As the Cold War ended, the roles played by the United States and Japan partly reversed. Japan now provided much of the capital, credits, technology, and consumer goods purchased by the United States and the developing world, especially in East and Southeast Asia. Although Japan remained a military midget, the post-Cold War environment amplified, more than ever, its status as an economic superpower. Whether or not Japan played much of a role in ending the Cold War depends partly on the assessment of Tokyo’s financial contribution to the Reagan-era arms buildup. Japan recycled its trade surplus in the form of loans that financed the new arms race, but historians disagree about how important a factor this was in changing Soviet behavior.

China and the Cold War after Mao

CHEN JIAN

On September 9, 1976, Mao Zedong, the Chinese Communist leader who had ruled the country for twenty-seven years, died. Almost immediately, the development of China’s domestic and international policies reached a critical juncture. In the last years of the Chinese chairman’s life, he endeavored to keep China on course in his continuous revolution. Meanwhile, in view of a growing security threat from the Soviet Union and a persistent legitimacy crisis – one that was characterized by his revolution’s inability to meet the expectations of the Chinese people’s lived experience – Mao led China to an approachement with the United States. He also introduced a set of ideas about China’s place in the world that were development-oriented rather than revolution-driven. These changes in China’s international policies had a significant and long-lasting impact on the global Cold War.

After Mao’s death, Deng Xiaoping emerged as China’s paramount leader. In order to modernize China, Deng initiated the “reform and opening” policies in the late 1970s. China then experienced a profound derevolutionization process, gradually changing from an “outsider” in the existing international system – dominated by the United States and the capitalist West – to an “insider.” All of this, while altering further the structure of the Cold War, buried the last hope of international Communism being an alternative to liberal capitalism as the mainstream path toward modernity. Consequently, China played a crucial – indeed, at times even central – role in bringing the Cold War to its conclusion in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Mao’s last revolution and China’s double crisis

At the center of China’s political chronology in the last decade of Mao’s life was the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. When the Cultural Revolution began in 1966, Mao had two goals in mind. First, he hoped that it would allow him to discover new means to promote the transformation of China’s state
and society, as well as its international outlook. Second, he wanted to use the Cultural Revolution to enhance his much weakened power and reputation in the wake of the disastrous Great Leap Forward. For the chairman of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), these two goals were interrelated: he believed that his strengthened leadership role would best guarantee the success of his revolution.

Mao easily achieved the second goal in the Cultural Revolution, but he failed to reach the much more complicated first one. Although the mass movement launched by the Cultural Revolution destroyed both Mao's opponents and the "old" party-state control system, it was unable to create the new form of state power that Mao desired for building a new social order in China. Despite this failure, however, Mao was ready to halt the revolution in 1968-69.

In July 1968, when Mao dispatched the "Workers' Ma Zedong Thought Propaganda Team" to various Beijing universities to reestablish the party-control system, the Red Guards at Qinghua University opened fire on them. Mao then decided to dismantle the Red Guards movement. 1 For two decades, "mobilizing the masses" had been the key for Mao to maintain the momentum of his "revolution after revolution." At the moment that he openly stood in opposition to the "revolutionary masses" in order to reestablish the Communist state's control over society, his transformative agenda collapsed.

Meanwhile, Beijing faced a grave international security situation. The propaganda prevailing during the Cultural Revolution created new enemies for Beijing and drove China into deeper isolation. American involvement in the Vietnam War and Beijing's support for Hanoi occasionally brought China and the United States to the verge of a direct military confrontation. At the same time, Beijing's provocative challenges to "Soviet revisionism" destroyed any hope that China and the Soviet Union might regard each other as comrades-in-arms. 2

The hostility between China and the Soviet Union culminated in March 1969 in two bloody clashes between Chinese and Soviet border garrisons on Zhenbao island on the Ussuri River. 3 For a few months, China and the Soviet Union were on the brink of a general war. Reportedly, Soviet leaders even considered conducting a preemptive nuclear strike against their former Communist ally. 4 Beijing's leaders responded in ways that created the worst war scare in the history of the People's Republic of China (PRC). 5

The extraordinary perception of threat from the Soviet Union, combined with the fading of Mao's continuous revolution, spurred Beijing to improve relations with the United States. 6 On the American side, President Richard M. Nixon and his national security adviser Henry Kissinger saw improving relations with China as beneficial to the United States. In the short run, this would help get the United States out of the Vietnam War and, in the long term, would enhance its strategic position in a global confrontation with the Soviet Union. 7 All of this paved the way for the coming of "the week that changed the world" in February 1972, when Nixon made his historic trip to China and met with Mao and Chinese premier Zhou Enlai in Beijing.

