

Nixon and Kissinger: Partners in Powers
Nixon and Mao: The Week that Changed the World
Roundtable Review



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Review by Yafeng Xia, Long Island University, Brooklyn

Nixon, Mao, Kissinger and Zhou—The Tale of Four Historical Giants

After nearly three years of contemplation and secret diplomacy, Richard Nixon finally went to China. Toasting his Chinese hosts at the banquet on his last night in China on 27 February 1972, Nixon said, "We have been here a week. This is the week that changed the world." This is the subtitle of the book by Margaret MacMillan, formerly a professor of history at the University of Toronto, and now the warden of St. Antony's College, Oxford. Making use of primary sources from American and British archives, secondary sources including translated Chinese books and articles, interviews with diplomats from the United States, the People's Republic of China (PRC), Britain, and Canada, this is the first fully documented history of U.S.-Chinese rapprochement in the early 1970s.

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Nixon's road to China was tortuous. It took almost two and half years in office before the Nixon White House was able to receive a secret message via the Pakistani channel in late May 1971 that the Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai invited Henry Kissinger, Nixon's National Security Adviser, to visit Beijing for high-level talks. What had Washington done to prompt such an invitation from Beijing? What persuaded Beijing, still in the midst of the Cultural Revolution, to take a leap toward opening up to the United States, still cursed as the number one imperialist power in Chinese propaganda? To answer these questions, it is essential to examine how the two antagonists had communicated with each other since 1969; what moved the PRC and the United States to engage in secret diplomacy; and how and why Richard Nixon, a cold warrior, and Mao Zedong, a staunch revolutionary, would decide to undertake such a historically significant course of action.

The election of Richard Nixon as president in 1968 marked a new era in U.S. Cold War strategy--the coming of "détente." Departing from the old bipolar system, the Nixon administration expected to reconfigure the great power structure by pushing for a five-part global order involving the United States, the Soviet Union, Europe, China, and Japan. By the late 1960s, the U.S. power position was declining. In Asia, the Vietnam quagmire evidently showed that the American empire was on the retreat.

Comparatively, the Chinese leaders now felt more confident in dealing with the United States as they acquired nuclear weaponry, a much aspired strategic asset, in 1964. They

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were more confident of resolving the Taiwan issue without worrying too much that they would be coerced to make unwanted and unpopular concessions. On the other hand, Washington not only urgently needed to engage China in a constructive dialogue (to end the war in Vietnam), but also came to realize that to normalize relations with China would serve long-term U.S. interests (to contain Soviet challenges).

To reduce external threats and improve their security situations seemed to be a common goal Washington and Beijing shared when they sought high-level dialogue. As a foreign policy president, Nixon was determined to restore and enhance the American position in world affairs. To get the United States out of Vietnam was Nixon's top priority. To that end, Nixon attached enormous importance to improving relations with China. For Chinese leaders, the Soviet Union gradually but surely turned into China's number one enemy in the late 1960s and early 1970s, while the United States became less threatening. Thus the mounting threat from China's northern neighbor—the USSR--galvanized Mao's determination to seek rapprochement with Washington.

The domestic political atmosphere in both countries was also favorable for a better U.S.-China relationship. In the United States, the public was becoming more interested in "Red China" and dissenting voices from the old China lobby were weak. Although there was still strong support for Jiang Jieshi's regime in Taiwan, more and more congressional and public opinion leaders advocated recognizing the PRC. Also, the American business community was impatient to have trade and travel restrictions lifted.

China's domestic politics played out into the U.S.-China rapprochement process as well. The political situation was slowly improving as the radical phase of the Cultural Revolution came to end after April 1969. Mao and Zhou Enlai, who favored improving relations with the United States, were in control of China's foreign policymaking. However, the "ultra-leftists," who were strong supporters of the Cultural Revolution, were not supportive of improving relations with the United States. They clung to the letter of Mao's revolutionary line and were resistant to changes in Chinese foreign policy. In March 1971, they did not support sending the Chinese ping-pong team to Japan. They resisted inviting the U.S. ping-pong team to visit China in April. They also voiced their concerns about Kissinger's secret visit to China at the Politburo meeting in May. Mao had to overrule their policy suggestions and launch propaganda campaign to prepare the whole nation theoretically and psychologically for a radical change in China's U.S. policy.¹

