration should not “exaggerate the Lobby’s [sic] effectiveness and thereby intensify in our minds an essentially manageable problem.”⁴²¹

This advantage vis-à-vis Taiwan allowed the Carter administration not to be considerate of Taipei’s anxieties. It also enabled a reconciliatory course toward Beijing, without alienating the ROC regime too much. As a consequence, Carter approved to downgrade the relations with Taipei step-by-step. He wanted to demonstrate to Beijing how serious he was about normalization. For that purpose, the Carter administration had already rejected any requests of ROC officials for high-level meetings. The next step was the White House’s decision to downgrade the rank of the commander of the American forces on Taiwan. This was a smart move since it gave Beijing the impression that Washington cherished its improving ties with the PRC more than its security relation with Taipei. On the other hand, Carter’s decision did not do any real damage to Taiwan’s security since as Harold Brown argued the “nature and size of this command [the U.S. Taiwan Defense Command] no longer requires a three-star officer.”⁴²²

Despite all efforts by the Carter administration to ignore all Taiwanese and Congressional disruptions as well as the White House’s decision to accommodate the PRC, there is no hint that the administration planned to abandon Taiwan. The Carter administration was aware that Taiwan still held value for the U.S. position in East Asia, as Oksenberg wrote in the aforementioned memorandum about the Taiwan Lobby. He argued that the U.S. “have derived benefits from our association with the KMT [Taiwan]: trade, access to a strategically important island, and the infusion of an Asian society with some of the values we esteem.” It was no question that “we [the U.S.] wish to maintain these benefits and we have a historic obligation to help Taiwan sustain a peaceful, prosperous future.”⁴²³ Oksenberg’s conclusion reflects my argument derived from Neoclassical Realism that close security

⁴²¹ Memo, “The Taiwan Lobby and Its Significance”, Zbigniew Brzezinski to Jimmy Carter, undated, “China (Republic of China) 1/77-5/78” folder, Box 11, NSA Brzezinski Material Country File, Jimmy Carter Library. The record does not make clear if the memorandum has ever been submitted to Jimmy Carter. However, Brzezinski used at least parts of the information and arguments of this memorandum for one of his weekly reports to Carter (FRUS, Vol. XIII, 121-122). Hence, we can assume that the President was informed about the National Security Council’s point of view. For further reading see: Memo, Michel Oksenberg to Zbigniew Brzezinski, 7/28/1977, “China (Republic of China) 1/77-5/78” folder, Box 11, NSA Brzezinski Material Country File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁴²² Memo, Harold Brown to Jimmy Carter, 4/28/1977, “China (Republic of China) 1/77-5/78” folder, Box 11, NSA Brzezinski Material Country File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁴²³ Memo, “The Taiwan Lobby and Its Significance”, Zbigniew Brzezinski to Jimmy Carter, undated, “China (Republic of China) 1/77-5/78” folder, Box 11, NSA Brzezinski Material Country File, Jimmy Carter Library.

ties with Taiwan supported the American position in Asia-Pacific at the cost of the PRC.

From the Carter administration's point of view, Sino-American normalization was not going to threaten the prosperity and security of Taiwan because Taiwan's security did not rest on the U.S.-ROC defense treaty as long as the United States found other ways to remain involved. According to Oksenberg, the ROC leadership seemed to share this perception because "[i]n reality, Chiang Ching-kuo believes Taiwan can survive" without the MDT.⁴²⁴ This notion made the Carter administration believe that it could accept Beijing's three preconditions. In the meantime, Washington had to find a way to make unofficial relations with Taiwan work in all fields required: political, economic, cultural, and military. The answer to this problem could only be found through the development of a guideline for Carter's China policy.

Presidential Review Memorandum-24

The Carter administration did not intend to abandon Taiwan, not even for the sake of normal relations with Beijing. Instead, Washington did not see any reason to discuss its plans to assure Taiwan's security in public because this could alienate Beijing. Still, during the first months of Carter's presidency, the White House did not seem to have an idea of how it was going to achieve normalization with the People's Republic while also guaranteeing the continued U.S. involvement in the Taiwan Strait. This changed in late spring 1977, when Carter's aides discussed the further course of action. The result of these discussions was PRM-24. Other than Vance's memorandum which discussed normalization on a rather abstract level, this document set the foundation for Carter's normalization policy, including the administration's plans about Taiwan and the position it should take during the negotiations with the Chinese.

Although PRM-24 took the Taiwan issue into account, it focused on the foreign policy implications of the normalization process while elaborating on the basic benefits of normalization for the United States. The first advantage was the possible reduction of the U.S. military engagement in Asia since the United States

⁴²⁴ Ibid.

did not have to counter Chinese aggression in the region, anymore. Now, Washington could focus on counterbalancing Soviet influence in the region, and the Chinese side would even welcome such efforts.⁴²⁵ This was a complete reversal of the situation in the 1950s and 1960s, when the United States had to be much more careful in its interventions in the Far East.

Due to normalization, the balance of power would turn in Washington's favor and Moscow would face more pressure, not only in East Asia but also on a global scale. Perceiving that the distribution of power would favor the United States in the foreseeable future, the authors of PRM-24 expected the Soviet Union to demonstrate a significant willingness to cooperate with Washington on matters like arms control, fearing the pressure Washington could force on them if normalization was to occur. The improvement of U.S.-PRC relations together with the "Sino-Soviet rivalry provides important and tangible strategic benefits to the United States."⁴²⁶ Indeed, the Soviets seemed nervous about the increasing exchange between Chinese and Americans, as USSR Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin indicated during talks with Jimmy Carter in the spring of 1977.⁴²⁷

PRM-24 also argued that the Soviet factor was an important incentive for Beijing for further improvement of its relations with the United States. The document claimed that, since the Chinese leadership, and especially Deng Xiaoping, saw the Soviet threat as the biggest danger for China's security and its territorial integrity, closer cooperation with the United States would help to secure the Chinese eastern borders, so that its vulnerability to Soviet provocation decreased.⁴²⁸ Due to this analysis, the State Department's policy planners thought Washington's bargaining power favorable, so that the Chinese would be more accommodating during normalization negotiations than they had been in previous discussions.

Similar to rapprochement in the early 1970s, the consequence of normalization was that the United States would have better relations with China and the Soviet Union than these two communist powers enjoyed with each other. Therefore,

⁴²⁵Presidential Review Memorandum NSC/24, Part I, Options Toward the People's Republic of China, 6/1/1977, "TL Sensitive 4/1-6/30/77" folder, Box 17, Records of Anthony Lake, 1977-1981, RG 59, NARA.

⁴²⁶Ibid.

⁴²⁷ Memcon, Jimmy Carter, 04/12/1977 in: FRUS, 1977-1980, Volume VI, Soviet Union (Washington D.C.: United States Printing Office, 2013), 138.

⁴²⁸Presidential Review Memorandum NSC/24, Part I, Options Toward the People's Republic of China, 6/1/1977, "TL Sensitive 4/1-6/30/77" folder, Box 17, Records of Anthony Lake, 1977-1981, RG 59, NARA.

the American China experts claimed that any delay in Sino-American reconciliation could tempt the Chinese to seek an improvement of their relations with Moscow. Success in that regard would strengthen Beijing's position in its negotiations with Washington. This would make it more difficult for the U.S. to gain concessions from the Chinese side concerning the American involvement in the Taiwan Strait. Moreover, the authors of PRM-24 warned that a failure of Washington's efforts for normalization with China was likely to result in a long-term stalemate in U.S.-PRC relations, which "could also relieve Soviet anxieties about prospects for improvements in US-PRC relations and thus have an adverse effect on our overall strategic position."⁴²⁹ The necessity for a quick move towards normalization became obvious.

Although the policy planners hoped that Beijing would appear patient on the matter of Taiwan, they saw no alternative to severing Washington's formal relationship with Taiwan. This was the price the United States had to pay for the conclusion of normalization. There was no alternative because the continuation of the formal U.S. military engagement in the Taiwan Strait would virtually mean the failure of normalization. As PRM-24 suggested, the administration had to find a way to maintain U.S.-Taiwan security relations on an informal basis.⁴³⁰ The only consolation in this regard was that leaving the manacles of formal security ties with Taiwan behind offered more flexibility for Washington's future policy in the Taiwan Strait.

As past experiences of U.S. administrations had demonstrated, any U.S. president needed as much flexibility as possible in order to lessen tensions in the Taiwan Strait. Otherwise, as long as the Taiwan issue was not settled, the danger of destabilization in the whole region was omnipresent. The MDT with Taiwan bound Washington, constituting which side the United States had to take in the event of a conflict. This made it much more difficult to act as an intermediary between Taipei and Beijing. The authors of PRM-24 believed that "[n]ormalization would reduce the degree to which important US interests [...] remain hostage to the PRC-Taiwan dispute." The end of the formal engagement of the United States in the Chinese Civil War "would somewhat lessen the PRC's nationalistic concerns about Taiwan and substantially decrease Peking's short-term incentive to use Taiwan as a pres-

⁴²⁹Ibid.

⁴³⁰Ibid.

sure point against us.” Moreover, the end of official U.S.-Taiwan security relations could help “to settle the Taiwan problem through mutual accommodation rather than military confrontation”, although neither Taipei nor Beijing seemed willing to pursue such a solution at that time.⁴³¹

The benefit of flexibility was worth risking the short-term stability of the regime on Taiwan. PRM-24 admitted that normalization would be a shock for the Taiwanese people. However, the document also assumed that the KMT regime would react reasonably once it came to derecognition of the ROC. The regime would be able to keep its citizens in check. The United States also did not have to fear the intervention of other countries like the Soviet Union. Taipei knew this would trigger a harsh reaction from the mainland, and the KMT’s legitimacy could suffer tremendously. Moreover, the KMT’s anti-communist attitude prevented them from exchanging Washington with Moscow as Taiwan’s protecting power.⁴³² It was rather the reaction of other countries in the region that concerned policy planners.

The abrogation of the U.S.-Taiwan defense treaty could harm America’s credibility and its image as hegemonic power in East Asia. As the State Department’s policy planners argued, eliminating “formal US security ties with Taiwan, coupled with the withdrawal of US ground forces from Korea and possible cut-backs in our Philippine bases, could give the impression of a major US retrenchment in the Pacific.” Such concerns made it even more imperative for Carter to pursue a careful approach concerning normalization and the American obligations to Taiwan as an ally. The American public favored normalization but PRM-24 reiterated that this attitude would change if normalization was achieved “at the expense of our present relations with Taiwan”, since the American people did not see the “inherent contradiction in this position.” Even political allies in the U.S. Congress could “feel that the way Taiwan is treated should take precedence over other, geopolitical considerations...”⁴³³

Carter had to convince the U.S. public and Congress that Taiwan’s security and the well-being of its people would not be sacrificed for the sake of normal Sino-American relations. Therefore, Taiwan’s security and the American involvement in the Taiwan Strait had to be compatible with normal relations with the

⁴³¹Ibid.

⁴³²Ibid.

⁴³³ Ibid.

mainland. It is important to note that the president had asked his advisers to take the latter into account when they drafted PRM-24.⁴³⁴

The authors of PRM-24 suggested setting up some minimum requirements the Chinese side had to meet if the PRC wanted to establish diplomatic relations with the United States. The first requirement was that Beijing should give “acceptable assurances that the PRC will not take military action against Taiwan for the foreseeable future.” In addition, the United States should be allowed to provide Taiwan with arms in order to defend itself. Furthermore, the United States required full “economic and financial relationships” with Taiwan “which will sustain Taiwan’s economy and assure continued growth of foreign trade and investment.” Finally, the United States should express its hopes for a peaceful accommodation between Taipei and Beijing.⁴³⁵ The Chinese would react critically to these demands but it was necessary for the Carter administration to maintain Taiwan’s de-facto independent status.

In fact, the requirements elaborated in PRM-24 allowed the United States to play a very active role in the Taiwan Strait. They represented not only an alibi for the Carter administration towards the U.S. public and the legislative branch in order to save its face. They indicated a lack of trust towards the Chinese. To the Carter administration, it was not clear what would happen in the Taiwan Strait if the formal security relationship with Taiwan ceased to exist. The historical experience suggested that the PRC could quite well pursue a more aggressive approach to force Taiwan into reunification talks. Thus, PRM-24 made clear that it was not in Washington’s interest to end its involvement in the Taiwan Strait. The document only suggested changing “the form but not the substance of our relations with Taiwan.”⁴³⁶ This approach became even more obvious with the passing of the TRA in early 1979. Whatever would happen after normalization, the reunification of China did not seem to be in Washington’s interest. Instead, Washington sought stability in the Asia-Pacific region and strove to secure the status-quo in the Taiwan Strait. This would allow the United States to focus its attention on Europe and other places of strategic interest like the Middle East and Southern Africa.

⁴³⁴ See Comment in Footnote 2 in: FRUS, 1977-1980, Volume XIII, China (Washington D.C.: United States Printing Office, 2013), 69.

⁴³⁵ Presidential Review Memorandum NSC/24, Part I, Options Toward the People’s Republic of China, 6/1/1977, “TL Sensitive 4/1-6/30/77” folder, Box 17, Records of Anthony Lake, 1977-1981, RG 59, NARA.

⁴³⁶ Ibid.

In the end, PRM-24 set the frame for Carter's further China policy. The literature about normalization has mainly overlooked the meaning of the document. Nancy Bernkopf Tucker mentions the memorandum but does not grasp its significance for the normalization process.⁴³⁷ As I claim, it was the decisive document for the development of the Carter administration's approach towards normalization and the way Washington was to deal with the Taiwan issue. The memorandum did not only formulate the goal of normalization but also weighed its advantages and benefits versus the risks of failure. Of utmost importance in that context was the definition of the minimum requirements the PRC had to meet if it had an honest interest in normalization. Since the beginning of Nixon's rapprochement policy in the early 1970s, the American side had always reacted to Chinese demands, without defining the limits of its willingness for concessions. Now, the U.S. executive had a guideline, which did not only determine the goal itself but also the way, the White House could achieve normalization. With PRM-24, Washington virtually set the conditions for normalization, not the Chinese.

After the decision about PRM-24 had been made, the next step was to let Beijing know about the Carter administration's intentions. The president himself used a speech at the University of Notre Dame in May 1977 to publicly announce his administration's desire to start talks about normalization:

"It's important that we make progress toward normalizing relations with the People's Republic of China. We see the American and Chinese relationship as a central element of our global policy and China as a key force for global peace. We wish to cooperate closely with the creative Chinese people on the problems that confront all mankind. And we hope to find a formula which can bridge some of the difficulties that still separate us."⁴³⁸

These words made clear that China was important for Carter's foreign policy, and that he wanted to find a way to make normalization happen. He wanted to achieve what neither Nixon nor Ford had been able to do. The major problem was still the Taiwan issue but, as PRM-24 indicated, the U.S. policy planners saw a chance to prevent this matter from spoiling the whole process. Next, it needed good timing to approach the Chinese, and the State Department identified four options for further steps.

⁴³⁷ Bernkopf Tucker, "Strait", 93.

⁴³⁸ Jimmy Carter, "Address at Commencement Exercises at the University", 05/22/1977, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=7552> (accessed: December 5, 2012).

In a memorandum which prepared Cyrus Vance for a meeting with other high level members of the administration (the so called Asia group), Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Richard Holbrooke and the Chief of Policy Planning for China Paul Kreisberg described four options the United States could take in order to pursue better relations with China. Holbrooke and Kreisberg wanted to pursue normalization as quickly as possible, demanding a timely and serious effort to do so, including cutting all official ties with the ROC which would also mean the abrogation of the defense treaty. Simultaneously, the U.S. would continue to sell military equipment to Taiwan, announce unilaterally that it expected a peaceful settlement of the Taiwan question, and have cultural and commercial relations with Taiwan. According to the State Department's officials, this approach stood in accordance with PRM-24, and fulfilled the United States' minimum requirements to make sure Taiwan's security. The administration just had to be careful not to alter the language of the Shanghai Communiqué, which did not foreclose self-determination for the people of Taiwan. As Holbrooke and Kreisberg insisted, it was important for the U.S. side to maintain an ambiguous language that would leave room for interpretation.⁴³⁹ Together with PRM-24, Holbrooke's and Kreisberg's memorandum prepared the final decision about the Carter administration's short-term approach toward normalization.

On June 27, the Asia group began to set up the next steps. The meeting included Secretary of Treasury Michael Blumenthal, Secretary of Defense Brown, the Director of the CIA Stansfield Turner, and National Security Advisor Brzezinski. Supported by the Departments of State, Treasury and Defense including the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the group followed Holbrooke's and Kreisberg's line of argument. They choose the first option of proposing a serious effort towards normalization. However, in order to avoid any limitation for U.S. policy, they also opted to seek additional measures to improve Sino-American relations. These measures included the reduction of U.S. troops on Taiwan. Finally, the Asia group agreed that due to the political situation in the United States, the whole process could not "be absorbed domestically until sometime in 1978 at the earliest."⁴⁴⁰ Thus, it was impossible to develop a fixed timeline for the negotiations, especially

⁴³⁹ Memo, Richard Holbrooke/Paul Kreisberger through Philip Habib to Cyrus Vance, 6/25/1977, "TL Sensitive 4/1-6/30/77" folder, Box 17, Records of Anthony Lake, 1977-1981, RG 59, NARA.

⁴⁴⁰ Memo, Zbigniew Brzezinski to Cyrus Vance/Michael Blumenthal/Harold Brown/Stansfield Turner, 7/15/1977, "TL 7/1-9/30/77" folder, Box 17, Records of Anthony Lake, 1977-1981, RG 59, NARA.

because Carter and his aides had no idea how the Chinese would react to Washington's minimum requirements.

The first chance for the administration to test its concept and to find out what the Chinese had in mind was Cyrus Vance's visit to Beijing scheduled for late August 1977. The Secretary of State's talks with Chinese top officials responsible for foreign affairs would determine what exactly the Chinese side demanded concerning Taiwan, and how far the USA could go in order to save its interests in the Taiwan Strait.

Conclusion and Discussion

When Jimmy Carter assumed presidency, he developed a host of ambitious foreign policy goals that included the objective of establishing full diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China. Backed by Neorealist theory the archival record suggests that such normalization aimed to strengthen the strategic position of the United States within the frame of the Cold War. This step should serve to put pressure on the Soviet Union and increase the incentives for Moscow to cooperate on a multitude of international issues. The new administration did not know what exactly the state of Sino-American relations was, since former presidents had conducted their China policy in secrecy. It was quite shocking for Carter and his aides to discover the far reaching promises former administrations had made to the Chinese, particularly concerning the Taiwan issue. According to Enrico Fardella, these promises weakened the new administration's bargaining position.⁴⁴¹ For the sake of continuation, Carter had to honor the former commitments between the United States and the PRC although it limited his policy options.

The new administration had to face additional problems, which further limited its leeway. The Chinese government made clear that it expected the White House to follow the path Carter's predecessor's set, by accepting the three preconditions the People's Republic had laid down for normalization (withdrawal of U.S. troops from Taiwan, severance of all diplomatic ties with Taipei, and abrogation of the MDT). Early meetings demonstrated how serious Beijing was on the matter. In

⁴⁴¹ Enrico Fardella, "The Sino-American Normalization: A Reassessment" in: *Diplomatic History* (Vol. 33, No. 4/ September 2009), 548-549.

the Chinese's point of view, the Taiwan issue was an internal affair and that the PRC would not tolerate any attempts of the Carter administration to continue the American security ties with Taiwan after normalization.

Nancy Bernkopf Tucker writes that the reason for Carter's reluctance to push stronger towards normalization with China in the early stage of his presidency was his desire to find a way to protect the people on Taiwan.⁴⁴² The White House knew it needed to preserve its security relationship with Taiwan at least to a certain degree if Carter wanted to find domestic support for his normalization policy. Otherwise, he would not be able to accumulate enough political resources to assert his plans and legitimize normalization with the PRC at the cost of derecognizing the regime in Taipei. The administration did not intend to abandon Taiwan. Carter and his aides just could not state this in public in order to avoid friction with Beijing. But the island's security was deemed important for the U.S. position in East Asia.

The U.S. public and even more so U.S. Congress put pressure on the White House, criticizing every step by the administration that could alter the status of U.S.-Taiwan relations in the future. Such disruptions were partly initialized by the regime in Taipei that sought to influence American policy as much as possible though only with minimal success. The Carter administration mostly ignored Taipei's pledges for more exchange. The executive also tried to keep Congress out of the decision-making process. Carter's concerns that the Taiwan Lobby and U.S. Congress could spoil his administration's attempt to normalize relations with China were immense.

Robert Ross and Michael Schaller claim, the White House did not pursue normalization seriously at the beginning of Carter's term because Washington was optimistic that it could handle the Soviet threat alone.⁴⁴³ This perspective neglects the aforementioned numerous problems Carter and his aides faced concerning their China policy. While the strategic situation vis-à-vis Moscow had always played a role in the Carter administration's considerations, Carter and most of his aides pursued normalization for more than this one reason. In fact, lacking flexibility and growing domestic pressure were responsible for the delayed development of the administration's normalization strategy; not over-confidence vis-à-vis the Soviet

⁴⁴² Bernkopf Tucker, "Strait", 90.

⁴⁴³ Ross, "Negotiating", 93-97; Schaller, "United States", 203-206.

Union, as Ross and Schaller claim. In addition, the Carter administration had to find a way how to deal with the Taiwan issue before it could really approach the Chinese.

Considering the administration's situation in the first half of 1977, Carter and his aides were not at all off to a slow start in their China policy. For example, only one week after Carter had met the Soviet ambassador in Washington Dobrynin, he met PRC Ambassador Huang Zhen. More important, the development of ideas and plans for normalization had started even before Carter's inauguration.⁴⁴⁴ A working group installed by Cyrus Vance shortly after the elections developed a memorandum, which discussed the advantages and risks of normalization on a broad scale. These ideas reappeared later in PRM-24, a document that was crucial for the further development of Carter's China policy. All this happened in the first half of 1977. As the archival record shows, the administration had a clear notion of its China policy no later than early May.

PRM-24 did not only state the motives for the administration's pursuit of normal relations with China, but also defined the limits of Washington's willingness to make concessions to the People's Republic. For the first time since Nixon's rapprochement policy had begun in 1970/1971, the United States had set its minimum requirements for normalization. Taiwan's security should not be jeopardized. Beijing had to accept U.S. arms sales to Taiwan. Moreover, Washington would publicly state its interest in a peaceful settlement of the Taiwan issue, expecting the Chinese not to contradict such a statement. Such claims would present much more resistance to the PRC's demands than the Chinese were used to face after having dealt with the Nixon and Ford administration. Carter and his aides felt prepared to take further actions towards normalization, and Secretary of State Cyrus Vance's trip to the People's Republic which was planned for August 1977 would become the first real test for the Carter administration's determination to normalize its relations with Beijing.

⁴⁴⁴ Carter met Dobrynin on February 1, while talking to Huang on February 8, see: Memcon, Jimmy Carter, 02/01/1977 in: FRUS, 1977-1980, Volume VI, Soviet Union (Washington D.C.: United States Printing Office, 2013), 6-12; Memcon, Jimmy Carter, 02/08/1977, "China MR-NLC-98-215 (1)" folder, Box 40, Vertical Files (VF), Jimmy Carter Library.

Chapter IV: Proving Seriousness, July 1977-May 1978

In the summer of 1977, Jimmy Carter had been president for more than half a year. He had tackled many issues in foreign affairs, initiating negotiations about a new SALT agreement and a new agreement about the Panama Canal as well as talks for peace in the Middle East. His China policy, by contrast, seemed to stagnate as even his National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski admitted in a memorandum from late July, 1977.⁴⁴⁵

However, this was about to change. After the administration had developed a strategy paper (PRM-24) for its China policy, Cyrus Vance's trip to China, which was scheduled for late August, provided a chance to galvanize the normalization process. But as the Secretary of State's talks with the Chinese would demonstrate, the Chinese and American position on Taiwan and the details of normalization were still far from being congruent.

This chapter deals with the period after the Carter administration had developed a political strategy for normalization, examining how the Chinese and Americans approached each other in order to bring themselves in the best possible position to start talks about normalization. Although negotiations between the PRC and the U.S. had not been initialized yet, the White House wanted the Chinese to know about the U.S. administration's desire for progress in the normalization process. The visits of Cyrus Vance in August 1977 and Zbigniew Brzezinski in May 1978 were of major importance for this aim. While some analysts of the history of Sino-American relations have deemed Vance's talks with the Chinese leadership a failure,⁴⁴⁶ these talks were in fact absolutely necessary for the White House to learn more about Beijing's lacking readiness for concessions on the matter of Taiwan. Furthermore, it was important to let the Chinese side know that Washington also had conditions for normalization to work.

From my point of view, Vance had to "fail", so that Brzezinski could "succeed" later. The Carter administration had to probe what maximum position it could pursue. It was also important to let the Chinese know how Washington's own

⁴⁴⁵ Memo, Zbigniew Brzezinski to Jimmy Carter, 07/29/1977, "Weekly Reports [to the President]. 16-30: [6/77-9/77]" folder, Box 41, Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁴⁴⁶ Berger, "Normalisierung", 423-424; Hao, "Dilemma", 76, 79.

demands looked like. Otherwise, the PRC would maintain a position where it could dictate the further course of negotiation process. In addition, the Carter administration learned about the pertinacity of Beijing concerning the Taiwan issue. As disappointing as Vance's visit appeared, its outcome was necessary because both sides needed to see what bargaining position the other side had adopted.

Now, Chinese and Americans did their best to demonstrate to each other how serious they were about normalization. Particularly Beijing's behavior during the months following Vance's visit underlined the Chinese interest in normal relations. It also became apparent that they preferred an interlocutor who was less inclined to promote *détente*. Instead, PRC officials wanted someone who despised any kind of cooperation with the Soviets.

As we will see, the Chinese thought Carter's National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski would be this person. He fit very well in Beijing's negotiation approach. Deng Xiaoping sought to develop a personal relationship with one U.S. top official, similar to the relationship between Zhou Enlai and Henry Kissinger during rapprochement. A personal relationship with Brzezinski could help Deng to make the U.S. side understand the PRC's position, particularly concerning the Taiwan issue. Deng's choice was not surprising. Vance seemed tougher and more straightforward on the matter of Taiwan, while Brzezinski preferred a more subtle approach, using vague and indirect phrases to describe the necessity for the Carter administration to maintain a security relationship with Taiwan. Moreover, the former professor from Columbia University in New York was a well-known anti-Soviet.⁴⁴⁷

The Chinese flattering suited Brzezinski well as he wanted to control the administration's China policy in order to use it as leverage vis-à-vis the Soviet Union. According to the journalists James Mann and Patrick Tyler, this ambition was the reason for some interagency struggle, and Brzezinski was able to alter some basic decisions.⁴⁴⁸ In the end, his trip to China would gain importance as he was to announce the president's willingness to start negotiations about normalization as soon as possible.

⁴⁴⁷ As mentioned above, Brzezinski's critical and repellent attitude toward the Soviet Union had already been demonstrated in some of his academic works; for another example, see: Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Soviet Bloc: Unity and Conflict* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960).

⁴⁴⁸ Patrick Tyler, "Wall", 237-238; James Mann, "Face", 91-92.

The APNSA underestimated the president's determination to maintain control over the China policy as he denied Brzezinski's wish to improve the relations with the People's Republic by selling American technology to China. Carter had his own notion of how to proceed with the normalization process. The president was not willing to let others make decisions, which could dilute the U.S. bargaining position or would expose his administration to political pressure at home.⁴⁴⁹ This included Carter's intention not to sacrifice Taiwan for the sake of normalization. In this author's opinion, the island was still too useful, and would even gain usefulness in the decades to come as it provided future leverage vis-à-vis the PRC. The record clearly demonstrates that the Carter administration was rather willing to risk normalization than giving up its exclusive influence on Taiwan although the U.S. president did not explain his intentions to the KMT regime.

While the Americans could not bluntly tell the Chinese they were not to give up Taiwan, Brzezinski was instructed to make them aware about the Carter administration's minimum requirements concerning the island. The discussions about this topic made clear that Deng Xiaoping was going to be the main interlocutor for the Americans. He also seemed to be the one Chinese official who was most interested in normalization. Above all, Deng appeared willing to make concessions if necessary. Since he was the most powerful figure among PRC leaders, he was in a position to do so. Eventually, it was Deng's reconciliation that would enable both sides to begin with the normalization negotiations only a few weeks after Brzezinski had left China.

Interim Report and Preparations

Although the Carter administration had made great strides in developing a strategy for its China policy during the spring of 1977, Brzezinski was not satisfied with the administration's achievements in that area of foreign affairs. He gave the administration good marks for its efforts in the Middle East, South Africa, and the Horn of Africa. Yet, he remained cautious about Carter's China policy, seeing a need for

⁴⁴⁹ The U.S. diplomat Harry E.T. Thayer who would later become the U.S. ambassador to Singapore confirms that the President played a major role in the decision-making about the China policy, see: Bernkopf Tucker, "China Confidential", 325-326.

“[c]orrective measures” in order to demonstrate the administration’s seriousness about normalization.⁴⁵⁰ Cyrus Vance’s upcoming trip to Beijing represented the first chance to demonstrate this seriousness. It was also the first chance after the Americans had set normalization as a policy goal to learn more about the Chinese position and the limits of their flexibility. This made the Vance mission a serious and delicate matter.⁴⁵¹

The question was how far Vance should push in order to convince the Chinese side that Washington would be ready to start serious talks about normalization. In preparation of Vance’s meeting with the president and other members of the administration who worked on its China policy, the Secretary’s aides wrote a memorandum, which discussed the purpose of Vance’s trip to Beijing. The State Department considered setting of a target date for normalization as problematic because of the domestic opposition to changes of the status-quo in U.S. China policy. Conservative circles were almost paranoid when it came to the Taiwan issue, and it would be difficult to gain Congressional support for normalization if it meant derecognizing the ROC regime.⁴⁵² The administration had to be cautious, which concessions it would make to the Chinese.

The memorandum also suggested a bold approach concerning Washington’s minimum requirements, as laid down in PRM-24. Vance had to point out the U.S. need to station government personnel in Taiwan although these people “would not perform diplomatic functions.”⁴⁵³ Since Vance’s talks would set the tone for the upcoming negotiations with the Chinese, this advice appears surprising as it could alienate the Chinese while leading to an impasse of the normalization process. However, the Carter administration had to state its own conditions in order to maintain some initiative during the upcoming negotiations. Carter shared this view.

In a meeting on July 30, the president ordered Vance to be very direct about U.S. requirements concerning arms sales and a security relationship with Taiwan. Carter said that his “experience in life has been that it never pays to procrastinate.”

⁴⁵⁰ Memo, Zbigniew Brzezinski to Jimmy Carter, 07/29/1977, “Weekly Reports [to the President]. 16-30: [6/77-9/77]” folder, Box 41, Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁴⁵¹ Michel Oksenberg, “A Decade of Sino-American” in: *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 61, No. 1 (Fall, 1982), 182.

⁴⁵² Memo, Richard Holbrooke/Anthony Lake to Cyrus Vance, 7/29/1977, “TL Sensitive 7/1-9/30/77” folder, Box 17, Records of Anthony Lake, 1977-1981, RG 59, NARA.

⁴⁵³ *Ibid.*

He also agreed with the DOS that setting a target date for normalization was not necessary, urging Vance to use phrases like “‘promptly’ or ‘as soon as possible’” in order to demonstrate Washington’s solemnity. The president even wanted his secretary to draft a normalization communiqué. Carter was aware that an acceptance by the Chinese would put some time pressure on the administration. At the same time, Carter was sure that “[i]t would take two months to prepare Congress and others” for normalization, and he was “prepared to work within that time frame.”⁴⁵⁴

This prompted Carter, against the previous practice to avoid talks between high-level members of the administration and representatives of the ROC, to consider a meeting with ROC Ambassador Shen to inform Taipei about his intentions.⁴⁵⁵ The president’s deliberation left no doubt that he thought normalization was within reach. Otherwise, his fears that the KMT regime would spoil his plans would have prevented him from informing Taipei.

Brzezinski, however, was not as optimistic as the president about Vance’s chances for success in China. He seemed concerned that Carter’s enthusiasm for normalization could neglect the administration’s efforts to strengthen the *China Card*, which should help to put pressure on the Soviets. Thus, in a memorandum from August 5, Brzezinski tried to lower Carter’s expectation. The National Security Advisor was skeptic that the Carter administration’s “flexible posture on normalization will elicit a favorable response” by the Chinese. Therefore, besides discussing the bilateral issue of normalization, Vance’s agenda should incorporate an exchange of matters of strategic dimension. According to Brzezinski, “[t]he plain fact is that our [Chinese and American] parallel strategic interests against the Soviet Union, not *bilateral* [sic] interests, provide the impetus to our relationship with China.”⁴⁵⁶ Reminding the Chinese about the strategic dimension of their relations with the United States should strengthen the relationship and also emphasize the American willingness to counter Soviet power. These points underlined that the

⁴⁵⁴ Memcon, “China Policy”, Jimmy Carter, 07/30/1977 in: FRUS, 1977-1980, Volume XIII, China (Washington D.C.: United States Printing Office, 2013), 130.

⁴⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 131.

⁴⁵⁶ Memo, Zbigniew Brzezinski to Jimmy Carter, 08/05/1977 in: FRUS, 1977-1980, Volume XIII, China (Washington D.C.: United States Printing Office, 2013), 133.

National Security Advisor valued normalization only in terms of strategic advantages vis-à-vis the Soviet Union.⁴⁵⁷

Carter disagreed with Brzezinski's approach, seeing the usefulness of normalization on a much broader scale. In a letter with instructions for Vance's trip, the president underlined that Vance's main goal was "to engage the Chinese in meaningful discussion on issues where we potentially can be helpful to each other: Korea, southern Africa, the Horn, Southeast Asia, and possibly South Asia." Talking about such issues was not neglecting the Soviet dimension of U.S.-China relations, since Carter also asked Vance to "give a full exposé of our policy regarding U.S.-Soviet relations, with strong emphasis on our capacity to manage those relations effectively."⁴⁵⁸ In accordance with Neorealist conclusions, normalization should still serve to improve the strategic situation of the United States, by creating a more favorable balance of power. Carter's intentions, however, went beyond pure Cold War thinking.

The president saw normalization and its consequences very clearly, knowing that the U.S. would have to give up its official ties with the ROC. Hence, he wanted to prove his determination not to sell out American interests or the future of the people on Taiwan:

"[I]n addressing the Taiwan issue, we must make certain that our actions in no way jeopardize the confidence of the people of Taiwan in a prosperous, tranquil future. Clearly, if we are to alter the form of our relations with Peking and Taiwan, we have an obligation to do so in a way that maintains the peace and stability of the region."⁴⁵⁹

Carter also wrote that he wanted the Chinese to be more flexible on the matter of Taiwan. This meant that they would have to tacitly accept U.S. arms sales after the conclusion of normalization. The president knew that the Chinese had to gain from normalization as much as the United States. He did not see any reason to accommodate Beijing at any price, without getting something in return.

⁴⁵⁷ Alexander Moens, "The Carter Administration and Multiple Advocacy" in: *International Journal*, Vol. 45, No. 4 (Autumn, 1990), 935, 940-941.

⁴⁵⁸ Letter, Jimmy Carter to Cyrus Vance, 08/18/1977 in: FRUS, 1977-1980, Volume XIII, China (Washington D.C.: United States Printing Office, 2013), 135.

⁴⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 135-136.

Carter's emphasis on the necessity to protect Taiwan also sharpened his sense of reality since he did not expect that Vance would actually achieve normalization during his trip. Hence, the president assured the Secretary of State that "[t]he success of your trip will not be measured by its immediate results but by whether you have set in motion processes which over a period of time will consolidate our favorable position."⁴⁶⁰ Despite his enthusiasm, Carter was aware of the difficulties between the Chinese and the U.S. He still saw Vance's trip as a probe maintaining quite a measure of skepticism about Beijing's willingness to accept Washington's conditions concerning Taiwan.

While Carter considered to inform Taipei about his intentions, Brzezinski thought it would be better if the president or the Secretary of State would speak with the Taiwanese after Vance's return from Beijing.⁴⁶¹ The APNSA was obviously concerned such a meeting would send the wrong signal to the mainland's leadership. Yet, Carter had decided to brief the ROC leadership about the purpose of the Secretary's trip. It was an attempt to be honest and direct to Taipei, and also to avoid accusations by the Congress that the White House left its loyal ally out of its considerations. This made Carter's considerations part of the administration efforts to accumulate enough resources to legitimize its China policy.

Prior to Vance's trip, the State Department sent Ambassador Leonard Unger to ROC Premier Chiang Ching-kuo. Unger should inform the Premier that the Secretary of State was going to talk with the PRC leadership about the possibility of normalization. The ambassador should also still Taipei's fears that the United States would abandon the island, as Washington's "approach to normalization will continue to be guided by our [American] concern not to undercut Taiwan's security and well-being", making sure "that any agreement on normalization protects the essence of Taiwan's current relations with the U.S."⁴⁶² The briefing served two purposes. First, it should prevent Taiwanese protests which could lead to public criticism of the Carter administration's China initiative. Second, the president wanted to demonstrate his concerns about Taiwan, not leaving the KMT regime in the dark about his intentions. Chiang reacted reserved and warned the Americans

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid., 136.

⁴⁶¹ See Footnote 2 in: Memo, Zbigniew Brzezinski to Jimmy Carter, 08/05/1977 in: FRUS, 1977-1980, Volume XIII, China (Washington D.C.: United States Printing Office, 2013), 134.

⁴⁶² Telegram, Department of State to Embassy in the Republic of China, 08/18/1977 in: FRUS, 1977-1980, Volume XIII, China (Washington D.C.: United States Printing Office, 2013), 137.

that Beijing would “make no concessions on Taiwan...”⁴⁶³ As Vance was to find out, the Taiwanese leader was right.

Vance's Trip to China

When Vance arrived in Beijing on August 21, the 11th National Congress of the CCP had just been concluded on August 18. It was the first Party Congress after the death of Mao Zedong and the purge of the *Gang of Four*. Hua Guofeng used the meetings in the Great Hall of the People to foster his position as the CPP's chairman, while Deng Xiaoping was officially reinstated in his offices. Only a month before, he had reemerged after being purged in 1976. It was a time when the new PRC leadership had just been able to stabilize its grasp of power. Especially Deng was not in a stable position. Although he had a considerable power base, he was still positioning himself within the higher ranks of the PRC government.⁴⁶⁴ In such a situation, Vance and his delegation could not expect to find the CCP regime in a very conciliatory mood.

The U.S. Secretary of State pursued his mission with a series of meetings with PRC Foreign Minister Huang Hua from August 22-24. Huang who had started his career as an English translator for Mao possessed a lot of experience in negotiating with the Americans. He was involved in the armistice negotiations that ended the Korean War as well as in the ambassadorial talks in Warsaw in the late 1950s. Before he was appointed as foreign minister in 1976, he also served as the PRC's ambassador to the United Nations. This position offered him some insight into the thinking of his American counterpart. While he was not the main decision-maker in Chinese foreign policy, he was perfect in conveying the PRC's position. As most successful diplomats, Huang could not only exhibit polished rhetoric, polite restraint, and genuine humbleness, but also possessed a good mix of cold blooded confidence and barefaced snappishness. Meeting Huang was a true first test for Vance.

⁴⁶³ Telegram, Embassy in the Republic of China to Department of State, 08/19/1977 in: FRUS, 1977-1980, Volume XIII, China (Washington D.C.: United States Printing Office, 2013), 139.

⁴⁶⁴ David Shambaugh, "Deng Xiaoping: The Politician" in: *The China Quarterly*, No. 135, (September, 1993), 483.

In the meetings with Huang, Vance presented the U.S. point of view on different issues of global, regional, and bilateral interest. According to Patrick Tyler, Vance's presented the U.S. position in a rather sterile manner reading from notes without searching for eye contact. Tyler criticizes that Vance's attitude made it difficult to establish an atmosphere of mutual courtesy.⁴⁶⁵ Indeed, the record suggests that Vance had opted for an unemotional approach wrapping himself in a mantle of calmness. However, other than Tyler argues, this approach reflected the uncertain situation the American delegation was facing. Since the Secretary of State did not know exactly how the Chinese would react to his proposals, it made sense to appear unmoved, restrained, and at times even humble. The Americans wanted to learn the Chinese position; they had not come to Beijing to win a debate contest.

Early on, Vance and Huang discussed the strategic situation of the United States and its struggle with the USSR. The Chinese claimed that Washington needed the PRC to cope with the Soviets. They exaggerated the threat the Soviet Union represented to the United States, arguing "the continued rivalry between the US and the Soviet Union is about to lead to a world war." Huang questioned the American strength concluding "the US is a bit afraid of the Soviet Union" since "the Soviet Union is going on the offensive and the US is on the defensive." Furthermore, he passionately criticized Washington's "appeasement policy." In his view, *détente* was responsible that "Soviet ambitions for aggression and expansion have become bigger..."⁴⁶⁶ Of course, Vance could not allow such statements to remain unanswered.

The Secretary of State emphasized again and again that the United States saw itself in a strong position vis-à-vis the Soviet Union. He admitted that the Soviet Union was the main threat to U.S. security, and the rivalry between Washington and Moscow would be fueled by strategic and ideological differences.⁴⁶⁷ Vance even conceded to Huang that the U.S. expected its competition with the USSR to continue.⁴⁶⁸ However, he strongly disagreed with Huang's conclusion about Amer-

⁴⁶⁵ Tyler, "Wall", 244.

⁴⁶⁶ Memcon, Cyrus Vance to White House, 08/24/1977, "China MR-NLC-98-215 (2)" folder, Box 40, Vertical Files (VF), Jimmy Carter Library.

⁴⁶⁷ Memcon, Cyrus Vance, 08/22/1977, "China MR-NLC-98-215 (1)" folder, Box 40, Vertical Files (VF), Jimmy Carter Library.

⁴⁶⁸ Memcon, Cyrus Vance, 08/23/1977, "China MR-NLC-98-215 (1)" folder, Box 40, Vertical Files (VF), Jimmy Carter Library.

ica's strength, being adamant that due to the economic and political superiority the United States enjoyed vis-à-vis Moscow "the US is not on the defensive, and we certainly are not afraid of the Soviet Union."⁴⁶⁹ The Carter administration still intended to search for ways to lessen tensions with the Soviet Union, and it would not allow Beijing to spoil its attempts to revive *détente*.⁴⁷⁰ On the one hand, Beijing should see the United States as a strong partner in global and regional issues. On the other hand, the PRC leadership should not think it could manipulate U.S. policy.

With this emphasis of strength, Vance underlined that the United States could handle its Soviet rival even without Chinese help. The U.S. administration was convinced that the USA was still more powerful than the USSR. Washington also wanted to prevent the impression that it needed better relations with the PRC in order to cope with Moscow. Such an impression would have left Beijing with a lot of leverage over Washington. Vance was convinced that the PRC was more afraid of the USSR than the United States. Hence, the Secretary of State tried to advertise the U.S. as a powerful nation, making a tacit alliance with the United States so tempting for Beijing that the PRC would make concessions concerning Taiwan. Unfortunately, Vance's plan did not work out, as the Chinese proved to be inflexible on the matter of Taiwan.

When Vance started his deliberations about Sino-American relations and normalization, he appeared very accommodating, stating that both sides should leave history aside, since normal relations between Washington and Beijing should be natural despite differing positions on key issues. The basis for the process of normalization would be the Shanghai Communiqué. However, referring to the aforementioned Carter administration's minimum requirements, Vance also made clear that it needed the prospect of a peaceful solution of the Taiwan question. In addition, the United States wanted to continue some form of informal ties between the United States and Taiwan. Only then, Washington's "diplomatic relations and Mutual Defense Treaty with Taipei would lapse, and we would be prepared to affirm that publicly..." The Secretary added that the U.S. side was also "prepared to complete the withdrawal of all U.S. forces and military installations from Tai-

⁴⁶⁹ Memcon, Cyrus Vance to White House, 08/24/1977, "China MR-NLC-98-215 (2)" folder, Box 40, Vertical Files (VF), Jimmy Carter Library.

⁴⁷⁰ Memcon, Cyrus Vance, 08/23/1977, "China MR-NLC-98-215 (1)" folder, Box 40, Vertical Files (VF), Jimmy Carter Library.

wan...” concluding that “in principle, I can say we are prepared to begin the process.”⁴⁷¹ This was the first time a member of the Carter administration announced the willingness to fulfill China’s three preconditions.

Yet, as Vance continued his proposal, he urged the Chinese to take into account U.S. domestic politics. As soon as the president would break off official relations with Taiwan, he was to face domestic pressure because of the “strong feelings of friendship for the people of Taiwan” in the American public. Vance pointed out that it was important for President Carter to avoid an “unduly divisive debate at home” in order to continue the normalization process. Therefore, the U.S. government wanted to maintain strong cultural and commercial relations with Taiwan. In order to do so “it would be necessary for U.S. Government personnel to remain on Taiwan under an *informal* [sic] arrangement.”⁴⁷² These conditions alone were unacceptable for the PRC leadership, but Vance asked for even more.

If the process of normalization should be publicly supported in the U.S., the Carter administration needed to maintain some sort of security relationship with Taiwan. Abandoning Taiwan would weaken U.S. alliances. Vance argued the American credibility as an ally, particularly vis-à-vis Japan and the NATO depended on such a relationship. For the sake of regional stability, Washington did not want to jeopardize Taiwan’s security. Vance assured the Chinese that the United States did not intend to intervene in the solution of the Taiwan issue. Instead, he pointed out that due to the Shanghai Communiqué, the United States had “taken [a] number of steps to reduce our role” in the Taiwan Strait including troop reductions and a more controlled arms supply for the island.⁴⁷³ It was a tightrope walk Vance had to walk, but it was necessary to make the Chinese understand that Washington had requirements of its own that had to be met if normalization should work out.

Vance himself painted a positive picture of his meetings with Huang and his own performance. According to him, Huang even praised his understanding of the Chinese negotiation style.⁴⁷⁴ The Chinese were most interested in the Soviet Union, Korea, India, and the NATO. However, Sino-American relations and normalization remained in the center of the Chinese attention. Vance felt how eager the Chinese

⁴⁷¹ Ibid.

⁴⁷² Ibid.

⁴⁷³ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁴ Report, Cyrus Vance to White House, 08/26/1977, “China, 1977” folder, Box 34A, Chief of Staff Jordan, Jimmy Carter Library.

side was to approach the normalization issue as his “interlocutor, foreign minister Huang Hua, signaled clearly several times that he wanted to hear our views on normalization as soon as possible.”⁴⁷⁵ Nonetheless, he also admitted that the PRC still opposed the U.S. position concerning Taiwan.⁴⁷⁶

Indeed, Huang Hua’s statement from August 24 stated nothing new about the Chinese position on Taiwan.⁴⁷⁷ The foreign minister openly criticized the U.S. concession to be “lip-services” since the Carter administration’s views would virtually negate the three preconditions. This left the impression that the U.S. would continue to interfere in Chinese internal affairs: “You regard Chiang Kai-shek as your pet and you boasted about the Chiang Kai-shek clique and gave it support. [...] It seems to me that you are still in need of Taiwan.” From Beijing’s point of view, the question was for what purpose the United States would need the island. At least, Huang alluded indirectly to China’s patience on the matter of liberating Taiwan: “If we can’t liberate Taiwan in this generation, we will do it in the next generation.”⁴⁷⁸ It was a sign of hope that agreement between Washington and Beijing was still possible.

Huang’s emotional release was rather a rhetorical exercise than a substantial exclusion of further progress in Sino-American relations. It was an attempt to gain bargaining power by showing no empathy for the needs of the U.S. on the matter of Taiwan. The Chinese style of negotiating rested on the idea to maintain a maximum position for as long as possible. Such a position was presented as a matter of principle and national pride. The aim was to prevent an interlocutor from gaining an advantage through early concessions.⁴⁷⁹ Officials of the Carter administration would face this attitude multiple times over the following months. The next PRC leader Vance met was Vice Premier Deng Xiaoping, a charismatic but humble tactician who was a master of the Chinese approach to negotiations.

Deng who was born in 1904 had served the CCP in numerous positions. As a protégé of Zhou Enlai, he had fallen out of grace during the *Cultural Revolution*

⁴⁷⁵ Report, Cyrus Vance to White House, 08/22/1977, “China, 1977” folder, Box 34A, Chief of Staff Jordan, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁴⁷⁶ Report, Cyrus Vance to White House, 08/23/1977, “China, 1977” folder, Box 34A, Chief of Staff Jordan, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁴⁷⁷ Report, Cyrus Vance to White House, 08/24/1977, “China, 1977” folder, Box 34A, Chief of Staff Jordan, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁴⁷⁸ Memcon, Cyrus Vance to White House, 08/24/1977, “China MR-NLC-98-215 (2)” folder, Box 40, Vertical Files (VF), Jimmy Carter Library.

⁴⁷⁹ Solomon, “Behavior”, 71.

due to intrigues by the *Gang of Four*.⁴⁸⁰ Purged from the leading ranks of the CCP, it took the support of high leaders in the PLA for him to regain influence from 1977 onwards. Deng chose not to assume the leading role in the communist party, leaving the position of the CCP's chairman to Hua Guofeng. Instead, he settled in the background, pulling the strings in a way compatible with his political objectives –his main goal was the modernization of China.⁴⁸¹ In spite of his less prominent role in the hierarchy of the PRC leadership, Deng was the most important decision-maker in the country's foreign policy at this time, and Vance's talks with him were of major importance to gain the real perspective on the Chinese position.

When Deng met the Secretary of State on August 24, the Chinese vice premier reinforced Huang's criticism. He reminded Vance that President Ford had promised the use of the *Japanese Formula*. The Carter administration's formula, however, "is not a step forward from the original process of normalization. It is, on the contrary, a retreat from it." Deng made clear that the PRC government did not have to make concessions: "[...] it is the United States which will have to make up its mind" because "the United States owes a debt to China" –something former Secretary of State Kissinger had agreed with. All Vance could do in that situation was to point out that the Carter administration's position was consistent with the Shanghai Communiqué and China's three preconditions which the U.S. government was ready to accomplish.⁴⁸² No matter what U.S. officials said, the Chinese were apparently not to give up their principle position on Taiwan.

The differences between Americans and the Chinese came down to two points. The first problem for Deng remained, according to Vance, that the United States "were asking China to violate its historic principle that Taiwan was an internal affair by requiring a statement of peaceful settlement..."⁴⁸³ The second problem was, as Deng put it, that the Americans wanted "an Embassy that does not have a

⁴⁸⁰ For further reading on the emergence of the Gang of Four and Deng's reemergence see: Roderick MacFarquhar/Michael Schoenhals, *Mao's Last Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006).

⁴⁸¹ For further reading of Deng's approach see: David S. G. Goodman, *Deng Xiaoping and the Chinese Revolution. A Political Biography* (Oxon: Routledge, 1994).

⁴⁸² Memcon, Cyrus Vance to White House, 08/24/1977, "China MR-NLC-98-215 (2)" folder, Box 40, Vertical Files (VF), Jimmy Carter Library.

⁴⁸³ Report, Cyrus Vance to White House, 08/24/1977, "China, 1977" folder, Box 34A, Chief of Staff Jordan, Jimmy Carter Library.

sign on its door...switching the Liaison Office to Taiwan.”⁴⁸⁴ Now that both sides had learned about the other side’s conditions for normalization, concessions from the Chinese on the matter of Taiwan appeared even less likely.

Surprisingly, in spite of the differences about Taiwan, the Chinese remained patient, and demonstrated their interest to work towards normalization. Deng did not believe both sides had to rush toward an agreement: “We have stated on many occasions we are patient. This is to mean that in improving relations between our two countries we can afford to do it in a more leisurely manner...” It was an expression of understanding for the American position that was further fueled when Deng indicated that China was also patient concerning the timetable for the liberation of Taiwan.⁴⁸⁵ Deng’s words appear as an early hint that the Carter administration could expect at least minor concessions on the matter of Taiwan. Vance even went as far as stating “that the mood surrounding the visit changed sharply after this meeting...”⁴⁸⁶

When Vance met Chairman Hua Guofeng, they did not discuss the matters of normalization and the Taiwan issue. As Hua put it he had “no new opinion to add” to the comments of Huang Hua and Deng Xiaoping, but to Vance it appeared that Hua wanted Sino-American rapprochement to continue.⁴⁸⁷ The chairman talked in length about the threat the Soviet Union presented to global stability, characterizing the United States as the strategic counterweight to Moscow: “The more important point in common is confronting the Polar Bear together.”⁴⁸⁸ This attitude supports Brian Hilton’s argument that Beijing regarded the Sino-American relationship essentially as one-dimensional at this time. The United States served the PRC to keep the Soviet Union in check.⁴⁸⁹

Although Hua Guofeng formally held the highest position within the PRC’s leadership, Deng was the main interlocutor for Washington. He was clearly the

⁴⁸⁴ Memcon, Cyrus Vance to White House, 08/24/1977, “China MR-NLC-98-215 (2)” folder, Box 40, Vertical Files (VF), Jimmy Carter Library.

⁴⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁶ Report, Cyrus Vance to White House, 08/24/1977, “China, 1977” folder, Box 34A, Chief of Staff Jordan, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁴⁸⁷ Memcon, Cyrus Vance to White House, 08/25/1977, “China MR-NLC-98-215 (2)” folder, Box 40, Vertical Files (VF), Jimmy Carter Library. Report, Cyrus Vance to White House, 08/25/1977, “China, 1977” folder, Box 34A, Chief of Staff Jordan, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁴⁸⁸ Memcon, Cyrus Vance to White House, 08/25/1977, “China MR-NLC-98-215 (2)” folder, Box 40, Vertical Files (VF), Jimmy Carter Library.

⁴⁸⁹ Hilton, *Flexibility*, 600.

most candid Chinese official and seemed at times to leave the “boxlike” thinking, which limited China’s flexibility on the Taiwan issue. Hua, on the other hand, acted like an elder statesman who could not be bothered with the details of normalization –similar to Mao Zedong in 1972. His role was to explain to the Americans how the thinking of the Chinese leadership worked. This attitude gave him the appearance of a teacher and not so much of a politician. The Carter administration learned that they would negotiate with Deng. If the U.S. side wanted to force the Chinese to make concessions, the vice premier was the man they had to convince. Unfortunately, Deng’s political position was too unstable for him to be accommodating concerning Taiwan.