The Sino-American rapprochement as a turning point

In retrospect, the Chinese-American rapprochement reshaped a world that had been profoundly divided by the global Cold War. It ended the total confrontation between the United States and China that had lasted for almost a quarter century, opening a new chapter in the relations between the world’s most powerful country and its most populous nation. It also dramatically shifted the balance of power between the two conflicting superpowers. While policymakers in Washington found it possible to devote more American resources and strategic attention to dealing with the Soviet Union, Moscow's leaders, having to confront the West and China simultaneously, faced the prospect of overextension.

In a deeper sense, Beijing's cooperation with Washington and confrontation with Moscow changed the essence of the Cold War. Ever since its beginning in the mid- and late 1940s, the Cold War had been characterized

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2 See Sergey Radchenko's chapter in volume II.
6 For more detailed discussion, see Chen Jian, Mao's China and the Cold War (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 7-10, 247-48.
by a fundamental confrontation between Communism and liberal capitalism.\(^8\)

The Chinese–American rapprochement obscured the distinctions between socialist and capitalist paths toward modernity. The Sino-Soviet split buried the shared consciousness among Communists that government planning and command economies were a viable path to modernization.

Taking the Soviet threat as a shared concern, Beijing and Washington gradually moved toward a tacit strategic partnership. Although the two countries did not establish formal diplomatic relations until 1979, leaders from the two sides often consulted on political and even military issues throughout the 1970s.

In this evolving international environment, Mao introduced his "Three Worlds" theory. As early as the late 1940s, Mao had laid out a unique Intermediate Zone thesis. He argued that in postwar international politics there existed a vast intermediate zone that was not directly controlled by either of the two superpowers, yet was the main target of competition by both. He believed that China belonged to this zone, a position that he continued to hold even after the PRC entered a political and strategic alliance with the Soviet Union.\(^9\)

The collapse of the Sino-Soviet alliance and the mending of Sino-American relations provided Mao with the opportunity to develop a new theoretical framework that would not only make sense of the PRC's changed international policies but also provide crucial legitimacy to the Chinese chairman's fading notions of "continuous revolution" at home. In a series of talks with foreign visitors in 1973–74, Mao argued that the world had been divided into three. He told Kenneth Kaunda, president of Zambia, on February 22, 1974: "The [United States] and the Soviet Union belong to the First World. The middle elements, such as Japan, Europe, Australia and Canada, belong to the Second World. We are the Third World ... The [United States] and the Soviet Union have a lot of atomic bombs, and they are richer. Europe, Japan, Australia and Canada, of the Second World, do not possess so many atomic bombs and are not so rich as the First World, but richer than the Third World ... All Asian countries, except Japan, and all of Africa and also Latin America belong to the Third World."\(^10\) On April 10, 1974, Deng Xiaoping, head of the Chinese delegation attending the UN General Assembly, publicly presented Mao's "Three Worlds" notion, emphasizing that the Third World was formed by the vast majority of developing countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.\(^11\)

Both Mao's Intermediate Zone thesis and his Three Worlds theory challenged the existing world order. But the latter was not a simple repetition of the former. The Intermediate Zone thesis hinged on the discourse of "international class struggle." In comparison, economic development formed the primary concern of the Three Worlds theory. In presenting it, Mao still embraced the language of "class struggle." But as far as the theory's basic "problematique" was concerned, he already highlighted "development" as a question of fundamental importance for China and other Third World countries.

It may seem odd that Mao, who had championed a revolutionary agenda for so many years, put forward the development-oriented Three Worlds theory toward the end of his life. But this made sense given the profound desire on the part of the chairman and his generation of revolutionaries to make China strong and to revive its central position in the world. Ever since he had proclaimed atop the Gate of Heavenly Peace at the time of the PRC's formation that "we the Chinese people have stood up," Mao had legitimated his "revolution after revolution" by repeatedly emphasizing how his programs would change China into a country of "wealth and power." Thus, alongside his discourse on class struggle were campaigns like the Great Leap Forward that proclaimed the possibility and necessity of dramatically increasing China's speed of development. Even the Cultural Revolution adopted the slogan of "grasping revolution, promoting production." When the Chinese Communist regime was encountering an ever-deepening legitimacy crisis as the result of the economic stagnation and political repression that Mao's revolution had wrought, the chairman introduced the development-oriented Three Worlds theory to emphasize – first and foremost to the Chinese people – that China, as a key Third World country, would continue to play a central role in transforming the world. By doing so, however, Mao opened a door that he did not mean to open: although he never introduced a grand strategy of "reform and opening," when he assigned so much emphasis to "development" in the Three Worlds theory, he created the opportunity for his successors to adopt a new grand strategy that would take "development," rather than "revolution," as its central mission.