Neither country's allies stood in the way of U.S.-China rapprochement. Washington's allies in Western Europe and Japan had been supportive of an improved Sino-American relationship and were pleased at Nixon's vision and courage in integrating China into the international community. Meanwhile, as the United States was reducing its footprint in Asia, the concerns of smaller allies such as Taiwan and South Korea weighed less heavily in

¹ For a discussion of Chinese elite politics during U.S.-China rapprochement, see Yafeng Xia, "China's Elite Politics and Sino-American Rapprochement, January 1969-February 1972," *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 4 (Fall 2006), pp. 3-28.

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Washington's policymaking calculations. As for Beijing's allies in Asia, Pakistan was more than enthusiastic about facilitating secret Chinese-American contacts. Although suspicious of Beijing's "softened" attitude toward Washington, Hanoi did not have much leverage as long as China did not sell it out, and the Vietnamese would retain their partnership with Beijing long after Nixon's trip. North Korea did not have much to say on this issue, and Enver Hoxha, the Albanian dictator and China's close ally in Eastern Europe, could only vent his anger in his diary, accusing America of being "the center of fascism and barbarous imperialism!" (MacMillan, p. 158)

Decade-long talks between American and Chinese ambassadors finally yielded substantive results. When Nixon took office, there was no direct high-level communication channel between Washington and Beijing. With difficulty they managed to reopen ambassadorial-level talks, which had been suspended for more than two years. Through the last two sessions of these talks, the Chinese side was assured that the Nixon administration was willing to send a high-level official to Beijing for direct talks with the Chinese leaders. This was an important breakthrough as the Chinese had been proposing higher-level talks since the beginning of the ambassadorial talks in 1955. To seek a more effective and more secure way to communicate with the Chinese leaders, even before the collapse of the Warsaw channel, the Nixon White House had been trying to establish communications with Beijing through various back channels, one of which--the Pakistani channel--turned out to be instrumental in setting up agenda for direct talks between Kissinger and Zhou Enlai. Secret diplomacy seemed to have facilitated the delicate exchanges between Washington and Beijing, and thus expedited the rapprochement process (pp. 181-184).

Mutual signaling promoted the communication process. Mao and Nixon each gave a personal push to overcome difficulties, Mao by meeting with Edgar Snow in October 1970, and Nixon by means of an interview with *Time* magazine the same month (pp. 174-175). Zhou Enlai made artful use of ping-pong diplomacy, which dramatically changed the political atmosphere between the two countries. Personal diplomacy seemed to work well and carry the day. In formulating its new U.S. policy in May 1971, the Chinese Politburo did not insist that Washington should openly sever diplomatic relations with Taiwan as a precondition for opening higher-level meetings. While continuing to claim that liberating Taiwan was a Chinese internal affair, China stressed its interest in resolving the Taiwan issue through peaceful means (pp. 187-188). China's flexible and constructive negotiating position was instrumental in moving things forward. The Chinese leaders, especially Zhou, made every effort to make sure that the first high-level talk between Beijing and Washington would be a successful one.

Nixon's splendid summit meetings with top Chinese leaders, in effect, replicated Kissinger's earlier visits to Beijing. Determined to move ahead but firm on principal issues, the leaders of both sides proved worthy negotiation opponents. Friendly in gesturing but candid in negotiating, they covered a wide array of issues, philosophical and practical alike, came away gratified. Although optimistic about the prospect of final U.S.-China normalization, both sides agreed to play slow and safe.

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At the core of the U.S.-China summit diplomacy was their common concern over the Soviet threat. Nixon and Kissinger sought to utilize China to balance the Soviet threat; Mao and Zhou sought likewise to make use of the United States. Without concluding an anti-Soviet alliance, American and Chinese leaders reached a tacit agreement on “opposing international [i.e., Soviet] hegemony.” With such an understanding, Nixon believed that Chinese leaders would not make excessive demands regarding Taiwan and might be willing to help the United States resolve the Vietnam conflict. For their part, Mao and Zhou seemed keenly aware of exactly what China would want over Taiwan and could offer in Vietnam.

