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## The First Cut is the Deepest: George H.W. Bush and CHIREP at the U.N. 1970-1971

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The First Cut is the Deepest : George H.W. Bush and CHIREP at the U.N. 1970–1971

A Thesis

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James W. Weber Jr.

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## List of Acronyms

CHIREP: Chinese Representation at the United Nations

NSA: National Security Advisor

NSC: National Security Council

PRC: People's Republic of China

RNC: Republican National Committee

ROC: Republic of China

U.N.: United Nations

USLO: United States Liaison Office (for this paper, Beijing)

USUN: United States Mission to the United Nations

## Abstract

Scholarship on George H.W. Bush tends to regard his career with the State Department in the context of traditional presidential biography. His tenure as Ambassador to the United Nations thus becomes a line-item on a presidential resume with little significance beyond its usefulness as a political credential. This paper situates Bush's voice as it appears in his personal diary into one of the widescreen events of Sino-American rapprochement, the conclusion in 1971 of the long-simmering conflict over Chinese representation at the U.N. (CHIREP) between the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the American-backed Republic of China (ROC). As chief of the U.S. Mission to the U.N. (USUN) in 1971 the fight over CHIREP represents George H.W. Bush's "first bleeding," a baptism into both the ecology of international diplomacy and a sustained, imbricate relationship with the People's Republic of China.

Keywords: George H.W. Bush; CHIREP; Sino-American Rapprochement; United Nations; Non-Aligned Movement; New Diplomatic History;

## Introduction

On October 29, 1971 the Ambassador to the United Nations George H.W. Bush waited in the green room of *The Dick Cavett Show* at New York's Elysée Theater on West 58th Street. Earlier in the week a critical U.N. vote had fallen against the United States, and President Richard Nixon's press secretary Ron Ziegler had bungled delivery of the Nixon party line on the event. Certainly Ambassador Bush was disgusted by the "gladiatorial ugliness" and hisses directed at the U.S. delegation, but Ziegler's unfortunate phrasing and bluster just created complications.<sup>1</sup> Shaping the posture of the United States at the U.N. required a delicate touch.<sup>2</sup> Now Nixon had Bush in front of the cameras of television talk-shows like *Firing Line*, *Issues and Answers*, and *Dick Cavett* in an effort to better spin the loss.<sup>3</sup>

"As everybody knows by now," the show's host began, "last Monday late into the night the United States lost the fight to keep nationalist China in the United Nations, and the Albanian resolution to admit communist China to the U.N. was passed, and Taiwan was sort of . . . booted out."<sup>4</sup> Cavett looked into the camera and continued, "It was a moment of what's been described as quote 'a shocking demonstration of undisguised glee

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations Diary, 31 October 1971, folder 14, OA/ID 25863, United Nations Files, George Bush Collection, George Bush Presidential Library. Hereafter abbreviated Bush U.N. Diary.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> "This weekend I have done three television shows . . . the president wants my interpretive backup." Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> The Dick Cavett Show, "George Bush Reacts to Taiwan Being Kicked Out of the United Nations," YouTube Video, 8:04, October 29, 1971, accessed October 15, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PXr7lRzBE4o>. Cavett himself understood his television program's historical significance and in 2017 donated two thousand hours of his programming to the Library of Congress. See "Library Acquires Archives of Iconic Talk Show Host Dick Cavett," Library of Congress, accessed March 30, 2020, <https://www.loc.gov/item/prn-17-166/library-acquires-archives-of-iconic-talk-show-host-dick-cavett/2017-11-03>.

and personal animosity toward the United States’ . . . the cheering and so on that went on.”<sup>5</sup> The host closed with a wry introduction while backstage Bush jammed his left-hand into his pocket anxiously. “My next guest is the American Ambassador to the United Nations . . . the man responsible for keeping them in. Will you welcome please, a gentleman who may have overcome his depression by now—or not I don’t know! Will you welcome please Ambassador George Bush!”<sup>6</sup>

Polite applause greeted the gangly Bush as he strode in from the wings wearing defeat. His head hung low, and he steadied himself on the railing as he stepped to the stage. They shook hands. Dick Cavett casually opened his jacket and sat down. Bush left his suitcoat buttoned shut which bulged awkwardly as he drew into himself, hands buried in his lap. The two men met eyes, the studio audience stilled, and Cavett’s opening quip caught Bush flat-footed. “Do you feel like a loser?”<sup>7</sup>

Blue-blooded George H.W. Bush spent the first forty-six years of his life aglow with an elite and quintessentially American greatness. His privileged upbringing guaranteed him a life of certain significance, access to power, and eased mobility. At eighteen he enlisted in the United States Navy and flew fifty-eight missions in a fabled TBM Avenger in the Pacific, eventually pulled from the sky by Japanese anti-aircraft fire off Chichi Jima. Safely back home, Bush finished schooling at Yale and married his high school sweetheart Barbara Pierce whom he’d doted on in letters while deployed. His

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<sup>5</sup> The Dick Cavett Show, “George Bush Reacts to Taiwan Being Kicked Out of the United Nations,” YouTube Video, 8:04, October 29, 1971, accessed October 15, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PXr7lRzBE4o>.

<sup>6</sup> “Well . . . I don’t *feel* like a loser,” Bush replied. Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.



family's wealth provided the financial stake for a timely entry into an oil business just entering a new phase of wild post-war growth in the 1950s. How strange then for Bush to find himself on a losing streak.

A failed bid in 1970 to represent Texas in the U.S. Senate stung. Its consolation prize was an appointment in 1971 to the United Nations, work for the State Department which excited the middle-aged public servant and promised valuable diplomatic experience on an international stage. But bureaucratic dysfunctions and a long-simmering fight with communist China at the U.N. had a weary Bush shuttling between the White House and the State Department, Washington D.C. and New York City, and from embassy to office in a doomed crusade to bend the U.N. to the will of the United States.

So how does George H.W. Bush's career at the U.N. play out in the diplomatic trenches? A teleological view might suggest the foreign policy credentials Bush first gained at the U.S. Mission to the U.N. (USUN) helped place him on the 1980 Ronald Reagan presidential ticket.<sup>8</sup> Bush's time at the United Nations did move on international tensions over Chinese representation (CHIREP) as the U.N.'s General Assembly swelled in the long moment of decolonization's first intense wave.<sup>9</sup> These new nations tilted the voting

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<sup>8</sup> Testifying to Bush's total inexperience with international diplomacy at the time of his appointment to the USUN, the quote "George, what the fuck do you know about foreign affairs?" from Yale classmate and Thomas "Lud" Ashley appears across the constellation of Bush biographies. Bush and Lud Ashley both joined the Yale secret society "Skull and Bones" in 1948. Ashley later represented Ohio in Congress for 26 years, eventually serving on the George H.W. Bush Presidential Library Foundation board.

<sup>9</sup> A basic understanding of the "fundamental coherence of this historical moment" of decolonization can be had in Jan C. Jansen, Jürgen Osterhammel, and Jeremiah Riemer's chapter "Paths to Sovereignty" in *Decolonization, A Short History* (Princeton University Press, 2017), 71–118. Also see Angela Torelli, "The Costs of Realism: The Nixon Administration, the People's Republic of China, and the United Nations," *The Journal of American-East Asian Relations* 19, no. 2 (2012): 157–82. The local end of the circuit between new sovereign nations and the institution of the U.N. is centered in Christopher O'Sullivan's "The United Nations, Decolonization, and Self-Determination in Cold War Sub-Saharan Africa, 1960-1994," *Journal of Third World Studies* 22, no. 2 (2005): 103–20.

balance away from the United States, the outcome determined before he even arrived. However the map drawn by such broad historical strokes does not necessarily represent the territory. For George Bush specifically, such geopolitical stresses played out along a terrain of institutional discord more than eventful diplomacy. Bush's own account of CHIREP as included in his personal diary located at the George Bush Presidential Library and Museum supports this interpretation.

In pursuit of historical sense, I draw on the analytical toolkit of political science as well as the culturally-minded strategies of the New Diplomatic History to examine Bush's personal record of the CHIREP fight as expressed in his habitual diaristic impulse and correspondence. In the paper's first section I explore George Bush's frustration as he struggled to overcome the bureaucracy of state, institutional short-circuits, and the unanticipated social responsibilities of his new round-the-clock job at the U.N. In its second I consider the CHIREP event as it relates to Bush. I conclude by looking forward at what the legacy of CHIREP might mean for Bush's future China-imaginary. Throughout I situate the voice of George H.W. Bush into 1970s Sino-American rapprochement and argue that the CHIREP fight at the U.N. represents his "first bleeding," a baptism into both the ecology of international diplomacy and a sustained, imbricate relationship with the People's Republic of China.

## Literature Review

This paper does not strictly trace the patterns of a “presidential history” as it takes for its topic only a single event which occurred during George H.W. Bush’s pre-White House career. However, I think it’s useful to consider the ways in which Bush scholarship and presidential history have been touched by an advantageous flow across once-fortified disciplinary boundaries. Brian Balogh describes a slow decline in scholarly attention paid to the American Presidency, a casualty of the overdue tilt in the 1970s toward writing “history from below.”<sup>10</sup> Political historians in the 1980s focused on the “durable bureaucratic structures” of modern government while their colleagues in the social sciences focused more strictly analytical lenses on the agency of the state.<sup>11</sup> Meanwhile, appraisals of those such as Bush who wielded an undeniable hierarchical power were “left to political scientists, the public intellectuals labeled “presidential historians” by the media, and . . . legal scholars.”<sup>12</sup>

America’s current moment of inflexibility and acute inequality demands historians stare unblinking at the narratives which sustain its political pantheon.<sup>13</sup> To this purpose I amplify Bruce Schulman’s suggestion that historians analyzing the lives of presidents

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<sup>10</sup> Brian Balogh, “Introduction: Confessions of a Presidential Assassin,” in *Recapturing the Oval Office: New Historical Approaches to the American Presidency*, ed. Brian Balogh and Bruce J. Schulman, (Cornell University Press, 2015), 1–8.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>13</sup> I look here to recent cultural trends in the reassessment of organizational structure at museums, galleries, public sites of memory, et cetera. American national memory’s constructive literature requires as much scrutiny as the more tangible architectonics which give it place.

ought to breach the top-down and bottom-up divide.<sup>14</sup> I believe that to trade heroic presidential exceptionalism for microhistories which speak to “broader issues affecting the culture as a whole,” to reseat figures like Bush into the ecologies which conferred their power, can nourish vital sense-making.<sup>15</sup>

Bush presidential biography begins in 1992 with Richard Ben Cramer’s gonzo accounting of the 1988 presidential race *What It Takes: The Way to the White House*, though it lacks both scholarly properness and source disclosure.<sup>16</sup> In 1997 the George Bush Presidential Library and Museum opened in College Station, Texas and a more academic Bush biography arrived from former social studies teacher Herbert S. Parmet which sticks closely to the “who, what, when, and where” of narration with little abstract analysis.<sup>17</sup> Tim Naftali’s institutionally-minded entry into *The American Presidents Series* portrayed Bush in 2007 as the good political soldier, an “understudy” who did not shy

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<sup>14</sup> Bruce J. Schulman, “Conclusion: The Perils and Prospects of Presidential History,” in *Recapturing the Oval Office New Historical Approaches to the American Presidency*, edited by Bruce J. Schulman and Brian Balogh, (Cornell University Press, 2015), 250–258.

<sup>15</sup> For this paper I found much comfort in Lepore’s embrace of the haze which surrounds microhistories whose “arguments, slippery as eels, are difficult to fish out of the oceans of story,” also taken from the article “Historians Who Love Too Much: Reflections on Microhistory and Biography,” *The Journal of American History* 88, no. 1 (2001): 129–144. See also Carlo Ginsburg “Microhistory: Two or Three Things That I Know About It”, translated by John and Anne C. Tedeschi, *Critical Inquiry* 20, no. 1 (2003): 10–35; Sigurður Gylfi Magnússon, “Social History as ‘Sites of Memory’? The Institutionalization of History: Microhistory and the Grand Narrative,” *Journal of Social History* 39, no. 3 (2006): 891–913; Sigurður Gylfi Magnússon and István M. Szijártó, *What Is Microhistory?: Theory and Practice*, (London ; New York: Routledge, 2013); David A. Bell “Total History and Microhistory: The French and Italian Paradigms,” in *A Companion to Western Historical Thought*, edited by Lloyd Kramer and Sarah Maza (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 262–76; Giovanni Levi, “On Microhistory” in *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, edited by Peter Burke (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001): 97–119; and the excellent microhistory bibliography at *Microhistory Network*, <https://www.microhistory.eu/index.php/2017/02/06/bibliography/>, accessed March 2, 2020.

<sup>16</sup> Just before his death in 2013, journalist Cramer culled the Bush portions of *What It Takes* for publication as *Being Poppy: A Portrait of George Herbert Walker Bush*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2013). Cramer sums up Bush’s experience at the United Nations in two sentences on page 129: “But in New York, he found he wasn’t in the game at all. Nixon and Kissinger were the whole team.” While full of a journalistic pith Parmet’s assessment cannot quite be described as microhistory, and this paper suggests there’s more to the story.