This observation was confirmed when rumors emerged in the U.S. press that Vance had gained concessions from Beijing concerning Taiwan. In that situation, it was Deng who harshly rebutted such rumors in an interview to a group of American journalists on September 6. He countered the impression “that the Chinese would be flexible about promising not to take Taiwan by force if the United States withdraws” as he emphasized that “there is no such flexibility on the part of the Chinese.”⁴⁹⁰ According to this report by Associate Press journalist Louis Boccardi, Deng further said Vance’s proposal contradicted President Ford’s promise to relay on the *Japanese formula*, and to sever diplomatic ties with Taiwan. The whole interview served the display of Deng’s disappointment. As much as these words served to criticize the U.S. administration, they also should underline Deng’s role as protector of China’s principle interests. However, even in this situation, Deng was keen not to close the door for further talks. Although he could not say so, the Americans had to understand that Deng and the PRC leadership were not able yet to make far reaching concessions. Thus, Deng conceded that, although there had been no progress on the matter of normalization, the meeting with Vance was still useful because it provided a platform for the exchange of views.⁴⁹¹

This last aspect was very important. We should understand it as the overall theme of Vance’s trip. It was obvious that Deng tried to put some pressure on the Carter administration, urging the USA to confirm its acceptance of Beijing’s three preconditions. However, Deng’s interview also demonstrated to the U.S. public

⁴⁹⁰ Report, The Associated Press, Untitled, 06/09/1977 (via <http://www.lexisnexis.com>; accessed: 01/21/2014).

⁴⁹¹ Memo, Michel Oksenberg to Zbigniew Brzezinski/David Aaron, 9/6/1977, “China (People’s Republic of) 77/7-9” folder, Box 8, NSA Brzezinski Material Country File, Jimmy Carter Library.

that the Carter administration had not made any far reaching concessions to the PRC concerning Taiwan's security. This impression helped the administration to cope with the domestic situation and to accumulate more political resources. In the end, Deng's interview did not hamper the normalization process, but was a public confirmation of Beijing's position concerning Taiwan.

As the record shows, in his talks with Huang Hua, Deng Xiaoping, and Hua Guofeng, Cyrus Vance proposed a strategy of maximum demands concerning U.S.-Taiwan post-normalization relations. He never expected the PRC leaders to accept this proposal, and they eventually rejected it. Vance argues that he deliberately did not offer to the Chinese the more reconciliatory communiqué draft which he had with him. His decision was based on his concern that such a step could influence the domestic discussions about the Panama Canal treaty.⁴⁹² Negotiating a new treaty that granted control over the Panama Canal to the state of Panama after 1999 was one of the major foreign policy goals of the Carter administration at this time. It was also an issue that the political circles in Washington discussed controversially.⁴⁹³ A push towards normalization at this time would have tested the White House's ability to accumulate enough political resources at home to legitimize all its foreign policy projects. It was a choice between ratifying the Panama Canal treaty or normalizing U.S.-PRC relations at the cost of Taiwan.

The Congress' critical position on normalization and its consequences for U.S. ties with Taiwan became clear during the Congressional hearings in the fall of 1977. The hearings dealt with the question of how the United States could achieve normalization in a manner that would serve American interests and commitments best. Congress eventually recommended the pursuit of normalization but warned that the executive should not achieve this objective at the cost of Taiwan.⁴⁹⁴ Accordingly, the *Japanese formula* was not sufficient to preserve American interests in the Taiwan Strait.⁴⁹⁵ The result of the hearings made clear that Vance's instincts were right. If the administration wanted to gain Congressional approval for the

⁴⁹² Vance, "Choices", 79, 82.

⁴⁹³ For further reading on the matter see: Adam Clymer, *Drawing the Line at the Big Ditch: The Panama Canal Treaties and the Rise of the Right* (Lawrence, University Press of Kansas, 2008).

⁴⁹⁴ Xu, "Congress", 270.

⁴⁹⁵ Summary of Hearings "United States-Soviet Union-China: The Great Power Triangle", Subcommittee on Future Foreign Policy Research and Development of the Committee on International Relations, House of Representatives, 08/01/1977, Library of Congress, 6.

Panama Canal treaty, normalization had to wait. The administration was not able to bear the political costs of two controversial projects at the same time.

In his memoirs, Brzezinski agrees that the Panama Canal treaty played a role for the decision to be more cautious on the matter of normalization. Furthermore, President Carter had second thoughts and was worried about the reaction of the Senate if the administration was to fulfill Beijing's preconditions. In order to succeed with the Panama Canal Treaty, the administration needed the legislative branch's support. The president therefore tended to choose a slower pace in his China policy. This decision, finally, led to the disappointing end of Vance's visit. While the Chinese saw the whole meeting as a setback, the U.S. side was critical of Beijing's lack of flexibility as well as their public anger about the situation. Nevertheless, as Brzezinski emphasizes, the Secretary of State's trip had reopened the dialogue between Washington and Beijing.⁴⁹⁶ Yet, the result of Vance's visit and Deng's interview left the impression of a serious rift in Sino-American relations. The Carter administration had to act quickly if it wanted to improve the situation and prevent a stalemate.

The Long Way Toward Reconciliation

It did not take long until Carter's aides started to make suggestions how the administration could accommodate the Chinese. Brzezinski believed that the U.S. side should indicate some flexibility on its position about Taiwan during Huang Hua's visit in New York in late September 1977.⁴⁹⁷ Surprisingly, it was the Chinese side that used Huang's meeting with Cyrus Vance at the United Nations to demonstrate China's ongoing interest for better relations with America. The Chinese foreign minister transmitted a message from Hua Guofeng to Carter, which said: "Sino-

⁴⁹⁶ Brzezinski, "Power", 201-202.

⁴⁹⁷ Memo, Zbigniew Brzezinski to Jimmy Carter, 09/16/1977, "Weekly Reports [to the President]. 16-30: [6/77-9/77]" folder, Box 41, Donated Historical Material: Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection, Jimmy Carter Library.

U.S. relations are not a diplomatic question but a political question. It is necessary to consider this issue with long-term strategic interests in mind.”⁴⁹⁸

The chairman’s statement indicated the PRC’s strong interest to avoid a stalemate of the normalization process. The political dimension of Sino-American cooperation referred to both nations’ strategy to counter Soviet influence. In Hua’s opinion, this common interest was more important than their diplomatic differences about bilateral matters such as Taiwan. The statement urged the U.S. president to put normalization beyond problems like Taiwan, so that disagreement about this matter would not spoil their chances to contain the USSR. Hua appealed to Carter’s sense of strategic necessity, trying to remind him that the rivalry with the Soviet Union was America’s major concern, and not the loss of official relations with Taiwan.

The White House was not aware of Hua’s attempt to manipulate the administration’s attitude on the Taiwan issue. Instead, everyone appeared relieved that the Carter administration’s proposal during Vance’s visit had not done any long-term damage to the relationship. According to Brzezinski, it needed careful public statements in the future to maintain an atmosphere of benevolence. Additionally, the U.S. side had to show its resolve to pursue normalization seriously. That way the U.S. could “sustain the relationship at its present level for at least the next few months.”⁴⁹⁹

It was necessary that the administration informed the PRC government about its intentions to make a serious move toward normalization. This role fell to Carter’s man in Beijing Ambassador Leonard Woodcock, former President of the United Auto Workers. His instructions underlined that he was not to let the relation deteriorate by mutual misunderstanding. The White House wanted to demonstrate that it took Beijing’s differing views about normalization and Taiwan seriously. Therefore, Woodcock should clarify that a public statement by the U.S. about the peaceful solution of the Taiwan question was directed at U.S. Congress, and not meant as a contradiction to the Shanghai Communiqué.⁵⁰⁰

⁴⁹⁸ Memo, Zbigniew Brzezinski to Jimmy Carter, 9/29/1977, “China (People’s Republic of) 77/7-9” folder, Box 8, NSA Brzezinski Material Country File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁴⁹⁹ Memo, Zbigniew Brzezinski to Jimmy Carter, 9/29/1977, “China (People’s Republic of) 77/7-9” folder, Box 8, NSA Brzezinski Material Country File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁵⁰⁰ Memo, Michel Oksenberg to Zbigniew Brzezinski, 10/25/1977, “China (People’s Republic of) 10/77-1/78” folder, Box 8, NSA Brzezinski Material Country File, Jimmy Carter Library.

While these suggestions did not mean the abandonment of Taiwan by any means, they, nonetheless, put the administration in a defensive position. In fact, not all staff members of the National Security Council shared Oksenberg's point of view. In a polemic memorandum to Brzezinski from late September, Thomas P. Thornton, NSC expert for South Asia, indicated that the Carter administration should avoid the impression to chum up with the Chinese. Referring to Nixon, Ford, and Kissinger who had "haul[ed] themselves off to Peking to do homage", Thornton thought the administration should not treat the PRC different from other countries.⁵⁰¹

It was a fair point, and in the aftermath of normalization, Carter and his aides had to face similar accusations from their political opponents. But in September 1977, Oksenberg campaigned to accommodate Beijing. In his opinion, the Chinese had continuously demonstrated their willingness to be patient with the United States and its position on the Taiwan issue distinguishing between public and private positions within the Carter administration.⁵⁰² Considering Hua Guofeng's emphasis on normalization as a political matter, Oksenberg was right. However, he underestimated that none of the involved actors could afford to overlook domestic politics and, in America's case, even third parties like Taiwan and the Soviet Union. This pressure from the inside and outside forced the PRC and U.S. governments to save face in order to legitimize any concessions they would grant to their counterparts.

Oksenberg disagreed with Thornton, and expressed his differing opinion in a memorandum to Brzezinski, criticizing Thornton's lack of knowledge about China and Sino-American relations.⁵⁰³ Instead, Oksenberg wrote in another paper: "If it takes a certain amount of deference to Chinese symbols to help ease Chinese tacit support for our global strategic posture, it is a cheap price to pay."⁵⁰⁴ Brzezinski agreed with Oksenberg, and Thornton's objections remained without consequences for the further development of the administration's China policy. The disagreement

⁵⁰¹Memo, Thomas P. Thornton to Zbigniew Brzezinski, 9/27/1977, "China (People's Republic of) 77/7-9" folder, Box 8, NSA Brzezinski Material Country File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁵⁰² Memo, Michel Oksenberg to Zbigniew Brzezinski, 9/29/1977, "China (People's Republic of) 77/7-9" folder, Box 8, NSA Brzezinski Material Country File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁵⁰³Memo, Michel Oksenberg to Zbigniew Brzezinski, 9/28/1977, "China (People's Republic of) 77/7-9" folder, Box 8, NSA Brzezinski Material Country File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁵⁰⁴ Memo, Michel Oksenberg to Zbigniew Brzezinski, 10/7/1977, "China (People's Republic of) 10/77-1/78" folder, Box 8, NSA Brzezinski Material Country File, Jimmy Carter Library.

between Thornton and Oksenberg indicated that the latter had a strong influence on Brzezinski's China approach. The archival record suggests that the APNSA took his suggestions concerning the PRC seriously.⁵⁰⁵ Oksenberg's China friendly approach and his influence on Brzezinski certainly added to the fact that the APNSA was the most accommodating U.S. official toward the Chinese.

It was also Oksenberg who insisted that the administration needed to demonstrate its resolve to continue the normalization process. A high level visit of another U.S. official seemed perfect for this intention.⁵⁰⁶ Thus, Oksenberg indicated in a meeting with Qian Dayong, the political counselor of the Chinese Liaison Office, that Brzezinski was interested in coming to China during his trip to East Asia in the spring of 1978. Qian seemed interested.⁵⁰⁷ It took a while before the Chinese sent their answer, but finally, in early November, they welcomed the possibility of a visit by the National Security Adviser.⁵⁰⁸ According to Patrick Tyler, it is not surprising that the Chinese liked Brzezinski as he favored the same relentless approach toward the Soviets as they did.⁵⁰⁹

As soon as he heard of the Chinese reply, Brzezinski acted quickly, sending a cable to Leonard Woodcock asking for his opinion about his plans. The APNSA intended to limit the purpose of his mission to explaining the global aspects of Sino-American normalization as well as Washington's reasons for approaching Moscow on matters of mutual interest.⁵¹⁰ Woodcock saw this as a good opportunity and agreed with Brzezinski to keep the scope of discussions limited.⁵¹¹ In reality, however, the APNSA was much more ambitious.

⁵⁰⁵ Oksenberg wrote some of the memorandums which Brzezinski sent to the president concerning the administration's China policy. On another occasions, the APNSA used the same arguments, Oksenberg did in his papers for Brzezinski. One example was the previously mentioned memorandum about the influence of the Taiwan lobby, see: Memo, "The Taiwan Lobby and Its Significance", Zbigniew Brzezinski to Jimmy Carter, undated, "China (Republic of China) 1/77-5/78" folder, Box 11, NSA Brzezinski Material Country File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁵⁰⁶ Memo, Michel Oksenberg to Zbigniew Brzezinski, 3/3/1978, "China (People's Republic of) 78/2-5" folder, Box 8, NSA Brzezinski Material Country File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁵⁰⁷ Memo, Michel Oksenberg to Zbigniew Brzezinski, 10/22/1977, "China (People's Republic of) 10/77-1/78" folder, Box 8, NSA Brzezinski Material Country File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁵⁰⁸ Memo, Michel Oksenberg to Zbigniew Brzezinski, 11/2/1977, "China (People's Republic of) 10/77-1/78" folder, Box 8, NSA Brzezinski Material Country File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁵⁰⁹ Tyler, "Wall", 254.

⁵¹⁰ Cable, Zbigniew Brzezinski to Leonard Woodcock, 11/18/1977, China (People's Republic of) – Brzezinski's Trip: [11/19/77-5/14/78]" folder, Box 9, Donated Historical Material Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection Subject File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁵¹¹ Cable, Leonard Woodcock to Zbigniew Brzezinski, 11/22/1977, China (People's Republic of) – Brzezinski's Trip: [11/19/77-5/14/78]" folder, Box 9, Donated Historical Material Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection Subject File, Jimmy Carter Library.

Brzezinski's Scheme

Brzezinski saw his trip not only as a chance to gain a better understanding of the Chinese position. He also wanted to get a stronger grip on the administration's China policy. His goal was to lead it in the direction that he desired: a de-facto alliance against the Soviet Union. His visit served to demonstrate Beijing that for Washington good relations with the People's Republic were more important than better relations with Moscow. To prove this point, he also arranged a NATO briefing for Chinese officers under his own authority. The briefing served to underline the security aspect of U.S.-China relations. It was a signal and a warning to Moscow that Washington had a strong and deepening relationship with the PRC. Another such signal was the APNSA's intention to treat China more favorable than the Soviets on the matter of technology transfers. Since PRC officials had suggested his visit, Brzezinski believed to have their trust, making him the logical choice to speak with the Chinese leadership. He claims in his memoirs Vice President Mondale and Secretary of Defense Brown supported his initiative.⁵¹²

Brzezinski's plan led to a conflict within the Carter administration as Vance opposed the trip. Oksenberg thought Vance's pleas against Brzezinski's proposal were essentially of a bureaucratic nature.⁵¹³ The Secretary of State had good reasons for his opposition. Vance's first argument was indeed of a rather bureaucratic character. He stated that U.S. foreign policy should be represented only by the president or the Secretary of State. Otherwise, the public perception of U.S. foreign policy could be confused. The second argument against the visit was more substantial. Vance assumed the National Security Advisor would force an agreement at the cost of Taiwan and other U.S. interests he regarded as less important. Considering Brzezinski's desire to hurt the Soviets, Vance was probably right. Ironically, Vance also claims in his memoirs that he had Vice President Mondale's support.⁵¹⁴ As stated above, Brzezinski claims the same. The historical record is not clear about this matter, but it is likely that the vice president rather supported Vance than

⁵¹² Brzezinski, "Power", 203, 206.

⁵¹³ Memo, Michel Oksenberg to Zbigniew Brzezinski, 3/3/1978, "China (People's Republic of) 78/2-5" folder, Box 8, NSA Brzezinski Material Country File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁵¹⁴ Vance, "Choices", 115.

Brzezinski, because Mondale was supposed to be the next member of the administration to go to China, before Brzezinski intervened on his own behalf. It is difficult to imagine that he forgo his chance to go to China in Brzezinski's favor.

In the end, it was again the president who ended the argument. Vance should go to Moscow to discuss SALT, while he sent Brzezinski to China. In his memoirs, Carter explains that his decision was based on the importance of the SALT agreement. The president wanted to prevent any delay of this issue. Furthermore, he believed that Brzezinski's exploration about normalization could help the SALT negotiations.⁵¹⁵ The president did not seem to be concerned about any possible interagency struggles about his administration's China policy. His designation of Brzezinski to visit Beijing was not an attempt to downgrade Vance's position. It was a pragmatic decision, which should underline the meaning of SALT to the president.

During the period from late 1977 until early 1978, the Carter administration looked for as many opportunities as possible to signal Beijing its interest in seeking a compromise. If the process of normalization was to be completed after the Congressional election in fall 1978, the Carter administration would have to start preparations as soon as possible after the Panama Canal Treaty vote in March. Before the vote, Oksenberg urged Brzezinski to get the president's approval for some moves that would accommodate Beijing. The NSC China expert suggested measures like recalling Ambassador Unger from Taipei, reducing U.S. troops on Taiwan, licensing key technologies for exports to the Chinese, and selling U.S. grain to them. At the same time, Washington should sell arms to Taiwan.⁵¹⁶ The fact that Oksenberg's memorandum included arms sales to Taiwan shows that while he was a strong supporter of concessions towards the PRC, he also thought the United States should meet its obligations towards the regime in Taipei. Yet, it still needed a clear signal to the PRC leadership that the Carter administration was serious about normalization.

Senator Edward Kennedy's (Dem-Massachusetts) trip to China presented a chance to send such a message. When the senator met Brzezinski in November 1977 to prepare his voyage, he asked for confirmation about the administration's

⁵¹⁵ Carter, "Faith", 194.

⁵¹⁶ Memo, Michel Oksenberg to Zbigniew Brzezinski, 3/3/1978, "China (People's Republic of) 78/2-5" folder, Box 8, NSA Brzezinski Material Country File, Jimmy Carter Library.

seriousness regarding normalization. He wanted to forward the White House's intentions to the Chinese. According to Oksenberg, the senator should also stress that China's public actions and rhetoric on the matter would have an influence on Washington's "capacity to pursue normalization."⁵¹⁷ The administration still faced the dilemma that it had to please different actors at home and abroad.

In the meantime, the Chinese sent their own signals for a broadening of U.S.-China relations. Hua Guofeng's opening address at the National People's Congress in early 1978 appeared as a commitment to modernization, and the Chinese leader wanted to accelerate this process by increasing contacts with western countries. The goal was to acquire modern technology from these nations.⁵¹⁸ There were also other, less obvious signals. For example, Beijing allowed two separated families of Chinese Americans to reunite after an intervention by the DOS. The U.S. liaison office was offered a second compound in Beijing, and Chinese military attaches were allowed to have social contact with their American counterparts.⁵¹⁹ Finally, the mainland's most important newspaper 人民日报 (*People's Daily*) featured a story about U.S. journalist Edgar Snow on its front page of.⁵²⁰ All these actions indicated that the Chinese really endeavored to signal their desire for further progress in the normalization process.

This impression was reinforced by an analysis of the State Department written by Culver Gleysteen, the elder brother of Deputy Assistant Secretary of State William H. Gleysteen Jr. Culver assessed Sino-Soviet relations to be worse than ever before due to border conflicts and ideological disputes that made any compromise between Moscow and Beijing difficult.⁵²¹ It was exactly the kind of situation the Carter administration had hoped for when it developed PRM-24.

However, as advantageous as this situation was, it also presented some dilemma for U.S. policy since it was in Washington's interest to cooperate with both communist powers. According to Gleysteen, playing the Soviets and the Chinese

⁵¹⁷ Memo, Michel Oksenberg to Zbigniew Brzezinski, 11/18/1977, "CO 34-2 Confidential 1/20/77-12/31/78" folder, Box CO-17, Countries, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁵¹⁸ Memo, Michel Oksenberg to Zbigniew Brzezinski, 2/28/1978, "China (People's Republic of) 78/2-5" folder, Box 8, NSA Brzezinski Material Country File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁵¹⁹ Memo, Michel Oksenberg to Zbigniew Brzezinski, 3/16/1978, "China (People's Republic of) 78/2-5" folder, Box 8, NSA Brzezinski Material Country File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁵²⁰ Report, Xinhua General New Service, "'People's Daily' Article Honours Memory of Edgar Snow, 02/16/1978 (accessed via Nexis, 01/22/2014).

⁵²¹ Memo, Culver Gleysteen through Anthony Lake to Cyrus Vance, 3/17/1978, "TL 3/16-31/78" folder, Box 3, Records of Anthony Lake, 1977-1981, RG 59, NARA.

against each other was a very risky strategy. The diversity of U.S. interests forbade alienating either of the communist powers. Gleysteen questioned Brzezinski's ideas to extend the security dimension of Sino-American relations in order to put pressure on Moscow. Therefore, the memorandum argued that the Carter administration should deal with both, Chinese and Soviets, individually, keeping in mind the general triangular situation. Neutrality between those two was imperative. Selling arms and modern technology to China was very risky in Gleysteen's opinion:

“Such arguments [for selling arms to China] are only acceptable if one is comfortable about what policies the PRC may pursue ten or fifteen years from now and is unconcerned about the effect of such arms transfers on third countries which are either allies of the US or countries whose policies we are trying to bring into closer line with our own.”⁵²²

Although Gleysteen agreed that normalization was still the best option for Washington to improve its relations with the PRC, his argument about arms sales and technology transfer was indeed valid. The administration could not know how China's foreign policy in general and Sino-American relations in particular would develop over the long run, and how this would affect the balance of power in Asia-Pacific.

The difficult question was whether better U.S.-China relations would help improving Washington's relations with the Soviets, or whether it would lead to a deterioration of this relationship. The NSC's and the DOS's different position on this issue was the reason for the growing dissent between those agencies. On the one hand, the DOS favored a patient and realistic assessment of the situation at hand incorporating all variables that mattered in the context of normalization. Brzezinski and the NSC staff, on the other hand, reduced Washington's relations with the People's Republic solely on its significance within the realm of the Cold War.

The next meeting of the aforementioned Asia group reflected this disagreement. The problems Brown, Brzezinski, and Vance were not able to solve during their discussion in April 1978, were how to proceed with normalization, to which technologies China should get access, and, above all, what kind of aircraft the U.S.

⁵²²Ibid.

could sell to Taiwan without provoking Beijing.⁵²³ But at first, they were occupied with the question of whether Congress could prevent normalization. In the DOS's view, a Congressional blockade could have two reasons. The first was Senator Goldwater's threat to challenge the termination of the MDT with the ROC legally. As Holbrooke said, the problem was that a law suit would "culminate in a debate on the Senate floor". Brzezinski added that the administration would "be confronted by the need to muster a majority" in the Congress.⁵²⁴ This would make the situation for the administration difficult.

The second problem was the way the administration would incorporate Capitol Hill into the development of U.S. relation with Taiwan after normalization. As Holbrooke pointed out the Congressional approval depended on the kind of security commitment to Taiwan that would replace the MDT. He suggested that following the announcement of normalization, the president could send legislation concerning future relations with Taiwan to Congress for approval. In this situation, the president had to underline that without this legislation any relations with Taiwan would be threatened.⁵²⁵ The administration eventually followed Holbrooke's suggestion. Carter wanted to maintain the initiative on the whole matter of normalization and the Taiwan issue.⁵²⁶ However, as the administration was to find out later, it was also the easiest way to alienate Congress because it left the legislative branch mostly out of normalization.

While the Asia group was not able to anticipate the Congress' reaction, the meeting made something else completely clear. No high level official of the Carter administration was of the opinion that the United States should sacrifice Taiwan for the sake of better relations with the People's Republic. Secretary of Defense Brown put this commitment in words, saying: "But our relation with Taiwan will remain. The PRC is not going to get Taiwan back." On the contrary, the administration saw Taiwan as future leverage vis-à-vis China for the time after normalization. This became clear when Deputy National Security Adviser David Aaron asked if it was

⁵²³ Memo, Zbigniew Brzezinski to Jimmy Carter, 4/11/1978, "Serial Xs—[8/77-8/78]" folder, Box 36, Donated Historical Material Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection Subject File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁵²⁴ Memcon, Zbigniew Brzezinski, 4/11/1978, "Serial Xs—[8/77-8/78]" folder, Box 36, Donated Historical Material Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection Subject File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁵²⁵ Ibid.

⁵²⁶ Carter, "Faith", 210.

not “useful to retain Taiwan as a way of securing leverage over Peking?”⁵²⁷ Indeed, Taiwan could still play an important part in America’s foreign policy and was obviously still of strategic value.

The group also discussed the question if normalization really had to occur in the latter half of 1978. The reason for “the rush” as Aaron expressed it was, according to Vance, that both, the president and the vice president, believed normalization could help the administration in its struggle with the conservatives in the Congress. Carter believed that since Capitol Hill saw any improvement of U.S.-PRC ties as a means to weaken the Soviet Union, Congress would be more willing to approve other political decisions of the president. Brzezinski agreed with Carter as long as SALT would not work out with the Soviets. Otherwise the conservatives would see normalization as a weakness. Aaron indicated the Republicans would never support Carter on this issue. Therefore timing was important.⁵²⁸

Brzezinski knew to use the dilemma of the right timing of normalization to his advantage. In a memorandum to the president that summarized the Asia group’s meeting, the APNSA asked Carter to decide if normalization should occur before the Congressional elections, soon after, or not until 1981. If Carter opted for one of the first two options, Brzezinski advised “that Leonard Woodcock should engage in quite, serious diplomacy soon after my trip.”⁵²⁹ Later, Carter emphasized in front of the press his approval of Brzezinski’s trip. The president made clear that the APNSA’s visit was consultative and focused on “matters of common strategic concern.” It would not incorporate any negotiations about normalization.⁵³⁰

But Brzezinski asked Carter for permission to approach the high-level Chinese leaders privately in order to discuss normalization without Woodcock or Holbrooke. Kissinger had done the same and “the really useful parts of his discussions were the ones from which he [Kissinger] excluded members of his own delegation [...]” Brzezinski argued that “[o]therwise they [the Chinese] will not talk

⁵²⁷Memcon, Zbigniew Brzezinski, 4/11/1978, “Serial Xs—[8/77-8/78]” folder, Box 36, Donated Historical Material Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection Subject File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁵²⁸ Memcon, Zbigniew Brzezinski, 4/11/1978, “Serial Xs—[8/77-8/78]” folder, Box 36, Donated Historical Material Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection Subject File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁵²⁹ Memo, Zbigniew Brzezinski to Jimmy Carter, 4/11/1978, “Serial Xs—[8/77-8/78]” folder, Box 36, Donated Historical Material Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection Subject File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁵³⁰ Memo, Michel Oksenberg to Zbigniew Brzezinski, 4/25/1978, China (People's Republic of) – Brzezinski’s Trip: [11/19/77-5/14/78]” folder, Box 9, Donated Historical Material Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection Subject File, Jimmy Carter Library.

frankly.”⁵³¹ Carter eventually followed the APNSA’s advice, and Brzezinski’s trip became more than just an exchange of views on the international situation. It was the final probe that would allow the administration to demonstrate to the Chinese its seriousness about normalization, and as intended, the trip to Beijing gave Brzezinski more influence on the administration’s China policy.

So far, Brzezinski had been able to convince the president of most of his ideas. Yet, it was up to Carter to decide the details of the next steps of his administration’s China policy. Brzezinski was not to have his way on all issues that were discussed in the Asia group’s meeting. This became clear on the matter of sales of dual-use technology to China. Brzezinski suggested more flexibility on technology transfers to China limited to fields such as agriculture, energy, medical service and mining. The APNSA argued that selling items to the PRC would not be the same as selling them to the Soviets. Also, the danger of any transfer from China to Russia would be negligible considering their bilateral relations. Moreover, Brzezinski indicated that selling advanced technology to China would serve U.S. security interests.⁵³²

The journalist James Mann argues that the readiness to sell dual-use technology to China demonstrated the Carter administration’s emphasis on using China to collaborate in the fields of military and intelligence against the Soviets.⁵³³ But Carter himself opposed such thinking. He was reluctant to sell any technology to China which could be later used for “military purposes.” He also wanted to prevent the impression Washington would favor the PRC over Moscow.⁵³⁴ It was another example that Carter saw the U.S. relation with China as part of a far greater scheme, which reached beyond the years of his first presidential term.

As Brzezinski’s trip approached, Congressional interest and support for normalization grew. In different meetings with the Senators Jackson and Kennedy, the APNSA did not only get crucial advice. He was also told that the administration’s initiative to normalize relations with the People’s Republic gained support in

⁵³¹ Memo, Zbigniew Brzezinski to Jimmy Carter, 5/4/1978, China (People's Republic of) – Brzezinski’s Trip: [11/19/77-5/14/78]” folder, Box 9, Donated Historical Material Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection Subject File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁵³² Ibid.

⁵³³ Mann, “Face”, 81.

⁵³⁴ Handwritten notes by Jimmy Carter, Memo, Zbigniew Brzezinski to Jimmy Carter, 4/11/1978, “Serial Xs—[8/77-8/78]” folder, Box 36, Donated Historical Material Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection Subject File, Jimmy Carter Library.

the Senate –even if it occurred within the framework of the *Japanese formula* that did not grant any kind of government-to-government relations between Washington and Taipei.⁵³⁵ Senator Kennedy argued that Brzezinski’s trip “will be counterproductive [sic] if I [Brzezinski] do not focus in some fashion on normalization.”⁵³⁶ Reading through both memorandums and comparing them with other documents, it appears that Brzezinski used the Senator’s points of views to manipulate Carter. Either via skillful rhetoric or generous interpretation, he put his own suggestions and preferences into the mouth of the Senators Jackson and Kennedy. However, at this point, the president had not made any decision, and it needed a joint effort by Vance, Brzezinski and Brown to get Carter to define the goals of the APNSA’s meetings with the Chinese.

Briefly before Brzezinski’s trip to China, he, Vance, and Brown sent a memorandum to the president, urging him to make a decision on the priority normalization would enjoy among U.S. foreign policy goals at that moment. The right timing of normalization was important because its controversial character within the U.S. public made it difficult for the Carter administration to find unanimous acceptance for this policy. The memo’s authors presented different time windows from mid to late-1978 over mid-1979 to until after the elections of 1980, but stated the domestic political situation would be very difficult from late 1979 until the elections in 1980.⁵³⁷ This assessment indicated that the best timing for normalization was the year of 1978, increasing the need for a successful Brzezinski trip.

According to the memorandum, the APNSA should indicate the American willingness for serious talks without starting the negotiating process itself. The document further suggested that Ambassador Woodcock would soon thereafter begin negotiations in secret, assuring the Chinese that Washington would fulfill their preconditions but also formulating America’s terms. The timing would have to take into account the development of other policies like the SALT negotiations. In the meantime, Washington could reduce its troops on Taiwan, reveal arms sales

⁵³⁵ Memo, Zbigniew Brzezinski to Jimmy Carter, 5/4/1978, China (People's Republic of) – Brzezinski’s Trip: [11/19/77-5/14/78]” folder, Box 9, Donated Historical Material Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection Subject File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁵³⁶ Memo, Zbigniew Brzezinski to Jimmy Carter, 5/5/1978, “China (People's Republic of) – Brzezinski’s Trip: [11/19/77-5/14/78]” folder, Box 9, Donated Historical Material Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection Subject File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁵³⁷ Memo, Cyrus Vance/Harold Brown/Zbigniew Brzezinski to Jimmy Carter, 5/10/1978, “TL Sensitive 4/1-6/30/78” folder, Box 17, Record of Anthony Lake, 1977-1981, NARA.

to the ROC regime, announce visits of U.S. officials to China, and let the President attend a Chinese cultural performance.⁵³⁸ The document underlined that Brzezinski's meetings should be only of preliminary nature in order to demonstrate earnestness about the start of negotiations. The National Security Adviser was not to detail the American position as this task was assigned to Woodcock.

The memorandum asked Carter to decide whether negotiations were to start in the summer of 1978, and whether the process should be concluded by the ambassador or by higher U.S. officials. Further delay could lead to unforeseeable problems in the future as well as a general shortening of the "normalization window" which meant the time to deal with the Chinese and Congress concerning normalization. Moreover, if the administration did not move swiftly toward normalization, the PRC government could improve its relations with the Soviet Union. Such a step would limit the strategic advantages of normalization. A postponement of normalization would also increase the incentives for China to improve its relations with other western countries. This would make it more difficult for the U.S. to get access to the Chinese market.⁵³⁹

Carter's aides also believed there were important advantages to be gained if the normalization process started soon. First, it would be complimentary to the SALT process as a demonstration that the U.S. was trying to improve its strategic position while also seeking cooperation with the Soviets and Chinese. Second, an early move toward normalization appeared beneficial since the state of U.S.-PRC relations would not have been better since the establishment of the Liaison Offices in 1973. Finally, despite a major setback for Taiwan, normalization would improve the U.S. position in Asia, by removing a major anomaly of U.S. foreign policy.⁵⁴⁰

Vance, Brzezinski, and Brown deemed even the disadvantages to be modest. While the negotiations could fail if the Chinese would not accept Washington's minimum conditions, a failure "would be made more manageable" due to the fact that the negotiations were held "out of the glare of publicity." On the domestic front, it needed a carefully planned strategy as the "die-hard supporters of the Republic of China could be expected to pull out all the stops" in order to prevent normalization from becoming legal. If the administration wanted Congressional

⁵³⁸ Ibid.

⁵³⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁰ Ibid.

support for its decision to establish diplomatic relations with the PRC, it also had to “demonstrate not only that normalization would strengthen our global position, but also that it would lessen prospects for conflict in the area and, in the longer run, promote the continued well-being of the people of Taiwan.” The final problem was the necessity of legal adjustments that enabled the United States to deal with Taiwan after derecognition. As the memorandum concluded, this issue made any struggle with the Congress more problematic since the administration needed Congressional support for such legislation.⁵⁴¹

As his instructions for Brzezinski suggest, Carter approved most points of the joint memorandum and followed Brown’s, Brzezinski’s, and Vance’s advice. The central point of Brzezinski’s trip remained the consultations with the Chinese concerning the international situation. The APNSA was instructed to express China’s importance for the United States. He should also emphasize common Sino-American interests and objectives. In addition, Carter wanted Brzezinski to make clear that the United States saw itself in a competition with the Soviet Union which would probably continue for some time. Nonetheless, the PRC government should be made aware that Washington was prepared to cooperate with Moscow in order to increase the level of international stability. On a bilateral level, Carter authorized the APNSA “[t]o reassure the Chinese that my Administration is serious in seeking normalization.”⁵⁴² With this last remark, the president went beyond his advisor’s joint memorandum, essentially adopting Brzezinski’s point of view.

While the joint memorandum suggested that Woodcock should present the details of the United States’ position to the Chinese after Brzezinski’s visit, Carter instructed his National Security Adviser to “reiterate U.S. acceptance of the three Chinese key points [preconditions] and reiterate the U.S. five points [made by Nixon].” Furthermore, Brzezinski should privately convey to the Chinese the basic position of the United States exploring “with the Chinese the possibility of developing ‘an American formula’ for a continuing non-diplomatic relationship with

⁵⁴¹ Ibid.

⁵⁴² Memo, Jimmy Carter to Zbigniew Brzezinski, undated, “China (People’s Republic of) – Brzezinski’s Trip: [5/15/78-5/22/78]” folder, Box 9, Donated Historical Material Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection Subject File, Jimmy Carter Library.

Taiwan” that should include the sales of defensive military equipment to the island.⁵⁴³

Carter’s instructions gave Brzezinski what he wanted: an opportunity to direct the administration’s China policy in the way he deemed necessary. Brzezinski’s gain of influence presented a great chance for Sino-American relations as he was a smart strategist. However, the APNSA’s heavy involvement also posed a risk to the broader framework of U.S. policy in the Taiwan Strait. For the Cold War warrior Brzezinski was, he would do everything to gain an edge over the Soviet Union casting other considerations aside.

In the Footsteps of Kissinger

Brzezinski did not have the historically inimitable chance that his rival Kissinger had in the early 1970s when he secretly traveled to Beijing to conduct negotiations about Sino-American rapprochement. But Carter’s National Security Adviser could still help to bring a new dynamic into the ongoing process of normalization, which was exactly Brzezinski’s assignment. The relationship between Washington and Beijing had not only been stalling since Cyrus Vance’s visit in late summer 1977, but in fact since the establishment of Liaison Offices in 1973.

Thus, Brzezinski did not lose time as he conveyed Carter’s intentions to the Chinese as soon as possible. In the afternoon of May 20 after only a few hours of rest, he met Huang Hua in Beijing. Even before giving an extensive overview of the strategic position of the United States, and the White House’s plans concerning the Soviet Union and other foreign policy issues, the APNSA stated that the Carter administration was determined “to move forward with the process of normalization.” Brzezinski said “on behalf of President Carter that the U.S. has made up its mind on the issue”, and “reconfirms the five basic principles enunciate by two pre-

⁵⁴³ Ibid. Brzezinski claims that he wrote the instructions himself (Brzezinski, “Power”, 208), and hence it is no wonder that they included points suiting his intentions. However, it makes sense to assume that Carter read them before approving them. Thus, the final decision was up to the President who obviously wanted his aide to push towards normalization exceeding the somewhat more cautious approach suggested in the joint memorandum by Vance, Brown, and Brzezinski.

vious U.S. Administrations.”⁵⁴⁴ Although he did not mention Taiwan directly, Brzezinski’s statement made clear that the Carter administration was willing to accomplish Beijing’s preconditions about this matter.

In their next meeting in the morning of May 21, Brzezinski and Huang exchanged their views on all the issues the National Security Advisor had presented the day before. Huang mainly reiterated his government’s criticism about *détente*, stressing the need for the Chinese and Americans “to work together to cope with the Polar Bear.”⁵⁴⁵ The Chinese did not understand why the United States tried to find a basis for cooperation with the Soviets, since, as Deng put it frankly, “[t]he main target of the Soviet Union is the U.S.”⁵⁴⁶ Hence, Huang Hua warned Washington not to “make China a pawn in your dealings with the Soviet Union, to divert the peril of the Soviet Union eastward [...]”, and Brzezinski hurried to assure the PRC foreign minister that diverting the Soviet threat towards China “is not our intention.” He elaborated that the United States was not weak and could handle the Soviets well enough: “The fact of the matter is that for the last 30 years we have opposed the Soviets and will continue to oppose it.”⁵⁴⁷

The exchange demonstrated that Beijing’s expectations about normalization with the United States had always been the creation of an anti-Soviet alliance, gaining power at the cost of the USSR and improving China’s security. With regard to this, Chinese and Americans were able to leave their different ideologies and social systems aside. Even more important, the Soviet threat was the reason why the PRC leadership had been so patient with the United States on the matter of Taiwan. Therefore, the Chinese critique did not present anything new to Brzezinski and his companions.

However, when Huang moved to the topic of normalization, he revealed to the American delegation that for Beijing the major aspect of Sino-American relations “is the international issues and the minor one is the Taiwan issue, but they are

⁵⁴⁴ Memcon, Zbigniew Brzezinski, 5/20/1978, “China (People’s Republic of) –Brzezinski’s Trip: [5/23/78-6/20/78]” folder, Box 9, Donated Historical Material Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection Subject File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁵⁴⁵ “Polar Bear” is a sobriquet for Russia and the Soviet Union used in China.

⁵⁴⁶ Memcon, Zbigniew Brzezinski, 5/25/1978, “China (People’s Republic of) –Brzezinski’s Trip: [5/15/78-5/22/78]” folder, Box 9, Donated Historical Material Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection Subject File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁵⁴⁷ Memcon, Zbigniew Brzezinski, 5/21/1978, “China (People’s Republic of) –Brzezinski’s Trip: [5/15/78-5/22/78]” folder, Box 9, Donated Historical Material Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection Subject File, Jimmy Carter Library.

inter-connected.” It was the first time, a Chinese official made this point so bluntly. Huang even threatened that “[i]f the question of normalization is not solved, it is bound to affect the coordination of actions between our two countries in the international area to deal with the Polar Bear.”⁵⁴⁸ The foreign minister’s statement did not only indicate the PRC’s leadership’s belief that Washington needed Beijing more than Taipei, it also crushed all hopes Brzezinski and others were having that a tacit Sino-American alliance would be possible even without the completion of normalization. Huang made clear that any joint measure to counter the Soviet Union was linked to normalization, and normalization was linked to a change of the U.S. position on the Taiwan issue.

Thus, it was no surprise that the maximum concession the Chinese were ready to make to the Americans was the use of the *Japanese formula* –allowing economic and cultural people-to-people relations between the United States and Taiwan. The problem was that the Americans could not be sure if this formula enabled them to sell arms to Taiwan. Moreover, it made a future involvement in the Taiwan Strait more difficult, limiting the scope of U.S.-Taiwan relations significantly.

Knowing well that reunification would be much harder if the United States continued its protection of the KMT regime, the PRC wanted to prevent a strong U.S. role in the Taiwan Strait after normalization. Huang hence repeated the well-known formula that Taiwan was “a matter of principle and on matters of principle there is no relaxation of China’s position or flexibility in China’s position.” Brzezinski responded noncommittally that the United States “recognize that this [Taiwan] is a matter of principle for you”, but that “a number of practical concrete issues which are complex, which are the product of historical conditions, which are intertwined with political complexities” would limit the Carter administration’s options on the matter. Brzezinski expressed his hope “that with good will and mutual understanding these complexities can be overcome.”⁵⁴⁹ It was an attempt to move towards an “American formula” for the Taiwan issue because the *Japanese formula* would not calm down U.S. Congress and other supporters of the ROC regime.

⁵⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁹ Ibid.

The only argument for Washington's commitment to Taiwan's security which Beijing might understand was the necessity for the United States to remain a strong, reliable, and credible partner to its allies in Asia and the rest of the world. As Brzezinski explained to the Chinese, otherwise the Soviet Union could fill the voids left by the United States: "It is important for both the U.S. and China that the U.S. not be perceived as fickle and untrustworthy." In that context, as the APNSA promised, Washington would consider how well the *Japanese formula* would fit the "historical needs and the complexities of a country which is not Japan."⁵⁵⁰ Since the Carter administration had already decided in internal discussions that it would not use the *Japanese formula*, Brzezinski's promise was a delaying tactic. He would wait for his talks with Deng before forwarding the more daring points of his proposal.

Similar to the talks Cyrus Vance had held with the Chinese in August 1977, Brzezinski's meetings with Huang Hua served purely as a platform for an exchange of views. Despite some harsh words and emotional outbreaks, the foreign minister did not make decisions or would alter the Chinese position. He should simply inform the Americans about the PRC's point of view and demonstrate Chinese tenacity on matters of principle. Having read many transcripts of meetings between Chinese and American statesmen, Brzezinski was not surprised. He knew that his chance to soften the Chinese position would come when he was going to meet Deng Xiaoping and Hua Guofeng. Still, learning about each respective side's bargaining approach was part of the process and the prelude to the more substantive discussions between Deng and Brzezinski.

When Deng and Brzezinski met on May 21, the National Security Advisor was more straightforward about the Carter administration's conditions for normalization. He revealed that due to domestic pressure Americans and the Chinese had "to find some formula which allows us to express our hope and our expectation regarding the peaceful resolution of the Taiwan issue." The vice premier replied his government would not oppose such a statement as long as China could state its own view on the matter as well. This was not what the Carter administration had exactly in mind since the issuing of parallel statements was "the beginning of the political problem at home" for the president. Thus, Brzezinski expressed the hope

⁵⁵⁰ Ibid.

that the Chinese statement “would not be in direct contradiction” to the American one.⁵⁵¹

Brzezinski’s concerns left Deng skeptical if Carter was really willing to accept China’s conditions for normalization. He questioned the U.S. president’s commitment to start negotiations. Brzezinski hurried to assure the Chinese that “President Carter had made up his mind”, and then explained that “[o]ne can make up one’s mind but then the process of executing that about which one has made up his mind can be difficult.” The U.S. administration was ready to accept Beijing’s premises, and wanted Ambassador Woodcock to start serious negotiations in June. According to Brzezinski, Carter was “prepared to resolve this question as rapidly as it proves practical.” The USA had “no intention of artificially delaying...” the process of normalization. In order to avoid leaks, the negotiations should be conducted in Beijing. Despite his skepticism and knowing full well that differences on the matter of Taiwan remained, Deng wholeheartedly accepted the American offer.⁵⁵²

Although Deng did not make any further concession to Brzezinski concerning the Chinese statement about the peaceful solution of the Taiwan issue, the whole exchange took place in a much more conciliatory atmosphere than the previous talks with Huang Hua. Deng even demonstrated some understanding for the political situation which the Carter administration faced at home, and the need to take into account the reaction of American and Taiwanese people about normalization. Therefore, the vice premier assured his interlocutor that the Chinese government was not in a hurry to reunify Taiwan and the People’s Republic. Although Beijing’s patience was not endless, according to Deng, the PRC government had “stated in the past that if the U.S. was still in need of Taiwan, China could wait.”⁵⁵³ While this was not the promise for a peaceful settlement of the Taiwan issue that the Carter administration had hoped for, it still was the farthest-reaching concession the Chinese had made yet, and it was not the only one.

According to the vice premier, Huang Hua was concerned that the Soviets could exploit an American withdrawal from Taiwan by approaching the regime on the island, and Taipei could even develop its own nuclear weapons. While such

⁵⁵¹ Memcon, Zbigniew Brzezinski, 5/25/1978, “China (People’s Republic of) –Brzezinski’s Trip: [5/15/78-5/22/78]” folder, Box 9, Donated Historical Material Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection Subject File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁵⁵² Ibid.

⁵⁵³ Ibid.

concerns did not change Deng's mind and he still would not concede to the Americans more than close non-governmental and commercial ties with Taiwan, he was aware that continuing relations between Washington and Taipei would hamper any attempts by Moscow to get a foothold on Taiwan.⁵⁵⁴ Deng, hence, granted the U.S. side the need to remain involved in the Taiwan Strait although he was aware that this would make a reunification much more difficult.

Beijing needed Washington to remain close to Taiwan. Otherwise, the Soviets could fill the security vacuum left by the Americans after the withdrawal of their troops as well as the termination of the U.S.-ROC defense treaty. An isolated ROC regime which would feel threatened could look out for an alternative alliance, replacing the one with the United States. Although Deng was confident that the PRC could deal with such problems on its own, Beijing let the U.S. continue to play a role in the Taiwan Strait as long as this role was linked to deterring the Soviet Union. Chinese strategic considerations circled always around closing the relative power gap between China and the USSR. The PRC leadership perceived the Soviet Union as a much bigger threat to the People's Republic than the United States. Closer relations with the United States thus helped China's strategic position. This is why Beijing granted the Americans more leeway on the matter of its post-normalization relations with Taiwan. In return, Washington had to fulfill the three preconditions.

All of this allowed Brzezinski to draw a positive conclusion of his talks with Huang Hua and Deng Xiaoping. Although Deng had demonstrated the limits of Beijing's patience and the PRC's aversions to concessions, the National Security Advisor interpreted Deng's statements about future U.S.-Taiwan ties in a particularly positive way. In Brzezinski's opinion, Deng's statement about economic ties between the U.S. and Taiwan could be seen as a hint that, for the sake of keeping Soviet influence out of Taiwan, Beijing would accept arms sales: "Thus on the two subjects of concern to us -arms sales to Taiwan and a Chinese commitment not to

⁵⁵⁴ Memcon, Zbigniew Brzezinski, 5/25/1978, "China (People's Republic of) -Brzezinski's Trip: [5/15/78-5/22/78]" folder, Box 9, Donated Historical Material Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection Subject File, Jimmy Carter Library.

contradict our statement- we broke some new and intriguing ground. Woodcock shares that feeling.”⁵⁵⁵

In addition to Brzezinski’s talks with Hua Guofeng, Deng Xiaoping, and Huang Hua, some other members of the American delegation met with their Chinese counterparts. While most of these meetings possessed a technical character and did not concern normalization or the Taiwan issue, Richard Holbrooke’s meeting with the director of the Department for Oceanic and American Affairs of the Chinese foreign ministry Lin Ping touched the Taiwan issue in indirect fashion.⁵⁵⁶ Holbrooke described to Lin the U.S. policy in Southeast Asia expressing Washington’s belief that the current balance of power in Asia should be maintained since any change could lead to instability.⁵⁵⁷ He used an argument developed in a Congressional report written by China expert Robert G. Sutton who believed that Southeast Asian regimes like those in Indonesia, Thailand, and Singapore viewed “the U.S. handling of the Taiwan issue as indicative of American intentions in the entire region, warning that a rapid withdrawal from the island will be seen as signalling a major decline in American interest in East Asia.”⁵⁵⁸

Holbrooke went beyond this regional perspective when he mentioned the four main powers in East Asia: the U.S., China, Japan and the USSR. Since, as the Assistant Secretary of State put it, “[t]he Japanese [...] do not have a military role to play”, the four power constellation forced the United States to maintain its strong involvement in the region. Not once did Holbrooke talk about Taiwan, as his remarks about security and stability in Asia-Pacific were all directed at the Soviet Union. Yet, his explanations to Lin about the U.S. plans to strengthen the American

⁵⁵⁵ Cable, Zbigniew Brzezinski to Jimmy Carter, 5/21/1978, “China (People’s Republic of) – Brzezinski’s Trip: [5/15/78-5/22/78]” folder, Box 9, Donated Historical Material Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection Subject File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁵⁵⁶ Holbrooke’s meeting was held in parallel to Brzezinski’s talk with Deng. Patrick Tyler claims that Holbrooke was outraged when he learned about Brzezinski’s decision to leave him out of the meeting with Deng (see: Tyler, “Wall”, 254-255). Brzezinski, on the other hand, claims Holbrooke’s exclusion from the meeting with Deng was purely based on the President’s instruction to keep the meeting small and confidential (Brzezinski, “Power”, 213). It is doubtful that Holbrooke did really react as harsh as Tyler suggests. First, he had to attend another meeting at the time, discussing the balance of power in Asia and the U.S. role in the region. Second, Ambassador Woodcock participated in Brzezinski’s talk with Deng and served as the State Department’s ear. Holbrooke’s presence was therefore not necessary.

⁵⁵⁷ Memcon, Richard Holbrooke, 5/21/78, “China MR-NLC-98-215 [1]” folder, Box 40, Vertical Files, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁵⁵⁸ Report, Congressional Research Service, Robert G. Sutter, “Foreign Perceptions of U.S.-PRC Normalization”, 08/01/1978, Library of Congress, 17.

allies like the Philippines and Indonesia made it clear that the United States wanted to maintain their dominance in the Asia-Pacific region.⁵⁵⁹

Although Holbrooke did not mention Taiwan, I argue, the island added to this dominance, by influencing the distribution of power in the Asia-Pacific region in Washington's favor. The ROC regime's mere existence weakened the mainland and kept the PRC from controlling important shipping lanes in East Asia. Moreover, Taiwan was a reliable trading partner and could provide U.S. forces with military bases in the event of a conflict in the region. While no American representative could say it publicly, preventing the reunification of mainland China and Taiwan was in the interest of the United States.

The Chinese were aware of the American desire to maintain its dominance in Asia-Pacific. That was the reason why, in his conversation with Brzezinski on May 22, Chairman Hua Guofeng explicitly blamed the Carter administration for creating uncertainty about reunification through its arms sales. According to Hua, "arming Taiwan with military equipment" helped the creation of two Chinas. He further claimed that "the overwhelming majority of people in Taiwan, including a considerable number of military and political officers in the Chiang Ching-kuo government, desire reunification." The U.S. policy just prevented "a quicker and better settlement of [the Taiwan] issue." Therefore, as Hua distinctly expressed, the PRC government could not forgo the use of force since it was "responsible not only for the Chinese people on the mainland but also on Taiwan."⁵⁶⁰ After Deng's more conciliatory words, Hua's open criticism was a warning to the U.S. administration, and a reminder of the constant vigilance of the PRC about the American involvement in the Taiwan Strait. Still, it was a good sign that the Chinese press did not criticize the U.S. position, but instead underlined the common interests of the Chinese and American governments.⁵⁶¹

Brzezinski understood Hua's critique as a kind of ultimatum for Carter: either the president wanted a statement about the peaceful settlement of the Taiwan

⁵⁵⁹ Memcon, Richard Holbrooke, 5/21/78, "China MR-NLC-98-215 [1]" folder, Box 40, Vertical Files, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁵⁶⁰ Memcon, Zbigniew Brzezinski, 5/22/1978, "China (People's Republic of) –Brzezinski's Trip: [5/15/78-5/22/78]" folder, Box 9, Donated Historical Material Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection Subject File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁵⁶¹ "华主席会见布热津斯基博士: 双方就共同关心的问题进行了坦率的交谈" ["Hua Guofeng Meets Brzezinski: Both Sides Have a Common Interest to Have a Frank Discussion about Their Differences"], 人民日报 [People's Daily], 05/23/1978.

issue by Beijing, and the United State would stop selling arms to the island, or the administration would continue the arms sales without obtaining such a statement by the Chinese. In any case, Hua did not question the United States' right to express its own point of view about the settlement of the Taiwan issue.⁵⁶² Nor did he say anything the Carter administration had not known before.