On both issues, outcomes were mixed. Nixon and Kissinger did repeatedly make efforts to link U.S. troop withdrawal from Taiwan with Chinese direct help to end the war in Vietnam. Zhou, however, rejected the linkage, was firm on “total U.S. withdrawal from Indochina,” and reiterated China’s support to Vietnam. When China declined to arrange a meeting between Kissinger and Le Duc Tho on Chinese soil, Nixon was not at all disappointed (pp. 266-267). To get China’s direct help to a settlement in Vietnam might be Nixon’s operational strategy, but it was certainly not his first priority. Still, Nixon’s successful trip to China indirectly put pressure on North Vietnam. China did encourage the North Vietnamese to reach a settlement with the United States in the coming year.

Coming to China, Nixon and Kissinger knew that they had to state clearly to Zhou the U.S. position regarding Taiwan. The end-result was Nixon’s five private assurances (p. 259).² I agree with MacMillan, Gong Li, and Robert Accinelli that these were substantial concessions the Nixon administration had to make to the Chinese.³ In response, the Chinese leaders backed down from their long-held position when they stopped asking the United States to sever relations with Taiwan immediately and stopped pressing for a time limit for troop withdrawal (pp. 256-260). Although the Taiwan issue remained unresolved, Zhou assured Nixon that “we are not rushing to make use of the opponents of your present visit and attempt to solve all the questions and place you in an embarrassing position.”⁴

² At their first private meeting on the afternoon of 22 February 1972, Nixon made five assurances to Zhou Enlai: (1) That there is one China, of which Taiwan is a part; (2) That the United States would not support Taiwanese independence; (3) That the United States would restrain Japan from moving into Taiwan; (4) That the United States would support any peaceful resolution of the Taiwan issue; and (5) That the United States would seek to normalize relations with the PRC.

³ See Yafeng Xia, *Negotiating with the Enemy: U.S.-China Talks during the Cold War, 1949-1972* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), pp. 187, 199-200; Robert Accinelli, “In Pursuit of a Modus Vivendi: The Taiwan Issue and Sino-American Rapprochement, 1969-1972”; Rosemary Foot, “Prizes Won, Opportunities Lost: The U.S. Normalization of Relations with China, 1972-1979”; Gong Li, “The Difficult Path to Diplomatic Relations: China’s U.S. Policy, 1972-1978,” in William C. Kirby, Robert S. Ross, and Gong Li, eds., *Normalization of U.S.-China Relations: An International History* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2006), pp. 9-55, 90-115, 116-146; Nancy B. Tucker, “Taiwan Expendable? Nixon and Kissinger Go to China,” *Journal of American History* (June 2005), pp. 109-135. Rosemary Foot and Nancy B. Tucker contend that “there might have been more flexibility” in the U.S. position than “U.S. officials believed at the time.”

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Indeed, Nixon and Kissinger needed more time to prepare both at home and abroad for U.S.-PRC normalization and were in no position to promise when they could withdraw U.S. troops from Taiwan and switch recognition from the Republic of China in Taiwan to the PRC. They succeeded in persuading Mao and Zhou to accept their concerns. Chinese pragmatism here prevailed over ideological rigidity.

Nixon's China trip did accomplish its strategic as well as political goals. Nixon broke a 22-year taboo against dealing with the People's Republic of China. Without any apology, he engaged Mao in a discussion that ended the isolation of the PRC from the West, and America's isolation from China. There is no doubt that Nixon's opening to China served American national interests and helped the Republican president win reelection.

Nixon was not the only winner. The historic Nixon-Mao handshake stood as a great diplomatic victory for Beijing. A Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Central Committee document hailed the summit for its success in "utilizing [others'] contradictions, dividing up enemies, and enhancing ourselves," and credited this to Mao's "brilliant decision" to invite the U.S. President. Chinese leaders could now focus their attention on the Soviet threat and avoid fighting a possible two-front war. In addition, Beijing gained U.S. and world recognition of its legitimacy, the validity of its national interests, and its status as a major regional power with a role to play in shaping current and future international policies. Moreover, China gained access to and enlisted the badly needed economic and technological resources of the United States in the build-up of Chinese industry and defense capability.⁵ Although no one gave much thought to this aspect of the relationship, China's phenomenal development in the last two decades has much to do with Nixon's opening.

