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Introduction by Yafeng Xia, Long Island University

Soon after President Richard Nixon's trip to China in February 1972, there was a lull in Sino-American relations. Nixon's initial opening of China was followed by a period in which the projected normalization of diplomatic ties between the two powers was allowed to languish. An important precondition for a better U.S.-China relationship was Chinese leader Mao Zedong's belief that the U.S.-Soviet differences were much greater than their ability to compromise and conspire against China. Mao was contemplating an alliance with the United States to counter the Soviet Union. However, Nixon's visit to the Soviet Union in May 1972, Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev's return visit to the United States in June 1973, and the signing of several treaties greatly improved U.S.-Soviet relations. Mao was disappointed and annoyed.

During his sixth visit to China in November 1973, in a hastily arranged meeting on the evening of the 13th, U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger discussed possible Sino-U.S. military cooperation with Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai. He suggested that the United States and China sign an agreement on accidental nuclear war and also establish a hotline. When Zhou's interpreter Tang Wensheng and Wang Hairong, then assistant foreign minister, reported to Mao that Zhou was too weak and incompetent in his talk with Kissinger, Mao assumed that Zhou had departed from the correct position, and had accepted U.S. nuclear protection in the event of a Soviet nuclear attack on China. On Mao's order, several sessions of enlarged Politburo meetings were held to denounce Zhou from 21 November to 5 December. The purpose was to expose and criticize the so-called "Right Capitulationism" that prevailed while Zhou had presided over diplomacy toward the United States in the last several years. After such events, it is not difficult to predict that China's perception and attitude toward the United States became more rigid.

When Mao did not see the expected intensification of the Soviet-American conflict, he flip-flopped on his anti-American approach, which his theory of "three worlds" attempted to rationalize. In his speech at the sixth special conference of the UN on 10 April 1974, Chinese Vice Premier Deng Xiaoping elaborated Mao's theory of "three worlds" and China's foreign policy. The hub of Mao's new theory was no longer "an alliance with the United States to counter the Soviet Union." Nor was there a reappearance of those world revolutionary propositions such as "anti-imperialists and anti-revisionists," or "down with the imperialists, revisionists and reactionaries." The core of the new theory was to ally with various nations against the Soviet Union, and to a lesser extent, against the United States. Mao modified his strategy from a united front with the United States to a united front against both the United States and the Soviet Union. China was to rely neither on the United States, nor the developed countries in Europe or Japan, nor any revolutionary parties of the world, but mainly on the governments of the developing countries in the third world.

When George Bush arrived in China as the head of the United States Liaison Office in October 1974, Mao was in the last leg of his life and was formulating his succession plan. Early in 1973, Zhou Enlai had been diagnosed with fatal bladder cancer and was now dying

in his hospital bed. After Deng jumped on the bandwagon at the Politburo meeting, criticizing Zhou in November/December 1973, he won Mao's trust. Mao regarded his wife Jiang Qing, and her Shanghai henchmen (the so-called Gang of Four) as his true ideological heirs. But Mao was also aware that his radical supporters were not experienced in running the country. Mao decided to entrust Deng with more power and Deng was soon put in charge of foreign affairs, especially policy toward the United States. Deng was appointed first vice premier and put in charge of the day-to-day government work in November 1974. But Deng was constantly ambushed by the "Gang of Four," who regarded him as the main obstacle to their road to the supreme power. During this period, Deng was very much of a caretaker as far as China's policy toward the United States was concerned. He couldn't exceed the stipulations of Mao's theory.

While in Beijing, Bush complained about his isolation and little contact with Chinese officials. He recorded on 6 July 1975, "The people are so nice here but they can be so obtuse, they can be so removed – so little chance for contacts....I can sit formally for one hour with Wang Hairong who says absolutely nothing." (353) Had Bush known more about China's elite politics, he would not have been so disappointed that he was not able to engage in any substantive dialogue with any Chinese official.

