

The United States and China, 1972–1974

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This article covers the period following President Nixon's China trip in February 1972.

If the Presidential visit was a highlight in the process of Washington's rapprochement with Peking, the succeeding years were an anti-climax. Furthermore, a subtle change in the mood was evident in China: from honeymoon to chill.

Nevertheless, the Soviet factor and the Japan problem forced Peking to work with Washington closely. China was fearful of a possible Soviet nuclear attack on its land, and worried about Soviet "expansionism" in Eurasia and its periphery. China was also concerned with a possible resurgence of Japanese "militarism."

Washington shrewdly used the Soviet and Japan cards in order for Peking to lean toward Washington.

As time passed by, however, Peking had become irritated by Washington's détente policy with Moscow, and dissatisfied with Washington's tardiness in establishing a formal diplomatic relation, which for Washington meant the abandonment of Taiwan.

In addition, a reaction to Mao's and Chou's line was visible, particularly among the Chinese military and the radical left, resulting in the erosion of Chou's position within the Chinese leadership, thus souring the bilateral relations.