While MacMillan's book is a well-written general history, full of interesting tidbits, the author is evidently unfamiliar with Chinese culture, history, and politics. Her inability to read Chinese sources directly hampers her interpretations. Accordingly, I differ with MacMillan's interpretations on numerous issues and events.

Regarding the Truman administration's policy toward the Chinese Communist regime, MacMillan writes, "In 1949, when the Truman administration considered trying to establish relations with the new Communist regime, the Chinese Communists were not prepared to negotiate" (p. 110). The real story is much more complicated. In May and June 1949, U.S. Ambassador to Nationalist China John L. Stuart met and held a series of talks in Nanjing with Huang Hua, a high-level CCP foreign affairs official. On 8 June, Philip Fugh, ambassador Stuart's personal secretary, came to visit Huang Hua and told him that a new American policy would require Stuart's further efforts after his return to the United States. He mentioned to Huang that Under Secretary of State James E. Webb recently cabled Stuart,

⁴ Nixon-Chou Talks (Indochina, 28 February 1972), p. 9, folder 6, box 848, NSCF, *Nixon Presidential Materials Project*, National Archives (NPMP).

⁵ Xia, *Negotiating with the Enemy*, p. 211.

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hoping that Stuart could make a trip to Peiping and meet with Zhou Enlai before his return to the United States. He mentioned that he could also stop by Yenching University for a visit during the trip. In this way, he could get to know the views of the top CCP's leadership and thus strengthen his argument in America upon his return. Fugh asked Huang to help with the arrangement. When Huang called on Stuart on 28 June and informed him that he could visit Peiping and might meet top CCP leaders, Stuart was very pleased. However, he could not decide what to do without receiving explicit approval from the State Department. The whole issue was taken, according to Dean Acheson, to the "highest level" and it was decided that the trip could not be made, mainly because of the likelihood of an unfavorable domestic reaction. Fearful of a negative outcry on Capitol Hill and in the press, President Truman vetoed Stuart's proposed trip to Peiping.⁶

Regarding Stalin's relations with the Chinese Revolution in the late 1940s, MacMillan writes, "In the spring of 1949, when Chinese Communist forces stood on the banks of the Yangtze, ready to continue their advance southward, Stalin told Mao he should be content to control the northern part of China" (p. 127). New scholarship shows that Stalin's attitude toward the Chinese revolution became more positive during this period. He was not actively mediating the GMD (Guomindong, the Chinese Nationalist Party)-CCP conflict. The reason why Stalin demanded that the CCP negotiate with the GMD was primarily tactical. The allegation that Stalin advocated the "division of China" between the GMD and CCP cannot be proved. It seems that the allegation was irrelevant to Stalin's actual policy toward China at that time,⁷ and more likely a reflection of the CCP leaders' suspicion of the Soviet policy.

Regarding Dulles' snub of Zhou Enlai, MacMillan writes, "In 1954, at the Geneva conference ... the strongly anti-Communist American secretary of state, John Foster Dulles, had publicly brushed past Chou Enlai's proffered hand" (p. 30). This is not yet a conclusive issue, and may never be. The story that Dulles refused to shake Zhou Enlai's extended hand at the Geneva Conference in 1954 has been widely told. Nevertheless, Ambassador Wang Bingnan claimed in his memoirs that the handshaking incident never happened.⁸ Xu Jingli, vice director of the PRC's Foreign Ministry Archives, notes that he has checked all the newly declassified Chinese diplomatic files, and concludes that this is a purely fabricated story.⁹ But according to Chinese scholar Jia Qingguo's interview with Ambassador U. Alexis

⁶ See Xia, *Negotiating with the Enemy*, pp. 30-34. Interestingly, Huang Hua dismissed the idea that a Stuart visit to Beijing might have opened the way to improved relations. He argued that Mao and Zhou were not interested in anything more than forestalling a major American intervention to save the Guomindang.

⁷ See Yafeng Xia, "New Scholarship and Directions in the Study of the Diplomatic History of the People's Republic of China," *Chinese Historical Review*, Vol. 14, No. 2 (Spring 2007), p. 127.

