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Yafeng Xia. *Negotiating with the Enemy: U.S.-China Talks during the Cold War, 1949-1972.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006. xv + 326pp. Notes, index. \$45.00 (cloth), ISBN 0-253-34758-0.

URL: <http://www.h-net.org/~diplo/essays/Zhai-Xia.pdf>

Reviewed for H-Diplo by **Qiang Zhai**, Department of History, Auburn University Montgomery

Whether the United States should talk with Iran has been a topic of heated debate between the presidential candidates during the 2008 elections. What role should negotiations play in Washington's handling of adversaries? How should the White House approach negotiations? To draw useful lessons from recent history, the foreign policy advisers for the next president would find themselves well-served if they read Yafeng Xia's well-researched study of American-Chinese talks during the Cold War.

Xia's book is based on exhaustive research in American and Chinese primary sources and a thorough familiarity with secondary writings on the subject. The result is a judicious and highly revealing account of the American-Chinese interactions between the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949 and the historic visit to Beijing by President Richard Nixon in 1972. The book addresses mutual calculations and miscalculations, highlighting the role of ideology, historical memory, domestic politics, and personality in decision-making in both Washington and Beijing.

The book begins with a discussion of the contact between John L. Stuart, the American ambassador to China, and Huang Hua, a Chinese Communist Party (CCP) foreign affairs official, in the summer of 1949. The two sides probed each other's real thinking without achieving any substantial results. Xia concludes that it was primarily the outbreak of the Korean War that disrupted any possibility of movement toward normal relations. On the historiographical debate over whether there was a "lost chance" in Sino-American relations in 1949-1950, Xia agrees with Warren Cohen and Nancy Tucker that there existed a chance for developing a working relationship between the PRC and the United States in late 1949 and early 1950. Unlike Chen Jian and Michael Sheng, who tend to stress

Mao's rigid and dogmatic adherence to Communist doctrines and his unremitting hostility toward imperialism, Xia regards the CCP leadership under Mao as committed, first and foremost, to ridding their country of all the humiliations since the Opium War in the 1840s and restoring China's greatness on the world stage.

U.S.-Chinese negotiations resumed during the Korean War. At the Korean armistice talks, which lasted from July 1951 to July 1953, first in Kaesong and later in Panmunjom, Washington sought only a cease-fire while Beijing wanted a political solution to the broader East Asian problems. Xia sees these talks as a great learning process for both sides. "Toward the end of the negotiations," Xia writes, "both learned so much more about themselves and about each other that they began to adjust their expectations of and attitude toward the talks..." (p. 75). Xia argues that the Korean armistice talks prepared China for future international diplomacy at Geneva in 1954 and Bandung in 1955.

Xia's middle chapters examine the Sino-American ambassadorial talks from 1955 to 1970. He points out that although these talks remained tedious and unproductive, they "served as a useful platform of learning for the two antagonists. The talks offered the American negotiators an increased familiarity with PRC's negotiating style and a greater knowledge of Beijing's positions on various issues." (p. 105). The most significant unintended consequence of the talks, according to Xia, was their role in forcing U.S. policymakers to reconsider their policies concerning negotiations with the PRC. To supply information and directions to American negotiators at the ambassadorial talks, State Department officials had to spend considerable time studying and understanding any subtle shift in Beijing's foreign policies. The thinking and considerations of these years yielded a rich set of policy choices that could be utilized by future leaders in both Washington and Beijing. The ambassadorial talks appeared to have paved the way for Nixon's China policy.

Xia's last three chapters are devoted to Nixon's opening to China. They describe how Washington and Beijing transcended their over two decades of mutual antagonism and hostility to achieve reconciliation. Xia demonstrates that both sides made concessions on the Taiwan issue. Henry Kissinger promised Zhou Enlai that the Nixon administration would not seek "two Chinas" or a "one China, one Taiwan" policy, would not support Nationalist action against the mainland, and would not support the Taiwan independence movement. The Chinese leaders, in return, did not insist on the resolution of the Taiwan issue as a precondition for a summit. They were prepared to settle the issue in due course. They did not demand immediate American withdrawal and severance of ties with Taiwan. Xia views the Kissinger-Zhou diplomacy as "a successful example of international negotiations in which the two negotiators tried to accommodate each other's needs in order to reach a solution.... Both Kissinger and Zhou Enlai deserved credit for the success of the talks." (p. 188).

Xia's book makes an important contribution to the literature on Sino-American relations during the Cold War. He is a talented young historian, and his skills are on display in this instructive book.

Qiang Zhai is Professor of History at Auburn University at Montgomery. He has published widely within his field including two books, *China and the Vietnam Wars, 1950-1975* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000) and *The Dragon, the Lion, and the Eagle: Chinese-British-American Relations, 1949-1958* (Kent, Ohio, 1994). He has also published many articles in scholarly journals such as *International Journal of Historical Studies*, *Journal of Cold War Studies*, *Journal of Military History*, *China Quarterly* and *Pacific Historical Review*. In recognition of these many publications, Dr. Zhai was recognized as one of AUM's Distinguished Research Professors in 1997.

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