Not surprisingly, in the wake of the Chinese–American rapprochement, Beijing gradually moved away from its previous support of revolutions in

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\(^8\) See David Engerman's chapter in volume 1.


\(^10\) Mao Zedong on Diplomacy, 454.

\(^11\) Renmin ribao [People's Daily], April 11, 1974.
other countries. During the last stage of the American–Vietnamese talks in Paris for ending the Vietnam War, Beijing’s leaders urged their comrades in Hanoi to strike a deal with the Americans. Almost immediately after the signing of the Paris Accords, Beijing significantly reduced its military and other aid to Hanoi. In April 1975, against the background of impending Communist victories in Indochina, North Korean leader Kim Il Sung visited Beijing to try to gain China’s backing for his renewed aspirations to unify Korea through a “revolutionary war.” Beijing’s leaders demonstrated little interest in, let alone support of, Kim’s plans.

In the meantime, rapprochement with the United States facilitated changes in China’s development policies. In 1972–73, Beijing approved twenty-six projects that called for the import of new equipment and technologies from Western countries and Japan, amounting to $4.3 billion. Implementation of these projects represented a first major step toward bringing China into the world market dominated by Western capitalist countries. Although Mao never totally relinquished his hope of transforming China and the world in revolutionary ways, this notion eroded in the last years of his life. His decision to improve relations with the United States in the early 1970s made it politically feasible for his successors to pursue a course of opening to the outside world.

Deng’s rise and the reform and opening of China

Mao’s death in September 1976 immediately triggered the most dramatic power struggle in the history of the People’s Republic. Less than a month later, Hua Guofeng, Mao’s designated successor and China’s new leader, joined forces with several top CCP leaders to direct a coup that destroyed the “Gang of Four,” the Cultural Revolution radicals headed by Jiang Qing, Mao’s widow.

Deng Xiaoping, however, quickly replaced Hua and became China’s paramount leader. Mao had, in the last months of his life, ordered that Deng be purged from the party leadership for the second time in the Cultural Revolution. Despite Hua’s resistance, Deng—with the support of the army as well as the great majority of party officials—managed to reemerge in Beijing’s decisionmaking inner circle by late 1977. The most influential event in Deng’s ascendance happened in the ideological and theoretical field. After Mao’s death, for the purpose of consolidating his position as China’s top leader, Hua and some of his close associates proclaimed that “whatever policy Chairman Mao decided upon, we shall resolutely defend; whatever policy Chairman Mao opposed, we shall resolutely oppose.” On May 11, 1978, Guangming Daily, a party ideological organ, published an essay, “Practice Is the Sole Criteria by which to Judge Truth.” The essay argued that whether a theory represented the truth must be tested by practice. As the essay presented a serious challenge to the two “whatevers” notion, Hua and his associates tried to suppress this debate. However, it soon became clear that Deng was behind those who favored a new pragmatism based on empirical experience. He supported this new approach because it countered the assumptions and practices that Mao and his continuous revolution had imposed upon China. By late 1978, it was clear that Deng and his supporters had won the debate.

Deng’s victory paved the way for him to introduce the “reform and opening” policies at the Third Plenary Session of the CCP’s Eleventh Central Committee, held in Beijing on December 18–22, 1978. Deng redefined the party’s central mission by abandoning Maoist slogans such as “class struggle” and “continuous revolution.” Following his pragmatic “cat theory” — “black cat or white cat, so long as it catches mice, it is a good cat” — Deng emphasized the primacy of economics over politics. What was unleashed was a process that would transform China’s state and society, as well as its path toward modernity.

The “reform and opening” were first and foremost a derevolutionization process. While Mao’s revolutions were being abandoned at home, Beijing’s leaders decided to dramatically reduce and then completely stop China’s material support to Communist insurgencies abroad. Since the early 1950s, and especially during the Cultural Revolution, China had provided military and other support to Communist rebels in countries such as Burma, Malaya (Malaysia), and Thailand. The trend began to change after Nixon’s China visit. With the inauguration of the “reform and opening” policies, Beijing’s leaders decided that it was time for China to go further. In 1980, Beijing informed the Burmese Communists that China would terminate its aid over five years. In