⁸ Wang Bingnan, *Zhongmei huitan jiunian huigu* [Nine Years of Sino-American Talks in Retrospect] (Beijing: Shijie Zhishi Chubanshe, 1985), pp. 21-22.

⁹ Xu Jingli, *Jiemu Zhongguo waijiao dangan* [Declassifying Chinese Diplomatic Files] (Beijing: Zhongguo Dangan Chubanshe, 2005), pp. 276-279.

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Johnson on 31 July 1986, Johnson said he personally witnessed the incident.¹⁰ Johnson's memoirs also recorded that during a break in the first session, Dulles entered the lounge and Zhou, who was already there, walked across the room "with a broad smile and his usual air of urbane familiarity." Zhou extended his arm. Dulles, noting the "press photographers poised" for a story, quickly turned his back.¹¹ The Chinese government made use of this story to arouse Chinese people's nationalism and indignation against U.S. imperialism. Later, when President Nixon arrived at Beijing airport for his historic trip, he made a point of extending his hand as he walked toward Zhou Enlai. Nixon wanted his gesture to symbolize the beginning of a new relationship between the two countries, just as Dulles's insult to Zhou Enlai marked the era of animosity toward the People's Republic of China.

MacMillan's narration of Sino-American ambassadorial talks is also confused. From August 1955 to February 1970, the Chinese and American ambassadors held 136 de facto diplomatic talks, first in Geneva (to the 73rd meeting on 12 December 1957) and then in Warsaw (from the 74th meeting on 16 September 1958 to the 136th meeting on 20 February 1970). MacMillan seems to be unaware of the talks at Geneva (pp. 108, 162). During the Nixon administration, U.S. ambassador to Poland Walter Stoessel met with Chinese charge d'affaires Lei Yang for two formal meetings: the 135th meeting on 20 January 1970 and the 136th meeting on 20 February 1970.¹² The Stoessel-Lei meeting on 20 January 1970 was not informal. (p.170)

Regarding the Kennedy administration's China policy, MacMillan writes, "At the end of 1961, the existence of two Chinas was accepted when what were called 'mainland China affairs' began to dealt with separately from those of Taiwan" (p. 111). MacMillan also claims that "At the start of the 1960s, . . . the Kennedy administration had looked at the possibility of having both Chinas in the U.N." (p. 215). The Kennedy administration in some contexts was willing to accept that the Communist government on the mainland was a government, but in other contexts--notably in its rejection of proposals for a two-China policy at the UN General Assembly in 1961--it was not willing even to do that. The change of policy began in the fall of 1970 when the Nixon administration decided to shift its position toward China's membership at the UN from unconditional exclusion of the PRC to advocating dual membership for both Taipei and Beijing.

Regarding the secret Paris channel, MacMillan writes, "Over time Walters himself became very friendly with Fang [Wen], also a retired general. They conducted much detailed business about the arrangements for Nixon's trip and compared notes about the Soviets ..."

¹⁰ Robert Ross and Jiang Changbin, eds. *Re-examining the Cold War: U.S.-China Diplomacy, 1954-1973* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), p. 427, n. 6.

¹¹ U. Alexis Johnson with Jef Olivarius McAllister, *The Right Hand of Power* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1984), p. 204.

¹² Xia, *Negotiating with the Enemy*, pp. 89-103, 113-132, 144-149.

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(p. 173). Here MacMillan mixes up facts. Fang Wen, the Chinese military attaché to France, played no part in Sino-American secret contacts in Paris beyond his brief encounter with General Vernon Walters and declining his letter after a reception at the Polish Embassy in July 1970. During his secret mission to Beijing in July 1971, Kissinger secured Zhou Enlai's agreement that in the future the contact point between China and the United States would be Paris, with Chinese Ambassador Huang Zhen (a retired general) and the U.S. military Attaché, General Walters, as point-persons. The two sides soon began to use the secret Paris channel. Walters would visit Ambassador Huang Zhen in his residence 45 times before the United States and China decided to utilize Paris as the open point of contact, which occurred only after Nixon's trip to China in February 1972. Kissinger also flew to Paris to talk secretly with Ambassador Huang three times in 1971.¹³