<sup>17</sup> Herbert S. Parmet, *George Bush: The Life of a Lone Star Yankee* (New York: Scribner, 1997).

from “cleaning up Reagan’s mess,” thus achieving an “unexpected greatness.”<sup>18</sup> Bush speech-writer Curt Smith’s *George H. W. Bush: Character at the Core* similarly presents Bush the true-believer: in the institution of the presidency, in an unassuming purity of Middle America, and in a long-standing American exceptionalism.<sup>19</sup>

Presidential historian Jon Meacham published an official Bush biography in 2015, researched and written with full approval of the Bush family. Its title places it in the school of heroic biography: *Destiny and Power: The American Odyssey of George Herbert Walker Bush*. Like Homer’s epic *Odyssey* which recounts a hero’s fated journey home to Ithaca following the Trojan War, Meacham suggests Bush rides the same mythic inevitability toward the White House. Meacham puts forth the conventional, uncomplicated portrayal of Bush’s time at the U.N. during which he offered a reasonable compromise to a “hostile Third World majority” that was “more than happy to try to embarrass the United States.”<sup>20</sup>

When academic historians have looked at George H.W. Bush they have primarily focused on his four presidential years, 1989 to 1993, during which he concerned himself with several major historical events: the fall of the Berlin Wall and the Cold War’s denouement, the First Gulf War and its troubling shadows, and (most relevantly for this

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<sup>18</sup> Timothy Naftali, *George H. W. Bush: The American Presidents Series: The 41st President, 1989–1993*, series edited by Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr. and Sean Wilentz, (New York: Times Books, 2007). Per the publisher’s website, this series maintains each president’s position in “the grand panorama of our chief executives.” See “Macmillan: Series: The American Presidents,” US Macmillan, accessed March 16, 2020, <https://us.macmillan.com/series/>.

<sup>19</sup> Curt Smith, *George H. W. Bush: Character at the Core* (Potomac Books, Inc., 2014). Like many, Smith highlights Richard Nixon’s assertion that Bush would “do anything for the cause” and thus deserved to survive through Nixon’s second-term personnel changes. The question here is to which cause is Nixon referring? Would Bush do anything for President Nixon, the Republican party, Middle America? The United States?

<sup>20</sup> Jon Meacham, *Destiny and Power: The American Odyssey of George Herbert Walker Bush*, (New York: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2015), 159.

paper) the Chinese Communist Party's massacre of civilians '89 Democracy Movement protesters in Tiananmen Square.<sup>21</sup> Here, Director of the Center for Presidential History at Southern Methodist University Jeffrey A. Engel has done more to shape the Bush legacy than anyone save the 41st president himself. Indeed the source notes appended to the end of his 2017 account of the Bush administration's international diplomacy *When the World Seemed New: George H. W. Bush and the End of the Cold War* serve as a remarkably comprehensive database for work on the presidency of George H.W. Bush.<sup>22</sup> But a tendency toward the professionalization of presidential historiography threatens to

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<sup>21</sup> An excellent overview of the initial wave of literature on the First Gulf War can be found in L. Carl Brown's review article "Shield and Storm in the Desert," *The International History Review* 16, no. 1 (1994): 92–113. Brown tackles no less than thirty books whose authorship spans the international community. How the Bush organization marched to war can be understood through John Edward Wilz's "The Making of Mr. Bush's War: A Failure to Learn from History?," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 25, no. 3 (1995): 533–54. Find the ecological impact of the war in the Persian Gulf in Thomas M. Hawley, *Against the Fires of Hell: The Environmental Disaster of the Gulf War*, (New York: Harcourt, 1992). For the shadows of the First Gulf War as captured in image, see "Blood in the Sand. The unpublished photographs that reveal the true horror of the Gulf War," edited by Don McCullin, *G2 The Guardian*, February 14, 2003; "The Unseen Gulf War by Peter Turnley - The Digital Journalist," accessed March 11, 2020, [http://digitaljournalist.org/issue0212/pt\\_intro.html](http://digitaljournalist.org/issue0212/pt_intro.html). The massacre at Tiananmen Square has been treated in memoir, cultural analyses, and the politics of protest. The events of 1989 in China thread through Jeffrey Engel's *When the World Seemed New* and the forthcoming *Post Wall, Post Square: How Bush, Gorbachev, Kohl, and Deng Shaped the World after 1989* by Kristina Spohr, but more comprehensive is Zhiang Lang's *The Tiananmen Papers*, edited by Andrew J. Nathan and Perry Link, (New York: PublicAffairs, 2002). The relative recency of the 1989 event makes book-length efforts by journalists to cover the event valuable, for example the chapter "Bush: . . . and Tiananmen" in Patrick Tyler's *A Great Wall: Six Presidents and China: An Investigation*, (New York: Public Affairs, 1999) covers Bush, Scowcroft, and the Bush Administration's China diplomacy and interactions with student leaders of the '89 Democracy Movement; for more in depth analysis of the Bush Administration's approach to China see former Beijing Bureau Chief for the *Los Angeles Times* James Mann's *About Face: A History of America's Curious Relationship with China from Nixon to Clinton*, (New York: Knopf, 1998). A professional's look at foreign policy changes which flowed from the Tiananmen Square massacre can be had in former National Intelligence Officer for East Asia at the National Intelligence Council Robert L. Suettinger's, *Beyond Tiananmen: The Politics of U.S.-China Relations 1989–2000*, 1st edition (Washington, D.C: Brookings Institution Press, 2003).

<sup>22</sup> Jeffrey A. Engel, *When the World Seemed New: George H. W. Bush and the End of the Cold War* (Boston; New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017). Engel mistakenly places Henry Kissinger rather than Secretary of State William Rogers at the head of the State Department during Bush's time at the USUN. Kissinger indeed "yearned to control every aspect of foreign policy," but had not yet consolidated his power. This conflict between the Secretary of State and NSA Kissinger is crucial to the experience of George Bush at the U.N. and points out the importance of a tight focus on the individual operators within a state's bureaucracy.

implicate practitioners in their subject's legacy.

Jeffrey Engel taught at the Bush School of Government & Public Service at Texas A&M from 2007-2012. While there he befriended the former president who subsequently helped Engel with class instruction. During his five years at the Bush School, Engel interviewed the ex-president "sometimes many times a month" followed by lunches together.<sup>23</sup> He accompanied Bush on a trip to China in 2006.<sup>24</sup> He annotated and prepared for publication in 2008 Bush's personal diary from his time at the U.S. Liaison Office in Beijing.<sup>25</sup> Numerous scholarly articles, book chapters, and media appearances followed.<sup>26</sup>

In 2013, Engel looked to the powerful assemblage of hosting university (Texas

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<sup>23</sup> "Q&A with Jeffrey Engel", August 29, 2018, C-SPAN, <https://www.c-span.org/video/transcript/?id=57359>, accessed March 4, 2020.

<sup>24</sup> Ben Westcott and Steve George CNN, "How George H.W. Bush Became Beijing's 'old Friend' in the White House," CNN, accessed March 19, 2020, <https://www.cnn.com/2018/12/01/asia/george-h-w-bush-china-intl/index.html>.

<sup>25</sup> George Bush, *The China Diary of George H. W. Bush: The Making of a Global President*, ed. Jeffrey A. Engel (Princeton University Press, 2008).

<sup>26</sup> "When the World is Going Your Way...Let It. The Hippocratic Foreign Policy of George H.W. Bush," in *The Dangerous First Year: National Security at the Start of a New Presidency*, eds. Melvyn Leffler and William Hitchcock, (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2018); Jeffrey A. Engel, *When the World Seemed New: George H. W. Bush and the End of the Cold War*, 1 edition (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017); "Beijing and Malta, 1989," with Sergey Radchenko, in David Reynolds and Kristina Spoehr, eds. *Transcending the Cold War: Summits, Statecraft, and the Dissolution of Bipolarity in Europe, 1970–1990* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 180–203; "When George Bush Believed the Cold War Ended, and Why that Matters," in Michael Nelson and Barbara Perry, eds, *41: Inside the George H.W. Bush Presidency* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014), 100– 121; "Bush, Germany, and the Power of Time: How History Makes History," *Diplomatic History* 37, no. 4, September 2013, 639–663; "The Gulf War at the End of the Cold War and Beyond," in *Into the Desert: Reflections on the Gulf War*, ed. Engel. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 1–56; "A Better World . . . but Don't Get Carried Away: The Foreign Policy of George H. W. Bush Twenty Years On," *Diplomatic History* 34, no. 1 (January 2010): 25–46; *The Fall of the Berlin Wall: The Revolutionary Legacy of 1989* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); George Bush, *The China Diary of George H. W. Bush: The Making of a Global President*, ed. Jeffrey A. Engel (Princeton University Press, 2008); "George H.W. Bush: Strategy and the Stream of History," in Elizabeth Borgwardt, Christopher Nichols, and Andrew Preston, eds., *Rethinking Grand Strategy* (New York: Oxford University Press, forthcoming); see also numerous mass media articles both authored and appeared in.

A&M), research center (The Bush School of Government and Public Service), and presidential library (The George H.W. Bush Presidential Library and Museum) when he opened and then directed the Center for Presidential History (CPH) at Southern Methodist University (SMU) in nearby Dallas, Texas. That same year the George W. Bush Presidential Center opened on the campus of SMU and thus completed the three-part machine for collaborative production of the younger Bush's presidential legacy. The SMU, the CPH, and the George W. Bush Presidential Center have worked in a close "world-changing partnership" since.<sup>27</sup> These sites of production for presidential legacy leave little obvious room for reflexive critique.

This paper mines the same archives housed at the George Bush Presidential Library as Engel and other Bush biographers, though it finds its own vein to drift along where the evidence travels across cultural strata. The major source I cite is the diary kept by George Bush during his time at the USUN which remains largely unpublished.<sup>28</sup> Bush's mediation of his legacy begins in their composition. Note that this portion of the Bush archive, the years prior to his time in the White House, is not subject to the Presidential Records Act of 1978.<sup>29</sup> Consequently I consider the moment of self-selection to be an equally

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<sup>27</sup> "Center for Presidential History at SMU", *The George W. Bush Presidential Center and SMU*, accessed March 10, 2020, <https://www.smu.edu/BushCenter/CenterForPresidentialHistory>.

<sup>28</sup> I turned to literary techniques for help approaching the life-narrative of George H.W. Bush such as Sven Birkerts, *The Art of Time in Memoir: Then, Again*, (Saint Paul, MN: Graywolf Press, 2007); Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives* (Minneapolis: University Of Minnesota Press, 2010); and Vivian Gornick, *The Situation and the Story: The Art of Personal Narrative*, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2001).

<sup>29</sup> The Presidential Records Act 1978 shifted ownership of the executive's records from private to public, so papers from these years have been sorted and saved according to federal regulations. It's important to note, however, that the burden of preservation or disposal rests with the incumbent president's office under the advisement of the current Archivist of the United States. This tangle of bias ought not be discounted when considering a presidential archive's patterns of conspicuous inclusion and exclusion. For specifics on the PRA see "Presidential Records Act (PRA) of 1978," National Archives, August 15, 2016, <https://www.archives.gov/presidential-libraries/laws/1978-act.html>.



determinant event en route to the documents' *domiciliation* or "house arrest" in 1997 at the George Bush Presidential Library. It is there and it is then that the Bush archive "takes place."<sup>30</sup>

George H.W. Bush was appointed the United States ambassador to the United Nations on February 16, 1971. The first nine months of his tenure were consumed by the long-simmering issue of Chinese representation at the U.N. (CHIREP). By November the CHIREP question would be settled at last, the delegation from the communist People's Republic of China (PRC) seated, the U.S.-allied Republic of China (ROC) on Taiwan protesting in withdrawal. Meanwhile the U.S. worked covertly to structure a shocking visit for the cold-warrior President Richard Nixon to communist China.

The broad view of diplomatic overtures toward China from the U.S. in the last third of the twentieth century suggests that President Richard Nixon's carefully-constructed visit in February 1972 shifted American foreign policy in absolute terms. And to be sure, Nixon's China visit immediately tipped the Cold War balance: rapprochement with China adjusted the Soviet Union's posture toward the United States. A summit in Moscow with General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev and progress toward nuclear arms limitations soon followed.<sup>31</sup> But the Shanghai Communique issued jointly by the U.S. and PRC, signaling the end of Nixon's visit, described a persistent disjunction between the

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<sup>30</sup> Jacques Derrida, "Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression," translated by Eric Prenowitz, *Diacritics* 25, no. 2 (1995): 10. For more warnings vis a vis the slippage of archives see Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, (Boston, Mass: Beacon Press, 1995); Howard Zinn, "Secrecy, Archives, and the Public Interest," *The Midwestern Archivist* 2, no. 2 (1977): 14–26; "The Archive(s) Is a Foreign Country: Historians, Archivists, and the Changing Archival Landscape," *The American Archivist* 74, no. 2 (Fall/Winter 2011): 600–632.

