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**CHINA AND THE U.S. PRESS FROM 1949-1989:
CRITICAL EVENTS FOREIGN POLICY ANALYSIS**

**A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of the School of Journalism and Mass Communications
San Jose State University**

**In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science**

**by
Neil Wu Becker
August 1999**

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ABSTRACT

CHINA AND THE U.S. PRESS FROM 1949-1989: A CRITICAL EVENTS FOREIGN POLICY ANALYSIS

By Neil Wu Becker

This thesis is a content analysis of *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* from 1949-1989 during nine critical events involving the United States and China. It examines Berry's (1990) perspective that the press is dependent on government officials at the outset of a critical event but becomes more independent in assessing foreign policy as time passes. Berry's perspective was not supported. Press coverage was fairly neutral on U.S. policy at both time periods. The press was also fairly neutral toward China, despite its threat to U.S. national security. These findings support Tuchman's (1972) concept of objectivity. The press was concerned with maintaining objective coverage, which involved reporting both sides of an issue. This balancing act produced neutral coverage toward both policy and China and therefore did not support Berry's perspective.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, Carl and Terry Becker, for their unwavering support and for making my life a dream come true.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The United States and China have had a long and rocky relationship. From the end of World War II to the present, the two countries have threatened each other's national security, cold-shouldered each other in diplomatic arenas, clashed on the battlefield, and taken monumental strides toward peace (Chang, 1993; Fairbank, 1979; Hsu, 1981; Jiang, 1988). The United States and China are different socially, economically, and politically. Americans' discordant images of China have focused for decades on the dissimilarity between the two nations and their people (Chang, 1993; Fairbank, 1979; Hsu, 1981). The relations between Washington and Beijing have fluctuated with varying degrees of misunderstanding and tension in large part because of this emphasis on dissimilarity (Chang, 1993; Fairbank, 1979; Hsu, 1981).

During the Cold War, the U.S. government conducted foreign policy toward China that seemed extreme or unnecessary (Fairbank, 1979). Fairbank noted that U.S. policy toward China was often paranoid, which raises the question of how the American press interacted with government officials when covering U.S.-China relations.

This study examined news coverage and the press-government relationship during nine critical events involving China and the United States from 1949 to 1989. The relationship between U.S. government officials and the press can best be examined during critical events (Berry, 1990; Nacos, 1990). Berry (1990) found that the American press depended on government officials at the outset of a critical event. However, as time passed, Berry noted that the press weaned itself from its dependence on government officials and became more critical of policy decisions. Berry's perspective may apply to press coverage of many countries, but this study asked the question of whether it applied to a Communist nation such as China.

This study examined whether the press' tone paralleled the government's stance on U.S. policy during critical events involving China. To analyze Berry's perspective, this study relied on a quantitative content analysis to examine news stories, news analyses, and editorials in *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* from 1949-1989.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Before providing a historical background on the ties between the United States and China during the study period, it is important to examine the relationship between the American press and government. This literature review provides an overview of the political environment the American press and government function in and the relationship between the two institutions, particularly during critical events. The first part of the literature review examines the American political culture and its influence on the two institutions, especially during periods when a threat confronts U.S. national security.

The second part examines literature on critical events and the behavior of the American press and foreign policy makers during these times. The literature review concentrated on press coverage during critical events, focusing largely on Berry's (1990) perspective. The final section of this chapter provides a historical overview of U.S.-China relations from 1949 to 1989 and the theoretical framework for this study.

The Nature of Political Culture and Ideology

Rachlin (1988) noted that press behavior and the news are a result of American political culture. According to Rachlin, there is a relationship between dominant world views within a political culture and news coverage. He added that a free press unrestrained by oppressive government still possessed the potential to undermine democracy “if it is constrained instead by a narrow vision of the world that reproduces existing social relationships by inhibiting the possibility of realizing or even imagining alternative realities” (p. 3). In other words, Rachlin found that humans acted according to what they know and understood and not necessarily according to what they saw or heard.

As a result, the press may be its worst enemy (Rachlin, 1988). The press fostered a nationalistic bias that supported the maintenance of its political culture (Paletz & Entman, 1981; Rachlin, 1988; Tuchman, 1978; Turow, 1992). Rachlin said this dominant world view reinforced ideals and values that were characteristic of the existing political culture. For example, Rachlin (1988) described the prevailing American world view as a “capitalist filter” (p. 127) that was pro-business and anti-Communist. From this perspective, a nation such as Communist China threatened the United States’ political culture.

However, Rachlin (1988) noted that an existing political culture was vulnerable to change. Although dominant ideology may be

reinforced by the state, Rachlin found that individuals developed their own idea of self-determination and individuality. Individuals have often challenged dominant ideologies and existing social, economic, and political orders (Rachlin).

This vulnerability has driven the American political culture to maintain its existing social order and repel alternative world views, such as Communism (Paletz & Entman, 1981; Rachlin, 1988). For example, the United States not only criticized China's Communist structure, the American political culture's defense mechanism prompted the government and press to try to suppress it (Fairbank, 1979; Hsu, 1981).

During international critical events when U.S. national security was threatened, the American press' role in promoting the country's existing political culture became amplified because a challenge to the social order emerged (Rachlin, 1988). But the hope of the press to objectively filter biased information from the government and military paled when considering its place in the American political culture (Schiller, 1981; Turow, 1992).

Schiller (1981) and Turow (1992) contended that American political culture and the country's dominant world view shaped news angles and influenced newsworthiness. Therefore, it was difficult for the press to report objectively because journalists were a part of the political culture (Altschull, 1984; Rachlin, 1988; Schiller, 1981; Steinberg, 1980;

Tuchman, 1978). The mantra of objectivity that the press brandished in legitimating its coverage was suspect. Turow noted: "Close examination, however, will show that the routines of objectivity are not the neutral recording instruments journalists like to believe they are" (1992, p. 158).

If the press promoted nationalism and the existing social order, then such behavior violated the maintenance of complete objectivity in reporting (Rachlin, 1988; Steinberg, 1980; Turow, 1992). A conflict therefore has existed between the norms that have guided journalism ideally and the actual practices of journalists (Rachlin, 1988; Roshco, 1975; Schiller, 1981; Steinberg, 1980; Turow, 1992). News objectivity has merely been a framework legitimizing the press' social power to interpret reality (Schiller, 1981; Tuchman, 1972; Turow, 1992). Whether the press has followed through with objective interpretation is another question (Schiller, 1981; Tuchman, 1972; Turow, 1992).

Aronson (1970) was critical of the press' inability to report objectively when he noted: "For all the surface brilliance and technical achievements, the American press lacks candor and curiosity—let alone courage—in its news coverage, interpretation, and editorial positions" (p. 21). He added: "The press serves the government without pay" (p. 22).

However, Tuchman (1972) noted that objectivity played an important role in shaping press coverage. The nature of the newsmaking process included a built-in defense mechanism against bias. This

defense mechanism, objectivity, helped to maintain newspapers' credibility as a public source of news. If readers ever believed a newspaper compromised its legitimacy as an objective messenger, then its credibility would be shattered and its survival in the industry would be jeopardized.

Thus, reporters and editors are very concerned about criticism from readers (Tuchman, 1972). Any unfavorable coverage is usually balanced by non-critical coverage. Presenting both sides of an issue is a fundamental part of objective reporting. This balancing act made it difficult for readers to blame the messenger for the message (Tuchman).

Therefore, the perspective that the press often fell victim to its nationalistic biases during tense times was not an automatic phenomenon, according to Tuchman's (1972) notion of objectivity. Newspapers' concern over objective reporting kept them in check. This study examined both perspectives—nationalistic bias and objectivity—in the midst of critical events involving China, a Communist nation that was politically, ideologically, and culturally different than the United States.

As this chapter shows, press behavior at its very essence involves human behavior. Rachlin (1988) noted that the press shares the same nationalistic spirit as U.S. citizens because they were organizations comprised of Americans themselves. Thus, it is important to

acknowledge that the same American values that were inherent in U.S. citizens often shape press coverage.

America's Enduring Values in Press Coverage

A strong explanation for the press' inability to shed political and ideological biases is human nature. "There is no way in which the press can be above politics," Altschull (1984) noted, adding that "by virtue of his humanity alone, a journalist is a political creature" (p. 283). The press, simply put, has been its own political institution. Altschull added that, although the press has possessed the potential to be the critic of the social and political order, it couldn't break from government manipulation. In the United States, the press has been a partner with the government (Altschull).

Relevant to this explanation is Gans' (1979) perspective that the press has interpreted and transmitted news with American values that have maintained and defended the United States' prevailing ideology and its existing political culture. Gans (1979) noted that "if the news includes values, it also contains ideology" (p. 45). Of his eight enduring values, several supported Rachlin's (1988) perspective that the press reinforced the country's political culture.

News, Gans (1979) said, contained values that suggested that there was "a picture of a nation and society as it ought to be" (p. 40). These values, which Gans added were "rarely explicit and must be found

between the lines" (p. 40), characterized American press coverage in foreign news.

The eight enduring values Gans (1979) found were: ethnocentrism, altruistic democracy, responsible capitalism, small-town pastoralism, individualism, moderatism, order, and national leadership. These enduring values defended the United States' existing social order and instilled public faith in leadership (Gans, 1979; Nordenstedt & Tillinghast, 1996).

Foreign news was most critical of undemocratic systems and activities, especially Communist nations (Fairbank, 1979; Gans, 1979; Paletz & Entman, 1981). In foreign coverage, the press has often interpreted news by applying American values to the situation that was reported (Fairbank, 1979; Gans, 1979; Hsu, 1981; Nordenstedt & Tillinghast, 1996). In general, this tendency of the press to interpret news events with underlying American values that affect coverage was important to acknowledge (Nordenstedt & Tillinghast, 1996).

Significance of International Critical Events

The relationship between the press and government became more crucial during critical events (Graber, 1980). Critical events troubled the public's peace of mind. A critical event directly or indirectly affected the United States, such as war, military intervention, major civil disturbances, or catastrophes (Berry, 1990; Nacos 1990).

Foreign news coverage has been limited and considered of lesser interest to the public than domestic news (Gans, 1980). But during critical events, the threat to national security took center stage, replacing domestic news as the top priority (Gans, 1980). Berry (1990) acknowledged how the role of the press was amplified during critical events. He examined the relationship between the press and government during and after a critical event. The pattern he found suggested that the press was more reliant on government officials for information at the outset of a critical event than later.

The Press-Government Relationship During International Critical Events

Berry (1990), Graber (1980), Linsky (1986), Nacos (1990), Roshco (1975), and many other researchers focused on time as a factor in explaining press behavior and its influence on the foreign policy process during and after critical events. The three stages of foreign policy during which press coverage was examined in Berry's (1990) study were: formulation, execution, and outcome.

The formulation stage involved the government's development of a policy response to a critical event (Berry, 1990). After deciding a course of action, the government executed or enacted the policy. Berry noted that the outcome stage occurred when enough time passed for the press and government officials to evaluate whether the policy was successful.

Berry (1990) noted that the press was more dependent on the government for information and therefore more vulnerable during the first two stages than during the outcome stage. This was because the outcome stage took place days or even weeks after a news event occurred, giving the press time to evaluate the policy response more carefully (Berry).

During these three stages, the press and foreign policy makers were in a constant struggle (Berry, 1990; Linsky, 1986; Nacos, 1990; Roshco, 1975; Tuchman, 1978). Their relationship was often adversarial (Chang, 1993; Roshco, 1975; Serfaty, 1990; Snow & Brown, 1994, Tuchman 1978). Roshco (1975) and Serfaty (1990) noted that too collegial a relationship between the two institutions would not serve public interest.

Several theoretical perspectives have suggested that the government, in an attempt to guard its policy, controlled the information flow early during critical events, because of the limited knowledge available at the time and officials presiding protectively over the government's policy (Berry, 1990; Nacos, 1990; Roshco, 1975). As time passed and the critical event came more into focus, the press often developed its own perspective on the event and deviated from the government's stance toward policy, especially if the decision backfired or was too risky (Berry, 1990; Nacos, 1990). The press steadily weaned

itself from officials' propaganda and developed a stance less manipulated and influenced by the government (Berry, 1990; Nacos, 1990; Roshco, 1975).

At the outset of a critical event, officials such as the president and his administration worked to formulate a policy response and prevent negative coverage of their decisions (Berry, 1990; Linsky, 1986; Roshco, 1975; Tuchman, 1978; Turow, 1992). Reporters relied on government officials for information, especially at the beginning of a major event (Berry, 1990; Deese, 1994; Gans, 1979; Nacos, 1990). The common logic of journalism, as Turow noted (1992), was for news stories to include the most credible sources available—in other words, people in positions of authority. In covering international critical events, the press coveted government policy makers (Berry, 1990).

Government officials knew this, and, in an effort to prevent negative coverage, they employed various news management techniques such as press releases, press conferences, meetings with writers and editors, polls, leaks, and media tours (Berry, 1990; Turow, 1992). Turow noted: "They can guide reporters to certain topics and not others so as to erase or obscure threats to their powerful positions within the established system," (p. 159).

During the formulation stage, the president usually enjoyed broad support from political actors and the press, thus explaining his

administration's ability to manage the news toward his agenda (Berry, 1990). Graber (1980) and McCartney (1994) observed that the press changed from a government adversary to a part of the propaganda machine of the administration. This softening of the press was called the "rally-around-the-flag" effect (McCartney, 1994; Nacos, 1990).