President Gerald Ford was more cautious in handling Sino-American relations. The United States and China made an effort to maintain their relations at a strategic level. Kissinger kept making his bi-annual trips to Beijing. For the U.S. side, the domestic political cost was too high for normalization with the People's Republic of China. Neither Kissinger nor Ford was willing to take the risk of breaking with Taiwan without a guarantee that Beijing would not conquer that island by force. George Bush was among those who warned Ford not to move ahead too precipitously in breaking relations with Taiwan.

In October 1975, during Kissinger's advance trip to China to make arrangements for President Ford's visit to Beijing, Deng Xiaoping "delivered a blistering and contemptuous review of the Ford-Kissinger policy."¹ Deng's tough attitude was in reality directed to shoring up and protecting his own declining status in the elite political struggle. Ford's visit in December proved disappointing. The trip was cut from seven days to four, and Ford added stops in Indonesia and the Philippines to give his tour greater substance. Although the Americans wanted to issue a joint statement at the end of the meeting to give the impression of headway, the Chinese refused on the grounds that no concrete progress toward normalization had been made.² Regretfully, these important meetings were not recorded in Bush's China Diary. Immediately after Ford's visit, to show China's dissatisfaction with the status of Sino-American relations and the alleged U.S. appeasement of the Soviet Union, the Chinese government announced the release of three crew members

¹ Patrick Tyler, *A Great Wall, Six Presidents and China: An Investigative History* (New York: Public Affairs, 1999), 187, 206-207.

² See Harry Harding, *A Fragile Relationship: The United States and China since 1972* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1992), 48.

of a Soviet helicopter that had penetrated Chinese airspace in March 1974.³ When Bush departed China in December 1975, Sino-American relations were at their nadir.

The China Diary of George H. W. Bush: The Making of a Global President, skillfully edited by Jeffrey Engel, offers rare insights for both scholars and the general public. The book provides an understanding of George Bush's subsequent foreign policy through his pre-presidential experiences in China. It is an important source of information for the study of Sino-American relations in the 1970s. To assess the significance of the volume, H-Diplo invited four scholars to comment on it. Their reviews are published here, along with a reply from Jeffrey Engel.

Participants

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Ting Ni is an Associate Professor and Chair of the History Department at St. Mary's University of Minnesota. She has numerous publications on both American history and Chinese history, including *The Cultural Experiences of Chinese Students Who Studied in the United States during the 1930s-1940s* (2002).

Priscilla Roberts is an Associate Professor of History at the University of Hong Kong where she is also Honorary Director of the Centre of American Studies. She is also an Adjunct Professor with the Foreign Studies College of Northeastern University, Shenyang, China and an Honorary Professor at Shanghai International Studies University. She has edited the Chinese Diaries of David Bruce, George Bush's predecessor as head of the US Liaison Office in Beijing. Her research interests focus upon the development and influence

³ Harry Harding, "The Domestic Politics of China's Global Posture, 1973-1978," in Thomas Fingar, *China's Quest for Independence: Policy Evolution in the 1970s* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1980), 105-106.

of the US foreign policy elite. She is currently working on a biography of the banker Frank Altschul, and a study of Anglo-American think tanks and the making of China policy.

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The appearance of George H.W. Bush's "China Diary" serves as a reminder that the story of U.S.-China relations in the 1970s has only begun to be told. Culled from the George Bush Presidential Library and shorn of a few redacted passages, the diary was published with the endorsement of the ex-President. It is a subjective and fragmentary record of Bush's brief tenure, and, as a historical document, it hardly forces a fundamental reconsideration of Sino-US relations during the Ford administration. It is a useful source nevertheless that reveals much about its author, his personalized work with the Chinese, and the evolutions of U.S.-China relations in the 1970s. Along the way, various shades of tragedy are encountered: Bush is endemically isolated in Beijing, perceiving the decline of American power in Asia, left to ruminate amid a tiny circle of expatriates and his perceptive Chinese domestic help. But these tragic overtones will likely be overshadowed if and when the document is eventually translated and published in China (with heavy editing, naturally). Then, the diary will indeed be greeted with acclaim as another notch of validation in the master narrative of China's rise.