<sup>31</sup> For a concise recounting of the U.S.-China relationship from Pearl Harbor through the dissolution of the Soviet Union see Nancy Bernkopf Tucker, "China and America: 1941–1991," *Foreign Affairs* 70, no. 5 (1991): 75–92.

states.<sup>32</sup>

Scholars have generally approached this subject with the toolkit of the political scientist and worry the processes, policies, and conventional aspects of great power diplomacy. These analyses dwell on officials at the top of the machinery of state and tend to revolve around the Nixon-Kissinger axis or the story of Sino-American rapprochement through the lens of Kissinger's relationship with the respected Premier of the People's Republic Zhou Enlai. Exemplary of this approach is Evelyn Goh's *Constructing the U.S. Rapprochement with China, 1961–1974: From “Red Menace” to “Tacit Ally”*.<sup>33</sup> While thorough, Goh's book exhibits the strengths and weaknesses of a political scientist's toolkit applied to historical synthesis. Goh tells the reader in detail how perceptions of China changed for the major actors involved in the 1960s Sino-American rapprochement but does not show us what such perceptions might mean. Similarly, Rosemary Foot and Li Jie each treat domestic aspects of the U.S.-China relationship in the 1960s in the excellent anthology *Re-Examining the Cold War* but without meditation on the crucial element of mentalities. Notably absent from these kinds of texts on China-discourse is the

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<sup>32</sup> The Shanghai Communiqué was a diplomatic instrument which “put a bow” on Nixon's visit to China and summarized the public content of the two government's dialogue. Similar communiqués followed President Jimmy Carter's visit to China in 1979 as well as Vice President George H.W. Bush's trip for the Reagan administration in 1982. In this summary statement, China recommitted itself to world revolution, affirmed the right of the oppressed to sovereignty, and demanded withdrawal of U.S. troops from Taiwan. The U.S. committed itself to a push away from hegemony in the Pacific in principle, and to establish a liaison office in Beijing in practice. The Shanghai Communiqué, and Nixon's visit, stopped short of enacting concrete normalized relations.

<sup>33</sup> *Constructing the U.S. Rapprochement with China, 1961–1974: From “Red Menace” to “Tacit Ally”* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2004). Using material from the Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon presidential libraries, Evelyn Goh chronicled in detail the shifts in China-discourse with regards to the Nixon Administration from a constructivist's perspective of international relations theory. For a more general overview of constructivism see Ted Hopf, “The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory,” *International Security* 23, no. 1 (1998): 171–200.

historicizing power of Orientalist critique.<sup>34</sup>

Historian David Alvarez reached across such disciplinary divides somewhat when he turned to Graham Allison's analyses of decision-making for his look at the Turkey Straits Crisis of 1946–47.<sup>35</sup> Like Alvarez, I believe that such scientific approaches “obscure the fact that governments are “black boxes”” composed of individual machines. But I do think it's useful to keep in mind the stakes which an individual might carry to the diplomatic stage. For tiny frictions and little easements play along the webs of “personal and organizational biases, fears, and goals” in diplomatic bureaucracies, and historians must attend to such human-powered contingencies.<sup>36</sup> I try to focus this paper on the “variety of human and organizational actors” too often occulted by a monolithic state they themselves instantiate.<sup>37</sup>

But also worthy of inclusion in any discussion of U.S.-China diplomacy, some harmonies stirred in the Sino-American cultural topography in the months prior to the CHIREP vote. “Ping-Pong Diplomacy” is the most obvious example of such chance

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<sup>34</sup> Douglas Little does inform his look at U.S. officials' relationship with and U.S. policy toward the Middle East with discourse on Orientalism in his fantastic *American Orientalism: The United States and the Middle East since 1945*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2002). Little invigorates the U.S.-Middle East conversation with important context from American popular culture. As attitudes toward foreign relations are shaped by the interior life of states, one must look at the mentalities of the individuals which construct and direct such international relationships. Chapter one “Orientalism, American Style: The Middle East in the Mind of America” lays out the construction of America's deformed perception of the Middle East. Chapter eight “Opportunities Lost and Found: The United States and the Arab-Israeli Peace Process” then breathes such stereotypes into his diplomatic history. see Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, 1st edition (London: Pantheon Books, 1978); and John M. MacKenzie, *Orientalism: History, Theory and the Arts*, 1 edition (Manchester ; New York : New York: Manchester University Press, 1995).

<sup>35</sup> David J. Alvarez, *Bureaucracy and Cold War Diplomacy: The United States and Turkey 1943–1946* (Institute for Balkan Studies, 1980); Graham Allison and Philip Zelikow, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis* (New York: Longman, 1999).

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

diplomacy. An unplanned meeting between a U.S. table tennis player and the Chinese team on a bus at the World Table Tennis Championship at Nagoya, Japan in early 1971 provided an opportunity for the PRC to invite the entire U.S. team for an impromptu visit to Guangzhou, Beijing, and Shanghai. The Championship produced a field for safe cross-cultural interaction, the result of which was an unpredicted and (in hindsight) important turn on the path to rapprochement. Mass media attention surrounded this famed “Ping-Pong Diplomacy,” and historians have cited the event as one of the major pieces of the era’s warmed relations.<sup>38</sup>

Scholars in the Network for New Diplomatic History have used both the toolkit of political science and the methods of cultural theory in the production of historical sense.<sup>39</sup> These historians have situated individual diplomats within state structures, cultural narratives, and social networks. This integrative approach promises “more expansive

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<sup>38</sup> “Ping-Pong Diplomacy” between U.S. and China in 1971 is sometimes used as a metric against which other cultural exchanges are judged, particularly in sport. See Sam Noumoff, “US and North Korea: Basketball Is Not Ping-Pong,” *Economic and Political Weekly* 48, no. 15 (2013): 12–14; R. Gerald Hughes and Rachel J. Owen, “‘The Continuation of Politics by Other Means’: Britain, the Two Germanys and the Olympic Games, 1949–1972,” *Contemporary European History* 18, no. 4 (2009): 443–74; Basil A. Ince, “Nationalism and Cold War Politics at the Pan American Games: Cuba, the United States and Puerto Rico,” *Caribbean Studies* 27, no. 1/2 (1994): 65–84; Historians Zhaohui Hong and Sun Yi frame “Ping Pong Diplomacy” as eminently contingent in “The Butterfly Effect and the Making of ‘Ping-Pong Diplomacy,’” *Journal of Contemporary China* 9, no. 25 (November 2000): 429–48. In an attempt to grab a wider audience for the World Table Tennis Championship, the president of the Japanese Table Tennis Association actively pushed China to attend the competition. He assured Chinese officials that Japan would adhere to the diplomatic norms of the Sino-Japanese relationship which did not recognize the “Two China’s” of the People’s Republic and the Republic of China and offered to fight for the expulsion of Taiwan from the Asian Table Tennis Association in a kind of assonance with the struggle over Chinese representation that George H.W. Bush would experience at the United Nations that same year. In 2014, Mayumi Itoh made a book-length argument for the importance of Gotō Kōji the president of the JTITA in *The Origin of Ping-Pong Diplomacy: The Forgotten Architect of Sino-U.S. Rapprochement* (Palgrave Macmillan US, 2011).

<sup>39</sup> Information on the “New Diplomatic History” can be found at <http://www.newdiplomatichistory.com>. From 2011, a network of scholars two-hundred strong has investigated “diplomacy as an extension of social interests, forces, and environments,” holding conferences in 2013, 2016, and 2018. Since 2019, its journal *Diplomatica: A Journal of Diplomacy and Society* has covered “the study of diplomatic processes more than the study of diplomatic product.”

thought” about a modern diplomacy whose elements are more “normatively defined than outcome oriented.”<sup>40</sup> Crucial for the study of modern diplomacy is an attendance to the ways which groups and individuals “perform diplomatic roles” on television and in media, in social settings, and in their diaries.<sup>41</sup> Their job performance faces judgement by their supervisors and, for Bush, by faceless future historians. Indeed Bush’s CHIREP legacy is as much about his personal experiences at the USUN as ambiguous foreign-policy wins on a presidential résumé.

With regards to the United States and the CHIREP debate, the second chapter of British historian Rosemary Foot’s 2005 book *The Practice of Power: U.S. Relations with China since 1949* remains the best entry point, though Bush appears only briefly and just in time to lose the fight.<sup>42</sup> That same year, the American specialist on U.S.-China relations

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<sup>40</sup> Naoko Shimazu’s “Diplomacy As Theatre: Staging the Bandung Conference of 1955,” *Modern Asian Studies* 48, no. 1 (2014): 231.

<sup>41</sup> “About”, *New Diplomatic History*, <http://www.newdiplomaticistor.com/about/>, accessed March 2, 2020.

<sup>42</sup> Rosemary Foot, “US Hegemony and International Legitimacy: The Chinese Representation Issue at the United Nations” in *The Practice of Power: US Relations with China Since 1949* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995). Foot’s diplomatic history puts forth that Mao and the PRC desired to participate in the U.N. from 1949, despite that institution’s involvement in the Korean War, the isolating effect of the Sino-Soviet Split, and its own internal Cultural Revolution. “A more general diplomatic offensive” from the PRC began in 1969, with “some 290 delegations from 80 countries” invited to visit mainland China in 1971. As well as this inward embrace, economic aid flowed from China out, including much to newly independent states in Africa with some asserted this economic aid “made the difference in the vote.” Here Rosemary Foot cites John Franklin Copper’s *China’s Foreign Aid* (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1976). But from the Marshall Plan, the O.D.A. following the Korean War, the U.S. Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 and USAID, and President Kennedy’s subsequent petition for a “Decade of Development” at the United Nations, economic assistance was a global matter of course throughout the decolonizing world. As such I disagree that Chinese aid made much practical difference in the CHIREP vote, though the effects of a complex “soft power struggle” thrummed through the African continent. A RAND Corporation report on the history of economic overtures from China also questions the effectiveness of such soft diplomacy in an era when the United States and the Soviet Union both offered so much more, particularly militarily. See chapter 2 “China in the Zone: The Cold War and After” in Andrew Scobell et al., “At the Dawn of Belt and Road: China in the Developing World,” Product Page (RAND Corporation, 2018), [https://www.rand.org/pubs/research\\_reports/RR2273.html](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2273.html). This history of investment in Africa remains important in light of China’s official Belt and Road Initiatives and attendant flood of smaller entrepreneurial endeavors. See Emily Feng and David Pilling, “The Other Side of Chinese Investment in Africa,” March 27, 2019, <https://www.ft.com/content/9f5736d8-14e1-11e9-a581-4ff78404524e>; Thokozani Simelane and Lavhelesani Managa, eds., *Belt and Road Initiative: Alternative Development*

Robert S. Ross issued *Negotiating Cooperation: The United States and China, 1969–1989*, focusing on the climax of the CHIREP issue and a longer tail of Sino-American rapprochement in which both states worked to strengthen diplomacy despite external pollutants.<sup>43</sup> This ever-present “negotiating cooperation” required a kind of cognitive dissonance on the part of U.S. foreign policy operators, an inherence of amnesia when facing external pollutants in order to further diplomatic aims.<sup>44</sup>

Like American and European scholars, historians in China have worked to both synthesize a more complex Cold War story and reevaluate settled wisdom.<sup>45</sup> In 2003,

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*Path for Africa* (Pretoria: Africa Inst of South Africa, 2018); Md. Nazrul Islam, ed., *Silk Road to Belt Road: Reinventing the Past and Shaping the Future* (New York: Springer, 2018). Also see Patrick Tyler, *A Great Wall: Six Presidents and China* (New York: Public Affairs, 2000), 45–180; Victor Kaufman addresses the important U.S.-British relationship during U.S.-China rapprochement in “‘Chirep’: The Anglo-American Dispute over Chinese Representation in the United Nations, 1950–71,” *The English Historical Review* 115, no. 461 (2000): 354–77.

<sup>43</sup> Robert S. Ross, *Negotiating Cooperation: The United States and China, 1969–1989* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995). Ross cites domestic issues such as the Watergate hearings, factional conflicts in China, the prosecution of war in Southeast Asia, changes in U.S.-Soviet and Sino-Soviet relationships, the sale of U.S. armaments to Taiwan in the 1980s, et cetera. Throughout the decades following the CHIREP vote, China’s star rose in priority and fell in favor as presidential administrations changed.

<sup>44</sup> For example, historian Li Danhui described the war in Vietnam as entering into a “phase of talking while fighting” following Nixon’s election in 1969 in “Vietnam and Chinese Policy Toward the United States,” in *Normalization of U.S.-China Relations: an International History*, ed. William C. Kirby, Robert S. Ross, and Gong Li (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2006), 176. Note that my paper sets aside the “fighting” to focus on the “talking” part of the U.S.-China equation. Though Vietnam echoed through the halls of the U.N. during his time there, the grind of diplomacy pushed on for bureaucrats like George H.W. Bush.