Once a policy was enacted, press coverage usually paralleled foreign policy and continued to favor the president (Berry, 1990; Nacos, 1990). McCartney (1994) noted:

The fact is that in such situations the press consistently has joined in supporting whatever policy, misguided though it may be, the reigning administration tried to sell. For the most part, in foreign policy crises the critical facilities of the news media shut down. (p. 42)

Berry (1990) noted that any existing or potential flaws in the policy could easily be masked during the early stages of a critical event. During the formulation and execution stages, the time constraints on the press lessened the government's need to manipulate the press (Berry, 1990; Nacos, 1990; Roshco, 1975; Tuchman, 1978; Turow, 1992). The press had little or no time to analyze policy decisions, so government officials only needed to conduct foreign policy and explain to the press what they hoped to achieve (Berry, 1990; Nacos, 1990). Officials took advantage of the press' time constraints and usually were able to keep criticism of its policy at a minimum (Berry, 1990; Nacos, 1990; Roshco, 1975; Tuchman, 1978; Turow, 1992).

But once the press began to evaluate the outcome of U.S. policy, a shift in influence occurred between the press and government (Berry, 1990; Nacos, 1990; Roshco, 1975; Tuchman 1978). Presidential performance during a critical event was ultimately judged based on his success or failure in managing the problem (Nacos 1990). The president was a single, universally known leader and represented the public's focal point for leadership (Nacos, 1990; Roshco, 1975). How well a president fared during a critical event affected the tone of press coverage (Nacos, 1990). As a result, it has been no mystery why presidents and officials have been so sensitive to critical events coverage (Berry, 1990; Nacos, 1990; Roshco, 1975).

During the outcome stage, news coverage became more in-depth, and probing questions were asked beyond the initial "What's going on at this time?" (Berry, 1990). Finally, after time passed and the press developed an editorial stance, news coverage put the critical event into a larger, long-range perspective.

Also during this stage, coverage began to include non-government sources who, combined with reporters, analyzed the event with a critical eye (Berry, 1990; Roshco, 1975; Sigal, 1973). Reliance on government sources waned as reporters used more non-government sources, and critical coverage increased as the number of non-government sources increased (Berry, 1990; Roshco, 1975; Sigal, 1973).

However, government officials remained the most prized sources for foreign news (Sigal, 1973). Roshco (1975) noted: "The Press feels it can't afford not to be where something highly newsworthy might occur" (p. 77), pointing to the White House as a constant site for reporters to congregate. According to Sigal (1973), the feeling of being in the center of the action was mutual between the press and government officials.

From the beginning of a critical event to the outcome stage, a codependent relationship existed between the two institutions (Berry, 1990; Roshco, 1975; Sigal, 1973). Sigal noted: "The official who wants to reach others in the capital needs (New York) *Times* and (Washington) *Post* reporters just as they need him (or her)" (p. 55). Officials wanted their side of the story told alongside other sources. Thus, the press had leverage too. Reporters played one official off another, especially during policy disputes (Berry, 1990; Roshco, 1975; Sigal, 1973). But ultimately, reporters had to bargain for news with government officials (Gans, 1980; Sigal, 1973).

This relationship tipped dramatically in the press' favor when a policy was perceived by the press to have failed (Berry, 1990). In this case, the press' nationalistic bias caused newspapers to turn from a government ally to a government critic (Berry, 1990; Rachlin, 1988; Roshco, 1975; Tuchman, 1978). Berry paralleled Rachlin's (1988) perspective when he noted: "They do not want their country to continue

down a dead-end path. Flagging ineffective or costly foreign policy is patriotic” (1990, p. 142). According to Berry (1990), regardless of supporting or opposing foreign policy, the press’ nationalism remained constant. Unwavering patriotism, Berry said, drove the press to promote or flag ineffective policy.

This perspective suggested that time was against the government (Berry, 1990; Nacos, 1990; Roshco, 1975; Sigal, 1973; Tuchman, 1978). Berry (1990) said officials not only focused on news management but tried to scapegoat the press, “blaming the messenger for the message” (p. 49). By this stage, however, Berry found that the press reinforced its role as a government watchdog and independent institution. Although good policy may have produced military success, for example, a war where the enemy became stronger and American casualties and financial costs mounted gave the press an image contrary to existing foreign policy (Berry, 1990).

Eventually press coverage stopped favoring policy that failed because the facts were inconsistent with the policy’s vision (Berry, 1990). Berry noted: “We are left with a press that imperfectly, hesitantly, but steadfastly tries to get the story and eventually does” (p. 150).

Thus the relationship between the press and government during critical events changed over time. Breaking news events and competition among the press affected the nature of coverage (Roshco, 1975;

Tuchman, 1978; Turow, 1992). Critical events were often sudden, and newspapers' race to beat deadlines and each other caused coverage to be descriptive instead of analytical (Roshco, 1975; Tuchman, 1978).

As a result, the timeliness of news reporting—a basic element in the newsmaking process and the press' survival—caused the press to assume a transmitter role after an event occurred because there was not enough time to analyze the available information (Tuchman, 1978). Once the press had enough time to analyze foreign policy, the emergence of the press' roles as an analyst and a watchdog occurred, and subsequently so did the shift in leverage between the two institutions (Roshco, 1975; Tuchman, 1978; Turow, 1992).

Although the press' vulnerability to officials changed during and after a critical event, the press' nationalistic tendency to preserve national security never wavered (Berry, 1990; Rachlin, 1988; Turow, 1992). This study analyzed Berry's perspective in the context of critical events involving the United States and China during the Cold War. Although his perspective may have applied to certain nations under certain circumstances, this study sought to define its limits. A Communist nation such as China, with a different political structure, ideology, and culture, was chosen to test that limit.

U.S.-China Relations From 1949-1989

During World War II, U.S. policy toward China was to urge Chinese participation in the war against Japan, with the long-term objective of China emerging as a strong and unified country, a stabilizer in Asia, and a staunch ally of the United States (Chern, 1990; Fairbank, 1979; Hsu, 1981). But disillusionment with internationalist ideals was not long in coming (Chern, 1990; Fairbank, 1979; Hsu, 1981; Spence, 1969).

The topsy-turvy relationship between China and the United States has wavered between tension and peace, but the constant theme that has characterized the nations' relations throughout this 40-year study period has been the distrust and secrecy between the two powers (Fairbank, 1979). U.S. policy and Americans' image of China have been adversely affected by the dissimilarities between the two countries (Chang, 1993; Fairbank, 1979; Hsu, 1981).

Underlying the gap between word and deed, and the waxing and waning of interest, perhaps we can discern the intractable problem of cultural differences. (Fairbank, 1979, p. 317)

Chinese were viewed by Americans as unassimilable and a menace to public health (Fairbank, 1979). He added that liberalism could not be established in China, and leaders did not allow "civil liberties and basic freedoms of speech and person, habeas corpus and jury trial, in short the supremacy of law—to which Americans are all too unconsciously accustomed" (p. 333).

Sutter (1983) noted: "Debate and controversy are deeply rooted in the history of U.S.-China policy" (p. 2). The secrecy behind U.S. policy toward China stemmed from a fear of leaks that could offend China and signal intentions to the former Soviet Union. Also, the United States tried to deal with Taiwan quietly and keep mistakes and internal differences from public view (Sutter, 1978). Such secrecy contradicted basic U.S. ideals of democracy and popular sovereignty, distorted American images of China, and prohibited full consensus on policy toward China (Sutter). As Fairbank (1979) noted:

Our inability to translate our moral ideals into active policy in China, our tendency to talk grand and act small, sometimes almost irresponsibly, has been affected by another pattern, one of fluctuation between energy and apathy. (p. 316)

The United States supported Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist forces, but the leader's corrupt administration was poorly run (Grasso, 1987; Spence, 1969). When Mao Zedong declared the establishment of the People's Republic of China on Oct. 1, 1949, China's transformation to a Communist state shattered the U.S. dream of a democratic postwar Asia (Fairbank, 1979; Grasso, 1987; Hsu, 1981; Spence, 1969). U.S. leaders had hoped that China would help the United States prevent Communist proliferation in Asia (Hsu, 1981; Mayers, 1986). But China's embrace of Communism and its location near U.S.-occupied Japan, the Philippines,

South Korea, and newly independent India worried American leaders (Grasso, 1987; Harding, 1984). Hsu (1981) noted:

The real American difficulty is not that Communists have seized the 'initiative', but that the international world as the Americans knew it had drastically changed without their permission. (p. 443)

In 1949, China had no intention of improving relations with the United States and embraced the Soviet Union instead (Harding, 1984; Spence, 1969, 1990; Sutter, 1978). When China entered the Korean War in 1950, U.S. hopes of a Sino-Soviet split were dashed (Harding, 1984; Jiang, 1988; Spence, 1969). The United States ceased trying to persuade China to change and intensified aggression toward China (Fairbank, 1979; Jiang, 1988).

U.S. leaders decided that the containment policy in Eastern Europe would have to be applied to Asia as well (Sutter, 1978). Sutter added that U.S. leaders thought Communist ideology was the binding force of the Sino-Soviet alliance. Thus, U.S. policy went from exploiting and balancing national interests—which was done at the end of World War II—to a drive against Communism (Fairbank, 1979; Hsu, 1981; Jiang, 1988).

Cold War presidents faced tough decisions on how to temper what they saw as a volatile China under Mao. U.S. leaders were forced to deal with an anti-American China, and their policy decisions reflected the misunderstanding, fear, and desire to keep Mao's new regime in check

(Fairbank, 1979; Hsu, 1981). President Harry Truman was the first American president to confront Communist China.

The Truman Period

When Chiang fled to Taiwan, the U.S. government had no choice but to cede Communist victory (Bueler, 1971). Fairbank (1979) noted that “to have Free China become Communist seemed a national disaster” (p. 350). Serious debate over China policy began at this time. Schaller (1979) noted that when Mao established the PRC, the first few months after the new regime's creation were a period of flux as U.S. leaders “waited for the dust to settle” (p. 125). Fear, insecurity and the Truman administration's paranoia fueled a “Red Scare” in the United States (Jiang, 1988).

For example, in 1947, two years before the establishment of the PRC, President Harry Truman ordered a federal loyalty program to root out spies or individuals who posed security risks within the government. In the next five years, more than 7 million people were investigated, but no one was charged (Schaller, 1979). The program created an atmosphere of fear and suspicion in the United States (Schaller). From 1950 to 1954, Senator Joseph McCarthy rode the paranoia to fame and power, adding tension to U.S. relations with China and driving many government officials out of office (Jiang, 1988; Schaller, 1979). Again,

“very little if any Communism, espionage, or treachery was uncovered, but everyone was intimidated” (Fairbank, 1979, p. 353).

Fairbank (1979) noted that Americans responded to China and the Cold War more fearfully than creatively. Fear, he added, was compounded by ignorance, and ignorance fostered prejudice. Such paranoia was a handicap to how the United States dealt with China (Fairbank).

During Truman's presidency, an array of political, military, economic, religious, and intellectual leaders said China was a threat to U.S. national security (Chern 1980). The Truman administration mishandled opportunities to improve relations because of the American political culture, ideology, and a nationalist rather than open attitude (Chern, 1980; Fairbank, 1979; Jiang, 1988).

The Truman administration devised three policy goals. They wanted to uphold and encourage the Taiwan Nationalists as being the current and future government of China, contain Communism in China, and make a positive attempt at reconciling differences with Mao's new regime (Grasso, 1987; Hsu, 1981; Jiang, 1988).

American leaders were fearful of Mao's affection for the Soviets (Chang, 1993; Fairbank, 1979; Harding, 1984; Jiang, 1988; Spence, 1969, 1990). Upon establishing the People's Republic of China, Mao

immediately leaned toward the Soviet Union for an ideological alliance (Fairbank, 1979; Harding, 1984; Jiang, 1988; Spence, 1969, 1990).

China's policy, Buss noted, was to unite with the Soviets and all Communist camps against the "imperialists headed by the United States" (1972, p. 47). Russian became the principal foreign language studied in China's schools. The Soviet Union was the chief destination for Chinese students studying abroad. Russians were welcomed in China, and Americans were ejected (Buss, 1972; Fairbank, 1979; Jiang, 1988; Spence, 1969, 1990). Chinese with U.S. ties were executed or imprisoned. China's economy burgeoned. Everything Western was rejected. Everything Soviet was embraced (Buss, 1972; Fairbank, 1979; Harding, 1984; Jiang, 1988; Spence, 1969, 1990).

Truman faced a dilemma: cut ties with Taiwan, acknowledge Mao's regime, and try to establish ties with the new PRC; or continue assisting the doomed Nationalists and resist China's advance toward Taiwan (Grasso, 1987; Jiang, 1988). Truman also faced growing discontent at home. The GOP in Congress and the public majority, which saw the United States losing its grip on China, opposed Truman (Grasso, 1987).

The Truman administration clarified its interests in China in a memorandum drafted late in 1949 by Secretary of State Dean Acheson (Jiang, 1988). Acheson listed seven categories of U.S. interest: American citizens, private property and investments in China, trade, U.S.

government property, credits due the United States by China, U.S. foreign service establishments, and U.S. influence in China (Grasso, 1987). Acheson advised of the importance of maintaining U.S. influence in education, business, and industry (Grasso, 1987; Jiang, 1988).

While Mao demanded respect from the international community and wanted his new country's government to be recognized by the United States and other nations, U.S. leaders tried to play hardball (Fairbank, 1979; Grasso, 1987; Jiang, 1988; Spence, 1990). Before U.S. leaders would officially recognize Mao's PRC, Acheson attempted to stall the process by demanding that three conditions be met (Jiang, 1988). Mao would have to demonstrate "effective control" of China, his government would have to recognize international obligations, and it would have to rule with people's consent—in other words, rule democratically (Grasso, 1987; Jiang, 1988). Acheson said that once China abided by these three conditions, there would be no reason not to welcome normal relations with the PRC (Grasso, 1987; Jiang, 1988).

