

Lecture 11 - Lecture Notes - Mao's China, Taiwan, and the Sino-Soviet Split (1949 – 1972) - History of International Politics (East Asia focus)

Course Leader: Dr. Senan Fox

Telephone number: 264 -5764

Email Address: senanfox@staff.kanazawa-u.ac.jp

Room: Room 309 (General Education Hall - GEH) - (総合教育 1 号館)

Consultation Times (Office Hour): Please email Senan Fox in advance if you wish to meet to discuss your work and studies.

NOTE: The following lecture notes are largely based on the class textbook – Warren Cohen (2000), 'East Asia at the Center – Four Thousand Years of Engagement with the World', New York: Columbia University Press.

Lecture Title: Mao's China, Taiwan, and the Sino-Soviet Split (1949 – 1972)

Taiwan

When the Korean War ended in July 1953, the main areas of Cold War tension in East Asia were most **apparent** in Vietnam, and between communist China and the United States, particularly over the issue of Taiwan (officially known as **the Republic of China - ROC**). After the Chinese Civil War (1927 – 1950), the defeated nationalists led by Chiang Kai-shek had **fled** to Taiwan where they established a new government that was committed to fighting communism and the influence of Beijing. As a result, the Taiwan **Strait**, which separates Mainland China and Taiwan, was one of the most dangerous **flashpoints** in East Asia. As we discussed in Week 10, the People's Republic of China (PRC), established in October 1949, had developed a **reputation** as a **formidable** enemy against the US and its allies during the Korean conflict (1950 – 1953). A negative consequence for Beijing of the PRC's **intervention** in the Korean War however was that Washington committed the USA to the protection and defense of Chiang Kai-shek's nationalist KMT (Kuomintang) regime in Taiwan. By 1953 therefore, the US was Taiwan's most powerful ally, and was, from Chairman Mao Zedong's **perspective**, the number one obstacle to the complete **re-unification** of the Chinese **motherland** and a **conclusive** end to the civil war.

Harry S. Truman's term as US President ended in January 1953. Truman was **succeeded** by **Dwight D. Eisenhower**, who **presided** over an **administration** (from 1953 to 1961) that was deeply anti-communist and **hostile** to any **soft line** towards Beijing. Post-1953, Washington focused on isolating and weakening the Chinese communist regime, and hopefully replacing it with Chiang Kai-shek's nationalists. After the outbreak of the Korean War in June 1950, Washington ordered American warships to sail to and defend **the Taiwan Strait** from any possible invasion attempt by Mao's mainland communist forces. The Americans would maintain a naval presence in the Strait for almost the next two decades. After late 1953, Chiang Kai-shek attempted to pressure Washington into signing a formal mutual defense treaty with Taiwan **along the lines of** an earlier defense treaty signed between the US and

South Korea in October 1953 (see the US-Republic of Korea (ROK) Mutual Defense Treaty). **The White House** feared being **drawn into** another major war over Taiwan and upsetting some of the US' European allies who distrusted Chiang. The Americans therefore chose not to sign a formal and official treaty. Instead the US **opted** to contain communism via organizations such as **the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO)**, which was founded in 1954, and via financial and **materiel** aid to Taipei.