Similar to Cyrus Vance's visit in China, the PRC leadership had allocated different roles to their main representatives. Huang Hua presented China's position and views, and discussed diplomatic and technical matters of the further proceeding. Hua Guofeng played the part of the more critical interlocutor who is not really concerned about the outcome. The most important part fell to Deng Xiaoping who was the frank negotiator. He demonstrated some understanding of the U.S. position but was emphasizing the limits of Beijing's willingness for concessions at the same time. It became obvious that Deng was the one defining the direction the whole process would go. The vice premier also seemed to be more eager to achieve normalization than Hua. The whole Chinese leadership appeared tough but also seriously interested in closer ties between PRC and the United States.⁵⁶³

Setting the Stage for Negotiations

Back in Washington, Brzezinski was convinced his trip had been a success. In his report to Carter, the APNSA talked about new elements he had identified in the Chinese statements concerning normalization and the post-normalization ties between the U.S. and ROC. First of all, thanks to his presentation, the Chinese seemed to believe in the U.S. "willingness and ability to compete with the Soviet Union." This belief enhanced the value the Chinese attached to their relationship with the United States, though such cooperation would not occur without normalization. Second, although he had not talked about it directly, Brzezinski thought Deng and Hua understood the U.S. commitment to having economic and non-

⁵⁶² Cable, Zbigniew Brzezinski to Jimmy Carter, 5/23/1978, "China (People's Republic of) – Brzezinski's Trip: [5/15/78-5/22/78]" folder, Box 9, Donated Historical Material Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection Subject File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁵⁶³ Memo, Zbigniew Brzezinski to Jimmy Carter, 5/25/1978, "China (People's Republic of) – Brzezinski's Trip: [5/15/78-5/22/78]" folder, Box 9, Donated Historical Material Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection Subject File, Jimmy Carter Library.

governmental ties with Taiwan including arms sales.⁵⁶⁴ For Brzezinski, that indicated their understanding of what kind of relations the United States wanted to have with Taiwan in the future. Finally, Brzezinski admitted that despite a basic understanding for Washington's need for a non-contradictory statement about the peaceful solution of the Taiwan question, it was obvious that Beijing was not going to demonstrate restraint on the matter.⁵⁶⁵

The Chinese concessions provided a basis for the upcoming negotiations. Moreover, they appeared very close to the minimum requirements of PRM-24 from a year ago. Since the White House had already confirmed the acceptance of China's three preconditions the chances for failure were minimized but still not eradicated. Brzezinski, hence, concluded: "We are dealing with a capable and tough Chinese leadership but one which seems ready to do business with us."⁵⁶⁶

Brzezinski did not express a particular affection for Deng Xiaoping in his report. He instead addressed Hua Guofeng's behavior and charisma in a very respectful manner. In Brzezinski's opinion the CCP's chairman possessed "the bearing that a Chinese emperor is supposed to possess."⁵⁶⁷ Surprisingly, in his memoirs, the APNSA praises the Chinese vice premier, and not Hua: "...Deng immediately appealed to me. Bright, alert, and shrewd, he was quick on the uptake, with good sense of humor, tough, and very direct. [...] Here was a political leader who knew what he wanted and with whom one could deal."⁵⁶⁸ Despite agreeing with his APNSA's opinion about Deng's character, Carter believed he "had been seduced."⁵⁶⁹

While Brzezinski had not lost sight of U.S. interests during his talks with Deng, he was made part of the Chinese negotiating tactic. As Richard Salomon explains the, PRC leadership had always been eager to find an interlocutor who appeared "helpful to their own objectives and who appeared likely to be 'friendly'." The most important criterion for the Chinese choice was "a broad strategic and political outlook based on distrust of the Soviet Union [...], and easy access to

⁵⁶⁴ Leonard Woodcock agreed with Brzezinski: the Chinese had understood that full U.S.-Taiwan commercial relations included arms sales, too. See: Footnote 8 in: FRUS, 1977-1980, Volume XIII, China (Washington D.C.: United States Printing Office, 2013), 473.

⁵⁶⁵ Memo, Zbigniew Brzezinski to Jimmy Carter, 5/25/1978, "China (People's Republic of) – Brzezinski's Trip: [5/15/78-5/22/78]" folder, Box 9, Donated Historical Material Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection Subject File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁵⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁸ Brzezinski, "Power, 212, 215-216.

⁵⁶⁹ Carter, "Faith", 196, 202.

the president.”⁵⁷⁰ Zhou Enlai had done it with Henry Kissinger in the early 1970s, and Deng did the same with Brzezinski. The more bureaucratic and guarded Cyrus Vance was not suitable for the role as a “Chinese friend”, while the National Security Advisor appeared to PRC leaders not only as an obvious opponent of the Soviet Union but also much more conciliatory toward the Chinese position. An article in the monthly magazine 新华月报 (Xinhua Yuebao) echoed this positive attitude toward Brzezinski, praising his experience in international relations.⁵⁷¹ As the Chinese side was to find out, even Brzezinski’s influence and also his conciliation had their limits but for now the PRC leadership was content with their talks with Brzezinski.

The Chinese approach to signal their eagerness for normalization continued in June. As a report by David Aaron said, the government of the People’s Republic expressed publicly his satisfaction with the talks between members of PRC leaders and the president’s National Security Advisor. Beijing had also abstained from public criticism about U.S. foreign policy. According to the Deputy National Security Advisor, the Chinese leadership even offered some assistance on other foreign policy issues and the Chinese rhetoric about the Taiwan issue appeared softer.⁵⁷² The soft line policy Beijing had started at the beginning of 1978 and which had led to Brzezinski’s trip to China continued. It was clear that the process of normalization had entered a new phase in which both sides tried to avoid friction with each other, while they were finalizing their preparations before the negotiations could start.

In the meantime, the regime in Taipei tried to make the Carter administration aware that it still existed. In a meeting with Ambassador Unger on May 29, newly inaugurated ROC President Chiang Ching-kuo acknowledged the U.S. commitment to Taiwan’s well-being and security but criticized “that in normalizing relations with the Chinese Communists the US does great harm to the ROC and it is an action detrimental to ROC interests.” Nonetheless, the ROC was a loyal “ally of the US, situated in the Asian and Pacific region and dedicated to contributing to

⁵⁷⁰ Solomon, “Behavior”, 59.

⁵⁷¹ “黄华外长举行宴会欢迎美国总统国家安全事务助理布热津斯基博士一行” [“Foreign Minister Huang Hua Hosts a Banquette to Welcome the American President’s National Security Advisor Brzezinski”], 新华月报 [Monthly News], 05/1978.

⁵⁷² Memo, David Aaron to Jimmy Carter, 6/16/1978, “Weekly Reports [to the President], 61-71: [6/78-9/78]” folder, Box 41, Donated Historical Material Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection Subject File, Jimmy Carter Library.

peace and security in this part of the world.” Taipei’s policy toward the United States would not change. The latter aspect convinced Unger that the KMT regime was willing to have continued relations with the United States in any fashion permitted by the U.S. government.⁵⁷³ Since Unger had no knowledge normalization negotiations were to start soon, he could not inform the Taiwanese leader about it. Again, Carter had decided to leave the ROC regime uninformed, deeming the risk of new disturbances too high.

Cyrus Vance had scheduled a meeting with Huang Hua for June 2, 1978. As the Secretary of State intended to inform Huang of the president’s reaction to Brzezinski’s visit in China, Carter wanted Vance also to convey to the Chinese that Ambassador Woodcock would contact the PRC government “to initiate confidential discussions with you [the Chinese] on normalization.”⁵⁷⁴ Vance did as he was ordered, adding on Huang’s request that Woodcock’s presentation would “be covering the whole subject of normalization.” Although the Chinese government welcomed the American suggestion, Huang still warned the U.S. administration not to “dabble in two China’s, one China and one Taiwan.”⁵⁷⁵ Despite Huang’s critical remarks, the time for negotiations had arrived.

Conclusion and Discussion

Although the administration had faced tremendous obstacles at the beginning of Carter’s presidential term in early 1977, it had developed a concise concept for its China policy by mid-1977 and was ready to seriously approach the Chinese concerning the process of U.S.-PRC normalization. Still, National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski was not satisfied with the administration’s China policy desiring a faster, more direct approach on the matter. The first top-level talks between high representatives from the People Republic and Secretary of State Cyrus Vance

⁵⁷³Telegram. Leonard Unger to Richard Holbrooke, “Telegram From the Embassy in the Republic of China to the Department of State”, 05/30/1978 in: FRUS, 1977-1980, Volume XIII, China (Washington D.C.: United States Printing Office, 2013), 474.

⁵⁷⁴Memo, Zbigniew Brzezinski to Jimmy Carter, 5/31/1978, “China (People’s Republic of) 78/2-5” folder, Box 8, NSA Brzezinski Material Country File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁵⁷⁵Memcon. Cyrus Vance, “Secretary’s Meeting with PRC Foreign Minister Huang”, 06/02/1978 in: FRUS, 1977-1980, Volume XIII, China (Washington D.C.: United States Printing Office, 2013), 478-479.

were hence deemed important for the further progress on the matter of normal relations between Washington and Beijing.

Jimmy Carter shared this point of view but was also aware that his administration had to stand its ground concerning the U.S. involvement in the Taiwan Strait. He made clear that Vance should convey to the Chinese that despite a general willingness to accept China's preconditions for the beginning of negotiations about normalization, the U.S. executive intended to maintain some sort of security relationship with Taiwan after the withdrawal of all U.S. troops on the island, the termination of the Mutual Defense Treaty and the diplomatic derecognition of the regime in Taipei.

When Vance stated Carter's intention in his talks with Huang Hua, Deng Xiaoping, and Hua Guofeng, the Chinese reaction was dismissive. They interpreted the U.S. proposal as a setback for all efforts to normalize Sino-American relations. This view was emphasized publicly when Deng Xiaoping gave an interview to American journalists, harshly criticizing Vance's proposal.

Deng's public reaction leads many authors like Ralph Berger and Hao Yufang to the perception that the Secretary of State's trip to China had been a complete failure since he did not achieve any progress on the matter of normalization.⁵⁷⁶ Such a view is shortsighted. The Secretary of State's visit manifested a probe rather than a real effort to start a negotiating process. The political window for normalization had always been more favorable in late 1978 than in mid- and late 1977. Vance's lack of success in Beijing had more to do with China's principles than with his approach. It was neither the first nor the last time that the Chinese repelled U.S. attempts to gain concessions concerning U.S.-Taiwan post-normalization ties.

According to the former U.S. diplomat and expert for East Asia Alan Romberg, the White House had to present its maximum position at least once to the PRC although there was almost no chance to succeed.⁵⁷⁷ The strategy to propose a maximum demand served the legitimation of Carter's China policy at home. Vance's proposal was also necessary to make the Chinese aware of Washington's own requirements for normalization. As the Chinese political scientist Li Gong

⁵⁷⁶ Berger, "Normalisierung", 423-424; Hao, "Dilemma", 76, 79.

⁵⁷⁷ Romberg, "Brink", 80-81.

argues both sides had to learn about each other's bottom line position.⁵⁷⁸ Cyrus Vance's far reaching proposal served exactly this purpose, and even Deng Xiaoping admitted that the talks with the U.S Secretary of State helped both sides to gain a better understanding of each other's position.⁵⁷⁹ Therefore, Vance's presentation was not, as Robert Ross claims, an attempt "to buy time" in order to postpone any serious negotiations about normalization until a more appropriate time.⁵⁸⁰ The archival record clearly demonstrates that although Carter and his aides did not expect the Chinese to make any far reaching concessions, the White House aimed to achieve progress on the matter of normalization as soon as possible. It just did not want to give up its own conditions.

Still, Beijing's reserved public reaction to Vance's visit urged the Carter administration to double its effort to demonstrate its seriousness and good will to the Chinese. PRC officials were also keen to show publicly that China's interest in further progress on normalization had not diminished. The climax of this development occurred when Beijing invited Brzezinski to visit China for high level talks in spring 1978. The White House jumped at the chance to bring a new dynamic to the normalization process although Brzezinski's intention to travel to Beijing led to some objections from the State Department. However, Carter was confident that his National Security Advisor was up to the task and permitted Brzezinski to go.

Patrick Tyler argues Carter's decision demonstrated that Brzezinski dominated the administration's China policy, but this is not true.⁵⁸¹ In fact, Carter had other plans for Vance. As he explains in his memoirs, one month before Brzezinski's trip, he sent the Secretary of State to Moscow in order to demonstrate his administration's willingness to improve its relations with both, China and the Soviet Union.⁵⁸² It was a cunning move that did not only prevent Vance from feeling downgraded but also demonstrated to the Chinese that the USA did not need Beijing to cope with the Soviets.

In the end, Carter granted Brzezinski considerable leeway in order to convince the Chinese that his administration was ready to move towards normalization. The APNSA should indicate that negotiations could begin as soon as possible.

⁵⁷⁸Gong, "Path", 135.

⁵⁷⁹ Report, The Associated Press, Untitled, 06/09/1977 (accessed via Nexis, 01/21/2014).

⁵⁸⁰ Ross, "Relations", 89.

⁵⁸¹ Tyler, "Wall", 249.

⁵⁸² Carter, "Faith", 194.

However, the archival record also shows that no member of the Carter administration was willing to risk Taiwan's security for the sake of normal relations with the People's Republic –not even Brzezinski. Although the Chinese rejected the American demands for concessions on the matter, Deng Xiaoping indicated some understanding for the Carter administration's needs in this context. He understood that the U.S. president needed the support of the U.S. public and Congress in order to implement normalization successfully.

It was not much of a reconciliation, but it was considerably more than any U.S. administration had ever gotten before from a PRC leader. This gesture led Brzezinski and other U.S. officials to believe that Deng was their most important interlocutor concerning normalization. He was the man who would make the final decisions in the upcoming negotiation process.

A comparison between Vance's and Brzezinski's China trip suggests that the latter brought more visible results and was also more important for the further development of the normalization process. This is underlined by the fact, that only several weeks after the National Security Advisor had left Beijing, U.S. Ambassador Leonard Woodcock started negotiating with the Chinese. However, such a view underestimates the process-like character of normalization. The historical development of the relationship between Washington and Beijing was characterized by highs and lows, rapprochement and alienation, stagnation and progress. On this scale, Vance's visit does not even represent an extreme on this scale, although it did not improve the atmosphere of the relationship while Brzezinski's visit laid the basis for further progress in the normalization process.

The U.S. and PRC governments had always struggled to stabilize their relationship, and the reason for this problem was their different interests on the Taiwan issue. Nonetheless, neither the Americans nor the Chinese had ever ceased to work on their relationship. In fact, Vance had not presented a line of argument to the Chinese that was fundamentally different from the one of Brzezinski. Without Vance's visit and his straightforward presentation of Washington's requirements for normalization, it would have been Brzezinski who would have faced the Chinese leader's opposition when confronting them with the U.S. administration's point of view.

There are four reasons why the Chinese accepted Brzezinski's proposal instead of Vance's. First, the Chinese leaders realized that the Carter administration would insist on a security relation with Taipei. If the PRC government aimed to soften this position, it could only do so via real negotiations. Second, while Vance's proposal had indicated some kind of government-to-government relations between the United States and Taiwan, Brzezinski's presentation did not include such a point anymore. Although the APNSA had used a relatively vague language to describe the U.S. intentions, everything he said had the character of non-governmental relations between Washington and Taipei. Hence, Beijing could accept his proposal. Third, the Chinese could not risk "losing" the Americans. They needed them in order to counterbalance the Soviet influence in Asia. Thus, the Chinese realized that they had to make at least some concessions.

The most important reason for the change of Beijing's attitude was that the PRC leadership around Hua Guofeng and Deng Xiaoping had consolidated its power. Vance's visit came only a few days after the 11th Party Congress of the CCP, when Deng had just been reinstated in his previous posts, still struggling for power. As Harry Harding argues, Deng's political position at this time was not strong enough in order to make any concessions to the Americans. He could not afford to appear weak on a matter of principle for the Chinese.⁵⁸³ When Brzezinski came to Beijing, Deng was sufficiently established within the PRC leadership and strong enough to be more accommodating. Deng's stable position and his believe that the PRC needed the United States to modernize its economy would help the upcoming negotiations about normalization.

⁵⁸³ Harding, "Relationship", 74.

Chapter V: Negotiating Normalization, June 1978- December 1978

The period between August 1977 and May 1978 was decisive for the relation between the Carter administration and the PRC leadership. Two visits by high officials from Washington in China, Vance and Brzezinski, helped both sides to convey their respective positions to each other. The Chinese and Americans agreed that normalization was highly desirable, but were in obvious disagreement about the Taiwan issue. The PRC government insisted that the U.S. administration may only maintain unofficial relations with the people in Taiwan. The United States wanted to continue arms sales to Taiwan after normalization, which was difficult to accept for the Chinese. In spite of this disagreement, both countries entered actual negotiations about normalization.

President Carter instructed the chief of the U.S. liaison office in China, Ambassador Leonard Woodcock, to conduct these negotiations. The PRC was mainly represented by foreign minister Huang Hua, although it was Deng Xiaoping who finalized the normalization agreement in the decisive period of the negotiations. All sessions were held in Beijing to provide secrecy. It did not take long until different notions about the future relationship between the United States and Taiwan became a problem. The Chinese tried to convince the Americans that their involvement in the Taiwan Strait made a peaceful settlement of the Taiwan issue more difficult. The Carter administration, on the other hand, conveyed to the Chinese that the United States had to remain involved in the Taiwan issue in order to prevent domestic opposition to normalization. The U.S. position endangered the success of the entire process.⁵⁸⁴

This chapter describes the negotiations between the Chinese and Americans about normalization, and the problems both sides faced before they reached an agreement. It also explains why the PRC finally accepted continuing U.S. arms sales to Taiwan, and why, as I am going to argue, this Chinese concession made the Carter administration the “winner” of the negotiations. Although both sides had very precise notions about the other side’s bottom line position concerning the

⁵⁸⁴ Memcon, Zbigniew Brzezinski, 12/15/1978, “China MR-NLC-98-215 (4)” folder, Box 41, Vertical Files, Jimmy Carter Library.

Taiwan issue, their different views and particularly the Carter administration insistence to sell arms to Taiwan after normalization put the negotiations at risk. In my opinion, it was the Carter administration's tenacity to maintain a security relationship with Taiwan and the threat to let the negotiations otherwise fail that forced Deng to postpone any discussion about U.S. arms sales to Taiwan to the time after normalization.

The negotiations which were conducted between July 5 and December 15 were rather uneventful at the early stage. Both sides wanted their talks to gain some momentum before they started discussing matters of dissent. Hence, the first two sessions in July served to set the agenda of the actual negotiations. Then both sides presented their respective positions. The U.S. government's implementation of the three preconditions concerning Taiwan (severance of diplomatic relations with the ROC regime, termination of the MDT, and the withdrawal of all U.S. troops from Taiwan) was of particular interest for the Chinese.

The meetings between Woodcock and different Chinese officials in Beijing were paralleled by some meetings of U.S. officials with representatives from the Chinese liaison office in Washington. These talks were an important part of the U.S. executive's strategy to convey its position about the future of U.S.-Taiwan relations. As we will see, these meetings served the Carter administration as complement to the negotiations in the Chinese capital, since they allowed U.S. officials including the president himself to be more candid about the administration's intentions concerning Taiwan.

The Taiwan issue remained the most contentious point between Washington and Beijing. It did not take long until both sides spoke mainly about this problem – in Beijing and Washington. Other differences were not going to play a prominent role in the normalization negotiations. The disagreement arose from the U.S. plans to continue its arms sales to Taiwan beyond normalization. The PRC leadership argued Washington's intentions would make a peaceful solution of the Taiwan issue more difficult. According to Deng Xiaoping, the continuation of arms sales to Taiwan would allow the ROC regime to reject talks with the PRC government. He

saw the U.S. administration's insistence on arms sales as a contradiction to the American interest in a peaceful settlement of the Taiwan issue.⁵⁸⁵

The PRC's complaints about the U.S. side's intention did not change President Carter's plans and his commitment to guarantee the security of Taiwan. Still, both sides reached an agreement about normalization on December 13, though some details like the exact wording of the joint communiqué had not been discussed yet. It certainly helped that the Carter administration accommodated the Chinese when they agreed not to conclude any new contracts about arms sales with Taiwan during the one year when the MDT would lapse in accordance with its Article 10.⁵⁸⁶ However, the Chinese side interpreted these concessions in a way that the U.S. administration would completely stop the sales of military equipment to Taiwan after normalization.

This misunderstanding which surfaced on December 15 led to panic actions on both sides in the following hours. The announcement of normalization was planned for the evening that same day. Any delay would embarrass Washington and Beijing. Still, the situation also demonstrated Carter's adamant will to maintain a security relationship with Taiwan because the White House was not willing to change its position. Woodcock was therefore instructed to meet Deng in the afternoon in order to explain the American position that the country would only abstain from new arms sales to Taiwan for the year of 1979. After this period of time, the United States insisted to resume the provision of military equipment to the ROC regime. As different officials of the Carter administration had previously stated to their Chinese counterparts, the U.S. public would not otherwise approve normalization. The success of normalization relied on the last minute session between Woodcock and Deng to solve the problem.

The Chinese vice premier was a shrewd and pragmatic tactician. Knowing the Americans would not budge on the arms sales issue, he relented to the U.S. position. Normalization served the PRC to gain a stronger position vis-à-vis the

⁵⁸⁵ Cable, "Full Transcript of December 15 Meeting with Teng", Leonard Woodcock to Cyrus Vance/Zbigniew Brzezinski, 12/15/1978, "China, [People's Republic of] – Normalization: 11/20/78-12/18/78]" folder, Box 9, Donated Historical Material Zbigniew Brzezinski Geographic File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁵⁸⁶ Article 10 of the MDT allows both sides to terminate the treaty with one year notice. See: Taiwan Document Project, "Mutual Defense Treaty between the United States of America and the Republic of China", 12/2/1954, <http://www.taiwandocuments.org/mutual01.htm> (accessed: 03/08/2014).

Soviet Union, and Deng deemed the price for this achievement worth, even if it meant the continuation of U.S. arms sales to Taiwan. While Deng still criticized the American position harshly, he made the final concession during his meeting with Ambassador Woodcock, by suggesting postponing any further discussions about arms sales to the time after normalization. Normalization had grown into an important aspect of Deng's reform strategy. He believed better relations with Washington were critical for the Chinese security because it put pressure on the Soviet Union. His concession at the negotiation talks removed the final obstacle, and within a few hours, normalization of Sino-American relations was announced to the world.

The Definition of the Negotiation Framework

After the Carter administration had made the decision to open negotiations with the Chinese, it had to consider its approach. This process started with a Cyrus Vance memorandum for Carter that pointed out the major issues for the upcoming negotiations and their desired result. Vance identified different assignments they had to accomplish. The administration had to work out how it wanted to conduct its future relations with Taiwan. Carter suggested the U.S. representation on Taiwan could be an "interest section", a "trade mission", or a "military mission" something similar to "what we have now with [the] PRC." Vance also pointed out that the administration had to prepare its public statement about a peaceful settlement of the Taiwan issue while also making sure that the PRC would not contradict such a statement. Finally, the Secretary of State argued the administration had to state to the Congress that arms sales to Taiwan would continue without provoking "a public counterattack from Peking."⁵⁸⁷ As Carter's handwritten comments in the memorandum implicate, he expected the Chinese to accept future U.S.-Taiwan trade with "no restraint [...] not single out arms or any other item."⁵⁸⁸

⁵⁸⁷ Memo, Cyrus Vance to Jimmy Carter, 6/13/1978, "China, [People's Republic of – Normalization: 1/24/78-11/10/78]" folder, Box 9, Donated Historical Material Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection Geographic File, Jimmy Carter Library. This document includes handwritten notes by Carter.

⁵⁸⁸ Handwritten notes by Carter, see: *ibid.*

This position was tested a few days later when Chinese Ambassador Han Xu expressed his government's concerns about possible sales of the F-4 fighter aircraft to Taiwan. In accordance with Carter's position, Brzezinski replied that the White House's acceptance of the Chinese three conditions for normalization would not exclude full economic relations between the United States and Taiwan.⁵⁸⁹ The administration used the potential opposition to normalization by U.S. Congress, the U.S. public, and U.S. allies to divert the PRC's attempts to put pressure on the White House. Without the occasional demonstrations of support for Taiwan, the Carter administration had no chance to find domestic approval for normalization. U.S. arms sales to the island served this purpose.

A topic of disagreement between the president and his Secretary of State arose from the question of when the administration would inform U.S. Congress, Japan and Taiwan about its intentions to conclude normalization with the PRC. While Vance suggested "[c]onsultation with the Congressional leadership at appropriate times; and [n]otification to President Chiang and Japanese Premier Fukuda about three weeks before the announcement", the president did not agree, urging Vance to be careful.⁵⁹⁰ Instead, Carter wanted to delay the involvement of Congress as long as possible. Only a small group should be involved because, according to the president himself, "[l]eaks can kill the whole effort." His anxieties also included governmental agencies -even the White House. In the end, he ordered that neither Vance nor other members of the administration were allowed to give "public hints of the degree of progress" of the normalization process.⁵⁹¹ This attitude proved Carter's growing anxiety that anyone could spoil his China initiative.

Carter's decision to keep the normalization negotiations secret proved to be his biggest mistake in the whole process. He ignored the Congress' legislation (the Dole-Stone Amendment) on the matter, alienating many people on Capitol Hill. Moreover, the president's refusal to inform Taipei or other U.S. allies of the outcome of the negotiations with Beijing affected America's credibility as an allied

⁵⁸⁹ Memcon, Zbigniew Brzezinski, 6/19/1978, "China, [People's Republic of – Normalization: 1/24/78-11/10/78]" folder, Box 9, Donated Historical Material Zbigniew Brzezinski Geographic Subject File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁵⁹⁰ This document includes handwritten notes by Carter, see: memo, Cyrus Vance to Jimmy Carter, 6/13/1978, "China, [People's Republic of – Normalization: 1/24/78-11/10/78]" folder, Box 9, Donated Historical Material Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection Geographic File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁵⁹¹ *Ibid.*

nation.⁵⁹² The United States did not lose any partners due to this behavior, but U.S. credibility still suffered in East Asia. Additionally, Carter's secrecy made Congress and the ROC regime question the administration's efforts to maintain a security relationship with Taiwan although these efforts enraged the Chinese and risked the success of the whole normalization process. On the contrary, as we will see in the next chapter, in the aftermath of normalization, Carter had to face heavy opposition from the U.S. public, Congress, and some of America's most trusted allies in Asia.

The president's response to Vance's memorandum also clarified his minimum requirements concerning Taiwan, underlining that despite all efforts to leave Taipei in the dark the ROC's security still mattered for Carter. The White House remained committed to the island, but had to accommodate the mainland in order to bring the negotiations to a successful ending. Probably for this reason, Carter agreed with Brzezinski on some changes in the instructions for Ambassador Woodcock who should approach the Chinese government for a meeting to start the actual negotiations. Brzezinski thought the administration should be more restrained about the question of the peaceful settlement of the Taiwan issue, avoiding the impression of "an explicit condition which [...] the Chinese might feel compelled to refuse out of hand."⁵⁹³ The negotiations should first begin and gain momentum before both sides would discuss matters of dispute.

On June 22, Woodcock was instructed to set up a meeting with PRC foreign minister Huang Hua. His instructions did not demand a full presentation of the U.S. position towards normalization, but outlined the further proceeding of negotiations.⁵⁹⁴ They also said that normalization including a joint communiqué was to be achieved until mid-December. Woodcock should convey to the PRC leadership that, due to this timeframe, Washington proposed an intensive negotiating process to follow with meetings every two weeks. The Chinese side should answer as soon as possible after each single issue between the two sides had been presented by

⁵⁹² The Dole-Stone Amendment demanded the U.S. executive to consult with the Congress in the event of any changes concerning the U.S.-ROC defense treaty (Lee, "Making", 39-40).

⁵⁹³ Memo, Zbigniew Brzezinski to Jimmy Carter, undated, "China, [People's Republic of – Normalization: 1/24/78-11/10/78]" folder, Box 9, Donated Historical Material Zbigniew Brzezinski Geographic File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁵⁹⁴ Cable, Cyrus Vance to Leonard Woodcock, 6/22/1978, "China, [People's Republic of] – Alpha Channel: [2/72-11/78]" folder, Box 9, Donated Historical Material Zbigniew Brzezinski Geographic File, Jimmy Carter Library.

Woodcock. The U.S. would “prefer that there be maintained a mutual exchange, with equivalent responsibility on both sides for sustained progress.”⁵⁹⁵

The American presentation was not to name the U.S. interest in a peaceful settlement of the Taiwan issue and the intention to continue U.S. arms sales to Taiwan. The presentation avoided any language which could provoke the Chinese. The ambassador was only to emphasize the necessity to reach an understanding on these issues since both sides needed to discuss “[t]he nature of the post-normalization American presence on Taiwan”, the Chinese and American unilateral statements about normalization, U.S.-Taiwan trade relations, and the wording of a “joint communiqué and the modalities of normalization.”⁵⁹⁶

The Chinese government responded to Woodcock’s request within a few days.⁵⁹⁷ On July 5, the first round of discussions about normalization took place. As Woodcock reported, Huang replied to the American proposal mostly with the same phrases that had outlined the Chinese position in all high level meetings before. Still, the U.S. ambassador felt the Chinese took his presentation seriously since they did not challenge the American statement that Washington would hope the Taiwan issue would be solved peacefully.⁵⁹⁸ The Chinese reaction to Woodcock’s proposal demonstrated that the Chinese leadership shared the White House’s idea that the negotiations should gain momentum before their different views would spoil the process beyond repair.

The next meeting, on July 14, served the definition of the negotiation framework. Huang demanded the U.S. side to explain how it would seek the fulfillment of the three Chinese preconditions. Otherwise, both sides could not finalize the timetable for further negotiations. In addition, the foreign minister said his government preferred to schedule each meeting individually because that way both sides could respond easier to the progress of the negotiations. It was an attempt to put pressure on Washington because it allowed the Chinese to postpone any meet-

⁵⁹⁵ Cable, Cyrus Vance to Leonard Woodcock, 6/25/1978, “China, [People’s Republic of] – Alpha Channel: [2/72-11/78]” folder, Box 9, Donated Historical Material Zbigniew Brzezinski Geographic File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁵⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁹⁷ Cable, Leonard Woodcock to Cyrus Vance, 6/29/1978, “China, [People’s Republic of] – Alpha Channel: [2/72-11/78]” folder, Box 9, Donated Historical Material Zbigniew Brzezinski Geographic File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁵⁹⁸ Cable, Leonard Woodcock to White House, 7/5/1978, “China, [People’s Republic of] – Alpha Channel: [2/72-11/78]” folder, Box 9, Donated Historical Material Zbigniew Brzezinski Geographic File, Jimmy Carter Library.

ings if the Americans pursued a course of action that did not meet Chinese expectations. Woodcock tried to change Huang's mind, arguing both sides had already expressed agreement on the Chinese preconditions, but the foreign minister insisted on his view. The U.S. ambassador was convinced that "the Chinese do not wish to deal with the issues one at a time but preferred to have us lay all of our cards on the table at once."⁵⁹⁹ Gong Li explains the PRC government's approach as means to gain time in order to develop its own strategy, while also staying as flexible as possible.⁶⁰⁰ It also served to put pressure on the U.S. side. If the White House wanted the negotiations to proceed, it really had to show its hand.

Approaching the Taiwan Issue

The actual negotiation started with Woodcock's and Huang's third meeting on August 3, 1978. The president's instructions for Woodcock said that Washington would honor its commitment to Beijing's preconditions. However, they also stated that U.S. foreign policy and U.S. relations with China were subject to the rule of law and constitutional constraints. Therefore Washington had to consider certain historical circumstances as well as the stability in East Asia, which would be closely related to American credibility: "[W]e [the U.S.] must provide for our post-normalization presence on Taiwan by taking into account American complexities and international realities." Beijing had to accept the Carter administration underlying a different rule to legitimize its policy than the CCP regime. While Deng and the other PRC leaders who supported normalization had only to convince a small group of high ranked officials within China's bureaucratic and military apparatus, the White House needed Congressional and public support if it wanted to pursue other political goals in other areas; being reelected in the future was certainly another concern for the president in this context.

Since the U.S. side did not want to provoke the PRC, Woodcock's instructions also conceded that the American cultural, scientific and commercial relations

⁵⁹⁹ Cable, Leonard Woodcock to White House, 7/14/1978, "China, [People's Republic of] – Alpha Channel: [2/72-11/78]" folder, Box 9, Donated Historical Material Zbigniew Brzezinski Geographic File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁶⁰⁰Gong, "Path", 138.

with Taiwan would continue on a non-governmental basis without official representation and formal governmental contacts. Woodcock should also explain to Huang that the organization which would manage U.S.-Taiwan relations after de-recognition would not have an official or diplomatic status, but would receive governmental funds and have contacts to the U.S. executive in order to fulfill some of its technical and bureaucratic assignments.⁶⁰¹ All these points indicated that the Carter administration had given up its desire for any special relationship with Taiwan, and was willing to settle for the *Japanese formula*.

The Carter administration still pursued its new approach that the negotiations in Beijing should make progress before delicate matters came up. Thus, the White House instructed Woodcock not to reply to any questions from the Chinese about the MDT. American top officials and Chinese representatives would privately discuss any kind of unexpected problems in Washington. These meetings worked complementary to Woodcock's presentation in Beijing. On September 7, Richard Holbrooke met Han Xu, the deputy chief of the PRC liaison office, to discuss the issue of American arms sales to Taiwan.

At the beginning of the meeting, Han expressed his concerns about newspaper reports saying the United States was planning to sell arms to the island. Holbrooke confirmed these reports, emphasizing that the United States would only sell defensive weapons to Taiwan. He added the U.S. administration had already turned down many requests from Taipei to honor U.S. agreements with China. Subsequently, he stressed the meaning of America's global credibility. The United States intended to have full commercial relations with Taiwan. This included selling defensive weapons to the island, although the USA would do so with restraint and discretion. Such actions would not diminish the seriousness of President Carter's pursuit of normalization. Any actions by the Carter administration were in accordance with the Shanghai Communiqué, and the White House's willingness to accomplish China's three preconditions. This approach was inevitable for the administration, as Holbrooke put it: "My response to you today is an objective state-

⁶⁰¹ Cable, White House to Leonard Woodcock, 8/4/1978, "China, [People's Republic of] – Alpha Channel: [2/72-11/78]" folder, Box 9, Donated Historical Material Zbigniew Brzezinski Geographic File, Jimmy Carter Library.

ment of certain realities with which the administration must deal if our efforts to complete normalization in the near future are to succeed.”⁶⁰²

Han responded that continued arms sales violated the spirit of the Shanghai Communiqué and made normalization more difficult.⁶⁰³ The PRC government interpreted the American intentions as the continuation of intervening in Chinese internal affairs.⁶⁰⁴ By contrast, the impression among U.S. officials was that the arms sales to Taiwan did not endanger the normalization negotiations.⁶⁰⁵ Oksenberg believed Holbrooke’s statement to Han Xu to be of utmost importance for future discussion about the issue. If the Chinese accepted the American desire to have full commercial relations with Taiwan including selected arms sales, the likelihood for successful negotiations about normalization would increase.⁶⁰⁶

It was a clever move to use Holbrooke to introduce the arms sales problem to Chinese officials in Washington, while Woodcock talked about common interests in the bilateral relationship, not damaging his and other U.S. official’s positive image. This indirect approach also gave the Chinese enough time to realize how serious the Carter administration was about its intentions to continue U.S. arms sales to Taiwan. Since Han Xu possessed a rather low rank within the Chinese bureaucracy, he had to report this information to his superiors in Beijing. That made a direct rejection impossible, preventing the Chinese and Americans from quarreling about the issue. According to Ralph Berger, it also helped the United States that the strategic situation of the People’s Republic deteriorated due to increasing frictions with Vietnam during that period of time.⁶⁰⁷

The American frankness concerning its intentions about U.S. post-normalization relations with Taiwan was also a signal that also controversial topics should now become a part of the negotiations in Beijing. Woodcock’s new instructions for the next round of meetings in mid-September reflected this approach. The

⁶⁰² Memcon, Richard Holbrooke, 9/7/1978, “China, MR-NLC-98-214 [1]” folder, Box 40, Vertical Files, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁶⁰³ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁴ Memo, Michel Oksenberg to Zbigniew Brzezinski, 9/12/1978, “China MR-NLC-98-215 (3)” folder, Box 41, Vertical Files, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁶⁰⁵ Handwritten notes on page 5, see: memcon, Zbigniew Brzezinski, 9/19/1978, “China MR-NLC-98-215 (3)” folder, Box 41, Vertical Files, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁶⁰⁶ Memo, Michel Oksenberg to Zbigniew Brzezinski, 9/6/1978, “China MR-NLC-98-215 (3)” folder, Box 41, Vertical Files, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁶⁰⁷ Berger, “Normalisierung”, 453-455. For more details about the Sino-Vietnamese border dispute, see: Ramses Amer, “Assessing Sino-Vietnamese Relations through the Management of Contentious Issues” in: *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol. 26, No. 2 (August 2004), 323-326.

ambassador was instructed to reveal to PRC officials that the U.S. unilateral statement after the announcement of normalization would include the expression of the U.S. interest in a peaceful solution of the Taiwan issue. The statement would also point out that despite cutting all official ties with Taiwan including the termination of the MDT, the United States would maintain some sort of informal relationship with the island. These relations would not include government-to-government contacts.⁶⁰⁸ Woodcock's presentation reiterated the bottom line of the Carter administration's position concerning the Taiwan issue, and the administration made sure that the Chinese were aware of them.

Only a few days after Woodcock had conveyed this position to Huang Hua, President Carter reaffirmed his administration's approach in a meeting with PRC liaison office director Chai Zemin. Beforehand, Brzezinski explained to Carter the delicate state of Sino-American negotiations. Carter had to repeat that the Chinese "must be prepared to tolerate continued U.S. arms sales to Taiwan and must not contradict our statement that we are confident the Taiwan issue would be settled peacefully by the Chinese themselves." Otherwise, it was impossible for the Carter administration to agree to normalization "within the framework of their three points [preconditions]."⁶⁰⁹ Brzezinski's words indicated that the Chinese had to understand that Carter could not pursue normalization if he was unable to legitimize it in the United States. The APNSA's urgency also underlines my argument of how important this matter was for the administration.

The president's statement about his administration's intentions held a special meaning. It demonstrated to the Chinese who highly value hierarchy that the United States was serious about not abandoning Taiwan. Even if normalization had its price, there existed a limit for Washington's readiness to accommodate the mainland, and Carter made this clear when he met Chai. In return for the U.S. acceptance of China's three preconditions, the USA expected the PRC "to honor the need of the United States to demonstrate its dependability, credibility, integrity, and resolve as we [the U.S.] change our relations with Taiwan and change our relations with the People's Republic of China." Carter also remarked that the United

⁶⁰⁸ Cable, Zbigniew Brzezinski/Cyrus Vance to Leonard Woodcock, 9/5/1978, "China, [People's Republic of] – Alpha Channel: [2/72-11/78]" folder, Box 9, Donated Historical Material Zbigniew Brzezinski Geographic File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁶⁰⁹ Memo, Zbigniew Brzezinski to Jimmy Carter, 9/11/1978, "China MR-NLC-98-215 (3)" folder, Box 41, Vertical Files, Jimmy Carter Library.

States “will continue to trade with Taiwan including the restrained sale of some very carefully selected defensive arms [...]”⁶¹⁰ This was the climax of the president’s personal tenacity on the matter of Taiwan’s security and U.S. arms sale. This time, it was not one of his advisors who conveyed the U.S. position about arms sales but the president himself who made the bottom line position of the United States clear.

In his statement to Chai, Carter was more frank and direct concerning the U.S. intentions to maintain involved in Taiwan’s security than ever before. He also exemplified which concessions the Chinese had to make. Brzezinski confirmed this view in a report to Carter, emphasizing that “[n]ever before has our [the Carter administration’s] bottom line been as clearly spelled out...”⁶¹¹ Since early 1977, Beijing had used Washington’s desire for normalization against the U.S., leaving it to the Americans to make concessions and to accept Chinese positions without further argument, but now it was the PRC leadership who had to decide how much normalization was worth to them.

In order to avoid frictions between the American and the Chinese government that could lead to a stalemate in the negotiations, Carter virtually “blamed” domestic reasons for his administration’s continuing commitment to Taiwan: “The political realities –particularly the U.S. domestic political situation which arises out of our long association with Taiwan- require that difficult issue be dealt with separately [sic] by you and by us.”⁶¹² The president also implied that without the United States as its protector, Taiwan could seek Soviet support or develop nuclear arms in order to bolster its own security.⁶¹³ That was something the Chinese wanted to prevent under any circumstances although, as we will see, they did not see this problem as a reason for a continued involvement of the United States in the Taiwan issue.

⁶¹⁰ Cable, Richard Holbrooke/Michel Oksenberg to Leonard Woodcock, 10/23/1978, “China, [People’s Republic of] – Alpha Channel: [2/72-11/78]” folder, Box 9, Donated Historical Material Zbigniew Brzezinski Geographic File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁶¹¹ Memo, Zbigniew Brzezinski to Jimmy Carter, 9/11/1978, “China MR-NLC-98-215 (3)” folder, Box 41, Vertical Files, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁶¹² Cable, Richard Holbrooke/Michel Oksenberg to Leonard Woodcock, 10/23/1978, “China, [People’s Republic of] – Alpha Channel: [2/72-11/78]” folder, Box 9, Donated Historical Material Zbigniew Brzezinski Geographic File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁶¹³ Memcon, Zbigniew Brzezinski, 9/19/78, “China, [People’s Republic of] – Normalization: 12/18/78-12/31/78]” folder, Box 9, Donated Historical Material Zbigniew Brzezinski Geographic File, Jimmy Carter Library.

The Chinese desired normalization with the United States because it was an important part of their foreign policy strategy. As Brzezinski pointed out in a memorandum to Carter, Beijing attempted to create an anti-Soviet front, and the CCP regime wanted normalization therefore to happen as soon as possible.⁶¹⁴ The National Security Advisor observed that since the second half of 1978, the People's Republic had conducted a more active diplomacy in Asia trying to gain access to modern technology, but also to counter Soviet influence in the region. In his opinion, Beijing's activities could only help the Carter administration's normalization efforts as it demonstrated their eagerness for closer relations with the United States and its allies.⁶¹⁵ For this reason, Brzezinski writes in his memoirs that Carter's meeting with Chai was very significant. In spite of his frankness about U.S. intentions concerning Taiwan, the meeting served as the final hint for Beijing that the White House was serious about normalization.⁶¹⁶

Indeed, Chinese officials had already signaled distinctly on different occasions that progress of normalization was too slow because the U.S. side did not change its position about Taiwan. First, Chai Zemin complained to Brzezinski that the U.S. administration had not gone far enough to accomplish the PRC's preconditions.⁶¹⁷ Later in a meeting with Cyrus Vance, Huang Hua characterized the current proposal of the Carter administration for normalization as disappointing, since Washington would not "[...] make a clear statement on the crucial issues" between the two countries. The foreign minister wanted to know when and how the Americans would "implement the severance of diplomatic relations [with Taiwan], the withdrawal of troops, and the abrogation of the Defense Treaty." In Huang's opinion, the "new" American position would not be different from its former one. He firmly reiterated the meaning of the Taiwan issue as a matter of principle and an

⁶¹⁴ Memo, Zbigniew Brzezinski to Jimmy Carter, 9/1/1978, "Weekly Reports [to the President], 61-71: [6/78-9/78]" folder, Box 41, Donated Historical Material Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection Subject File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁶¹⁵ This document includes handwritten notes by Carter, see: memo, Zbigniew Brzezinski to Jimmy Carter, 10/13/1978, "Weekly Reports [to the President], 71-81: [9/78-12/78]" folder, Box 42, Donated Historical Material Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection Subject File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁶¹⁶ Brzezinski, "Power", 229.

⁶¹⁷ Memcon, Zbigniew Brzezinski, 9/27/78, "China MR-NLC-98-215 (3)" folder, Box 41, Vertical Files, Jimmy Carter Library.

internal affair. Therefore, as the foreign minister pointed out to Vance, the *Japanese formula* represented a far reaching concession for the PRC government.⁶¹⁸

After Carter had repeated the U.S. position concerning the Taiwan issue and future U.S.-Taiwan relations, Chai's and Huang's remarks demonstrated a last diplomatic effort to change the American posture. Carter and his aides had to realize that Chinese critique about the American commitment to Taiwan's security would never cease for the simple reason that the Chinese officials had to save their face. Although they had always claimed that the Soviet factor was much more important for the development of Sino-American relations, the PRC leaders were not able to leave the Taiwan issue aside. Doing so would weaken the PRC's leadership's position at home, costing vast political resources. Political opponents would accuse Hua Guofeng and Deng Xiaoping to sell out Chinese interests since Taiwan was indeed a matter of national principle for the Chinese people. This confirms Thomas Christensen's thesis that also authoritarian regimes have to legitimize their decisions vis-à-vis domestic political opponents.⁶¹⁹

Additionally, China did not want any American long-term involvement in the Taiwan Strait. Here, two historical experiences had an impact on the CCP regime's attitude. First, the de-facto loss of China's sovereignty and territorial integrity during the age of imperialism was still in the minds of the Chinese people and their leaders, fueling Chinese nationalism. The PRC government was afraid that a foreign power's intervention in internal Chinese affairs would weaken the country in the long-term. Second, the Taiwan Strait crises of the 1950s had demonstrated that the U.S. would never allow the PLA to invade Taiwan, and the Chinese leadership assumed that Taipei would never negotiate with Beijing if the U.S. protected the island. If the CCP regime was ever to achieve reunification, the U.S. engagement in the Taiwan Strait had to end.

Still, as the protocols of meetings between U.S. and PRC officials at this time suggest, the People's Republic realized that it lacked leverage. Hence, the normalization negotiations were not the right place to keep the United States out of the Taiwan Strait. The Carter administration was not going to make a sudden

⁶¹⁸ Cable, Richard Holbrooke/Mike Oksenberg to Leonard Woodcock, 10/19/1978, "China, [People's Republic of] – Alpha Channel: [2/72-11/78]" folder, Box 9, Donated Historical Material Zbigniew Brzezinski Geographic File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁶¹⁹ Christensen, "Adversaries", 20-22.

change of a position, which it had held since the beginning of the discussions about normalization. This realization and the traditional Chinese patience caused the PRC not to threaten stopping the negotiations if the Carter administration would not change its position concerning Taiwan.

Negotiating the Joint Communiqué

After Carter had revealed his minimum conditions concerning the Taiwan issue, the negotiations slowed down in the fall of 1978. The Chinese leaders had to find new ways to put pressure on the U.S. side. That was the moment when, according to Chinese author Li Jie, the common thinking of Brzezinski and Deng helped to keep the process alive. While Carter's National Security Advisor signaled to PRC officials that both sides should make use of the window of opportunity opening after the Congressional mid-term elections in November 1978, Deng urged the Politburo to seize the initiative.⁶²⁰ Subsequently, the Chinese leaders stated that the PRC would favor those nations in trade which had already recognized the People's Republic. If the United States wanted access to the Chinese market, they would have to finalize normalization. In addition, Deng gave an interview to the American columnist Robert Novak using this opportunity to express his interest in a visit of the USA after normalization.⁶²¹ These actions proved how serious the PRC leadership was about normalization.

The Carter administration perceived the Chinese efforts with interest, and was already preparing the next steps of the negotiations. Woodcock was instructed to present a first draft for a joint communiqué, if the Chinese would fully accept the American proposal about future U.S.-Taiwan relations. Carter was willing to alter the status of the liaison office in China immediately after the establishment of diplomatic relations with the PRC and the announcement of the termination of the MDT. His legal advisor on the matter of the termination of the treaty, the attorney Herbert J. Hansell, assured the executive branch that the president had the right to

⁶²⁰ Li "China's", 85-86.

⁶²¹ Vogel, "Deng", 321, 327.

terminate a treaty with another state without consulting the Congress. Former presidents had made use of this competence on several occasions in U.S. history.⁶²²

In the meantime, Woodcock wrote the draft for the communiqué which included language from the Shanghai Communiqué. Carter approved Woodcock's suggestions and set the date for normalization to January 1, 1979. Concerning Taiwan, the Carter administration was ready to provoke the Chinese with a language that was, according to Brzezinski, "hard for Peking to swallow." The National Security Advisor referred to a paragraph that assumed the PRC government would pursue the peaceful settlement of the Taiwan issue and be patient on this matter.⁶²³ Such boldness could jeopardize further progress of the negotiations, but the administration had to take the risk. Woodcock should present the draft during the next session on November 2, 1978.⁶²⁴

The Chinese did not directly comment on Woodcock's draft postponing their reply until the next meeting. They only asked some questions that Woodcock offered to answer in December. After his presentation, Woodcock sent a summary with his personal impressions and interpretations to the White House. The ambassador was worried about the consistency of the wording of the American statements. In his opinion, when the real discussions would start, the administration needed to choose its words very carefully as well as keeping the communiqué consistent with former statements.⁶²⁵

The White House met Woodcock's concerns, drawing his instructions for the sixth session more precisely. The ambassador should answer all Chinese questions concerning the American presentation. Afterwards, however, the president wanted Woodcock to convey to his Chinese interlocutors that they "have heard

⁶²²Memo, Herbert J. Hansell to Cyrus Vance, 12/15/1978, "China (Republic of China), 11-12/78" folder, Box 11, NSA Brzezinski Material Country File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁶²³ Memo, Zbigniew Brzezinski to Jimmy Carter, 10/13/1978, "China, [People's Republic of] – Normalization: [1/24/78-11/10/78]" folder, Box 9, Donated Historical Material Zbigniew Brzezinski Geographic File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁶²⁴ Cable, Cyrus Vance/Zbigniew Brzezinski to Leonard Woodcock, 10/19/1978, "China, [People's Republic of] – Normalization: [1/24/78-11/10/78]" folder, Box 9, Donated Historical Material Zbigniew Brzezinski Geographic File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁶²⁵ Cable, Leonard Woodcock to Cyrus Vance/Zbigniew Brzezinski, 11/13/1978, "China, [People's Republic of] – Alpha Channel: [2/72-11/78]" folder, Box 9, Donated Historical Material Zbigniew Brzezinski Geographic File, Jimmy Carter Library.

enough of our [the U.S.] position to begin to respond in a serious fashion.”⁶²⁶ Carter and his aides were tired of answering Chinese questions and listening to their tirades. For the negotiations to make progress, it was time that the PRC government presented its own point of view.

Over the last couple of months, the group around Deng Xiaoping had gained more ground vis-à-vis the leftists in the Chinese leadership. Deng’s success was signaled by the removal of the, as Robert Ross puts it, “Cultural Revolution leftovers” Nancy Tang and Wang Hairon from the Chinese negotiating party at the beginning of December.⁶²⁷ This indicated that Deng was trying to bring himself and his aides into a position which allowed him to accept U.S. minimum conditions, without losing ground to the leftists. The Chinese leadership knew by this time that the United States was not willing to give up the American involvement in the Taiwan Strait. Hence, it was important for Deng who was the main advocate of normalization among the PRC leadership to dampen any possible opposition before it could even arise.

Woodcock had to wait several weeks until the Chinese answered his request for a further meeting with Huang. He did not intend to ask again, since he believed Huang would see him as soon as it would please him.⁶²⁸ At this time he did not know that the PRC foreign minister had been admitted to a hospital. Thus, the Chinese suggested a meeting in the afternoon of December 4 with Han Nianlong, the deputy foreign minister, who acted as foreign minister in Huang’s absence. Woodcock did not interpret Huang’s illness as a political maneuver because he was to meet the acting foreign minister and not one of the numerous vice ministers in the ministry.⁶²⁹

When it finally came to the meeting, the PRC objected to most of the points in the U.S. draft which concerned Taiwan. Han Nianlong reiterated that the United States owed the Chinese people a debt. Therefore, “the Japanese Formula is the

⁶²⁶ Cable, Cyrus Vance/Zbigniew Brzezinski to Leonard Woodcock, 11/14/1978, “China, [People’s Republic of] – Alpha Channel: [2/72-11/78]” folder, Box 9, Donated Historical Material Zbigniew Brzezinski Geographic File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁶²⁷ Ross, “Negotiating”, 136.

⁶²⁸ Cable, Leonard Woodcock to Cyrus Vance/Zbigniew Brzezinski, 11/29/1978, “China, [People’s Republic of] – Alpha Channel: [2/72-11/78]” folder, Box 9, Donated Historical Material Zbigniew Brzezinski Geographic File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁶²⁹ Cable, Leonard Woodcock to Richard Holbrooke/Mike Oksenberg, 12/4/1978, “China, [People’s Republic of] – Alpha Channel: [12/78-1/80]” folder, Box 9, Donated Historical Material Zbigniew Brzezinski Geographic File, Jimmy Carter Library.

maximum concession the Chinese government can make, and the farthest it can go in accommodating the needs of the U.S. side.” Then, he criticized at length the Carter administration’s insistence on selling arms to Taiwan: “We [the PRC] have clearly stated our emphatic objection to the U.S. expressed intention of continuing its arms sales to Taiwan after normalization.” The PRC government did understand why this was necessary if “the U.S. side is going to establish diplomatic relations with China and change its former China policy, why must it continue to arm the Chiang clique [...]?” The American fear that Taiwan could acquire nuclear weapons was, according to Han, unnecessary as long as the “the U.S. side should stand by its own promise and refrain from letting the Chiang clique make or acquire such weapons.” Moreover, the PRC did not think this issue was “something for the U.S. to worry about”, because the PRC knew “how to deal with it.”⁶³⁰

The PRC government expressed some understanding for the U.S. position concerning the statement about the peaceful solution of the Taiwan issue. Thus, Han confirmed that the Chinese side would “refrain from raising objections to statements by U.S. government leaders’ expressing their hope to see a peaceful solution of the Taiwan issue.” From a Chinese point of view, the Carter administration had to understand that Sino-American relations would be strategic and political, not just diplomatic. In this sense, both sides needed to consider their long-term interests.⁶³¹ That was the reason why the Chinese were willing to let the Americans say what they deemed necessary to say in order to please their people at home. However, the Chinese draft for the joint communiqué aimed to make up for this concession.

Beijing’s draft also leaned heavily on the language of the Shanghai communiqué, emphasizing that the United States and the People’s Republic opposed any attempts by a third nation to pursue hegemony in Asia-Pacific or any other region in the world.⁶³² Such phrases were aimed against the Soviet Union and underlined

⁶³⁰ Cable, Leonard Woodcock to Cyrus Vance/Zbigniew Brzezinski, 12/4/1978, “China, [People’s Republic of] – Alpha Channel: [12/78-1/80]” folder, Box 9, Donated Historical Material Zbigniew Brzezinski Geographic File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁶³¹ Ibid.

⁶³² Cable, “Normalization Communiqué: Chinese Draft”, Leonard Woodcock to Cyrus Vance/Zbigniew Brzezinski, 12/4/1978, “China, [People’s Republic of] – Alpha Channel: [12/78-1/80]” folder, Box 9, Donated Historical Material Zbigniew Brzezinski Geographic File, Jimmy Carter Library.

Chinese thinking that normalization served mainly as means to contain Soviet influence in Asia, proving the seriousness of the Sino-American partnership.