<sup>45</sup> With regards to Cold War studies in the People’s Republic of China see Yafeng Xia’s survey “The Study of Cold War International History in China: A Review of the Last Twenty Years,” *Journal of Cold War Studies* 10, no. 1 (February 12, 2008): 81–115. According to Xia, Chinese historical research began in the mid-1970s with a simple multi-volume survey initiative. Chinese scholars educated in the United States published articles in the 1980s, and cooperative conferences followed. Comparable to the *American Historical Review*, China’s *Lishi yanjiu* (Historical Studies) regularly published articles through the 1990s on Cold War events, governmental policies, and methodological concerns for future study. Traveling the other direction, Chinese translations of Nixon and Kissinger memoirs were published in the years following the 1970s Sino-American rapprochement. Periodized biographies of diplomats and senior party officials have been published but were unavailable for this paper. Also see Zhang Baijia, “The Changing International Scene and Chinese Policy toward the United States, 1954–1970,” in *Re-examining the Cold War: U.S.-China Diplomacy, 1954–1973*, edited by Robert S. Ross and Changbin Jiang, (Cambridge, MA; London: Harvard University Asia Center, 2001), 46–76.

Chen Jian pushed back against predominantly geopolitical interpretations which characterized histories of the U.S.-China relationship, putting forth that a “profound connection existed between (the) two phenomena” of geopolitics and the internal ferment of Mao Zedong’s notion of “continuous revolution.”<sup>46</sup> From 2000, a more free dialogue between Chinese and American scholars as well as a stuttered declassification of Chinese Communist Party archives has periodically shifted the conversation vis-à-vis previously obscured factors that drove front-facing diplomatic actions of the U.S. and China.<sup>47</sup> Notable anthologies of such syntheses arrived in 2001 and 2005.<sup>48</sup> Though the American Ross’s name appears on each as co-editor, the scholarship is pointedly international and as such the work retains a modern credibility.

More recently, historians have underscored the importance of political-economic concerns in the rank-and-file officials of the People’s Republic of China. Li Jie points to a reality which runs parallel to Cold War geopolitics, a shift “away from leftist emotionalism and toward pragmatism.”<sup>49</sup> Historian Charles Kraus published in 2019 a paper which suggests that bottom-up economic processes ultimately warmed relations

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<sup>46</sup> Chen Jian, “The Path Toward Sino-American Rapprochement, 1969–1972,” *Bulletin of the German Historical Institute*, Supplement 1 (2003): 26–52. This article is presented in a more broad China context as Chapter 9 in Chen Jian’s monograph *Mao’s China and the Cold War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 91. Documents from the years which concern the CHIREP issue were declassified in 2007 but were unavailable for this paper.

<sup>48</sup> *Normalization of U.S.-China Relations: an International History*, ed. William C. Kirby, Robert S. Ross, and Gong Li (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2005); *Re-Examining the Cold War: U.S.–China Diplomacy, 1954–1973*, ed. Robert S. Ross and Changbin Jiang (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Asia Center, 2001).

<sup>49</sup> Li Jie, “China’s Domestic Policies and the Normalization of Sino-U.S. relations, 1969–1979,” in *Normalization of U.S.-China Relations: An International History*, ed. William C. Kirby, Robert S. Ross, and Gong Li (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2005), 63.

between China and the United States through the second half of the 1970s.<sup>50</sup> Mid-level bureaucrats in China connected with U.S. business elites in an effort to sidestep the gridlock of their respective governments' foreign policy apparatuses. George H.W. Bush assumed both the political and economic aspects of just such informal associations when he began work at the U.S. Mission to the United Nations.

The fact of the future Bush presidency demands critical consideration of the ways in which institutions and individuals present his pre-presidential past. Scholarly application of monolithic terms such as “United States,” “China,” and in many cases personalities like “Nixon” and “Mao,” needs close query, too. These finer grains affect the work of careful historians, and I suggest that in the case of diplomacy in the age of mass and social media the animating force of historical evidence dwells in performativity, oblique outcomes, and the image. So mindful of epistemological limitations on language and archival bias, let us consider the relationship between George H.W. Bush, China, and the CHIREP terrain at the USUN in 1971.

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<sup>50</sup> Charles Kraus, “More than Just a Soft Drink: Coca-Cola and China’s Early Reform and Opening,” *Diplomatic History* 43, no. 1 (2019): 107–129. Kraus pairs research at the Coca-Cola Company in Atlanta, Georgia with Chinese-language archives in Shanghai. This exciting new perspective on one U.S. business’s successful attempt to engage in commercial activity in the People’s Republic offers a counternarrative to the fruitless experiences of George H.W. Bush in 1970s Beijing.



## George Bush at the United Nations

George H.W. Bush was born to win, the product of a union between the successful businessman-turned-senator Prescott Bush and Dorothy Walker, a daughter of an elite clan of bankers. George graduated from a prestigious boarding school and Yale University, earned the Distinguished Flying Cross for exploits in World War II's Pacific Theater, and wed his teenage sweetheart, Barbara. Later, Bush made himself a major player in the post-war oil boom of the 1950s. But the veteran found himself a loser in his 1970 campaign to represent Texas in the U.S. Senate.

Still, Bush's senate run raised his stature nationally, and by December his political future began to pull into focus.<sup>51</sup> Richard Nixon and his chief-of-staff Bob Haldeman initially offered Bush a position as an assistant to the president. This political appointment would have placed him in the White House without a strictly defined role, a job with the sort of flexibility valued by the Nixon administration. But Bush had his eye on the United Nations, and sitting across from the president in December of 1970, he pounced.<sup>52</sup>

At the end of their forty minute introductory meeting, Bush suggested that Nixon needed a sympathetic voice on the ground in Manhattan. In that media-rich metropolis, someone savvy like Bush could present Nixon's programs "with some style."<sup>53</sup> Nixon

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<sup>51</sup> Jon Meacham, *Destiny and Power: The American Odyssey of George Herbert Walker Bush* (New York: Random House, 2015), 149-150.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 151. The idea to pitch himself for the USUN position was not his own. The D.C. insider and journalist Charles Bartlett suggested the practical, political, and personal benefits of the job.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 153.

thought the idea sound, that indeed “nobody in the nation’s largest city seemed to be on the president’s side.”<sup>54</sup> As well, Bush would be in Cabinet meetings “getting briefed and having an input on domestic policy.”<sup>55</sup> But the job’s appeal wasn’t all domestic political football. In his diary, Bush suggested as yet undeveloped potential for the U.N. A month after his swearing-in, he declared his intention to “revitalize the U.S. presence at the U.N (USUN)” and in turn “represent the good things about the U.N. in the U.S.”<sup>56</sup>

The job occupied an unusual position, both a part of and apart from the State Department hierarchy. Officially Bush worked for the Secretary of State William Rogers, though his small, self-contained staff at the USUN operated outside the massive bulk of state bureaucracy. Moreover, as a presidential appointee responsible for voicing foreign policy initiatives, he was tethered directly to the White House. This pre-existing structural “short-circuit” between the State Department and the Nixon Administration had grown more acute with the appointment of Henry Kissinger to the National Security Advisor (NSA) position. The short-circuit would generate mixed-messages, friction, and frustration for George Bush.

For his part, President Nixon considered the U.N. little better than “a damn debating society” which produced little consequential results.<sup>57</sup> Its various committees

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<sup>54</sup> Meacham, *Destiny and Power* (2015), 153. His predecessor Charles Yost tended to isolate himself from the media while head of the USUN. Bush saw Yost, now out of the State Department bureaucracy and soured on Nixon, promoting the “liberal Democrat line” to the media. Bush U.N. Diary, 10 March 1971, folder 11, OA/ID 25863, United Nations Files, George Bush Collection, George Bush Presidential Library.

<sup>55</sup> George H. W. Bush, *All the Best: My Life in Letters and Other Writings*, Revised edition (New York: Scribner, 2013), 132

<sup>56</sup> Bush U.N. Diary, 10 March 1971, folder 11, OA/ID 25863, United Nations Files, George Bush Collection, George Bush Presidential Library. Not everyone was convinced. The capital’s *Washington Star* considered it “the appointment of a political loser,” and Bush an unqualified “conservative Republican Texas Oil millionaire,” see Engel, *When the World Seemed New* (2017), 37.

<sup>57</sup> “Conversation Between President Nixon and the Ambassador to the Republic of China (McConaughy), Washington, June 30, 1971, 12:18–12:35 p.m.,” *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976*,

generated piles of paper. The issues tackled were esoteric, dry, and difficult to sell to an American public who viewed the U.N. as an international boondoggle. “Nobody knows about (the U.N.),” Bush fretted in his diary.<sup>58</sup> “And if they did know about it, they wouldn’t care about it.”<sup>59</sup>

Bush needed to nurture direct communication with the Nixon-Kissinger nucleus to keep the wheels of diplomacy at the USUN greased. To the professional bureaucrats at the State Department, the White House and political appointees like Bush represented fools to suffer. Such antipathy flowed the other direction as well, and to the Nixon administration the State Department appeared obstinate, unwilling to compromise. The growing power of Nixon’s right-hand, NSA Henry Kissinger, complicated the situation. Bush was left to “walk the tightrope.”<sup>60</sup>

This split between the National Security Council and the State Department was as much structural as ideological. NSA Henry Kissinger and Secretary of State William Rogers were driven by different goals to be sure, but their modes of action toward those goals were shaped by each organization’s bureaucratic make-up. Henry Kissinger maintained a direct control over a small, nimble staff which worked closely with the

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Volume XVII, China, 1969–1972, eds. Steven E. Phillips and Edward C. Keefer (Washington D.C., 2006), doc. 136, accessed March 12, 2020, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v17/d136>. “I would just say the hell with the UN. What is it anyway? It’s a damn debating society What good does it do? Very little . . . They talk about hijacking, drugs, the challenges of modern society, and the rest just give hell to the United States. That’s all they do.”

<sup>58</sup> Bush U.N. Diary, 16 January 1971, folder 8, OA/ID 25863, United Nations Files, George Bush Collection, George Bush Presidential Library.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Bush U.N. Diary, 1 February 1971, folder 8, OA/ID 25863, United Nations Files, George Bush Collection, George Bush Presidential Library. Interestingly, Bush states he consulted Dean Acheson’s then-recent 1969 memoir *Present at the Creation: My Years in the State Department* for insight into such interdepartmental concerns during the Truman-Roosevelt transition. The White House-State Department bureaucratic roadblock was nothing new.

President. Secretary Rogers, the opposite. Though Kissinger quickly expanded his staff from twelve to thirty-four during Nixon's first term, the State Department still dwarfed the tiny NSC. Secretary Rogers's massive bureaucracy boasted a staff of thousands. By 2019, the State Department's Foreign Service alone employed 13,000, while its Civil Service numbered 11,000. Another 45,000 employees made up the infrastructure which maintained its far-flung outposts.<sup>61</sup>

As in mass, the two organizations differed in goals and methods. The NSC existed to present policy options upon which the President might directly act or choose to stand pat. This particular function empowered it with a direct agency, Kissinger at the helm. And if this Nixon-Kissinger axis leveraged a profound influence on American foreign policy, it was as much shaped by domestic concerns over the Nixon legacy (e.g. Sino-American rapprochement) and re-election.

Secretary Rogers and the State Department, however, were directed by bureaucratic inertia. Perhaps at the level of the individual the organization concerned itself with geopolitical mediation and 'the work' of the post-war United States project. But as a cumbersome machine of many moving parts, maintenance of the status quo predominated. Where Kissinger and his NSC pushed policy forward, the State Department and Rogers applied the brakes.

With regards to China specifically, the State Department and Secretary Rogers took a "steady-as-you-go" course, even if the temperature of the Sino-American

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<sup>61</sup> "Mission," *U.S. Department of State*, accessed October 4, 2019, <https://careers.state.gov/learn/what-we-do/mission/>.

relationship was changing.<sup>62</sup> For Chas Freeman Jr., an officer at the China Desk, the unwieldy nature of state bureaucracy was obvious. “Turning the ship of state even a few degrees requires an awful lot of work by the crew, and the crew generally doesn’t want to do it. So it’s a fairly creaky process.”<sup>63</sup>

The former Ambassador to the United Nations under President Lyndon Johnson, Arthur Goldberg warned Bush about the hazards of the USUN’s peculiar position in the United States government. In his diary Bush makes particular note of a first-day meeting with Goldberg and the advice he imparted: “(1) Be sure to get the proper relationship with the White House. (2) Be sure that it’s made clear you’re working just for the president.”<sup>64</sup> At the lunch, Goldberg seemed “generally hostile” and “on guard” to the State Department.<sup>65</sup>

Though he worked under the direct supervision of Secretary of State William Rogers, and President Nixon included him in meetings, Bush worked perhaps most closely with National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger. The Cabinet courtesies offered by Nixon impressed Bush.<sup>66</sup> But when he sought to reciprocate with a private dinner for Kissinger, the National Security Advisor let Bush know who was boss.

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<sup>62</sup> Nancy Tucker, *China Confidential: American Diplomats and Sino-American Relations, 1945-1996* (New York: Columbia University Press 2001), 241.

<sup>63</sup> Tucker, *China Confidential* (2001), 242. Freeman remembered “hearing Stanley Sommerfield [chief of Foreign Assets Control Division, Treasury Department] say to (him), “Well, that may be the president’s policy, but it’s not the Treasury’s.” And that was generally the attitude.”