However, other nations were quick to recognize Mao's PRC, hurting the Truman administration's plans. The arrest and detention of U.S. consulate staff in Mukden from November 1948 to December 1949 was perhaps the most pressing conflict Truman had to handle (Grasso, 1987). While the detainees were mistreated and tried for allegedly beating Chinese employees, U.S. allies, including Britain, announced plans to

recognize China (Fairbank, 1979; Grasso, 1987; Jiang, 1988). This dealt a severe blow to the Truman administration and its policy.

At the outset of Mao's new regime, Truman and his staff wanted to develop a joint Western policy toward China (Fairbank, 1979; Grasso, 1987). When Britain and other U.S. allies decided against the joint plan, the United States became isolated in its stand against China (Fairbank, 1979; Grasso, 1987). The U.S. objective to isolate China had backfired; It was the United States instead that was isolated (Fairbank, 1979; Grasso, 1987; Jiang, 1988). U.S. leaders developed a "wait-and-see" attitude toward the China recognition issue (Grasso, 1987; Jiang, 1988). Any American move to recognize China was postponed until Americans were treated respectfully, particularly the consulate staff in Mukden.

In addition, U.S. ties with Taiwan offended China and the British (Grasso, 1987). Chinese officials refused to talk with Americans. While Truman stood firm on the issue of China's treatment of Americans, PRC officials sternly opposed U.S. ties with Taiwan. Chinese officials said there would be no talks until these ties dissolved (Fairbank, 1979; Grasso, 1987; Jiang, 1988).

However, Truman's apparent commitment to Chiang and not necessarily to Taiwan caused lasting confusion over the island's status in the eyes of the United States (Fairbank, 1979; Grasso, 1987; Jiang, 1988). Grasso found that succeeding administrations maintained

amorphous and ill-defined relations with Taiwan, "giving the impression of continued American support for the government as a bulwark against Communism in East Asia" (p. 3). Regardless, U.S. relations with Taiwan prevented China from seizing the island (Fairbank, 1979; Grasso, 1987; Jiang, 1988).

U.S. policy under Truman focused not on maintaining the Nationalists in Taiwan but on preventing the island's fall to Communism (Fairbank, 1979; Grasso, 1987; Jiang, 1988; Spence, 1969). The island itself served a valuable strategic purpose for U.S. security efforts in Asia. Truman's dilemma over the future of Taiwan and U.S.-China relations led him to adopt a two-China policy (Fairbank, 1979; Grasso, 1987).

Mao declared Taiwan part of China, and Truman acknowledged that the island belonged to the PRC on Jan. 5, 1950. Truman's statement was a clear sign that he was prepared to let Taiwan fall to China and it was even more evident when he said there would be no U.S. military intervention (Grasso, 1987; Spence, 1969). It was also a realization of the State Department's "White Paper," published a year earlier in 1949 (Grasso).

Truman had wavered between his natural self and an unnatural personality (Grasso, 1987). In just two years, he had wavered from policy to satisfy China by dissociating amorphously from Taiwan, to a rigid policy when Mao took over in 1949, and back to a soft approach

after Truman's statement about Taiwan (Fairbank, 1979; Grasso, 1987; Jiang, 1988). U.S. policy would tighten again on China and Taiwan later in 1950 when China entered the Korean War (Fairbank, 1979; Jiang, 1988; Spence, 1969).

The White Paper proposed abandoning the Nationalist government because nothing could be done to save it from defeat (Grasso, 1987). By releasing the document before Mao officially established the PRC and defeated Chiang's forces, the Truman administration was able to divorce itself from identifying with the Nationalists, answered criticism that the United States' policy toward China was inconsistent, and pushed the Nationalists to become more self-sufficient and independent (Grasso, 1987; Spence, 1969). The document also provided Truman with an escape to avoid making military commitments to Taiwan and opened the door to negotiations with Mao and China's new government (Grasso, 1987). In general, the Nationalists were informed that they were responsible for Taiwan's security, not the United States, and an increase in American aid should not be expected (Grasso, 1987; Spence, 1969).

But playing soft on Taiwan did not translate to better relations with China (Fairbank, 1979; Grasso, 1987). Leaning toward the Soviet Union for an ideological alliance, Mao continued to welcome Russian influences and reject anything American (Fairbank, 1979; Jiang, 1988).

Only a month later, Truman's approach changed (Fairbank, 1979; Grasso, 1987; Jiang, 1988).

In February 1950, the Soviet Union and China signed a 30-year Treaty of Friendship, solidifying an alliance and guaranteeing mutual aid. U.S. policy toward China hardened (Fairbank, 1979; Grasso, 1987; Spence, 1969, 1990). In April of that year, U.S. consulates were closed in China, and by May, Soviet advisers were entering the country (Grasso, 1987; Spence, 1969).

The U.S. officials were not the only ones left out of China affairs. Also during this time, American journalists were barred from China while reporters from other countries were permitted short visits (Hohenberg, 1967). But in 1956, China suddenly invited 18 U.S. newsmen to tour the country. Although the U.S. government snubbed the invitation, three American journalists went anyway. Up to that point, the American press had been shielded from direct observation of China (Hohenberg).

Because access was tough for American journalists, observing China took place from Hong Kong (Hohenberg, 1967). This practice became especially common in the 1960s. The inability for reporters and correspondents to see first-hand what was transpiring in China led to a lack of information on Chinese activities and produced a paranoid American public and government that could only guess and assume what their Communist enemy was doing. China represented a constant

problem. Propaganda emanated from Chinese officials, making it difficult not only to touch base with Chinese sources, but to sift through the biased information that was released (Fairbank, 1979; Grasso, 1987; Hohenberg, 1967).

The American stereotypes and images of Chinese people that emerged partly as a result of the lack of press and government access to China did not help relations either (Buss, 1972; Chang, 1993; Fairbank, 1979). Buss noted that Americans looked at Chinese as “exotic, inscrutable Orientals” (p. 69). Americans could not accept the fact that the Communists won the civil war in China.

The failure to accommodate the Communists and the increase in Soviet influence in China made the Korean War seem part of a larger Communist advance, posing a threat to Taiwan, Japan, Southeast Asia, and the Philippines (Grasso, 1987). Two days after the outbreak of the Korean War, Truman provided military support to South Korea and moved the 7th Fleet in between China and Taiwan (Fairbank, 1979; Jiang, 1988; Spence, 1969). This “neutralization” of the Taiwan Strait was to prevent the Communists from advancing to the coast and to stop Nationalist air raids on the mainland (Fairbank, 1979; Grasso, 1987; Jiang, 1988). Beyond the mission to neutralize Taiwan-China tensions, the containment policy took root during the Korean War (Fairbank, 1979; Spence, 1969).

When the war ended July 27, 1953, the United States was persistent in blocking China from taking a seat in the U.N. Security Council and backed Taiwan's seat in the United Nations (Aronson, 1970). China would then hold, in theory, a position equal to the other members, including the United States. U.S. policy toward keeping China out of the United Nations remained more firm than the stance toward Taiwan and negotiating with Mao (Aronson, 1970; Spence, 1990).

From Eisenhower to a Setting for Rapprochement

Schaller (1979) noted that President Dwight D. Eisenhower and his administration "placed the final bricks in the wall around China begun by the Truman administration" (p. 138-139). Eisenhower continued three key policies from Truman's Two-China approach: supporting Taiwan, containing Communism and China, and promoting Taiwan's inclusion in the United Nations. A prime example of the two-China policy was the United States' intolerance for China or Taiwan attacking one another (Fairbank, 1979; Jiang, 1988). By seeking to prevent military confrontations between the PRC and Nationalists, U.S. leaders killed two birds with one stone—maintaining Taiwan Nationalists' existence and keeping China in check (Fairbank, 1979; Jiang, 1988).

Eisenhower's administration solidified Truman's policy of supporting Taiwan and avoiding recognition of China (Bueler, 1971). Secretary of State John Foster Dulles considered Taiwan a crucial part of

the U.S. collective security chain, signing a Sino-American Mutual Defense Treaty in 1954. Continued support of Taiwan's drive for a seat in the United Nations reaffirmed the United States' non-recognition of China (Fairbank, 1979; Spence, 1969).

Eisenhower also maintained Truman's policy of containment in East Asia (Buss, 1972; Fairbank, 1979; Jiang, 1988). In 1954, Dulles signed treaties with South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, and seven other nations in the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization, including Britain, France, Australia, New Zealand, Thailand, Pakistan, and the Philippines (Jiang, 1988). The treaties, despite limited commitments from the nations involved, created a mutual security system of anti-Communist countries around China's periphery that were under U.S. sponsorship (Buss, 1972; Jiang, 1988). SEATO provided an opportunity for the United States to station military forces in participating countries and was designed to contain China and Communism (Buss, 1972; Jiang, 1988).

In addition, the United States instituted a trade embargo on China (Fairbank, 1979; Jiang, 1988; Schaller, 1979). Under the embargo, no country trading with the United States was allowed to trade with China. The United States hoped the embargo would weaken the PRC and hasten its downfall (Fairbank, 1979; Jiang, 1988; Schaller, 1979).

Although China defied these actions during the Truman presidency, the PRC's sense of security changed (Fairbank, 1979;

Spence, 1969, 1990). The momentum of Sino-Soviet relations slowed in 1955 when China complained that Soviet assistance was limited and not very generous (Fairbank, 1979; Harding, 1984; Schaller, 1979; Spence, 1969, 1990). China began to see its reliability on the Soviets becoming more and more problematic (Fairbank, 1979; Harding, 1984; Mayers, 1986; Spence, 1969, 1990). During the Korean War, Soviet aid was “embarrassingly inadequate” (Schaller, 1979, p. 151). The dispute between the Soviet Union and China became a culmination of differences and conflicts (Fairbank, 1979; Gregor, 1986; Harding, 1984). As Fairbank (1979) noted:

The Sino-Soviet split developed on several levels at once. The Chinese and Russian peoples were separate nations with different histories, self-images, needs, and goals. Just as the ideology of Communist revolution had been the original bond, so it became the point of fracture. (p. 422)

U.S. policy toward China remained aggressive (Fairbank, 1979; Jiang, 1988; Mayers, 1986). Mayers (1986) said the United States was tougher on China than the Soviet Union, regarding the PRC as “militant, inadmissible and unrecognizable” (p. 151). Meanwhile, U.S. leaders expanded relations with the Soviets.

Like Eisenhower, President John F. Kennedy and President Lyndon Johnson saw China's Communist state as long-term, not as a temporary or passing phase (Bueler, 1971; Fairbank, 1979; Jiang, 1988). However, they did not see China as such an urgent matter as other Cold War

presidents did (Bueler, 1971; Jiang, 1988). The Cuban Missile crisis and Vietnam were obvious examples of other issues that were more pressing to U.S. leaders. As a result, China became less significant on both presidents' agendas (Bueler, 1971; Jiang, 1988). Kennedy seemed interested in the China problem in long-range terms, but he lacked the time or knowledge to alter Truman and Eisenhower's prior policies (Bueler, 1971; Jiang, 1988).

Kennedy assured defense of Taiwan at any cost but kept his options open in case China modified its policies (Jiang, 1988; Yang, 1977). In other words, Kennedy's approach toward China was staunch on the outside but willingly flexible (Garver, 1982; Jiang, 1988). Kennedy said change in U.S. policy hinged on China's change in attitude and ability to reciprocate (Jiang, 1988; Yang, 1977). However, China did little to reciprocate during Kennedy's abbreviated term (Yang, 1977). When Kennedy was assassinated, China's jubilation did nothing to soothe U.S.-China relations (Yang).

Kennedy and the United States increased the commitment to preventing Communism from spreading to Vietnam, but the war's outbreak became Johnson's top priority (Jiang, 1988). Furthermore, right before China detonated its first atomic explosion in 1964, Buss noted that Johnson turned "dovish" (1972, p. 87), saying the United States would not risk war with the PRC.

Johnson, like his predecessors, continued to recognize Taiwan and its desire for a U.N. seat, and he defended the Mutual Defense Treaty obligations (Jiang, 1988; Yang, 1977). At the same time, Johnson maintained an open-door policy of containment without isolation. He was the last president to defend and enforce a policy of containment (Yang, 1977).

During the late 1950s and early 1960s, from the Eisenhower presidency to the Johnson period, China's relations with the Soviets deteriorated and U.S.-Soviet detente progressed (Fairbank, 1979; Garver, 1982; Harding, 1984; Jiang, 1988; Spence, 1969, 1990). The detente was in the area of strategic weaponry.

By the late 1960s, China feared the countries' cooperation was becoming a joint superpower nuclear alliance directed at China (Fairbank, 1979; Garver, 1982; Spence, 1969). The Soviets' decision in 1959 to renege on its 1957 promise to assist China in developing nuclear weapons was a major signal to China that detente between the United States and Soviet Union was advancing (Garver, 1982).

In addition, rescinding the promise for nuclear assistance persuaded Chinese leaders that both superpowers could attack China (Garver, 1982; Spence, 1969). Later, in August 1963, the U.S.-Soviet-British Partial Nuclear Test Ban Treaty was seen by China as another example of U.S.-Soviet collusion (Garver). In 1964, a meeting between

Johnson and Soviet Premier Alexi Kosygin in the United States convinced China that the two superpowers had reached agreement that China was their common enemy (Garver).

Later that year, in August, the United States and the Soviet Union signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. China interpreted the treaty as a U.S.-Soviet nuclear monopoly treaty (Fairbank, 1979; Garver, 1982). More ominous for China was the U.S.-Soviet decision in 1967 to build anti-ballistic missile (ABM) systems, which was perceived by Beijing as anti-China missile systems (Garver, 1982).

Barnett (1971) noted that China's military position in relation to the superpowers was weak "and the Chinese knew it" (p. 103). China's policy was to be defensive (Barnett, 1971; Spence, 1969). China tried to bolster its ability to deter threats through nuclear development and wanted to be a superpower (Barnett, 1971; Fairbank, 1979; Spence, 1969).