The document also conveyed how important the Taiwan issue was for the Chinese, belying former comments in which they had claimed the strategic situation would be more important for U.S.-China relations than Taiwan. Consequently, the document included a paragraph aiming to signify that the Carter administration had accepted the PRC's three preconditions. It was pointed out that no ambassadors would be exchanged before the U.S. side conducted the actions necessary to accomplish these conditions.⁶³³ The American confession should serve the PRC government's legitimacy as the only Chinese government. They wanted to prevent any ambiguity, pointing out that the United States was only allowed to conduct people-to-people relations with Taiwan. This would underline the non-diplomatic (from a Chinese perspective even illegal) character of U.S.-ROC relations, significantly downgrading the regime in Taipei.

Woodcock saw the Chinese draft as the basis for further negotiations. In spite of some concessions due to U.S. needs, the document still included phrases every U.S. administration would have difficulties to agree with. One example was the phrase that stated Taiwan was a province of China. In order to avoid such provoking phrases in the communiqué, he suggested keeping it as short as possible, and to express controversial aspects in separate unilateral statements.⁶³⁴

It is true that the Chinese government made all concessions it perceived possible. At first glance that did not appear to be much. But the fact, that the Chinese would only oppose U.S. arms sales to Taiwan, and would only state their own views about Taiwan's status, yet not contradicting U.S. hopes for a peaceful solution, should be seen as a success for the Carter administration. The PRC government had stood up to its principles, and did not give the United States a *carte blanche* to remain involved in the Taiwan Strait. However, the success of normalization was more important for the Chinese leadership than its principles. China would always criticize U.S. arms sales to Taiwan but it would not endanger the success of normalization. Chinese officials had finally accepted that their own bar-

⁶³³ Ibid.

⁶³⁴ Cable, Leonard Woodcock to Cyrus Vance/Zbigniew Brzezinski, 12/5/1978, "China, [People's Republic of] – Alpha Channel: [12/78-1/80]" folder, Box 9, Donated Historical Material Zbigniew Brzezinski Geographic File, Jimmy Carter Library.

gaining power was not strong enough to get more concessions from the U.S. concerning the Taiwan issue. This insight enabled a compromise which led to a wording of the joint communiqué both sides could live with.

As the former U.S. diplomat and intelligence officer Richard Bush points out, in the end, the joint communiqué was able to clarify the U.S. positions about the status of Taiwan, which had previously remained unclear in the Shanghai Communiqué. The document was to state that the Carter administration only *acknowledged* “the Chinese position that there is but one China and Taiwan is a part of China” and not the fact itself.⁶³⁵ In this context, Washington accommodated the PRC by accepting the Chinese word “chengren” (承认) which sounds stronger than the previously used word “renshidao” (认识到). In the Carter administration’s China experts’ view, the former also means, in the context of the joint communiqué, “to acknowledge” and not “to recognize”.⁶³⁶ Michel Oksenberg was aware that “chengren” was stronger but referred to the fact that Chinese and Americans had agreed to work “from the English text, which uses the same language as the Shanghai Communiqué.”⁶³⁷ Thus, the difference was not important for U.S. purposes and did not change the previous U.S. position on the matter.

The wording of the joint communiqué appeared ambiguous, and served the U.S. interest to leave room for interpretations about Taiwan’s status. The reference in the communiqué that “Taiwan was a part of China” cannot only be understood in a political sense that would define Taiwan as a part of the People’s Republic, but also in a cultural sense that appears much more diffuse. The approach to keep the language of the communiqué ambiguous fitted Carter’s previous instructions to Woodcock not to agree under any circumstance that Taiwan was a province of China. Such a clause would define the island as a part of the political entity “China”, and subsequently as a part of the People’s Republic because with the establishment of diplomatic relations, the United States recognized the PRC government as the sole legitimate government of China. The Carter administration, however, did not want to create the impression it would abandon Taiwan, leaving the island

⁶³⁵ Bush, “Purposes”, 144-145.

⁶³⁶ Romberg, “Brink”, 100.

⁶³⁷ Memo, “A Translation Problem in the Joint Communiqué”, Michel Oksenberg to Zbigniew Brzezinski, 1/3/1979 in: FRUS, 1977-1980, Volume XIII, China (Washington D.C.: United States Printing Office, 2013), 690-691.

at the mercy of the PRC. Therefore, the English version which clearly used the word “acknowledge” for this part was dectory for the Carter administration.

It is not clear if the Chinese side used the stronger verb “chengren” in the Chinese version in order to force the Americans to accept the PRC government’s view about Taiwan’s status. Not only had the Carter administration never agreed to express such a view, but the Chinese side had also previously confirmed that the English version was dectory for the normalization agreement. Therefore, it appears more likely that the choice for “chengren”, which can also have the meaning “to recognize” and not only “to acknowledge”, served to impress Chinese speaking people on the mainland and Taiwan. It was part of the PRC’s propaganda that aimed to shock the people on Taiwan, while also to strengthen the CCP’s legitimacy.

After both sides had agreed on the wording of the joint communiqué, the time to strike a deal had finally arrived. Therefore, at the end of the fifth session, Han told Woodcock that Deng Xiaoping would like to meet him soon. This request hinted to Woodcock that the Chinese wanted to move ahead quickly. According to him, this was the reason why they accommodated the Americans to a certain degree.⁶³⁸ Deng’s involvement signaled that Washington and Beijing had reached the final stage of negotiations.

Deng’s Resurgence and the Need for Normalization

After Cyrus Vance and later Zbigniew Brzezinski had traveled to China to speak with high level officials of the PRC government, they gained the impression that Deng Xiaoping was the most important interlocutor for the Carter administration. Deng did not only appear to be the most fervent advocate of normalization among PRC official, but he also emerged as the man who made the final decisions about the way China’s relations with the United State developed.⁶³⁹ As the previous chap-

⁶³⁸ Cable, Leonard Woodcock to Cyrus Vance/Zbigniew Brzezinski, 12/4/1978, “China, [People’s Republic of] – Alpha Channel: [12/78-1/80]” folder, Box 9, Donated Historical Material Zbigniew Brzezinski Geographic File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁶³⁹ Michael Yahuda, “Deng Xiaoping: The Statesman” in: *The China Quarterly*, No. 135, (September, 1993), 551.

ter has shown, Brzezinski's meetings with different Chinese leaders in May 1978 underlined this impression.

However, at the beginning of Carter's presidency, U.S. analysts were not sure which political faction was in charge in China, and how far it could trust Chinese officials after Mao's death and the purge of the *Gang of Four*. While Michel Oksenberg had expressed his belief that the then new leadership around Hua Guofeng and Deng Xiaoping appeared pragmatic, he also suspected different movements among the Chinese elite which did not all support closer relations between Washington and Beijing.⁶⁴⁰ Henry Kissinger argues in a book about China, Deng's and Hua's notions about the future development of China were very different. While Hua was favoring "Soviet like methods" to improve China's economic situation, Deng disapproved such an approach.⁶⁴¹ These different views were the reason for the conflict between Deng and Hua that escalated in the early 1980s.⁶⁴² During the process of normalization, however, these differences did not play a major role.

As we have seen, the Carter administration had doubts about the Chinese leadership's reliability. It therefore helped that the new leaders followed up on the path of the *Four Modernization* (四个现代化). The concept had been introduced by Zhou Enlai in the 1960s, and should modernize China in four areas (agriculture, industry, national defense, and science and technology) in order to improve China's economic situation. However, the project had never been realized due to domestic political struggle until Deng Xiaoping was able to implement the necessary policies to start the process in 1978.⁶⁴³

One of the first signs for the serious attempt to pursue the *Four Modernizations* was the decision to send a delegation -called the China Government Economic Investigation Group- under Vice Premier Gu Mu to Western Europe from May to June 1978. Gu's report started a development which demanded the opening of

⁶⁴⁰ Memo, Michel Oksenberg to Zbigniew Brzezinski, 02/04/1977, "China MR-NLC-98-215 (1)" folder, Box 40, Vertical Files (VF), Jimmy Carter Library; Memo, Michael Oksenberg to Zbigniew Brzezinski, 2/18/77, "China (People's Republic of) 1-2/77" folder, Box 8, NSA Brzezinski Material Country File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁶⁴¹ Kissinger, "China", 340.

⁶⁴² Spence, "Chinas", 791-798. For a more detailed about Deng's conflict with Hua Guofeng, see: Joseph Fewsmith, *Elite Politics in Contemporary China* (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 2001).

⁶⁴³ For further reading see: Richard Evans, *Deng Xiaoping and the Making of Modern China* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1993); Maurice Meisner, *The Deng Xiaoping Era: An Inquiry into the Fate of Chinese Socialism, 1978-1994* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1996).

China to the world. The National Planning Conference supported this development, recommending the abandonment of the PRC's isolationist science and technology policy. The country should enter a dialogue about technological exchange with capitalist countries. This made normalization a high priority for the near future since the goal of the new policy was to develop an international environment favorable to China's further modernization.⁶⁴⁴

Brzezinski was convinced that Deng Xiaoping agreed with western theories on modernization which argued that development would need specialization, hierarchy, and urbanization. Although this view would not be irreversible, in the AP-NSA's opinion, it was another sign that China was turning towards the West.⁶⁴⁵ Indeed, modernization and technology transfer gained increased meaning in the PRC policy after Deng was restored in his offices. Deng himself had pointed out that China needed advanced science and technology to modernize itself. China had to learn from the advanced countries in the world.⁶⁴⁶ This was one reason why Deng argued in favor of improved Sino-American relations knowing well that China needed the West for the project of the *Four Modernizations* to become a success.

But first, Deng needed a strong position among Chinese leaders in order to conduct the policy he deemed necessary to strengthen his country. After he had taken first steps to improve his position during the 11th Communist Party Congress, he was able to foster his leadership in late 1978.⁶⁴⁷ Deng was able to attack Wang Dongxing, the head of the Chinese security apparatus, and his followers, the *Small Gang of Four*. This success did not only weaken Hua Guofeng's power basis, but also enabled Deng to set the agenda of China's reform policy.⁶⁴⁸ An important part of this agenda was the normalization of relations with the United States since this would allow the PRC easier access to modern technology.

⁶⁴⁴ Li, "China's", 79-82; Vogel, "Deng", 311-312, 321-322.

⁶⁴⁵ Memo, Zbigniew Brzezinski to Jimmy Carter, 4/7/1978, "Weekly Reports [to the President]. 53-60 [4/78-5/78]" folder, Box 41, Donated Historical Material Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection Subject File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁶⁴⁶ Deng Xiaoping said as much during a meeting with a West German press delegation, see: "邓小平副总理会见西德新闻代表团" ["Deng Meets West German Press Delegation"], 人民日报 [People's Daily], 10/11/1978.

⁶⁴⁷ Barry Naughton, "Deng Xiaoping: The Economist" in: *The China Quarterly*, No. 135, (September, 1993), 499-500; Wang, "States", 97.

⁶⁴⁸ Shambaugh, "Deng", 483.

In his assessment of the power struggles in Beijing, Michel Oksenberg characterized Deng's approach as a risky strategy. According to the White House's China expert, the Chinese vice premier had "many balls in the air [...], and it would be dangerous for him to drop any of them." Thus, Oksenberg suggested the U.S. administration should support Deng indirectly by encouraging western European states to provide China with new credits as well as modern technology and even arms.⁶⁴⁹ The State Department was more optimistic and believed Deng would most likely prevail without causing any instability in the Chinese leadership. The U.S. itself also benefited from Deng's strong position, since it helped normalization to proceed. In the end, Deng's growing power opened the opportunity for wider economic relations with China because he was the driving force behind China's course of modernization.⁶⁵⁰ Just two weeks later, Oksenberg changed his assessment when he observed that Deng had earned "a strong but not total victory" in the PRC's leadership struggle. While Oksenberg did not expect heavy upheaval in the Politburo, it was clear that Hua Guofeng remained only chairman at Deng's mercy. In Oksenberg's opinion, Deng's strong position meant good news for the normalization negotiations, as the Chinese vice premier had previously revealed "an eagerness to move ahead rapidly and a desire to visit the United States..." The NSC staff member even argued that the administration could expect last minute concessions from Deng if he took over the negotiation process.⁶⁵¹ This assessment confirmed what had become clear among Carter's aides months ago: Deng was the right person for the U.S. executive to conclude a normalization agreement.

After restoring his influence, Deng pushed the Chinese leadership towards economic reforms. As mentioned above, the vice premier was worried that China would fall in terms of technological progress.⁶⁵² Thus, he became responsible for scientific and educational programs and also influenced the economic plans of the PRC, announced by CCP Chairman Hua Guofeng at the 5th National People's Congress in 1978. Over the following period of time, Deng lobbied for increasing wages, decentralizing production processes, and most importantly for a bonus system

⁶⁴⁹ Memo, Michael Oksenberg to Zbigniew Brzezinski, 11/15/1978, "China (PRC) 9-11/78" folder, Box 8, NSA Brzezinski Material Country File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁶⁵⁰ Memo, David E. Mark to Cyrus Vance, 12/1/1978, "China (PRC) 12/78" folder, Box 9, NSA Brzezinski Material Country File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁶⁵¹ Memo, "The Chinese Internal Situation: Further Developments", Michel Oksenberg to Zbigniew Brzezinski, 11/30/1978 in: FRUS, 1977-1980, Volume XIII, China (Washington D.C.: United States Printing Office, 2013), 606-608.

⁶⁵² Westad, "Empire", 372.

which should reward effective and efficient workers.⁶⁵³ It was only the beginning of his reforms but it quickly became clear to him that the PRC needed the United States to achieve Deng's reform goals. Further political events fueled this thinking.

When Vietnam and the Soviet Union signed a treaty of friendship and cooperation on November 4, 1978, Beijing repeatedly signaled its readiness to normalize Sino-American relations.⁶⁵⁴ The alliance between two regimes, that were hostile towards the People's Republic and had both a massive number of troops stationed on China's border, left the PRC in a strategic stranglehold. This development made the modernization of the Chinese conventional forces a more pressing need. The PLA appeared to American observers outdated. As the conflict with Vietnam at the beginning of 1979 should prove, the PRC did not seem to be able to project power beyond its land borders. The Pentagon concluded it would cost the PRC up to 63 billion U.S. dollars to upgrade its forces in order to withstand a Soviet conventional attack.⁶⁵⁵

Deng knew that the weak Chinese economy would not be able to finance the modernization of the PLA. China needed to conduct profound economic reforms, and for this sake the country had to cooperate with the capitalist West to support the reform process that would help China's development. The whole scope of reforms was announced during the third plenary session of the 11th Central Committee from December 18-22, 1978.⁶⁵⁶ Here, Deng was able to implement his reform ideas and to strengthen his political position. The prior announcement of normalization had certainly supported his plans. This was the reason why he became so engaged in the normalization negotiations, making the final concessions that were to enable an agreement.

⁶⁵³ David Bachman, "Differing Visions of China's Post-Mao Economy: The Ideas of Chen Yun, Deng Xiaoping, and Zhao Ziyang" in: *Asian Survey*, Vol. 26, No. 3 (Mar., 1986), 304-306; Wang, "States", 103-104.

⁶⁵⁴ Tyler, "Wall", 260.

⁶⁵⁵ Foot, Rosemary, "Practice", 162-164.

⁶⁵⁶ Zhang Baijia, "Chinese Politics and Asia-Pacific Policy" in: Ezra F. Vogel/Ming Yuan/Tanaka Akihiko (ed.), *The Golden Triangle of the U.S.-China-Japan Triangle 1972-1989* (Cambridge: Harvard East Asian Monographs, 2002), 44.

Removing the Last Obstacles

Deng Xiaoping wanted a normalization agreement, and he was in the political position to convince his fellow leaders in the CCP that they should make some concessions to the Americans concerning Taiwan. The Chinese accommodation and rhetoric during the negotiations confirmed that the Carter administration had drawn its bottom line in a realistic fashion. The PRC would tacitly accept the continuation of the American involvement in the Taiwan Strait. This conclusion was supported by a statement by PRC Vice Premier Geng Biao when he met a delegation from U.S. Congress on December 6, 1978. During the exchange, he stated his belief that normalization would be achieved soon. In his opinion, the Taiwan question was not an obstacle. Geng even expressed his understanding for the political situation in the U.S. and the influence U.S. Congress had on foreign policy decisions.⁶⁵⁷ It was a strong signal for Carter and his aides that it did not need much more negotiations to get a deal with the People's Republic done.

Woodcock shared this conclusion. In a memorandum, he had sent to the White House only a day before Geng's meeting, he pointed towards the substantial progress the negotiations had made over the course of the last sessions. The Chinese did not exclude further discussions on matters of ongoing conflict between Beijing and Washington (e.g. arms sales to Taiwan), and especially Deng's invitation for a meeting should be seen as an attempt "to give momentum to the normalization process."⁶⁵⁸

The White House mainly agreed with Woodcock's analysis. Although Vance and Brzezinski urged the ambassador to meet with Deng, he needed to delay such a meeting until they could prepare the instructions for him. A discussion with Deng would serve as final clarification if controversial issues such as future arms sales to Taiwan were able to prevent normalization. Woodcock should also use the

⁶⁵⁷ Transcript, "Meeting of Codel Williams with Keng Piao [Geng Biao]", 12/7/1978, "China MR-NLC-98-214 (2)" folder, Box 40, Vertical Files, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁶⁵⁸ Cable, Leonard Woodcock to Cyrus Vance/Zbigniew Brzezinski, 12/5/1978, "China, [People's Republic of] – Alpha Channel: [12/78-1/80]" folder, Box 9, Donated Historical Material Zbigniew Brzezinski Geographic File, Jimmy Carter Library.

chance, and invite a Chinese leader to the United States.⁶⁵⁹ The ambassador agreed, but suggested that such a visit should be scheduled for the time after normalization. In the past, the Chinese had relayed repeatedly that no PRC leader could visit a country with an ROC embassy. Woodcock was also unable to predict who would come to the U.S. According to him, Deng likely wished to do so, but Hua Guofeng had the last word.⁶⁶⁰

The Chinese were indeed very interested in a visit by one of their leaders, and Deng Xiaoping was eager to be the first PRC statesman to visit the United States.⁶⁶¹ Liaison office chief Chai Zemin confirmed this impression during discussions with Brzezinski mentioning a possible visit by Deng to the United States in January 1979.⁶⁶² Michel Oksenberg later reported the Chinese liaison office's political counselor Zao Guisheng had asked about the president's schedule in January when he visited Oksenberg's office a few days after Chai's and Brzezinski's meeting.⁶⁶³ It was another signal that the Chinese leadership expected the successful conclusion of the normalization process to happen very soon.

Washington reacted accordingly, and wanted all possible misunderstandings eliminated. The instructions which Vance and Brzezinski drew for Woodcock, with Carter's approval, emphasized the seriousness and the progress already achieved in the negotiations. However, although Woodcock should underline the topics of agreement between the United States and the People's Republic, there still existed disagreement on different issues. The White House wanted Woodcock to explain to the Chinese that the USA could not declare all treaties with Taiwan "null and void". Beforehand, it needed some legal adjustments to maintain commercial and cultural relations with the island. Therefore, the administration needed some time to adjust U.S.-Taiwan relations for the time after the derecognition of the regime in

⁶⁵⁹ Cable, Cyrus Vance/Zbigniew Brzezinski to Leonard Woodcock, 12/6/1978, "China, [People's Republic of] – Alpha Channel: [12/78-1/80]" folder, Box 9, Donated Historical Material Zbigniew Brzezinski Geographic File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁶⁶⁰ Cable, Leonard Woodcock to Cyrus Vance/Zbigniew Brzezinski, 12/6/1978, "China, [People's Republic of] – Alpha Channel: [12/78-1/80]" folder, Box 9, Donated Historical Material Zbigniew Brzezinski Geographic File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁶⁶¹ Of course, different Chinese politicians had visited the United States before in order to attend meetings of the UN, but this time it would be an official state visit where the Chinese representative would be the guest of honor.

⁶⁶² Memcon, Zbigniew Brzezinski, 12/11/78, "China, [People's Republic of] – Normalization: 12/18/78-12/31/78]" folder, Box 9, Donated Historical Material Zbigniew Brzezinski Geographic File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁶⁶³ Memcon, Michel Oksenberg, 12/14/1978, "China MR-NLC-98-215 (3)" folder, Box 41, Vertical Files, Jimmy Carter Library.

Taipei. This made it difficult to set the date for the establishment of embassies and the exchange of ambassadors, although the White House suggested a date not later than March 1, 1979.⁶⁶⁴

The U.S. leadership hoped that Deng's involvement could lead to further concessions about Taiwan. Woodcock was therefore instructed to point out the U.S. insistence on its fundamental position. Furthermore, the Carter administration intended to maintain some ambiguity in the language of the communiqué preventing any interpretation that would grant the PRC the right to use any force against Taiwan. Thus, the joint communiqué had to be adjusted in accordance with both sides' needs. In fact, the new American draft which Carter wanted Woodcock to present to the PRC incorporated many points from the Chinese one. However, the draft did not include a phrase that called Taiwan a province of China, and the instructions underlined that Woodcock, under no circumstances, would agree to such a phrase. As stated above, the United States only acknowledged that the island was part of China without further elaborating what this precisely meant. In return, as Woodcock was to convey to the PRC officials, the Carter administration would terminate its diplomatic relations and the MDT with Taiwan as well as withdraw its military personnel within four months.⁶⁶⁵

The Carter administration was certain that both sides were close to a normalization agreement. Thus Woodcock received further instructions for his meeting with Deng on December 13. The U.S. president wanted the ambassador to ask Deng if both sides could announce normalization simultaneously in Washington D.C. and Beijing on December 15 at 9pm (ET), and December 16 at 10am (CST), respectively. At the same time, they would announce Deng's visit to the United States in the following month.⁶⁶⁶

In the end, Deng mostly agreed with the Carter administration's draft for the joint communiqué and the suggestions about the way the U.S. side would handle the transition of its relations with Taiwan. He also accepted Carter's invitation to the United States, and set the date for the exchange of ambassadors for March 1,

⁶⁶⁴ Cable, Cyrus Vance/Zbigniew Brzezinski to Leonard Woodcock, 12/6/1978, "China, [People's Republic of] – Alpha Channel: [12/78-1/80]" folder, Box 9, Donated Historical Material Zbigniew Brzezinski Geographic File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁶⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶⁶ Memo, Cyrus Vance/Zbigniew Brzezinski to Leonard Woodcock, Undated, "China MR-NLC-98-215 (3)" folder, Box 41, Vertical Files, Jimmy Carter Library.

1979. The Chinese side even tolerated that the withdrawal of all U.S. troops from Taiwan would need four months, and they also granted the U.S. administration the period of one year to terminate the U.S.-ROC defense treaty in accordance with its Article 10.⁶⁶⁷

However, the Chinese vice premier's reconciliation had its price. The PRC government wanted the Carter administration to understand that it would not allow the United States to continue the provisions of the MDT while it had no official relations with the regime in Taipei. Such an attitude could lead to the impression that Beijing either allowed U.S.-Taiwan security relations, or accepted a *two-China-policy*. Hence, Deng asked the U.S. officials not to quote the MDT in their statements. In addition, he insisted that, during the one year until the treaty with Taiwan would lapse, the United States would "refrain from selling weapons to Taiwan because it would cause a lot of trouble" as it almost meant for the Chinese that the United States would still "carry out the treaty provisions."⁶⁶⁸ Carter accepted.

Another matter concerned Beijing's insistence that normalization served to counter Soviet power. From a Chinese perspective, the joint communiqué had to express this purpose. Deng wanted to incorporate an anti-hegemony clause in the agreement, although this suggestion was difficult to accept for the Americans. As an alternative, he suggested, both sides could express the anti-hegemony clause in their respective statements. The White House saw this alternative also very critically.⁶⁶⁹ The United States did not want to be part of Beijing's attempts to create an anti-Soviet front.

The reason for U.S. reservations was that the Carter administration did not want the Soviet Union or anyone else to think normalization served exclusively to put pressure on the Soviets. While Washington had always been aware that closer U.S.-China ties could improve the American position vis-à-vis the Soviet Union, forcing the Kremlin to concessions in certain areas of mutual interest, the Carter administration also wanted to prevent Moscow from blockading any cooperation.

⁶⁶⁷ Cable, Leonard Woodcock to Cyrus Vance/Zbigniew Brzezinski, 12/13/1978, "China, [People's Republic of] – Normalization: 11/20/78-12/18/78]" folder, Box 9, Donated Historical Material Zbigniew Brzezinski Geographic File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁶⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁶⁹ An unidentifiable handwritten note on the document suggests that the Carter administration rejected such a clause; see: Ibid.

The administration knew that the USSR was concerned about normalization. Only a few months before the announcement, in meeting with Carter, Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko expressed that Moscow was “gaining the impression that the United States was trying to ‘play the Chinese card’ to the detriment of Soviet interests.”⁶⁷⁰ Since the White House was still working on an agreement with the USSR about SALT II, Washington did not want to alienate Moscow. Carter and his aides took the Russian concerns seriously.

Therefore the White House agitated against the use of the phrase “China card” in a *Time* magazine article with the title “Playing the China Card” planned for the edition of November 6. In a letter to the editors, the National Security Council’s Associate Press Secretary Jerold L. Schechter opposed this expression and named the development of Sino-American relations “a central element of our [the U.S.] foreign policy, important not only in bilateral terms but in the context of preserving global and regional peace and stability.”⁶⁷¹ Though the article was published without changes, the Carter administration’s reaction demonstrated its sensitivity on the matter.

It was Woodcock who presented a solution for the administration’s dilemma about the anti-hegemony clause. He argued this issue should not spoil the normalization agreement. In order to satisfy the Chinese demands while keeping its impact as low as possible, the ambassador recommended using a wording, which mimicked the Shanghai Communiqué.⁶⁷² The president approved this idea, and it was incorporated in the normalization communiqué.⁶⁷³

In spite of this difficulty, Woodcock interpreted Deng’s behavior as very accommodating, giving “a clear signal that he [Deng] would not let our position on arms sales to Taiwan block normalization.” Since Deng had “opted for movement rather than legalistic quibbling over details”, and had put so much effort and per-

⁶⁷⁰ Memcon, Jimmy Carter, 09/30/1978 in: FRUS, 1977-1980, Volume VI, Soviet Union (Washington D.C.: United States Printing Office, 2013), 469.

⁶⁷¹ Letter, Jerrold Schechter to Editor [of the *Time* Magazine], 11/1/1978, “CO 34-2 Executive 8/1/78-12/31/78” folder, Box CO-17, Countries, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁶⁷² Handwritten notes on the document indicate that the White House appreciated Woodcock’s suggestion, see: cable, Leonard Woodcock to Cyrus Vance/Zbigniew Brzezinski, 12/13/1978, “China, [People’s Republic of] – Normalization: 11/20/78-12/18/78” folder, Box 9, Donated Historical Material Zbigniew Brzezinski Geographic File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁶⁷³ Cable, Zbigniew Brzezinski to Leonard Woodcock, 12/14/1978, “China, [People’s Republic of] – Normalization: 12/18/78-12/31/78” folder, Box 9, Donated Historical Material Zbigniew Brzezinski Geographic File, Jimmy Carter Library.

sonal prestige into the whole process, Woodcock suggested finalizing normalization as soon as possible. Because the MDT would remain effective for one more year, Deng might face domestic pressure. Woodcock therefore concluded, the vice premier's critical remarks concerning Article 10 and arms sales to Taiwan served to avert domestic critique.⁶⁷⁴

In the next meeting, Deng agreed to Washington's proposed timing of the announcement and the dates for his visit to the United States. He also suggested exchanging the unilateral statements in advance, so there would not be any contradictions. Therefore, Woodcock met with vice foreign ministers Han and Chang to work out the final draft.⁶⁷⁵ The same day, he met Deng again, and presented the text of the joint communiqué. The vice premier approved the final version, and also agreed to the draft of the Carter administration's unilateral statement.⁶⁷⁶

A Misunderstanding in the Last Minute

When the Chinese and Americans believed an agreement was nearly accomplished, a misunderstanding about the arms sales issue threatened to shatter all efforts made by the U.S. administration. The problem occurred when Brzezinski met Ambassador Chai Zemin the same morning the public announcement was scheduled for. On this occasion, the National Security Advisor explained to the PRC diplomat that the Carter administration could not avoid answering questions from the U.S. press about the future of arms sales to Taiwan. Chai was struck by this revelation because, as he claimed, the PRC government believed the United States had agreed not to sell any arms to Taiwan in the future.⁶⁷⁷

⁶⁷⁴ Cable, Leonard Woodcock to Cyrus Vance/Zbigniew Brzezinski, 12/13/1978, "China, [People's Republic of] – Normalization: 11/20/78-12/18/78]" folder, Box 9, Donated Historical Material Zbigniew Brzezinski Geographic File, Jimmy Carter Library. Handwritten notes on the document imply that the White House appreciated Woodcock's suggestion.

⁶⁷⁵ Cable, Leonard Woodcock to Cyrus Vance/Zbigniew Brzezinski, 12/14/1978, "China, [People's Republic of] – Normalization: 11/20/78-12/18/78]" folder, Box 9, Donated Historical Material Zbigniew Brzezinski Geographic File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁶⁷⁶ Cable, Leonard Woodcock to Cyrus Vance/Zbigniew Brzezinski, 12/14/1978, "China, [People's Republic of] – Normalization: 11/20/78-12/18/78]" folder, Box 9, Donated Historical Material Zbigniew Brzezinski Geographic File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁶⁷⁷ Memcon, Zbigniew Brzezinski, 12/15/1978, "China MR-NLC-98-215 (4)" folder, Box 41, Vertical Files, Jimmy Carter Library.

Now, it was Brzezinski who was struck by surprise. In his opinion, the record clearly showed that Deng “understands our [the U.S.] position” concerning the arms sales issue. Additionally, he explained to Chai that the Carter administration had agreed to suspend additional arms sales only for one year until the MDT would lapse. Chai replied the liaison office “got a message that the U.S. will not sell arms after normalization”, but he also admitted not to be “very familiar with the course of the discussion in Peking.” It was a difficult situation, and all Brzezinski could do was to remind the Chinese of Hua Guofeng’s own argument that normalization was a “political” and not a “diplomatic” question. Hence, the PRC should think “political” and not give their common “enemies [USSR] the opportunity to complicate what could be a historically important relationship.”⁶⁷⁸ The reference to the Soviet Union helped, but Brzezinski went a step further.

It was this moment, when Brzezinski seemed to forget his strategic thinking and ignored all the advantages the normalization with the PRC would bring for the U.S. position vis-à-vis the Soviet Union. Precisely then, he became the most fervent advocate of U.S. arms sales to Taiwan. First, he reassured Chai that the U.S. side was “not trying to get you [the PRC] to change your position”, but he coolly added that “we will not change our [the U.S.] position”, either. Referring to the political situation in the United States, he even openly warned that “if we [the Carter administration] were to agree to a blockade of Taiwan, the normalization would collapse here.”⁶⁷⁹

In my opinion, it was this threat that helped convincing Chai that the Americans were serious. Subsequently, the chief of the Chinese liaison office agreed to inform his superiors in Beijing about the U.S. views. Up to this point, Brzezinski had appeared to the Chinese as their closest ally among U.S. officials. If even he insisted that Washington could only agree to normalization if U.S. arms sales to Taiwan would continue, the PRC leadership better considered how much normalization was worth to them. Deng was the only Chinese official able to make such a decision, and therefore it was up to him and Woodcock to find a solution before the process would fail, after all.

⁶⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁷⁹ Ibid.

Indeed, Woodcock met Deng in the afternoon of the same day. From a Chinese perspective, the continuation of arms sales left the impression that the United States did not disengage from the Taiwan Strait, questioning the value of normalization in this regard. Hence, Deng tried to remind the White House about its own responsibility to make a peaceful solution of the Taiwan issue possible. When Woodcock confirmed that the U.S. government intended to sell arms to Taiwan after 1979, the Chinese vice premier replied “we [the PRC] cannot agree to it” since continued arms sales meant “that the U.S. will still carry out the terms of the Mutual Defense Treaty with Taiwan [...]” In Deng’s opinion, this prevented “China from finding a rational and peaceful solution with Taiwan.”⁶⁸⁰ As Woodcock put it in his report, the vice premier asked the Americans “to act in ways compatible with peaceful reunification rather than obverse.”⁶⁸¹

In this situation, the Carter administration could not be sure how the vice premier would decide, but eventually Deng gave up the Chinese opposition to arms sales. Normalization was too important. He suggested postponing any discussions about the arms sales question “without affecting the issuance of the [normalization] communiqué...”⁶⁸² With these words, Deng did not accept China’s defeat on this matter but demonstrated a good understanding of the U.S. position. The Carter administration’s continuing tenacity had finally convinced him that the PRC’s bargaining position was not strong enough to change the White House’s view.

The Chinese authors Li Jie and Zhang Baijia claim Deng’s pragmatism ultimately opened the door for normalization.⁶⁸³ This conclusion does not give due credit to the Carter administration’s approach to the normalization process. As I have demonstrated in previous chapters, Carter and his aides had early on a very precise notion of their minimum requirements for normalization, never keeping this

⁶⁸⁰ Cable, “Full Transcript of December 15 Meeting with Teng”, Leonard Woodcock to Cyrus Vance/Zbigniew Brzezinski, 12/15/1978, “China, [People’s Republic of] – Normalization: 11/20/78-12/18/78” folder, Box 9, Donated Historical Material Zbigniew Brzezinski Geographic File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁶⁸¹ Cable, Leonard Woodcock to Cyrus Vance/Zbigniew Brzezinski, 12/15/1978, “China, [People’s Republic of] – Normalization: 11/20/78-12/18/78” folder, Box 9, Donated Historical Material Zbigniew Brzezinski Geographic File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁶⁸² Cable, “Full Transcript of December 15 Meeting with Teng”, Leonard Woodcock to Cyrus Vance/Zbigniew Brzezinski, 12/15/1978, “China, [People’s Republic of] – Normalization: 11/20/78-12/18/78” folder, Box 9, Donated Historical Material Zbigniew Brzezinski Geographic File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁶⁸³ Li Jie, “China’s Domestic Politics and the Normalization of Sino-U.S. Relations, 1969-1979” in: Ezra F. Vogel/Ming Yuan/Tanaka Akihiko (ed.), *The Golden Triangle of the U.S.-China-Japan Triangle 1972-1989* (Cambridge: Harvard East Asian Monographs, 2002), 86-87; Zhang, “Politics”, 45-46.

position a secret from the Chinese. In the final hours of the negotiations, the Carter administration displayed great timing and a thorough understanding of the Chinese situation. While Washington had always been adamant that the United States sought to have a security relationship with Taiwan after normalization, it had also allayed the Chinese by indicating sympathy for the Chinese position. But, in the end, the White House chose the right moment to put pressure on the PRC.

Two things were responsible for the Carter administration's prevailing on the arms sales issue. First, in spite of all the criticism and even threats from the Chinese, Carter had remained tenacious and insisted that the United States would have a security relationship with Taiwan. The White House was not willing to give up its strategically useful relations with the ROC regime, even if they would have only an unofficial character after normalization. Second, in the right moment, the U.S. administration made use of its better bargaining position. Washington was convinced that the PRC needed normalization so dearly that Deng would make the final concession concerning the arms sales issue. China had put so much effort in emphasizing what a great threat the Soviet Union represented to the United States that Washington was certain that Moscow was a major concern for the PRC itself. Chinese strategic necessities, thus, helped the Carter administration's success.

After having made the necessary concessions, the Chinese side still remained concerned about public discussions about the Carter administration's intention to continue arms sales to Taiwan after the announcement of normalization. Therefore, Deng argued, both sides should "evade this question [...] or the President may be very vague in his answer." Deng also warned that if Carter discussed the question of continued arms sales with the U.S. press in detail, "we [the PRC] will immediately give a response."⁶⁸⁴ Deng had no other choice than remaining adamant on this matter, because, as Woodcock had explained in an earlier message to the White House, "a direct statement by the President on arms sales would be seriously embarrassing to [D]eng and have potential political consequences in China."⁶⁸⁵ Therefore, according to Woodcock, "[D]eng will not give us [the U.S.] a

⁶⁸⁴ Cable, "Full Transcript of December 15 Meeting with Teng", Leonard Woodcock to Cyrus Vance/Zbigniew Brzezinski, 12/15/1978, "China, [People's Republic of] – Normalization: 11/20/78-12/18/78]" folder, Box 9, Donated Historical Material Zbigniew Brzezinski Geographic File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁶⁸⁵ Cable, "Backchannel Message from the Chief of the Liaison Office in China (Woodcock) to the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Brzezinski)", Leonard Woodcock, 12/15/1978

free ride” leaving both sides with only one choice: since Chinese and Americans could not “agree on the arms sales question [...]”, they had “agree to disagree”, in the ambassador’s opinion⁶⁸⁶

It was a solution in the spirit of Deng’s pragmatism, and the White House had no choice but to accept Woodcock’s formula. As Brzezinski and Vance argued in a cable to Woodcock, the president did not expect to be able to abstain from a statement about future arms sales because “this may be the very first question asked by reporters.” Moreover, if Carter was not to confirm the continuation of arms sales publicly, it “may induce the instability” in Taiwan, the administration wanted to prevent. The cable therefore instructed Woodcock to convey to Deng that the United States “recognize this [U.S. arms sales] is a sensitive issue for China”, and the U.S. administration “understand[s] that you [the PRC] cannot publicly approve such sales.”⁶⁸⁷ There was no solution that could please both sides’ needs in an equal fashion. Accordingly, the U.S. side considered the problem solved. All that mattered to Carter and his aides was that this short episode of confusion and the Chinese misinterpretation about the continuation of U.S. arms sales to Taiwan did not prevent normalization.

From a historical perspective, the whole issue appears as a last attempt of the PRC leadership to get further concessions from the Carter administration concerning the arms sales issue, and it does not matter in this context if the PRC had really misunderstood the U.S. side’s intentions. China wanted to make use of the subsequent confusion, and tried a “bluff” by exaggerating the problem. The attempt did not work out. The Carter administration remained unfazed and “called the bluff”. Washington referred to numerous meetings and exchanges with PRC officials where U.S. officials had reiterated the administration’s intention to sell arms to Taiwan after normalization. It was as Ambassador Woodcock stated: “There is no doubt in my mind that we have clearly put on the record our position with re-

in: FRUS, 1977-1980, Volume XIII, China (Washington D.C.: United States Printing Office, 2013), 647.

⁶⁸⁶ Cable, Leonard Woodcock to Cyrus Vance/Zbigniew Brzezinski, 12/15/1978, “China, [People’s Republic of] – Normalization: 11/20/78-12/18/78]” folder, Box 9, Donated Historical Material Zbigniew Brzezinski Geographic File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁶⁸⁷ Cable, Cyrus Vance/Zbigniew Brzezinski to Leonard Woodcock, 12/15/1978, “China, [People’s Republic of] – Normalization: 12/18/78-12/31/78]” folder, Box 9, Donated Historical Material Zbigniew Brzezinski Geographic File, Jimmy Carter Library.

spect to arms sales.⁶⁸⁸ Deng and his fellow comrades eventually accepted the fact that President Carter was not abandoning Taiwan.

The Carter administration had stood its ground on the matter of arms sales, without jeopardizing the normalization agreement. As I have argued, this success was possible because, on the one hand, the administration accommodated Deng and the PRC leadership by being considerate of their needs, while, on the other hand, it demonstrated strength and tenacity by making clear that the USA could not agree to normalization if it could not sell arms to Taiwan after 1979. Documents suggest the Carter administration was caught by surprise by Chai Zemin's revelations to Brzezinski in the morning of December 15.⁶⁸⁹ Therefore, Woodcock was instructed to clarify immediately the U.S. position, without alienating the Chinese so much that they would call off normalization.⁶⁹⁰ Then, on the other hand, the U.S. executive put pressure on the Chinese, threatening normalization would fail if the United States could not sell arms to Taiwan after the termination of the MDT.⁶⁹¹ This approach worked, and both sides reached an agreement.

The conclusion of the negotiations meant for the U.S. and PRC government a huge diplomatic success. After rapprochement in the early 1970s, normalization represented the next significant stage in the history of U.S.-China relations. However, the arms sales issue remained a problem, and Carter's successor Ronald Reagan had also to deal with the issue, playing a double game with Chinese and Taiwanese which resulted in the so called "Six Assurances" to Taiwan from July 1982 and a third U.S.-PRC joint communiqué signed in August 1982.⁶⁹² In fact, both sides have not been able to resolve the issue until today.

Yet, Taiwan was only one point of bilateral dissent. Other important aspects of Sino-American relations had not even been discussed during the normalization process, the two most significant were trade and human rights. If both nations

⁶⁸⁸ Cable, "Backchannel Message From the Chief of the Liaison Office in China (Woodcock) to the Secretary of State Vance and the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Brzezinski)", Leonard Woodcock, 12/14/1978 in: FRUS, 1977-1980, Volume XIII, China (Washington D.C.: United States Printing Office, 2013), 645.

⁶⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁹⁰ Cable, Zbigniew Brzezinski to Leonard Woodcock, 12/15/1978, "China, [People's Republic of] – Normalization: 12/18/78-12/31/78]" folder, Box 9, Donated Historical Material Zbigniew Brzezinski Geographic File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁶⁹¹ Ibid.

⁶⁹² For a summary of the Reagan administration's motives for this policy, see: Statement for Press Background, John Holdridge, undated, "China, PRC (August 1982) (1 of 4)" folder, Box 7, Executive Secretary, NSC Country File, Asia [Far East], Ronald Reagan Library.

wanted to improve their commercial relations, it needed a trade agreement. The PRC wanted to have access to U.S. technology and the United States sought access to China's incredibly huge consumer market. The negotiations about a trade agreement and the Most Favored Nation (MFN) status should also become very difficult but were eventually successfully concluded on July 7, 1979.⁶⁹³ Due to Beijing's refusal to talk about human rights, this issue's meaning for U.S.-China relations should grow over the next decade. At the latest, after the incident on Tiananman Square in May 1989, the United States made this topic a priority in its approach towards the PRC.⁶⁹⁴ Trade and the human rights issue have remained huge concerns for U.S. China policy since normalization.

The issues of human rights and trade relations as well as the Taiwan issue have frequently led to friction in U.S.-China relations until today. In 1978, however, both sides deemed it more prudent to ignore these differences. Otherwise, Washington and Beijing had not been able to achieve normalization. Both governments knew about their differing views on many issues, bilateral ones like Taiwan as well as global problems like nuclear non-proliferation (NNP).⁶⁹⁵ However, these differences could not prevent normalization because they were not important enough at this time. With the exception of the Taiwan issue, neither of the aforementioned difference prevented both governments from legitimizing their respective normalization policy at home. These issues were also not important enough for Washington and Beijing to forgo the strategic advantage and power gain they expected from normalization. Therefore, both sides remained patient about the way their future relationship would develop, accepting that some details had to wait until they had implemented normal relations.

⁶⁹³ Memcom, Michael Blumenthal, 05/30/1979 in: in: FRUS, 1977-1980, Volume XIII, China (Washington D.C.: United States Printing Office, 2013), 884-888; Memo, Michel Oksenberg to Zbigniew Brzezinski, 06/05/1979 in: in: FRUS, 1977-1980, Volume XIII, China (Washington D.C.: United States Printing Office, 2013), 888-889; Message, Leonard Woodcock to David Aaron, 06/26/1979 in: in: FRUS, 1977-1980, Volume XIII, China (Washington D.C.: United States Printing Office, 2013), 893.

⁶⁹⁴ For an introductory reading about the democracy movement in China and the Tiananmen incident, see: Spence, "Chinas", chapter 25; for the Bush administration's approach towards China after Tiananmen, see: David Skidmore/William Gates, "After Tiananmen: The Struggle over U.S. Policy toward China in the Bush Administration" in: *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 27, No. 3 (Summer, 1997). For an introductory reading about the role of human rights in U.S. China policy, see: Lowell Dittmer, Chinese "Human Rights and American Foreign Policy: A Realist Approach" in: *The Review of Politics*, Vol. 63, No. 3 (Summer, 2001).

⁶⁹⁵ During the Cold War, the PRC rejected to join efforts for multilateral NNP. For a more detailed reading about China's historic and actual position on the matter, see: J. Mohan Malik, "China and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Regime" in: *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol. 22, No. 3 (December, 2000).

After six months of negotiations preceded by years of progress and setbacks in Chinese-American relations, mutual diplomatic recognition was finally achieved. At 9pm (ET) on December 15 (10am (CST) December 16 in Beijing), President Carter announced the normalization of the relations between the United States of America and the People's Republic of China on TV.⁶⁹⁶ It was a historical occurrence. Although normalization was not as shocking as Nixon's announcement of his trip to China in 1971, the world looked to Washington and Beijing on this day in mid-December 1978, wondering how the United States and China would handle the situation. Not all observers were happy, hopeful or excited. In Taiwan, as we shall see, many people thought the world would come to an end.

Conclusion and Discussion

National Security Advisor Brzezinski's talks with Deng, Hua, and Huang in May 1978 opened the path for serious negotiations about normalization. Both sides made final preparations before the chief of the American liaison office in Beijing, Leonard Woodcock, was instructed to request a meeting with Chinese official to start the negotiations. The first two sessions took place on July 5 and July 14, respectively. However, they only served to set the frame of the actual negotiations. The Chinese wanted the American side to present their position before they would reply. Therefore, it took some time before the negotiations became more dynamic. Both sides pursued a strategy that would allow their exchange to gain momentum before they reached matters of discordance. However, it did not take long until the different views about the Taiwan issue became the focal point of the discussions between Chinese and Americans.

In numerous meetings between U.S. and PRC officials over these final one and a half years, both sides had learned their respective bottom line positions concerning Taiwan. According to the PRC government, the framework for U.S. rela-

⁶⁹⁶ For the record of Carter's announcement, see: University of Southern California, USC US-China Institute, "Jimmy Carter, 'Establishing Diplomatic Relations with China,' Dec. 15, 1978", (video clip, 12/15/1978), [http://china.usc.edu/\(S\(cz42lkyfjmjts3ruaz4rqo55\)A\(YHOIZEuuxzQEkAAAAZTNhODg2YmMtZTk5Zi00ZWlxLThjNzktZWY2ODM3NzM1NTY5zaiLOxoKc1fgzQ1JZAQvpG9eJAo1\)\)/ShowArticle.aspx?articleID=2738](http://china.usc.edu/(S(cz42lkyfjmjts3ruaz4rqo55)A(YHOIZEuuxzQEkAAAAZTNhODg2YmMtZTk5Zi00ZWlxLThjNzktZWY2ODM3NzM1NTY5zaiLOxoKc1fgzQ1JZAQvpG9eJAo1))/ShowArticle.aspx?articleID=2738) (accessed: 11/06/2014).

tions with Taiwan after normalization had to be the *Japanese formula* allowing only cultural, scientific, and economic relations on a people-to-people basis. The Carter administration was willing to accept this condition, as long as it could have full economic relations with Taiwan which had to include arms sales. Furthermore, the U.S. side insisted that the Chinese would not contradict Washington's unilateral statement about the wish that the Taiwan issue would be settled by peaceful means.

An important part of the American negotiating strategy during this stage of the negotiations was to schedule meetings with representatives of the PRC's liaison office in Washington that took place parallel to Leonard Woodcock's sessions with PRC officials in Beijing. These talks allowed the Carter administration to state controversial positions before they were discussed in Beijing. The most significant of those meetings occurred when President Carter met Chai Zemin, the head of the Chinese liaison office, in September, 1978. Carter used this meeting to assure the Chinese of his serious intention to normalize U.S. relations with China. However, he also made clear that normalization could only occur if the PRC would tacitly accept U.S. arms sales to Taiwan.

It was important for Carter to state this position because it demonstrated his adamant will that the United States would remain involved in the Taiwan Strait. While this position should serve to calm down U.S. allies and the U.S. Congress, it was also, as we have seen in previous chapters, the expression of an honest concern about Taiwan's security. Carter's tenacity was the decisive factor for the Chinese government's acceptance of the American position. In addition, the U.S. bargaining position was stronger than the Chinese one because Beijing needed closer relations with the United States in order to deal with the Soviet threat.

In the end, PRC officials realized that the normalization negotiations were not the right place to solve the problem of the American involvement in the Taiwan Strait, and Carter's statement helped them to come to this conclusion. The president's words about Taiwan held more weight as statement's by lower ranked U.S. officials such as Leonard Woodcock. From a Chinese perspective, Carter's statement made clear that the U.S. side was not willing to make further concessions on the matter. Otherwise, the U.S. president would lose his face -a concept the Chinese had a good understanding of. However, Carter's frankness did not prevent Deng and Huang from criticizing the American position.

Although not all differences about the Taiwan issue were cleared up, the next step in the negotiations was the formulation of the joint communiqué and the unilateral statements. The only disagreement between Chinese and Americans in the process of drafting the communiqué emerged about the insertion of an anti-hegemony clause because the Carter administration did not want to leave the impression, normalization served exclusively to put pressure on the Soviet Union. Nonetheless, after some discussion between the White House, the DOS and Leonard Woodcock, the latter was able to convince his superiors in Washington to concede the clause using the exact language from the Shanghai communiqué.

The language of the communiqué should strengthen the CCP's regime legitimacy in China and abroad, and was also closely related to Deng Xiaoping's reforms. The announcement of normalization actually helped Deng to pursue his plans, and further strengthen his leadership. China experts Alan Romberg, Ezra Vogel, and Odd Arne Westad agree with this conclusion adding that the proposed "punishment" of Vietnam might have played also a role in this context since it helped stabilizing China's strategic position.⁶⁹⁷ Robert Ross, in contrast, argues Deng was able to accept the non-settlement of the arms sales issue only because he already had the support of the Chinese elite who valued normalization out of strategic necessity.⁶⁹⁸ Although Deng needed a power base for his policy, it seems more likely that he still had to act cautiously. Unlike Mao he was not the unquestioned leader of the CCP.⁶⁹⁹ He was neither the CCP's Chairman, nor its ideological leader. Hence, he was aware that his policy was under close scrutiny, especially so shortly after his resurgence to the CCP leadership ranks. Many of his political opponents who did not dare to question Deng at the moment only waited for him to fail. That was the reason why, as the Chinese author Li Li concludes, he had to find a way to satisfy the Chinese minimal conditions concerning Taiwan while giving the Carter administration enough room to maneuver in accordance with their own needs.⁷⁰⁰

There is no question that normalization still served Deng Xiaoping's own political needs as well as China's strategic position because it demonstrated to the

⁶⁹⁷ Romberg, "Brink", 94.; Vogel, "Deng", 332-333; Westad, "Empire", 373.

⁶⁹⁸ Ross, "Negotiating", 139.

⁶⁹⁹ Zhang, "Politics", 45-46.

⁷⁰⁰ Li Li, 目击台海风云 [Witnessing the Situation Across the Taiwan Strait] (Beijing: Huayi Publishing House, 2005), 372.

Soviet Union and Vietnam that the PRC was not isolated. Moreover, the diplomatic success lessened the opposition to Deng's plans for modernization and reforms. This could only help the self-strengthening of the country. Finally, it opened the U.S. market to China, which could now sell Chinese products to America, and – even more important- gained access to American technology. Therefore, when the Carter administration remained adamant on its position about future arms sales to Taiwan, Deng was forced to the aforementioned final concession, enabling normalization.

The normalization of relations with the People's Republic meant for the Carter administration a fundamental success as it greatly improved the American position in the Asia-Pacific region. The United States had now official relations to all major powers in the region. Moreover, Taiwan was still inside the zone of influence of the USA, and could serve as a strategic hedge vis-à-vis the PRC for years to come. Although the Carter administration had not achieved more than its bottom line goals concerning Taiwan, it was still able to honor its commitment to the island's security. The American arms industry had still access to the Taiwanese market, and the mainland knew that it could not pursue any aggressive tactics against Taipei without a harsh reaction from Washington.

As my research illustrates, the Carter administration took a great risk when it insisted on arms sales to Taiwan after normalization. This approach is only explainable if we take Carter's commitment to Taiwan's security seriously. Otherwise, the president would not have dared to endanger normalization. A failure here would have only cost him political prestige; it also would have put the United States in a bad position vis-à-vis the Soviet Union. In the worst case, a failure of normalization could lead to a new Sino-Soviet alliance.

The result of the negotiations left the USA still in a position to guarantee Taiwan's security. Of course, this commitment is not documented in the joint communiqué or the American unilateral statement, but the relationship between the United States (as the patron) with Taiwan (as the ward) had not changed. Giving U.S.-Taiwan ties the legal character of unofficial people-to-people relations did not alter this matter of fact. The PRC was not able to put an end to the U.S. involvement in the Taiwan Strait. As Deng Xiaoping had stated earlier, however, Taiwan's

liberation could wait.⁷⁰¹ This leads me to the conclusion that the U.S. benefited more from normalization than the PRC because it was not only able to improve its strategic situation but paid also an “affordable” price.

Considering the history of the Taiwan issue, taking into account the role the United States has always been playing in this matter, and given the fact how sensitive Beijing has always been about the American involvement, the content of the normalization agreement and the unilateral statement should not be surprising. Yet, Richard Bush and Robert Ross point out that the Carter administration had not been able to satisfy all of their needs concerning the Taiwan issue with these documents. First, in contrast to the demands of PRM-24, Washington had failed to get Beijing’s commitment for a peaceful solution of the Taiwan issue. Second, neither normalization document clearly stated that the U.S. would continue to sell arms to Taiwan.⁷⁰² While at first glance Bush’s and Ross’ observation appears correct, we have to consider how different the interests and perceptions of Chinese and Americans were about the matter of Taiwan. Furthermore, Bush’s and Ross’ critique does not give enough consideration to the fact that neither the Chinese nor Americans were in a position to achieve their maximum demands.

Archival and non-archival material shows that the Carter administration had to take a very careful approach if it was to satisfy its own requirements about Taiwan, without risking normalization. As I have demonstrated, it was not realistic that Carter and his aides could convince Beijing to accept a strong security language in the normalization agreement or the unilateral statement. The course of the negotiations makes this evident. Both sides were only able to conclude the negotiations successfully because they were willing to make compromises. In fact, as we have seen above, the Carter administration was able to gain far-reaching concessions from the PRC leadership concerning Taiwan although it did not reflect the full scale of the White House’s maximum demands.

As painful as the U.S. decision for normalization and derecognition of the ROC was for the people in Taiwan, Jimmy Carter corrected the mistake that the United States recognized the ROC regime as legal representatives of hundreds of millions of Chinese, although the KMT did not control the mainland. After dec-

⁷⁰¹ Report, Cyrus Vance to White House, 08/24/1977, “China, 1977” folder, Box 34A, Chief of Staff Jordan, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁷⁰² Bush, “Purposes”, 150; Ross, “Negotiating”, 161.

ades of mistrust and even hostility between two of the largest nations in the world, the White House made up for this mistake. Since China was too important in world politics to be ignored by the United States, the establishment of diplomatic relations between Washington and Beijing was a step towards the political realities of the present, away from the ideological grounds of the early Cold War. However, both sides were not able to solve all problems that existed between them. There was more than only the Taiwan issue.