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13 Mao’s talks with Kim, April 18, 1975, and Deng’s talks with Kim, April 20, 1975, CCP Central Archive, Beijing; see also Leng Rong and Wang Zuoling, et al., Deng Xiaoping niandu (A Chronological Record of Deng Xiaoping), 2 vols. (Beijing: Zhonggong weixian, 2004), I, 36-37.
14 Chen Jinghua, Guozi yishi [Recollections and Accounts of State Affairs] (Beijing: Zhonggong dangshi, 2003), ch. 1.
15 MacFarquhar and Schoenhals, Mao’s Last Revolution, 443-49.
16 Yang Meihong, Yingwu huagong: wo zai mingong shiwu nian (Red Poppy: My Fifteen Years with the Burmese Communist Party) (Hong Kong: Tiandi, 2001), 263-64.
December 1980, Deng told Chin Peng, the secretary general of the Malayan Communist Party, to stop the operation of the party’s radio station (which had been broadcasting from Chinese territory since the early 1970s). In Maoist discourse, revolutions were always closely associated with wars. When Beijing’s leaders abandoned revolution, they gradually changed their estimate of the danger of a new world war. Since the 1960s, Beijing had persistently claimed that, because of the existence of imperialism, a new world war could only be delayed, not averted. With the introduction of modernization programs, Deng concluded that “it is possible that there will be no large-scale war for a fairly long time to come and that there is hope of maintaining world peace.”

These developments changed China’s position in the world. Since its establishment in 1949, the People’s Republic had been a revolutionary country on the international scene. China constantly challenged the legitimacy of the existing international order, which Mao and his comrades believed to be the result of Western domination and thus inimical to revolutionary China. The logic of the “reform and opening” process meant that China would no longer behave as a revolutionary country internationally. This change, in turn, symbolized the beginning of a critical transition in China’s evolution from an outsider to an insider in the existing international system.

Not surprisingly, at the center of China’s “opening policies” was Beijing’s embrace of a more open approach toward the capitalist world market. Until the last years of the Maoist era, China maintained only limited exchanges with other countries. The twenty-six import projects adopted in the wake of Sino-American rapprochement opened China’s door to Western technology, yet they did not expose China to the world market. In particular, little change occurred in China’s Soviet-style planning economy.

The reform and opening policies of the late 1970s were much broader and deeper. They transformed China’s domestic economic structure and its international connections. Throughout the Maoist era, Chinese leaders saw markets and profits as alien to genuine socialism. Deng, by initiating the reform process in China, emphasized that everything should be done to promote productivity. “To get rich is glorious,” he said. Meanwhile, he and his colleagues significantly broadened the scope of China’s international connections. They sent Chinese students to study in Western countries and Japan.

Promoted China’s international trade with Western countries, and welcomed investments from abroad. When Deng and his fellow Chinese leaders were designing China’s path toward modernity, they looked to the West for models to formulate China’s development strategy. They repudiated their own experience with building socialism in the 1950s and 1960s, when they had wholeheartedly embraced a Soviet model—characterized by a rigid state-controlled planning system.

Alliance with Washington, war with Hanoi

In the context of Beijing’s market-oriented modernization drive, the strategic relationship between China and the United States developed continuously in the late 1970s. Nixon’s visit to China ended the total confrontation between the two countries. But they still did not have formal diplomatic relations. The Chinese leaders were told that Nixon would deal with this issue during his second term. However, the Watergate scandal made it impossible for Nixon to concentrate on improving relations. Still, in May 1973, China and the United States each established a liaison office in the other’s capital. During the presidency of Gerald R. Ford, issues such as the end of the Vietnam War, the lingering crisis in the Middle East, and the United States’ strategic negotiations with the Soviet Union attracted Washington’s main attention. Ford was also reluctant to try to establish formal diplomatic relations with Beijing because he was not ready to modify, suspend, or repudiate US ties with Taiwan.

Deng’s reforms happened at the same time that President Jimmy Carter was reassessing US relations with the PRC. While China’s new “opening” approach served as an important pulling force for Washington to improve relations with Beijing, the difficulties the Carter administration was having in concluding the strategic arms limitations talks (SALT II) with the Soviet Union created a strong push for US policymakers to turn their strategic attention to

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17 Chin Peng, My Side of History (Singapore: Media Masters, 2003), 497–98.
20 In November 1974, Deng specified three conditions as prerequisites for diplomatic relations between China and the United States: that the Americans must cut off diplomatic relations with Taiwan, abolish the US-Taiwan treaty of mutual defense, and withdraw all military forces from Taiwan. See Xue Mouhong, et al., Dangdai zhongguo waijiao [Contemporary Chinese Diplomacy] (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue, 1988), 226.
China. Zbigniew Brzezinski, Carter’s national security adviser, played a crucial role in shaping Washington’s policy. Carter shared Brzezinski’s vision. China was a core component of his global policy. “The United States and China,” he said, “share certain common interests and ... have parallel, long-term strategic concerns.” Carter thus emphasized that improving relations with China was, “an interest that is both fundamental and enduring.”