In 1964, when China detonated its first nuclear bomb, Chinese officials pledged a "no-first-use" policy, perhaps acknowledging their nation's relative weakness compared to the United States and the Soviet Union (Barnett, 1971). China called on other nations to make the same pledge (Spence, 1969). But Barnett (1971) noted that China opposed the Non-Proliferation Treaty, favoring proliferation to socialist nations in

hopes that the United States and Soviet Union's nuclear leverage would be weakened.

In 1966, the Cultural Revolution in China also affected the country's national security considerations and led to more tension along the border with the Soviets (Fairbank, 1979; Garver, 1982; Spence, 1969, 1990). The Soviets increased patrols along the border with China (Garver, 1982; Harding, 1984; Spence, 1969, 1990). Border incidents increased as a result. This rising tension among allies-turned-foes paved the way for U.S. rapprochement with China and detente with the Soviets (Fairbank, 1979; Garver, 1982). U.S. leaders said they were willing to use their relations with Moscow to defuse a Soviet attack on China (Garver, 1982).

Detente between the Soviet Union and the United States continued until Richard Nixon was elected president in 1969 (Fairbank, 1979; Garver, 1982). Nixon said he intended to further relations and cooperation with the Soviets, and Moscow returned the favor (Garver, 1982). In November of that year, the two nations convened in the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT). But the United States informed China that it was not pursuing a military alliance against them. U.S. leaders outlined a neutral position in the Sino-Soviet conflict (Garver, 1982).

During SALT I, the United States rejected a Soviet proposal to jointly suppress third-party provocative action with nuclear force, an intended jab from Moscow at China (Garver, 1982). U.S. leaders informed China of their decision to reject the Soviet plan. This paved the way for Nixon's visit to China in 1972 and showed China that the United States did not intend to keep it weak and vulnerable (Garver, 1982).

The Emergence of Rapprochement

Nixon's visit to China in 1972 was one of the most important and significant breakthroughs in U.S. foreign policy since the Cold War began (Fairbank, 1979; Jiang, 1988; Sutter, 1978). China looked at the United States no longer as a bitter enemy but more as a deterrent to offset Soviet power (Jiang, 1988; Sutter, 1978). Both the United States and China's opposition to the Soviet Union set the foundation for normalized relations to occur (Fairbank, 1979; Jiang, 1988; Sutter, 1978). Garver (1982) said it has become accepted fact that U.S.-China rapprochement resulted from China's fear of the Soviet Union. As Fairbank (1979) noted:

The Nixon-Mao handshake had been due ever since the open Sino-Soviet split of 1960, for great power triangles naturally tend to become equilateral. Each party must deal with the other two if only to prevent their combining. (p. 457)

From this time on, it appeared that the United States and China shared mutual interests (Fairbank, 1979; Sutter, 1978). Both countries

opposed Soviet expansion in Asia, and both profited by putting aside past prejudices to pursue a favorable strategic balance (Fairbank, 1979; Sutter, 1978).

By 1968, it was clear that China had become just as hostile to the Soviet Union as it once was to the United States (Cohen, 1990). Sino-Soviet border clashes erupted in March 1969, causing renewed interest among Chinese leaders to improve relations with the United States (Fairbank, 1979; Sutter, 1978). According to Sutter (1978), the tensions proved that reliance on ideological principles—in other words, Communism—as a basis for foreign policy was “dangerous for vital Chinese concerns” (p. 102).

Fear of a Soviet attack prompted China's change in attitude and policy (Garver, 1982). Border talks between the two Communist powers began in Peking on October 20, 1969. The Soviet Union had military superiority over China (Sutter, 1978). Afraid of negotiating a disadvantageous border settlement, Chinese leaders developed better relations with Soviet satellites and neighbors, such as North Vietnam and North Korea (Sutter).

Chinese leaders realized that opposing both superpowers would lead the PRC to the brink of disaster (Fairbank, 1979; Garver, 1982; Sutter, 1978). China's turn to moderatism stemmed from a fear of a

Soviet attack and fear of U.S.-Soviet relations (Fairbank, 1979; Garver, 1982).

However, the decision for rapprochement is a product of more than just international relations (Garver, 1982). Internal events contributed to China's move toward moderatism too. Conflicts within the Chinese government during this time resulted in disagreement. Although China moved toward improving relations with the United States, there was still a strong anti-U.S. and pro-Soviet sentiment within China's government (Garver).

China's first reaction to its growing tensions with the Soviets was to shore up relations with Moscow (Garver, 1982). Chinese leaders expressed an anti-U.S. sentiment. Thus, factional conflicts within China during this time exposed glaring contradictions in the country's policy toward the two superpowers. These factions included the Chinese Communist Party, the People's Liberation Army, and other government organs (Garver). Chinese policy making was a battle of organization against organization as much as official against official. These factions competed for influence, eventually producing the movement toward normalizing relations with the United States (Garver).

By late 1969, China's posture was more moderate and flexible toward the U.S. government (Fairbank, 1979; Garver, 1982; Sutter, 1983). Peking's desire for reconciliation with the United States was

evident in its media messages. Although U.S. leaders were criticized, personal attacks on Nixon diminished (Sutter, 1983).

Although some Chinese officials were unhappy with this new approach, the decline in U.S. pressure and the increase in Soviet pressure allowed China to conclude that its previous rigid posture toward both superpowers had to be altered (Fairbank, 1979; Sutter, 1983). China viewed the Soviets as its most dangerous threat (Fairbank, 1979; Sutter, 1983).

Before, China had lumped both nations together as a collective enemy. Chinese moderatism was designed to defuse the Soviet threat and to encourage U.S. moderatism in its containment policy (Sutter, 1978). For U.S. leaders, the principal motive for rapprochement was the belief of mutual security advantages, such as containing the Soviets (Fairbank, 1979; Gregor, 1986).

Nixon's Monumental Visit to China

Nixon's willingness to negotiate with China altered sentiment in the United States (Buss, 1972; Fairbank, 1979; Jiang, 1988). He wanted to improve relations and minimize risks and conflicts with China.

In 1971, Buss noted: "A great thaw took place" (1972, p. 94). Nixon stopped the 7th Fleet's patrols in the Taiwan Strait, halted U.S. spy flights over China, acknowledged the PRC as the legitimate power in control of the Chinese mainland, and reduced military personnel in Asia,

including Vietnam (Buss, 1972). Exchanges of students and journalists were approved by both countries, and tourist travel to China was permitted (Buss). Trade sanctions against the PRC were eased (Buss, 1972; Fairbank, 1979). China responded to Nixon's gestures with invitations to the U.S. ping-pong team, scientists, and foreign correspondents (Buss, 1972; Fairbank, 1979).

A secret talk between Henry Kissinger and Premier Zhou Enlai in Beijing from July 9-11, 1971 was a preface to Nixon's invitation and visit (Fairbank, 1979). On July 15, 1971, Nixon announced that Zhou had invited him to visit China and that he had accepted (Jiang, 1988). The purpose of the visit was to seek normalization of relations with China (Buss, 1972; Fairbank, 1979).

His visit from Feb. 21-28, 1972, officially started the nations' movement toward reconciliation (Fairbank, 1979; Sutter, 1978). The event marked the end of U.S. policy to contain China, which lessened the Chinese concern about the U.S. military in Asia. Nixon's visit also lessened the likelihood of Sino-U.S. clashes elsewhere, such as in Korea, Indochina, and Taiwan (Fairbank, 1979; Sutter, 1978). Of great importance was the end to Truman's Two-China policy (Sutter, 1978). Nixon's visit reduced U.S. support for Taiwan, increasing China's leverage and enhancing its rising international stature (Sutter, 1978).

The trip shocked the world and jolted Taiwan. Buss (1972) said Nixon was calling for a flexible China policy and an “era of negotiation” to replace the “era of confrontation” (p. 19), but opponents argued that the president was betraying his principles and deserting allies. Supporters said the president was removing blinders from his eyes, casting off the shackles of a disastrous Asian foreign policy (Buss). They lauded Nixon’s announcement, saying he was resuming dialogue that never should have been discontinued.

Nixon signed the Shanghai Communique that promoted one China—the PRC (Fairbank, 1974). Cautious reconciliation was the theme in U.S. foreign policy toward China (Fairbank, 1974, 1979). The communique called for frequent visits to strengthen ties and affirmed the desire of both nations to mend relations (Fairbank, 1974; Sutter, 1978). Schaller (1979) found that the media crush during the trip provided the first sympathetic images of Chinese citizens.

After the visit, Nixon acknowledged only one China and declared that Taiwan was part of the PRC (Fairbank, 1974, 1979). The objective of normalization was agreed upon. Taiwan had been snubbed. By 1977, 23 of the 60 nations that had acknowledged Taiwan reversed their stance on the island’s status. That same year, SEATO dissolved. U.S. policy toward China had changed dramatically (Fairbank, 1979).

From Ford to Reagan

No substantive progress between China and the United States occurred during Gerald Ford's presidency, even after his trip to China in 1975. In late 1976, Mao and Zhou died. A new political power struggle erupted in China (Fairbank, 1979; Spence, 1990; Sutter, 1983). Amid this power play, Ford followed the basic tenets of Nixon's open-door policy, seeking negotiation and avoiding confrontation with China.

President Jimmy Carter, elected in 1976, promoted full normalization of relations despite his concern about Taiwan's security (Spence, 1990; Sutter, 1983). The American public mostly supported rapprochement. At this point, Sutter noted it was clear that "no major constituency in the United States opposed establishing relations with the Peking government" (p. 49). Questions focused on when and under what conditions normalization would occur.

U.S. leaders faced a tough decision on what kind of ties to keep with Taiwan (Sutter, 1983). China wanted the U.S. military to withdraw from Taiwan and for Washington to acknowledge the PRC as the sole China.

However, compared to past Cold War presidents, Carter was nonchalant about normalization (Ross, 1995). He supported severing ties with Taiwan and recognizing the PRC, but doing so was not an

immediate objective on his agenda (Ross). Carter focused more on detente with the Soviet Union, which frustrated Chinese officials (Ross).

But on December 15, 1978, the United States and China agreed to normalize relations starting January 1, 1979. Both countries had developed a common view of the Soviet threat (Ross, 1995). Intelligence-sharing and eventually arms sales to China under President Ronald Reagan further cemented the once-bitter rivals' pact.

Trade between the two countries opened as well, and the most favored nation status emerged in talks (Harding, 1992). China's tensions with the Soviets provided leverage for U.S. officials (Ross, 1995). U.S. policy focused on keeping those tensions going (Ross, 1995). Many U.S. officials thought normalization would reduce the possibility of Sino-Soviet peace and give the United States leverage over the Soviet Union in international affairs (Ross, 1995; Fairbank, 1974).

Although the United States and China agreed to disregard issues of conflict to maximize cooperation against Moscow, Taiwan was the largest issue that the two nations could not set aside (Ross, 1995; Spence, 1990). Amid this conflict, there was constant negotiation and mutual adjustments to achieve cooperation. However, the contrasting security perspectives on Taiwan allowed room for compromise (Ross, 1995).

By the end of the 1980s, the United States and China had established extensive political, economic, military, and cultural

cooperation (Ross, 1995; Spence, 1990). However, under President Ronald Reagan, growing tensions between the Soviets and United States eased tensions between the Soviets and China (Ross, 1995; Spence, 1990). This shift in tension gave China more leverage, representing another episode in the countries' tripolar relations (Ross, 1995; Spence, 1990).

This transformation revealed how U.S.-China relations extended beyond dyadic relations (Fairbank, 1979; Ross, 1995). Both nations' ties hinged on their relationship with the Soviet Union (Fairbank, 1979; Ross, 1995). China's perception of threat softened during the Reagan period, particularly during the early 1980s, increasing its security position (Harding, 1984). But Reagan, who had a close affinity for Taiwan, caused a sharp shift in relations with China (Harding, 1992; Spence, 1990; Sutter, 1983). This stance slowed progress in U.S.-China relations (Harding, 1992; Spence, 1990; Sutter, 1983).

But in 1982, the United States agreed to limit arms sales to Taiwan, a move that relaxed tensions between China and the United States (Ross, 1995). This development was remarkable, considering the deep distrust and hostility during the 1950s and 1960s (Ross, 1995). This relationship also proved crucial in the U.S. reaction to China's crackdown at Tiananmen Square in 1989 (Harding, 1992; Ross, 1995).

Ross (1995) noted:

It is hard to imagine that even minimal U.S.-PRC cooperation could have survived the 1989 Beijing crackdown had American and Chinese leaders not laid the foundations of cooperation during the previous 20 years. (p. 262)

Tiananmen Square and Beyond

In 1985, the first signs that China was entering an economic crisis were detected (Domes, 1990; Harding, 1992; Spence, 1990). By 1988, the Chinese economy was stressed, growth was uneven, and its society was adversely affected. Inflation became a serious problem (Domes, 1990; Harding, 1992; Spence, 1990). The reasons for the 1989 Tiananmen crackdown were clear. A strong wave of urban discontent with government policy as well as major intra-governmental conflict on power and politics caused growing tensions in China (Harding, 1992; Spence, 1990).

From April 17 to June 3, 1989, thousands of university students and people from all walks of life held demonstrations in Beijing and at least 16 other cities (Domes, 1990; Harding, 1992; Spence, 1990). They demanded human rights, freedom, and democracy. From May 4 to June 3, demonstrators occupied Tiananmen Square, the center of China's capital. They established autonomous organizations, unions, a police force, and administrative networks (Domes, 1990).