Seeing an opportunity to secure the PRC's objectives **vis-à-vis** Taiwan before any formal alliance between the USA and the ROC, or any further strengthening of Taiwan's position, Mao Zedong decided to **trigger** a crisis in the Taiwan Strait. In September 1954, **People's Liberation Army (PLA)** forces based on Mainland China's coastline began firing **artillery shells** upon KMT-controlled islands in the Taiwan Strait (see **the First Taiwan Strait Crisis** of September 1954 to May 1955, and the Matsu, Quemoy (Kinmen), and Tachen Islands). Beijing's objective was to **intimidate** Washington by displaying their **resolve** to use force in advance of the US and Taiwan possibly signing a defense treaty, and to warn the Americans that such an alliance could lead to a major conflict. The PLA attacked and took control of a number of KMT-**administered** smaller islands off the Chinese coast. Mao however failed in securing his **ultimate** objective. In fact, the PLA's activities were **counter-productive**. Instead of preventing the signing of a new defense treaty, Beijing's actions encouraged Washington to agree to an alliance in order to prevent any further attacks against Taiwan and its surrounding islands (see **the US-ROC Mutual Defense Treaty** of December 1954). The US also strengthened its military presence and capabilities in the region in response. The American military's **Joint Chiefs of Staff** had also suggested using nuclear weapons to defeat the Chinese if necessary but the White House rejected the idea. Chiang Kai-shek's government also held control over numerous coastal islands such as Quemoy (Kinmen), Matsu, and the Penghu (the Pescadores), which were regarded by both Taipei and Washington as essential to both the defense and **morale** of Taiwan. Surprised by the American response, Beijing stopped shelling KMT territory in May 1955 and then commenced negotiations to address the Taiwan issue with Washington.

In August 1955, talks between the PRC and the USA began **in earnest**. After some initial progress on the issue of the **repatriation** of Chinese and American citizens **displaced** by the Korean War, the talks collapsed on the critical issue of Taiwan. Washington insisted that the Chinese permanently **renounce** the use of force against the island before they would agree to a **settlement** with the communist regime. Beijing however argued that Taiwan was an island province and an **integral** part of the PRC, and **as such** the communist government had a right to use force to finally unify all of China. Despite this, the Beijing leadership argued that even though force was a right, it was not a necessity because a peaceful re-unification was possible and more desirable. The Americans were **unconvinced**, and were determined to pressure Beijing to accept complete independence for Taiwan, or at least a political arrangement that recognized '**two Chinas**' or '**one China, one Taiwan**' (within one historical China.) It is important to note that neither the PRC nor the ROC recognized the **sovereignty** of the other state, and regarded their own **respective** governments as the only **legitimate** government that represented all of China. Both were committed to

reuniting the country under a communist or a nationalist regime. Benefitting from US and Western diplomatic support, China's **seat** in the **United Nations (UN)** and on the **United Nations Security Council (UNSC)**, was also occupied by Taiwan from 1945 until 1971. The anti-communist states of the world only recognized the Republic of China (Taiwan) as the **sole** representative for the Chinese nation.

Beijing's attempts to continue the talks following the First Taiwan Crisis (September 1954 – May 1955) were **turned down** by the Americans who **pulled out** of **bilateral** discussions in late 1957. From the mid-1950s, the US provided financial and materiel assistance to KMT forces who engaged in small-scale attacks on the Chinese mainland. As a result, Beijing **ceased** attempting to find **a middle ground** on Taiwan with Washington. The Soviet Union was China's most powerful ally and by 1957, Mao also felt confident that the rise of Soviet military power as well as initial Soviet **superiority** in **the Space Race** (1957 – 1975) could **deter** an effective US response to a second crisis in Taiwan. Viewing an **opportune** moment to strike again as the US appeared distracted by a potential civil war in the Lebanon, in August 1958, Mao ordered his forces to bomb the island of Quemoy (Kinmen) and Matsu and to harass shipping around other small KMT-controlled islands off the Chinese coast. Beijing had deliberately started a second crisis (see **the Second Taiwan Strait Crisis** of August to October 1958). Once again Beijing was surprised by the American response. Almost immediately, Washington ordered its naval forces to assist and re-supply KMT forces on Quemoy. KMT airplanes with US supplied missiles allowed Chiang's forces to **dominate** the air over the Taiwan Strait. As with the First Taiwan Strait Crisis in 1954-55, Washington also discussed the possibility of using nuclear weapons to defeat the Chinese if they advanced further upon Taiwanese territory. The US had helped its ally Taiwan, and the PRC likewise expected the Soviet Union to assist the Chinese military in their campaign. Moscow however refused to be drawn into a potential conflict. Beijing once again had no option but to pull its forces back and to cease military attacks on the offshore KMT-controlled islands. On this occasion however, Mao won a **concession** whereby the KMT government assured Beijing and a concerned diplomatic community that the nationalists' objective of ending communist rule in Mainland China would not require the use of force. America's Western allies had grown increasingly concerned that a major and potentially nuclear conflict could break out as a result of a **skirmish** over tiny islands. The second Taiwan Strait crisis thus created tension between the US and its allies, including between Washington and Taipei. Following the crisis, Beijing claimed victory for the PRC and defended his actions but stated that the PLA would **refrain** from occupying the tiny islands at the center of the crisis because they did not want to assist Washington's 'desire' to reinforce a two Chinas policy by **severing** ties between mainland China and Taiwan.