MacMillan's reliance on *The Private Life of Chairman Mao* by Li Zhisui is troublesome and problematic. When Li completed his initial manuscript in November 1989, he had had a hard time finding a Chinese publisher. The situation changed dramatically when the powerful chief editor at Random House, Jason Epstein, saw great potential in a book based on Li's manuscript. Random House made an offer of \$500,000 on the condition that Li would submit an English version of the work in ten months and would no longer have anything to say on production of the book. Li then hired Dai Hongchao, a political science professor at the University of Detroit, to translate the manuscript into English. After the English version was submitted to Random in February 1991, Epstein made two complaints. His first complaint was that the manuscript lacked analysis and commentary and too strongly resembled a simple record of events. His second was that it read too much like a biography of Mao Zedong and not enough like the memoirs of Li Zhisui. Two U.S. China scholars, Andrew Nathan and Ann Thurston, were hired to lead the process of manufacturing a book of "value" by weaving into the original manuscript Li's own life experience, his views and comments on Mao, and various footnotes and additions. It took them more than two years to create a biographical literature out of whatever materials Li could offer, "edit" the English translation of Li's original Chinese manuscript, and add footnotes to give the book the trappings of an academic work. The final product was significantly different from the original, not only in style but also in substance.¹⁴ Because of this, the historical value of the book is seriously compromised. It is very difficult for scholars to distinguish in it fact from fiction.

MacMillan cites Li's book on numerous occasions, and her echoing of Li about his role in the Nixon-Mao meeting is troubling. For example, MacMillan writes, "The Nixon Party walked into a hallway" and "Mao's doctor motioned them toward his study" (p. 70). This is a transparent fabrication, for it was against protocol for a doctor to perform such a role.

¹³ Xia, *Negotiating with the Enemy*, pp. 174-175. Vernon Walters, *Silent Missions* (Garden City: N.Y.: Doubleday, 1978), pp. 526-547.

¹⁴ Dai Hongchao, "The Publication Process of Li Zhisui's Memoirs," in Jin Zhong, *Fanpan de Yuyi: Mao Zedong siren yisheng Li Zhisui he ta wei wancheng de huiyilu* [Rebellious Palace Physician: Mao Zedong's Private Doctor Li Zhisui and his Unfinished Memoirs] (Taibei: Yiqiao Chubanshe, 1997), pp. 154-162.

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According to the Chinese record, Wang Dongxing, director of the general office of the CCP Central Committee, and his deputy, Zhang Yaoci, were waiting at the front gate of Mao's quarters, and Zhou Enlai walked Nixon's party into Mao's study.

MacMillan also writes that Li "listened to everything from his post outside the door" (p. 73). It was impossible for Li to listen to Mao's conversation with Nixon because his doctors were awaiting orders near Mao's swimming pool 5-6 meters (18-20 feet) from Mao's study and separated by a thick concrete wall and door.

Third, MacMillan writes: "Once Nixon left, Mao changed out of his new suit and into his dressing gown and chatted happily with his doctor" (p. 74). As Mao had been sick for a very long time before his meeting with Nixon, he was extremely tired after Nixon left. With the assistance of his nurses Wu Xujun and Zhang Yufeng, Mao recuperated on a sofa for about 30 minutes and then moved to bed. He had neither the energy nor the intention to "chat happily" with anybody.¹⁵

MacMillan could have avoided numerous factual mistakes with more careful editing. The Cultural Revolution did not end until 1976, after Mao Zedong's death, not in 1969 as MacMillan suggests (p. 25). Deng Pufang, Deng Xiaoping's son, jumped out of a window and "became a paraplegic" at Beijing University during the early years of the Cultural Revolution when he was under house arrest; he was not "thrown out a window" (p. 26). In November 1971, the PRC delegation headed by Qiao Guanhua arrived at JFK airport via Air France; it was not La Guardia on a Chinese plane as MacMillan suggests (p. 218). At the time, China's national airline was not allowed to fly to the United States. Although Nixon made numerous trips to China after leaving office, his visit in February 1976 and meeting with Mao was his second (p. 329). The marriage between Qiao Guanhua and Zhang Hanzhi did not produce any children. Hong Huang, Zhang Hanzhi's daughter from her previous marriage, went to Vassar (p. 332).