Both sides started to talk about a trade agreement in the months after normalization, realizing that this was another topic of dissent. Even more surprising was that human rights did not play any role in the normalization process. The Chinese had stated that they did not understand the concept the same way the Western World did. To them, the Carter administration's approach did not fit the reality of the life in China.⁷⁰³ Since Washington had forced the PRC leadership to make concessions concerning U.S. involvement in the Taiwan Strait, it might have been too much of a risk to include human rights in the negotiation process, as well. In addition, this matter and Sino-American commercial relations were not deemed important enough at this time. Instead, the next challenge for the Carter administration was now to gain domestic and international support for normalization. This meant for Carter to give up his secrecy, and to face the public and the U.S. Congress.

⁷⁰³ Memcon, Zbigniew Brzezinski, 5/25/1978, "China (People's Republic of) –Brzezinski's Trip: [5/15/78-5/22/78]" folder, Box 9, Donated Historical Material Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection Subject File, Jimmy Carter Library.

Chapter VI: Promoting Normalization, December 1978-February 1979

In 1971, on July 9, Henry Kissinger arrived in Beijing in order to start secret talks with China. These talks established the process of rapprochement which should eventually lead to the normalization of relations between the United States and the People's Republic. However, neither Henry Kissinger, who engineered this process, nor Richard Nixon, who had ordered Kissinger to do so, was able to achieve normalization. More than seven years after Kissinger had touched Chinese soil for the first time, it was the 39th President of the United States, Jimmy Carter, who was able to announce the establishment of diplomatic relations with communist China on December 15, 1978. Finalizing the negotiations with Beijing was only the first step. Carter and his aides now had to promote their achievement in the United States and in Taiwan. Otherwise, the administration would not be able to arrange a framework that allowed normalization to work.

In this chapter I examine the domestic and international reaction to the announcement of normalization, and how the Carter administration tried to appease U.S. Congress, the American public and the regime on Taiwan. Carter faced criticism from all sides, and had to find a way to convince at least parts of his critics of the prudence of his China policy. Otherwise, he would not be able to establish a legal framework that would allow future U.S. relations with Taiwan. Without such a framework, U.S. citizens and agencies could not conduct cultural and commercial relations with Taiwan. From the perspective of U.S. legislation, after derecognition of the ROC regime the island had no legal status that would allow cultural or commercial exchange on the basis of U.S. law or international treaties. The legal framework would define this status for future U.S.-Taiwan ties. Moreover, the administration had to demonstrate their ongoing concern about Taiwan's security, and its willingness to continue arms sales to the island. To make the situation more difficult, Carter and his aides had to achieve these assignments without damaging the frail bond between the U.S. and the PRC which they had just tied via normalization.

Another question, I try to answer in this chapter, is why and in which ways the American and Chinese governments worked together to promote normalization. As I argue, normalization was so important for the PRC regime that the Chinese leadership had to make sure that the agreement did not fail due to the domestic situation in the United States. The state visit of Deng Xiaoping, who was going to travel through the United States from late January to early February 1979, played a major role in this context as the Chinese leader's popularity helped both, the Chinese and the American governments, to gain public consent for normalization.

Both sides knew that the domestic situation in the United States and the strong public support for Taiwan made it necessary to demonstrate the advantages of diplomatic relations between China and the U.S. Since the major critique on normalization based on concerns about Taiwan's security, it was imperative for the PRC leadership to make clear that they did not intend to attack the island in the near future. In contrast, Beijing made it publicly known that the PRC regime was very interested to open a dialogue with the regime in Taipei. While Chinese assertions like this were not new, in early 1979, they rather aimed at the U.S. public than at Taiwan. The Chinese leaderships' idea was to convey the picture of the peace-loving, friendly Chinese nation, supporting the Carter administration in its effort to convince the American people that Taiwan's security was not in jeopardy. In accordance with the argument from Neoclassical Realism that governments need to legitimize their policies at home, the Chinese statements must be seen in this context, and as we will see, they really helped the Carter administration.

The process of promoting normalization began right with its announcement to the U.S. public. In both, his announcement speech and the subsequent press briefing, Carter endeavored to calm down any concerns about Taiwan's security. While diplomatic constraints forced the president to make use of indirect assurances for Taiwan, he hoped that both the American public and the people on Taiwan would believe in the honesty of his concerns and intentions.

In truth, Carter's assurances did not help to diminish the disappointment in Taiwan. Neither did sending Warren Christopher to Taipei. The president instructed the Deputy Secretary of State to set the frame for later negotiations about unofficial U.S.-Taiwan relations, but the high ranking diplomat was not able to calm down the anxieties of the Taiwanese people. The KMT leadership harshly criti-

cized normalization, but also realized that it had to cooperate with the Americans if it wanted to ensure its survival. Therefore, it resorted to typical measures of authoritarian regimes like enforcing martial law. The result was the suspension of the upcoming elections on municipal level.⁷⁰⁴

The reactions to Carter's announcement abroad and in the United States were mixed. The western allies of the United States welcomed normalization as a natural step which could increase the stability in Asia. The Soviet Union, on the other hand, saw normalization aimed at itself, and warned Washington to be careful. As we will later see, the most critical voices, however, came from America's allies in Asia. They were afraid that the termination of the defense treaty with Taiwan would mean the beginning of American disengagement from Asia-Pacific. The Carter administration could not ignore these concerns which were echoed in Washington itself.

In the United States, Carter earned both, compliments and critique. Party boundaries did not play a role in this context. As expected, supporters of Taiwan criticized the White House for not getting a Chinese guarantee to solve the Taiwan issue peacefully. They also questioned the legality of Carter's decision to terminate the Mutual Defense Treaty, a decision that fueled concerns about Taiwan's security. Facing these opinions, the Carter administration wanted to demonstrate its ongoing commitment to Taiwan, preparing sales of military equipment worth more than 340 million U.S. dollars. However, the White House deemed a more visible public relations effort to advertise normalization necessary, and Deng's visit to the United States should serve as such an effort. Its success, however, did not lay in the hands of the Carter administration alone.

The Announcement of Normalization

Although Jimmy Carter felt the public reaction to his announcement very favorable⁷⁰⁵, the administration knew that the Taiwanese people as well as different

⁷⁰⁴ Bernkopf Tucker, "Strait", 112-113.

⁷⁰⁵ Carter, "Faith", 200.

groups in the U.S. would be very critical of Washington's decision.⁷⁰⁶ Thus, the president addressed in his announcement speech the people in Taiwan, assuring them that the U.S. would continue to have strong and close relations with them albeit "through non-governmental means".⁷⁰⁷ Of course, such public statements of reassurance were not only meant for the people of Taiwan. Carter and his aides had to assure the U.S. public that their intentions to continue its support for the island were honest.

One way to divert critique was to share the responsibility for the consequences of normalization. A memo by Michel Oksenberg that dealt with possible disruptions through Henry Kissinger stated that the former National Security Advisor and Secretary of State had negotiated "the framework for our [Carter administration's] China policy" before Carter was even elected. The White House should make known that it was Kissinger who promised to Beijing the use of the *Japanese formula* and negotiated Nixon's so called Five Points.⁷⁰⁸

Carter emphasized that while normalization was the achievement of his administration, he was not to blame for its costs. When he credited the former administrations of Nixon and Ford for the improvement of U.S.-PRC relations over the last decade, he also intended to make clear that their groundwork had set the basis for the Carter administration's leeway during its negotiation with Beijing. Hence, in his public announcement, Carter pointed out every U.S. administration since Richard Nixon had accepted that the communist government in Beijing would be the one speaking for China as a whole: "Realistically, it [the PRC government] is the single government of China and our government must deal with it."⁷⁰⁹ It was this realism in the first place that had enabled the Carter administration to normalize relations although it meant restraint on the Taiwan issue.

In the context of Taiwan, the administration had to hope that the U.S. public would read between the lines. The U.S. side wanted to create the impression that the exiguous Chinese concessions were enough to guarantee Taiwan's security.

⁷⁰⁶ Memo, Richard Holbrooke to Cyrus Vance, 5/19/1978, "Chinese Normalization, 1978" folder, Box 34A, Chief of Staff Jordan, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁷⁰⁷ "Presidential Statement [on normalization]", 12/15/1978, "China Normalization: Items of Significance, 2/77-12/78" folder, Box 19, Plains File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁷⁰⁸ Memo, Michel Oksenberg to Zbigniew Brzezinski, 12/19/1978, "China, [People's Republic of] – President's Meeting with [Vice Premier] Deng Xiaoping: 12/19/78-10/3/80" folder, Box 9, Donated Historical Material Zbigniew Brzezinski Geographic File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁷⁰⁹ "Presidential Statement [on normalization]", 12/15/1978, "China Normalization: Items of Significance, 2/77-12/78" folder, Box 19, Plains File, Jimmy Carter Library.

Carter and his staff had already realized that they did not have much leeway on this matter, and that it was very difficult to accommodate every party. They knew that Beijing would publicly contradict and condemn any strong commitment concerning the security of Taiwan. Therefore, U.S. officials pointed out that the PRC government had promised not to contradict the American unilateral statement about the U.S. interest in a peaceful settlement. During the press briefing after the announcement, Carter underlined that his administration was to credit for this concession.⁷¹⁰ The White House hoped this would be enough to explain to the U.S. public the lack of public assurances for Taiwan.

Neither the joint communiqué nor the unilateral statements could dare such blank boldness as to guarantee Taiwan's security. Using mostly language from the Shanghai Communiqué, the joint communiqué included all points both sides had previously agreed upon.⁷¹¹ It was the least common denominator. As I have argued in the previous chapter, the Carter administration had to accept it because it had been impossible to achieve further going concessions from the Chinese than the White House had already achieved during the negotiations.

The unilateral statements served both sides as a substitution, containing everything that would have prevented a normalization agreement. If both sides would have stated their respective views about the Taiwan issue in the communiqué, it would have never come into existence. But the unilateral statements offered Washington and Beijing an opportunity to express their disagreement. They still had to be cautious in order to not offend their interlocutor, but the Carter administration was still able to refer to its position that it “continue[d] to have an interest in the peaceful resolution of the Taiwan issue and expect[ed] the Taiwan issue [would] be settled peacefully by the Chinese himself.”⁷¹² The delicateness of Sino-American relations forbade the U.S. president to demand such a resolution.

The PRC leadership made clear in their own unilateral statement that it did not share Washington's point of view, pointing out that the Taiwan issue was an

⁷¹⁰ Background Briefing [on normalization], 12/15/1978, “China, (PRC) 12/78]” folder, Box 9, NSA Brzezinski Material Country File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁷¹¹ Joint Communiqué on the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations [between the United States of America and the People's Republic of China], 1/1/1979, “China, [People's Republic of] – Normalization: 12/18/78-12/31/78]” folder, Box 9, Donated Historical Material Zbigniew Brzezinski Geographic File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁷¹² Statement of the Government of the United States of America [on normalization], 1/1/1979, “China, [People's Republic of] – Normalization: 12/18/78-12/31/78]” folder, Box 9, Donated Historical Material Zbigniew Brzezinski Geographic File, Jimmy Carter Library.

internal affair, and the Chinese alone decided how to solve the problem.⁷¹³ The document leaves no doubt how far apart both sides really were on the matter of the Taiwan. In order to save Beijing's face, Hua Guofeng emphasized that China expected the U.S. just to have unofficial relations with Taiwan as well as not selling military equipment to the island. Nevertheless, it seemed apparent that the Chinese side was realistic concerning the last point, since Hua also stated that despite differing views on the matter of arms sales, the more important thing was that normalization finally had been achieved.⁷¹⁴ Washington shared this sentiment.⁷¹⁵

The announcement and also the unilateral statements of both sides indicated how much they valued the achievement of normalization. It was clear that both sides could live with their differences for now, and cherished normalization more than insisting on their principle views about Taiwan. The public statements, thus, expressed the same kind of flexibility and pragmatism Chinese and Americans had demonstrated during the whole normalization process. Due to the opposed positions on the matter of Taiwan, the only formula both governments agreed upon was to “agree to disagree”, and this thinking was articulated in the unilateral statements.

The Situation in Taiwan

In spite of having many supporters in U.S. Congress, ROC leaders were completely unaware of the secret negotiations between Washington and Beijing about normalization. Other than during Kissinger's negotiations with Beijing, the Carter administration did not keep Taipei informed. Critique from members of the administration notwithstanding,⁷¹⁶ Carter also opted for a short notice of Taiwanese officials prior to his announcement. Ambassador Leonard Unger was instructed to request a

⁷¹³ Statement of the Government of the People's Republic of China [on normalization], 1/1/1979, “China, [People's Republic of] – Normalization: 12/18/78-12/31/78” folder, Box 9, Donated Historical Material Zbigniew Brzezinski Geographic File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁷¹⁴ “华主席就中美建交举行记者招待会” [“Präsident Hua Gives Press Conference Concerning the Establishment of Chinese-American Diplomatic Relations”], 新华月报 [Monthly News], 12/1978.

⁷¹⁵ Washington had conveyed this position to Beijing during Cyrus Vance's China trip in August, 1977, see: report on Second Meeting of Vance's visit to Beijing, Cyrus Vance, 08/23/1977, “China MR-NLC-98-215 (1)” folder, Box 40, Vertical Files (VF), Jimmy Carter Library.

⁷¹⁶ Memo, Michael Armocast to Zbigniew Brzezinski, 12/14/1978, “China, [People's Republic of] – Normalization: 12/18/78-12/31/78” folder, Box 9, Donated Historical Material Zbigniew Brzezinski Geographic File, Jimmy Carter Library.

meeting with President Chiang, just one hour before the announcement. Even Brzezinski had suggested giving Taipei notice twelve hours before Carter's announcement.⁷¹⁷ An earlier notification would have expressed respect and empathy for the ROC, but instead Carter opted again for secrecy because he was too concerned about leaks.

Despite the late timing of the notion, the Carter administration was sincerely interested to comfort the KMT leaders as much as possible to avoid any kind of destabilization in Taiwan. When the ambassador wanted to see Chiang Ching-kuo in the middle of the night of December 16 (CST), Taiwanese officials seemed to know what he was going to say.⁷¹⁸ In a note for ROC President Chiang, Jimmy Carter expressed his sympathy for the Taiwanese leader, and assured him of Washington's intentions to work something out to ascertain the "peace, prosperity and wellbeing of the people on Taiwan."⁷¹⁹ It was an honest courtesy, but, as we will see, it came too late to prevent the Taiwanese public from being shocked. Over the next couple of weeks people in Taiwan panicked and blamed the U.S. government to abandon the island.

The late notice demonstrated Carter's ambivalence about Taiwan and the way his administration treated the old U.S. ally. During the negotiations with the PRC, the U.S. administration had gone out on a limb to maintain involvement in the Taiwan Strait and to be in a position to protect Taiwan beyond normalization. However, the White House had also avoided any far reaching communication with ROC representatives, reducing direct contacts to exchanges between lower rank officials. Even during the few meetings between U.S. and ROC diplomats, American officials refrained from strong commitments towards Taiwan's security. The administration just did not trust Taipei to keep the commitments made in private a secret. The White House was always aware that strong public guarantees for the island's security could lead to frictions with the People's Republic. Therefore, Washington was reluctant to commit itself, neither in public nor in private. Carter gambled that some vague statements about his concerns about Taiwan, and the

⁷¹⁷ Memo, Zbigniew Brzezinski to Jimmy Carter, 12/14/1978, "China, [People's Republic of] – Normalization: 12/18/78-12/31/78]" folder, Box 9, Donated Historical Material Zbigniew Brzezinski Geographic File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁷¹⁸ Jay Taylor, *The Generalissimo's Son. Chiang Ching-kuo and the Revolution in China and Taiwan* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 335-337.

⁷¹⁹ Note, Richard Holbrooke, 12/15/1978, "China (PRC) 12/78" folder, Box 9, NSA Brzezinski Material Country File, Jimmy Carter Library.

willingness to sell arms to the island would be enough to calm down the critique from members of the Congress and Taiwan. As he states in his memoirs, he really believed to have always been honest and upfront to the Taiwanese since their well-being had always been taken into account by his administration.⁷²⁰

Since the ROC leadership had had almost no access to the Carter administration, it could not be sure if the U.S. president did really care for Taiwan's security. With the exception of Leonard Unger, no U.S. official had kept the ROC informed over all the months before the announcement, and even these briefings were very short and superficial at best. As we have seen above, Brzezinski delayed a meeting with James Shen several times, while Cyrus Vance did not even offer such a meeting with the ROC ambassador. The president and vice president had also been never available.⁷²¹ Moreover, the statement of reassurance that was submitted by Unger did not include any hints about continued arms sale, or any plans to defend Taiwan in the event of an attack from the mainland.⁷²² Even the most imaginative and optimistic Taiwanese leaders had no idea what the future of U.S.-Taiwanese relations could look like.

The Carter administration's lack of openness and commitment left the Taiwanese side in the dark, and led to a feeling of insecurity in the whole society. It fueled the worst fears of the people on Taiwan who were simply afraid not be able to control their own future, anymore. Only a few days after the announcement, students of the well-respected Taiwan National University collected money for the national defense. Nancy Bernkopf Tucker describes the situation in Taiwan during that period as "cautious". The ROC government had to retain control, and Chiang even suspended the legislative elections due to a fear of rising instability.⁷²³ It was as if the Taiwanese leaders tried to freeze everything in order to prevent a crisis.

In the end, a crisis never materialized, and the KMT regime was able to maintain its grasp on the island. In the short term, normalization and derecognition even helped Chiang and his aides after the regime's legitimacy had started to crumble through the 1970s. The KMT's claim to rule Taiwan was eroding as the success of the opposition movement "Dangwai" in the local elections in 1977 had

⁷²⁰ Carter, "Faith", 200.

⁷²¹ Shen, "U.S.", 205-206, 214.

⁷²² Memo, Zbigniew Brzezinski to Cyrus Vance, 12/18/1978, "China (Republic of China), 11-12/78" folder, Box 11, NSA Brzezinski Material Country File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁷²³ Bernkopf Tucker, "Strait", 113.

demonstrated.⁷²⁴ The threat of an imminent crisis, however, helped the KMT as it enabled the party to blame the United States for Taiwan's problems. In addition, it allowed the ROC government to take measures that would oppress any political opposition. The two most notorious actions in this context were the aforementioned suspension of local elections and the extension of the rule of martial law. Nonetheless, Chiang still needed the U.S. to demonstrate some commitment to Taiwan's security. In order to accomplish this goal, turning to Taiwan's friends in U.S. Congress was a logical step.

The International Reaction to Normalization

All over the world, governments were surprised about the sudden announcement of normalization. On December 6, only days before the announcement of normalization, the German consulate general in Hong Kong sent a report to the Foreign Office in Berlin observing "that [...] the establishment of diplomatic relations between Washington and Peking is so to speak 'just around the corner', as some people here claim, appears doubtful."⁷²⁵ While this assessment was wrong, it demonstrated that other countries were interested in how the relationship between the USA and PRC would develop. Unfortunately, no government close to the U.S. had any information about the status of normalization. The world was looking to Washington and Beijing.

The international reaction to normalization mattered to the United States. Two weeks before the announcement by President Carter, the State Department had sent a memorandum to Brzezinski, concluding that the overall reaction would be rather positive. The DOS expected the western allies as well as New Zealand and Australia to welcome the decision wholeheartedly, not drawing any parallels to

⁷²⁴ Gunter Schubert, "Taiwan seit 1945: Von der Entwicklungsdiktatur zur entwickelten Demokratie" in: Carsten Herrmann-Pillath/Michael Lackner (ed.): *Länderbericht China. Politik, Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft im chinesischen Kulturraum* (Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 2000), 211-212. For a more detailed reading see: Alan M. Wachman, *Taiwan: National Identity and Democratization* (New York: M.E. Sharp, 1994); Shelley Rigger, *Politics in Taiwan. Voting for Democracy* (London: Routledge, 1999).

⁷²⁵ Translation by the author; original text: " Daß [...] die Aufnahme diplomatischer Beziehungen Washingtons zu Peking sozusagen 'vor der Tür stehe', wie hier manche meinen, erscheint allerdings zweifelhaft"; see: Report, "Verhältnis VR China – Taiwan – USA", 12/6/1978, "Pol 322.00 Außenpolitik VR-China, 1973-1981", Politisches Archiv, Auswärtiges Amt.

their situation. The Soviets, on the other hand, would probably react critically, implying that “the U.S. playing its China card after having reached an impasse in its dealings with the USSR.”⁷²⁶

Despite the expectation of rather positive reactions to normalization, Carter explained his decision for normalization in personal letters to the British, German, and French leaders, respectively. He described normalization as a step to promote peace and stability.⁷²⁷ In another letter, the U.S. president also endeavored to assure the Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev that normalization did not serve to put pressure on the Soviet Union. Carter also wrote that “[t]here is no greater priority in my government than the strengthening of relations between our [U.S. and USSR] two countries.”⁷²⁸ It was an attempt to align Washington’s efforts to have good relations with China with Carter’s attempts to make progress in the administration’s SALT negotiations with the Soviet Union.

Such assurances were necessary as Moscow reacted as critical as expected. The Soviet ambassador to the United States, Anatoly Dobrynin, conveyed a message from his government to the Americans during a brief phone call to Brzezinski. The Soviets characterized normalization as “a natural thing”, but questioned the reasons for Carter’s decision since the PRC pursued an anti-Soviet policy. Thus, Moscow viewed the anti-hegemony clause from the joint communiqué as directed against itself warning the Americans that “the Soviet Union will follow most closely what will be the practical results of the development of U.S.-China relations...”⁷²⁹ These words confirmed the conclusion of a report by the German Foreign Office which suggested the Kremlin suspected that normalization served the development of an anti-Soviet axis in East Asia consistent of Beijing, Tokyo and Washington.⁷³⁰

⁷²⁶ Memo, Peter Tarnoff to Zbigniew Brzezinski, 12/2/1978, “China (PRC) 12/78” folder, Box 9, NSA Brzezinski Material Country File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁷²⁷ Draft, Jimmy Carter to James Callaghan/Helmut Schmidt/Valery Giscard [d’Estaing], 12/15/1978, “China, [People’s Republic of] – Normalization: 12/18/78-12/31/78]” folder, Box 9, Donated Historical Material Zbigniew Brzezinski Geographic File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁷²⁸ Draft, Jimmy Carter to Leonid Brezhnev, 12/14/1978, “China, [People’s Republic of] – Normalization: 12/18/78-12/31/78]” folder, Box 9, Donated Historical Material Zbigniew Brzezinski Geographic File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁷²⁹ Memcon, Zbigniew Brzezinski, 12/19/1978, “China, [People’s Republic of] – Normalization: 12/18/78-12/31/78]” folder, Box 9, Donated Historical Material Zbigniew Brzezinski Geographic File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁷³⁰ Memo, “Stichwortartige Bewertung der chinesischen Außenpolitik”, 3/16/1979, “Pol 322.00 Außenpolitik VR-China, 1973-1981”, Politisches Archiv, Auswärtiges Amt.

The public reaction in countries of the Western European allies, on the other hand, also confirmed the State Department's former assessment, since they saw normalization uncritical. Different newspapers across Europe described U.S.-China normalization as the acceptance of the political reality in Asia. Only some German journalists pointed to the possibility that one day the U.S. might abandon West Berlin as well in order to achieve accommodation with the Soviet Union.⁷³¹

In Asia, leaders took a more problematic position. Since Washington had kept its negotiations with Beijing a secret, it could not appease its partners in the region in preparation of normalization. We have to be aware that Carter's decision had a much bigger impact on the strategic situation in Asia than in Europe. American allies like Japan, South Korea, and most non-communist states in Southeast Asia appeared concerned that Sino-American normalization would mean an American disengagement from the Asia-Pacific region. These sentiments were echoed in the East Asian and Southeast Asian press. While normalization was generally approved, the way the U.S. treated Taiwan was interpreted as an abandonment of the island, and this behavior demonstrated America's lack of reliability as an ally. According to some newspaper articles, the American decision would lead to a power shift in the region, favoring the PRC.⁷³² Thus, Washington was aware that "many nations would expect the U.S.-ROC relationship to change just in form rather than in substance."⁷³³

The Carter administration knew it had to convince Taiwan and all other American partners in Asia that the stability of Asia-Pacific was an important concern of U.S. policy in the region. In this context, I argue that U.S. security assurances and continuing arms sales to Taiwan did not only serve to appease Taiwan – or as mentioned before the U.S. public. The demonstration of commitment to Taiwan's security was also important to restate the credibility of the United States as an ally. Without this credibility, the American security and structure of alliances in Asia-Pacific could erode, weakening the U.S. strategic position and influencing the distribution of power, resulting in a detriment to the United States.

⁷³¹ Special Report, Foreign Media Reaction [about normalization], 12/27/1978, "Visit of U.S. by China's Vice Premier Deng Xiaoping, 1/29/79-2/5/79 [CF, O/A 587] [1]" folder, Box 81, Staff Offices Press Powell, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁷³² Ibid.

⁷³³ Memo, Peter Tarnoff to Zbigniew Brzezinski, 12/2/1978, "China (PRC) 12/78" folder, Box 9, NSA Brzezinski Material Country File, Jimmy Carter Library.

Washington's position in East Asia had to be stabilized. The United States needed the image as an Asian power, protecting its friends and allies. The Joint Chiefs of Staff had emphasized this necessity in a report to Harold Brown a month before the announcement of normalization. The generals saw normalization rather positive, as long as the Taiwan issue would be handled correctly. It would be important to have compensatory mechanics to guarantee Taiwan's security. In such a case the termination of the MDT would be no problem. However, the U.S. administration's position to provide Taiwan's security on an unofficial basis would "have a positive impact on perceptions and [would] demonstrate US resolve to maintain a substantial and constructive influence in the Pacific." As the JCS believed, a strong American position would be in the PRC's interest since it would help the U.S. to counterbalance Soviet influence.⁷³⁴ Harold Brown took the JCS conclusion very seriously, and was assured that normalization, "managed properly", could strengthen U.S. influence in the Asia-Pacific region as long as it would provide security assistance for Taiwan.⁷³⁵ This attitude indicated that the decision-makers in the U.S. took such concerns into account. As the Carter administration's tenacity during the normalization negotiations had showed, any relationship with Taiwan, whatever legal character it might have, had to incorporate some kind of American security assistance for the island. Due to diplomatic considerations towards the PRC, the Carter administration just could not say so in public.

The Critique on Normalization in the United States

The reaction at home was even more critical for the success of normalization. Right from the beginning, the Carter administration had to be aware that, as the political scientist Leonard A. Kusnitz argues, throughout the whole 1970s the U.S. public had a more favorable view of Taiwan than of the PRC. In 1977 for example, polls showed that only 26% of the respondents stated to have a favorable image of the People's Republic, while 56% of them had one of Taiwan. This view translated to

⁷³⁴ Memo, David C. Jones to Harold Brown, 11/20/1978, "China, [People's Republic of] – Normalization: [11/20/78-12/18/78]" folder, Box 9, Donated Historical Material Zbigniew Brzezinski Geographic File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁷³⁵ Memo, Harold Brown to David C. Jones, 12/2/1978, China Normalization: Items of Significance, 2/77-12/78" folder, Box 19, Plains File, Jimmy Carter Library.

the MDT. According to Kusnitz, only a few months before the announcement of normalization, in September, a poll asked if the United States should continue or should terminate the defense treaty with Taiwan. A vast majority of 64% wanted the treaty to continue while only 19% favored its termination.⁷³⁶ Even before the successful conclusion of the negotiations in Beijing, the administration was aware of these concerns, as a memorandum from Richard Holbrooke to Cyrus Vance indicated. Holbrooke explained that the American people preferred the status-quo in the Taiwan Strait, not wanting Washington to assist China in becoming a great power. The polls also made clear, that even in the event of the establishment of diplomatic relations with the PRC, the U.S. should ascertain Taiwan's security.⁷³⁷

These polls did not prevent Carter from normalizing relations with the PRC, and in fact, normalization itself was not questioned by the U.S. public. The president, however, had to know that the support for his achievement was fragile. The American public was very ambivalent about U.S. China and Taiwan policy. As polls conducted by CBS network between 1977 and 1979 indicated, a slight majority of U.S. citizens approved Carter's decision for normalization, although public endorsement dropped significantly, as soon as the polls linked normalization to the derecognition of Taiwan.⁷³⁸ This connection did not change over the following period of time. One month after Carter's announcement, 57% of the interviewed persons approved the president's decision, while only 23% did not, but 48% of them thought normalization "was not an 'important enough reason to break off diplomatic ties with Taiwan'." In February, 44% of U.S. citizens were even opposed to normalization at the cost of the MDT, while only 40% agreed with such a decision.⁷³⁹

Some of the Carter administration's political opponents tried to make use of the U.S. public's ambivalence. They criticized the consequences of the Carter's decision concerning Taiwan. One of these critics was Henry Kissinger. The nature of his criticism does not become clear from the archival record, as a report by Michel Oksenberg only stated that "Kissinger is beginning to hit us on China poli-

⁷³⁶ Kusnitz, "Opinion", 141, 172.

⁷³⁷ Memo, Richard Holbrooke to Cyrus Vance, 5/19/1978, "Chinese Normalization, 1978" folder, Box 34A, Chief of Staff Jordan, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁷³⁸ CBS News, CBS News Polls, 1977-1979, Study No.: ICPSR07817-v1 (Ann Arbor: Interuniversity Consortium for Political and Social Research [distributor], 1981).

⁷³⁹ Kusnitz, "Opinion", 143-145.

cy.”⁷⁴⁰ As the architect of rapprochement policy, the U.S. public would take Kissinger’s criticism seriously. This could damage the administration’s plans.

The White House, however, was not willing to let Kissinger get away with his critique. Oksenberg suggested a call by Brzezinski, reminding Kissinger that the administration had always been very gentle with him concerning his China policy. Oksenberg pointed out that so far they did not plan to mention his promises to China concerning Taiwan which had set the frame for the whole normalization process, and had limited the Carter administration’s scope of options enormously. However, Oksenberg suggested that Brzezinski conveyed to Kissinger that this attitude could change.⁷⁴¹ The threats must have affected Kissinger since he refrained from further public criticism. Still, he was just one former dignitary to worry about.

An even bigger concern was the reaction of the former Presidents Nixon and Ford. Hamilton Jordan suggested, the president should call Nixon convincing him to support normalization like Gerald Ford had already done.⁷⁴² In order to express the Carter administration’s respect for the achievements of Nixon’s China policy, Michel Oksenberg briefed him in a personal meeting. The former president was not as critical as expected. Instead, he expressed his belief that Taiwan would survive normalization. The administration should entertain a Senate resolution by someone it could work with “which the Administration might indirectly encourage but which openly the Administration might only grudgingly accept or even somewhat disown.”⁷⁴³

Nixon also had some critical words for the president. In a letter to Jimmy Carter concerning normalization, he expressed three major concerns. First, there were still no guarantees for a peaceful solution of the Taiwan issue. Second, the termination of the MDT questioned U.S. credibility as an ally. Finally, Carter’s ability to gain public support for future foreign policy initiatives suffered because he was going to face heavy critique from the Senate whose support he needed in

⁷⁴⁰Memo, Michel Oksenberg to Zbigniew Brzezinski, 12/19/1978, “China, [People’s Republic of] – President’s Meeting with [Vice Premier] Deng Xiaoping: 12/19/78-10/3/80” folder, Box 9, Donated Historical Material Zbigniew Brzezinski Geographic File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁷⁴¹Ibid.

⁷⁴² Memo, Hamilton Jordan to Jimmy Carter, 12/17/1978, “Chinese Normalization, 1978” folder, Box 34A, Chief of Staff Jordan, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁷⁴³ Memo, Michel Oksenberg to Zbigniew Brzezinski, 12/19/1978 in: FRUS, 1977-1980, Volume XIII, China (Washington D.C.: United States Printing Office, 2013), 658.

foreign affairs. Nixon repeated his idea that the administration could leave the matter of further security guarantees to the Congress in order to protect its relationship with Beijing. This way, the United States was still able to stand by its security commitments to Taiwan. In Nixon's view, that was important because if China was going to become more powerful, Taiwan would become more important for the U.S. position in East Asia in the future than some people realized. In any case, as the former president put it, the pro-Taiwan fraction would be "a fact of American political life", and the White House had to account for it.⁷⁴⁴

Nixon's warning of the Congressional reaction proved to be correct. Just a few days after the announcement of normalization, some Congressmen wrote to the White House. The critique was not aimed at normalization itself but went in different directions. One group of Congressmen just requested the president to meet ROC Ambassador James Shen before his departure on December 29. They expected the president to show some respect for the people in Taiwan. Carter declined this request because he did not want to send the wrong signal to Beijing.⁷⁴⁵ Other letters saw a danger for U.S. credibility as an ally, claiming a better deal from the Chinese had been possible. Others questioned the legality of Carter's actions and pointed out that the president had ignored Congressional legislation (the aforementioned Dole-Stone amendment), by not informing Capitol Hill about the upcoming changes in the U.S.-Taiwan relations.⁷⁴⁶ A considerable amount of members of the Congress, who approved normalization in general, criticized that Carter's decision would have come at the cost of the people on Taiwan—a sentiment that was shared by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops.⁷⁴⁷

Concerned about Taiwan's security, different Congressmen wanted a strong commitment to keep the island safe. Such demands came from members of both parties in the Congress. The Democrat Antonio B. Won Pat from Guam for example stressed the significance of Taiwan for the strategic position of the United

⁷⁴⁴ Letter, Richard Nixon to Jimmy Carter, 12/20/1978, "China, [People's Republic of] – Alpha Channel: [12/78-1/80]" folder, Box 9, Donated Historical Material Zbigniew Brzezinski Geographic File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁷⁴⁵ Letter, Diverse to Jimmy Carter, 12/22/1978, "CO 34-2 Executive 6/1/78-12/31/78" folder, Box CO-16, Countries, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁷⁴⁶ Letter, Robert Daniel, Jr. to Jimmy Carter, 12/21/1978, "CO 34-2 Executive 1/1/79-1/17/79" folder, Box CO-17, Countries, Jimmy Carter Library; Letter, Richard T. Schulze to Jimmy Carter, 12/21/1978, "CO 34-2 Executive 1/18/79-1/31/79" folder, Box CO-17, Countries, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁷⁴⁷ Letter, National Conference of Catholic Bishops to Jimmy Carter, 5/29/1979, "CO 34-1 General 1/20/77-1/20/81" folder, Box CO-16, Countries, Jimmy Carter Library.

States in the Asia-Pacific region.⁷⁴⁸ The Carter administration could not ignore the aforementioned polls and the critique by numerous Congressmen if normalization was to find broad political and public support in the United States.

The president needed to strengthen his position vis-à-vis his critics at home. The first step for the White House was to inform Congress about its intentions to maintain a close relationship with Taiwan, and to remain involved in the Taiwan Strait. The president wanted to emphasize his ongoing concern for the island and its people. The preparation documents for the Congressional briefing about normalization, therefore, indicated that U.S.-ROC relations were not to change in substance but only in their legal status.⁷⁴⁹

With the exception of the MDT, the White House planned to leave all bilateral treaties and arrangements with the ROC effective. This decision served as much practical as political goals because observers in Washington including the political opposition had to be convinced of Carter's benevolence towards Taiwan. Carter's directive "for all departments and agencies" should convey the impression that Taiwan was virtually treated as a state: "...whenever any law, regulation, or orders of the United States refers to a foreign country, nation, state, government, or similar entity, departments and agencies shall construe those terms and apply those laws, regulations, or order to include Taiwan."⁷⁵⁰ In this fashion, the Carter administration proved how serious the president was to develop a framework that allowed the United States future dealings with Taiwan. Despite this gravity, all statements and public documents concerning Taiwan expressed that the White House deliberately failed to include any security component in their legislation draft.

The only hint for the Carter administration's commitment to guarantee Taiwan's security was the White House's stressing of its intention to continue arms sales to Taiwan. These sales were the most obvious proof for the ongoing American support of the island. We have to be aware that as long as the ROC forces had access to U.S. military equipment, the PRC knew that the United States still acted

⁷⁴⁸ Letter, Antonio Won Pat to Jimmy Carter, 12/18/1978, "CO 34-2 Executive 1/1/79-1/17/79" folder, Box CO-17, Countries, Jimmy Carter Library; Letter, John Danforth to Jimmy Carter, 1/2/1979, "CO 34-2 Executive 1/1/79-1/17/79" folder, Box CO-17, Countries, Jimmy Carter Library; Letter, Virginia D. Smith to Jimmy Carter, 1/5/1979, "CO 34-2 Executive 1/1/79-1/17/79" folder, Box CO-17, Countries, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁷⁴⁹ Congressional Briefing [on normalization], 12/15/1978, "China (PRC) 12/78" folder, Box 9, NSA Brzezinski Material Country File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁷⁵⁰ Memo, Jimmy Carter to all Departments and Agencies, 12/30/1978, "China (Republic of China), 11-12/78" folder, Box 11, NSA Brzezinski Material Country File, Jimmy Carter Library.

as Taiwan's protector. Carter's approval for increased sales of military equipment to Taiwan in the second half of 1978 underlines this point of view.

In addition to tighten U.S.-Taiwan commercial relations, the regime in Taipei recognized a chance to use arms purchases from the United States as an instrument of policy. Subsequently, Taiwanese orders for military material climbed to over 340 million U.S. dollars.⁷⁵¹ These orders did not only serve the purpose to strengthen Taiwan's military forces. They should also remind the United States that the American arms industry benefited from the ROC's security needs. Since the arms industry has always been an influential pressure group, the president had a political interest to consider their needs. To Taipei's relief, many American arms manufacturer like Northrop Grumman or McDonald Douglas/Boeing had an interest to sell their military systems to Taiwan.

Still, the Carter administration's biggest problem remained, finding a balance between diplomatic and domestic considerations. On the one hand, arms sales to Taiwan should not offend the PRC too much, while on the other hand, Washington had to make sure that the ROC's defensive capabilities would be strong enough to deter any coercion from the mainland. Although Carter was willing to consider Beijing's objection to arms sales insofar as he partially abstained from selling state-of-the-art equipment to Taiwan, the president and his advisors fully knew that no American government could afford to cease selling arms to Taiwan if it wanted to find domestic support for their China policy. Arms sales would not only appease Taipei. It would also appease Congress, and all U.S. allies in the Asia-Pacific region who were afraid of an American disengagement.

As the normalization negotiations had already proved, the arms sales issue should remain a tightrope walk for Carter. The decision about the sale of all-weather aircraft to Taiwan in the summer of 1978 provides a good example for this dilemma. Taiwan's air force lacked the capability to counterattack airstrikes in bad weather as the old version of their Northrop F-5 fighter aircraft did not possess the necessary equipment to be active under such conditions. The F-4 Phantom from McDonald Douglas, which represented the most sophisticated all weather fighter

⁷⁵¹Report, "U.S: Arms Sales to Taiwan", Bureau of Public Affairs of the Department of State, 01/1979, "China-Taiwan" folder, Box 160, Office of Anne Wexler, Special Assistant to the President Michael Channin's Subject Files, Jimmy Carter Library.

aircraft at the time, could solve this problem.⁷⁵² The U.S. Department of Defense favored the sale of F-4 because the state-of-the-art jet and his sophisticated systems could foster Taiwan's air defense for decades to come.⁷⁵³ The DOS, on the other hand, recommended that the USA should not sell the F-4 to Taiwan because it could alienate the PRC. According to Cyrus Vance, the Chinese would interpret this "as a hostile diplomatic signal."⁷⁵⁴ Instead, the State Department suggested that Taiwan should get an upgraded version of the F-5 (the E-version) which also possessed the all weather capabilities the ROC air force needed. The F-5 would be rather acceptable for Beijing than a state-of-the-art jet like the F-4.⁷⁵⁵

The DOS's view prevailed, but their considerations were futile. After the Chinese government learned about the sale of the F-5E, they complained that this decision would "raise obstacles to the normalization of relations between [...]" the PRC and the United States. In a conversation which took place briefly before both sides reached the normalization agreement, Richard Holbrooke argued to the Chinese the sale of the F-5E was "a continuation of something that has gone on for several years."⁷⁵⁶ The sub-text of Holbrooke's reply was that arms sales to Taiwan would continue, no matter how much the Chinese would complain about it. As we have seen in the previous chapter, the PRC finally accepted the Carter administration's position.

Another hint, that the United States would sell arms to Taiwan after normalization, came from Brzezinski. The APNSA sought to use arms sales to Taiwan in order to satisfy U.S. supporters of the KMT regime. Therefore, he suggested to

⁷⁵² Senate and House had discussed the sale of the F-4 to Taiwan in the late 1960s and early 1970s. While the House wanted the ROC government to get access to the more sophisticated F-4, the Senate seemed to have reservations, see: Memo, "Military Assistance and Force Reorganization – Addendum – Congressional Action on the Silkes F-4 Ammendment and GRC Reaction", 12/24/1969, "U.P. Agnew's Trip Dec 1969-Jan 1970 Republic of China TS/EXDIS", Box 81, National Security Council Files – Henry A. Kissinger Office Files – Country Files-Far East, Richard Nixon Library.

⁷⁵³ Memo, Zbigniew Brzezinski to Jimmy Carter, 4/11/1978, "Serial Xs—[8/77-8/78]" folder, Box 36, Donated Historical Material Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection Subject File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁷⁵⁴ Memo, "Arms Sales to Taiwan", Cyrus Vance to Jimmy Carter, undated, "TL Sensitive 7/1-9/30/78" folder, Box 17, Record of Anthony Lake, 1977-1981, RG 59, NARA.

⁷⁵⁵ Memo, Leslie Gelb/Robert Oakley/Anthony Lake to Cyrus Vance, 7/7/1978, "TL Sensitive 7/1-9/30/78" folder, Box 17, Record of Anthony Lake, 1977-1981, RG 59, NARA. The same deal should provide the ROC with modern Harpoon anti-ship launchers and missiles to equip the ROC's new patrol boats. The ROC had already requested this equipment during the presidency of Gerald Ford when the Harpoons had not yet been in the U.S. Navy's inventory, see: Memo, George Springsteen, 04/29/1975, "China, Republic of (4)" folder, Box 4, National Security Advisor Presidential Country Files for East Asia and the Pacific, Gerald Ford Library.

⁷⁵⁶ Summary, "Han-Holbrooke meeting November 15: arms sales; [D]eng visit; Vietnam," 11/16/1978, "China MR-NLC-98-214 (2)" folder, Box 40, Vertical Files, Jimmy Carter Library.

postpone the sales of anti-ship Harpoon launchers and missiles to Taiwan, bundling the deal together with the sale of the F-5E for a time when the Carter administration “will have to demonstrate later our [the American] dedication to Taiwan’s defense.” The APNSA had always appeared as the most eager advocate of normalization among Carter’s advisors, also at the cost of Taiwan. As an immigrant of Polish birth, Brzezinski was a fierce Cold War warrior always searching for ways to counterbalance the Soviet Union. Normalization had always appealed to him as an instrument to put pressure on the USSR. However, Brzezinski was also aware that normalization could not work out if the U.S. would not maintain a security relationship with Taiwan. Otherwise, Congress would not support normalization.⁷⁵⁷ The next step was now to talk with the Taiwanese, and explain to them the Carter administration’s intentions.

The Christopher Mission

Deputy Secretary of State Warren Christopher was Carter’s choice to be the first U.S. top official to go to Taiwan after derecognition of the ROC. Christopher, a career diplomat and former U.S. Deputy Attorney General, should speak about a framework with Taipei that would enable Washington to maintain close relations with Taiwan without alienating the PRC. He was also, together with David Aaron, chairman of the administration’s special ad-hoc group that should help to coordinate the implementation of normalization in Washington’s bureaucratic apparatus.⁷⁵⁸ As one of the highest ranking U.S. diplomats, Christopher had a profound knowledge of the normalization process. Moreover, due to his experience in the field of jurisdiction, he was perfect to overcome any legal difficulties. Christopher’s rank in the State Department was also important. As Deputy Secretary of State he was important enough to please U.S. Congress and the regime in Taipei but his rank would not offend the PRC.

⁷⁵⁷Zbigniew Brzezinski to Jimmy Carter, 10/26/1978, “China (Republic of China), 11-12/78” folder, Box 11, NSA Brzezinski Material Country File, Jimmy Carter Library. Like Cyrus Vance, Brzezinski was wrong as China has been complaining about any American arms deal with Taiwan for more than three decades, now.

⁷⁵⁸ Memo, Zbigniew Brzezinski to Walter Mondale/Harold Brown/David C. Jones/Stansfield Turner, 12/18/1978, “China (PRC) 12/78” folder, Box 9, NSA Brzezinski Material Country File, Jimmy Carter Library.

On December 27, Christopher arrived in Taipei. He and his companions were greeted by a mob of thousands of disappointed Taiwanese. The demonstrators threw tomatoes and other waste at the U.S. delegation's motorcade, forcing Carter to offer to Christopher to call off the mission. However, the Deputy Secretary insisted to stay in Taipei as long as the KMT regime would ensure his and his delegation's security. When he met Chiang Ching-kuo soon after the incident, the ROC president assured the Americans to be safe for the rest of their visit to Taiwan. Despite disappointment and a feeling of betrayal, the Taiwanese were still willing to cooperate with the U.S. government realizing "the need to foster future ties with the United States."⁷⁵⁹

Christopher characterized his first meeting with CCK as positive and constructive.⁷⁶⁰ During several sessions, ROC officials argued the regime needed government-to-government relations to the U.S. due to legal matters.⁷⁶¹ This claim was echoed in Taipei's five principles about future U.S.-Taiwan ties. The first was "reality", and meant that the existence of the ROC was an immovable fact. The second was "continuity". U.S.-ROC relations had continuously to improve. The third one dealt with Taiwan's "security" that Washington had to guarantee via ongoing support and arms sales. The fourth principle was "legality", emphasizing the need for a legal framework in order to have economic and cultural relations after derecognition. Finally, the ROC insisted on a certain degree of "governmentality". CCK believed it would need government-to-government relations in order to handle issues like arms sales.⁷⁶² These demands demonstrated that Taipei was not unprepared and had its own ideas how the relationship with the United States should look like in the future. Christopher was too experienced a diplomat to guarantee for anything of the above. He left Taipei without any agreement as both sides should negotiate about this topic later in Washington. Still, his mission was vital for the U.S. administration to learn how CCK and his aides imagined the future of unofficial U.S.-Taiwan relations.

⁷⁵⁹ Special Report, "Foreign Media Reaction [about normalization]", 12/27/1978, "Visit of U.S. by China's Vice Premier Deng Xiaoping, 1/29/79-2/5/79 [CF, O/A 587] [1]" folder, Box 81, Staff Offices Press Powell, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁷⁶⁰ Telegram, Warren Christopher to Cyrus Vance/Richard Holbrooke/Zbigniew Brzezinski, 12/28/1978, "China (Republic of China), 11-12/78" folder, Box 11, NSA Brzezinski Material Country File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁷⁶¹ Telegram, Warren Christopher to Cyrus Vance/Richard Holbrooke/Zbigniew Brzezinski, 12/30/1978 in: FRUS, 1977-1980, Volume XIII, China (Washington D.C.: United States Printing Office, 2013), 681.

⁷⁶² Shen, "U.S.", 258-259.

This impression leads me to contradict Nancy Bernkopf Tucker's interpretation that Christopher's mission was proof for the Carter administration's estrangement from Taipei. According to Bernkopf Tucker, Christopher and his delegation provided the Taiwanese public only with a target for their anger and disappointment, without achieving anything of substance.⁷⁶³ This assessment underestimates the meaning of Christopher's trip for the exchange of views between the ROC and the U.S. The Deputy Secretary's talks with the ROC leadership provided both sides with information how the framework for unofficial U.S.-Taiwan relations could look like. Moreover, the U.S. administration demonstrated its commitment to find a solution suiting Taipei's and Washington's needs. It was a final act of official diplomacy between the two governments, and as I will show, it kept the channels of communication between Washington and Taipei open.

Still, it is true that the Carter administration was not aware of the Taiwanese people's anxieties. All the delaying tactics to avoid a meeting with James Shen and other ROC officials in Washington led to a lack of comprehension for the situation of the people on the island. The Carter administration was all too certain that the KMT regime had no other choice than cooperating with the United States. The lack of options for CCK led Washington to dictate the conditions of the future relationship. One example of this dominance was Washington's refusal to issue a joint communiqué at the end of Christopher's trip although the ROC government had sent a draft to the Deputy Secretary. The ball was in Washington's court, and Taipei had to wait for "their pass".

While it was understandable that the ROC wanted as much official commitment from the U.S. as possible, the drafted communiqué also demonstrated why Washington had to be so careful in its dealings with Taipei. ROC officials could not only be indiscreet in order to publicly prove Taipei's close relationship to the United States. They also tended to exaggerate their demands when their options were narrowed down. So it was not surprising that the proposed draft for a final U.S.-ROC joint communiqué did not only include the guarantee for further arms sales to the island. It also contained phrases that would have meant the *de facto* independence of Taiwan: "The United States government recognizes the state and government of the Republic of China as de jure [underlined by author] entitled to

⁷⁶³ Bernkopf Tucker, "Strait", 110, 112.

exercise governing authority in respect of the territories presently under its control.”⁷⁶⁴ These words demonstrated that Taipei was overestimating its own options. After normalization, Washington could not accept a Taiwanese proposal that used words like “government of the Republic of China” and “de jure” in the same sentence. Agreeing to such a formula could lead to significant damage for U.S. relations with the People’s Republic.

Pleasing the U.S. Public

The administration’s next assignment was to convince the U.S. public of normalization. Therefore, the first three months of 1979 were crucial for the long-term success of Carter’s China policy. While the president seemed certain that the majority of the American people and the political circles in Washington accepted his decision for normalization, his aides were aware that the administration had to do more in order to convince U.S. public of the benefits of normalization. A first step was to make important pressure groups such as business associations aware of the vast potential that trade with China represented. Closer trading relations with China would create new jobs in the United States, and that would please many Congressmen. However, before commercial relations with China could grow, both nations had to agree on a trading agreement. In addition, the PRC needed the MNF status. Both negotiation processes needed time. Nonetheless, early contacts between U.S. business men and Chinese officials helped the future of Chinese-American trade, and would stabilize the relationship in general.⁷⁶⁵

Another reason to gain public support for normalization lay in the political situation in Washington. Public support for normalization made it easier to convince Congress to approve the upcoming Taiwan legislation, as many senators did not want to act against the will of their voters. The administration had already learned that there existed some groups in Congress which did not endorse Carter’s decision. But, as Cyrus Vance pointed out in a memorandum for the president,

⁷⁶⁴ Telegram, Warren Christopher to Cyrus Vance/Richard Holbrooke/Zbigniew Brzezinski, 12/28/1978, “China (Republic of China), 11-12/78” folder, Box 11, NSA Brzezinski Material Country File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁷⁶⁵ Memo, Zbigniew Brzezinski/Anne Wexler to Jimmy Carter, 1/2/1979, “1/3/79” folder, Box 114, Office of Staff Secretary Handwriting Files, Jimmy Carter Library.

Congressional approval was very important for the White House's proposed Taiwan legislation.⁷⁶⁶ In accordance with Neoclassical Realism, this legislation was the ultimate test if the administration was able to find acceptance for its policy and could legitimize derecognition of Taiwan. If the executive branch failed in this regard, Carter would lose political resources that could later be missing to conduct other political goals like the SALT II treaty. Furthermore, a failure of the Taiwan legislation would damage his prestige.

Special Assistant to the President for Public Outreach, Anne Wexler, developed a number of goals the administration should pursue in the short-term. In Wexler's opinion, the administration had to enhance the public knowledge about the ongoing changes in China. This would improve the PRC's image in the United States. Simultaneously, the White House needed to demonstrate U.S. support for Taiwan in order to minimize the concerns about the island's security. The administration should also make the Congress aware that there already existed broad public support for normalization. In order to further increase this support, Wexler wanted to approach and cooperate with any important group of the American society that could have any dealings with China in the future -mainly businessmen, journalists, and academics.⁷⁶⁷

On the basis of Wexler's arguments, Brzezinski suggested two events to promote normalization among potential players in future U.S.-China relations. One should be a reception with a briefing for more than 600 members of the National Council for U.S./China Trade and the USA/Republic of China Economic Council. The second event was a briefing for 50 foreign policy and China experts from different universities, think tanks, and the media. Carter opted against the reception for the trade council members. The president thought this plan involved too many people, claiming it would be "overkill". Moreover, an attempt to please so many people could appear "desperate". It could lead to the public impression that the Carter administration was in dire need of approval for its China policy. Carter did

⁷⁶⁶ Memo, Cyrus Vance to Jimmy Carter, 12/28/1978, "TL Sensitive Vance/President 12/78-1/79" folder, Box 17, Records of Anthony Lake, 1977-1981, RG 59, NARA.