U.S. Ambassador to China Richard Williams interpreted the student demonstrations as vocal criticism of corruption in the Chinese government and a sign that the Chinese people wanted democratic reforms to proceed much quicker (Harding, 1992; Spence, 1990). *The Department of State Bulletin* (1989) noted: "They are interested in reform of a system which they see as insufficiently responsive to their needs" (p. 48). Williams said demonstrators wanted to protest without direct confrontation with the Chinese government (Harding, 1992; Spence, 1990). They merely wanted a peaceful demonstration for freedom of the press, anti-corruption measures, and freedom of association (Harding, 1992; Spence, 1990).

U.S. policy toward the demonstrations supported the right for peaceful assembly, including peaceful protest and freedom of expression (Domes, 1990; Harding, 1992; Spence, 1990). U.S. leaders hoped that demonstrations, if they continued, would remain peaceful and that Chinese authorities would act with restraint (Domes, 1990; Harding, 1992).

Like the demonstrators, U.S. leaders hoped for more openness and respect for human rights (Domes, 1990; Spence, 1990). However, in the early morning of June 4, 1989, the People's Liberation Army suppressed the pro-democracy movement. This event altered the domestic political scene in China and Western nations' optimistic projections about China's

future (Domes, 1990; Harding, 1992; Spence, 1990). Prior to the crackdown, politicians, businessmen, and journalists had said reform in China was proceeding (Domes, 1990). The crackdown came unexpectedly to Western optimists (Domes).

The United States deplored the crackdown, saying 20 years of improved relations with China could be jeopardized if violence continued (Domes, 1990; Harding, 1992; Spence, 1990). On June 9, *The Department of State Bulletin* noted that the United States viewed China as an “armed camp” despite a calmer situation (1989, p. 76). On June 20, President George Bush directed the U.S. government to suspend ties with China, reiterating its support for democracy movements, a desire for peace, and relations with China (Domes, 1990; Harding, 1992; Spence, 1990).

Exchanges between top-level diplomats were suspended (Domes, 1990; Harding, 1992). Arms sales to China were cut off, and consideration for loans to the PRC was deferred. The U.S. policy adjustments were designed to send a message to stimulate, not suffocate, relations with China (Domes, 1990; Harding, 1992; Spence, 1990). Bush did not want to affect U.S.-China relations over the long-term (Harding, 1992; Spence, 1990).

History Summary

After the establishment of the PRC in 1949, Mao derided American and Western influences and looking to the Soviets as an ally and benefactor (Fairbank, 1979; Grasso, 1987; Harding, 1992; Spence, 1969, 1990). In response, presidents and U.S. leaders sought to contain and oppose China, worrying in the 1950s and early 1960s about a China-Soviet alliance against democracy, peace, and the United States (Grasso, 1987; Schaller, 1979; Spence, 1969, 1990).

A multipolar paradigm including China and the United States broadened the scope for cause-and-effect relationships between the two powers and other nations—allies, the Soviet Union, and Communist and Western satellites (Fairbank, 1979; Grasso, 1987). The wavering relations between China and the United States often rested uneasily on their relations with other countries. Presidents maintained a similar policy of encouraging peace and democratic reforms in China; however, they developed alliances in Asia and the United Nations to temper the PRC's power and influence (Aronson, 1970; Fairbank, 1979; Grasso, 1987).

Not until Nixon's historic visit did the United States and China officially make strides toward peace (Fairbank, 1979; Garver, 1982; Sutter, 1978). The previous decades of nuclear arms testing, confrontations on the battlefield, and tension in diplomatic arenas

appeared to be over (Garver, 1982; Sutter, 1978). Although relations improved, the two countries eyed each another with varying degrees of suspicion and distrust (Fairbank, 1979; Garver, 1982; Sutter, 1978). Many researchers (Berry, 1990; Fairbank, 1979; Nacos, 1990; Paletz & Entman, 1981; Rachlin, 1988) said U.S. policy always is crafted with nationalistic tendencies. Fairbank, (1979) noted:

As we continue to construct our image of Sino-American relations, we can be sure of one thing: our thinking will tend to favor our side. (p. 452)

This is the main theme inherent in U.S.-China relations. The political culture of both countries was and remains in conflict, but the threat of confrontation and loss of stability in Asia moved the two giants to desire peace (Fairbank, 1979; Hsu, 1981). Jiang (1988) summed up the theme of Sino-U.S. relations when he noted:

If there is any lesson to draw from the history of Sino-American relations, it is that policies and actions based on anachronistic assumptions are of no avail. (p. 172)

Theoretical Framework for This Study

This study examined critical events coverage involving China. It tested and determined how applicable Berry's perspective was in explaining critical events coverage involving the United States and China.

Berry's (1990) perspective suggested that the American press became more self-sufficient and less vulnerable to government officials'

influence as time passed after a critical event, sharpening its critical eye on policy decisions during the outcome stage of the foreign policy process. Berry added that the press became critical of U.S. policy when it failed.

However, the literature review noted that the press tended to rally around the flag during critical events, especially when a Communist country threatened U.S. national security (Berry, 1990; Gans, 1979; Paletz & Entman, 1981; Rachlin, 1988). The press also reported with nationalistic values shaping its coverage. As a result, a Communist nation such as China could undermine Berry's perspective. This study examined whether Berry's perspective described critical events involving China.

Although Berry (1990) noted that the rally-around-the-flag tendency occurred predominantly during the formulation and execution stages of foreign policy, the press' nationalism existed throughout the policy process (Berry, 1990; McCartney, 1994; Nacos, 1990; Rachlin, 1988; Turow, 1992). According to Rachlin (1988), a change in the press' support for policy could be postponed or nonexistent if a threat to democracy and U.S. national security existed. A nation such as China, which was different than the United States politically, ideologically, and culturally, could illustrate this unwavering trend among the press in its support for policy decisions.

As a result, coverage involving China could cause the press to cover the Communist nation unfavorably and to continue supporting U.S. policy throughout the outcome stage of the policy process. In addition, coverage of China could cause the press to report favorably on U.S. officials and their policies even in times of risk or failure. If this happened, Berry's perspective would be undermined. The press' objectivity would be jeopardized as well.

Furthermore, the news routines, time, and type of critical event could affect the tone of the press coverage. Berry (1990), Nacos (1990), Roshco (1975), Tuchman (1978), and Turow (1992) noted that deadlines, the suddenness of breaking news, and other work routines limited the time that newspapers had to analyze incoming information.

The tone toward policy would be favorable at the outset of a critical event because the press would lack ample time to assess government actions. However, as time passed, the press would steadily find time to analyze and critique policy. This could lead to an unfavorable tone toward policy if the government's decisions failed.

The theoretical framework could be undermined if the press' tone remained favorable toward the United States and its policy makers throughout both study periods of the nine critical events. A possible explanation for this unwavering favorable tone would be the press' view of China. This study seeks to test the limits of Berry's perspective by

examining the coverage of China, a nation that is different than the United States politically, ideologically, and culturally. Rachlin (1988) and McCartney's (1994) perspective that nationalism motivated the press to suppress threats to national security could undermine Berry's position. In other words, the press may continue to support policy in defiance of China's threat to the United States.

The type of critical event could also explain the nature of press coverage during critical events. Military events, by their nature, involved a serious threat to U.S. national security. In a way, nuclear tensions and war posed more of a direct threat to American lives than diplomatic tussles in the United Nations. From this perspective, the tone toward policy has the potential to be more unfavorable during military events than diplomatic events. The type of event could better explain Berry's perspective by pinpointing the circumstances of critical events that motivate the press to undermine policy.

To test Berry's perspective, the overall question of this study was: During critical events involving the United States and China, how did the American prestige press cover China and U.S. policy toward China? The four main research questions are as follows:

1. What roles did the press assume?
2. What was the tone of coverage toward the United States and its actors?

3. What was the tone of coverage toward China and its actors?
4. What was the press' tone toward U.S. policy the first week after a critical event began as well as after the passage of at least three weeks?

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

This study used a quantitative content analysis to determine the nature of American press coverage of nine critical events involving the United States and China. The content analysis tested Berry's perspective by coding the tone of all content in the two newspapers that focused on U.S.-China relations—in other words, news stories, news analyses, and editorials/op-ed pieces.

Three basic factors motivated the press to write news stories (Mencher, 1996). The more people that were affected, the more important the story was. News events that were out of the ordinary or that involved prominent people also warranted the need for coverage (Mencher).

In addition, the conflict inherent in the news event, its proximity to a newspaper's readership, and the event's timeliness compelled the press to write news stories (Mencher, 1996). News stories were descriptive in nature, simply reporting the facts of a news event. They were designed to provide information in an objective manner and without editorial commentary.

The commentary was reserved for editorials and op-ed pieces, which were printed in the opinion/editorial section (Mencher, 1996). They provided insight into the two newspapers' views of U.S. policy and the critical events. They gave newspapers a chance to express their concerns on critical events, a forum that was not available in news stories (Mencher).

Although news stories simply reported the facts of a breaking news event, editorials included the opinions of newspapers' publishers and editorial boards and op-ed pieces represented the views of columnists (Mencher, 1996). A newspaper's editorial board, and sometimes its publisher, decided what issues and news events to focus on. Their decision to write editorials and op-ed pieces indicated which news events they considered the most important and pressing to the public (Mencher).

News analyses rounded out a newspaper's coverage of critical events. In short, news analyses tried to make sense of the news. Although news stories described breaking events and editorials/op-ed pieces critiqued them, news analyses interpreted their impact on the public (Mencher, 1996). Examining news stories, news analyses, and editorials/op-ed pieces provided an overall perspective of the press coverage that occurred during the nine critical events.

Analyzing the press coverage involved coding policy, actors, events, nations, and lifestyles/cultures present in the coverage. Determining the tone for each story for each critical event helped to determine how much Berry's perspective described critical events coverage of the United States and China.

Selection of Newspapers

The New York Times and *The Washington Post* were selected as the newspapers to be analyzed in this study. Both newspapers have been regarded as the prestige newspapers that are read by policy makers, government officials, other members of the press, and intellectuals (Merrill, 1980). The *Times* and *Post* have relied consistently on their own correspondents and reporters, making it legitimate to characterize both newspapers' coverage as their own and not as a product of a wire service or other newspaper.

The Department of State Bulletin was used to determine the U.S. government's official policy toward China and the reasoning behind the policy. The coverage in the *Times* and *Post* was compared with the tone toward U.S. policy in the *Bulletin* to determine the relationship between the press and government.

The *Bulletin* and national editions of the *Times* and *Post* from the microfilm collections at Clark Library, San Jose State University; Green Library, Stanford University; Doe Library, University of California,

Berkeley; and J. Paul Leonard Library, San Francisco State University were used.

Critical Events Selection

This study examined nine critical events beginning in 1949 with the establishment of the People's Republic of China and ending with the Tiananmen Square crackdown in 1989. The Associated Press, a wire service that has published the top 10 events in the news every year since before World War II, provided the study with the criteria for selecting the events.

The criteria were: The event had to be included in the top 10 list, regardless of rank from 1 to 10; the event had to have a concrete date that could be used to devise study periods for the content analysis; China and the United States had to be involved diplomatically or militarily.

Sample Periods Selection

The first week and the third week after an event began were examined for each critical event in this study. The first week represented the formulation and execution stages of the foreign policy process as outlined by Berry (1990). The second study period represented the outcome stage. Although the outcome stage did not necessarily occur after the third week following the start of an event, the study period was

chosen for the sake of providing enough time to test the theoretical framework.

A rule of 20 stories or one year—whichever came first—was established to determine the content to be analyzed and the time period for each critical event. The content analysis included news articles, news analyses, and editorials/op-ed pieces. Ten stories for the first week after an event began and 10 for the third week were coded for each event. If 10 stories were not available within the third week, the study period was extended to a maximum of one year until the 10 stories were attained.

The nine critical events and the dates they began were:

1. Communists establish People's Republic of China—Oct. 1, 1949
2. China enters Korean War—Oct. 27, 1950
3. China develops atomic bomb—Oct. 16, 1964
4. China tests nuclear bomb—Oct. 27, 1966
5. Nixon announces plan to visit China—July 15, 1971
6. United Nations admits China—Oct. 25, 1971
7. Nixon visits China—Feb. 21, 1972
8. Carter announces U.S. recognition of China—Dec. 15, 1978
9. Tiananmen Square crackdown—June 4, 1989

Units of Analysis

Paragraphs of newspaper and *Bulletin* stories represented the units of analysis. The newspaper sample consisted of 180 *Times* stories and

180 *Post* stories. They were compared to 15 stories in the *Bulletin* that outlined U.S. government policy during the nine critical events. The total number of paragraphs coded was 7,275—3,451 in the *Times*, 3,301 in the *Post*, and 523 in the *Bulletin*.

Coding and Categories

There were three coding sections with several categories in each. The introductory/newspaper category included information on the event, its date, the newspaper used, issue dates, and whether the item was a news story, analysis, or editorial/op-ed piece. The play category included newspaper information, such as the story page, byline, and dateline. The paragraphs/tone category involved coding of the variables within news stories, news analyses, and editorials/op-ed pieces.

Introductory/Newspaper and Story Type Category

A case number was assigned to each story, written on each coding sheet in numerical order based on the chronology of the nine study events and their two-week time periods. The first news story, news analysis, or editorial/op-ed piece (whichever came first) for the first event, the establishment of the PRC, was coded as case number 1. The next story was coded as number 2. The next critical event continued the case number sequence. For example, for the *Times* the PRC event in

1949 ended with case number 20; the first story of the second event, China's entrance into the Korean War, was coded as case number 21.

Page 1 stories were coded before back-page or other A-section stories. If more than one story was on the same page, such as the front page, then the case number sequence was determined by the following up-down, left-right criteria: The event was coded from 1 to 9, which represented the nine critical events. For example, China's development of a nuclear bomb was coded as 4. The event date was a six-digit number representing the date of the event. For example, Nixon's visit to China on Feb. 21, 1972 was coded as 022172; 02 represented the second month of the year, February; 21 was the day of the month; and 72 was the year of the event.