I concur with other reviewers that MacMillan's book also suffers from a structural dislocation. Her attempts to flash back to the origins of Sino-American reconciliation within the critical week itself--to explain the history of Chinese Communism (Chapter 2), Zhou Enlai's early experience in Paris in the early 1920s (Chapter 3), and Kissinger's career at Harvard (Chapter 4)--are out of proportion with the main story line. While the description of Nixon's arrival in Beijing for the historic visit in February 1972 is in chapter 2, the account of Kissinger's secret visit to the city in July 1971 in order to prepare for the presidential visit is in chapter 12, about 150 pages later. This makes it hard for ordinary readers to appreciate the importance of the negotiation process.

¹⁵ See Lin Ke, Xu Tao and Wu Xujun, *Lishi de zhenshi--Mao Zedong shenbian gongzuo renyuan de zhengyan* [Let Historical Truth Be Told--Eyewitness Account of Mao's Staff] (Hong Kong: Liwen Chubanshe, 1995), pp. 215-226.

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While MacMillan's focus is Nixon's historic meeting with Mao in 1972, involving four main figures -- Nixon, Mao, Kissinger, and Zhou -- Robert Dallek explores the stormy relationship between Nixon and Kissinger during the turbulent years from 1969 to 1974 in his massive new book, *Nixon and Kissinger: Partners in Power*. Dallek, a noted American presidential historian and author of several important books about American presidents, sets out to answer larger and more serious questions: Why did the Nixon administration fail so miserably after achieving great successes in foreign policy? Contrary to the popular belief that Watergate caused Nixon's presidency to collapse, Dallek argues that the pathology ran far deeper. According to Dallek, Nixon was brought down by a pattern of deception, manipulation and double-dealing that was endemic to his administration. All of these began with the Nixon-Kissinger relationship.

Making extensive use of recently declassified material--millions of pages of national security documents, 2,800 hours of Nixon's secret tape recordings, and 20,000 pages of transcriptions of Kissinger's phone calls -- Dallek has succeeded in drawing a compelling portrait of the two men, and especially of how their personal traits -- their drive, their paranoia, and their hunger for power and control -- affected their foreign policy decision making and its consequences. Here is a list of what we learn from this revelation:

- The Nixon administration continued the war in Vietnam when it had ample evidence that the war was unwinnable. The Paris accord to end U.S. involvement in Vietnam in 1973 was not fundamentally different from one that could have been achieved four years earlier--and came at a cost of thousands more American lives, countless Vietnamese deaths, the expansion of the war into Cambodia and Laos, and an increasingly divided nation at home. As Dallek observes, "Nixon was reluctant to see an end to the war in the three months before the election" (p. 407). Nixon and Kissinger waited until after Nixon's reelection in 1972.
- Although they were in constant collaboration until Nixon's resignation, Nixon and Kissinger were never close friends. Kissinger engaged in a painful rivalry with Nixon. Kissinger frequently referred to Nixon as "the meatball mind," "our drunken friend," and "That madman." Nixon returned the favor, demeaning Kissinger as his "Jew boy" and calling him "psychopathic." At one point, he recommended (through John Ehrlichman) that Kissinger needed psychiatric therapy and should obtain it (p. 352).
- At one point prior to his second term, Nixon was inclined to rid himself both of William Rogers and Kissinger. As he told Admiral Elmo Zumwalt, "I'm going to fire the son-of-a bitch" (p. 437). But when they were together, Kissinger would flatter Nixon. "The thing that's so interesting about your style of leadership is that you never make little news, it always big news... You are a man of tremendous moves." This was the kind of thing Kissinger frequently said to buck up and ingratiate himself with Nixon. "Mr. President," Kissinger told him, "without you this country would be dead" (p. 318). During the Watergate investigation, Kissinger told Nixon, your "resignation would be a national

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catastrophe ... You can go down in history as a man who brought about the greatest revolution in foreign policy ever" (p. 487).