On the Chinese side, Deng regarded cooperation with the United States as highly compatible with both China’s international strategic interests and his modernization drive. From the beginning, Deng treated diplomatic relations with the United States as a top priority. As expected, the course of the negotiations was difficult – especially because of the complexities surrounding the Taiwan issue. In December 1978, the two sides reached agreement on most questions. The only matter that remained unsolved was whether Beijing would agree that, after the establishment of diplomatic relations, the United States would pause for one year – rather than discontinue permanently – “restrained sale of selective defensive arms” to Taiwan. On December 13, on the eve of an important CCP Central Committee meeting, Deng made the crucial decision that Beijing would concede to the United States on this last issue. This concession paved the way for the two sides to announce on December 15 that formal diplomatic relations between the People’s Republic and the United States would be established on January 1, 1979.

On December 15, Beijing and Washington also announced that Deng Xiaoping would visit the United States in early 1979. This would be the first time in the history of the People’s Republic that a top Chinese leader visited the United States. Deng was determined to make sure that the visit, which occurred on January 29–February 4, 1979, would be a success. Deng talked to Carter about global and regional strategic issues. A crucial topic was Soviet support for Vietnam’s invasion of Cambodia. Deng emphasized that Vietnam was behaving like a “regional hegemon,” and asked for Carter’s advice on – in fact for his support for – Beijing’s plans to use military force “to teach the Vietnamese a lesson.” In a handwritten letter, Carter told Deng that Beijing should not use military means to deal with Hanoi. However, Washington’s actions pointed in another direction: it shared with Beijing strategically important intelligence information on the deployment of Soviet military forces along the Soviet-Chinese border, as well as on Vietnam’s military operations in Cambodia and on its border with China. During Deng’s visit, the Chinese and American leaders also discussed cooperation between the two countries in new areas, including strategic affairs. They concluded their talks with the signing of agreements regarding science, technology, and cultural exchanges between China and the United States.

The establishment of Chinese-American diplomatic relations served the interests of both governments. For Deng, the pursuit of cooperation with the United States was an integral part of his “reform and opening” policies. Deng understood that, so long as China wanted access to the US-dominated world market, it would have to pursue a partnership with the United States. For Carter, China was a potential strategic partner in containing the growing Soviet threat. Policymakers in Washington felt that, in Southeast Asia, Angola,
in Ethiopia, and Afghanistan, Moscow and its allies—such as Cuba and Vietnam—were on the offensive, putting greater pressure on vital US strategic interests. By tilting toward Beijing in the Sino-Soviet rift, Brzezinski contended, the United States would serve its own interests. In the context of China’s modernization drive and its strengthened strategic partnership with the United States, China’s relations with Japan also experienced major improvements. In 1972, only months after Nixon’s visit to Beijing, China and Japan established formal diplomatic relations. In 1978, Beijing and Tokyo signed a treaty of friendship and mutual cooperation, in which both countries agreed to work together to prevent the emergence of a dominant power in the Asia-Pacific region. In the late 1970s, Japan was the first among all major industrial/capitalist countries to provide China with substantial technological and financial support.

While the collaboration between China and the United States and other capitalist countries was being strengthened, China’s confrontation with the Soviet Union continued. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Vietnam’s invasion of Cambodia and China’s punitive war against Vietnam combined with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan brought Sino-Soviet relations to their lowest point since 1969. Moreover, the Chinese–Vietnamese conflict and Soviet occupation of Afghanistan became the two most difficult issues blocking the improvement of Sino-Soviet relations until the late 1980s, when the global Cold War was already approaching its end.

In a general sense, China’s road away from revolution greatly reduced the degree of outside threat to China’s international security interests as perceived by Beijing’s leaders. Therefore, China’s modernization drive should also have served as a powerful reason for Beijing to improve its relations with Moscow. In the late 1970s, China started improving its relationship with several countries of the Soviet bloc, including Poland, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary. What made the improvement of Chinese–Soviet relations much more difficult was the deteriorating relationship between China and the unified Vietnam. Chinese and Vietnamese Communists were close allies during the First Indochina War and most of the Second Indochina War.

Beginning in the late 1960s, however, relations between the two Communist allies had begun to deteriorate. After the Vietnamese Communists unified the whole country in 1975, hostility quickly developed between Beijing and Hanoi, eventually leading to a major border war in early 1979. On February 17, 1979, Chinese troops started a large-scale invasion of Vietnam to “teach the Vietnamese a lesson.” After hard fighting and heavy casualties, the Chinese troops seized Lang Son and Cai Bang, two strategically important border towns. Instead of pushing forward, Beijing announced that Chinese troops would begin to return to China. The confrontation between Chinese and Vietnamese troops, however, did not stop with the withdrawal of the former. Throughout the 1980s, the borders between the two countries constituted areas of protracted warfare.