The Sino-Soviet Split (1959 – 1989)

A major consequence of the Second Taiwan Strait Crisis of 1958 was that it **exacerbated frictions** between Moscow and Beijing. The two countries had been formal allies since 1950 under the **Sino-Soviet Alliance**. After Joseph Stalin's death in March 1953, the Chinese recovered complete control over Manchuria after decades of foreign interference in that area. Beijing however remained angry about the Soviet rejection of PRC claims to Mongolia, and the Soviet **exploitation** of Manchurian

resources and assets after **WWII**. The Chinese also **resented** the **terms** of Moscow's economic and technical assistance to the **fledgling** PRC (established in 1949). A notable example was the Soviet insistence that the Chinese pay for help and materiel provided to PRC military forces during the Korean War (1950 – 1953). In addition, Beijing was suspicious about Moscow's request to place military advisers, and for **submarine** basing rights and a radio station for submarine communications on Chinese territory. By the late 1950s, Mao and senior **Chinese Communist Party (CCP) cadres** had come to view the USSR's foreign policy stance towards the United States as too moderate and cautious (see for example 'Peaceful Co-existence'). Beijing was likewise disappointed by the new approach taken by the new Soviet leadership after Stalin's death, in particular **Nikita Khrushchev's de-Stalinization** program (after the mid-1950s). In the opinion of many top PRC elites, especially Chairman Mao, who regarded himself as the new leader of the communist world and who **espoused 'Maoism'**, the post-Stalin era Soviets were abandoning their traditional Marxist-Leninist **revolutionary** and **ideological principles**.

The number one issue in the increasing tensions between the Chinese and the Soviets was Moscow's calls on Beijing to soften its foreign policies **so as** not to provoke the United States. Following the Soviet Union's refusal to provide major assistance to the PRC during the 1958 Taiwan Strait crisis, Mao Zedong became convinced that Moscow was **indifferent** to China's security and strategic interests, and was no longer a reliable ally in the event of conflict with the USA. To add to Beijing's frustration with the Soviets, Nikita Khrushchev tried to persuade Mao to accept the US-supported 'two Chinas' policy, which would mean in effect to give up on reuniting Taiwan with the mainland. The Chinese felt **highly offended** by the suggestion. From the late 1950s onwards, Sino-Soviet relations began to rapidly **deteriorate**. Arguments between the Soviets and the Chinese over each other's ideological **credentials** and commitments dramatically escalated, and in 1959 and 1960 Beijing and Moscow **clashed** openly on **the world stage** over approaches to the US and ideological differences. Concerned with the perceived threat to global security represented by Mao, and outraged by China's criticism of the USSR, Khrushchev **recalled** Soviet technical experts (who played a vital role in China's development) from the PRC. The USSR also made unsuccessful attempts to **sabotage** the PRC's nuclear weapons program. By the early 1960s, the Sino-Soviet alliance of 1950 had fallen apart (see **the Sino-Soviet Split** of 1959 to 1989). Bilateral relations were hostile, and communist China was even more isolated within the diplomatic community as a result.