<sup>64</sup> Bush U.N. Diary, 4 January 1971, folder 8, OA/ID 25863, United Nations Files, George Bush Collection, George Bush Presidential Library.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.* President Johnson personally met with Goldberg, Secretary of State Dean Rusk, and the State Department communication center to ensure the USUN remained in the loop on all cable traffic. Though less clear, the diary entry implies President Johnson made a similar visit to the C.I.A.

<sup>66</sup> Bush *All the Best* (2000), 135.

The dinner at the Bush family residence began with his “personal touch” on display. After politely inviting Kissinger’s security detail inside, Bush bested the guard twenty-four games to four in “Tiddley Winks.”<sup>67</sup> When the two statesmen turned at last to professional matters, Kissinger took the lead. He assured Bush of Nixon’s complete confidence.<sup>68</sup> The two agreed on direct lines of communication between Bush’s USUN and the White House. Kissinger let Bush know that he’d be in on the action, that some aspects of diplomacy “would be better initiated from (Bush’s) office.”<sup>69</sup> In return, Bush stated his intention to advocate for the President, something he felt lacking at the USUN.<sup>70</sup>

Indeed, in the weeks of preparation for his new job Bush assayed the culture at the USUN and put forth a proactive attitude in his diary. “Maybe it’s the apolitical nature of the place,” he supposed, “but there doesn’t seem to be any great enthusiasm” for the president and his political positions.<sup>71</sup> He would have to manage with a firm hand from the start, to push out problematic “lifers” in favor of those who could see a bigger picture, one which included the political effects of diplomatic maneuvers. On the advice of trusted advisors, Bush needed to “get control of (the USUN) in a hurry . . . (to) make darned sure they understand who is going to be running the place.”<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Bush U.N. Diary, 19 January 1971, folder 8, OA/ID 25863, United Nations Files, George Bush Collection, George Bush Presidential Library.

<sup>68</sup> Bush U.N. Diary, 19 January 1971, folder 8, OA/ID 25863, United Nations Files, George Bush Collection, George Bush Presidential Library.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Bush, *The China Diary* (2008), 137.

<sup>72</sup> Bush U.N. Diary, 15 December 1970, folder 8, OA/ID 25863, United Nations Files, George Bush Collection, George Bush Presidential Library. While not quite cleaning house at the USUN, long-tolerated but troublesome staff had to go. Glenn Olds, for example, alienated himself to co-workers over time, “yet no one had taken the bull by the horns to can him.” Americans who served the U.N. directly were also subject to Bush’s house-cleaning. Auto executive Paul Hoffman applied his experience with the post-war Marshall Plan toward the creation of the United Nations Development Programme in the 1960s. But by 1971 Hoffman was eighty years old, and “everyone involved (felt) he should” step down. Here, Bush’s

The potential for hurt feelings caused by circumventing Secretary of State Rogers's authority did in fact concern Bush. Kissinger, he thought, "had a rather low regard" for the State Department chain of command. But Bush played both sides at their meeting. At once he voiced concerns about interdepartmental micro-betrayals and promised Kissinger his ready availability.<sup>73</sup> As the relationship developed over the summer of 1971, Kissinger would eventually assure Bush he was "more communicative" than his superior Secretary Rogers, and that he was indeed "the President's man."<sup>74</sup> But more significantly Bush was also "Kissinger's man," as their increasingly tight relationship placed him in the middle of the foreign policy action, able to "do his homework" and "learn the business cold."<sup>75</sup>

The contrast with this close talk came the following week, when Secretary Rogers invited Bush to dinner with the Prince and Princess of Spain. Here, Spanish guitar players serenaded the dignitaries, and they "hung in there for a long time, twanging away."<sup>76</sup> Rogers waved his arms comically, worked to get the musicians to stop.<sup>77</sup> The next night, Bush wrote, the two "entertained 8 or 9 of the black ambassadors."<sup>78</sup>

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human resources hat was all flattery and finesse: "build him up . . . get to know him," then push Hoffman to resign. "These personnel matters are very sensitive," wrote Bush, "and one has to be somewhat less direct than in business." Bush U.N. Diary, 5 January 1971, 10 March 1971, folder 11, OA/ID 25863, United Nations Files, George Bush Collection, George Bush Presidential Library.

<sup>73</sup> Bush U.N. Diary, 15 December 1970, folder 8, OA/ID 25863, United Nations Files, George Bush Collection, George Bush Presidential Library. "I also told him I did not want to "go around" Secretary Rogers, but I felt that we could keep a balance here."

<sup>74</sup> Bush U.N. Diary, 19 April 1971, folder 11, OA/ID 25863, United Nations Files, George Bush Collection, George Bush Presidential Library.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Bush U.N. Diary, 26 January 1971, folder 8, OA/ID 25863, United Nations Files, George Bush Collection, George Bush Presidential Library.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Bush U.N. Diary, 27 January 1971, folder 8, OA/ID 25863, United Nations Files, George Bush Collection, George Bush Presidential Library. "I am convinced that the personal touch can go with these guys . . . I know I am going to get clobbered on the votes, but it is worth the try to make them feel at home."

At the U.N., too, Bush faced obligatory “stilted” official luncheons.<sup>79</sup> These “long deadly lunches given by the Secretary General” dragged on for hours in the middle of the day while providing few opportunities for substantive engagement. Bush lamented “the wine, the heavy meal,” all of which of wasted time and left him no room to operate.<sup>80</sup> Fostering successful relationships with other nations’ representatives demanded a less formal approach, he thought, one which traded cocktails for bottles of beer.<sup>81</sup> But even that “social whirl” wore on him.<sup>82</sup> Some nights out were of great benefit, and the congenial “personal touch” gained from Bush’s experiences in society life eased diplomacy. Other engagements simply added to the often unproductive grind of a diplomat always on the company clock. “Tonight it was the Stuttgart ballet . . . it didn’t help the job any, and it didn’t help the President any, and it didn’t help my ulcers any.”<sup>83</sup> Diving into ‘vodka diplomacy’ with his Soviet counterpart at the U.N. Yakov Malik also did his ulcers no favors. “Vodka before, vodka during, wine during, offer of cognac after, long philosophical discussion,” so went Bush’s efforts at connection with the regularly frigid Soviet diplomat.<sup>84</sup>

But while foreign delegations could focus solely on representing their own country’s interests at the U.N., Bush bore additional responsibilities. The U.N.’s

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<sup>79</sup> Bush U.N. Diary, 20 March 1971, folder 11, OA/ID 25863, United Nations Files, George Bush Collection, George Bush Presidential Library.

<sup>80</sup> Bush, *All the Best* (2000), 139.

<sup>81</sup> Bush, *All the Best* (2000), 139. A trip with the Ambassador of Madagascar and his son to a hockey game, accompanying Ambassador Ogbu of Nigeria and his son to a basketball game: these adventures into America were more conducive to the Bush glad-hand.

<sup>82</sup> Bush U.N. Diary, 28 March 1971, folder 11, OA/ID 25863, United Nations Files, George Bush Collection, George Bush Presidential Library.

<sup>83</sup> Bush U.N. Diary, 19 April 1971, folder 11, OA/ID 25863, United Nations Files, George Bush Collection, George Bush Presidential Library.

<sup>84</sup> Bush, *All the Best* (2000), 145.



institutional deficiencies often became Bush's headaches, too. "There are tremendous host country problems," he reported.<sup>85</sup>

For one, the finances of the U.N. were mismanaged, and paychecks weren't being delivered to the staff that kept the organization functioning.<sup>86</sup> Compounding these fiscal shortcomings, the U.N. floated an injudicious plan to expand its Manhattan facilities.<sup>87</sup> 1970s New York represented the "fundamental core" of the U.N.'s problems for Bush.<sup>88</sup> He saw no wisdom in investing more money into the U.N.'s New York location when the city was "the most expensive place, terrible crime, impossible living conditions."<sup>89</sup> New York City, he thought, presented foreign officials at the U.N. a funhouse-mirror perspective which emphasized "tremendous intensified urban problems that are not 'the real America.'"<sup>90</sup> In his diary, the beleaguered Bush griped that "the Host Country problems are beginning to bug me."<sup>91</sup>

Privately, he longed for a crisis that might allow him to operate, a major military conflict to mediate for example, or a productive conflict with the Russians.<sup>92</sup> The long-

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<sup>85</sup> Bush, *All the Best* (2000), 142.

<sup>86</sup> Bush U.N. Diary, 28 March 1971, folder 11, OA/ID 25863, United Nations Files, George Bush Collection, George Bush Presidential Library. "I am worried sick about how we are going to solve these overall United Nations problems. The financial people from the United Nations came over and they were talking about having to take out of trust funds to pay the salaries."

<sup>87</sup> Bush U.N. Diary, 28 March 1971, folder 11, OA/ID 25863, United Nations Files, George Bush Collection, George Bush Presidential Library.. "This is a plan to enlarge the UN building with the Federal government putting in \$20 million in addition to what it puts in indirectly . . . my position is that the financial affairs of the UN are in such sorry shape."

<sup>88</sup> Bush U.N. Diary, 28 March, 1971, folder 11, OA/ID 25863, United Nations Files, George Bush Collection, George Bush Presidential Library.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>91</sup> Bush U.N. Diary, 19 April 1971, folder 11, OA/ID 25863, United Nations Files, George Bush Collection, George Bush Presidential Library.

<sup>92</sup> Bush U.N. Diary, 16 January 1971, folder 8, OA/ID 25863, United Nations Files, George Bush Collection, George Bush Presidential Library.

simmering debate over who would represent China at the United Nations, the communist People's Republic or the tiny Republic of China, boiled over in the second half of 1971. Here was the pulpit George Bush desired.

## Section 2: The CHIREP Vote

The American-led reorganization of the global order after World War II stretched far beyond Europe's Marshall Plan. These efforts mostly failed to permeate the closed borders of post-war China. Efforts by U.S. agents of diplomacy failed to defuse tensions between Chiang Kai-Shek's American-supported, officially democratic, nationalist government and supporters of communist visionary Mao Zedong. October 1st, 1949 heralded the declaration of the People's Republic of China (PRC), with Chiang's rump Republic of China (ROC) pushed across the strait to Taiwan. These competing Chinese governments possessed a distinctly disproportionate relationship. The PRC represented China's expansive population and landmass, and therefore wielded its diplomatic power in practice on the global stage. The ROC, tiny in size and buttressed by the expansive reach of U.S. power, appeared its exact opposite.

Economic expansion and the new nuclear paradigm which marked the early years of the Cold War provided the opportunity, the means, and the need for the emergence of the United States as a premier global power. The Chinese government on Taiwan provided an important circuit for that power to flow more intensely into the Pacific. Affirmed as the official Chinese delegation to the U.N. in 1952, the ROC offered the U.S. an effective second seat at the U.N.'s powerful Security Council. More obliquely, the tiny democratic China offered precious leverage in America's efforts at what it perceived as containment of the constant threat of communist expansion. Taiwan lent the perception of democratic health at Communism's doorstep, a piece of the Western Bloc in the East.

However, the ROC's status gradually shifted from Western asset to American liability, predominantly due to two factors. First, a split in the Sino-Soviet relationship grew from around 1956, the result of an ideological divergence between the Chinese Communist Party and Khrushchev-era endeavors toward a "de-Stalinization" of Soviet domestic and foreign policy. The split undercut the prevailing western notion of a monolithic Communist threat from unified Sino-Soviet actions. Additionally this break adjusted China's diplomatic posture toward the United States.<sup>93</sup>

Even as the effects of this Sino-Soviet split's acute phase rippled through the 1960s, Khrushchev still wielded the China question as a diplomatic tool for the U.S.S.R. After the so-called "Albanian Resolution" introduced the issue of Chinese representation (CHIREP) in 1961, Khrushchev described the situation in a speech before the U.N. as "anomalous that (mainland) China is not having her seat at the U.N."<sup>94</sup> Khrushchev foresaw an increasingly global impact of the CHIREP issue. "The peoples are waiting for it," he declaimed, "it is only a matter of time."<sup>95</sup>

Who are these "peoples" identified by Khrushchev? It is possible he meant the massive citizenry of the PRC, but Khrushchev was probably signaling the growing community of nations not aligned with the powers of the West nor the U.S.S.R. Indeed the second factor affecting the issue of CHIREP can be located in this group of non-aligned states exploding from the collapse of the 19<sup>th</sup> century colonial empires following

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<sup>93</sup> A. Doak Barnett, *The Making of Foreign Policy in China: Structure and Process* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1985), 139.