Several factors underlay the prolonged confrontation between Beijing and Hanoi: historically, relations between China and Vietnam had been conflictual; geopolitically, Hanoi’s deep involvement in Laos and Cambodia caused Beijing to suspect that the Vietnamese intended to establish their own regional hegemony in Indochina; politically, Hanoi’s discrimination against ethnic Chinese living in Vietnam fueled the enmity; and, strategically, Beijing resented Hanoi’s alignment with the Kremlin on China’s southern periphery, and Hanoi disliked Beijing’s rapprochement with Washington.

In an even deeper sense, the reasons for Beijing’s continued confrontation with Hanoi—and, in the background, with the Soviet Union—were not international, but profoundly domestic. Deng made the decision to “teach the Vietnamese a lesson” during the Third Plenary Session, the same session that approved Deng’s reform programs. From his perspective, the decision to go to war provided him with a highly valuable opportunity to consolidate his control of China’s military and political power and to crush any possible opposition to his position as China’s paramount leader. The confrontation with Vietnam enabled Deng to capitalize on the patriotism of the Chinese people. Throughout the 1980s, popular literature, movies, and music extolled the People’s Liberation Army (PLA’s) struggle against the ungrateful Vietnamese and inspired a campaign of domestic mobilization to foster “love of the socialist motherland.” At a time when the reform and opening policies were creating profound economic inequality within Chinese society and stirring unrest, the confrontation with Vietnam—and Beijing’s representation of it to the Chinese people—served to mobilize the support of ordinary Chinese for the regime in Beijing.

In late December 1979, Soviet troops invaded Afghanistan, signifying a major turning point in the development of the Cold War. The invasion

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26 Brzezinski, Power and Principle, 419.
28 China already had good relations with Romania and Yugoslavia in the 1970s.
shattered US-Soviet détente and increased the Kremlin’s strategic overextension. It also greatly deepened the suspicion and hostility between Beijing and Moscow, and offered a new reason for Beijing and Washington to establish closer relations.

Immediately after Soviet troops marched into Afghanistan, Beijing’s leaders denounced the invasion and prepared to deal with its consequences. Deng stated that the Soviet invasion demonstrated Moscow’s desire to achieve “worldwide hegemony” and created threats of the most serious nature for the peace and security of Asia as well as for the whole world. On January 10, 1980, a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson announced that the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan created a new barrier to improved relations between Beijing and Moscow. Then, having just reestablished its membership in the International Olympic Committee, the Chinese government decided that Beijing would join a group of countries — mostly Western and capitalist — in boycotting the Olympic Games in Moscow scheduled for the summer of 1980.

Thus, in the wake of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, China’s rift with the Soviet Union continued. Throughout the 1980s, Beijing provided substantial military and other support to Pakistan and, largely through Pakistan, to the resistance forces in Afghanistan. In March 1982, Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev announced that he did not intend to threaten China; in fact, he hoped to improve relations. Deng did not oppose Soviet overtures, but he also believed that Moscow needed to prove its good intentions. For Sino-Soviet relations to improve, Deng said, Moscow had to reduce its military forces on the Soviet-Chinese and Mongolian-Chinese borders, withdraw from Afghanistan, and encourage Vietnamese troops to leave Cambodia.

In the meantime, shared interests in containing Soviet expansion in Afghanistan allowed Beijing and Washington to develop a cooperative relationship (although on a limited scale) in the military and security spheres. In January 1980, right after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, US secretary of defense Harold Brown visited China. In May 1980, Chinese defense minister Geng Biao visited the United States. Several months later, Washington had approved “export licenses for some 400 items in the area of advanced technology in military support equipment.”

The depth of the new Chinese-American strategic cooperation was tested after Ronald Reagan was elected president in November 1980. As a conservative politician who had long voiced a strong commitment to Taiwan, Reagan claimed during his presidential campaign that if elected he would restore the United States’ “official diplomatic relationship” with Taiwan. But when he became president, Reagan took a conciliatory approach toward China. While calling the Soviet Union an “evil empire,” he viewed the PRC as a useful partner in the American mission to contain the expansion of Soviet power. On August 17, 1982, China and the United States signed a joint communiqué, in which the United States confirmed that it would “reduce gradually its sales of arms to Taiwan, leading over a period of time to a final resolution.”