Beijing's problems were **compounded** by skirmishes and then the outbreak of conflict with India over the issue of where exactly the border between the two states rested (see **Aksai Chin** and **Arunachal Pradesh**). The disputed territory in question was in the Himalayan mountain areas and virtually **uninhabitable**. The Chinese and the Indians had never agreed on a definite and official border, and used maps showing different boundaries between the two countries. When the PRC constructed a major Xinjiang to Tibet roadway through an area claimed by India, the Indians were outraged. In 1959, the Indian government had also angered Beijing by granting **political asylum** to **the Dalai Lama** and thousands of his supporters following an anti-PRC **uprising** in Tibet (see **the Tibetan Rebellion of 1959**). Despite India's explanation of the act as a **humanitarian** gesture, the move was seen by the CCP as interference in the PRC's internal affairs and a gesture of sympathy for the Tibetan

independence movement. Chinese and Indian military forces first exchanged gunfire in August 1959 and then experienced **sporadic** clashes and skirmishes until the middle of 1962 when the Indian army took measures to establish an Indian presence within the disputed border area. In October 1962, the Indian army entered PRC territory in Tibet in a move perceived as **expansionist** by China. Beijing responded by ordering the PLA to attack Indian forces in the area in November 1962. As a result, the Chinese successfully drove the Indians out of all disputed territories along the **frontier** (see **the Sino-Indian War** of 1962). After that defeat, the humiliated Indians looked towards the USA and the USSR for help and assistance in **retrieving** the lost disputed territory. Both **superpowers** were rivals for influence in India. When Soviet **Premier** Khrushchev expressed doubt about China's version of the events that led to the 1962 border conflict (as well as showing sympathy for Tibet), Beijing was once again outraged by the Soviet Union's apparent **betrayal** of China, its former ally. In the early 1960s, the PRC had very poor relations with the USA, the USSR, and India.

China's Domestic Problems

In addition to some very difficult and major foreign policy challenges, Mao Zedong also had to deal with serious problems on the domestic **front**. Within the CCP elite, Chairman Mao's once unquestioned leadership position was undermined as a result of these domestic and foreign challenges. Following the establishment of the PRC in 1949, the communist party elites agreed on a program of reform in a number of key areas including land reform, the economy, and China's culture and society. Land reform was a very important **component** in winning support for the communists amongst China's rural poor. Attacks on the country's wealthy classes as well as landowners (who were labeled as 'greedy **capitalists**' and '**bourgeois traitors**') also won support from **the masses** even though these attacks had a negative effect on the PRC's economy. The communist Chinese had also adopted the Soviet model of economic development for the PRC's economy. As the 1950s progressed however, Mao's government had to deal with deep divisions concerning the reform of China's society and economy. People began to question the pace and direction of change within China as well as the influence of intellectuals on the new state. In 1957, as more party members had become **disillusioned** with the direction of Mao-**inspired** reforms, Mao launched the so-called '**Hundred Flowers**' campaign, which gave intellectuals and other **citizens** the opportunity to criticize the Party, **ostensibly** for the purpose of learning from their criticism, and improving China as a result. For several weeks after the campaign's launch, numerous Chinese intellectuals came forward to criticize the government. The campaign however **backfired** on both Mao and those people who had publicly **aired** their opinions. **Conservative-minded** party elites were horrified by the campaign, and privately **denounced** Mao for initiating it. Fearing a weakening in party discipline, **far-left** communist elites called for strong **disciplinary** action to be taken against those who had criticized the regime. Thousands of intellectuals and other citizens were labeled as 'rightists' and severely punished with jail sentences in prison labor camps (for **re-education programs**) and in some cases, death. Chairman Mao, having initially supported the 'Hundred Flowers' campaign now **distanced** himself from it and exploited it to punish and **imprison** hundreds of thousands of potential anti-government **dissidents** (see **the Anti-Rightist Movement**).