The *Times* was coded as 1. The *Post* was coded as 2. The issue date of the newspaper was coded the same way as the event date. A news story, news analysis, or editorial/op-ed piece was coded as 1, 2, or 3, respectively.

As explained earlier in this chapter, news stories simply reported the facts of a news event. They provided the most current information about the event. Editorials and op-ed pieces were found on a newspaper's editorial and op-ed page and provided commentary on the news event (Mencher, 1996). They reflected the opinions of a

newspaper's publisher and editorial board. Editorials/op-ed pieces indicated that the editorial board of a newspaper considered an issue or a news event to be important to the public (Mencher). News analyses interpreted the news event and evaluated its impact on the public.

Bylines and Datelines

For bylines, beat writers and in-house writers were coded as 1; unnamed bylines with the newspaper's credit (e.g. staff reports, etc.) were coded as 2; writers from different papers were coded as 3; the Associated Press was 4; UPI was 5; Reuters was 6; other wire services were 7. If no byline was given, then the byline category and corresponding subcategories were left blank on the coding sheet.

News stories and news analyses' (not editorials/op-ed pieces) datelines were coded as 1 for Washington, DC; 2 for New York; 3 for other U.S. dateline; 4 for Beijing; 5 for Shanghai; 6 for other Chinese dateline; 7 for Hong Kong; 8 for Taipei; 9 for Moscow; 10 for Tokyo; 11 for New Delhi; 12 for Seoul; 13 for London; 14 for Manila; 15 for Saigon; 16 for Geneva; 17 for Paris; 18 for other. The dateline category was left blank when no dateline was given.

Paragraphs/Tone Category

The following coding guidelines applied to news stories, news analyses, and editorials/op-ed pieces. The first coding entry in this

section was the type of critical event being coded. Military events were 1; diplomatic events were 2.

Although diplomacy occurred during military events, the determining factor was the overall event itself. A war was a war, regardless of how much diplomacy occurred. Diplomacy among U.S. and Chinese leaders may have occurred during China's nuclear testing, but the root of the event was military—there was a military threat to national security, which in turn caused the need for diplomacy and policy decisions.

The number of paragraphs and tone within each paragraph were essential to the study's results. There had to be at least 8 paragraphs per story and analysis. There was no limit on the number of paragraphs per editorial. The 8-paragraph rule established a limit for determining which stories were coded and which ones were not used. Usually a news story with multiple sources, byline, dateline, and relative news value consisted of at least eight paragraphs.

The coding sheet contained several numbers in vertical sequence, representing the paragraph numbers for each story. Although many stories were 15 to 30 paragraphs in length, some news analyses had 50 paragraphs or more. Perpendicular to these paragraph numbers and along the horizontal coding guideline atop the page were the headings for

the tone corresponding to policy, actors, events, countries, and cultures. Coding variables were listed parallel to and below these headings.

The first entry was policy. References to U.S. policy were coded as 1. The tone toward the policy, as with most all the coding variables, was coded as 1 for favorable; 2 for neither favorable nor unfavorable; and 3 for unfavorable. If a favorable reference to U.S. policy was made in the second paragraph of a story, then 1 was recorded under policy type and 1 for favorable tone across from paragraph 2. If there was no reference to a particular variable in a paragraph, then the space under the variable heading and across from the corresponding paragraph number was left blank.

The tone toward actors was coded next. The president, White House/staff members, Congress, U.S. government agency, other U.S. government leaders, U.S. ambassador, U.S. military, U.S. people, U.S. intellectuals, and other U.S. actors were coded, followed by Mao, Zhou, Deng, other Chinese government leaders, Chinese military, Chinese people, Chinese intellectuals, and other Chinese actors. Actors other than those associated with the United States and China were coded as "other." After actors were coded, the average tone was calculated for individual actors at the bottom of their respective columns on the coding

sheet. In addition, the mean of all U.S. actors and Chinese actors in each story was calculated.

The same process applied to events. The tone toward war, battles, nuclear developments, talks, votes, deaths, and other events were coded along the corresponding column of paragraph numbers. After events, the tone toward the United States, China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, the Soviet Union, India, Japan, Korea, Britain, and other countries was coded.

The tone toward American, Chinese, Taiwanese, and other lifestyles and cultures were coded after countries. Particularly during Nixon's visit to China in 1972, many stories and news analyses focused on Chinese history, lifestyles, and culture. Although this category had less coverage than others, it was important to include references to life in China and the United States because more insight on the nature of press coverage could be gained.

Press Roles

In addition to play, each paragraph was coded according to six different press roles: transmitter, analyst, watchdog, cheerleader, China cheerleader, or China critic.

The transmitter role, coded as 1, involved coverage that simply reported the facts without any noticeable bias or favoritism toward the United States or China. The analyst role, coded as 2, involved the press

providing insight and interpretation of government policy. The watchdog role, coded as 3, involved the press utilizing its independence from government officials to evaluate and to question government policy on behalf of the public.

The press as a cheerleader, coded as 4, involved noticeable support or positive images of the United States and its policy. The press as a cheerleader of China was coded as 5, although the number of instances where positive images of China typified a story was few. In addition, 6 was coded for press coverage that focused primarily on criticizing China.

Intercoder Reliability

A pretest was carried out by the author and an assistant coder to determine how precise the variables were developed and how closely another person would interpret the coding procedures. The assistant was given 15 sample *Post* stories on the death of Deng Xiaoping on February 19, 1997, that were outside of the study samples but retained the condition of being an AP top-10 critical event involving the United States and China. The assistant was given detailed instructions on the coding procedures, and each coding variable was described in a coding guide prepared by the author.

After conducting a successful pretest, 10% or 36 stories in the study were selected at random and coded by the assistant. To determine

which stories were double-coded, a random number was selected between 1 and 9, representing the nine critical events. The number chosen was 5. Story number 5 was the first selection to be double-coded. Because there were nine events and two newspapers, the number 18 was added to 5 to determine the second and following stories to be double-coded. Thus, story numbers 23, 41, 59, and so on were selected until 10% of the total press sample—36 stories—were chosen.

The double coding of the newspaper stories produced a combined intercoder reliability of 90%. The intercoder reliability for U.S. policy was 93%. It was 96% for tone toward the president, 89% for tone toward the United States, 89% for tone toward China, and 100% for tone toward the role of the press.

Data Analysis

The data were entered into the SPSS for Windows program for statistical analysis. The SPSS program used each variable's mean derived from the press' coverage to run analyses of variance and independent-sample *t*-tests to answer the research questions in this study.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

This chapter presents the findings and an interpretation of the quantitative content analysis. It is divided into four main sections:

(a) press roles, (b) an overview of the *Times* and *Post*'s coverage toward the United States and China, (c) coverage of U.S. policy, the United States, and China in both newspapers and *The Department of State Bulletin*; and (d) the comparison of press coverage during military and diplomatic critical events.

Press Roles in Coverage of U.S.-China Critical Events

The press' approach to covering U.S.-China critical events varied. The *Times* and *Post* assumed different press roles that influenced the tone of the coverage. Examining the press roles answered this study's first research question: what roles did the press assume? The press assumed a total of six press roles: transmitter, analyst, watchdog, cheerleader, pro-China, and China critic.

As explained earlier, the transmitter role involved the two newspapers reporting just the facts; the analyst role involved analysis of U.S. and Chinese actions; the watchdog role involved the press'

disagreement with U.S. policy and the nation's decision-makers; the cheerleader role involved support for U.S. actions and criticism of China; the pro-China role involved support for China, and the China critic role involved criticism of China.

As Table 1 shows, the transmitter role was the most prevalent role found in this study. The press coverage primarily included news stories, and 96% of them assumed the transmitter role. The press coverage also included 37 news analyses and 50 editorials/op-ed pieces, most of which assumed analyst and watchdog roles.

Although the majority of the coverage involved news stories, the press also provided some analysis of the critical events. One out of every 4.6 stories was an editorial/op-ed piece or news analysis. As explained earlier, editorials/op-ed pieces allowed editorial boards and columnists to express their opinions concerning critical events. They served as a forum for the two newspapers to criticize or support the United States and China. In short, editorials added commentary, something that news stories did not do (Mencher, 1996).

In addition, news analyses interpreted the critical events' impact on the public (Mencher, 1996). This interpretative coverage was different than news stories, which simply reported the facts in an objective manner (Mencher).

Table 1

Percentages of Press Roles Assumed by The New York Times and The Washington Post and the Two Newspapers Combined During the Nine Critical Events

Press Role	NYT (n=180)	Post (n=180)
Transmitter	71%	77%
Analyst	17	16
Watchdog	7	4
Cheerleader	2	1
China Critic	2	1
Pro-China	1	1

Press Role	News Stories (n=273)	Analyses (n=37)	Editorials (n=50)
Transmitter	96%	8%	—
Analyst	2	84	44
Watchdog	—	3	36
Cheerleader	—	—	10
China Critic	—	3	8
Pro-China	1	3	2
Total	273	37	50

Note. *n* represents number of stories; the overall percentages of news stories, news analyses, and editorials do not add up to 100% because each press role was rounded off.

Table 1 shows that the press rarely assumed the cheerleader role, which involved the press supporting U.S. policy while simultaneously criticizing China. Only 2% of the *Times*' coverage and 1% of the *Post*'s coverage assumed this role. In addition, the press did not assume the pro-China or China critic roles very often. Only 2% of the *Times*' coverage and 1% of the *Post*'s assumed the pro-China role, and 1% of both newspapers' coverage assumed the China critic role.

Instead, press coverage frequently assumed the analyst role. This role, which will be discussed later in this chapter, produced fairly neutral coverage of U.S. policy, the United States, and China. As this chapter will show, press coverage was fairly neutral overall. The various press roles were major factors in shaping this coverage. In the coding process, this neutral coverage was represented by a 2 on a 3-point scale. As mentioned in the method chapter, a 1 represented favorable coverage, 2 indicated neutral coverage, and 3 represented unfavorable coverage.

Overview of Tone in Times and Post Coverage

Examining the coverage of the United States, China, and the two nations' leaders answered the second and third research questions: (1) What was the tone of coverage toward the United States and their actors? and (2) What was the tone of coverage toward China and its actors? Overall, the coverage was fairly neutral toward both nations and their leaders.

An independent *t*-test showed that there was no significant difference between the press' tone toward the United States ($M = 2.10$, $SD = .31$), $N = 171$, and China ($M = 2.19$, $SD = .32$), $N = 475$. The coverage of the United States ($M = 2.10$) and China ($M = 2.19$) was slightly higher than a 2 on the 3-point coding scale, indicating that the press was fairly neutral toward both nations overall.

In coverage that assumed the transmitter role, the United States was treated in a fairly neutral manner ($M = 2.12$). In coverage that assumed the analyst ($M = 2.00$) and watchdog roles ($M = 2.28$), the United States was also covered in a fairly neutral way. As a result, additional independent *t*-tests showed that there was no significant difference between coverage that assumed transmitter ($M = 2.12$, $SD = .33$), $t(194) = 1.05$, and analyst and watchdog roles ($M = 2.08$, $SD = .26$), $n = 72$. This finding indicated that the press could be neutral when analyzing policy.

This is not to say that the United States avoided criticism from the press. Compared to other press roles, criticism of the United States was more common in coverage that assumed the watchdog role. There was a significant difference between the analyst role ($M = 2.00$, $SD = .20$), $n = 52$, $t = -4.47$, $p < .001$, and the watchdog role ($M = 2.28$, $SD = .31$), $n = 19$.

Paralleling this coverage was an interesting finding that China, a nation that falls under Gans (1979), Rachlin (1988), and McCartney's (1994) description of a threat to U.S. national security, was also covered in a fairly neutral manner. Gans, Rachlin, and McCartney noted that a country that threatened the national security of the United States was likely to be covered unfavorably. But in this study, the coverage of China did not support their perspective.

Table 2 shows that even the watchdog role, which by its nature was the most critical of the six press roles found in this study, did not exhibit an unfavorable tone ($M = 2.12$) toward China. In fact, when the press assumed the watchdog role, coverage of the United States ($M = 2.28$) was slightly more unfavorable than China. This was because the press' watchdog role naturally concentrated on criticizing U.S. actions that failed or seemed risky. In coverage that assumed this role, China was not the main focus of the press' critical eye.

In coverage of China, independent t -tests showed that there was no significant difference between the transmitter role ($M = 2.18$, $SD = .32$), $t(251) = .17$, and the combined category of analyst and watchdog press roles ($M = 2.17$, $SD = .28$), $n = 77$. Contrary to coverage of the United States, there also was no significant difference between the analyst role ($M = 2.19$, $SD = .30$), $t(57) = 1.03$, and the watchdog role ($M = 2.12$, $SD =$

Table 2

Press Roles Involving Coverage of the United States and China

Press Role	United States		China	
	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>
Transmitter	194	2.12	251	2.18
Analyst	52	2.00	57	2.19
Watchdog	20	2.28	20	2.12
Cheerleader	6	1.63	6	2.36
Pro-China	3	2.00	4	1.89
China Critic	6	2.08	6	2.60

Note. *N* represents the number of stories; means range from 1 to 3, with 1 representing a favorable tone, 2 representing neither a favorable nor unfavorable tone, and 3 representing an unfavorable tone.

.22), $n = 17$. Both roles were near 2 on the 3-point coding scale, which indicated fairly neutral coverage.

Thus, comparing press roles did not reveal any difference in the way the *Times* and *Post* covered China. In straight news stories or opinionated editorials/op-ed pieces, the press exhibited fairly neutral

coverage of China. This was an intriguing finding, and it indicated that the press was objective toward China in the midst of tense critical events.