By the mid-1980s, the Soviet Union was a superpower in decline, and China contributed in crucial ways to Moscow’s problems. In a strategic sense, Beijing’s partnership with Washington and its continued confrontation with Moscow completely altered the balance of power between the two superpowers. More importantly, China’s market-oriented reforms destroyed Moscow’s claims that Communism remained a viable alternative to capitalism. Beijing’s repudiation of the Soviet model discouraged other Third World countries from thinking that Communism could serve as an exemplary model for achieving modernity. Since the Cold War from its inception had been a global struggle between two contrasting ideological and social systems, the new course embraced by China obscured the distinctions between the two sides and favored the capitalist world. The Soviet Union and its allies found it increasingly more difficult to sustain the course of the Cold War.

The Tiananmen tragedy of 1989 and the end of the Cold War

Throughout the 1980s, China’s reform and opening process developed continuously. In September 1980, after an experimental period, CCP leaders adopted a “family-based responsibility system” in the Chinese countryside, thereby undermining the People’s Communes that had existed in China since the late 1950s. The peasants were given greater freedom to produce and sell agricultural products. At about the same time, four special economic development zones were established in coastal cities, where policies to attract international investment were implemented. Reform measures were also introduced in state-owned enterprises, removing the tight controls on the state planning system and making productivity and profits the central goals of production.
In addition, the Chinese government allowed privately owned businesses and Chinese–foreign jointly owned ventures to coexist with state-owned enterprises. In 1982, the party's Twelfth Congress pointed out that multiple forms of ownership should be allowed "for the promotion of socialist economic reconstruction."34 In 1987, the party's Thirteenth Congress further emphasized that cooperative businesses, individual businesses, and privately owned businesses should all be encouraged to develop. China also carried out several price reforms in the 1980s, mainly for the purpose of removing state subsidies on commodities, so that the market rather than state plans would determine prices.35

The new policies generated rapid growth in the Chinese economy and resulted in profound changes in Chinese society. But the legacies of China's age of revolution were deep and influential. The CCP's one-party reign did not change. Indeed, the reform and opening were highly unbalanced from the beginning: emphasis had been almost exclusively placed on economic initiatives, leaving aside politics and ideology. Despite China's abandoning of Maoist discourses, since the late 1970s the CCP leadership had repeatedly called on the party to fight against "bourgeois liberalization," warning ordinary Chinese that they should boycott the "spiritual pollution" of Western influence.

But Chinese society was changing. The mid 1980s witnessed a new tide of "cultural fever" in China's intellectual life. Like the Chinese intellectuals of the early twentieth century, many educated Chinese in the mid- and late 1980s became increasingly frustrated with the reality that China's reform and opening were restricted to technology and the economy. Many intellectuals, using cultural criticism as a weapon, wanted to reform the sphere of politics and cultural politics. The political agenda of the "cultural fever" was epitomized in a television series, Heshang (River Elegy). Tracing the origins of China's backwardness in modern times to the early development of Chinese civilization, Heshang's writers emphasized the importance of transforming China's authoritarian political culture.36

35 Su Xing, Xin zhongguo jingji shi (An Economic History of the New China) (Beijing: Zhonggong zhongyang dangxiao, 1990), 735-49.
of political participation did not vanish. Entering 1989, they grew more deeply concerned about the future of China.

Although China’s domestic situation was heading toward a crisis, its international status was better than it had been since the PRC’s establishment. Chinese-American relations developed smoothly in the second half of the 1980s. Beijing’s leaders welcomed George H. W. Bush’s election as president of the United States. Many of them had known Bush since his time as the director of the US liaison office in Beijing in the mid-1970s. Bush did not disappoint his old friends in Beijing. In February 1989, shortly after he became president, he visited China. Deng proposed to Bush that, in addition to their relationship in the strategic field, China and the United States should “mutually trust and mutually support” each other in additional areas. China’s relations with Japan and with many other Western countries also improved in the 1980s, especially as China’s market reforms presented these countries with bright prospects for investing in and doing business with China.

Even China’s relationship with the Soviet Union showed signs of improvement. Mikhail Gorbachev, the new Soviet leader, wanted to restructure and nurture progressive change in the Soviet Union. He sought better relations with Western countries and with China. Seeing that Moscow had substantially reduced its military deployment along its border with China and that Soviet leaders were seeking to withdraw troops from Afghanistan, Deng deemphasized these two matters as preconditions for a Sino-Soviet rapprochement. On October 9, 1985, Deng asked the Romanian leader Nicolae Ceaușescu to convey a message to Gorbachev: “If the Soviet Union reach[ed] agreement with us on Vietnam’s withdrawal from Cambodia and [took] due action,” he would be willing to meet with Gorbachev to discuss how to improve relations between China and the Soviet Union.