<sup>94</sup> Nikita Khrushchev, "On the Need for Relaxation of Tensions" 30 October 1962, Chapter 15 "The Rise of Détente" in *The Cold War: A History in Documents and Eyewitness Accounts*, eds. Jussi M. Hanhimaki and Odd Arne Westad., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*

World War II. Decolonization saw an efflorescence of new sovereign states across Africa, Southwest and Southeast Asia, and Eastern Europe. Following Tunisia, Morocco, and Sudan in 1956, fifty-four more delegations claiming their voice at the U.N. by 1971.<sup>96</sup>

Along with the PRC, this new voting bloc represented a third power, apart from the spheres of the U.S. and the U.S.S.R., independent in histories, goals, and methods. Recent scholarship suggests the PRC considered this growing block of non-aligned nations vital to its foreign policy as early as 1953.<sup>97</sup> China appeared to signal its leadership role with this third Cold War bloc at the Asian-African conference held in Bandung, Indonesia in 1955.<sup>98</sup> Twenty years later, Mao put forth his “Theory of Three Worlds” in 1974 just before his death.<sup>99</sup> Thus, from nearly the beginning of the PRC in 1949, its leadership has recognized its preeminent role in the non-aligned world.

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<sup>96</sup> “Growth in United Nations Membership, 1945-Present,” August 6 2015, <http://www.un.org/en/sections/member-states/growth-united-nations-membership-1945-present/index.html>.

<sup>97</sup> Gong Li, “Preface,” in *Normalization of U.S.-China Relations: An International History*, ed. William C. Kirby, Robert S. Ross, and Gong Li (Harvard University Asia Center, 2007), xii. “Some Chinese scholars also suggested that although the change in US policy toward China in the early 1970s played a role in Mainland China’s rejoining the United Nations, the process began in the 1950s, and that had the “Cultural Revolution” not impeded progress in the 1960s, it would have been completed several years earlier.”

<sup>98</sup> I found Naoko Shimazu’s reconsideration of the Bandung Conference relevant to this paper specifically and fascinating more generally, see “Diplomacy As Theatre: Staging the Bandung Conference of 1955” in *Modern Asian Studies* 48, no. 1 (2014). Shimazu’s more anthropologically-minded approach to the subject of Bandung and the Non-Aligned Movement has some antecedents such as Akhil Gupta’s “The Song of the Nonaligned World: Transnational Identities and the Reinscription of Space in Late Capitalism,” *Cultural Anthropology* 7, no. 1 (1992): 63–79. More perspectives on the legacy of Bandung can be found in Amitav Acharya and See Seng Tan, eds., *Bandung Revisited: The Legacy of the 1955 Asian-African Conference for International Order* (Singapore: National University of Singapore Press, 2008).

<sup>99</sup> Editorial Department of *Renmin Ribao* (*People’s Daily*), “The Countries and the People of the Third World Constitute the Main Force Combating Imperialism, Colonialism, and Hegemonism,” *Chairman Mao’s Theory of the Differentiation of the Three Worlds is a Major Contribution to Marxism-Leninism*, transcribed by Paul Saba, November 1, 1977, <https://www.marxists.org/history/erol/ncm-5/theory-3-worlds/section3.htm>.

The importance of this proliferation of new states to the USUN's diplomatic strategy was not lost on the U.S. State Department. In mid-September, Bush received an overview of U.N. member nations' attitudes toward the CHIREP issue from staffer Harry Thayer. It laid out in plain fact what many knew already. The PRC had achieved a remarkable parity with the island of Taiwan. Each enjoyed diplomatic relations with around sixty states, while both boasted a nearly equal number of states which recognized their sovereignty.<sup>100</sup>

What were the stakes of membership in the United Nations for the two opposing China's? For the small ROC, retention of its seat at the UN meant continued political legitimacy, but also the added value of membership in the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Access to the economic aid those programs provided was vital, especially as its relationship with the U.S. frayed.

For the PRC, membership in the U.N. meant global recognition of both their regional hegemony as well as their unofficial leadership within the third bloc of non-aligned states. Such legitimacy generated leverage against both the U.S. and the U.S.S.R., crucial for the PRC's successful foreign policy implementation. As torch-bearer for what they perceived as the 'true communism,' membership at the U.N. represented a tremendous step for the world revolution.

From the 1960s, the People's Socialist Republic of Albania introduced annually a resolution which sought to settle the CHIREP issue through the expulsion of the ROC in favor of the communist PRC. In September 1971, the People's Socialist Republic of

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<sup>100</sup> Memorandum, Mr. Thayer to George Bush, 15 September 1971, folder 10, OA/ID 25863, United Nations Files, George Bush Collection, George Bush Presidential Library.

Albania introduced its perennial resolution which argued the ROC place at the U.N. to be “unlawful,” demanding ejection of ROC representatives.<sup>101</sup> But this year, the United States would counter with its own resolution.<sup>102</sup> It would be George Bush’s task to push it through.

At a meeting of Nixon’s National Security Council (NSC) back in March 1971, the “dual representation” solution to the CHIREP issue was suggested by “Kissinger and Rogers.”<sup>103</sup> This U.S. potential counter-strategy to the annual Albanian Resolution would theoretically push seats for both delegations at the U.N., with China’s Security Council seat occupied by the PRC. But generally the tenor of the NSC remained inflexible toward CHIREP. As well, Vice President Spiro Agnew, a cold warrior and dedicated anti-communist pushed for “(going) down with the ship.”<sup>104</sup> “Asians will respect us more, etc.” Secretary of the Treasury John Connally described the political benefits an obvious enemy provided.<sup>105</sup> Bush agreed, the PRC represented “something to be against,” a good foil for U.S. democratic ideology.<sup>106</sup>

But at the start of August 1971, Secretary of State William Rogers issued a statement specifically addressing the inevitable annual vote on CHIREP. Hinting at a dual representation strategy, Rogers referenced recent Nixon pragmatism in Latin America.

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<sup>101</sup> “A/L.630 Restoration of the Lawful Rights of the People’s Republic of China in the United Nations”, 25 September 1971, folder 9, OA/ID 25861, United Nations Files, George Bush Collection, George Bush Presidential Library.

<sup>102</sup> “A/L.635 The Representation of China in the United Nations”, 29 September 1971; “A/L.634 The Representation of China in the United Nations (Important Question)”, 29 September 1971; folder 9, OA/ID 25861, United Nations Files, George Bush Collection, George Bush Presidential Library.

<sup>103</sup> Bush U.N. Diary, 25 March 1971, folder 11, OA/ID 25863, United Nations Files, George Bush Collection, George Bush Presidential Library.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

“We must deal realistically with governments . . . as they are,” read the press release.<sup>107</sup>

The Secretary’s clumsy attempt at a Kissinger-style realpolitik fell flat, though, when it came time for questions from the press pool.<sup>108</sup> The next day, the ROC Foreign Ministry in Taipei did not hide its concern over Secretary Rogers’s statement, warning of “infiltration, subversion, and eventual destruction (of the U.N.)” should the PRC be seated.<sup>109</sup>

A few days later, U.N. staffer Harry Thayer’s memo suggested the doomed effort to save the ROC had heated up. “We will have made opening pitches,” he wrote, “to at least forty (other U.N.) missions.”<sup>110</sup> On the 17<sup>th</sup>, Bush moved to get ahead of the CHIREP problem and officially introduced an agenda item titled “The Representation of China in the United Nations.”<sup>111</sup> The next day, a briefing paper circulated which both acknowledged the change in attitude toward the PRC signaled by the dual representation plan and prepared U.S. officials for anticipated press queries on the agenda item’s conspicuous lack of content.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Press Release, USUN-108-(71) 2 August 1971, folder 11, OA/ID 25863, United Nations Files, George Bush Collection, George Bush Presidential Library.

<sup>108</sup> “Q: Mr. Secretary, from the wording of this statement, it would appear that the United States would be also in favor of both Vietnams, both Koreas and both Germanies. Is that a correct assumption?” Ibid. Back in March, Bush and State Department staff member Phil Habib visited with General Secretary U Thant following the early NSC meeting on the prospect of dual representation. Habib voiced similar concerns then, “Some things you ought to think of, namely, this might open the door for the North Vietnamese to do it.” Bush U.N. Diary, 28 March 1971, folder 11, OA/ID 25863, United Nations Files, George Bush Collection, George Bush Presidential Library.

<sup>109</sup> Tad Szulc, “U. S. Backs U. N. Seat for Peking, Opposes Ousting Taiwan,” *The New York Times*, August 3, 1971. <https://www.nytimes.com/1971/08/03/archives/us-backs-un-seat-for-peking-opposes-ousting-taiwan-old-policy-ended.html>.

<sup>110</sup> Memorandum, Harry Thayer to George Bush, 5 August 1971, folder 1, OA/ID 25862, United Nations Files, George Bush Collection, George Bush Presidential Library.

<sup>111</sup> Letter, George Bush to Secretary-General of the United Nations, 17 August 1971, folder 10, OA/ID 25861, United Nations Files, George Bush Collection, George Bush Presidential Library.

<sup>112</sup> “Press Briefing Paper, Subject: Chinese Representation,” 18 August 1971, folder 10, OA/ID 25861, United Nations Files, George Bush Collection, George Bush Presidential Library.



The previous summer, Nixon had surprised everyone with an announcement that he would visit the People's Republic of China. Even as the CHIREP issue was coming to head the U.S. and the PRC negotiated the details of this upcoming summit. Kissinger led these negotiations, and he intended to announce on October 5 another upcoming trip to Beijing.<sup>113</sup> This trip's timing complicated the CHIREP situation, so Bush conferred with the two statesmen.

Nixon gave Bush a long leash and advised him to operate with a free hand tactically, to "go all out—especially on procedural matters."<sup>114</sup> But Nixon also reminded him to think ahead and to have his main speech prepared "before (the) vote."<sup>115</sup> However the USUN's institutional short-circuit clouded the meeting, and the disconnect between Bush's two supervisors, Secretary of State Rogers and Henry Kissinger, remained a problem.<sup>116</sup> At a meeting later that day between Bush and NSC assistant Al Haig, the two agreed that the U.S. very well might lose the CHIREP vote.<sup>117</sup> Despite the administration's forethought, meetings, and strategic planning, bullet-points from this meeting with Haig such as "much delay as possible" and "scratch heads on what to do" suggest U.S. officials at the mercy of the developing events.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Robert B. Semple Jr., "Kissinger to Visit China to Prepare for Nixon's Trip," *The New York Times*, October 6, 1971, <https://www.nytimes.com/1971/10/06/archives/kissinger-to-visit-china-to-prepare-for-nixons-trip-asserts-that-he.html>. On October 5th the White House indeed announced the Kissinger trip. Taking the podium for the presser himself, Kissinger did not address the trip's curious timing.

<sup>114</sup> Handwritten notes, "China vote and later private meeting," Sept-Oct 1971, folder 3, OA/ID 25863, United Nations Files, George Bush Collection, George Bush Presidential Library.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid. Bush's meeting notes address communication problems between the State Department and the White House. As well, Nixon's Press Secretary Ronald Ziegler had misspoke, referring to Henry Kissinger as the Secretary of State and leaving Rogers "furious." This meeting also demanded secrecy, as Bush writes that Secretary Rogers was "not supposed to know I'm there."

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

On October 10th, Secretary of State Rogers joined CBS's *Face the Nation* to relate the importance of settling the CHIREP issue to the American public. Rogers noted that the PRC represented a population of 700 million and should not be isolated from "trade, cultural exchange, scientific exchanges, (exchanges) of journalists, and so forth."<sup>119</sup> The tight "horse race" to keep the ROC represented at the U.N. "would be very close," added Rogers.<sup>120</sup> To lose it would subsequently trouble the status of "ten other nations" that exhibited similar intranational conflicts.<sup>121</sup>

*Face the Nation*'s George Herman wondered if, given the upcoming visits to Beijing by both Kissinger and Nixon, the State Department was merely "going through the motions" for a "credible public defense" of the ROC.<sup>122</sup> Did the U.S. have its "eye on Peking, not Taiwan?"<sup>123</sup> The question put Rogers on his heels. States which sought the expulsion of the ROC ought to look at the bigger ramifications of such a decision, he argued.<sup>124</sup> The entire history of the United Nations could be wholly delegitimized.<sup>125</sup>

Rogers insisted the CHIREP vote was not as close as news reports might make it sound. Privately he'd received many assurances of pro-ROC votes. Smelling blood, Herman cut the Secretary off mid-sentence. "Which ones?" he demanded.<sup>126</sup> "Well," Rogers demurred, "I'm not going to say."<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Transcript, *Face the Nation*, 10 October 1971, folder 1, OA/ID 25862, United Nations Files, George Bush Collection, George Bush Presidential Library.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid. Rogers did not specify the ten nations.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

On his copy of the transcript, Bush highlighted the next exchange as significant. These international issues at the U.N., did they affect the willingness of Congress to continue financing the U.N.? If the ROC were ejected, would Congress close its purse? When pressed, Rogers was forced to admit, “Yes, I think we’ll have difficulty” there.<sup>128</sup> Many senators had stated exactly this.<sup>129</sup> Should Congress pull its funding assistance to the U.N., it was George Bush as head of the host mission who would handle the budgetary headaches.<sup>130</sup>

A draft of Bush’s introduction to the official CHIREP debate scheduled for October 18th soon made the rounds at the State Department.<sup>131</sup> The scribbled notes indicate a desire to tame the language of conflict, leaving room in the speech’s language for future cooperation with the inevitable PRC delegation at the United Nations. The PRC’s “exclusion” from the U.N. was rejected in favor of its “absence.”<sup>132</sup> The “cold and forbidding attitude in Peking” was struck for the anodyne “Peking’s former posture.”<sup>133</sup> The expulsion of the ROC would no longer “tear this organization apart,” but would “damage the very fabric” of the U.N.<sup>134</sup> The United States plan to solve CHIREP with dual representation, the speech now read, “carefully closes no doors.”<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> Transcript, *Face the Nation*, 10 October 1971, folder 1, OA/ID 25862, United Nations Files, George Bush Collection, George Bush Presidential Library.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> A few days after Rogers appeared on *Face the Nation*, Democratic congressman John J. Rooney announced during session that members of the United Nations “should be made aware of the fact that Uncle Sam no longer intends to be ‘Uncle Sap’.” Copy of Congressional Record, 14 October 1971, folder 6, OA/ID 24861, United Nations Files, George Bush Collection, George Bush Presidential Library.

