PRC became concerned that it might be next, leading it to look for support from other nations, including the United States. With both sides interested in improved relations, the door was open to the Sino-American rapprochement of 1972.

Yet Richard Nixon’s trip to Beijing could have been delayed indefinitely. It was he who in 1967 wrote in the journal *Foreign Affairs* of the need to improve relations with China. And it has been Nixon who has received the credit for opening the door to better Sino-American relations. But had the Johnson administration misplayed its cards, Nixon’s goals vis-à-vis China likely would have proven much more difficult to achieve. Mao was becoming increasingly paranoid in the decade or so prior to the beginning of the Cultural Revolution. Not only did the Chinese leader believe that he had enemies around him, but, as Rice suggested, that those enemies would join with the Americans if the United States attacked China. And there was clearly a belief among the Maoists that a Sino-American war was likely, if not definite. Such could be seen in the CCP’s preparations for war with the United States during 1964 and 1965. Mao himself told a group of Japanese Communist officials in early 1966 that a Sino-American war was inevitable and would occur “within two years at the latest.”

Foreign Minister Chen Yi carried this argument a step further. In September 1966, he told Japanese officials that the Cultural Revolution “is [an] inevitable thing for us. It is part of preparation for war. It is so that no back-stabbers emerge when America comes to attack China, or if there are back-stabbers, they will be kept to [a] minimum.” He added later in the conversation that the “direct effect of [the] Great Cultural Revolution is to eliminate forces which would cooperate with [the] US if [the] latter came to attack China.”

In light of such statements, the Johnson administration deserves credit for maintaining its “posture of quiet reasonableness.” Any American statements in opposition to the Maoists easily could have fed Mao’s paranoia to the point that he and his supporters would have believed that they were indeed a target of Washington’s. In turn, they might have been reluctant to improve relations with the United States, even after the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. Though unlikely, the Maoists could have felt so threatened by Washington that they even might have sought to mend relations with the Kremlin. By keeping quiet, the Johnson administration gave the Chinese an option of improving relations with the United States, one which they grabbed.

81. Terrill, 313; Dick Wilson, *The People’s Emperor, Mao: A Biography of Mao Tse-tung* (Garden City, N.Y., 1980), 429.
82. Emmerson to State Department, 17 Sept. 1966, box 10, Memos to the President, NSF, LBJL.
China and America: A Troubled Relationship

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Mao Zedong’s decision to align with the Soviet Union after the founding of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) in 1949 and the subsequent Sino-American confrontation in the Korean War locked the two countries in deep hostility for over two decades. Sino-U.S. relations did not begin to unfreeze until 1969 when border clashes broke out between China and the Soviet Union.

The question why there was no breakthrough in Sino-American relations during the 1950s and 1960s has preoccupied the attention of historians for some time.1 All three articles address this question in one way or another. They draw upon newly available American documents to explore alternative views and proposals that might have modified Washington’s rigid containment policy toward the PRC. While Priscilla Roberts explores dissent opinions throughout the 1950s and 1960s, Jean Kang and Scott Kaufman focus on the policies of the Kennedy and Johnson administrations. They assign different responsibilities for the absence of a rapprochement between Beijing and Washington.

Roberts focuses on the views of Texas millionaire William L. Clayton. Throughout the 1950s and until his death in 1966, Clayton consistently called for American recognition of the PRC and an end to U.S. economic embargo policies. Roberts argues that Clayton’s opinions were shared by a large number of people within the foreign policy establishment—figures like Senator Theodore Francis Green, Senator Mike Monroney, Senator J. William Fulbright, Milton Eisenhower, Chester Bowles, Adlai Stevenson, W. Averell Harriman, Roger Hilsman, Arthur Dean, David Bruce, David Rockefeller, John McCloy, and Lewis Douglas. But despite their prominent positions in American political circles, these individuals failed to alter U.S. policy toward China. A primary reason for the failure of their efforts, according to Roberts, was the long shadow of McCarthyism on politicians during the 1950s and early 1960s.