The ‘Great Leap Forward’ (1958 – 1961)

Alongside the failure of the ‘Hundred Flowers’ campaign in the political and cultural **spheres** in the economic field, there was a disastrous ‘**Great Leap Forward**’ campaign (from 1958 to 1961). The ‘Great Leap Forward’ was a highly ambitious and economic policy based around achieving rapid advancement in agricultural and industrial production through the **mobilization** of China’s people. The campaign demanded the **abolition** of private land **holdings**, and the creation of massive agricultural **communes** that were supervised by the state (see **collectivization**). Millions of **backyard furnaces** were built, and ordinary **unskilled** Chinese people were asked to spend many hours collecting and **melting down** all available **scrap** iron and steel (including **household** pots, pans, and other kitchen **utensils**) so as to increase China’s iron and steel production levels. Any available wood and timber was collected to fuel the furnaces, and as a result many areas of China suffered environmental damage such as **drought** and **erosion** due to a lack of trees (**deforestation**). The backyard produced iron and steel was of too poor a quality to be used **efficiently**. The abolition of private land holdings was very unpopular and had a devastating effect on the ability of poor Chinese peasants to avoid **starvation**. As a result of the campaign, hundreds of millions of rural Chinese had nothing to rent, sell, or to use as **collateral** with which to secure loans. In addition to demands for higher iron and steel production, the communist leadership in Beijing ordered that Chinese peasants produce more and more grain so as to feed the country’s urban population and to add to the PRC’s **treasury** via the export of grain. Under pressure and **overzealous** party bosses from different villages and towns in the countryside competed with one another to impress central government. As a consequence, they placed **crippling** demands on the rural poor who were forced to work **excessive** hours in a **vain** attempt to satisfy unrealistic iron, steel, and grain **quotas**. The **fanatic** commitment to iron and steel production meant that often **harvests** were left uncollected or left to **rot**. **Exorbitant** grain quotas and local party heads exaggerating the amount produced also resulted in the vast majority of available grain being exported away from the countryside with **insufficient** amounts of food remaining for the rural poor. This food shortage was made worse by a devastating **locust swarm**, which left even less food for the Chinese peasantry (see also **the Great Sparrow Campaign** or **the Four Pests Campaign**). As a consequence of the **dire** food shortages caused by the ‘Great Leap Forward’, between fifteen and forty-five million Chinese died of famine and starvation (see the ‘**Great Chinese Famine**’ from 1958 to 1961). The failures of the ‘Hundred Flowers’, the ‘Great Leap Forward’, and other attempts at reform (in addition to foreign policy **crises**) meant that by the early 1960s, serious divisions between Mao and other senior Party leaders over government policies were more **apparent**. These failures helped to undermine faith amongst the party elite in Mao’s capacity to effectively lead the PRC. Senior CCP elites such as **Liu Shaoqi**, **Deng Xiaoping**, and **Peng Dehuai** feared that Chairman Mao might lead the country to disaster while others saw an opportunity to increase their power and influence within the party. When the ‘Great Leap Forward’ campaign ended in 1961, Mao’s position and **standing** within the Chinese leadership was at its weakest since the establishment of the PRC in 1949.

The Cultural Revolution (1966 – 1976)