In addition to coverage of the two nations, independent *t*-tests also showed that there was no significant difference between the press' tone toward U.S. leaders ($M = 2.05$, $SD = .30$), $n = 432$, and Chinese leaders ($M = 2.10$, $SD = .37$), $n = 342$. Coverage of both nations' leaders was near 2 on the 3-point coding scale. This finding showed that U.S. officials, who included the president, White House, State Department, and Congress, were not covered any differently than their counterparts in China.

This does not suggest that the *Times* and *Post* avoided criticizing China and its government. In some of the coverage, China's leaders were covered unfavorably, receiving a 3 on the 3-point coding scale. The Chinese government's Communist rule was especially criticized in the earlier events in this study. In a *Times* news analysis during the Korean War, Mao was criticized for "acting belligerently in an effort to frighten the Western nations and wring concessions from them" ("Mao's Game", Nov. 12, 1950, p. E1).

The Chinese Communist invasion of Tibet and the effective help extended to the Indo-Chinese Communists shows that Mao Tse-tung may have begun to think of himself as an Asiatic Napoleon, or at the very least as an Oriental Stalin employing the latter's mode of conquest. ("Red China and", Nov. 1, 1950, p. A34)

But, as the neutral coverage of China indicated, Chinese leaders were not always covered unfavorably. For example, Mao was treated politely during Nixon's visit in 1972. An editorial in the *Post* presented a different image of Mao than during military events:

Mao Tse-tung really is a living legend. His name draws the sword from the Chinese stone. He is the great Helmsman by force of more than metaphor. (Kraft, February 24, 1972, p. A19)

Although the two newspapers covered both nations and their leaders in a fairly similar way, the comparison of China's leaders and people led to a different finding. Table 3 shows that there was a significant difference between the press' coverage of China's leaders and military and the coverage of China's people.

During the Tiananmen Square crackdown, the press showed a contrasting tone toward China's government and its people. Students were commonly labeled as "pro-democracy" supporters. The lead paragraph in the *Times*' news report after the crackdown painted a contrasting portrayal of China's students and government:

Tens of thousands of Chinese troops retook the center of the capital from pro-democracy protesters early this morning, killing scores of students and workers and wounding hundreds more as they fired submachine guns at crowds of people who tried to resist. (Kristof, June 4, 1989, p. A1)

Table 3

Comparison of Coverage of China's Leaders and People

<i>Actors</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>
China People/Students	171	1.99	.35	.03	4.35*
China Leaders/Military	475	2.14	.37	.02	

Note. Tone was coded by paragraph and averaged for each story; *N* represents combined number of stories with references to actors; means range from 1 to 3, with 1 representing a favorable tone, 2 representing neither a favorable nor unfavorable tone, and 3 representing an unfavorable tone.

* $p < .001$.

A story in the *Post* hammered the point home:

Tanks pursued student victims with machine guns, ran over some and smashed others like insects against walls. . . . Behind the tanks came soldiers and riot police, who beat students with truncheons and fired on them with automatic weapons. (Southerland, June 5, 1989, p. A1)

The day after the crackdown began, the *Times* reported on the shock and helplessness of many Chinese citizens:

Beijing residents seemed stunned by the violent attacks on the protesters for democracy, but unsure how to respond. While many students and young workers are militant and insist that they will win in the long run, older people already seem to have accepted defeat. (Kristof, June 5, 1989, p. A10)

A feature story in the *Post* on one of the protesters who was killed

at Tiananmen Square further cast the Chinese government in a negative light:

Chen's short life, as recounted by friends wearing black armbands in a stifling university dorm room, provides an example of how much young talent—cherished in a country with relatively few college students—was wasted on the bloody asphalt of the capital. (Mathews, June 5, 1989, p. A22)

The *Post* made it clear how the press viewed China's leaders during the crackdown.

Bloody Sunday in Tiananmen Square will be remembered by Chinese at home and abroad as one of the darkest days in China's history, one which is likely to blacken the names of several Chinese leaders for decades to come. (Southerland, June 5, 1989, p. A1)

However, in the context of the nine critical events overall, coverage of China's leaders and people was fairly neutral. Coverage of both was near a 2 on the 3-point coding scale. The large number of references to China's leaders and military ($N = 475$) and also to its people ($N = 171$) probably was a factor that resulted in a statistically significant difference in tone between the two groups.

However, the difference in coverage between China's leaders and its people was an exception. Overall, this study showed that there was no significant difference in the way the press covered the two nations and their leaders. The fact that the two newspapers covered the United States and China in a similar way was a very intriguing finding.

A possible explanation for the neutral coverage involved the press' concern with objectivity. Two reasons indicated that Tuchman's (1972) perspective on objectivity seemed to play a larger role than Rachlin's (1988) notion of a biased press. First, China was not heavily criticized; coverage of the Communist nation was fairly neutral. Second, press coverage of the United States was also neutral. The neutral coverage was shaped by press roles, which in turn seemed to result from objective reporting and editing.

Neutral Coverage and Objectivity

Rachlin (1988) noted that the press was a product of its environment. Newspapers harbored the same nationalism as any U.S. citizen because reporters and editors were Americans themselves. As a result, when a nation threatened U.S. national security, such as Communist China, the press simultaneously opposed that threat and supported U.S. actions (McCartney, 1994; Paletz & Entman, 1981; Rachlin, 1988).

However, in this study, the press did not heavily criticize China. Any criticism was tempered by fairly neutral coverage. There was no significant difference in the way the press covered the two nations and their leaders. They were all covered in a fairly neutral way. The United States ($M = 2.10$, $SD = .31$), $N = 171$, and China ($M = 2.19$, $SD = .32$), $N = 475$ were both covered similarly. U.S. government leaders ($M = 2.05$, SD

= .30), $n = 432$, and Chinese government leaders ($M = 2.10$, $SD = .37$), $n = 342$ were also covered in a similar manner. On a 3-point coding scale, where 1 represented favorable coverage and 3 represented unfavorable coverage, the two nations and their leaders were all near 2, which indicated neutral coverage.

Press roles shaped the neutral coverage in this study. The transmitter, analyst, and watchdog roles were the most prominent. As mentioned earlier, the majority of the press coverage in this study assumed transmitter and analyst roles that were fairly neutral toward the United States, China, and their leaders. Even China was treated in a fairly neutral manner in coverage that assumed watchdog roles ($M = 2.12$). There were some instances of unfavorable coverage in the watchdog role, but the prevalence of the neutral transmitter and analyst roles reduced the watchdog role's overall impact on the coverage.

Because there was no significant difference between coverage of China and the United States, and because coverage of both nations was fairly neutral, Rachlin's (1988) perspective was not supported. The fairly neutral coverage toward both nations and their leaders indicated that the press did not heavily criticize China nor support U.S. actions. In other words, the *Times* and *Post* did not appear to treat China as a threat to U.S. national security.

Instead, the two newspapers seemed to support Tuchman's (1972) perspective concerning the convention of objectivity. Tuchman noted that editors were concerned with criticism from readers. Objective reporting protected a newspaper from criticism. As a result, news desks often balanced unfavorable coverage with a contrasting viewpoint. Providing both sides of an argument helped prevent criticism. Presenting a balanced story prevented readers from blaming the messenger for the message.

In addition, balancing coverage by presenting both sides of an issue also resulted in fairly neutral coverage. In this study, the neutral coverage of both the United States and China supported Tuchman's (1972) perspective. Although China may have been heavily criticized by the press for entering the Korean War or cracking down on students in Tiananmen Square, the lack of a significant difference in the coverage of both nations indicated that overall, over time, objective reporting took place.

It was important to see whether this finding extended to U.S. policy. It was also important to see how the neutral coverage of policy, if it existed, affected Berry's (1990) perspective. Berry noted that during critical events, the press initially supported U.S. policy but eventually became more critical. If press coverage of U.S. policy was neutral

throughout each event, then Berry's (1990) perspective would be undermined.

Official U.S. Policy and the Times and the Post

Examining the coverage of U.S. policy answered the fourth research question: What was the press' tone toward U.S. policy the first week after a critical event began as well as after the passage of at least three weeks? As this section will show, the coverage of policy was fairly neutral during both time periods of virtually all the critical events. This finding undermined Berry's (1990) perspective that the press eventually criticized policy after the outset of a critical event.

The fairly neutral coverage of policy paralleled the coverage of the two nations and their leaders. In other words, the press' objective behavior extended to the coverage of policy, which undermined Berry's (1990) perspective. The newspapers' concern with objectivity produced a prevalence of neutral press roles, which in turn caused neutral coverage of U.S. policy.

Table 4 shows that much of the coverage of policy included transmitter and analyst roles. The prevalence of these roles played a major part in shaping the coverage in this study. On the 3-point coding scale, both roles were near 2. The transmitter role produced fairly

Table 4

Press Roles in Policy Coverage

Press Role	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	% of Policy Coverage
Transmitter	67	2.20	58%
Analyst	28	2.06	24
Watchdog	16	2.54	14
Cheerleader	4	1.54	4
Pro-China	—	—	—
China Critic	—	—	—

Note. *N* represents the number of stories with references to policy; means range from 1 to 3, with 1 representing a favorable tone, 2 representing neither a favorable nor unfavorable tone, and 3 representing an unfavorable tone; the *Times* and *Post* did not assume the Pro-China or China Critic roles during policy coverage.

neutral coverage of policy ($M = 2.20$). Coverage that assumed the analyst role was also neutral ($M = 2.06$) toward U.S. policy.

In coverage of policy, there was a significant difference between analyst roles ($M = 2.06$, $SD = .47$), $t(28) = -3.38$, $p < .01$, and watchdog roles ($M = 2.54$, $SD = .40$), $n = 16$. But there was no significant difference between the transmitter role ($M = 2.20$, $SD = .44$), $t(67) = -.44$, and the

analyst and watchdog roles ($M = 2.23$, $SD = .50$), $n = 44$. Just as they had done in coverage of the United States and China, the greater number of analyst and transmitter roles neutralized any unfavorable coverage that assumed the watchdog role.

The two newspapers' coverage of policy may have been similar regardless of the press roles, but there was a significant difference in the way the press and U.S. government viewed policy. As explained earlier, the government's viewpoint on policy was found in *The Department of State Bulletin*. The *Times* and *Post*'s coverage differed with the *Bulletin*'s coverage of policy.

Table 5 shows a significant difference between how the *Times* and the *Bulletin* perceived policy throughout the nine critical events combined. Table 5 also shows a significant difference between the *Post* and the *Bulletin*'s coverage of policy.

Furthermore, Table 6 shows a significant difference between the press and *Bulletin*'s view of the United States. The *Times* and *Post*'s coverage of the United States were both significantly different from the *Bulletin*'s.

Although the *Times* and the *Post* frequently assumed the transmitter role, the two newspapers still analyzed policy. For example, after the United Nations' vote to recognize China in October 1971, anti-

Table 5

Analysis of Variance for Tone Toward U.S. Policy in The New York Times, Washington Post, and The Department of State Bulletin

<i>Publication</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>F</i>
Times (n=193)	2.25	.52	.07	7.70**
Post (n=266)	2.14	.44	.06	
SDB (n=172)	1.71	.34	.09	
Times (n=193)	2.25	.52	.07	13.65**
SDB (n=172)	1.71	.34	.09	
Post (n=266)	2.14	.44	.06	6.19*
SDB (n=172)	1.71	.34	.09	

Note. *n* represents number of paragraphs; means range from 1 to 3, with 1 representing a favorable tone, 2 representing neither a favorable nor unfavorable tone, and 3 representing an unfavorable tone.

* $p < .01$. ** $p < .001$.

Table 6

Analysis of Variance for Tone Toward the United States in The New York Times, Washington Post, and The Department of State Bulletin

Publication	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>F</i>
Times (<i>n</i> =972)	2.09	.31	.03	13.14*
Post (<i>n</i> =947)	2.11	.32	.03	
SDB (<i>n</i> =186)	1.67	.35	.09	

Note. *n* represents number of paragraphs; means range from 1 to 3, with 1 representing a favorable tone, 2 representing a neither favorable nor unfavorable tone, and 3 representing an unfavorable tone.

* $p < .001$.

U.N. sentiment exploded in the United States. The United States had lobbied vigorously to prevent China from acquiring an international stage in the United Nations. Admitting China rescinded Taiwan's U.N. membership and upset U.S. policy objectives in Asia.

But a *Post* editorial warned the U.S. administration to temper its bitterness toward the decision:

Some will say that the U.N. and the Chinese deserve each other. But a responsible President will move in an opposite direction—toward reaffirmation of the U.N.'s value to us, toward active efforts

to reform its finances and procedures, and toward more extensive use of its forums and corridors. ("China at the," Nov. 17. 1971, p. A18)

However, in December 1978, President Carter announced that the United States would recognize China. Another editorial in the *Post* set the tone immediately:

1979 is the year of the Ram, and Taiwan just got gored-needlessly. (Dec. 29. 1978, p. A15) . . . In retrospect, our China policy after 1973 was probably flawed. We were so sure that we could make a deal with Peking that we began to cover our domestic flank from right-wing attack by strengthening our ties with Taiwan, thus making it more agonizing than necessary when the inevitable break came. (Lawson, Dec. 29, 1978, p. A15)

Despite the opinionated nature of editorials/op-ed pieces, the *Times* and *Post* were fairly neutral toward U.S. policy. In this study, unfavorable coverage of policy represented a minority amid a majority of coverage that assumed neutral transmitter and analyst roles.

Overall, statistical analysis showed that the *Times* and *Post* differed with the government on policy. The *Bulletin's* coverage was more favorable than the *Times* and *Post's*. Analyzing Berry's (1990) perspective by examining whether the press became more unfavorable of policy over time required further analysis to determine *when*, if at all, the two newspapers disagreed with government decisions.