According to Dallek, "Nixon's use of foreign affairs to overcome impeachment threats in 1973-1974 is a disturbing part of the administration's history. Its impact on policy deserves particular consideration, as does the more extensive use of international relations to serve domestic political goals throughout Nixon's presidency. Nixon's competence to lead the country during his impeachment crisis also requires the closest possible scrutiny" (p. xii). Dallek makes the case that Kissinger knew that Nixon was so badly incapacitated as the Watergate scandal unfolded that he should have considered having him removed from power under the aegis of the 25th Amendment. Kissinger failed to inform Congress that Nixon was incapable of running the country at that point.

Another appalling revelation is Nixon's penchant for using vulgar words to describe foreign leaders. Previous studies show that Nixon changed his perception of Communist China after the ping-pong diplomacy in April 1971 and was eager to fly to Beijing to shake Mao's and Zhou's hands; Dallek shows that Nixon spent almost two hours with Kissinger on 1 July 1971, a few days before Kissinger's secret mission to Beijing, instructing Kissinger what he should say to Chou En-lai [Zhou Enlai]. Nixon told Kissinger that his success in talking to Communist leaders was because "I don't fart around ... I'm very nice to them -- then I come right in with the cold steel ... They're bastards; he [Chou]’s a bastard" (p. 292). Nixon called Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi a "bitch" and much worse (p. 340). On Vietnam, Nixon repeatedly told Kissinger, "We are not going to let this country be defeated by this little shit-ass country" (p. 372). Kissinger would blast Nguyen Van Thieu as "a complete SOB" and referred to the South Vietnamese as "SOBs, maniacs, and so on" (p. 447).

What can we learn from this historical revelation? The public spin reminds me of a similar effort to cover up historical truth in the official party history in Communist countries. After the end of the Cultural Revolution, an official *CCP Resolution on Party History* during the PRC years was issued on the CCP's sixtieth anniversary (on 1 July 1981). Mao Zedong emerged from the *Resolution* as a tragic hero whose leftist error, "comprehensive in magnitude and protracted in duration," was that of "a great proletarian revolutionary." Why did the CCP try to certify and protect the legacy of Mao, whose Cultural Revolution had caused such great disaster to the nation? As Roderick MacFarquhar and Michael Schoenhals have observed, "The legitimacy of the party still rested heavily on Mao's revolutionary achievements. Unlike the Soviets, the Chinese had no Lenin to fall back on, Mao was both Lenin and Stalin."¹⁶ As Deng Xiaoping pointed out, "discrediting Comrade Mao Zedong ... would mean discrediting our Party and state."¹⁷

¹⁶ For a discussion of the Resolution on Party History in English, see Roderick MacFarquhar and Michael Schoenhals, *Mao's Last Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press/Harvard University Press, 2006), pp. 456-458.

¹⁷ *Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping (1975-1982)*, (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1994), p. 287.

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Thus, an official line of interpretation of the PRC during the Cultural Revolution emerged. Although Mao Zedong made serious mistakes in launching the Cultural Revolution, his foreign policy in the 1970s was nevertheless a great and brilliant success, especially his decision to seek rapprochement with the United States.¹⁸ We now know that this is a one-sided interpretation. In examining China's policy toward the United States from early 1969 to late 1976, a more rational and plausible interpretation should look at Mao's career as a revolutionary, China's domestic political environment in the 1970s, pressure from China's revolutionary allies, and Mao's dilemma in maintaining his position as a world revolutionary leader and in seeking a new ally to counterbalance the security threat from the Soviet Union. As a ruthless dictator, Mao would do everything to secure his power and prestige. And he couldn't be wrong! His subordinates -- high-ranking associates such as Zhou Enlai, who was so loyal to Mao and the Chinese revolution -- would have to bear responsibility for all the negative consequences and possible failure of this new diplomacy. What I like most about the book is Dallek's skill in disclosing the complicated and delicate relationship between two important political leaders. This is something which we rarely see in Chinese Communist historiography.

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¹⁸ See, e.g., works by official party historians such as Gong Li, Li Jie, and related chapters in Pang Xianzhi and Jin Chongji, chief eds., *Mao Zedong zhuan, 1949-1976* [A Biography of Mao Zedong, 1949-1976], 2 vols. (Beijing: Zhongyang Wenxian Chubanshe, 2003); and Liu Wusheng, *Zhou Enlai wannian suiyue* [Zhou Enlai's Last Years] (Beijing: Renmin Chubanshe, 2006).