These divisions within the CCP were still **evident** in the mid-1960s even though China had recovered from the ‘Great Leap Forward’ and economic progress had **resumed**. In an attempt to restore popular support for his leadership and to undermine potential challengers, Mao initiated the ‘**Cultural Revolution**’ (1966 – 1976). The Cultural Revolution was a mass social experiment whereby Mao and his supporters (including his **notorious** wife **Jiang Qing**) sought to **rekindle** revolutionary **fervor** and to **purify** the communist party of undesirable members. Mao and his supporters exploited popular anger aroused by the Cultural Revolution to humiliate, punish, and **purge** CCP members and Chinese intellectuals who were regarded as potential threats to Chairman Mao’s power. They also promoted **a cult of personality** centered on Mao. One of the **indelible** images of the revolution was the sight of young and fanatical ‘**Red Guards**’ attacking those within Chinese society who were perceived to have a ‘negative’ **bourgeois** and **rightist** influence on the country. Party elite Liu Shaoqi for example was labeled a ‘capitalist-roader’ and a traitor to China while Deng Xiaoping was forced to retire and his son tortured and left permanently injured by Red Guards. Millions of people were imprisoned and forced to participate in re-education programs while tens of thousands of others were executed by Mao’s supporters within the regime. The summer of 1966 in particular was characterized by images of tens of thousands of young Chinese and ‘Red Guards’ **converging** upon **Tiananmen Square**, waving little red books (from the book ‘**Quotations** from Chairman Mao’) and declaring their loyalty to Mao Zedong. Within a matter of months, Mao and his party allies had successfully exploited the movement to strengthen his position as the country’s undisputed leader. Another consequence of the movement was that the PRC’s foreign policy **apparatus** was **shattered** and all but one of the state’s foreign ambassadors were recalled back to China. This was at a time when Beijing had already succeeded in **antagonizing** the USA, the USSR, and India. Noting the terrible damage to China’s image and stability caused by the ‘Cultural Revolution’, Cohen observes ‘China’s young, **goaded** by Mao and his allies, attacked their parents, their teachers, and Party officials, beating thousands to death and driving thousands more to suicide. Intellectuals, cultural **artifacts** and anyone or anything remotely related to the West were worthy targets of the **rampage**’ ‘The Cultural Revolution brought China’s economic development to a **halt** and damaged the reputation it had won in world affairs in 1949’ ‘By mid-1967 China was in **chaos**, with **pitched battles** between various revolutionary **factions**, battles in which the PLA occasionally became involved, **slaughtering** thousands of its own people. Hundreds of thousands of intellectuals and Party cadres were sent to the countryside for labor and re-education. Until the summer of 1968, there was little **resemblance** of **order** in the country’ (Cohen, 2000:410).

The Sino-Soviet Border Conflict (March to September 1969)

By the late 1960s, political elites within the PRC had become increasingly concerned about the implications of the Cultural Revolution for the country's security at the domestic and international level. Beijing's problems were compounded by renewed difficulties with Moscow. Already tense Sino-Soviet frictions had been made worse after 1964 when both states began to position larger numbers of their military forces along disputed border area in regions such as Manchuria and Xinjiang (see Zhenbao Island (Damansky in Russian) on the Ussuri River, the Argun River, the Amur River, and the Pamir Mountains). In March 1969, skirmishes broke out between Soviet and Chinese forces near the contested **Zhenbao Island** on the Ussuri River. Fighting between PRC and USSR patrols that had been sent to protect their 'territory' in the area resulted in significant casualties (over 150 soldiers were killed) for the two countries. Moscow sought to settle the territorial disputes via negotiations but Mao, who was trying to bring a **trouble-free** end to the Cultural Revolution (having secured his objectives), was **not in the mood** to make any concessions. Moscow persisted by issuing a number of **ultimatums** to the Chinese side but **to no avail**. Frustrated by the failure of peace **overtures**, Soviet military forces, backed up by helicopters crossed the border into Xinjiang (PRC territory) in August 1969. China had developed its first nuclear weapon in 1964 (see '596' – the codename for the PRC's nuclear test in October 1964), and Beijing feared that the Soviets might destroy PRC nuclear **installations** in the region in a **preemptive** strike in advance of a possible major conflict. Realizing that the border conflict could **escalate** beyond China's control, Mao decided to commence **dispute resolution** talks with the Soviets in order to avoid war. Non-communist powers such as the US, while **content** to see the world's two most powerful communist states **fall out** with one another, were nonetheless concerned about the implications for global stability should the two nuclear-armed neighbors escalate their border conflict into a major regional war.