⁷⁶⁷ Memo, Zbigniew Brzezinski/Anne Wexler to Jimmy Carter, 1/2/1979, "1/3/79" folder, Box 114, Office of Staff Secretary Handwriting Files, Jimmy Carter Library.

not want to take the risk to leave such an impression, and only allowed the briefing of the 50 experts.⁷⁶⁸

Carter's reaction revealed how ambivalent the administration was about gaining support for normalization. While his advisors saw an obvious necessity to advertise the president's decision as a chance to improve the economic, strategic, and diplomatic situation of the United States, Carter himself was more restraint on the matter. His handwritten remarks on Wexler's memorandum indicate that he did not want to create the impression he was cajoling for public support. In the president's opinion, this behavior conveyed political weakness. Carter was convinced that he had made the right decision with normalization. This conviction, which was fueled by the congratulations of his political allies, forced the president to ignore the problems his administration faced when they had to deal with the consequences of normalization.⁷⁶⁹

Due to Carter's lack of empathy, Deng Xiaoping's proposed visit in early 1979 gained even more importance, as it provided a chance to promote normalization to the U.S. public, and broaden the basis for cultural and economic relations with the PRC. As Michel Oksenberg put it in a memo for Carter's interview with the journalist John Chancellor on January 13, the administration faced difficult questions about the timing, the benefits, and the reversibility of normalization, as well as about the future of Taiwan. According to the White House's China expert, the president should make clear that the timing of normalization had been crucial in order to develop Sino-American relations simultaneously to the American relationship with the Soviet Union. The advantages of Carter's decision meant a better overall position for the United States in East Asia increasing the level of peace and security there. Normal relations with China should help to integrate the country into the international community. This, in addition to the continuing military presence of the United States in the region would finally prevent Beijing from the use

⁷⁶⁸ The President made handwritten comments to express his opinion, see: memo, Anne Wexler to Hamilton Jordan, 12/29/1978, "1/3/79" folder, Box 114, Office of Staff Secretary Handwriting Files, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁷⁶⁹ Even politicians who were not member of the Democratic Party sent their compliments to Carter for his achievement. Letter, William Whitehurst to Jimmy Carter, 12/18/1978, "CO 34-2 Executive 1/1/79-1/17/79" folder, Box CO-17, Countries, Jimmy Carter Library; Letter, Hugh Scott to Jimmy Carter, 12/19/1978, "CO 34-2 Executive 1/1/79-1/17/79" folder, Box CO-17, Countries, Jimmy Carter Library; Letter, Les AuCoin to Jimmy Carter, 12/20/1978, "CO 34-2 Executive 1/1/79-1/17/79" folder, Box CO-17, Countries, Jimmy Carter Library; Letter, Theodore Weiss to Jimmy Carter, 12/22/1978, "CO 34-2 Executive 1/1/79-1/17/79" folder, Box CO-17, Countries, Jimmy Carter Library.

of force against Taiwan.⁷⁷⁰ The Carter administration did not want to hurt Chinese sentiments concerning the Taiwan issue, and was still opting for restrained statements about U.S. intentions concerning Taiwan.

The Carter administration thought it could afford to leave any security guarantees for Taiwan out of its statements, because Carter and his aides were convinced that the PRC would abstain from using violence against Taiwan in the future. The DOS believed the PRC had a strong interest to find a peaceful solution for the Taiwan issue because, otherwise, Beijing was going to risk its good relations with the U.S. and Japan –something the Chinese needed in order to put pressure on Moscow. Moreover, the PLA lacked the “military capability to take Taiwan by force”, and the State Department did not expect this fact to change soon. Finally, the recent end of the bombardment of Quemoy and Matsu was seen as a demonstration of Beijing’s good will. Citing an official statement from the PRC from January 1, 1979, the report elaborated that “the PRC pledged to ‘respect the status-quo on Taiwan’[...].”⁷⁷¹ From an American perspective, such statements made clear that a forceful reunification was not imminent in the foreseeable future.

The PRC had its own reasons for accommodating Taiwan. On the one hand, the PRC leaders were really interested to open a dialogue that could lead to reunification, or would at least help to establish a functioning working relationship with the KMT regime. On the other hand, Beijing wanted normalization to gain world wide support, and particularly in the United States. The Chinese government needed normalization even more than Washington. The regime in Beijing could not afford any kind of international isolation, as it had experienced during the years of the *Cultural Revolution*. Being belligerent towards its “renegade” province did not serve China’s interest to gain more international prestige and easier access to modern western technology. Therefore, the PRC was waver to appear patient on the matter of Taiwan, and Deng Xiaoping got never tired to convince foreign politicians of China’s patience. One example for Deng’s approach was his meeting with Congressman Thomas L. Ashley. The American politician reported back in Washington how impressed he was by Deng and his frankness about Taiwan because the

⁷⁷⁰ Memo, Michel Oksenberg to Jerry Schecter, 1/12/1979, “CO 34-1 Executive 1/1/79-2/28/79” folder, Box CO-16, Countries, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁷⁷¹ Report, “U.S: Arms Sales to Taiwan”, Bureau of Public Affairs of the Department of State, 01/1979, “China-Taiwan” folder, Box 160, Office of Anne Wexler, Special Assistant to the President Michael Channin’s Subject Files, Jimmy Carter Library.

vice premier had stressed how patient China was on the matter.⁷⁷² He wanted to use the same tactic during his time in America.

Deng's State Visit: Chinese and American Expectations

Deng Xiaoping's visit to the United States was very important for the U.S. and PRC government. It should demonstrate the strength of the relationship between Beijing and Washington, and, particularly from China's point of view, should deter the Soviet Union. In addition, the trip served Chinese and Americans to promote normalization. Both sides put a lot of prestige into it, making the trip an enormous public relation effort. The goal was to find international and domestic approval for normalization, so that the Taiwan issue and derecognition of the ROC regime would fade into the background. Especially the U.S. public should learn more about Deng and his country to improve China's image in the United States.

The PRC vice premier wanted to use his journey through the United States to convey China's love for peace, making clear that the People's Republic was not going to use force against Taiwan. The idea was that an improvement of China's image would help normalization. The less aggressive the PRC appeared to the U.S. public, the better its image would be. U.S. officials shared this view and, as we will see, welcomed Deng's efforts in this regard.

Deng also hoped to foster his position in the Chinese leadership with this trip. Since he had made the decision to tacitly accept U.S. arms sales to Taiwan, he had bound his personal prestige to the success of normalization. The Chinese people should learn about his efforts in the United States which served China's modernization and this way also the improvement of their standard of living. Therefore, the China Central Television (CCTV) reported about this trip more than about any other state visit by a Chinese statesman before. The pictures from America should also make the Chinese people aware of how backward their country was.⁷⁷³ In preparation of Deng's trip, CCTV broadcasted an interview by the Chinese journal-

⁷⁷² Report, Thomas Ashley to Jimmy Carter, 1/18/1979, "CO 34-2 Executive 1/18/79-1/31/79" folder, Box CO-17, Countries, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁷⁷³ Vogel, "Deng", 337.

ist Zhao Zhongxiang with Jimmy Carter.⁷⁷⁴ Later the channel even produced a documentary about the Deng's visit with the title "The Spring of Friendship".⁷⁷⁵ Although not many Chinese people had access to television, such publicity helped Deng greatly to strengthen his position. Of major importance was also that the party elite would see how Deng presented himself as a statesman of international grandeur.

Another goal Deng pursued was gaining access to American technology and investments. Thus, as Henry Kissinger puts it, the whole state visit did not only serve diplomatic and political means but also economic interests.⁷⁷⁶ As we have seen, the PRC leader was convinced that China's modernization also needed progress in the area of science and technology. Thus, he sought for ways to get in touch with U.S. companies which could provide China with modern technology and know-how. That was the reason why he visited places like the Johnson Space Center in Houston, the headquarters of Coca Cola in Atlanta, and the facilities of Boeing in Seattle.

The Carter administration had great expectations for Deng's visit. The White House hoped for a positive public relations effect to gain support for normalization. Deng's visit needed to become a success. In the best case scenario, the Chinese statesman's trip through the United States would trigger a similar effect as Richard Nixon's trip to China had in 1972.⁷⁷⁷ Normalization should find unanimous support in the United States, and Carter should appear as an astute statesman with vision and self-assertion. According to a memorandum by Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, the administration embraced Deng's help to gain Congressional and public support for normalization, and encouraged the broadening of Sino-American relations. In order to bolster the vice premier's political position at home, the United States had also an honest interest in the success of Deng's reforms and China's

⁷⁷⁴ Interview, Jimmy Carter and Zhao Zhongxiang, 01/25/1979, The American President Project, "Interview With the President Question-and-Answer Session With Zhao Zhongxiang of Central TV, People's Republic of China", <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=32757> (accessed: 10/29/2014).

⁷⁷⁵ A small part of the documentary can be seen here: videoclip, "America Entertains Chinese Vice-Premier Deng Xiao-Ping (1979)", Jason Wang, uploaded on 07/30/2010, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hgPDqrVVT-A> (accessed: 10/14/2014).

⁷⁷⁶ Kissinger, "China", 372.

⁷⁷⁷ Different polls about public opinion in the United States suggest that Nixon's trip to China, and the issuance of the Shanghai communiqué improved China's image in the United States, see: Michael G. Kulma, "The Evolution of U.S. Images of China: A Political Psychology Perspective of Sino-American Relations" in: *World Affairs*, Vol. 162, No. 2 (Fall, 1999), 79.

modernization because this could increase the degree of China's involvement in international affairs.⁷⁷⁸

However, the U.S. side did not share all of Deng's objectives. In the same memorandum, Vance argued, was not interested in an anti-Soviet alliance, as the Moscow was too important for the solution of international problems like in Somalia, Cambodia, or Afghanistan. Thus, ignoring or alienating the Soviet leadership, as the Chinese suggested, was too costly. Guessing that the PRC could ask Washington to support any actions against Hanoi due to Vietnam's aggressive course in Cambodia, Vance also criticized the Chinese attempts to maximize U.S. hostility towards the Southeast Asian communist regime.⁷⁷⁹ The Secretary of State wanted to avoid the impression the Chinese could exploit the new character of its relationship with the U.S. at the cost of Washington's further political goals.

Brzezinski widely agreed with Vance but emphasized the need to contain Moscow's influence. Hence, the APNSA wanted the PRC to be strong enough to resist any threats or offers from the Soviet Union, and considered even Chinese arms purchases from western European allies.⁷⁸⁰ Carter rejected this idea because he did not want to provoke the Soviets with such an initiative, as he made clear in an interview with different members from U.S. media. Although the president conceded that U.S. "allies are independent, sovereign nations, and they would resent any intrusion by us into their weapons sales policies", he still hinted that he saw such arms sales critical if the weapon systems would have offensive quality: "Our [U.S. administration] publicly expressed and privately expressed advice to the other nations is that the sale of any weapons should be constricted to defensive weapons..."⁷⁸¹ These clear words indicated Carter's unwillingness to build an anti-Soviet alliance.

⁷⁷⁸ Memo, Cyrus Vance to Jimmy Carter, 1/26/1979, "China MR-NLC-98-214 (2)" folder, Box 40, Vertical Files, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁷⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁸⁰ Memo, Zbigniew Brzezinski to Jimmy Carter, undated, "China, [People's Republic of] – President's Meeting with [Vice Premier] Deng Xiaoping: 12/19/78-10/3/80" folder, Box 9, Donated Historical Material Zbigniew Brzezinski Geographic File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁷⁸¹ Interview, Jimmy Carter, 01/26/1979, The American President Project, "Interview with the President Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session with Editors and News Directors", <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=31313> (accessed: 03/22/2014).

The Deng Show

Between January 29 and February 4, Deng Xiaoping visited Washington D.C., Atlanta, Houston, and Seattle in an effort to show the American people that the people of China wanted to be their friends. The visit was so important for China that the newspaper 人民日报 (People's Daily) reported about his arrival on its front page.⁷⁸² He should go on to give the performance of a life time, and the whole United States was Deng's stage. His visit should become the perfect public relations event for normalization.

The preparations for Deng's arrival went well, and a number of important groups saw the visit very positive. The Chinese leader was invited to different luncheons and dinners in his honor such as from the Foreign Policy Association which contacted both Deng himself and the White House in order to make the necessary arrangements.⁷⁸³ Members of Washington's political circles were also eager to meet Deng and arrange meetings for their acquaintances.⁷⁸⁴ Other Congressmen contacted the Chinese directly, advertising their districts or states as places Deng Xiaoping should visit.⁷⁸⁵ The public interest for Deng was enormous, and the White House welcomed the situation wholeheartedly. The Chinese leader was very popular. His plans to change and modernize his country for example had impressed the editors of the *Time* magazine so much that they made Deng the "Man of the Year" for 1978 even before he had touched American soil.⁷⁸⁶ The interest on Deng

⁷⁸² Typically for Chinese newspapers, the title of the article was still very plain: "邓小平副总理到达华盛顿" ["Vice Premier Deng Xiaoping Arrives in Washington"], 人民日报 [People's Daily], 01/30/1979.

⁷⁸³ Letter, Carter Burgess to Zbigniew Brzezinski, 12/20/1978, "CO 34-2 Executive 8/1/78-12/31/78" folder, Box CO-17, Countries, Jimmy Carter Library; Cable, Carter Burgess to Deng Xiaoping, 12/19/1978, "CO 34-2 Executive 8/1/78-12/31/78" folder, Box CO-17, Countries, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁷⁸⁴ Letter, John Heinz III to Zbigniew Brzezinski, 12/22/1978, "CO 34-2 Executive 1/1/79-1/17/79" folder, Box CO-17, Countries, Jimmy Carter Library; Letter, Zbigniew Brzezinski to John Heinz III, 1/4/1979, "CO 34-2 Executive 1/1/79-1/17/79" folder, Box CO-17, Countries, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁷⁸⁵ Letter, Adlai Stevenson to Chai Zemin, 1/8/1979, "CO 34-2 Executive 1/1/79-1/17/79" folder, Box CO-17, Countries, Jimmy Carter Library. Also see: Letter, Ike Skelton to Jimmy Carter, 1/9/1979, "CO 34-2 Executive 1/18/79-1/31/79" folder, Box CO-17, Countries, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁷⁸⁶ Deng's counterfeit was on the cover of the *Time* magazine's issue from January 1, 1979 which featured a story with the title "Man of the Year: Visionary of New China". The article was about Deng's reforms, see: cover story, "Man of the Year: Visionary of New China. Teng Hsiao-p'ing Opens the Middle Kingdom to the World", *Time*, 01/01/1979.

and his popularity showed that the American attitude towards the PRC was changing. The establishment of U.S.-PRC diplomatic relations had already tremendously improved China's image in the U.S.

The whole state visit started with some private talks between Deng and Carter. The latter was aware that Deng Xiaoping's visit and statements in front of the whole country would influence the public reaction to any further steps taken by the administration in their China policy. This included the upcoming legislation on Taiwan. Therefore, Carter asked Deng to exercise restraint concerning Taiwan, as the PRC vice premier should only repeat his earlier statements about China's patience in public:

“I think we have negotiated long enough to understand the attitude of each other [concerning the Taiwan issue] and as far as our public approval for normalization and the approval by Congress of necessary legislation, any reference to patience or peaceful resolution on your part to the Congress or to the public would be very helpful. Just to repeat the statements that the Vice Premier has made since our announcement would be completely adequate. They are very fine, very constructive statements.”⁷⁸⁷

It was the most important pledge Carter made towards Deng.

The Chinese vice premier reacted positively to Carter's wish. On January 31, 1979, Deng gave an interview which was hosted by reporters from different TV stations (Walter Cronkite/CBS, James Lehrer/PBS, Frank Reynolds/ABC, David Brinkley/NBC). The Chinese leader expressed his gratitude for the opportunity to speak in the American television. While the interview centered on questions about the Soviet Union and the security of China and the United States, there was also a question about the peaceful solution of the Taiwan issue. Deng answered cautiously, and stated: “We try our very best by peaceful means to bring about the return of Taiwan to the Mainland and to complete our reunification.”⁷⁸⁸ Beforehand, in his talks with Carter, Deng had even conceded the U.S. could deliver the weapons it

⁷⁸⁷ Memcon, Jimmy Carter, 1/30/1979, “China MR-NLC-98-215 (4)” folder, Box 41, Vertical Files, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁷⁸⁸“Interview of his Excellency Deng Xiaoping, Vice Premier of the State Council of the People's Republic of China by Walter Cronkite,CBS, James Lehrer,PBS, Frank Reynolds,ABC and David Brinkley,NBC”, 1/31/1979, “Visit of U.S. by China's Vice Premier Deng Xiaoping, 1/29/79-2/5/79 [CF, O/A 587] [1]” folder, Box 81, Staff Offices Press Powell, Jimmy Carter Library.

had already promised to Taiwan, although the PRC government hoped Washington would be discrete, careful and prudent on the matter in the future.⁷⁸⁹

Deng understood what the U.S. president needed in order to gain support for normalization but he still had to consider his own political situation. Therefore, he made clear that the PRC's patience on the Taiwan issue had its limits. He suggested that the United States and Japan urged Taipei to start negotiations with the mainland. Washington should abstain from encouraging Chiang Ching-kuo to refuse talks with Beijing. Otherwise, the PRC would run out of options to deal with Taiwan and the matter of reunification. He assured Carter that just two conditions existed under which the mainland would forgo peaceful means. Either Taipei refused any kind of negotiations over the long-term, or the Soviet Union gained political and military access to Taiwan.⁷⁹⁰ Since the Carter administration knew this position already, Deng's revelation did not present a problem for them, and it did not shock the U.S. public.

The PRC could not publicly commit to solve the Taiwan issue peacefully. As I have argued in previous chapters, it needed a certain degree of deterrence against Taiwan in order to prevent the island from declaring independence –though this was unlikely as long as the KMT ruled Taiwan. Therefore, the PRC government needed to provide a credible threat against the island. The Chinese insistence also served the cultural attitude of *saving face*.⁷⁹¹ The communist leadership had always claimed Taiwan was a province of China. Since the communists had also always propagated to unify all of China in order to lead it to its past glory, it could not lose Taiwan. It could not even allow any impression to soften its claim on the island. Doing so would damage the CCP's credibility as the ruling party of China, and mean the loss of the Chinese leaders' faces. This attitude based on more than only pride. Showing weakness and losing face can mean the end of a political career in China. Thus, it was politically and culturally impossible for Deng to make a concession that would question the credibility of Beijing's demands towards Taiwan. Demonstrating patience and restraint was one thing, giving up a vital position of Chinese politics another. Washington seemed to accept this fact.

⁷⁸⁹ Memcon, Jimmy Carter, 1/30/1979, "China MR-NLC-98-215 (4)" folder, Box 41, Vertical Files, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁷⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁷⁹¹ For a closer look on the concept of "Face", see: Joo Yup Kim/Sang Hoon Nam, "The Concept and Dynamics of Face: Implications for Organizational Behavior in Asia" in: *Organization Science*, Vol. 9, No. 4 (July-August, 1998).

The Carter administration felt that Deng's statements about the Taiwan issue were very accommodating. That was one of the reasons why Carter refrained from a fierce reaction to China's aggression against Vietnam.⁷⁹² Another reason was that the DOS did not believe that the United States was in a position to alter Beijing's course of action.⁷⁹³ James Mann criticized this reaction, claiming that even some of the Carter's aides conceded the Chinese could not have hoped for less critique.⁷⁹⁴ Henry Kissinger argues that Deng used this moment to sell the impression the U.S. administration would sanctify Beijing's decision to invade its southern neighbor. Using this kind of "psychological warfare", as Kissinger puts it, the Chinese Premier wanted to deter the Soviet Union from any intervention on behalf of the Vietnamese.⁷⁹⁵

Mann's and Kissinger's criticism does not take into account what a diplomatically difficult situation the president faced. I argue that the White House's reaction represented a quid-pro-quo between Washington and Beijing. While Deng abstained from threatening Taiwan in front of the American people, Carter abstained from scolding the Chinese for invading the north of Vietnam. Nobody in the administration was willing to risk tensions in Sino-American relations.⁷⁹⁶ In the end, the whole Vietnam issue was a test for the fragile relationship between Washington and Beijing. A public argument with the Chinese about Vietnam would have spoiled Deng's visit, denying the Carter administration a chance to promote normalization. Even the Chinese press did not focus its coverage on the Vietnam issue. The People's Daily only mentioned on its front page that Deng and Carter had resumed their political talks.⁷⁹⁷

In his memoirs, Carter admits that China's "punitive strike" against Vietnam bore some risks for his administration because the invasion was a threat to the stability in Asia which was one of the main arguments in favor of normaliza-

⁷⁹² For an introductory reading about the Sino-Vietnamese war from 1979, see: Zhang Xiaoming, "China's 1979 War with Vietnam: A Reassessment" in: *The China Quarterly*, No. 184 (December, 2005). For a more detailed reading about the whole conflict, see: King C. Chen, *China's War with Vietnam, 1979* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987).

⁷⁹³ Memo, Anthony Lake to Cyrus Vance, 1/19/1979, "TL Sensitive 1/1-3/31/79" folder, Box 17, Record of Anthony Lake, 1977-1981, RG 59, NARA.

⁷⁹⁴ Mann, "Face", 98-100.

⁷⁹⁵ Kissinger, "China", 371-372.

⁷⁹⁶ Memo, Cyrus Vance to Jimmy Carter, 1/26/1979, "China MR-NLC-98-214 (2)" folder, Box 40, Vertical Files, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁷⁹⁷ "卡特总统邓副总理继续会谈" ["President Carter Resumes Talks with Vice Premier Deng"], 人民日报 [People's Daily], 01/31/1979.

tion.⁷⁹⁸ Moreover, the PLA's attack could damage Deng's credibility, and the American people could start to question if the Chinese patience concerning Taiwan was honest. The history of the last 30 years had demonstrated to the U.S. public that the PRC was not shy to resort to belligerence and aggressive measures in their foreign policy. However, these concerns were unfounded, as Deng was able to convince the U.S. public that China's invasion of Vietnamese territory was a purely defensive measure.⁷⁹⁹ While Carter's behavior appears ethically questionable, it was diplomatically prudent, especially considering the outcome that the U.S. public did not blame Deng for the Chinese attack.

Carter's decision paid off, and Deng Xiaoping's visit became the success the administration had hoped for. Deng was impressed with what he saw in the U.S., and he wanted his country to benefit from the same experience. Thus, it was not surprising that he was willing to discuss possibilities for an institutionalization of cultural exchange between the PRC and the United States. One way to do so was to grant journalists from the United States access to China. Another one, the more intriguing for Deng, was to exchange students.⁸⁰⁰ As Deng had expressed it himself, in June 1978, the PRC wanted its young people to go to the West and Japan in order to learn from these nations.⁸⁰¹ Deng's own experience of working and studying abroad helped him during his political life. It was only logical that he believed the same experience would be good for other young Chinese, helping China's modernization.

The pictures from the United States should indeed stimulate the curiosity of young Chinese about this country, becoming an important impetus for Deng's reforms and the modernization of China. Within ten years, the number of Chinese exchange students to the U.S. grew from 22 in 1974/75 to more than 10,000 in

⁷⁹⁸ Jimmy Carter, "Faith", 206.

⁷⁹⁹ "Luncheon interview of his Excellency Deng Xiaoping, Vice Premier of the State Council of the People's Republic of China by American Journalists", 1/31/1979, "Visit of U.S. by China's Vice Premier Deng Xiaoping, 1/29/79-2/5/79 [CF, O/A 587] [1]" folder, Box 81, Staff Offices Press Powell, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁸⁰⁰ Memcon, Jimmy Carter, 1/30/1979, "China MR-NLC-98-215 (4)" folder, Box 41, Vertical Files, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁸⁰¹ Li Sufei, "Navigating U.S.-China Water: The Experience of Chinese Students and Professionals in Science, Technology, and Business" in: Peter H. Koehn/Yin Xiao-huang (ed.), *The Expanding Role of Chinese Americans in U.S.-China Relations. Transnational Networks and Tran-Pacific Interactions* (New York: M.E. Sharp, Inc., 2002), 21.

1984/85.⁸⁰² Deng's visit led in China to similar results as Richard Nixon's visit had in the United States in 1972. Like the Americans in the early 1970s, the Chinese people looked at the television, read the newspapers, or accessed other media to learn the news about their political leader's visit to another country, and they were fascinated by the completely different world they found. Indeed, as Deng had envisaged, his visit opened the eyes of the Chinese people, and helped to pave the way for modernization.

Jimmy Carter was "favorably impressed with Deng."⁸⁰³ The Chinese's public appearances during his trip through the United States made U.S. citizens believe in the legitimacy of normalization. An article of the Washington Post said one day after an entertainment show in honor of the vice premier in the Kennedy Center in Washington D.C.: "For although the show was technically put on for his benefit, he [Deng], in fact, was the show." The author of the article praised Deng's appeal and his presence which led to the success of the whole evening.⁸⁰⁴ It was just one of many occasions where Deng exuded his charisma. Time and time again, Deng was able to show his human side, winning over America's hearts. Once, he was moved to tears when some children sang one of his favorite Chinese songs. Another time, he curiously took the driver's seat of the Lunar Rover when he visited the Johnson Space Center. Then, attending a rodeo show in Texas, he excitingly swung around a huge cowboy hat to the crowd. His self-assured, calm, humble, and genuine attitude helped his country's image more than words could ever have.⁸⁰⁵ In fact, Deng Xiaoping's visit was going to bring the popularity of China in the United States to new heights.

A news segment by Jim Laurie for ABC News echoed the praise for Deng Xiaoping's public appearances, indicating that his performance had led to "a new image for communist China's leading man [Deng]."⁸⁰⁶ Even political opponents of the diplomatic recognition of the PRC had to admit the success of Deng's performance and its positive influence on U.S. public opinion.⁸⁰⁷ Public polls which

⁸⁰² Institute of International Education, Open Doors Data, "International Students: All Places of Origin", Selected Years: 1949/50-1999/2000, <http://iie.org/Research-and-Publications/Open-Doors/Data/International-Students/All-Places-of-Origin/1950-2000> (accessed: 09/12/2013).

⁸⁰³ Quote from Jimmy Carter Presidential Diary (1/29/1979) in: Carter, "Faith", 202.

⁸⁰⁴ Editorial, "The Teng Show", *Washington Post*, 01/31/1979.

⁸⁰⁵ Vogel, "Deng", 345-347.

⁸⁰⁶ Jim Laurie, "China 1979: Deng Xiaoping visits Texas February 2nd 1979", uploaded 12/31/2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DNKhvixdV4o> (accessed: 10/14/2014).

⁸⁰⁷ Tyler, "Wall", 275.

asked U.S. citizens about their opinion about China reflected this conclusion. While in spring 1978, only 21% of the polled people had a favorable opinion about the PRC, in October 1979, this number grew to 64%. In 1980, this number dropped again to only 42%.⁸⁰⁸ Although there do not exist any polls about Deng's personal image in the U.S. public at this time, it appears logical to link the improvement of U.S. public opinion about China in 1979 to Deng's performance during his visit in the United States. The Deng Show had succeeded.

Conclusion and Discussion

The announcement of normalization was a huge foreign policy success for Jimmy Carter. Normalization should demonstrate to the U.S. public that the administration was able to improve the strategic position of the United States on a global (Cold War) and regional (Asia) scale. Moreover, official relations with China also offered the promise for a larger amount of bilateral trade in the near future. This idea was encouraged by the beginning of Deng Xiaoping's reform course in China. Although normalization was the result of difficult negotiations that had demanded hard compromises from both, the American and Chinese governments, the U.S. president and the Chinese leadership concluded that the result had been worth these concessions.

Most members of Congress and also a majority of the American people had a positive view about normalization, but there still remained some concerns about Taiwan which led to open critique about Carter's decision. After the difficult negotiations with China, this meant a new struggle for the White House. Now, the Carter administration had to explain to the American public, the U.S. Congress, the regime in Taiwan, and U.S. allies why normal relations with Beijing did not mean the abandoning of Taiwan, and a disengagement from Asia-Pacific. The first chance for Carter to make this clear was the announcement of normalization on TV on December 15.

Carter stated that normalization was a great achievement and an important asset to the global position of the United States. Since he was aware that the derec-

⁸⁰⁸ Matthew S. Hirshberg, "Consistency and Change in American Perceptions of China" in: *Political Behavior*, Vol. 15, No. 3 (September, 1993), Table 1.

ognition of the ROC and the termination of the MDT would lead to heavy critique from different sides, he also endeavored to calm down any concerns that the United States would abandon Taiwan and disengage from East Asia. To underline this position, Carter referred to the administration's plans to install a framework that would allow the United States to conduct unofficial relations with Taiwan. However, as a result of the concessions, the White House had to make to the Chinese, neither the normalization agreement nor the U.S. administration's unilateral statement included any future security guarantees for Taiwan.

Yet, the lack of security guarantees was not Carter's biggest mistake in his approach towards normalization. The aforementioned concessions were part of his diplomatic approach and a necessity if normalization should be successful. Instead, the president's most costly mistake was to leave Congress in the dark about the administration's negotiations with Beijing. This decision ignored the injured pride of many members of the Congress who did not want to lose their influence on U.S. policy about China and Taiwan. Subsequently, Carter's decision damaged the administration's relationship with the legislative after the Stone-Dole amendment had asked the executive branch to inform the Congress about any upcoming changes in the U.S. relations with Taipei. Still, Carter saw the decision for normalization as a "presidential prerogative", and thus not only legal but also irreversible. In his opinion, threats from Congress would only endanger the possibility for unofficial relations with Taiwan.⁸⁰⁹

While Carter's view suggests something like a presidential omnipotence in the realm of U.S. foreign policy, his denial to involve Congress in his China policy underestimated the legislative branch's possibilities and vigor. This appears as a contradiction because, as previous chapters showed, the president and his advisors knew that they needed Congress for legal and political matters. The legal matter was the passing of the Taiwan legislation which should enable future U.S.-Taiwan ties. The political matter was the need to legitimize Carter's China and Taiwan policy. If he wanted Congressional support for his administration's future projects, he could not afford to damage the White House's relations to Capitol Hill beyond repair. The representatives in Congress wanted to remain involved in the China policy, and, as the former Georgian peanut farmer Carter had to learn during the up-

⁸⁰⁹ Carter, "Faith", 200-201.

coming legislation process of his Taiwan initiative, they would find a way to have their way.

In the meantime, the Carter administration had to convey to the KMT regime in Taipei that the United States was still interested in close relations with Taiwan. The reasons for this interest were of political, economic, and strategic nature. As we have seen, the Carter administration needed good relations with Taiwan in order to calm down public critique at home. There was also a large group of U.S. companies –including the American arms industry- which was doing good business in Taiwan. Finally, the island still held strategic value for the United States. As President Nixon had expressed to officials of the Carter administration, Taiwan could always serve as a strategic hedge vis-à-vis the People’s Republic if the relationship between Washington and Beijing would ever deteriorate. The latter argument should play an important role in the discussions about the upcoming Taiwan legislation, but beforehand Washington needed to set the frame of future U.S.-Taiwan relations with the regime in Taipei.

For this purpose, Carter decided to send Deputy Secretary of State Warren Christopher to Taiwan. He should make the Taiwanese understand that Washington did not intend to abandon the regime and its people. It was an important decision, because it allowed both sides to inform each other about their conditions for the framework of future unofficial relations between the U.S. and Taiwan. However, as Nancy Bernkopf Tucker argues this mission indicates the Carter administration’s estrangement from Taipei, as she correctly points out Carter underestimated the Taiwanese people’s anger and disappointment.⁸¹⁰

Indeed, a diplomatic delegation could not lower the level of frustration in Taiwan. Thus, Carter’s approach appeared almost naïve. Yet, the regime in Taipei was so dependent on U.S. support that CCK had to accept most of the American conditions for the development of future relations. Even the disappointed Taiwanese public accepted this fact. From the Carter administration’s point of view, Warren Christopher’s mission was therefore a complete success because it demonstrated to the U.S. public Carter’s commitment to the people of Taiwan. Moreover, Christopher let Taipei know what character the future relationship would have.

⁸¹⁰ Bernkopf Tucker, “Strait”, 110, 112.

Finally, the KMT regime signaled that it would agree with these notions because they had no other choice.

The next step in promoting normalization was the announced visit of Deng Xiaoping in late January 1979, only a month after the establishment of diplomatic relations between Washington and Beijing. The Carter administration needed Deng's visit to become a success. The best case scenario was that Deng's trip through the United States would trigger a similar effect like Richard Nixon's trip to China had in 1972.⁸¹¹ The expectations were high as both sides wanted to advertise normalization in the U.S. and in China. Simultaneously, Deng sought to strengthen his own position in the CCP's leadership and gain U.S. support for a Chinese attack on Vietnam.⁸¹²

As Carter and his aides realized, especially the last of Deng's intentions could lead to frictions between Chinese and Americans, and to protests in the U.S. public which would run counter to the U.S. goal of promoting normalization. It was a difficult situation, and Carter solved it masterfully. Other than James Mann argues, Carter did not give "a green light for the Chinese invasion" of Vietnam, when Deng informed him about the PRC's plans.⁸¹³ Instead, Carter made clear that the USA did not sanctify the attack because it damaged the stability in Southeast Asia. It is true that the U.S. president refrained from a harsh public condemnation, but Carter acted with diplomatic vision, understanding that U.S. critique on Beijing's plans would not change anything, and could only lead to frictions in their relations. Additionally, his accommodation on this matter served to gain Deng's promise to emphasize in public that Beijing intended to solve the Taiwan issue peacefully if possible, instead of threatening to reunify China by military means.

In the end, the U.S. public gained a very positive impression of the Chinese leader and his country. Besides the humble and likeable appearance of the vice premier one reason for this impression was Deng's eschewal of threats against Taiwan. As I have argued, this was a success for Carter. The Taiwan issue was still an internal affair for the PRC government. It was therefore a huge concession that Deng did not reiterate his government's view that it was up to the PRC how it

⁸¹¹ Different polls about public opinion in the United States suggest that Nixon's trip to China and the issuance of the Shanghai communiqué had improved China's image in the United States, see: Kulma, "Evolution", 79.

⁸¹² Kissinger, "China", 371-372.

⁸¹³ Mann, "Face", 99.

would settle the Taiwan issue. We have to be aware that committing to the peaceful solution of the Taiwan issue was impossible for the CCP regime. Beijing still needed a certain degree of deterrence to prevent Taiwan from declaring independence. Thus, Deng's restraint helped the promotion of normalization, although it did not help the Carter administration in its struggle with the U.S. Congress and the American public.

In spite of Deng's successful visit, the public opinion about the Taiwan issue in the United States did not change. The reason for this problem did not lay in the image of China which was greatly improved after the vice premier's visit. The first reason for this problem lay within the political system of the United States, and different notions how foreign policy should be conducted. The Carter administration's secrecy before the announcement alienated the U.S. Congress and made it more difficult to gain support for Carter's legislative plans about future U.S.-Taiwan relations.

The second reason is a mix of strategic and cultural considerations due to the traditional security relationship between the United States and Taiwan. The close U.S. ties which had been developed through the first decades of the Cold War had created a bond between the people in the United States and Taiwan. This bond left the American people wondering, if the establishment of diplomatic relations with a communist country as alien as China, was really worth risking the security of the Taiwanese people. Not only did the island and its seventeen million people appear as an underdog compared to the mainland with its almost one billion people. Many Americans liked Taiwan and also believed to share important values like democracy, human rights and capitalism with the Taiwanese.⁸¹⁴ Thus, the Carter administration had to find a way to maintain a security relationship with the regime in Taipei. However, without Congressional support, laying the foundation for the continuation of the American involvement in the Taiwan Strait was difficult to achieve.

⁸¹⁴ In 1977, 55% of respondents had a favorable opinion about Taiwan, and only 18% an unfavorable, see: Michael Y. M. Kau et al., "Public Opinion and Our China Policy" in: *Asian Affairs*, Vol. 5, No. 3 (January-February, 1978), 135.

Chapter VII: Preserving U.S. Involvement, January 1979- April 1979

After the announcement of normalization, the White House had tried everything to make it palatable to Congress and the U.S. public. Deng Xiaoping's visit to the United States was a huge public relations success, but still it did not look as if the administration would face less opposition to its plans for the Taiwan legislation. Normal relations with the People's Republic had demanded cutting all official ties with the ROC. The United States could only conduct people-to-people relations with Taiwan, and it required a legislative frame for U.S. agencies to conduct certain actions -especially arms sales- with the Taiwanese. It was a complicated situation, and Carter hoped to get the legislation done quickly and without Congressional intervention. However, he underestimated the Congress' desire to play a more prominent role in the creation of future U.S.-Taiwan relations, leading to heavy opposition to the White House's Taiwan Omnibus bill.

The following chapter deals with the legislative process and the subsequent debate about the new Taiwan legislation that should enable the United States to conduct unofficial relations with Taiwan. The administration hoped that Congress would pass its draft as quickly as possible because it could otherwise come to complications in the cultural and economic exchange between Americans and Taiwanese. Therefore, the Taiwan Omnibus bill had a pure technical character. Moreover, it contained no security language –and no direct hint at arms sales- in order to avoid friction with the PRC.

The administration's legislation failed because as different Congressional hearings made clear many members of Senate and House insisted on inserting some sort of security language. However, comments by different members of the Carter administration during the hearings as well as some public statements by Carter himself also indicated that the White House did not oppose security guarantees. They just insisted that the legislation would not contradict the normalization agreement with the PRC.

The argument I want to advance here is that the administration did not give in to the Congress, but rather left it to the legislative branch to secure the perma-

ment U.S. involvement in Taiwan's security. The White House still saw the island as strategic useful although normalization had changed the overall situation in Asia. The U.S. government had a multitude of reasons why they did not want to lose America's influence on Taiwan. It could still serve to put pressure on the PRC if Sino-American relations were to deteriorate. All it needed was to prevent a solution of the Taiwan issue in Beijing's favor. Taiwan was also an important piece for the United States' position in Asia-Pacific as the regime in Taipei was highly dependent on Washington's benevolence, and thus very loyal. Furthermore, since the island lies right on the shipping routes that provide Japan and South Korea with goods and raw materials and also protects Japan's southern flank, it is very important for the security of Japan which has always been the most important ally of the U.S. in the region. Finally, a real American disengagement from Taiwan would lead to questions about the United States' credibility and reliability as an ally. At the height of the Cold War, no American government could allow this to happen. Emphasizing the security dimension of U.S.-Taiwan ties was therefore in the interest of the administration.

The Taiwan Relations Act provided the United States with the opportunity to maintain an active role in the Taiwan Strait. We have to understand that it was an expression for America's aspiration to remain the most powerful actor in Asia-Pacific. The character of the TRA was not only a commitment to Taiwan's security but also a political message to the Chinese and Taiwanese regimes that the United States would be watching the further development of the Taiwan issue. As a U.S. law the TRA stood outside of any diplomatic constraints, so that the Carter administration was going to shrug off any Chinese protests. The most important aspect of the act, however, was that it allowed the United States more leeway in the decision about how it would conduct its role as a protector for Taiwan. In contrast to the times of the MDT, it was now completely up to Washington to decide whether or not and in which way the United States would intervene in the Taiwan Strait. This provision should help to restrain Taipei from provoking the PRC, for example, by declaring Taiwan's independence.

As I will demonstrate, the TRA provided the perfect tool for the United States to keep Taiwan as an informal ally, without giving the PRC enough reason to call off normalization. This cunning move was only possible due to the character of the political system of the United States which allows the executive and legisla-

tive branches to play different but equally influential roles in foreign policy decisions. In the case of the Taiwan legislation, the executive had to make sure that diplomatic constraints would be honored, while the legislative could ascertain that the American interest in Taiwan's autonomy and security was taken into account. The new law represented the perfect compromise between the American interests to have full diplomatic relations with the PRC, and to preserve U.S. involvement in the Taiwan Strait.

The Administration's Taiwan Omnibus Bill and the Conflict with U.S. Congress

The U.S. administration agreed in the normalization negotiations to cut all official ties between the United States and the Republic of China. This included accepting that the government of the People's Republic was the only legitimate government of China. Although Washington had not agreed that Taiwan was part of the political entity China, the White House could not have official government-to-government relations with the regime on Taiwan. Instead, the United States could only seek unofficial people-to-people relations.

This presented a problem for the continuation of U.S. arms sales to Taiwan. Carter stated publicly that the United States would continue to sell arms to Taiwan after the self-proclaimed moratorium of 1979.⁸¹⁵ Since U.S. laws heavily limited commercial arms sales on a non-governmental level outside of the NATO, Carter's legal advisor, Herbert Hansell, mentioned two requirements for arms sales to Taiwan after derecognition. First, the U.S. administration had to clarify "Taiwan's ambiguous status as a country, nation, state etc.", and, second, the USA needed an intermediary that would serve as the seller instead of the U.S. government because the PRC could object to any governmental involvement.⁸¹⁶ Both requirements needed a legislative framework in order to succeed.

The Carter administration opted to write a legislation draft, the Taiwan Omnibus bill, and planned to ask Congress to pass the bill as soon as possible. This

⁸¹⁵ Carter made clear that the U.S. would continue to sell arms to Taiwan after 1979, see: news conference, Jimmy Carter, 01/17/1979, The American President Project, "The President's News Conference", <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=32324> (accessed: 10/29/2014).

⁸¹⁶Memo, Herbert J. Hansell to Cyrus Vance, undated, "China Briefing Book Tabs 1-10, undate [CF, O/A, 715]" folder, Box 7, Staff Office Counsel Lipshutz, Jimmy Carter Library.

kind of legislation was unprecedented in American history because it created a framework for state-like-relations with an entity that the United States did not actually recognize as a state. The concomitant complexity of the projected legislation, as President Jimmy Carter and his aides realized, made it necessary to gain as much support from U.S. Congress as possible.

Congressional interest in U.S. China policy and the Taiwan issue was nothing new. The Congress had dealt with these topics many times during the presidencies of Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford, and also did so during Carter's term long before the White House actually reached an agreement with the People's Republic on normalization. In fact, as the Chinese historian Xu Guangqiu claims, the Congressional hearings about U.S.-China relations from September and October 1977 had been the first of their kind which dealt with concrete measures of how and when the United States could realize the normalization of relations with the PRC, and not whether this step was even possible. The hearings also discussed how the United States should deal with the American commitment to the security of Taiwan, and how the U.S. executive could achieve normalization without ending the American involvement in the Taiwan Strait.⁸¹⁷ These were exactly the same problems that defined the upcoming public discussion about Carter's legislation concerning unofficial U.S. relations with Taiwan in early 1979.

The Carter administration had been aware that the Congress was not only interested in the normalization process and its consequences for U.S. relations with Taiwan but also wanted to be informed about any changes in the nature of the MDT. The Congress had expressed these expectations explicitly in the previously mentioned Dole-Stone amendment from September 1978. Of course, the amendment did not give a precise note how much information the White House had to convey to Congress, leaving room for interpretations. As long as the U.S government had not concluded a deal with the PRC about normalization, no changes of the MDT were imminent, allowing the executive to maintain its secrecy about the course of the negotiations in Beijing.

Officials within the executive were not unanimous on the question how much Congress should learn about the negotiations with the PRC. Cyrus Vance argued to keep Congress informed on a regular basis, and wanted to assign Richard

⁸¹⁷ Xu, "Congress", 270.

Holbrooke to this task.⁸¹⁸ Carter, however, opted for secrecy, because he wanted to avoid any leaks. Moreover, he did not trust Congress. In his opinion, if some of its members would learn about the administration's plans, it was only a matter of time until they would initiate steps against normalization.⁸¹⁹ As China expert Robert G. Sutter states, Carter's decision to leave the Congress uninformed would haunt him during the legislative process of the White House's Taiwan Omnibus bill.⁸²⁰

Although Carter's decision was a mistake because it cost him Congressional benevolence, it was understandable. We have to consider how much critique he had faced for his normalization plans in the early period of his presidency. In 1978, the negotiations with the PRC had to gain some momentum before the administration could risk a public debate at home. An early Congressional involvement would make such a debate much more likely since many members of Congress were sympathizing with Taiwan, increasing the domestic pressure for Carter, and tremendously limiting the U.S. administration's leeway in the negotiations. A public debate in favor of Taiwan would have forced the White House to find a way to gain considerable security guarantees for Taiwan from Beijing. Since it was highly unlikely to get these, the normalization process would have stalled or even completely failed.

The White House also faced another dilemma. Washington had to demonstrate commitment to one of its traditional allies in Asia. Other U.S. allies would question their partnership with the United States. In addition, it was important to honor a new diplomatic agreement. On the one hand, the U.S. government had to provide a legal basis for the United States to deal with Taiwan on a broad range of issues. On the other hand, it could not violate the normalization agreement with the PRC. Both aspects were important for the American credibility in the world. In the middle of the Cold War, the United States could not afford to appear unreliable, making U.S. efforts like reviving *détente* with the Soviet Union more difficult. Normalization strengthened America's position in the world while the Taiwan legislation had to make sure that Washington's position in East Asia remained unchanged, calming down any concerns by other U.S. allies in the region.

⁸¹⁸ Vance, "Choices", 77.

⁸¹⁹ Brzezinski, "Power", 224; Carter, "Faith", 197.

⁸²⁰ Sutter, "China", 5.

The U.S. administration was therefore aware how urgent and delicate legislation about Taiwan was, and made this clear to the U.S. public. In a press briefing after the announcement of normalization, an U.S. official explained that the current legal situation denied many of the proposed activities between the people of the United States and Taiwan e (e.g. Ex-Im Bank loans, arms sales etc.) since U.S. law allowed the U.S. executive to conduct these interactions only with other states or state-like entities.⁸²¹ The White House did not want to spread panic, but aimed to put some pressure on the legislative branch with this statement in order to urge Congress to cooperate with the White House on the matter. The goal was to avoid any procrastination for the Taiwan legislation.

Carter believed the urgency of the matter helped him to control the upcoming legislation process because his administration was “in the driver’s seat.” The only obstacle Carter indentified was “a group of highly motivated right-wing political-action groups” that wanted “a law that would reverse the action I [Carter] had taken in recognizing the People’s Republic of China...”⁸²² In order to avoid public scrutiny, the administration entertained the idea to limit Congressional jurisdiction, trying to keep the matter on the level of the Foreign Relations Committee.⁸²³ Clinging to the conviction that leaving the Congress uninformed was his right as U.S. president and underestimating Congressional persistence on the matter of Taiwan, Carter still aimed to limit the Congress’ role in the Taiwan legislation as much as possible.

Not all of Carter’s aides shared his view. Especially the State Department, knew the administration needed the cooperation of Congress in order to pass the legislation. The experts there were aware that it was not easy to gain broad Congressional support, as they had been following the Congressional debates about Carter’s China policy. Hence, the DOS concluded that the administration would “be accused of inadequate notification” about the administration’s course of action concerning normalization and the Taiwan issue.⁸²⁴ Another report argued that even

⁸²¹ Background Briefing [on normalization], 12/15/1978, “China, (PRC) 12/78]” folder, Box 9, NSA Brzezinski Material Country File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁸²² Carter, “Faith”, 210.

⁸²³ Memo, James T. McIntyre, Jr. to Jimmy Carter, 1/23/1979, “China: Taiwan Presidential Memorandum and Legislation, 12/78-6/79 [CF, O/A 710]” folder, Box 7, Staff Office Counsel Lipshutz, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁸²⁴ Memo, Addendum to our Memo on China Resolution, Douglas Bennet, 12/12/1978, “Normalization of Relations with China - 1979” folder, Box 13, Records of Warren Christopher, 1977-1981, RG 59, NARA.

supporters of the president's decision could ask for clarification on the three most controversial points: Congressional consultation prior to normalization, security guarantees for Taiwan and diplomatic privileges for the authorities on Taiwan.⁸²⁵

Indeed, the executive did not have to wait long before Congress criticized the lack of information the administration had forwarded to the legislative about the course of the normalization negotiations. Congressmen like Jonathan B. Bingham's (Dem-New York) who felt adequately consulted by the administration concerning were in the minority.⁸²⁶ Lester L. Wolff (Dem-New York), Chairman of the Asia & Pacific Subcommittee of the House of Representatives, was the first who harshly criticized the administration for its secrecy.⁸²⁷ Senator Charles Percy (Rep-Illinois) who basically agreed with Carter's decision warned the administration that the Senate would postpone any legislative actions or would even aim to rewrite the executive branch's bill.⁸²⁸ Percy's statement left no doubt, the administration had to bring in the Congress to a certain degree.

The White House opted for a very technical legislation. The former ROC diplomat David Tawei Lee states the core of the administration's bill was the installation of the American Institute in Taiwan (AIT) which should manage the unofficial relationship between the United States and Taiwan.⁸²⁹ In the sense of Hansell's advice, the institute could also function as intermediary for the arms sales. From a legal standpoint, the AIT was a private institution although U.S. Congress would fund it, while the U.S. executive would provide its personal staff. According to experts from the State Department, there was "no alternative to the nominally 'private' corporation approach to continue U.S./Taiwan relationships."⁸³⁰ Any attempt to give the institute a semi-official character would offend the PRC.

⁸²⁵Memo, Douglas J. Bennet, Jr. to Warren Christopher, 2/01/1979, "Briefing Memorandum" folder, Box 13, Office of the Deputy Secretary Records of Warren christopher [sic], 1977-1980, RG 59, NARA.

⁸²⁶Statement of Jonathan B. Bingham in: Hearings "Taiwan Legislation", Committee on International Relations, House of Representatives, 2/7/1979, Library of Congress, 32.

⁸²⁷Memcon "US-Taiwan relations and the Institute: Discussion with Congressman Wolff", Department of State, 01/16/1979, "Briefing Memorandum" folder, Box 13, Office of the Deputy Secretary Records of Warren christopher [sic], 1977-1980, RG 59, NARA.

⁸²⁸ Memcon "Briefing of Senator Percy on East Asia", Department of State, 01/10/1979, "Briefing Memorandum" folder, Box 13, Office of the Deputy Secretary Records of Warren christopher [sic], 1977-1980, RG 59, NARA.

⁸²⁹ Lee, "Making", 49.

⁸³⁰Memo, James T. McIntyre, Jr. to Jimmy Carter, 1/23/1979, "China: Taiwan Presidential Memorandum and Legislation, 12/78-6/79 [CF, O/A 710]" folder, Box 7, Staff Office Counsel Lipshutz, Jimmy Carter Library.

As the Department of Justice argued the creation of the Taiwan Omnibus bill was very complex due to the unique issue it dealt with. After the United States had deprived the ROC of recognition, Taiwan did not possess a status that allowed U.S. agencies to have relations with the ROC regime and its agencies. Thus, the administration's draft provided that U.S. officials could conduct interactions with Taiwan like with a "foreign country, nation, state, government or [a] similar entity."⁸³¹ This notion in section 102 of the bill also enabled the sales of arms to Taiwan.⁸³² There was no kind of security language in the draft, and the administration also endeavored to avoid any kind of language which could be interpreted as security guarantees for Taiwan. The risk of alienating the PRC was too high.

The White House tried to make Congress understand that the Taiwan legislation had to be acceptable for the PRC government. Far reaching security guarantees or demands for a peaceful solution of the Taiwan issue would damage U.S.-China relations and even endanger the normalization agreement. The PRC had made clear that it did not accept the new framework of U.S. relations with Taiwan to exceed the *Japanese formula*. As we have seen in previous chapters, different Chinese officials had stated that this was the farthest reaching concession they could make.

President Carter was not willing to risk frictions with China, and the administration made this view clear in its comments on different Senate resolutions. The executive branch would not allow government-to-government relations with Taiwan, also excluding the idea of a liaison office in Taipei. In a memorandum which analyzed all suggestions by members of Congress for changes in the Taiwan Omnibus bill, the administration even claimed any kind of official recognition of the government on Taiwan, as demanded for example by resolution S. Res. 11 introduced by Senator Dennis DeConcini (Dem-Arizona), "could jeopardize the U.S. interest in the continued peace in the Taiwan area and threaten the well-being of the people on [sic] Taiwan..." The authors of the analysis also tried to explain why the

⁸³¹Attachment "A Bill", memo, James T. McIntyre, Jr. to Jimmy Carter, 1/23/1979, "China: Taiwan Presidential Memorandum and Legislation, 12/78-6/79 [CF, O/A 710]" folder, Box 7, Staff Office Counsel Lipshutz, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁸³²Attachment "Section by Section Analysis of the Proposed Act to Promote the Foreign Policy of the United States through the Maintenance of Commercial, Cultural and Other Relations with the People on Taiwan on an Unofficial Basis, and for Other Purposes", memo, James T. McIntyre, Jr. to Jimmy Carter, 1/23/1979, "China: Taiwan Presidential Memorandum and Legislation, 12/78-6/79 [CF, O/A 710]" folder, Box 7, Staff Office Counsel Lipshutz, Jimmy Carter Library.

Carter administration did not pursue a stronger public commitment to Taiwan's security. They argued that since the PRC tacitly acknowledged U.S. interest in a peaceful solution of the Taiwan issue, any stronger commitment to Taiwan's security, as demanded e.g. by S. Res. 12 by Senator John C. Danforth (Rep-Missouri), could "likely be regarded by the People's Republic of China as provocative, and serve to raise tensions and to undermine the prospects for peace in the Taiwan area."⁸³³

The record does not explain if Carter ignored Congressional objections because he was convinced that his decision and behavior had been flawless concerning Taiwan, or if he hoped Congress would insert a stronger security language into the Taiwan legislation because the president was not able to do so with regard to diplomatic considerations. As stated above, Carter seemed certain that the Congress would approve the bill, not risking the smooth transition of U.S.-Taiwan relations. Thus, the administration decided to adhere to their draft, and Senator Frank F. Church (Dem-Idaho) introduced the Taiwan Omnibus bill as S. 245 to the Senate on January 29, 1979. The same day, Representative Clement Zablocki (Dem-Wisconsin) introduced the bill as H.R. 1614 to the House of Representatives.

The bill's restraint on security matters served to appease the PRC after the Chinese leadership had made considerable concessions during the normalization negotiations. The Carter administration did not want to push its efforts to ensure Taiwan's security too far, so that the PRC would take offense. The avoidance of any security language in the legislation draft should therefore also help to prevent friction in the Taiwan Strait. However, the previous behavior of Carter and his aides towards Taiwanese officials did not suggest that the administration had always acted in the best interest of Taiwan.

⁸³³Memo, Executive Office of the President to Ronald K. Peterson, 31/1/1979, "CO 34-2 Executive 1/18/79-1/31/79" folder, Box CO-17, White House Central File Subject File Countries, Jimmy Carter Library.

Downgrading U.S.-Taiwan Relations

Right from the beginning of Carter's presidency, the administration took measures to downgrade U.S. relations with the ROC. This decision was not only technical in nature, but, from the U.S. point of view, a diplomatic necessity. The Carter administration had to demonstrate its commitment to normalization. It was important to show Beijing how serious the White House took Chinese concerns about the relationship between the U.S. and its "renegade" province. Moreover, Carter and his aides knew that the Taiwan legislation would test the PRC leadership's patience, anyway. Downgrading U.S. relations to Taiwan and restraint in the Taiwan legislation was the price the Carter administration had to pay for Beijing's concessions, although it was clear that this course of action would provoke criticism from Taiwan and U.S. Congress.

The first step of the administration's downgrading tactic was to keep the communication level with the regime in Taipei and its representatives in the United States as low as possible. ROC Ambassador James Shen was not allowed to meet any high U.S. official.⁸³⁴ This avoidance strategy reached its point of culmination when National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski indefinitely postponed a meeting with Shen to inform him about his upcoming trip to China, and ordered his aide Michel Oksenberg to meet the Taiwanese diplomat instead.⁸³⁵ Even after the DOS and Oksenberg had urged the APNSA to talk to Shen, Brzezinski refused.⁸³⁶ This behavior led to friction between the executive branch and parts of the Congress, although the State Department remained in contact with ROC officials reassuring Taiwan of American support.⁸³⁷

⁸³⁴Memo, Alan Romberg to Anthony Lake, 1/31/1978, "Classified Correspondence" folder, Box 11, Records of Anthony Lake, 1977-1981, RG 59, NARA.