<sup>131</sup> “Herb, this is same copy you saw and scribbled on before . . . I transferred all your changes to copy and gave Mike (whom I gather gave it to Bush).” Draft Statement by Ambassador Bush, 18 October 1971, folder 1, OA/ID 25862, United Nations Files, George Bush Collection, George Bush Presidential Library.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

The State Department machine prepared a statement which walked a careful line of mediation, setting a firm but cooperative tone for the upcoming debate. But following the Albanian delegation's introduction of their CHIREP proposal, a frustrated Bush introduced the speech with surprising invective.<sup>136</sup> Bush delivered the statement's first two sentences as prepared, then began to voice his personal opinions. The Albanian officials spoke "outrageous slanders" and "old-fashioned tirade."<sup>137</sup> They "rolled the clock back" with "clichés of the Cold War," but Bush declared he would take the high road "without name calling."<sup>138</sup> Regaining his composure, Bush continued with the speech as prepared by the State Department.

The friction between George Bush's two bosses cut his feet from beneath him at this crucial moment in the CHIREP debate, the introductory statement by the United States.<sup>139</sup> Bush initially "felt that the speech was going to be cleared out of the White House," meaning Kissinger and Nixon. But Secretary of State Rogers phoned Bush, and they "went over it" agreeing to "certain changes."<sup>140</sup> All seemed settled. Then, "five minutes before" he was to deliver the speech, Bush received a call with changes "the White House insisted on."<sup>141</sup> Kissinger's assistant Al Haig made the phone-call, and

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<sup>136</sup> "Statement by Ambassador George Bush, United States Representative to the United Nations, in Plenary, on Chinese Representation," USUN-163(71), 18 October 1971, *Press Release (United States Mission to the United Nations)* (New York: United States Mission to the United Nations, 1971). <https://books.google.com/books?id=Yulf7qJTNKgC>. Original S 5.55: 1971, no. 97-229 from Ruth Lilly Auxiliary Library Facility, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana. Scanned 20 May 2019. Accessed 14 January, 2019.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> "The problem between the State Department and NSC. The clearance of our speech was another incident." Bush U.N. Diary, 21 October 1971, folder 14, OA/ID 25863, United Nations Files, George Bush Collection, George Bush Presidential Library.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

insisted he would “go to the President” if Bush did not comply.<sup>142</sup> One can understand how Bush felt afterward that “it was not a good situation.”<sup>143</sup>

On October 23rd, two days before the CHIREP vote, Bush spoke with Kissinger to again tighten up “procedures for working together.”<sup>144</sup> Any agreement in principle between the two, Bush was to implement outright. Kissinger reassured Bush of the Nixon administration’s unfailing support. Once more, Bush was told that “you’re our man.”<sup>145</sup> Bush noticed a continued paranoia from Kissinger toward Secretary of State Rogers, jotting down in his notes that the NSA was “Gun shy about State Dept knowing anything.”<sup>146</sup> Two days later, the U.S. lost the CHIREP fight. On October 25th, the General Assembly of the United Nations voted down the resolution for dual representation. The tally, fifty-nine against and fifty-five for, was as much a referendum on U.S. hegemony as a coronation of communist China. “The villains are documented in our [file],” Bush wrote, and “some anti-American delegates literally danced in the aisles.”<sup>147</sup> The ROC delegation walked out to applause.<sup>148</sup>

For some in the New York media, though, the defeat at the United Nations belonged to George Herbert Walker Bush. President Nixon put Bush in front of the

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<sup>142</sup> Bush U.N. Diary, 21 October 1971, folder 14, OA/ID 25863, United Nations Files, George Bush Collection, George Bush Presidential Library.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> Handwritten notes, “3 P.M. Oct 23 H. Kissinger”, 23 October 1971, folder 3, OA/ID 25863, United Nations Files, George Bush Collection, George Bush Presidential Library.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> Bush U.N. Diary, 31 October 1971, folder 14, OA/ID 25863, United Nations Files, George Bush Collection, George Bush Presidential Library. Video footage supports Bush’s recollection of schadenfreude on the part of some U.N. member states. Jeers follow Bush’s ‘yay’ vote and a largely jubilant General Assembly upon the tallying up of the ‘nays.’ See video published by British Movietone (Associated Press), “UNITED NATIONS MEETING - CHINA VOTE - SOUND - COLOUR,” YouTube video, 4:01, July 21, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sfOIEjuXFyU>.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

cameras of television talk-shows *Firing Line, Issues and Answers*, and *The Dick Cavett Show* in an effort to spin the CHIREP loss.<sup>149</sup> Some blame caught up with Bush on Capitol Hill as well, with one Representative calling for his resignation.<sup>150</sup> But many felt he had been “sandbagged,” and voiced support, notably Gerald Ford who was not yet Nixon’s Vice President.<sup>151</sup> Bush would, however, have to visit several Congressional committees and do “a little hand-holding in Washington.”<sup>152</sup>

Documents released in 2002 describe a July 1971 meeting between Kissinger and the PRC Prime Minister Zhou Enlai.<sup>153</sup> Several months before the CHIREP debate heated up, Zhou raised the prospect of a dual representation resolution at the U.N. which the PRC would of course oppose “because that means two China’s.”<sup>154</sup> Kissinger plainly assured the official, “this is temporarily one China, one Taiwan.”<sup>155</sup> Zhou noted the contradiction between such an attitude and Nixon’s overtures toward the PRC. Kissinger then admitted that forcing a decision on the CHIREP issue could be a “good way to end

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<sup>149</sup> “This weekend I have done three television shows . . . the president wants my interpretive backup . . .” Bush U.N. Diary, 31 October 1971, folder 14, OA/ID 25863, United Nations Files, George Bush Collection, George Bush Presidential Library.

<sup>150</sup> Letter, Tom Lias (Bush aide) to George Bush, 26 October 1971, folder 6, OA/ID 25861, United Nations Files, George Bush Collection, George Bush Presidential Library.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

<sup>153</sup> “Memorandum of Conversation, Chinese Government Guest House Peking, 11 July 1971 10:35a to 11:55a” (The National Security Archive at the George Washington University), OA/ID 1031, Exchanges Leading Up to HAK Trip to China - December 1969-July 1971 (1), National Security Archive, accessed October 2, 2019, <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB66/ch-38.pdf>. More at “The Beijing-Washington Back-Channel and Henry Kissinger’s Secret Trip to China, September 1970-July 1971,” *National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book* no. 66 (February 27, 2002), <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB66/>.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

the issue.”<sup>156</sup> Indeed, the vote at the U.N. on October 25th ended the issue for China, the U.S., and George Bush.

While Bush did not initially think Kissinger intentionally threw the match, as time passed he adopted a more critical position on the severe handicap Kissinger’s visit placed on the U.S. position.<sup>157</sup> Bush’s initial thoughts as recorded in his U.N. diary describe mixed feelings toward Kissinger’s secret visits to the People’s Republic of China. “There is no question in my mind that the Kissinger visit gave our position some incredibility,” Bush reflected, but also that he believed Kissinger “did not deliberately sabotage the UN vote.”<sup>158</sup> Years after the 1971 CHIREP vote, in conversation with Taiwanese Ambassador James Shen, Bush wondered “what was Kissinger doing in Beijing?”<sup>159</sup> Regardless, NSA Kissinger’s phoned Bush in “an ugly mood” and blamed him for procedural breakdowns.<sup>160</sup> The call ended with Bush’s boss Kissinger stating flatly, “I am not amused.”<sup>161</sup>

During its first year, the PRC at the United Nations expressed a tendency toward maintaining its “negotiating cooperation” posture with the United States. The two shared

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<sup>156</sup> “Memorandum of Conversation, Chinese Government Guest House Peking, 11 July 1971 10:35a to 11:55a” (The National Security Archive at the George Washington University), OA/ID 1031, Exchanges Leading Up to HAK Trip to China - December 1969-July 1971 (1), National Security Archive, accessed October 2, 2019, <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB66/ch-38.pdf>.

<sup>157</sup> Bush U.N. Diary, 31 October, 1971, folder 14, OA/ID 25863, United Nations Files, George Bush Collection, George Bush Presidential Library.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> Jaw-ling Joanne Chang, “Taiwan’s Policy Toward the United States 1969-1978,” in *Normalization of U.S.-China Relations: An International History*, ed. William C. Kirby, Robert S. Ross, and Gong Li (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2006), 233. Also see Brent Scowcroft’s opinion that “Kissinger pulled the rug out from under (Bush) at the U.N.” in interview with Jeffrey Engel in “A Better World . . . but Don’t Get Carried Away: The Foreign Policy of George H. W. Bush Twenty Years On,” *Diplomatic History* 34, no. 1 (January 2010): 25–46.

<sup>160</sup> Bush U.N. Diary, 31 October, 1971, folder 14, OA/ID 25863, United Nations Files, George Bush Collection, George Bush Presidential Library.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

outlooks on global events which threatened hot wars such as conflicts between India and Pakistan, the rapidly developing issue of international terrorism, and the U.N. supervision of the complex border arrangements between Lebanon and Israel.<sup>162</sup> At the same time, the PRC leveraged its increasingly strong position outside the U.S.-U.S.S.R. dichotomy to push the interests of non-aligned nations regarding concerns such as African political and economic independence, seabed and coastal sovereignty, and the intersection of environmental concerns with underdevelopment.<sup>163</sup>

Though forced to take the fall for CHIREP, Bush labored on at the USUN for another year. His eventual departure from the USUN in January 1973 to chair the Republican National Committee (RNC) for president Nixon disappointed some.<sup>164</sup> This jump back into party politics would eventually disappoint Bush himself when the Watergate scandal began to force the Nixon Administration's focus away from foreign diplomacy.<sup>165</sup> As Bush grabbed the wheel at the RNC, the increasingly problematic Watergate situation placed him on the defensive, and he was forced to spend "an enormous amount of time as chairman trying to reassure (Republicans) that . . . the party

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<sup>162</sup> Memorandum, "PRC and the Non-aligned in the UN", 12 September 1972, folder 7, OA/ID 25861, United Nations Files, George Bush Collection, George Bush Presidential Library.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

<sup>164</sup> Letter, George Bush to President Richard M. Nixon, 21 November 1972, folder 15, OA/ID 25863, United Nations Files, Bush Archive; "Downgrading the U.N. . . .," *The New York Times*, December 15, 1972. <https://www.nytimes.com/1972/12/15/archives/downgrading-the-un-.html>. The New York Times expressed concern over this "downgrading" of the USUN and cites the Nixon administration's return to the use of the USUN chief post as a sinecure for defeated party members in its appointment of Bush. Four days later the Times editorial board doubled down on the "downgrading" language when they skewered Nixon's nomination of foreign affairs journalist and political neophyte John Scali to replace the departing Bush. ". . . the naming of Mr. Scali compounds the downgrading of the United Nations . . .", see "Downgrading the U.N.," *The New York Times*, December 19, 1972. <https://www.nytimes.com/1972/12/19/archives/downgrading-the-un.html>.

<sup>165</sup> Robert S. Ross, *Negotiating Cooperation* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995), 56.



had nothing to do with Watergate, and that our President was innocent.”<sup>166</sup> An impossible task, as Nixon eventually faced impeachment, then resignation, and the Republican party was left to pick up the pieces. Looking back in 2013, Bush offered a curt assessment of his year directing the RNC. “It was not an easy job.”<sup>167</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> Bush, *All the Best* (2013), 165.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*

## Conclusion

When post-Watergate caretaker Gerald Ford presented Bush with an offer to return to diplomatic work, Bush retreated to the other side of the globe.<sup>168</sup> Despite the obvious paradox, he opted to direct the recently-established U.S. Liaison Office in Beijing.<sup>169</sup> Bush flew in to Beijing's dynamic diplomatic community, ready to treat with a post-CHIREP China that he presented in his diary as a unique, crucial actor for the emerging globalized future.<sup>170</sup> Instead the diplomat found himself restrained by familiar bureaucratic frictions and constrained by acute cross-cultural myopia.