The United States and China Repair Relations

By 1970, Chairman Mao increasingly appreciated that the Cultural Revolution was becoming a serious threat to domestic stability in China and to his own power and influence within the country. Mao's advisers also warned him about the threat to his leadership represented by the PLA, which had become more politically influential in the 1966 to 1970 period. The Chinese leader also recognized that the USSR was the number one threat to the PRC's national security, and therefore that the US was less of a threat to China's interests than the Soviet Union. As such, Mao and his supporters concluded that **rapprochement** with Washington might strengthen China's position vis-à-vis the Soviet Union. Mao's wife, Jiang Qing however protested against **moderating** the Cultural Revolution and improving ties with Washington, communist China's long-time ideological enemy. Serious differences of opinion on foreign policy therefore meant that **conclusively** ending the Cultural Revolution, and improving relations with the Americans was slow and uncertain. In the same period, the US government and the US public had tired of the seemingly unwinnable war in Vietnam. The war had also weakened the willingness of the US to continue its policy of containing and of isolating communist China. In addition, Washington realized that improved relations with communist China could benefit the United States in two significant ways. In the first place, Beijing could be very useful in helping to end the Vietnam War and in convincing its allies, the Vietnamese communists, to agree to a settlement that was favorable to the USA. Secondly, the Sino-Soviet split and

improved relations between Washington and Beijing could result in the US gaining a powerful ally against Soviet influence in the world and particularly in East Asia. Noticing an opportunity to repair relations with the Chinese, in the late 1960s the Americans made some private **overtures** to Beijing in the hope of a positive response. Mao and the CCP leadership however initially **turned down** Washington's offer to repair the relationship. In an attempt to convince China of their good intentions, the Americans ended US naval patrols in the Taiwan Strait and eased travel and trade **restrictions** against China for the first time since the end of the Korean War in 1953. In early 1970, **ambassadorial** level conversations took place between the two countries. One should remember that, until the early 1970s, the USA did not officially recognize the PRC as the legitimate government of China.

Washington and Beijing proceeded carefully in their talks aimed at repairing damaged ties. Taiwan was, as in the 1950s, the main **stumbling block** in the way of progress. In the early 1970s however both countries had stronger **strategic** reasons to agree on some form of **compromise** vis-à-vis the Taiwan issue. The Americans hoped that the communist Chinese would accept a 'two Chinas' policy, with a capital in Beijing for the communists and a capital in Taipei for the nationalists. Beijing however rejected the idea. Instead, the US and the PRC agreed on the idea of a 'one China, but not now' policy, which respected both Taiwan's desire to remain politically separated from the mainland, and the PRC's **aspiration** towards eventual unification for all of China. Both the nationalists and communists desired unity but disagreed on the type of government under which it would take place. As Cohen observes, '*The United States **acknowledged** the fact that Chinese on both sides of the strait insisted on one China and expressed its expectation that the future of Taiwan would be determined peacefully, by the Chinese themselves, at some later time*' (Cohen, 2000: 412). By 1971, private bilateral talks and confidence-building measures were starting to **bear fruit**. In mid to late 1971, the US expressed its support for Beijing's demand to officially seat PRC representatives in the United Nations (see **UN General Assembly Resolution 2758** of October 1971). Resolution 2758 designated the PRC as '*the only legitimate representative of China to the United Nations*', and controversially terminated Taiwan's (the Republic of China - ROC) full membership within the UN. The US wanted both the PRC and the ROC to have full membership but both Beijing and Taipei viewed themselves as the sole legitimate government for all of China. To the **astonishment** of the international community, in July 1971, it was revealed in the media that Henry Kissinger (the US National Security Adviser from 1969 to 1975) had travelled to the PRC capital to **finalize** arrangements and details for a new relationship between the US and China. It was also revealed that US President Richard Nixon would visit China in February 1972 (see **Nixon's 1972 visit to China**). Nixon's 1972 visit to the PRC symbolized how the two world powers were willing to bury their ideological differences in favor of their mutual strategic and material interests (see the political concept of '**Realpolitik**').