⁸³⁵ Brzezinski noted handwritten he would meet Shen after his trip, see: memo, Michel Oksenberg to Zbigniew Brzezinski, 4/26/1978, "China (Republic of China) 1/77-5/78" folder, Box 11, NSA Brzezinski Material Country File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁸³⁶Memo, Michel Oksenberg to Zbigniew Brzezinski, 5/30/1978, "China (Republic of China) 1/77-5/78" folder, Box 11, NSA Brzezinski Material Country File, Jimmy Carter Library; Memo, Michel Oksenberg to Zbigniew Brzezinski, 8/3/1978, "CO 34-1 Confidential 1/20/77-1/20/81" folder, Box CO-15, White House Central Files Subject Files Countries, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁸³⁷Memo, Alan Romberg to Anthony Lake, 1/31/1978, "Classified Correspondence" folder, Box 11, Records of Anthony Lake, 1977-1981, RG 59, NARA.

The idea behind Carter's and his aides' avoidance strategy was to accommodate the PRC by demonstrating the Carter administration's seriousness to start the normalization process. However, the regime in Taipei had proved a lack of trustworthiness and discretion in the past, using every encounter with U.S. officials to emphasize the tight relationship between the United States and Taiwan. Such posturing hurt the president's efforts to normalize relations with the People's Republic, since it did not only offend the PRC leaders but also let them question Carter's seriousness to accept the previously mentioned three Chinese preconditions.

However, reducing the communication with the Taiwanese was only one part of the U.S. administration's attempts to downgrade the relationship. At the end of 1977, the president ordered the reduction of the diplomatic personal in Taiwan, and Ambassador Leonard Unger, who assured Carter of his devotion to U.S. interests, promised to reduce the staff of his embassy as much as possible.⁸³⁸ Any American with an official assignment on the island was on the retreat, and the White House had not even finished the downgrading.

Another step was the reduction of U.S. troops on Taiwan to fewer than 500 soldiers. According to Secretary of Defense Harold Brown, the remaining units on Taiwan needed around 660 soldiers to remain operative. Brown argued a reduction was only possible after the development of a contingency plan.⁸³⁹ At first, Carter postponed his decision until after the vote about the Panama Canal Treaty because he did not want to provoke a conflict with Congress.⁸⁴⁰ In May 1978, however, he approved the reduction to 660 soldiers.⁸⁴¹ The reduction of the diplomatic and military personnel was the last proof that the White House was cutting off any basis for a government-to-government relationship with the ROC.

The U.S. administration did not even back off from offending the regime in Taipei. As James Shen describes in his memoirs, the ROC leadership asked to

⁸³⁸ Letter, Leonard Unger to Jimmy Carter, 12/5/1977, "CO 34-1 Executive 7/1/77-12/315/77" folder, Box CO-16, Countries, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁸³⁹ Memo, Deputy Secretary of State to Zbigniew Brzezinski, 1/5/1978, "China (Republic of China) 1/77-5/78" folder, Box 11, NSA Brzezinski Material Country File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁸⁴⁰ Instead of approving or disapproving Brzezinski's suggestion, the President noted that he would decide after the vote, see: memo, Zbigniew Brzezinski to Jimmy Carter, 2/25/1978, "China (Republic of China) 1/77-5/78" folder, Box 11, NSA Brzezinski Material Country File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁸⁴¹ Memo, Zbigniew Brzezinski to Jimmy Carter, 5/11/1978, "China (Republic of China) 1/77-5/78" folder, Box 11, NSA Brzezinski Material Country File, Jimmy Carter Library.

postpone Brzezinski's arrival in Beijing on May 20, 1978 because it was also the day of Chiang Ching-kuo's inauguration as president of the ROC. The unfortunate scheduling was presumably a coincidence, but Brzezinski's visit to Beijing on the same day as Chiang's inauguration would mean a huge insult to the ROC regime. Eventually, the White House denied Taipei's request, and Brzezinski touched Chinese soil only hours before Chiang Kai-shek's son followed the footsteps of his father, a man who had been an important ally in the early years of the United States' struggle against global communism. It was just another demonstration that the Carter administration for all its honest concerns about Taiwan's security lacked respect for the ROC leadership and did not care about their feelings. James Shen admits that this offence was the final proof for the KMT regime that the White House was not considering its needs anymore. For Taiwanese leaders, the time to approach Taiwan's friends in the United States had finally come.⁸⁴²

U.S. Congress and also the American people were concerned about the constant downgrading of U.S.-ROC relations, and the administration was aware of this sentiment. Richard Holbrooke reported in a memo to Cyrus Vance that the American people would oppose any abandonment of Taiwan. Holbrooke elaborated that numerous polls indicated they preferred the current status-quo in the Taiwan Strait. A majority of interviewees also expressed concerns that the U.S. helped China to become a great power. As the polls also made clear, the USA should ensure Taiwan's security if the administration would indeed normalize U.S. relations with the PRC.⁸⁴³ The process of the Taiwan legislation in early 1979 demonstrated that the Congress was much more willing to fulfill the wishes of the American citizens than the Carter administration who appeared to a lot of Americans just too eager to accommodate the PRC government.

Discussing Normalization and the Security of Taiwan

The Congress started to discuss the matter of security guarantees for Taiwan officially in different hearings in February 1979 which gave the administration signifi-

⁸⁴² Shen, "U.S.", 226-229.

⁸⁴³ Memo, Richard Holbrooke to Cyrus Vance, 5/19/1978, "Chinese Normalization, 1978" folder, Box 34A, Chief of Staff Jordan, Jimmy Carter Library.

cant information about what they had to expect. It also offered administrative officials a chance to explain the decisions the government had made in order to achieve normalization. Normalization itself was not criticized as a report by the Democratic Study Group (DSG) of the House of Representatives stated that “there has been little controversy over the merits of normalizing relations with the PRC. Most people view it as a long overdue move to conform to international realities.”⁸⁴⁴ Even Senator Barry Goldwater (Rep- Arizona) who was a keen supporter of Taiwan did not oppose normalization in general because he knew “that that is coming. We have all known that it is coming. We have known it for years.”⁸⁴⁵

However, Goldwater and other Senators believed it needed a stronger commitment to Taiwan’s security, a commitment that Carter and his aides had failed to make in their Taiwan Omnibus bill. Characterizing the administration’s draft as “a guarantee that says little and means little”, Senator Robert Dole (Rep-Kansas), an ally of Goldwater on the matter of Taiwan, insisted on using language from the MDT in the Taiwan legislation in order to assure the Taiwanese people of U.S. support for its defense.⁸⁴⁶ Senator John Glenn (Dem-Ohio) who elaborated such concerns from an institutional point of view echoed this skepticism. In his opinion, the proposed AIT would not be able to handle a real crisis if the PRC were to threaten Taiwan. In such a situation “it becomes very, very difficult to deal through an institute like this, so perhaps if that ever occurred, things would be deteriorated to such a point that it would become academic at that point anyway.”⁸⁴⁷

Observers outside the legislative branch shared these worries. The President of the American Chamber of Commerce in Taipei, Robert P. Parker, for example also demanded a clear statement that would guarantee Taiwan's security. Such guarantees would be good for U.S.-Taiwanese trade because “[p]art of doing business, and doing it successfully, is having certainty [...] and no element of certainty is more important than one's political security.” Therefore, Parker argued Taiwan

⁸⁴⁴Special Report, Democratic Study Group, 2/8/1979, “PRC [People’s Republic of China]/Taiwan, 2/1/79-3/20/79” folder, Box 167, Office of Congressional Liaison Francis, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁸⁴⁵Statement of Barry Goldwater in: Hearings “Taiwan”, Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 2/6/1979, Library of Congress, 360.

⁸⁴⁶Statement of Robert Dole in: Hearings “Taiwan”, Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 2/6/1979, Library of Congress, 398-399.

⁸⁴⁷Statement of John Glenn in: Hearings “Taiwan”, Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 2/5/1979, Library of Congress, 100.

needed a “strong security resolution [...] from Congress.” Otherwise, the people on Taiwan could become the victim of “economic coercion.”⁸⁴⁸

The administration had to take concerns from the Congress and business associations seriously because both groups were able to increase the political pressure on Carter. The president still needed a Congressional majority to vote for the executive’s Taiwan Omnibus bill, which continued to be very unspecific on matters of security in order to avoid frictions with the PRC, and this led to broad opposition against Carter’s legislation.

The discussion about Taiwan’s security circled around the question of whether or not the PRC posed a real threat to the people on Taiwan at the moment. The administration assessed Taiwan to be in no danger. Since the beginning of 1979, the PLA had ceased their regular bombardment of the ROC outposts on Quemoy and Matsu. Additionally, Beijing had expressed its readiness to start negotiations with Taipei about reunification.⁸⁴⁹ The administration believed China would refrain from violence against Taiwan because the Chinese government did not want to risk the good relations the PRC had developed with the United States and other industrialized nations over the last years.⁸⁵⁰ U.S. Congress and other people critical of the administration’s previous behavior concerning Taiwan shared this view.⁸⁵¹ China could not risk its relations with the West because this would limit its access to modern technology and foreign investments.

The different China experts speaking in front of the Congressional committees were divided in their assessment of Taiwan’s security. Former member of the NSC and professor for political science at Swarthmore College Kenneth Lieberthal agreed with the administration, and explained that a Chinese attack on Taiwan did not appear as an imminent danger, arguing that China needed a stable East Asia to pursue its current course of modernization. He also stated that the PLA lacked the

⁸⁴⁸Statement of Robert P. Parker in: Hearings “Taiwan”, Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 2/6/1979, Library of Congress, 442-443.

⁸⁴⁹ John Fraser, “China Restates Reunification Bid with Taiwanese”, *Washington Post*, 12/16/1978.

⁸⁵⁰Statement of Warren Christopher in: Hearings “Taiwan Legislation”, Committee on International Relations, House of Representatives, 2/7/1979, Library of Congress, 4, 16.

⁸⁵¹Statement of Robert P. Parker in: Hearings “Taiwan”, Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 2/6/1979, Library of Congress, 442-443; Report, Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 3/1/1979, Library of Congress, 11; Report, Committee on Foreign Affairs, United States House of Representatives, 3/3/1979, Library of Congress, 5.

capabilities to conquer Taiwan without significant casualties.⁸⁵² The well-known China expert and Harvard professor John K. Fairbank agreed, and tried to draw Congress' attention to the fact that Taiwan was the only Chinese province which was completely surrounded by water. This made the island easy to defend as long as the ROC was provided with defensive weapons.⁸⁵³ Former U.S. Navy Admiral and head of the Taiwan Defense Command (TDC) Edward K. Snyder, however, believed that the Taiwanese air force and navy would be no match for the huge amount of PLA forces that Beijing could send against Taiwan.⁸⁵⁴ This statement echoed Congressional concerns.

Congress thought it needed a stronger U.S. commitment to Taiwan's security because many of its members like Senator Ed Muskie (Dem-Maine) doubted Taiwan's ability to defend itself.⁸⁵⁵ Neither the administration nor experts like Fairbanks were able to convince Congress that Taiwan was in no imminent danger. Even Richard Nixon who declined the Senate's wish to participate in the hearings made clear that Taiwan would have to be protected in some way in order to save U.S. credibility.⁸⁵⁶ Hence, Congress expected the White House to give Taiwan some sort of security guarantee.

The U.S. executive, on the other hand, was convinced that continuing arms sales would ensure that the Taiwanese forces would remain strong enough to repel any aggression from the mainland.⁸⁵⁷ The Carter administration had made sure during the normalization negotiations that arms sales to Taiwan would not stop. According to Richard Holbrooke, the U.S. administration had three reasons to insist on the continuation of arms sales to Taiwan. First, an end of these sales would have had a negative psychological impact on the Taiwanese people. Second, ceasing the sales of arms could create instability in the region. Third, no other nation would

⁸⁵² Statement of Kenneth Lieberthal in: Hearings "Taiwan", Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 2/6/1979, Library of Congress, 453-454; Statement of A. Doak Barnett in: Hearings "Taiwan", Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 2/6/1979, Library of Congress, 590.

⁸⁵³ Letter, John K. Fairbank to Lester L. Wolff, 2/14/1979, "3/1/79" folder, Box 121, Office of Staff Secretary Handwriting File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁸⁵⁴ Statement of Edward K. Snyder in: Hearings "Taiwan", Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 2/6/1979, Library of Congress, 586.

⁸⁵⁵ Statements of Edmund S. Muskie in: Hearings "Taiwan", Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 2/8/1979, Library of Congress, 679-680.

⁸⁵⁶ Letter, Richard Nixon to Lester L. Wolff, 2/14/1979, "3/1/79" folder, Box 121, Office of Staff Secretary Handwriting File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁸⁵⁷ Statement of Warren Christopher in: Hearings "Taiwan Legislation", Committee on International Relations, House of Representatives, 2/7/1979, Library of Congress, 4, 16.

sell enough arms to Taiwan: “Over the years, the United States has provided Taiwan the bulk of its defensive equipment through foreign military sales and commercial channels. We will continue to **extend** [sic] such access.”⁸⁵⁸

Since the attempt to show that Taiwan was in no imminent danger had failed, the Carter administration aimed to underline the benefits of normalization for the United States. According to the administration’s main speaker in the hearings, Deputy Secretary of State Warren Christopher, normalization opened a wide range of political and economic opportunities. As he emphasized in his written statement normalization “will permit us to encourage an outward-looking China to play a constructive role in the world generally.” Moreover, Christopher saw a possibility for “American business to deal on an equal footing with other suppliers as China moves toward modernization.”⁸⁵⁹ Later, Richard Holbrooke further elaborated the administration’s position. Holbrooke pointed out that thanks to normalization, the United States had friendly relations with all countries in East Asia except Vietnam and North Korea. Of particular significance was that Washington enjoyed good relations with “the two giants of Asia”, Japan and China. Holbrooke argued, good relations with China were the best way to assure Taiwan’s security because Beijing was aware of America’s “important interest in the Taiwan region.”⁸⁶⁰ Such statements made clear that the administration saw no alternative to normalization.

China was too important in the world for the American position to be ignored. Therefore, Secretary of Defense Harold Brown claimed good relations with the PRC were indispensable in order to deal with China’s status as a rising power. In Brown’s words “China is an emerging power which will exercise increasing influence on world events. That is a fact, not a consequence of normalization.” As the Secretary further argued, better relations with China had led to “an Asia much less menacing to the United States than it appeared, and was, in the 1950’s, when the Soviets and the Chinese acted in concert.”⁸⁶¹

⁸⁵⁸Statement by Richard Holbrooke in: Hearings “Implementation of Taiwan Relations Act: Issues and Concerns”, Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs of the Committee on International Relations, House of Representatives, 02/14/1979, Library of Congress, 12, 18.

⁸⁵⁹Statement of Warren Christopher in: Hearings “Taiwan”, Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 2/5/1979, Library of Congress, 19.

⁸⁶⁰Statement by Richard Holbrooke in: Hearings “Implementation of Taiwan Relations Act: Issues and Concerns”, Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs of the Committee on International Relations, House of Representatives, 02/14/1979, Library of Congress, 13-14.

⁸⁶¹Statement of Harold Brown in: Hearings “Taiwan”, Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 2/5/1979, Library of Congress, 31-32.

All these comments by Carter's aides summed up the strategic considerations the administration had taken into account when it made the decision to push for normalization. The United States benefited from closer relations with the People's Republic because it improved the American global position. In accordance with Neorealist conclusions, the tacit alliance with the PRC increased U.S. power and prevented the reemergence of Sino-Soviet cooperation. In addition, good U.S.-China relations put pressure on the Soviet Union, facilitating U.S. cooperation with Moscow on matter such as SALT. But the United States would not only gain advantages for its Cold War struggle with the Soviet Union from normalization. In the Carter administration's view, normalization should also help to strengthen the U.S. position in Asia-Pacific. The perception was that closer U.S.-China ties influenced the distribution of power there in Washington's favor. In his talks with the Chinese in August 1977, Vance had already stated that the U.S. wanted "to stabilize our [the U.S.] position as a Pacific power. There should be no doubt that we will continue to play a key role in contributing to regional peace and stability."⁸⁶² Not only closer relations with the PRC were helpful in this regard, but also a continuing security relationship with Taiwan.

The administration cared for Taiwan's security. The normalization negotiations with Beijing had demonstrated as much, and U.S. officials reiterated this view during the hearings several times. As Michael Armacost from the DOD emphasized normalization served the purpose of stability in the Far East because it actually prevented China from using force against Taiwan.⁸⁶³ A stable East Asia would allow Washington to use its means elsewhere. The question was not whether the White House was willing to support Taiwan by selling arms, but whether U.S. Congress and the American public deemed that to be enough for the island's security. The answer was no. They wanted a more visible commitment.

⁸⁶² Memcon, Cyrus Vance, 08/22/1977, "China MR-NLC-98-215 (1)" folder, Box 40, Vertical Files (VF), Jimmy Carter Library.

⁸⁶³Statement by Richard Holbrooke in: Hearings "Implementation of Taiwan Relations Act: Issues and Concerns", Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs of the Committee on International Relations, House of Representatives, 02/14/1979, Library of Congress, 15.

Taiwan's Strategic Meaning

As history proved, a close security relationship with Taiwan has strengthened the U.S. position in East Asia. During the Cold War, U.S. relations with Taiwan were almost as significant for the American position in the region as the relations with Japan and South Korea because as close U.S. allies they added to the United States' political weight in the region. All three actors were major trading powers in East Asia, and absolutely dependent on the United States concerning their security. That made all three regimes highly loyal. In the event of a conflict in East Asia, the geographic position of South Korea, Japan, and Taiwan also allowed the stationing of American troops in a strategically advantageous position.

Different documents indicate that the Carter administration underlined the character of the United States as a Pacific power. Taiwan was a piece in Washington's strategic make-up in the Asia-Pacific region. Since the end of the Chinese Civil War, the island and its people had served as a stronghold in East Asia, even if no U.S. troops were stationed there. The administration argued that the United States did not need to have a garrison on Taiwan anymore because the situation had changed since the 1950s.⁸⁶⁴ An attack from the mainland was no longer imminent. However, the Taiwan Strait was too important as a regional trade route, and Taiwan's security was connected to the safety of the shipping lanes there. Moreover, assuring Taiwan's security, and deterring the mainland from any forceful actions, also served the U.S. interest of a stable region.

The record of the normalization negotiations indicates that the Carter administration was not willing to leave Taiwan to the mercy of the PRC. Now, Christopher made it publicly known that "[i]n normalizing relations with the People's Republic of China, we [the U.S. government] have not, by any means, abandoned our role as a Pacific power or our interest in the peace and security of Taiwan."⁸⁶⁵ According to the Deputy Secretary of State, the U.S. administration was ready to take measures if the PRC took "the kind of action that you [Jacob Javits] imply in

⁸⁶⁴Statement by Richard Holbrooke in: Hearings "Implementation of Taiwan Relations Act: Issues and Concerns", Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs of the Committee on International Relations, House of Representatives, 02/14/1979, Library of Congress, 16.

⁸⁶⁵Statement of Warren Christopher in: Hearings "Taiwan", Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 2/5/1979, Library of Congress, 15.

your statement -that is, the use of force or threat of the use of force [...]” against Taiwan. The Carter administration was “determined to play a proper role to try to insure the peace and security of that area”, and they “would, in consultation with the Congress, take the action necessary to protect our interests there in trade, our investment, our interest in the investigation in those waters.”⁸⁶⁶

Christopher’s statement was very important, because it demonstrated Washington’s resolve to protect Taiwan and maintain the dominant position of the United States in the region. With regard to the strategic meaning of Taiwan, it was more direct than any previous public statement of a member of the Carter administration. The White House saw the United States not only as a nation with vital interests in Asia-Pacific but as the most powerful actor in this region, a hegemon. Preventing regional instability or a power shift was therefore in the interest of this hegemon. Normalization served exactly this purpose, and the protection of Taiwan against any kind of aggression from the PRC did so, as well.

The leadership of the U.S. military agreed with Christopher’s view. General David Jones, Chairman of the JCS, was sure that normalization would mean more stability in the Far East as long as the United States guaranteed Taiwan’s security and survival. The United States had a strategic interest in Taiwan that would exceed moral consideration about the well-being of the people there. While Japan, South Korea, the Philippines and Thailand might have been more important for U.S. interests at the time, the General still admitted “that an attack on Taiwan would be not only of grave concern but would impact [sic] on our security interests. There is no question about it.”⁸⁶⁷ The General made clear that the United States did not need troops on Taiwan for the island to have a meaning to America’s strategic interests.

In the minds of many U.S. officials, Taiwan still held some strategic value to the United States, and the Senate agreed. According to Senator Jacob Javits, the Congress wanted plain and simple, “Taiwan pretty free for strategic and military and security reasons.”⁸⁶⁸ One reason for this interest was Taiwan’s location on the

⁸⁶⁶ Ibid., 28.

⁸⁶⁷Statement of David Jones in: Hearings “Taiwan”, Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 2/22/1979, Library of Congress, 740, 742, 751.

⁸⁶⁸Statement of Jacob K. Javits in: Hearings “Taiwan”, Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 2/22/1979, Library of Congress, 742.

aforementioned shipping lanes between Japan and the Philippines.⁸⁶⁹ A variety of experts outside of the political circles in Washington confirmed this perspective. They characterized Taiwan as a strategic asset, guaranteeing the United States an important ally in the region, in the event that either the Soviet Union or the People's Republic would threaten American interests in Asia-Pacific. The former head of the TDC Snyder equated "Taiwan to about 10 aircraft carriers" and thought the island represented "a hub of our [U.S.] communications system in the Far East."⁸⁷⁰

In addition, Taiwan was central for Japan's security. Japan was the most important American ally in East Asia. The previously mentioned reaction in Japan after Carter had announced normalization indicated Japanese anxiety the United States could gradually disengage from East Asia. Moreover, if Taiwan fell into the hands of a hostile power, Japan's southern flank would be threatened. As Senator Danforth pointed out "Japan is the centerpiece of our security position in Asia." From Danforth's perspective, Taiwan served the protection of South Korea and Japan, and "a very serious change in the condition of Taiwan [...] would seriously complicate the defense arrangements and requirements between Japan and ourselves..."⁸⁷¹ Admiral Snyder went even further explaining that Taiwan "sits astride of the oil routes from the Middle East to Japan. Interruption of this oil could bring Japan to its knees very quickly." Therefore, he considered "Taiwan a very important military asset."⁸⁷² The United States could not allow that to happen because it needed Japan in its struggle against the Soviet Union, and thus, it still needed Taiwan.

Some experts were convinced that the Soviet Union was trying to establish hegemony in East Asia, and one way to achieve this goal was to approach Taiwan.⁸⁷³ The U.S. administration conceded that a military basis on Taiwan would

⁸⁶⁹Statement of Charles H. Percy in: Hearings "Taiwan", Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 2/22/1979, Library of Congress, 744.

⁸⁷⁰Statement of Edward K. Snyder in: Hearings "Taiwan", Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 2/6/1979, Library of Congress, 649.

⁸⁷¹Statement of John Danforth in: Hearings "Taiwan", Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 2/6/1979, Library of Congress, 421.

⁸⁷²Statement of Edward K. Snyder in: Hearings "Taiwan", Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 2/6/1979, Library of Congress, 649.

⁸⁷³Statement of Edward K. Snyder in: Hearings "Taiwan", Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 2/6/1979, Library of Congress, 649-650; Statement of Robert A. Scalapino in: Hearings "Taiwan", Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 2/6/1979, Library of Congress, 665.

give the Soviets an immense advantage.⁸⁷⁴ However, the Carter administration did not believe the ROC leadership would approach the Soviets. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Roger Sullivan emphasized that by “continuing on in maintaining an unofficial relationship with the United States and not changing his claim to be the president of the sole legal government of China [...]”, Chiang Ching-kuo had chosen exactly the political option the DOS had foreseen. Sullivan further explained the Taiwanese leadership had “very authoritatively [...] rejected the Soviet option in an address to the Central Committee plenary session on the 18th of December, a couple of days after the announcement.”⁸⁷⁵ In addition, the PRC had already threatened that it considered a Soviet-Taiwanese alliance to be a direct threat to China’s security, leaving the PRC no other choice than a military response.⁸⁷⁶ Furthermore, as the result of Christopher’s mission to Taipei in late December had already illustrated, Taiwan was just too dependent on the United States to risk Washington’s benevolence. The PRC’s threat, the strong anti-communist attitude of Chiang, and the high degree of dependency on the United States made a USSR-ROC alliance very unlikely. It was therefore no concern for Carter and his aides.

The U.S. administration also had no interest in the regime in Taipei declaring Taiwan’s independence as this could lead to instability in East Asia due to the likely military reaction from the PRC. However, U.S. officials were sure CCK would refrain from such a step for two reasons. First, he and the rest of the leadership in Taipei were aware that the declaration of independence would provoke an attack from the mainland, and secondly, the KMT regime’s legitimacy depended on its claim to represent whole China and not only the people in Taiwan.⁸⁷⁷ From the White House’s point of view, Taipei’s attitude left reunification as the only way to solve the Taiwan issue.

Since the U.S. could feel assured that the regime in Taipei did not intend to accept the PRC’s offer for negotiations any time soon, the United States enjoyed a very comfortable position. The Carter administration followed the official line that

⁸⁷⁴Statement of Michael Armacost in: Hearings “Taiwan”, Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 2/8/1979, Library of Congress, 675.

⁸⁷⁵Statement of Roger Sullivan in: Hearings “Taiwan”, Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 2/8/1979, Library of Congress, 671.

⁸⁷⁶Memcon, Lester L. Wolff, 10/7/1978, “China, MR-NLC-98-214 [1]” folder, Box 40, Vertical Files, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁸⁷⁷Byron S. J. Weng, “Taiwan’s International Status Today” in: *The China Quarterly*, No. 99 (September, 1984), 464.

the Taiwan issue was an internal affair of the Chinese. The United States only expected a peaceful settlement of the issue. It became clear, however, that the administration saw the unresolved Taiwan issue and the U.S. role in this quarrel as a strategic asset.⁸⁷⁸ Therefore, the United States had no interest in a quick solution, as Richard Holbrooke admitted in the Hearings of the House of Representatives a few weeks after the Senatorial hearings. While Holbrooke reiterated the official U.S. position that it was up to the Chinese and Taiwanese how they would settle the Taiwan issue, he also stated his personal opinion that he had “no problem with seeing the present situation on Taiwan and the mainland continue [sic] indefinitely...”⁸⁷⁹

Holbrooke did not elaborate his position, but he would not have expressed such a view, if his superiors had not approved it. The Assistant Secretary of State’s words emphasized what previous actions and comments from members of the Carter administration like Harold Brown had already indicated.⁸⁸⁰ The administration had no interest in Taiwan becoming a part of the PRC because this would mean the definition of Taiwan’s legal status. In the long-term, this could lead to the end of U.S. involvement in the Taiwan Strait as the PRC would then possess legal and political means to keep the United States out of Taiwan, weakening the U.S. position in the Asia-Pacific region. Moreover, if we believe that Taiwan influenced the Asian-Pacific balance of power in Washington’s favor, a reunification of Taiwan and the PRC would weaken the U.S. position vis-à-vis the People’s Republic. After all, U.S.-Taiwan relations could serve as means to put pressure on the regime in Beijing. In the event of friction with the PRC, Washington could opt to increase its military, political, or economic support for Taiwan.

One example for this approach occurred in 1992 when Washington wanted the PRC to change its approach to arms sales and foreign trade, resulting in U.S. support for Taiwan’s membership in the *General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade* (better known as GATT) and the sales of 150 F-16 Fighting Falcon fighter aircrafts

⁸⁷⁸Statement of Warren Christopher in: Hearings “Taiwan”, Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 2/5/1979, Library of Congress, 64-65.

⁸⁷⁹Statement by Richard Holbrooke in: Hearings “Implementation of Taiwan Relations Act: Issues and Concerns”, Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs of the Committee on International Relations, House of Representatives, 02/14/1979, Library of Congress, 29.

⁸⁸⁰ As we saw in chapter IV, during the Asia group’s discussions about normalization, Brown clearly stated that the U.S. would leave Taiwan never to the PRC, see: Memcon, Zbigniew Brzezinski, 4/11/1978, “Serial Xs—[8/77-8/78]” folder, Box 36, Donated Historical Material Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection Subject File, Jimmy Carter Library.

to Taipei.⁸⁸¹ An even more serious intervention occurred in 1996. After the PRC had conducted missile tests close to the Taiwanese main island to disrupt the presidential election in Taiwan, the United States sent the aircraft carriers U.S.S. Nimitz and U.S.S. Independence to Taiwan in order to deter Beijing from any further provocations.⁸⁸² Such events illustrate, why the United States had a significant interest in making sure it could influence the situation in the Taiwan Strait.

The American attitude also suggests that the United States saw the PRC only as a tacit ally, not worthy of Washington's full trust. Neither the administration nor a variety of other U.S. politicians (e.g. Senator Jesse Helms [Rep-North Carolina]) and China experts (e.g. Prof. Robert Scalapino, Dr. Ray Cline) were so naïve as to believe that the PRC would accept America's leadership in Asia in the future. For the Berkeley professor Scalapino it was only a matter of time until Beijing would develop "certain regional interests that may diverge from ours [American]."⁸⁸³ A few weeks later, the Senatorial committee appropriated these concerns in its report. The committee emphasized that China could alter its foreign policy in the future, and, hence, could thwart interests of the U.S. and its allies in the region.⁸⁸⁴ This was something the executive could not state in public due to diplomatic reasons but it is telling that no member of the administration criticized or contradicted the committee's report.

Some members of Congress were even more explicit about the probability of a future rivalry between the People's Republic and the United States. Senator Helms for example emphasized that Taiwan was of strategic value to the U.S. and its allies in Asia-Pacific pointing out that "Taiwan served as an important intelligence resource" against mainland China. According to Helms, the PRC still saw

⁸⁸¹ Harry Harding. "Tough and Smart on China" in: *The Brookings Review*, Vol. 11, No. 1 (Winter, 1993), 46.

⁸⁸² For a discussion about the Taiwan Strait Crisis of 1996, see: Kurt M. Campbell/Derek J. Mitchell, "Crisis in the Taiwan Strait" in: *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 80, No. 4 (July-August, 2001); Chang Pao-Ming, "The Dynamics of Taiwan's Democratization and Crisis in the Taiwan Strait" in: *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (June, 1996); Chen Qimao, "The Taiwan Strait Crisis: Its Crux and Solutions" in: *Asian Survey*, Vol. 36, No. 11 (November, 1996).

⁸⁸³ Statement of Robert A. Scalapino in: Hearings "Taiwan", Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 2/6/1979, Library of Congress, 665.

⁸⁸⁴ Report, Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 3/1/1979, Library of Congress, 21.

the relationship with the U.S. as “an adversary [sic] one over the long haul, as even top China hands in the Carter administration are quick to admit.”⁸⁸⁵

Accordingly, Taiwan had to be as autonomous as possible from China. Otherwise, it was not useful for the United States. As Congressman William Broomfield (Rep-Michigan) put it, Taiwan’s security was not only important but deemed vital to U.S. interests in the Asia-Pacific region.⁸⁸⁶ Some observers like Senator Jacob Javits even argued this logic made the island essential for American security itself. Javits did not believe “that because of Vietnam the American people have lost their marbles or failed to perceive the threat to their own security as a threat to the security of Taiwan.” The Senator was certain that the American people would be willing to bear the costs of the effort to keep Taiwan safe.⁸⁸⁷ As we have seen, public polls supported this view.

The administration agreed with this view, and did not exclude an intervention on behalf of Taiwan’s security. Roger Sullivan pointed out that Chinese aggression against Taiwan would present a threat to the U.S. security interest.⁸⁸⁸ Referring to the strength of the U.S. Navy, Michael Armacost confirmed that the administration reserved the right to intervene if the Chinese attempted to blockade Taiwan: “[I]n relationship to the naval blockade [of Taiwan], the U.S. Navy continues to be a very powerful force in the Pacific [...and] [t]he Chinese Navy is not the most, powerful navy in the world.”⁸⁸⁹ The United States would be ready and able to intervene in the Taiwan Strait if necessary.

Richard Holbrooke became even more explicit than Armacost. He was certain that the president was not restricted from taking any military action in the Taiwan Strait if the situation demanded it, even after the termination of the MDT.⁸⁹⁰ Jimmy Carter had confirmed this position a few days before: “And there is certainly nothing to prevent a future president or Congress from even going to war, if they

⁸⁸⁵ Statement, Jesse Helms, in: “Taiwan Enabling Act”, 125 Congressional Record, United States Senate, 3/5/1979, Library of Congress, 3832-3833.

⁸⁸⁶ Statement of William Broomfield in: Hearings “Taiwan Legislation”, Committee on International Relations, House of Representatives, 2/8/1979, Library of Congress, 58.

⁸⁸⁷ Statement of Jacob Javits in: Hearings “Taiwan”, Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 2/5/1979, Library of Congress, 12.

⁸⁸⁸ Statements of Roger Sullivan and Michael Armacost in: Hearings “Taiwan”, Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 2/8/1979, Library of Congress, 680-681.

⁸⁸⁹ Statement of Michael Armacost in: Hearings “Taiwan”, Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 2/8/1979, Library of Congress, 676.

⁸⁹⁰ Statement by Richard Holbrooke in: Hearings “Implementation of Taiwan Relations Act: Issues and Concerns”, Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs of the Committee on International Relations, House of Representatives, 02/14/1979, Library of Congress, 19.

choose, to protect the people of Taiwas [sic] or to protect any other people... that we look on with favor."⁸⁹¹ Warren Christopher did not even exclude the possibility that the administration would break up its diplomatic ties with the PRC if the PLA attacked Taiwan.⁸⁹²

Such comments were as frank as the Carter administration could be about Washington's intention to continue its protection of Taiwan, without openly questioning the normalization agreement. We can conclude that as important as normal relations with Beijing were, stability and America's preponderance of power in the Asia-Pacific region were more important for the White House. These statements also represented a warning to the PRC who had to think twice if it would risk tensions in its relations with the United States. This put a lot of diplomatic pressure on Beijing for the future. Finally, the administration's comments demonstrated that the Carter administration kept all its options open when it came to the security of Taiwan. It is really doubtful that Carter or any of his aides would have stated their attitude towards Taiwan's security so plainly if the president had not attached a great strategic value to Taiwan.

The Carter administration obviously had the political will to make sure that the status of Taiwan would not change in the future. Of course, there was a political question of whether the United States would use of force to deter the PRC from attacking Taiwan, but, in the event of a crisis, Congress and the U.S. public would be able to force the president to protect the island, although this promise did not concern Quemoy and Matsu. Although, as Christopher confirmed, these small islands belonged to the "people on Taiwan" in a cultural and economic sense, they were not incorporated into any security commitments.⁸⁹³ This was nothing new since Article 6 of the MDT had not included the ROC outposts, either, speaking only of the Taiwanese main island and the Pescadores. Arms sales, however, as Secretary of Defense Brown added, did not underlie any "geographic restriction as

⁸⁹¹ Quote from Don Oberdorfer, "Carter Says U.S. Could Go to War To Help Taiwan", *Washington Post*, 02/11/1979.

⁸⁹²Statement of Warren Christopher in: Hearings "Taiwan Legislation", Committee on International Relations, House of Representatives, 2/7/1979, Library of Congress, 41.

⁸⁹³Statement of Warren Christopher in: Hearings "Taiwan", Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 2/5/1979, Library of Congress, 29, 44.

to where arms sold to Taiwan are placed.”⁸⁹⁴ The United States would ensure the security of Quemoy and Matsu via arms sales.

In spite of the aforementioned frank comments, the Carter administration was still not in a position to make a strong public statement about U.S. guarantees for Taiwan’s security because they had to consider diplomatic requirements. The executive branch was afraid that the PRC would not only object to anything that would exceed the unilateral statement from December, but that Beijing would question the normalization agreement in general if Washington dared to substitute the MDT for something comparable to a bilateral defensive treaty.

Therefore, the executive appeared open to the idea of Congress clarifying the U.S. commitment to Taiwan’s security because Christopher admitted that “it may be that in the resolution that you [the Senate] propose, some language to give more assurance on that point [U.S. readiness to intervene in the Taiwan Strait] can be worked out.”⁸⁹⁵ The Congress only had to make sure that such a resolution would not “give an official character to our relations with Taiwan [which] would contradict the basis of normalization.” Furthermore, the security language should not “reestablish a mutual defense arrangement between the two countries...”⁸⁹⁶ The administration could not oversee the diplomatic requirements vis-à-vis the People’s Republic.

In hindsight, the White House had counted on Congress to express the concerns about Taiwan’s security in public. That way, Congress’ frankness also opened a path for Taiwan to play a more prominent role in the future of U.S. politics in East Asia. It was like a theater piece about an orphan who had lost his parents in a terrible accident. Taiwan was the orphan who looked for safety. The administration played the role of the ignorant aunts and uncles who meant well but were not able to help in the way necessary because they were occupied with other requirements, while the People’s Republic was the mean director of the orphan asylum abusing his wards if given the opportunity. This setting gave Congress the opportunity to play the role of the hero, the young couple who comes to the or-

⁸⁹⁴Statement of Harold Brown in: Hearings “Taiwan”, Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 2/5/1979, Library of Congress, 31-32.

⁸⁹⁵Statement of Warren Christopher in: Hearings “Taiwan”, Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 2/5/1979, Library of Congress, 29.

⁸⁹⁶Statement of Warren Christopher in: Hearings “Taiwan”, Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 2/5/1979, Library of Congress, 57.

phanage and rescues the child in the end, by giving him a home. This way, Congress eventually constituted the U.S. security commitment to Taiwan.

On the other hand, the public debate about Taiwan's security increased the political pressure on the Carter administration. It was clear that the American people, many important pressure groups from business and academic circles, and especially Congress demanded a commitment to Taiwan's security. Thus, the administration did not seem to have another choice but to prepare for discussion about what this security commitment could look like. Since it became obvious that Congress would not accept the Taiwan Omnibus bill in the form it had been introduced, Carter and his aides had to make sure that the new inserted security language would not contradict the normalization agreement with the PRC.

Indeed, Congress did indeed not accept the administration's Taiwan Omnibus bill as further legislation process on it was postponed indefinitely. According to the Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs' report, the reason for this reaction was that "the nonadministration [sic] witnesses agreed that the original proposals outlined by the administration failed to address the security concern" about Taiwan. The administration's draft also did not satisfy "the needs of the people on Taiwan, or of the private, commercial interests which were to form the bedrock of the new, unofficial United-States-Taiwanese relationship."⁸⁹⁷ These arguments indicated the meaning of the statements of the different experts whom the committee had asked to testify. In the end, the Taiwan Omnibus bill was just not able to create a framework that satisfied Congressional notions about unofficial U.S.-Taiwan relations.

Congress demanded adjustments. Thus, other legislative reports by the Senate's Committee on Foreign Relations and the House of Representatives' Committee on Foreign Affairs from early March characterized a U.S. commitment to Taiwan's security as important for U.S. credibility as well as America's global and regional position in Asia. Therefore, the United States should assure the people on Taiwan that it would still care about their security. The committee concluded that the U.S. should not only provide Taiwan with defensive arms, but should also emphasize that any attempt by the PRC to solve the Taiwan issue non-peacefully was

⁸⁹⁷ "Preface" in: Hearings "Implementation of Taiwan Relations Act: Issues and Concerns", Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs of the Committee on International Relations, House of Representatives, 02/14/1979, Library of Congress, III.

deemed as concern for the United States, and would lead to an appropriate response.⁸⁹⁸

Although members of the executive had indicated during the Congressional hearings that the administration still had a great interest in Taiwan's security for a multitude of strategic reasons, but could not commit to security guarantees due to diplomatic constraints, Congress did not approve the White House's legislation draft. It became clear that, in the opinion of Congress, the Taiwan legislation needed a completely different form than the Carter administration had in mind. Any new legislation draft would now include some sort of security guarantee for Taiwan. The White House had to make sure that this draft would not damage its relations with the People's Republic.

Negotiating the Character of Unofficial U.S.-Taiwan Relations

When the administration realized that it could not prevent Congress from altering Carter's proposed Taiwan legislation in a way that would exclude an American commitment to Taiwan's security, it led to a sudden change in the White House's attitude. While the president was still questioning the necessity of a resolution that guaranteed Taiwan's safety, he underlined that he had "never said that I [Carter] would not accept any resolution from the Congress."⁸⁹⁹ Furthermore, he emphasized his concerns for the people on Taiwan and demonstrated his willingness to discuss the island's security in public.⁹⁰⁰

Warren Christopher had already explained that any security language in any Taiwan legislation draft Congress might create had to be compliant with the normalization agreement the United States had concluded with the People's Republic of China. One formal restriction the administration had to make was to exclude the creation of a liaison office in Taiwan that would replace the U.S. embassy there.

⁸⁹⁸ Report, Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 3/1/1979, Library of Congress, 10-14; Report, Committee on Foreign Affairs, United States House of Representatives, 3/3/1979, Library of Congress, 5.

⁸⁹⁹ News Conference, Jimmy Carter, 02/12/1979, The American President Project, "The President's News Conference", <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=31905> (accessed: 10/29/2014).

⁹⁰⁰ Don Oberdorfer, "Carter Says U.S. Could Go to War To Help Taiwan", *Washington Post*, 02/11/1979.

Since the general public did not understand why the United States had a liaison office in the PRC but could not have one in Taipei, Christopher elaborated that China's case had a very unique character. Washington had always intended to establish normal relations with the PRC, and the liaison office had been very helpful to achieve this cause. However, since the U.S. was not going to seek diplomatic relations with the ROC anymore, an official U.S. representation in Taiwan was not necessary anymore. The AIT would be sufficient to fulfill any task necessary to conduct unofficial relations with the people on Taiwan.⁹⁰¹

Government-to-government relations were indeed not necessary since the United States would be able to assure Taiwan's well-being, without taking any diplomatic risks by installing a liaison office in Taipei. U.S. officials knew that Beijing would never accept any arrangements that left U.S.-Taiwan relations with a semi-official or even official appearance. As Carter emphasizes in his memoirs, he was not willing to risk his diplomatic success for the sake of official relations with Taiwan.⁹⁰² There were other ways to ensure Taiwan's security, and enable U.S.-Taiwan trade and cultural exchange.

Carter also made clear that any addition or alteration of his administration's legislation draft was subject to restrictions. Otherwise, as he indicated, he would make use of his presidential veto that could stop any legislative process. A veto would postpone the establishment of a legal basis for U.S.-Taiwan relations, complicating cultural and economic exchange between Americans and Taiwanese. The White House hoped the legislative branch was aware of this problem and would not pass a law, granting Taiwan a de-facto status as an independent nation. The administration knew the PRC government would never accept this, and that would lead to frictions in Sino-American relations.

It was imperative for Carter to prevent problems in Washington's relationship with the PRC. Serious tension could threaten the stability in East Asia and damage the strategic position of the United States which was just improving due to the Carter administration's effort to normalize the relations with China. Accordingly, Carter stated during a press conference in February that he would "not accept any resolution or amendment to the legislation that would contradict the commit-

⁹⁰¹Statement of Warren Christopher in: Hearings "Taiwan", Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, 2/5/1979, Library of Congress, 67.

⁹⁰²Carter, "Faith", 210-211.

ments that we [the U.S.] have made to the Government of China, on which is predicated our new, normal relationships.” He made clear that his reservation aimed especially at any security guarantees for Taiwan.⁹⁰³

These restrictions set the conditions which Congress could work out its own Taiwan legislation. Congress wanted a clear commitment to Taiwan’s security, and the White House needed a law that would not risk the achievement of normalization. Since both sides basically agreed that the United States had a profound interest in a secure Taiwan and the continuation of U.S. involvement in the Taiwan Strait, the whole issue became one of finding the right language for the Taiwan legislation. If the members of the House and the Senate wanted to prevent the postponement of their legislation, because this would lead to a stalemate in U.S.-Taiwan relations, they had to respect the president’s position regarding the security commitment to Taiwan and diplomatic requirements towards China. In this situation, the relationship between the American executive and legislative that the German political scientist Kurt L. Shell characterizes as an “antagonistic partnership” demanded the search for a political compromise that would satisfy all sides.⁹⁰⁴ As I argue, this was the foundation for the labor division between legislative and executive branch, resulting in the TRA.

The first attempt at a compromise failed. A small group around the Republican Senators Howard H. Baker (Rep-Tennessee) and Jacob K. Javits and the Democrat Frank F. Church offered a draft that Carter’s aides deemed unacceptable for Beijing, and hence unacceptable for the administration. In a memorandum to the Oval Office, Frank Moore stated that it needed language in the draft that would allow Carter not to veto Congress’ approach. The president conveyed this position to Senator Church in a meeting on February 8.⁹⁰⁵ Indeed, Carter convinced Church that the administration could not accept the resolution, and the Senator “distanced himself from the Javits draft”, characterizing it as “a tentative proposition [...] hastily drawn up.”⁹⁰⁶ This incident demonstrated that Congress was all but unani-

⁹⁰³ News Conference, Jimmy Carter, 02/12/1979, The American President Project, “The President’s News Conference”, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=31905>.

⁹⁰⁴ Kurt L. Shell, “Das politische System“ in: Willi Paul Adams/Peter Lösche (ed.): *Länderbericht USA. Geschichte, Politik, Geographie, Wirtschaft, Gesellschaft, Kultur* (Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 1998), 207.

⁹⁰⁵ Memo, Frank Moore to Jimmy Carter, 2/8/1979, “2/8/79 [1]” folder, Box 119, Office of Staff Secretary Handwriting File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁹⁰⁶ Robert G. Kaiser, “Woodcock Nomination is Supported”, *Washington Post*, 02/09/1979.

mous on the question of how far the U.S. commitment to Taiwan's security should go. Many Congressmen did not want to risk normalization, and took Carter's veto threat seriously.

A draft by Representative Lester L. Wolff and the Senators Ted Kennedy and Alan M. Cranston (Dem-California) brought the solution, and became the blueprint for the final legislation on Taiwan. It found more than 100 cosponsors in the House of Representatives and more than 25 in the Senate. Although Kennedy did not agree with Carter's China policy in all details, the Senator was nevertheless one of the most fervent supporters of normalization as his speech in Boston on August 15, 1977 had demonstrated.⁹⁰⁷ Thus, the White House considered him a political ally in the whole process.⁹⁰⁸

Kennedy was also an advocate of the necessity for the country to find a way to protect Taiwan. Therefore it made sense for the Carter administration to ask him for support after the executive's draft had failed. Kennedy had enough influence in Congress, among Democrats and Republicans, to achieve the necessary adjustments that would allow the executive and legislative branches to find a compromise. The result was resolution S. J. Res. 31 with the intricate title "A joint resolution regarding the peace, prosperity, and welfare of the people on Taiwan, and the Pescadores, and for other purposes" from early February, 1979. Democratic Senator Alan M. Cranston who supported Carter's decision for normalization introduced the resolution, claiming that it would "correct any misperception that recognition of the Peking government is automatically translated as abandonment of Taiwan" because as a Congressional draft it could spell "out what the United States-China agreement implies, but leaves unsaid."⁹⁰⁹ The same draft was introduced as H. J. Res. 167 to the House of Representatives by Lester L. Wolff.

⁹⁰⁷ Jerome A. Cohen, "Ted Kennedy's Role in Restoring Diplomatic Relations with China" in: *Legislation and Public Opinion*, Vol. 14, No. 347 (2011), 353. (via <http://www.nyujlpp.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/Jerome-A.-Cohen-Ted-Kennedys-Role-in-Restoring-Diplomatic-Relations-with-China.pdf>, accessed: 03/28/2014).

⁹⁰⁸ Memo, Michel Oksenberg to Zbigniew Brzezinski, 11/18/1977, "CO 34-2 Confidential 1/20/77-12/31/78" folder, Box CO-17, Countries, Jimmy Carter Library; Memo, Zbigniew Brzezinski to Jimmy Carter, 5/5/1978, "China (People's Republic of) -Brzezinski's Trip: [11/19/77-5/14/78]" folder, Box 9, Donated Historical Material Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection Subject File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁹⁰⁹ Statement of Alan Cranston in: Hearings "Implementation of Taiwan Relations Act: Issues and Concerns", Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs of the Committee on International Relations, House of Representatives, 02/14/1979, Library of Congress, 5-7.

While Wolff, Cranston and Kennedy saw their resolution as complementary to the administration's Taiwan Omnibus bill, the legislation should also make sure that the Congress would be involved in America's Taiwan policy in the future, especially in the event of a crisis in the Taiwan Strait. The Senators favored "developing a single package with both security and non-security elements, which incorporates the Administration's proposal as well as our own." While the White House's draft took care of the technical aspects of unofficial U.S.-Taiwan relations, the Cranston-Kennedy-Wolff initiative made sure that the United States could protect Taiwan "in accordance with our [U.S.] Constitutional processes and legislative requirements, including the War Powers Act."⁹¹⁰ The resolution aimed to emphasize the continuing U.S. interest in a peaceful resolution of the Taiwan issue. It should also guarantee the continuation of arms sales to Taiwan. Of great importance was also that executive and legislative branches should have consultations if a danger to the well-being of the people on Taiwan would emerge.⁹¹¹

Considering Christopher's comments during the hearings about normalization and the Taiwan legislation, it was clear that the Carter administration could live with the result of the Congressional intervention if the Cranston-Kennedy-Wolff initiative was to pass the Congress. The Deputy Secretary of State underlined this position when he conceded that this resolution did not contain any language that was not compatible with the normalization agreement.⁹¹² Of course, the White House still had to reject many Congressional drafts for a new Taiwan legislation because they went too far in their security language, or granted Taiwan a status not in accordance with the normalization agreement. As the Congress' DSG therefore supposed in a report, the resolution by Cranston, Kennedy and Wolff albeit not directly supported by the administration, served to counter any proposals which could violate the agreement with the PRC.⁹¹³

⁹¹⁰ This refers to the *The War Powers Resolution* of 1973 which limited the President's power to decide whether or not the United States should enter an armed conflict. For further reading about the political and legal details of the act, see: Donald L. Westerfield, *War Powers: The President, the Congress and the Question of War* (Westport: Praeger, 1996).

⁹¹¹ Statement of Edward Kennedy in: Hearings "Implementation of Taiwan Relations Act: Issues and Concerns", Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs of the Committee on International Relations, House of Representatives, 02/14/1979, Library of Congress, 3.

⁹¹² Statement of Warren Christopher in: Hearings "Taiwan Legislation", Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives, 2/7/1979, Library of Congress, 16.

⁹¹³ Special Report, Democratic Study Group, 2/8/1979, "PRC [People's Republic of China]/Taiwan, 2/1/79-3/20/79" folder, Box 167, Office of Congressional Liaison Francis, Jimmy Carter Library.

Indeed, the Cranston-Kennedy-Wolff resolution was modest enough in its claim to guarantee Taiwan's security, and went as far as possible without questioning or even violating the normalization agreement because it neither granted Taiwan any official status, nor did it question the *One-China-principle*. By referring to these facts, Washington was in a position to counter any upcoming Chinese criticism. On the other hand, Congress assured future involvement of the United States in the security of Taiwan –something the Carter administration had never been opposed to- and forced the administration to let the legislative play its part in the process of normalization and the composition of the future unofficial relationship between the U.S. and Taiwan.

Bringing the Taiwan Relations Act into Life

In the end, the Cranston-Kennedy-Wolff resolution was not enacted but referred to Congressional committees for further discussions. The draft still served as the basis for the Congressional legislation about Taiwan. According to David T. Lee, after the hearings in Congress had made clear that changes in the administration's legislation draft were necessary, and that the Cranston-Kennedy-Wolff resolution was presenting an option for the final legislation, it came to extensive negotiations between the State Department and the Congressional committees in mid-February. The Democratic Chairman of the House's Foreign Affairs Committee Clement Zablocki saw himself responsible to find a quick solution that would be acceptable for Congress and administration alike. Otherwise, U.S.-Taiwan relations would enter an even more complicated state than they were already in. Since Congress was demanding so many adjustments that changed the make-up of the administration's original Taiwan Omnibus bill, Zablocki eventually decided to reintroduce the whole legislation as a new, clean bill which incorporated all the necessary changes.⁹¹⁴

The vote on the final resolution demonstrated agreement beyond party boundaries about the general direction America's future involvement in the Taiwan Strait should take. H.R. 2479 passed the House by a vote of 345 "ayes" to 55

⁹¹⁴ Lee, "Making", 119.

“nays” on March 13, 1979. The Senate, on the other hand, passed its own bill, the “Taiwan Enabling Act” (S. 245), which slightly differed from the House’s draft by a margin of 90 to 6 votes one day later. The result made clear that members of both parties, Republicans and Democrats, approved the law. However, it still needed a consensus between the House and the Senate in order to reach a final version of the Taiwan legislation. Congress eventually reached this consensus expressed in a conference report from March 24 which found approval in both Chambers on March 28 and March 29, respectively.⁹¹⁵ Now, Congress could submit the Taiwan Relations Act to the president.

The broad support for the new law made it much harder for the president to veto it. Although the PRC leadership criticized the resolution even before the final Congressional approval, the president signed the law with the ID “Public Law 96-8” on April 10, 1979.⁹¹⁶ Even if Jimmy Carter was opposed to its final version, the political constraints in Washington did not allow him to veto the TRA. It was obvious that a great majority of Congress favored it. The new law set the frame for unofficial U.S.-Taiwan relations, and assured American involvement in the Taiwan Strait in the future. While the PRC did not like the outcome of the U.S. legislation process, it had to accept it because the wording of the TRA did not contradict the normalization agreement.

In fact, most of the TRA’s sections (sections 4 to 18) did not provoke critique from the PRC because they mainly set a framework of legal rules for U.S.-Taiwan relations. Most paragraphs remained as technical as in the administration’s Taiwan Omnibus bill, and aimed on cultural and economic aspects. Section 6 was of particular importance since it constituted the American Institute on Taiwan as the entity that would conduct and carry out programs, transactions and related issues for the government of the United States and its agencies on Taiwan. It should also administer consular services for U.S. citizens there.⁹¹⁷ The PRC could live with such a framework because it reflected the spirit of the *Japanese formula*.