Coverage of Policy in the Two Study Periods

Comparing policy coverage during the first and second study periods in each event did not support Berry's (1990) perspective at $p <$

.05. The press did not deviate from the government's tone in the way Berry suggested. From a statistical perspective, only the *Times*' coverage of Nixon's announcement to visit China supported Berry's perspective: As Table 7 shows, comparing both study periods of that event produced a p value of .003 at $p < .01$.

Nixon's intention to visit China was controversial for many reasons. His announcement caused a shift in U.S. policy toward China, upset Taiwan, and affected relations with the Soviet Union (Buss, 1972; Fairbank, 1979; Jiang, 1988). During this event, the *Times*' coverage of policy became more unfavorable from Time 1 to Time 2. As a result, the *Times*' coverage deviated from the *Bulletin*'s tone ($M = 1.64$ throughout event), becoming more unfavorable toward policy during Time 2.

Table 7

The New York Times' Coverage of Policy During Nixon's Announcement to Visit China

Study Period	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>
Time 1	14	1.63	.48	.24	-4.04*
Time 2	27	2.60	.33	.12	

Note. n represents number of paragraphs; means range from 1 to 3, with 1 representing a favorable tone, 2 representing neither a favorable nor unfavorable tone, and 3 representing an unfavorable tone.

* $p < .01$.

Table 8

The Press and Government's Tone Toward Policy in Both Study Periods of Each Event

<i>Event</i>	<i>Bulletin</i>	<i>NYT</i>		<i>Post</i>	
	<i>M</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>
1. PRC established (1949)					
Study Period 1	2.00	—	—	3	2.00
Study Period 2		—	—	2	2.00
2. China enters Korean War (1950)					
Study Period 1	—	—	—	—	—
Study Period 2		—	—	—	—
3. Atomic test (1964)					
Study Period 1	1.31	—	—	15	2.25
Study Period 2		—	—	4	2.33
4. Nuclear test (1966)					
Study Period 1	2.00	7	2.00	3	2.00
Study Period 2		3	2.67	8	1.77
5. Nixon announces visit (1971)					
Study Period 1	1.64	14	1.63*	6	2.00
Study Period 2		27	2.60*	61	2.03
6. U.N. recognizes China (1971)					
Study Period 1	1.94	6	2.22	8	2.40
Study Period 2		7	2.25	11	2.44
7. Nixon visits China (1972)					
Study Period 1	1.70	11	2.27	2	2.00
Study Period 2		11	2.46	12	1.80
8. U.S. recognizes China (1978)					
Study Period 1	1.67	62	2.20	94	2.15
Study Period 2		10	2.17	37	2.45
9. Tiananmen crackdown (1989)					
Study Period 1	2.00	7	2.29	1	2.00
Study Period 2		—	—	2	2.00

Note. During some events, one or both newspapers had no references to U.S. policy; during these events, the press focused more on the developing news than the policy process; the *Bulletin's* tone encompassed both study periods per event; *n* represents number of paragraphs; *N* for the *Bulletin* was 14 stories.

* $p < .01$.

Table 8 shows the press and *The Department of State Bulletin's* tone toward policy during each event. The tone toward policy was measured on a 3-point scale, with 1 representing favorable coverage, 2 indicating neutral coverage, and 3 representing unfavorable coverage. With the exception of the *Times's* coverage during Nixon's announcement, independent *t*-tests did not reveal a significant difference between time periods at $p < .05$.

Because Berry's (1990) perspective was only supported by the *Times* during one event, a better explanation was needed to describe critical events coverage in this study. China represented a special case, because the amount of time after a critical event did not affect the press' criticism of policy as Berry (1990), Nacos (1990), Roshco (1975), Tuchman (1978), and Turow (1992) had noted.

Interpretation of Findings

Of all the perspectives in this study, Tuchman's (1972) notion of objectivity was the most prominent. The press' concern with objectivity produced neutral press roles that shaped the coverage of U.S. policy. As a result, the United States, China, their leaders, and U.S. policy were all covered in a similar and fairly neutral way.

This neutral coverage was influenced by the press roles that the *Times* and *Post* assumed. Of the six press roles in this study, the

transmitter and analyst roles were the most prominent. The two roles combined to represent 82% of the total sample. Both were fairly neutral toward policy, as well as the two nations and their leaders. At times the press' watchdog role was unfavorable, receiving a 3 on the 3-point coding scale, but the prevalence of the transmitter and analyst roles resulted in neutral coverage overall.

The press roles were influenced by the *Times* and *Post's* concern with objective reporting. Tuchman (1972) noted that reporters and editors were concerned about being criticized by readers. Thus, newspapers used objective reporting in an effort to avoid criticism. In doing this, unfavorable coverage was often balanced by contrasting viewpoints. So although China may have been criticized in this study, the press often balanced its criticism of the Communist nation.

This balancing act by the press, all in an effort to avoid criticism from readers, produced fairly neutral coverage toward both the United States and China. The neutral coverage indicated that the press did not cover China unfavorably and support U.S. policy, as Rachlin's (1988) perspective noted. Instead, objectivity was a stronger factor than Rachlin's notion of a press biased by its own nationalism.

Furthermore, the press' concern over objectivity affected the coverage of U.S. policy, which in turn undermined Berry's (1990)

perspective. It seemed apparent that Berry did not account for objectivity as a major factor in press coverage.

This is not to say that Berry's (1990) position did not consider newmaking routines. His perspective was predicated on the work routines of reporters and editors. He contended that the lack of access to information at the outset of a critical event caused reporters to rely heavily on government officials. Combined with the daily pressure of deadlines, government officials realized that the press was limited in its ability to analyze breaking news.

But Berry's (1990) perspective did not account for coverage that remained neutral throughout the course of a critical event. In other words, Berry did not consider objectivity's influence. Objectivity limited any criticism of policy and China.

Another major finding in this study was that the press differed significantly with the government's coverage of policy, which was revealed in the *The Department of State Bulletin*. The *Times* and *Post* did not increasingly criticize U.S. policy over time. Nor did the press constantly favor policy. Instead, the press' concern with objectivity produced fairly neutral coverage, which was significantly different than the coverage in the *Bulletin*.

Overall, the press was fairly neutral toward policy throughout both

study periods because it balanced critical coverage with non-critical coverage. In the case of China, Berry's (1990) perspective did not stand up. Of all the perspectives in the literature review, Tuchman's (1972) notion of objectivity was the most prominent.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This thesis examines *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*'s coverage of nine critical events involving the United States and China after World War II. It examines the relationship between the press and government by focusing on coverage of U.S. policy, the United States, and China in a quantitative content analysis.

Overview of Findings

In this study, government officials do not heavily influence press coverage of policy. The *Times* and *Post* act independently, expressing their own views on policy. This is a major finding. The *Times* and *Post* do not reflect the government's view of U.S. policy. *The Department of State Bulletin*, which is representative of the government's stance on policy, is fairly favorable of U.S. actions toward China. However, the two newspapers are fairly neutral, indicating that the press does not always support the government's policies during critical events.

In the Findings chapter, several examples excerpted from the press coverage show that the *Times* and *Post* are both independent in covering policy, as well as the United States and China. Editorials/op-ed pieces, which represent the opinions of the two newspapers, clearly show that

the press does not automatically support policy. Instead, the two newspapers often challenge the government or maintain a skeptical stance on policy-makers' decisions.

This independent behavior by the press affects more than just the coverage of policy. Even a nation such as China, which is considerably different than the United States, is covered with a fairly neutral tone. In this study, press coverage of China is near 2 on a 3-point coding scale, with 1 representing favorable coverage, 2 indicating neutral coverage, and 3 representing unfavorable coverage. This indicates fairly neutral coverage. McCartney (1994), Paletz & Entman (1981), and Rachlin's (1988) position that the press criticizes threats to U.S. national security does not surface in this study; the fairly neutral coverage of China and its similarity to the coverage of the United States does not support their perspective.

This study shows that even during critical events, the press does not necessarily favor policy and criticize China. Berry's (1990) perspective describes critical events coverage involving many nations, but it does not stand up to China. There is no significant difference in the way the two newspapers cover the United States and China, nor is there a significant difference in the coverage of the two nations' leaders.

The fairly neutral coverage results from various press roles that the two newspapers assume throughout this study. In short, press roles shape the coverage. Because of this combination of news stories, news analyses, and editorials/op-ed pieces, the *Times* and *Post* assume six different press roles.

The transmitter role, which involves descriptive reporting that simply states the facts, is the most prominent of the six. The analyst and watchdog roles, which are generally representative of editorials/op-ed pieces, represent the views of the two newspapers' editorial boards, publishers, and columnists. The other three roles—cheerleader, pro-China, and China critic—play an extremely small part in shaping the coverage.

The transmitter and analyst roles combine to make up 82% of the coverage in this study. Coverage that assumes both of these roles is fairly neutral. The watchdog role produces some unfavorable coverage, but the neutral transmitter and analyst roles dominate the coverage. Because the press assumes neutral press roles the majority of the time, there was no significant difference between the tone of the coverage of the United States and the tone of the coverage of China during the nine critical events.

Furthermore, coverage is fairly neutral regardless of the role the press assumes. In coverage of the United States, China, and both

nations' leaders, there is no significant difference between the transmitter and analyst roles. Both are near 2 on the 3-point coding scale. Even the watchdog role, which naturally is the most critical of the six press roles, produces fairly neutral coverage overall.

This is an intriguing finding. Not only is the coverage of China fairly neutral, but it is similar to coverage of the United States. This finding undermines Rachlin's (1988) perspective, because the press does not cover China unfavorably and the United States and its policy favorably. Another explanation is needed to describe the nature of the press roles and how they produce fairly neutral coverage in this study.

That explanation involves Tuchman's (1972) notion of objectivity. Tuchman notes that the press is concerned with criticism from readers. In serving as a public messenger, its credibility as a legitimate source of news is always at stake. Therefore, reporters and editors make an effort to represent both sides of an issue fairly and accurately. Presenting both sides of an issue maintains objectivity and prevents the messenger from being blamed for the message.

Tuchman's (1972) notion of objectivity as an entrenched newsmaking ritual undermines Rachlin's perspective of a potentially biased press. The press seems to maintain objective reporting during times when nationalism usually prevents it. In addition, objectivity undermines Berry's (1990) perspective on the coverage of policy.

The *Times* and *Post*'s coverage of U.S. policy is near 2 on the 3-point coding scale, indicating a fairly neutral tone ($M = 2.19$). This coverage is significantly different from the government's view of policy, which is revealed in *The Department of State Bulletin*. This difference shows that the press retains its journalistic independence by not reflecting the U.S. government's policy toward China. This difference does not undermine Berry's (1990) perspective, because his notion suggests that the press maintains its independence by eventually criticizing policy.

Objective coverage undermines Berry's perspective in a different way. Within the three-week time frame of this study, time is not a significant factor in the press' criticism of policy. In virtually all of the events, there is no significant difference in the newspapers' tone toward policy between the first and third weeks after an event occurs. The press' concern with objectivity keeps the coverage of policy fairly neutral throughout both time periods, indicating that the criticism of U.S. policy is not prominent. The lack of significant change in the coverage of policy does not support Berry's (1990) perspective.

This study shows that Berry (1990) does not consider objectivity as an influential news routine. News routines are always a factor in coverage, but to varying degrees (Berry, 1990; Roshco, 1975; Tuchman,

1978; Turow, 1992). In this study, objectivity seems to be the most influential factor shaping press coverage.

Contributions to the Literature

This study adds a new perspective to the existing literature and theories pertaining to the press-government relationship, objectivity, and coverage of China during critical events. In the case of China, the press' independence in covering policy and its concern with objectivity counter the existing theory on how the press functions in the midst of critical events.

China counters the results of studies based on other countries. These other studies include those conducted by Berry (1990), Rachlin (1988), and many other researchers. The press' concern with maintaining objective coverage is more prominent in this study than the press' bias toward a Communist country such as China. As a result, China represents a unique case.

Because the press is fairly independent of U.S. policy toward China, this may be why no significant change is detected from Time 1 to Time 2 in virtually all nine critical events. The *Times* and *Post's* independence and their concern with objectivity result in neutral coverage that counters previous studies.

The fairly neutral coverage of China shows that newspapers do not always criticize threats to U.S. national security. In addition, the press

does not always support U.S. policy during critical events, even when China threatens national security. This study shows that the press can be fairly neutral, even when expressing its opinions.

Limitations to the Study

The strength of this study is that nine critical events during a 40-year period from 1949-1989 were content-analyzed. However, because the number of stories, news analyses, and editorials that were examined was limited to 10 for the first time period and 10 for the second time period, it was not possible to analyze each of the events separately.

Directions for Future Research

The results of this overview study of nine critical events provide researchers with overview data that will be useful in future research on the U.S. coverage of China. A study could be done to extend the research to additional critical events, such as the death of Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai, which occurred during the period of this study. In addition, a future study could include critical events that occur after 1989, such as the death of Deng Xiaoping and President Bill Clinton's visit to China.

Basing a future study on new critical events definitely deserves attention. However, it would also be enriching to expand research on several of the critical events in this study. In particular, further study is warranted of the period (1971) in which Nixon announced that he would

visit China. The *Times* and *Post* printed numerous news stories, news analyses, and editorials/op-ed pieces about this event. But the guidelines that shaped the time periods for this study excluded some of this coverage.

Because this study found that the coverage reflected the journalistic convention of objectivity, future research can also focus on news stories. Excluding news analyses and editorials/op-ed pieces allows the researcher to examine press coverage that is supposed to be objective. Strictly focusing on news stories could provide a clearer perspective on objectivity's influence on critical events coverage.

Finally, this study shows that the press does not always succumb to nationalistic biases in its coverage. In building upon this study, future research should examine American values that shape press coverage, especially during critical events. Gans (1979) noted that press coverage often is shaped by nationalistic values. Examining these values, such as democracy and ethnocentrism, will provide a greater understanding of the press' nationalism and how it affects newspapers' concern with objective coverage.

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