In the years immediately after 1972, domestic political instability and **succession crises** in both countries delayed any further major steps toward bilateral **reconciliation**. President Nixon was first hampered by **the Watergate scandal** (June 1972) and then forced to resign in August 1974. As a result of these domestic difficulties, Nixon was too weak politically to honor commitments made earlier to the CCP leadership. The Chinese felt annoyed and frustrated by the lack of movement by

Washington. Beijing was also angered by Kissinger and Nixon's success in achieving **détente** with the Soviet Union, a state, which the PRC still regarded as its main threat. As party leaders Mao Zedong and Premier **Zhou Enlai** reached old age and began to suffer from ill health, other Party elites such as radicals like Jiang Qing and other members of **the Gang of Four** for example saw an opportunity to strengthen their own positions within the party. Jiang in particular criticized the earlier moderate policies towards the US adopted by political rivals such as Zhou in the early 1970s. In the mid-1970s, domestic power struggles and issues in both the US and the PRC took precedence over foreign policy goals. As Cohen observes however, 'By 1976, China and the United States had ceased to be **adversaries**. The meetings in 1971 and 1972, and the establishment in 1973 of **liaison** offices, **tantamount** to embassies by each country in the other's capital, signaled the beginning of a new era in their relationship. The leaders of both countries had concluded that cooperation against the Soviet Union was of greater importance than the many issues that still divided them. There remained, however, many powerful figures in each country opposed to rapprochement and the future of the relationship depended on the outcome of domestic political struggles in both' (Cohen, 2000: 412-413). Mao and Zhou's deaths and the removal from power of the Gang of Four in 1976, and then the rise to power of the **pragmatist** Deng Xiaoping created the favorable political conditions in which both the PRC and the USA could finally **normalize** their relationship after nearly thirty years of **animosity**. On December 15th 1978, Washington and Beijing announced the establishment of diplomatic relations (see also the '**Joint Communiqué on the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations**' of January 1st, 1979).

Key Points:

- The negative consequences of Mao Zedong's economic, domestic, and foreign policies provided valuable lessons for future Chinese leaders, particularly Deng Xiaoping (the PRC's **pragmatic** '**paramount leader**' from 1978 until 1992).
- The loss of its Soviet ally during the years of the Sino-Soviet Split, as well as the disastrous economic failure of Mao's 'Great Leap Forward' (1958-1961) and the diplomatic isolation created by the 'Cultural Revolution' (1966 – 1976) pushed the PRC towards a **rapprochement** with the United States in the late 1960s.
- Washington, noticing an opportunity to weaken the communist **bloc**, made peace **overtures** with Beijing in the late 1960s. The PRC was also a useful player in helping the Americans to withdraw from Vietnam in 1973. Strategic necessity and the threat of war with the USSR also influences China's policies towards the United States. These factors contributed to President Nixon's visit to Beijing in 1972 and the normalization of bilateral ties in 1979.
- Soviet influence in East Asia was considerably weakened as a result of Sino-US rapprochement. The result was a dramatic shift in the Cold War balance of power.
- With the **acquiescence** of the non-communist world, the PRC's unhindered

full membership of the United Nations and a seat in the powerful **UN Security Council (UNSC)** as ‘*the only legitimate representative of China to the United Nations*’ after 1971 permitted the country to exercise greater political power on the world stage. The **expiration** of Taiwan’s (the Republic of China – ROC) seat within the UN placed the island in a state of diplomatic **limbo** with the PRC regularly blocking any attempts by **successive** Taipei governments to win diplomatic recognition. This situation continues to create frictions between the PRC, the ROC, and the global community, in particular the US and Japan.