From 1986 to 1989, Beijing and Moscow conducted a series of political negotiations to resolve problems and pave the way for a Chinese-Soviet rapprochement. In January 1989, Hanoi announced that all Vietnamese troops would withdraw from Cambodia by September. On February 6, 1989, the Chinese and Soviet governments issued a nine-point statement, emphasizing that the two sides would strive for a just and reasonable resolution of the Cambodia issue, and that withdrawal of Vietnamese troops from Cambodia would form an important part of the solution. Against this background, Beijing and Moscow agreed that Gorbachev would visit China on May 15–18 for a summit with Deng and other Chinese leaders. After more than two decades of confrontation, the two largest Communist countries in the world were beginning to cooperate in international affairs.

But time was not on the side of international Communism. Gorbachev faced great challenges in domestic affairs, and so did Deng. In March 1989, after a series of protests in Lhasa, the capital of the Tibetan Autonomous Region, the city was placed under martial law. On April 15, Hu Yaobang, the reform-minded party leader who had been ousted after the 1986 student movement, suddenly passed away. Students in Beijing quickly turned the mourning of Hu into a public expression of their frustration and anger over widespread corruption and political stagnation. When the party’s propaganda machine, with Deng’s approval, accused the students of being incited by provocateurs, the students responded with more protests. Beginning on May 13, students from universities all over Beijing and many other parts of the country started a hunger strike at Tiananmen Square, which later evolved into a mass occupation of this space in the center of the capital. On May 20, martial law was declared in Beijing. However, the students at the square and the people in Beijing angrily defied the authorities, leading to a standoff. Deng
and other party elders decided to use troops to crack down. On June 3–4, PLA soldiers fought their way into the square, attacked the students, and killed an unknown number of them as well as other Beijing residents.42 The tragedy of Tiananmen stunned the entire world.

Ironically, the rapprochement between Beijing and Moscow ensured that the tragedy of Tiananmen would be widely covered by the international media. Gorbachev’s official visit to Beijing had attracted extensive media attention. In addition to reporting on the Sino-Soviet summit, however, several hundred reporters covered the standoff between the students and the government, as well as the bloody crackdown on June 3–4. When millions of viewers in different parts of the world saw on television a young Chinese man standing in front of a moving tank to stop its advance, they were shocked. This was a defining moment for the fall of international Communism.

In China, the Tiananmen tragedy did not put an end to the reform and opening process. After a short period of stagnation, the reform process regained momentum in 1992, when Deng used a dramatic tour of southern China to revive his reform ideas and practices. But the Soviet Union and the Soviet bloc did not survive. In December 1989, the Berlin Wall, which had existed as the real and symbolic dividing line between East and West for almost three decades, was destroyed. The same month, Romania’s Communist dictator Ceaușescu and his wife were executed after they tried but failed to use military force to suppress mass protests in Bucharest. Two years later, on August 19, 1991, a military coup staged by a group of hard-line Communist leaders occurred in Moscow. However, the coup was quickly defeated. The coup leaders hesitated to repress the resistance because the "jarring effect" of the Tiananmen tragedy lingered in their minds.43 This, then, became another defining moment in twentieth-century history, a moment that led to the collapse of the Soviet Union and the entire Communist bloc in Eastern Europe in a few short months. As a consequence, the global Cold War ended. Although the conflict started and finished in Europe, the great transformations that China experienced from the late 1960s to the early 1990s formed a unique and integral part of the Cold War’s final denouement.

42 The Chinese government announced that thirty-six people died on June 3–4. The unofficial death toll provided by survivors and international observers, however, is several hundred or more.

The Cold War in Central America, 1975–1991

John H. Coatsworth

The strategic stalemate that prevented a direct military conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union displaced violent superpower competition to areas of the Third World where the two blocs could invest in local and regional wars without risking direct confrontation. The Soviet Union tended to approach such conflicts cautiously even when they involved other Communist states.1 The United States, by contrast, adapted its security policies to a containment doctrine that defined the political complexion of every non-Communist government in the world as a matter of potential strategic interest. Local opposition to foreign rule in the US and European colonial empires, and social movements aiming to displace traditional elites elsewhere, confronted a strong US preference for reliably anti-Communist (and thus conservative to right-wing) regimes. Even moderate to conservative regimes that sought to advance national interests by constraining US influence came under assault from Washington. Governments that collaborated closely with the United States often had to ignore or suppress local interests opposed to US policies.

In its prosecution of the Cold War in the Third World, the United States enjoyed formidable advantages over its Soviet rival. Economic strength gave US leaders a decided financial and material advantage over the Soviets. Military bases projected US power into regions bordering on Communist states throughout the world. US ideological and cultural assets also helped. Alliances with local elites eager to reduce domestic challenges proved especially helpful. The United States deployed all of these resources in response to perceived affronts to its regime and policy preferences wherever they occurred. The Soviet Union and its allies worked assiduously to overcome...