⁹¹⁵ In his study about the Taiwan Relations Act, David T. Lee describes the differences between both chambers’ bills, and the whole subsequent negotiations between House and Senate about the final version of the TRA; see: Lee, “Making”, 123-124, 154-171.

⁹¹⁶ Xinhua General News Service, “Foreign Minister Huang Hua Reiterates Chinese View on Latest U.S. Bill on Taiwan”, 03/24/1979, (via www.lexisnexis.com; accessed: 10/28/2013).

⁹¹⁷ American Institute in Taiwan, ‘Taiwan Relations Act’, <http://www.ait.org.tw/en/taiwan-relations-act.html> (accessed: 10/15/2014). For an introductory reading about the AIT’s role, see:

Sections 2 to 3, on the other hand, exceeded the *Japanese formula* as these paragraphs made clear that the United States did not intend to give up their active role in the Taiwan Strait -only the legal basis for this involvement would change. Since the United States had broken up its official diplomatic ties with the ROC, the relationship did not fall under the rules of international law –especially since the MDT was to expire on January 1, 1980. This offered some new opportunities for the United States.

The TRA itself was an American law, and that made it far more binding for any U.S. president than any international ruling could. The White House was aware of this fact. The reason is quite simple. It is possible to go to an U.S. court in order to enforce a law passed by U.S. Congress, while it is much more difficult or even impossible to do the same with international laws. There is usually no agency to enforce them, and the character of international laws is often abstract and only binding on the basis of a wide range of interpretation. Furthermore, no U.S. president could risk the U.S. Congress' and also the American public's anger if she or he ignored U.S. law. The political damage could be tremendous, aside from any legal consequences. Barry Goldwater's law suit against Jimmy Carter concerning the abrogation of the MDT provides a good example for this.⁹¹⁸ It not only demonstrated that at least certain circles took American interests on Taiwan very seriously, but also aimed to diminish at Carter's political prestige.

The United States had no interest leaving Taiwan to itself, and the Taiwan Relations Act underlined this position. Washington also did not want to see a settlement of the Taiwan issue in the near future. Thus, it was no surprise that the TRA considered “any effort to determine the future of Taiwan by other than peaceful means, including by boycotts or embargoes [...] of grave concern to the United States” because it would threaten the stability of Asia-Pacific.⁹¹⁹ As mentioned before, it was a warning to Beijing that the United States would watch the situation in the Taiwan Strait carefully. The statement also indicated the superpower would maintain its capabilities in East Asia to pursue American interests in the region.

David Dean, *Unofficial Diplomacy: The American Institute in Taiwan: A Memoir* (Bloomington: Xlibris US, 2014).

⁹¹⁸ For a brief overview about the case, see: L. Peter Schultz, “Goldwater v. Carter: The Separation of Powers and the Problem of Executive Prerogative” in: *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (Winter, 1982).

⁹¹⁹ American Institute in Taiwan, “Taiwan Relations Act”, <http://www.ait.org.tw/en/taiwan-relations-act.html> (accessed: 10/15/2014).

The continuing interest about the Taiwan issue also fit Washington's self-perception as a Pacific power, as U.S. officials had explained several times during the aforementioned Congressional hearings. The United States would never stop playing an active role in East Asia, not only to counterbalance the Soviet Union but also to counterbalance any other power that would strive for hegemony there. Thus, the TRA also authorizes the president "to maintain the capacity of the United States to resist any resort to force or other forms of coercion that would jeopardize the security, or the social or economic system, of the people on Taiwan."⁹²⁰

The provision of defensive military equipment remained the favorite instrument to demonstrate U.S. resolve to support Taiwan. The TRA clearly stated that "the United States will make available to Taiwan such defense articles and defense services in such quantity as may be necessary to enable Taiwan to maintain a sufficient self-defense capability." The White House had to consult Congress to "determine the nature and quantity of such defense articles and services based solely upon their judgment of the needs of Taiwan, in accordance with procedures established by law."⁹²¹ Since it was possible that the United States would succumb to pressure from the PRC in the future, these few lines should ensure Taiwan's access to modern equipment which would strengthen the ROC Armed Forces.⁹²²

However, the arms sales were not only intended to improve the defensive capabilities of Taiwan but also served political and strategic means. Above all, the provision with U.S. arms should demonstrate that the United States was not willing to leave Taiwan to the mainland's mercy. Such an impression could lead to questions among other U.S. allies about America's credibility and reliability. As the rivalry with the Soviet Union was continuing, the USA could not afford to lose the support of their allies worldwide. In addition, in spite of public confirmations that the Taiwan issue was an internal affair, Washington was not ready to forgo its influence on Taiwan because this would weaken the U.S. position in the Far East.

In fact, the U.S. situation had drastically improved through the means of the TRA because it left the initiative about an intervention on behalf of the people on Taiwan to U.S. authorities and not to diplomatic constraints. As the history of the

⁹²⁰ Ibid.

⁹²¹ Ibid.

⁹²² Nowadays, Taiwan is completely dependent on U.S. arms sales as its only provider of military equipment. See: John P. McClaran, "U.S. Arms Sales to Taiwan: Implications for the Future of the Sino-U.S. Relationship" in: *Asian Survey*, Vol. 40, No. 4 (Jul. - Aug., 2000), 624.

Chinese Civil War had taught the White House, this was necessary in order to prevent the regime in Taiwan from provoking a conflict with the PRC. If the decision for an intervention was completely up to the United States, and not imposed by a defense pact like the MDT, Taipei had to be more careful and accommodating towards the mainland. While, in provision with Article 5, the MDT had forced the United States to intervene in the Taiwan Strait in the event of armed conflict, the U.S. government could now choose if it was in its interest to do so. As section 3302 (c) of the TRA stated, if a “threat to the security or the social or economic system of the people on Taiwan and any danger to the interests of the United States” were to arise, the president and Congress “should determine [...] appropriate action by the United States in response to any such danger.”⁹²³ The United States created a loophole by writing a law that left it to the U.S. itself what measures the nation would take if American interests in the Taiwan Strait were threatened. Of course, Congress wanted the president to consult with the legislative branch before taking any actions, but it is possible that in the event of a new crisis, the president would be the one to determine whether or not U.S. interests were threatened.⁹²⁴

In the set up of the Taiwan Relations Act, all variables of this study’s theoretical frame manifest. The new law served the legitimization of normalization, by setting a frame in which U.S.-Taiwan relations could still work, changing only their form but not their substance. Since the character of Washington’s relationship with Taiwan would not change, the island still served U.S. strategic interests, namely the preservation of U.S. dominance in Asia-Pacific and vis-à-vis the PRC. According to the perceptions of U.S. policy makers, an unofficial de-facto alliance with Taipei kept Taiwan out of Beijing’s grasp, weakening the mainland, and offering the United States the option to use Taiwan as leverage against the PRC in the event of future friction. Historical experiences with the PRC implied that, sooner or later, tension between the United States and China would emerge. Thus, as Neo-realist thinking suggests, the TRA and the preservation of U.S. involvement in the Taiwan

⁹²³ American Institute in Taiwan, “Taiwan Relations Act”, <http://www.ait.org.tw/en/taiwan-relations-act.html> (accessed: 10/15/2014).

⁹²⁴ Observers of Chinese-American relations and Taiwan are divided how autonomous the president is concerning Taiwan. A study by Robert S. Ross about the Taiwan Strait Crisis in 1995-1996 suggests that the Clinton administration just decided to react to Chinese military postures after Congress put pressure on the White House (Robert S. Ross, “The 1995-96 Taiwan Strait Confrontation: Coercion, Credibility, and the Use of Force” in: *International Security*, Vol. 25, No. 2 (Fall, 2000) 122). Chas W. Freeman, however, suggests that Clinton’s decision for an intervention was his own, see: Chas W. Freeman Jr., “Preventing War in the Taiwan Strait: Restraining Taiwan: And Beijing” in: *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 77, No. 4 (July-August, 1998), 7.

Strait was an attempt to affect the balance of power in America's favor, increasing U.S. power and, hence, U.S. security beyond the Cold War.

The ROC regime reacted with mixed feelings. A document by the MOFA indicated that, on the one hand, the Taiwanese were "[...] not satisfied with it..." but "...appreciate[d] the intense support and endeavor of the U.S. Congress and U.S. public." Taipei understood that the TRA did not replace the MDT, although it included the security guarantees, the Taiwanese leadership had hoped for. It was no *carte blanche* that the United States would intervene in the Taiwan Strait no matter the circumstances. Instead, the KMT regime had to be more careful in its future posture towards the mainland, preventing any kind of provocation. Since the TRA was not a treaty between the United States and Taiwan, the ROC could not force Washington to an intervention on its behalf. In its dealings with the PRC, Taipei had to take into account that the United States wanted stabilization in the Taiwan Strait. Still, under the given circumstances and after the shock of derecognition the KMT regime had no reason to complain. A statement by the regime's representative to Japan attached to the aforementioned MOFA document summarized the thinking of CCK and his aides. While the TRA did not give U.S.-Taiwan relations the formal status the relationship deserved, from Taipei's point of view, "the Act still constituted the best unofficial one."⁹²⁵ The TRA assured U.S. support for Taiwan.

The PRC government protested against the Taiwan Relations Act. A demarche from March 16 submitted by Huang Hua expressed the Chinese disappointment that the new legislation presented "in essence an attempt to maintain to a certain extent the U.S.-Chiang joint defense treaty and to continue to interfere in Chinese internal affairs and to give an official status to the U.S.-Taiwan relationship." While such a critique was to be expected, the PRC seemed convinced of the Carter administration's involvement in the development of the Taiwan legislation because the Chinese perceived that "the bills concerned had the close cooperation of the U.S. Government (sic)." In an attempt to put pressure on the U.S. president, the People's Republic warned that "great harm will be done to the new relationship that has just been established between China and the U.S." leading to the threat that

⁹²⁵中華民國外交部，1979.01.01~1979.08.15.，《美匪關係—0068/005.2/0033-0034/001》，中華民國外交部 [MOFA, 1979.01.01-1979.08.15, "The Relations Between the U.S. and the Chinese Communists"—0068/005.2/0033-0034/001, MOFA, National Archives of the ROC].

“China would have no alternative but to make the necessary response”, if the legislation became law.⁹²⁶

The message did not specify what form the Chinese response would have. It also failed to pinpoint what phrases of the TRA were, in the PRC’s opinion, incompatible with the normalization agreement. Therefore, the whole telegram appeared more like the usual complaints about principles than an actual diplomatic objection. To a certain degree, the Chinese leadership had to protest against the TRA out of habit. Otherwise, the PRC leadership would have lost its face, but Beijing did not intend to question normalization. A report by Ambassador Woodcock indicates as much, claiming the protest served mostly to impress the Chinese public.⁹²⁷ Instead, the demarche contained a hint that Beijing still valued the new U.S.-PRC relationship enormously as it stated that there was “growing evidence of the far-reaching impact of normalization and of the visit by Vice Premier Deng Xiaoping to the U.S. on the furtherance of friendly relations and cooperation between our two countries....”⁹²⁸

In spite of Chinese protests, Jimmy Carter did not see the law itself as a problem. In his opinion, it did not violate the agreement with the PRC. Moreover, he was certain the people on Taiwan would benefit from it. In his memoirs, Carter even claims the TRA was in no small part the result of his administration’s efforts, claiming he had “finally prevailed” to create a legislation that allowed U.S.-Taiwan relations to continue. From this perspective, it seems that his critique of the whole matter did not refer to the Congress’ idea to insert security language into the Taiwan legislation, but had other reasons. First, as earlier remarks had indicated, Carter lacked a general confidence towards the U.S. legislative.⁹²⁹ The comfortable Democratic majority in Congress (277 to 158 in the House; 58 to 42 in the Senate)

⁹²⁶ Telegram, “PRC Reaction to Taiwan Legislation “, Embassy in China to Department of State, 03/16/1979 in: FRUS, 1977-1980, Volume XIII, China (Washington D.C.: United States Printing Office, 2013), 836.

⁹²⁷ Telegram, Leonard Woodcock to Cyrus Vance, 3/24/1979, “China (PRC), 1-3/79” folder, Box 9, NSA Brzezinski Material Country File, Jimmy Carter Library; Telegram, Leonard Woodcock to Cyrus Vance, 3/31/1979, “China (PRC), 1-3/79” folder, Box 9, NSA Brzezinski Material Country File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁹²⁸ Quote from telegram, Embassy in China to Department of State, 03/16/1979 in: FRUS, 1977-1980, Volume XIII, China (Washington D.C.: United States Printing Office, 2013), 836-837.

⁹²⁹ Carter made a handwritten comment in which he stated that he did not trust Congress (and others) to keep the interim reports about the normalization negotiations in Beijing secret, see: memo, Cyrus Vance to Jimmy Carter, 6/13/1978, “China, [People’s Republic of – Normalization: 1/24/78-11/10/78]” folder, Box 9, Donated Historical Material Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection Geographic File, Jimmy Carter Library.

did not change this attitude.⁹³⁰ Second, parts of Congress dared to question Carter's decision-making concerning normalization in general, and his honesty about his concerns for the well-being of the Taiwanese people.

Indeed, as the negotiations with the Chinese had proved, the Carter administration put a lot of effort into ensuring future opportunities to support Taiwan. In the end, Congress and the administration were pursuing the same goals, albeit through different means. As we have seen, it was a problem of means and language not of different political convictions or differing strategic views. The White House believed Taiwan to be secure, while Congressmen wanted explicit security guarantees. The administration saw the whole Taiwan issue very pragmatically, assuming it could ensure Taiwan's security without any public commitment except the promise to sell a sufficient amount of arms. The experience of the last minute concessions concerning arms sale by the Chinese leadership during the negotiations, left the Carter administration convinced that the PRC was too dependent on its relationship with Washington to risk any true struggle. The White House had to act carefully on the matter of Taiwan and, eventually, Congress had to accept the government's position because anything else would lead to a presidential veto.

Normalization led to important advantages for the regime in Beijing like the improved strategic situation vis-à-vis the Soviet Union and access to western technology that would help China's *Four Modernizations*. This outweighed the feeling of betrayal the Chinese leaders might have had in the course of the TRA. At least, there did not seem to be any long-term damage, as only a few days after the critical demarche, Leonard Woodcock reported that Deng Xiaoping had expressed his hope for Sino-American trade to quickly increase. China needed U.S. technology and foreign investments. Postponing the necessary steps to get both would hurt China more than the United States. Thus, Woodcock considered "it unlikely that the Chinese would react to the Taiwan legislation in ways that would fundamentally damage our new relationship", because, as he continued, it would hurt the Chinese "economic interests in their relationship with us."⁹³¹

Political and diplomatic constraints still forced the Carter administration to accommodate the PRC, although the TRA did not contradict the White House's

⁹³⁰ Carter, "Faith", 200-201, 211.

⁹³¹ Telegram, Embassy in China to Department of State, 03/27/1979 in: FRUS, 1977-1980, Volume XIII, China (Washington D.C.: United States Printing Office, 2013), 854-855.

condition that the Taiwan legislation must not violate the normalization agreement. Woodcock suggested pointing out to the Chinese that the Taiwan legislation would neither weaken Washington's commitment to the normalization agreement nor be incompatible with it.⁹³² Carter concurred. The DOS should take the necessary steps in order to avoid deeper frictions.⁹³³ It was also a chance to convey to Beijing that the new law was still compatible with the normalization agreement.

Warren Christopher and Richard Holbrook met China's ambassador, Chai Zemin, on March 27, 1979. Both emphasized that the presidential administration did not consider the upcoming Taiwan legislation inconsistent with the normalization agreement. In addition, Christopher disagreed with Chai's view the legislation appeared like a substitution for the MDT. As the Deputy Secretary explained to his Chinese interlocutor, a "better bill [than the TRA] could not be obtained [from Congress]" since it was more likely to get "a bill less favorable to normalization [...]", if Carter was to veto the TRA.⁹³⁴ Christopher had made a convincing case, and the Chinese had no choice but to accept this line of argument. The TRA did not contradict the normalization agreement, or at least not enough that the Chinese could call it off.

Conclusion and Discussion

The normalization agreement with the PRC made it necessary for the Carter administration to derecognize the Republic of China. Therefore, the United States could only conduct unofficial people-to-people relations in the future. In order to conduct full cultural and economic relations with Taiwan that also included the possibility for arms sales, the Congress had to pass legislation that granted Taiwan the status as a de-facto nation. As David Lee suggests, such a case was unprecedented in U.S. history, and the task, accordingly, very complex and complicated.⁹³⁵ Therefore, the administration needed the support of Congress in order to pass the legislation as quickly as possible.

⁹³² Ibid, 856.

⁹³³ Editorial Note in: FRUS, 1977-1980, Volume XIII, China (Washington D.C.: United States Printing Office, 2013), 857.

⁹³⁴ Telegram, Cyrus Vance to Leonard Woodcock, 3/28/1979, "China (PRC), 1-3/79" folder, Box 9, NSA Brzezinski Material Country File, Jimmy Carter Library.

⁹³⁵ Lee, "Making", 183.

The administration's Taiwan Omnibus bill forwent any security language concerning Taiwan. It also did not directly mention provisions for arms sales although the character of the bill made clear that future arms sales were possible. It was a very technical draft that had to be acceptable to the People's Republic. In order to demonstrate its commitment to normalization, the Carter administration was not in a position to use any security language in the Taiwan legislation. This decision served the White House's approach to allay the PRC as much as the constant downgrading of U.S.-ROC relations. In addition, the Carter administration was convinced that the people on Taiwan were in no imminent danger from the mainland. Thus, the ROC regime did not need any security guarantees.

Congress and the U.S. public disagreed with this assessment. Especially the Congressional hearings made clear that many Congressmen wanted a more visible commitment to the security of Taiwan in the new legislation. This had not only humanitarian reasons but also strategic ones. As a variety of China experts and also some Congressmen stated and different officials of the Carter administration admitted, Taiwan and its location on the important shipping lanes in East Asia made the island strategically importance for U.S. interests in the Asia-Pacific region. Hence, an end of the American involvement in the Taiwan Strait would weaken the U.S. position in the region. Washington's position vis-à-vis the People's Republic could also suffer because the United States' relationship with Taiwan was useful to put pressure on the PRC if Sino-American relations were to deteriorate. China's recent attack on Vietnam had demonstrated that the PRC could quickly become a troublemaker in the region. A reunification under the leadership of the PRC regime was, thus, not in the interest of the United States.

After the president left out Capitol Hill for so long, the diplomatic constraints which limited the White House's options concerning the Taiwan legislation, allowed Congress to play a more significant role in the nation's China policy. Jerome A. Cohen and Xu Guangqiu claim that members of the Congress played an important role in U.S. China policy.⁹³⁶ At least for normalization process, this is not true. Until early 1979, Congress had not contributed much to normalization. Even Senator Kennedy, who was one of the most involved members of Congress in

⁹³⁶ Cohen, "Ted Kennedy's", 355; Xu, "Congress", 301.

the normalization process, does not agree with Xu's and Cohen's assessment.⁹³⁷ While single Congressmen served occasionally as messengers for the American and Chinese side, Carter's mistrust of Capitol Hill prevented any significant role for Congress in the whole process. Only the necessity of a Taiwan legislation allowed Congress to have a significant impact on U.S. China policy in aftermath of normalization.

Carter made clear that Congress had to be careful with its adjusted Taiwan legislation because he would not accept a resolution that was not compatible with the normalization agreement. Congress and the White House needed to find a compromise. Capitol Hill had to respect the nation's diplomatic obligations towards the PRC, and the administration had to cooperate in order to strengthen the security language in the upcoming Taiwan legislation. The result was the rather modest Cranston-Kennedy-Wolff resolution that set the basis for the eventual Taiwan Relations Act which found broad support beyond party boundaries and a significant majority in both chambers.

As David Lee states, the legislative process of the TRA is the perfect example for the need of compromise in the political system of the United States due to the strained relationship between the executive and legislative branches.⁹³⁸ On the one hand, Congress was able to pass a law that would bind the executive branch to a certain code of behavior in its dealings with Taiwan. If the Carter administration did not want to risk political damage at home, it had to play to these rules. On the other hand, Congress also had to consider the possibility of a presidential veto, which could lead to a stalemate in the whole legislative process, which could lead to problems for Taiwan. Since this was not in the interest of Congress, Capitol Hill eventually took Carter's conditions seriously. While the TRA went beyond the *Japanese formula* which was seen by the Chinese as the farthest reaching concessions they could make, it was still compatible with the normalization agreement.

The new law made clear that the United States continued to protect Taiwan and would remain involved in the Taiwan issue. Taiwan's strategic position, the historical meaning of the relationship between the American and Taiwanese people, and especially the uncertain future of U.S.-China relations made it highly de-

⁹³⁷ Edward M. Kennedy, *True Compass. A Memoir* (London: Hachette, 2009), 362.

⁹³⁸ Lee, "Making", 3.

sirable for the United States to maintain the capability to intervene in the Taiwan Strait on behalf of American interests. In short, the TRA and the continuation of close U.S.-Taiwan security ties made the United States more powerful and fostered the country's position as hegemon in Asia-Pacific. Therefore, Chinese authors like the former PRC diplomat Han Nianlong see the TRA as directed against the People's Republic.⁹³⁹ In addition, the law made U.S. Taiwan policy more flexible because now it was Washington that could decide under which condition the United States would intervene in the Taiwan Strait.

From this point of view, the TRA served as a warning to Beijing and also to Taipei. Both sides had to be aware that Washington wanted stability in East Asia. If the PRC or the ROC acted against this U.S. interest, this could not only lead to an American intervention in the Taiwan Strait but also to heavy damage to both regimes' relations with the United States. It was this aspect that made the TRA not only a strategic instrument but also a diplomatic one. Washington gained more flexibility in its China and Taiwan policy and was not limited to the role of Taiwan's protector, serving the long-term stability in the Taiwan Strait and eventually encouraging Beijing and Taipei to settle their disputes by peaceful means.⁹⁴⁰

In the particular case of the TRA the Congress played a very important role to create a framework for "a workable new relationship" between Americans and Taiwanese, as Jacob J. Javits states.⁹⁴¹ This is a fair assessment, as the role of Congress was complementary to the government's one, enabling the United States to remain an active actor in the Taiwan Strait. The independence of U.S. Congress allowed U.S. officials to point out to the Chinese that the American government could not control Congress, and had to accept the outcome of the legislative process.

In my opinion, this approach was a kind of double-crossing. In hindsight, the White House let Congress do what Carter and his aides were not able to do due to the aforementioned diplomatic constraints. This led to some sort of interplay between the executive and legislative branches with regard to Taiwan. The Carter

⁹³⁹ Han, "Diplomacy", 287.

⁹⁴⁰ For an introductory reading about PRC-ROC cross-strait relations, see: Nina Halpern/Samuel P. S. Ho, "Introduction: Cross-Strait Relations" in: *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 72, No. 4, (Winter, 1999-2000). For a more detailed reading, see: Richard C. Bush, *Uncharted Strait: The Future of China-Taiwan Relations* (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution, 2013).

⁹⁴¹ Jacob K. Javits, "Congress and Foreign Relations: The Taiwan Relations Act" in: *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 60, No. 1 (Fall, 1981), 62.

administration might not have been able to control this interplay, but the Congressional reaction was neither unexpected nor unwelcomed. It rather appears as if the administration had counted on Congress to express concerns about Taiwan's security and to include a stronger security language in the Taiwan legislation.

Nancy Bernkopf Tucker questions whether the White House left filling the security gap to Congress because "in all the years since 1979 and despite all that has been written, no member of the Carter administration has presented this as justification."⁹⁴² While it is true that the archival record does not include any direct statements about this, it is also clear that no official from the Carter administration could dare to state something like this in an official document. Instead, we find an indirect confirmation for my argument about the labor division between legislative and executive branch in the statements of U.S. officials during the Congressional hearings. Here high ranking members of the administration like Christopher, Holbrooke, and Armacost suggested the administration's readiness to accept a legislation draft by Congress which would include security guarantees for Taiwan. Michel Oksenberg provides even stronger evidence, stating that the administration had always planned to present a weak draft which could provoke Congress to strengthen the security language.⁹⁴³ As we have seen, even former President Nixon had suggested such an approach to Carter.

Congressional intervention was most helpful in order to assure Taiwan of Washington's ongoing support. The political system of the United States is way too complicated to predict any certain outcome, but in the context of the Taiwan legislation this system was very useful to preserve American interests in Asia-Pacific. There is conclusive evidence that Washington still had a strong interest in the Taiwan issue, proven by the Taiwan Relations Act and the way it was developed. The TRA was a clever move and the perfect tool to allow the United States to remain fully involved in the Taiwan Strait on behalf of American law, not diplomatic constraints. As the U.S. administration had promised after the announcement of normalization, the TRA made sure that U.S.-Taiwan relations, indeed, only changed in form but not in substance.

⁹⁴² Bernkopf Tucker, "Strait", 120.

⁹⁴³ Michel Oksenberg, "Congress, Executive-Legislative Relations and American China Policy" in: Edmund S. Muskie et al. (ed.), *The President, the Congress, and Foreign Policy* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1986), 218.

Conclusion

“[...] I tried to imagine what the Taiwanese were likely to say and do during my visit. It was hard to make a credible case to myself that I would be a welcome visitor.”⁹⁴⁴ These are the thoughts Warren Christopher writes in his memoirs about his visit in Taiwan to explain to the ROC leadership President Carter’s reasons for normalization and the derecognition of Taiwan. Christopher’s words should prove prophetic. Neither the Taiwanese public nor its leadership took the announcement of normalization and the diplomatic consequences for Taiwan kindly. A Taiwanese mob attacked the U.S. Deputy Secretary of State and his entourage’s motorcade, while ROC security personal seemed to look the other way.

The reaction of the people in Taiwan is understandable, because they feared that normalization was the beginning of the end of U.S. protection for the island from the mainland. They could not know how much effort the Carter administration had put into maintaining the American involvement in the Taiwan Strait, and how much effort all political circles in Washington would add to this endeavor over the following months until the Taiwan Relations Act was passed, constituting the U.S. role as protector of the people in Taiwan for the following decades. In the days after Jimmy Carter had announced his administration’s achievement, nobody outside the White House and the State Department had an idea how the relationship between Taiwanese and Americans could look like, and what role the United States would play in the Taiwan Strait in the future.

This thesis was set out to explore the process of normalization between the United States and the People’s Republic of China and the meaning the Taiwan issue had in this context. It also sought to explain how Chinese and Americans approached the Taiwan issue, and what risks their attitude presented to the success of the normalization process. The historiography on U.S.-Chinese relations and the ongoing American engagement in the Taiwan Strait is inconclusive on some vital questions within this subject and does not offer any satisfactory answers that do justice to the complexity of this topic. As this examination demonstrated, former studies have not paid enough attention to the Taiwan issue’s impact on the whole

⁹⁴⁴ Warren Christopher, *Chances of a Lifetime* (New York: Scribner, 2001), 91.

normalization process and its direct aftermath, offering no answer to the question of why the Carter administration risked the success of normalization by insisting on arms sales and other security ties with Taiwan. Up to now no historical examination of U.S.-China relations has considered the strategic dimension of Washington's interest in Taiwan and its unresolved status beyond normalization. In this context, the interplay between executive and legislative branch in the development of the Taiwan Relations Act has been completely overlooked. The constitution of America's continuing involvement in the Taiwan Strait beyond normalization which we can deduce from the TRA was not the result of Congressional revolt but of a prudent labor division between the White House and Capitol Hill.

In an attempt to shed light on the role the Taiwan issue played for the normalization of U.S.-PRC relations and its consequences, this study tried to answer the following questions: How did the Taiwan issue shape the normalization process and its outcome? Why did the Carter administration risk the success of normalization to preserve America's role for the security of Taiwan, and how was this problem approached in the aftermath of normalization? Why was the White House able to succeed with its tenacity about Taiwan, and why did the Chinese leadership accept the continuation of U.S. intervention in the Taiwan issue? Finally, how did it come to the TRA, and what impact had this new law for the future U.S. role in the Taiwan Strait?

Taiwan Matters

The Taiwan issue had a great impact on the normalization process because the Chinese and Americans saw the matter as the main obstacle to normalization. Past experiences, which even led to armed conflict, demonstrated how difficult it was for both sides to overcome their different positions on Taiwan. Even when China and the United States improved their relations in the course of rapprochement, Taiwan remained a problem. This also became apparent during the normalization process. In spite of considerable concessions by the Carter administration to the Chinese concerning the character and legal status of the U.S. relationship with Taiwan, Bei-

jing did not seem willing to meet American reconciliation by making concessions of their own.

Several times, the PRC leadership pointed out to U.S. officials that Taiwan was a “renegade” province of China which had to be brought back under the rule of Beijing. It was an expression of Chinese nationalism, but the roots for this insistence went deeper.⁹⁴⁵ The traumatizing experience of the 19th and early 20th century when vast parts of China were controlled by foreign nations, not only limiting the central Chinese government’s power but virtually taking away China’s sovereignty, fed Chinese anxieties to appear weak. Maintaining territorial integrity and strengthening the capability to protect China were therefore important tasks for the communist government. This made Taiwan a matter of national principle for the PRC leadership, who could not accept any involvement of outsiders. Furthermore, Taiwan’s belonging to China was seen as a matter of justice and rectification.⁹⁴⁶ It was China’s right to rule Taiwan and Beijing believed the United States owed China a debt due to previous intervention in this Chinese affair.

The Carter administration, on the other hand, did not only have to face China’s inflexibility concerning Taiwan but was also obligated to honor promises by former U.S. administrations to the Chinese about this issue. Additionally, President Carter faced domestic pressure. The U.S. public and Congress expected him to achieve normalization in a way that would allow the United States to remain committed to the security and well-being of the people in Taiwan. In fact, the Carter administration was already planning to achieve exactly this feat. But Congress did not understand that the White House had to approach this matter carefully and with diplomatic prudence if the normalization process should still be successful. A failure of normalization would mean a considerable setback in Washington’s efforts to strengthen the strategic position of the United States vis-à-vis the Soviet Union. Although it was not the only motive for the pursuit of normalization, Carter and his aides had always considered normal relations with the PRC to be helpful in countering Moscow’s influence in Asia.

⁹⁴⁵ For a discussion about Chinese nationalism, see: Lei Guang, “Realpolitik Nationalism: International Sources of Chinese Nationalism” in: *Modern China*, Vol. 31, No. 4 (October, 2005).

⁹⁴⁶ According to Odd Arne Westad justice plays an important role in the Chinese society, see: Westad, “Empire”, 5.

Still, as important as normalization was, Washington was not willing to pay any price the Chinese were demanding. Abandoning Taiwan was never open to debate despite Beijing's criticism and threats. Domestic pressure was not the only reason why Carter and his aides denied the PRC's claim that Washington should leave Taiwan alone. The president and his advisors were aware that the island and its regime had still a role to play for American policy in Asia-Pacific. U.S. commitment to Taiwan's security did not only demonstrate the reliability and credibility of the United States as an ally in general, the continuing commitment did also calm down any anxieties in Japan, South Korea and elsewhere that the U.S. planned to disengage from the region. Japan and South Korea were the closest American partners in East Asia, and Washington could not allow any discouragement of them. They were too important for U.S. Cold War efforts in the Asia-Pacific region. However, there was an even more significant reason why the Carter administration did its best to secure the U.S. position in the Taiwan Strait.

Past experiences with the PRC regime had demonstrated to American political decision-makers that U.S.-China relations could deteriorate at any time. The common threat of the Soviet Union was no guarantee that Chinese and Americans would be able to solve bilateral problems diplomatically. It was too obvious that Chinese and American interest were incongruent in too many aspects -not only in the context of the Taiwan issue. The PRC saw war with the Soviet Union as inevitable, while Washington was eager to prevent any escalation. The PRC's attack on Vietnam demonstrated to American observers that Beijing could quickly become a troublemaker in the region. Moreover, an ascending China could mean a challenge to U.S. dominance in the Asia-Pacific region. In such an event, Taiwan could serve as a strategic hedge, helping the United States to put political pressure on Beijing. At the same time served keeping Taiwan out of the PRC's grasp the purpose to deny a strengthening of China's position in Asia at the cost of the United States. This could prove to be a valuable asset in the future.

Beijing seemed aware of the U.S. considerations concerning Taiwan. However, at the end of the normalization negotiations, they still accepted U.S. arms sales to Taiwan after normalization. Later, Beijing's protests against the TRA appeared modest, not threatening the previously achieved agreement. It became clear that in spite of the meaning of Taiwan as a matter of national principle, the Chinese

valued normal relations with the United States much more than an immediate weakening of the regime in Taipei.

One reason for this constraint was that closer Sino-American ties deterred the Soviet Union from measures which could threaten China's security. Another aspect, however, was even more important. Normalization served the self-strengthening of the PRC, as it granted China access to western technology. China needed these technologies if it wanted to achieve the goals set by Deng Xiaoping when he introduced his reform agenda in late 1978. The argument was that, in the long-run, patience on the matter of Taiwan and accepting U.S. involvement in the Taiwan Strait for now would pay off in Beijing's favor as long as the modernization of China would succeed.

The American insistence on an ongoing security relationship with Taiwan and the PRC's last minute acceptance of these U.S. efforts proved that the United States had the better bargaining position. This led to significant consequences for the future of U.S.-China relations. The normalization agreement was not able to produce a solution of the Taiwan issue. Since Washington and Beijing were not able to find a common denominator which allowed them to leave their different positions about Taiwan's status behind them, the Taiwan issue should remain one of the most difficult topics for their bilateral relations beyond the Cold War.

Serving U.S. Interests Beyond the Cold War

Normalization and derecognition of Taiwan changed the character and the circumstances of the Taiwan issue. The problem was not part of the systemic constraints of the Cold War anymore. Neither Washington nor Beijing could use Taiwan to put pressure on each other with regard to the common Soviet threat. As normalization was achieved and the MDT replaced by the TRA, Taiwan became a purely bilateral matter between the Chinese and Americans. It was still a matter of dispute but had no influence on both countries' Cold War strategy. This became clear during the 1980s when Ronald Reagan pursued a very ambivalent China and Taiwan poli-

cy.⁹⁴⁷ Between the communist victory in the Chinese Civil War in 1949 and the successful conclusion of normalization in 1979, the Taiwan issue had always been enveloped in the dynamics of the antagonism between Americans and Soviets although the Soviet Union had never intervened in the Taiwan Strait. First, the regime in Taipei served as America's anti-communist agent in East-Asia, containing "Red China" and weakening Soviet power in the region this way. Later, the United States used Taiwan and concessions concerning U.S.-Taiwan relations as a bargaining chip to gain the PRC's support against the Soviet Union. Even the Carter administration followed this strategy to a certain degree but marked a clear red line when Carter insisted on the continuation of arms sales to ensure Taiwan's security.

The TRA, however, altered the nature and legal basis for U.S. engagement in the Taiwan Strait. U.S. interventions there had been part of the strategy to demonstrate America's commitment to its allies in East Asia. The TRA, on the other hand, allowed the United States now to decide whether they wanted to intervene or not, without underlying the same diplomatic constraints as under the regimen of the MDT. This gain of leeway went far beyond the Cold War. The leeway and flexibility given to Washington by the TRA continues even today. Furthermore, any U.S. president could now point to the TRA as part of U.S. law to legitimize American engagement in the Taiwan Strait. While this has never prevented the PRC from protesting against U.S. intervention, the TRA helped the United States as political justification. One example for this approach was the aforementioned crisis in the Taiwan Strait which occurred during the Taiwanese presidential election campaign in 1996.⁹⁴⁸

Considering the U.S. reaction to tensions between Beijing and Taipei, the TRA also helps the United States to guarantee the status-quo in the Taiwan Strait. The division of China along the Taiwan Strait serves U.S. interests well. Taiwan as an ally does not only strengthen the U.S. position in the Asia-Pacific. As long as Taiwan is not under the rule of the mainland, the island prevents the PRC from controlling the shipping routes through the Taiwan Straits. In addition, Beijing has invested heavily in containing the Taiwanese by political, economic, and military means. These resources cannot be used somewhere else where it could harm Amer-

⁹⁴⁷ For an introductory reading about Reagan's approach toward China and Taiwan, see: Bernkopf Tucker, "Strait", chapters 8, 9.

⁹⁴⁸ Richard C. Bush, "Thoughts on the Taiwan Relations Act", Brookings Institute (April, 2009), <http://www.brookings.edu/research/opinions/2009/04/taiwan-bush> (accessed: 07/02/2014).

ican interests. This is one reason why the U.S. government has always opposed Taiwanese independence.⁹⁴⁹

The other reason is that a unilateral declaration of independence by the Taiwanese would provoke a military response from the PRC; anything from naval and aerial blockades to airstrikes or an invasion. The U.S. wants to prevent a new crisis in the Taiwan Strait because it would force Washington's hand. America had to commit itself on behalf of Taiwan's security or needed to accept a weakening of its position in the Asia-Pacific.

In this sense, the TRA and its vague security language increases the level of stability in the region, also serving as a warning to the Chinese and Taiwanese alike. On the one hand, it deters the Chinese from the use of force against Taiwan. On the other hand, Taipei cannot become too bold, as they cannot be entirely sure if the United States would intervene on their behalf. When we consider the division of labor between the U.S. executive and legislative branches during the development of the TRA, it is surprising how effective a tool it has become for the White House's China and Taiwan policy. This indicates that the Carter administration has never been opposed to the Congressional intervention in the law-making process. In spite of the vicissitudes of politics in Washington, Carter and his aides always seemed aware that the Congress could add a dimension to the Taiwan legislation, which was otherwise unavailable to the president due to diplomatic constraints.

From this point of view, the Carter administration was not only able to achieve normalization, adjusting U.S. Asia policy to the realities of its time, but was also in a position to secure the American involvement in the Taiwan Strait at the lowest costs possible. Normalization allowed the United States to deal with the PRC on a new level, simplifying military and intelligence cooperation, but also improving the provisions for Sino-American trade and cultural exchange. All of this put pressure on the Soviet Union, improving the prospects of U.S.-Soviet cooperation, and eventually helping the Carter administration to strike a new deal on SALT.

Carter's tenacity about a security relationship with Taiwan and the TRA, on the other hand, allowed the United States to maintain a strong position in the Asia-

⁹⁴⁹ Numerous statements by U.S. officials confirm this view, see: Report, Congressional Research Service, Shirley A. Kan, "China/Taiwan: Evolution of the 'One China' Policy – Key Statements from Washington, Beijing, and Taipei", 01/2011, 58, 68-69, 75.

Pacific in general and vis-à-vis the People's Republic in particular. In spite of these achievements, many scholars have criticized Carter's China and Taiwan policy. James Mann calls Carter's China policy "disappointing". Nancy Bernkopf Tucker claims the Carter administration had been "ill equipped" to deal with the Taiwan issue after normalization.⁹⁵⁰ But as this study showed, Carter's China and Taiwan policy was successful and deserves praise because he was able to improve U.S.-China relations and the strategic position of the United States in the world and Asia-Pacific. While Carter's approach was not flawless, he and his advisors were able to find a solution, in the end, which served U.S. interests on a broad basis and also beyond the Cold War.

IR-Theory Meets History

Normalization was a complex matter. The high number of actors involved in the process and their respective perspectives, interests, and strategies makes it difficult to explain the outcome of this process. In addition, the amount of accessible sources and empirical data adds to this complexity, not giving an easy or at least direct answer to the motivations and intentions of certain actions. IR-theory, in this study's case a two-level-approach based on Neo-realism and Neoclassical Realism, offers a chance to bring order into the disorder of historical records and the multitude of plausible explanations. The biggest asset these theories offer is the way they interconnect different factors and variables, which explain the decision-making and behavior of political actors. Most significant in this context are the theoretical assumptions which arise from an abstract level of thinking, making sense of the behavior and statements of the involved actors.

The first step was to understand the nature and dynamic of the international system. As Neo-realism argues, the structure of the international system has a profound influence on the way nations and other actors act. Due to the anarchic character of the system and the necessity to accumulate as much power as possible in order to ensure the own survival, states see themselves in an ongoing competition with each other. This leads to the consequence of the *Balance of Power* paradigm: no matter how powerful an actor is it is never enough.

⁹⁵⁰ Bernkopf Tucker, "Strait", 116; Mann, "Face", 81.

The historical record demonstrates that the Carter administration and their Chinese counterparts were aware of this dynamic. The aim of their suspicion was the Soviet Union because this nation presented the biggest challenge to U.S. and the PRC's security. The anxiety to lose relative ground to the USSR forced Washington and Beijing to consider Sino-American cooperation. The desire to strengthen the own position against the biggest threat relegated other considerations like ideology to the background. Otherwise, normalization would not have been possible as the social and cultural systems of China and the United States were too different.

If states are aware which actors present a threat to them, this indicates that statesmen are also aware of the distribution of power in the international system. This connection is very important and derives directly from the theoretical framework of Neo-realism and Neoclassical Realism. It gives us an idea of how political decision-makers in the United States and China came to the conclusion that Sino-American cooperation was useful.

Political leaders have an idea how powerful their states are compared to other actors in the international system. Of course, they do not have an exact notion of how much more or how much less powerful they are than their counterparts. But historical experience and some simple facts (size and equipment of a nation's army, its national gross product etc.) give them a pretty good idea. The perception of the distribution of power and the idea of the own position in the international system in terms of capabilities affects the preferences and strategies, which political decision-makers develop. In the case of the Carter administration, this aspect had a direct impact on its approach toward normalization, particularly when it came to the Taiwan issue.

The historical experience of U.S.-China relations during the Cold War indicated to the Carter administration that Taiwan was very useful in order to contain China. Taiwan had always been helpful to affect the balance of power in Asia-Pacific in Washington's favor. The same experience led the U.S. government to believe that it was useful to remain involved in the Taiwan Strait. This made sense because the United States assumed that U.S. and Chinese interests were not congruent. There existed many areas where Washington's and Beijing's preferences were quite different. While these differences did not prevent both sides from pursuing normalization, the United States was still aware of them.

Another aspect which affected the Carter administration's approach to normalization and the Taiwan issue was the necessity to legitimize its policy. We have to be aware that decision-makers need to find acceptance for their policies. Otherwise, it is much more difficult or even impossible to implement their political strategies. While U.S. Congress was not in a position to prevent normalization, it had an influence on the development of future U.S.-Taiwan relations. Furthermore, the legislative branch could blockade other policy initiatives of the Carter administration, giving Capitol Hill an opportunity to make the president's life very difficult. Another reason why the legitimation of certain policies matters refers to public opinion. Especially a democratically elected government cannot afford to alienate the voters by adopting unpopular policies. This diminishes the chance for reelection significantly. Even authoritarian regimes take into account the people's will when they conduct certain policies. Thus, the U.S. and PRC government faced domestic pressure during the normalization process.

It was the interplay of these variables which affected the Carter administration's approach to normalization and the Taiwan issue. But we can understand this interplay only if we allow abstract assumptions to guide our interpretations. Published and unpublished sources suggest the importance of these factors, but it does not offer us an explanation of the reasons for their importance. Normalization and Carter's tenacity on the matter of Taiwan was also not simply the result of *realpolitik*.

Each of the aforementioned variables alone cannot explain the Carter administration's behavior. If the affect of the balance of power paradigm and the need for strategic advantages over the USSR had influenced the U.S. normalization policy alone, the Carter administration would not have bothered to insist on a security relationship with Taiwan. If the U.S. administration was aware of the distribution of power, the risk to alienate Beijing, which could result in a failure of normalization, was too great. In such an event, Moscow might have made use of the U.S. miscue, affecting the distribution of power to the disadvantage of the United States.

If the Carter administration's attempts to remain involved in the Taiwan Strait had served only to appease Congressional and public sentiments toward Taiwan, why would the executive worry so much about Beijing's reaction to these efforts. In fact, the White House had to be careful not to let normalization fail. This would not only weaken the global position of the U.S. but would also lead to harsh

criticism from Carter's political opponents, being more costly than the derecognition of Taiwan. Losing ground to the Soviet Union would present a much bigger problem for Carter's foreign policy than unofficial relation with Taiwan.

If Carter had only considered the historical experience the United States had made with the PRC, he would have never pursued normalization in the first place. Nothing in the history of Sino-American relations suggested that Beijing could become a reliable ally of the United States. The Chinese shared this view and claimed several times during the normalization process that the Americans owed China a debt due to the historical role of the country in the Taiwan Strait. However, as long as Washington would still have an alliance-like relation with Taiwan, the U.S. could always put pressure on the PRC. This lesson derived from America's historical experience and its perception of the distribution of power. Both factors told the decision-makers in Washington that Taiwan was an important asset for the United States.

This last point indicates that we have to connect our variables to explain Carter's approach to China and Taiwan. One variable does not make sense without the other because we need a multicausal explanation. Normalization was the result of the insight that better U.S.-China relations improved America's strategic position vis-à-vis the Soviet Union, influencing the balance of power in the international system in Washington's favor. However, other obligations intervened and did not allow the White House to pursue normalization, without taking those into account. The need to legitimize normalization and its consequences, namely the derecognition of Taiwan, as well as historical experiences in U.S. dealings with the PRC forced the Carter administration to consider the adoption of a position which would allow the United States to put pressure on China in the future. Washington was aware that the alliance with Taiwan and the U.S. involvement in the Taiwan Strait had always been useful for the American dominance in the Asia-Pacific region. Thus, it made sense to rely on the island again to have a strategic hedge against China beyond normalization. The result of these considerations was the TRA.

From this point of view, normalization and its consequences affected the distribution of power in Washington's favor in two ways. First, the improved relationship with the PRC made the United States more powerful than the Soviet Union

because it allowed the U.S. to put pressure on Moscow. It also prevented the Soviets from aggressive measures against China, containing Moscow's influence in Asia. At the same time, the ongoing security relationship with Taiwan meant a huge advantage vis-à-vis the PRC. Since the future development of U.S.-China relations was unpredictable, ensuring the de-facto independence of Taipei and implementing a framework which assured U.S. involvement in the Taiwan Strait constituted the dominant position of the United States in Asia-Pacific, increasing the nation's security.

Limits and Loose Ends

This study provides explanations about normalization, its consequences, and the role of the Taiwan issue within this context. It is an account of the American position, offering only a limited understanding of the Taiwanese and Chinese leaderships' decision-making because access to Chinese and Taiwanese archives and documents is heavily restricted. Without any question, our understanding of the normalization process would vastly increase if we had access to these sources. A first step might be a thorough examination of those Taiwanese and Chinese documents, which are publicly accessible. This study could not provide this kind of analysis due to linguistic limitations. The same is true for Taiwan.

Another limitation of this thesis accrues from its focus on the decision-making process in Washington. The main interest was to explain the behavior of the political decision-makers and their considerations. When we take into account that the decision-making in the White House was influenced by public opinion about U.S.-Taiwan relations, it would be interesting to learn more about the relationship of these two societies. How did it come that Americans were so concerned about the well-being of the people in Taiwan? Was this purely the result of anti-communist or anti-PRC attitudes among American people? While my own research offered an explanation of the political and strategic dimension of U.S. involvement in the Taiwan Strait, our knowledge about America's role in Asia would benefit if historians were going to examine the people-to-people relations between Americans and Taiwanese and/or Americans and Chinese more profoundly, not only on a commercial but also on a cultural level.

Examining transnational and trans-cultural relations with a focus on U.S.-PRC and U.S.-Taiwan relations in the late 1970s and early 1980s could explain why the U.S. public was so eager to support Taiwan, and held a negative image of the PRC for such a long time. We find first attempts to explore the role of people-to-people relations within the realm of U.S.-China-Taiwan relations in studies from different fields. The American historian Frank Ninkovich for example examines the cultural relations between Chinese and Americans during World War II, finding out that their influence on the political decision-making was rather small, but still held symbolic value.⁹⁵¹ We also have a study by the Chinese economist Shu Keng and the German Political Scientist Gunter Schubert. They deal with the role of Taiwanese business people for cross-strait relations.⁹⁵² However, neither of these studies focuses on normalization and U.S. involvement in the Taiwan Strait.

Finally, this author suggests extending examinations about the Taiwan issue beyond normalization and the Carter administration, especially incorporating both Reagan administrations. The already sizable extent of this study did not allow such an approach, but it would certainly add to our understanding of the development of the Taiwan issue beyond the Cold War. Jimmy Carter's successor in the Oval Office, Ronald Reagan, was a fervent advocate of U.S. engagement in the Taiwan Strait. For example, he had strongly opposed Richard Nixon's rapprochement policy in the early 1970s. In fact, the regime in Taipei expected U.S.-Taiwan relations to become closer under President Reagan.⁹⁵³ Still, the Reagan administration did not only attempt to exploit Sino-American relations in their struggle to counter Soviet power during the last decade of the Cold War. They also negotiated a third communiqué in succession of the Shanghai Communiqué and the normalization agreement. This communiqué should restrict future U.S. arms sales to Taiwan.⁹⁵⁴ At the same time, the Reagan administration agreed with Taipei on six points in

⁹⁵¹ Frank Ninkovich, "Cultural Relations and American China Policy, 1942-1945" in: *Pacific Historical Review*, Vol. 49, No. 3 (August, 1980), 471.

⁹⁵² Shu Keng/Gunter Schubert, "Agents of Taiwan-China Unification? The Political Roles of Taiwanese Business People in the Process of Cross-Strait Integration" in: *Asian Survey*, Vol. 50, No. 2 (March/April 2010), 287.

⁹⁵³ 中華民國外交部, 1970, 《1980年美國大選結果及加強中美關係策略計劃綱要-0069/411.1/0001/001》, 中華民國外交部 [MOFA, 1980, "The Result of the Elections in the U.S. and the Compendium of the Strategies of Reinforcing the Relationship between the U.S. and R.O.C."-0069/411.1/0001/001, MOFA, National Archives of the ROC].

⁹⁵⁴ Taiwan Documents Project, "Joint Communiqué of the United States of America and the People's Republic of China" (17/08/1982), <http://www.taiwandocuments.org/communique03.htm> (accessed: 01/11/2014).

order to express the ongoing U.S. support for Taiwan.⁹⁵⁵ This kind of double play gave a new twitch to U.S.-China relations and the role of the Taiwan issue within this context. The whole negotiation process about these two agreements has not been examined thoroughly, yet. Such a study could provide us with new insights about Reagan's strategy to "win" the Cold War.⁹⁵⁶

Expanding the Knowledge of the Present

Historical literature has often characterized normalization as the logical next step of Richard Nixon's rapprochement policy which began in the early 1970s. All the U.S. administration would have to do was, finding a way to satisfy the Taiwan Lobby in Congress and tell Beijing that a deal could be done. This view, however, does not take into account how valuable Taiwan and a security relationship with the island still was for the United States. The Carter administration was aware of this value and tried everything to achieve normalization without selling out its interests in the Taiwan Strait. In the end, Carter and his aides had to rely on Congress to ensure that the United States would remain involved in the Taiwan issue conundrum in the future and beyond the Cold War. It did not matter that this approach led to a loss of political prestige for the president, as his administration was able to finalize what two presidents before him could not. In addition, Washington was able to ensure Taiwan's security, bolstering the American position in Asia-Pacific beyond pure Cold War considerations.

This study aimed to shed light on the dilemmas the Carter administration faced when it set out to normalize relations with China. It sought to explain why the White House took certain risks to secure a close relationship with Taiwan, and how the Americans prevailed in the face of China's stubbornness concerning Taiwan. Borrowing analytical instruments from the field of IR-theory, this study was able to explain the reasons for the decisions made and the actions taken by the

⁹⁵⁵ Taiwan Documents Project, "The 'Six Assurances' to Taiwan" (07/1982), <http://www.taiwandocuments.org/assurances.htm> (accessed: 01/11/2014).

⁹⁵⁶ Several books like Nancy Bernkopf Tucker's *Strait Talk* or Richard Bush's *At Corss Purposes*, which deal with Sino-American relations during the Cold War, touch this topic, but none has made extensive use of recently declassified archival material. One reason for this reluctance is certainly the restrictive policy of the Reagan Library, which only declassifies documents as the result of successful Freedom of Information Act requests.

Carter administration. It also offered an explanation why the PRC leadership accepted the U.S. position on Taiwan, in the end, without calling off normalization. Finally, this examination demonstrated that the normalization process could have never been successful without the passing of the Taiwan Relations Act, which set the frame for the continuing involvement of the United States in the Taiwan Strait.

By explaining the context of normalization, the Taiwan issue, and the Taiwan Relations Act, this study adds to our understanding of Sino-American relations and their present character. Moreover, it gives us an idea, why the United States is still involved in the Taiwan Strait, guaranteeing the de-facto independence of Taiwan. We know that Beijing sees the American role as an intervention in Chinese affairs. The nature of the Taiwan issue and the antagonistic involvement of such major powers like the PRC and the U.S., therefore, make the matter one of the most volatile political problems in the Asia-Pacific. We should not underestimate the potential for friction that arises from this issue, but a more extensive knowledge about U.S.-China relations and the Taiwan issue might help to prevent future conflicts in the Asia-Pacific region.

Abbreviations

AIT	American Institute in Taiwan
APNSA	National Security Advisor (Assistant to the President for National Security)
CCK	Chiang Ching-kuo
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CCTV	China Central Television
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CKS	Chiang Kai-shek
Comintern	Communist International
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
Dem	Democrat (Member of the U.S. Democratic Party)
DOD	United States Department of Defense
DOS	United States Department of State
DSG	Democratic Study Group
ERP	European Recovery Plan/Marshall Plan
FRUS	Foreign Relations of the United States
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
IR	International Relations
JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff
JFK	John F. Kennedy
KMT	Kuomintang/Nationalist Chinese Party
LBJ	Lyndon B. Johnson
MDT	Mutual Defense Treaty
MFN	Most Favored Nation

MOFA	Ministry of Foreign Relations (of the Republic of China)
NARA	National Archives and Records Administration
NNP	Nuclear Non-Proliferation
NSC	National Security Council
PLA	People's Liberation Army
PRC	People's Republic of China
PRM	Presidential Review Memorandum
Rep	Republican (Member of the U.S. Republican Party)
RG	Record Group
ROC	Republic of China
SALT	Strategic Arms Limitation Talks
SIPRI	Stockholm International Peace Research Institute
TRA	Taiwan Relations Act
TDC	Taiwan Defense Command
UN	United Nations
UNGA	(United Nations) General Assembly
UNSC	(United Nations) Security Council
U.S.	United States
USA	United States of America
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics/Soviet Union

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Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Museum, Simi Valley, California, USA

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