American industry, academia, and cultural operators hungry for China's massive, largely untapped consumer base almost exclusively faced disappointment and rejection from the USLO in Beijing.<sup>171</sup> Bush was "unable to put in the requested personal word" for a Washington Press Club junket.<sup>172</sup> "I wish I could be more encouraging," Bush wrote to a professional soccer club.<sup>173</sup> A music festival asked for help facilitating Chinese participation, but he was forced to admit that "the USLO have little influence over these

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<sup>168</sup> Bush, *China Diary* (2008), 5.

<sup>169</sup> Bush's interaction with Chinese officials at the USUN didn't end with CHIREP, of course. Neither did they disappear during his turn back to party politics at the RNC. Just before he joined the USLO in Beijing, PRC diplomat Huang Hua hosted the Bushes for a "going-away party," see Bush, *China Diary* (2008), 8-9. Hua served as Foreign Minister for the People's Republic of China beginning in 1976.

<sup>170</sup> Engel, *When the World Seemed New* (2017), 42; Bush, *China Diary* (2008), 5.

<sup>171</sup> Misconceptions fueled this appetite for entry into China's markets. Diplomat Chas Freeman Jr. described an exemplary case in which a Texas casket maker "foresaw one-point-something-or-other billion in caskets being sold over the course of his lifetime and was salivating at that." Freeman added, "Of course, modern China uses cremation, but he didn't know that." Tucker, *China Confidential* (2001), 259. See,

<sup>172</sup> Letter, George Bush to Mr. Ron Sarro, 4 November 1974, folder 15, OA/ID 25870, China File, George Bush Collection, George Bush Presidential Library.

<sup>173</sup> Letter, George Bush to Mr. Lamar Hunt of the Dallas Tornado Soccer Club, 5 November 1974, folder 8, OA/ID 25870, China File, George Bush Collection, George Bush Presidential Library.

decisions.”<sup>174</sup> A letter to a radio station saw Bush throw up his hands entirely. “If you make it, be sure to let me know.”<sup>175</sup> Diplomacy at the USLO in Beijing presented its own disconnect. Officials for the People’s Republic took a distinctly formal approach to statecraft, and their measured pace stymied Bush’s efforts to make headway. In Beijing, Bush was a gatekeeper without a gate.

Two events which might have provided capstones for Bush’s year in Beijing fizzled where they should have flashed. First President Ford’s visit to Beijing in 1975 played out cordially but with little effect and conspicuously absent a summit-capping communiqué.<sup>176</sup> Faced with friction and far from home, that same year Bush puffed his chest full of true-believer pomp, flew in his family, and tried to assemble a Texas-sized July 4th Independence Day celebration. Though George Bush’s America descended on Beijing in patriotic bunting, hot dogs, Coca-Cola, and cigarettes, the performance was blank with inconsequence.<sup>177</sup> At the end of his USLO tenure just a few months later, Bush noted that in his mind China yet considered the U.S. to be an impotent “paper tiger.”<sup>178</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> Letter, George Bush to The Honorable Hugh Scott, 25 March 1975, folder 5, OA/ID 25876, China File, George Bush Collection, George Bush Presidential Library.

<sup>175</sup> Letter, George Bush to Jim Farr, Radio KKUB, 19 August 1975, folder 3, OA/ID 25871, China File, George Bush Collection, George Bush Presidential Library.

<sup>176</sup> Ross, *Negotiating Cooperation* (1995), 85. These meetings were “friendly but eventful.” The summit was “one of the dullest meetings” one unnamed participant had ever attended. Ford and Mao “found nothing more to say with more than a half hour remaining in their meeting.”

<sup>177</sup> Bush, *China Diary* (2008), 346. On the evening of July 3 Bush hosted a more staid reception he thought might span his perception of the U.S.-China cultural divide. Ranking guests such as Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade, and Public health gathered in the dining room, separated from the rest of the attendees who dined on the outdoor patios. “We did it the Chinese way,” Bush confessed in his diary and complained that the Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs was “absolutely impossible . . . totally negative,” responding only with questions and evasive non-answers.

<sup>178</sup> Bush, *China Diary* (2008), 347; Letter, George Bush to Tom Lias, 29 October 1975, Bush, *All The Best* (2013), 233. As early as 1956 Chairman Mao Zedong located the source of American anemia in its self-alienation, “it is divorced from the masses of the people and is disliked by everybody and by the American people too. In appearance it is very powerful but in reality it is nothing to be afraid of, it is a paper tiger . . . unable to withstand the wind and the rain.” Mao Zedong, “U.S. Imperialism is a Paper Tiger,” 14 July 1956, *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*, <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao>

The inexperienced diplomat could not have imagined on his arrival at the USUN in 1970 how completely China would populate the political, professional, and personal rhythms of his life. But from this first experience with diplomacy during the CHIREP fight, Bush labored to plait a special relationship with his China-imaginary. A few years after leaving the USLO in 1975, he visited China as a business-minded civilian on the invitation of then-ascendant Chinese Communist Party official Deng Xiaoping.<sup>179</sup> High-profile visits as Reagan's Vice President came in 1980, 1982, and again in 1985.<sup>180</sup>

It's possible that Bush hoped his return to China as president in 1989 would signal he had moved from confounded to confident, from low-level State Department sinologist to seasoned "China Hand."<sup>181</sup> When the People's Liberation Army violently suppressed protestors and civilians just months later, the typically delegatory Bush did lean on his long-standing personal relationships with Chinese officials. Bush managed the situation through a "near monopolization of China Policy."<sup>182</sup> But his public cessation of high-level communication with the Chinese Communist Party failed to signal a hard stance against the massacre in Tiananmen Square. Despite such posturing Bush retained covert contact with Chinese Communist Party officials, and he dispatched his National Security Advisor

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<sup>179</sup> James Lilley, *China Hands*, (New York; London: Public Affairs, 2004); Parmet, *George Bush* (1997), 85, 210.

<sup>180</sup> Parmet, *George Bush* (1997), 248–249; "The August 17, 1982 U.S.-China Communiqué on Arms Sales to Taiwan," United States Office of the Historian, accessed March 30, 2020, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1981-1988/china-communicue>; John F. Burns, "China Greets Bush with a Warning," *The New York Times*, October 14, 1985, <https://www.nytimes.com/1985/10/14/world/china-greets-bush-with-a-warning.html>.

<sup>181</sup> Bush alighted in front of Tiananmen for a triumphal photograph on this trip, and it can be seen at "Did President George H.W. Bush Mishandle China?" China File, December 4, 2018, <https://www.chinafile.com/conversation/did-president-george-hw-bush-mishandle-china>.

<sup>182</sup> Jeffrey A. Engel, "A Better World . . . but Don't Get Carried Away: The Foreign Policy of George H.W. Bush Twenty Years On," *Diplomatic History* 34, No. 1 (January 2010): 37-38.

Brent Scowcroft to hand-deliver a personal letter to leader Deng Xiaoping which bestowed America's critical absolution on the violence.<sup>183</sup>

George H.W. Bush's relationship with China might be seen to have climaxed with this careful non-response to the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre, but he continued to mold his China legacy even after leaving public office. In 2008 Bush produced his *China Diary of George H.W. Bush: The Making of a Global President*. The fascinating book's publication was well-timed: that year the global gaze turned to Beijing for the Summer Olympics. Even after Bush's death in November 2018 work on the Bush-China legacy continued as journalists and concerned parties seized the theme for a litany of obituaries. Indeed Bush authority Jeffrey Engel appeared to close the circuit when he assured CNN that "there's no doubt Beijing sees him as the best friend China has ever had in the White House."<sup>184</sup>

The Bush family's frequent deployment of a cherished image captured during his time at the USLO in Beijing suggests he kept his China-imaginary close.<sup>185</sup> He and his wife

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<sup>183</sup> Engel, "A Better World . . .", 37–38. A letter from Bush on June 23 assured Deng that the United States would tolerate the human rights abuses and "leave to the history books" judgement on the massacre per "Bush: . . . and Tiananmen" in Patrick Tyler, *A Great Wall*, (New York: Public Affairs, 1999), 363. The letter appears in full in both George Bush's *All the Best* (2013) and Jeffrey Engel's *When the World Seemed New* (2017). The relationship with Deng Xiaoping began in November 1974 and continued after Bush left the USLO in Beijing for the C.I.A. Bush states explicitly that his relationship with Deng convinced him to "keep relations with them going after Tiananmen Square" in his *China Diary* (2008), 47n104.

<sup>184</sup> "How George H.W. Bush Became Beijing's 'old Friend' in the White House," CNN.com, December 1, 2018, <https://www.cnn.com/2018/12/01/asia/george-h-w-bush-china-intl/index.html>.

<sup>185</sup> The "Bushes, bicycles, and Mao" image can be viewed at the George Bush Presidential Museum and Library website, "H013-26.Jpg (472x600)," accessed March 19, 2020, <https://bush41library.tamu.edu/photo-view/789/H013-26.jpg>. Consideration of this photograph and the layering of meaning which surrounds it was aided by the archivist Eric Ketelaar's notion that records are "activated" upon their use. Each of these activations both "changes the significance of earlier activations" and produces a "semantic genealogy" around the record, in "Tacit Narratives: The Meaning of Archives," *Archival Science* 1, no. 2 (June 2001): 131–141. Roland Barthes's book-length meditation on the powerful "emanation of past reality" that photographs vitalize was also quite useful, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), 88, 109. The philosopher and semiotician Barthes visited China just

Barbara chose this image for their 1975 family Christmas card.<sup>186</sup> Blown-up to a colossal banner, the image greeted visitors to the George Bush Presidential Library and Museum.<sup>187</sup> There's even evidence that Chinese Communist Party officials valued the image as well.<sup>188</sup> The picture remains atop a 2009 feature on the English-language China Daily website which emphasized the special relationship between the Bush family and China.<sup>189</sup>

This image was captured on May 30, 1975. Journalist John Burns had lately been “running around taking pictures, jumping out from behind trees” in the Chinese capital to capture George Bush and his wife Barbara in situ for a “’lifestyle’ in Peking kind of thing” that would soon run in *People Magazine*.<sup>190</sup> He posed the couple “at the Forbidden City. . . for a cover shot.”<sup>191</sup> In the photo, George and Barbara Bush stand with their

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months before Bush arrived at the USLO in Beijing, a trip he chronicled in notebooks that remained unpublished until 2009, later published in English as *Travels in China*, trans. Andrew Brown, ed. Anne Herschberg Pierrot (Cambridge, MA: Polity Press, 2012); see review by H. Swindall in *China Review International* 19, no. 3 (2012): 419–23; Bush’s proclamation in 1974 that “Everybody wants to go to China” in his *China Diary* applied to the French intellectual Left fascinated by the Cultural Revolution as covered in Yiju Huang’s “Badiou and the Chinese Cultural Revolution,” *Comparative Literature Studies* 52, no. 1 (2015): 29–46; and Dora Zhang’s review of Barthes’s *Travels in China* at Dora Zhang, “The Sideways Gaze: Roland Barthes’s Travels in China,” *Los Angeles Review of Books*, accessed March 9, 2020, <https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/the-sideways-gaze-roland-barthes-travels-in-china/>.

<sup>186</sup> The back of this 1975 Christmas card featured images of the Bush children at a site along the Great Wall, the Summer Palace, and the Ming Dynasty Tombs and can be accessed on the Bush Library website at “HS1074a.Jpg (700×292),” accessed April 7, 2020, <https://bush41library.tamu.edu/photo-view/2511/HS1074a.jpg>.

<sup>187</sup> When I visited the George H.W. Bush Presidential Library and Museum in June 2019 a series of these massive photo-banners wreathed the Bush Museum’s rotunda in a particular narrative chronology. The banners presented Bush as the Yale baseball captain, a Capitol Hill family-man, Ambassador to the U.N., Chair of the RNC, with Barbara in Beijing, at his C.I.A. desk, et cetera. They are participants in the museum’s powerful mechanism which lays out the Bush legacy.

<sup>188</sup> “The Bush Family and China,” [chinadaily.com.cn](http://chinadaily.com.cn), May 31, 2009, accessed March 9, 2020, [https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/09usofficials/2009-05/31/content\\_7956346.htm](https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/09usofficials/2009-05/31/content_7956346.htm).

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>190</sup> Bush, *China Diary* (2008), 227; Bush, *All the Best* (2013), 222; Copy of *People Weekly* article, “George and Barbara Bush at Home in Peking,” 5 May 1975, folder 13, OA/ID 25879, China File, George Bush Collection, George Bush Presidential Library.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*, 222. The photograph did not make the *People Weekly* cover. That honor went to “Millionaire Brat of Tennis” Jimmy Connors.

bicycles before Tiananmen, the Gate of Heavenly Peace. The sun lowers toward the horizon, and the shadows cast by residents of Beijing and People's Liberation Army soldiers stretch across the ground. Chairman Mao joins the diplomat and his wife, though he is only a portrait which peers over their shoulders, his face a balance of benevolence and inscrutability. Barbara smiles, and George squints out at China and into the sun which paints the caves of his eyes in darkness. The journalist's camera clicks.

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## Vita

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