Bush was a safe choice to head the U.S. Liaison Office (hereafter USLO) in Beijing, but his education in China policy had not come without bruises. As the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, Bush had been forced to grapple at length with the Taiwan issue in 1971. In October of that year, as Kissinger was concluding his first public trip to the PRC, Taiwan was stripped of its United Nations membership, forcing Bush to engage in a humiliating fight for a lost cause. (Ironically, Bush family recollections of this episode for contemporary readers in mainland China leave out the Ambassador's defiant exit with the Republic of China delegate out of the General Assembly hall, reverse-engineering the episode to give Bush a share of credit for admitting the PRC into the United Nations).¹ Bush had indeed been discussed in 1971 as the first head of a potential USLO, but Kissinger had dismissed Bush, the former head of the Republican Party, as "too soft and not sophisticated enough" (6). White House aide Dwight Chapin nevertheless lobbied H. R. Haldeman for Bush's inclusion with President Nixon's breakthrough February 1972 delegation to Beijing, describing Bush's presence as "an off-beat idea that may at first glance appear ridiculous" but one which would mollify American conservative politicians and voters sandbagging the White House with doomsday denunciations of Nixon's visit.² Bush stayed at home while

¹ Neil Bush, foreword to Wang Kuan, *Bushi yu Zhongguo* [Bush and China] (Beijing: Huaxia Chubanshe/Xinhua Shudian, 2007).

² Dwight L. Chapin to H.R. Haldeman, "Memorandum re: Ambassador George Bush," January 24, 1972, White House Central Files, Subject Files, Trips [EX TR 24 China, People's Republic of (Red China) Proposed 1972, Beginning – 7/28/71], Box 60, Folder 3, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, Maryland. For colorful examples of resistance to the China visit among Republican constituencies, see *ibid*, Box 58. Given the vehemence of the anti-communist sentiment present in these documents, it is unlikely that Bush's presence on Nixon's maiden voyage to China would have provided Nixon with much additional political cover.

Nixon posed at the Great Wall, but was finally tapped as USLO head in 1974 as successor to the esteemed David Bruce.³

The period of the diary stretches from 21 October 1974 to 22 August 1975, corresponding to Bush's tenure as the head of the US Liaison Office in Beijing. Although the diary adds little to the existing record of how or why Bush was appointed, it does illuminate his problematic relationships with Henry Kissinger and Winston Lord. Kissinger and Lord, functioning respectively as Secretary of State and Head of China Desk at State, frequently admonished Bush for his overzealousness and unwarranted independence. In one of his first diary entries, Bush complains that Kissinger's secrecy with regard to policy hamstrung the officers in the State Department's Bureau of East Asian Affairs (5). Yet when Kissinger arrived in China in 1974, Bush was swept up into his energy, lifted from the torpor of isolating daily routine. Bush describes this flurry of banquets and performances in detail, resulting in the most sustained and interesting passages in the diary (94-96). When Kissinger insults him, to Deng's face, as a "left-wing Republican," Bush does not recount the sting in his diary.⁴ Although Kissinger wanted Bush to move slowly with the Chinese, from virtually the moment of his arrival in China, Bush was eager to create what he called "forward motion" in the relationship, going so far as to bring his "progress thesis" to an impervious Deng Xiaoping (6, 28).

Harmoniously enough, work for progress on China policy also served to accelerate Bush's own career trajectory. While Bush wanted to welcome a bevy of important Washington (and Texas) players to China, he and his unscripted visitors risked upsetting the delicate progress that Kissinger and the State Department had fostered over the past three years (212-213).⁵

Such intensive preparations marked the cycles of patronage for which he would become famous. In setting the table for a Beijing-bound delegation of Texas oilmen coming to Beijing led by the octogenarian Neil Mallon, Bush painstakingly prepares for the visit by having Mallon presented with an elaborate banner adorned with a Mao quotation about "the future being in the hands of the young" (310, 314).

Congressional delegations were a less anodyne presence in Bush's tenure. Bush recounts a number of Congressional mishaps with a touch of horror. When Congressman Carl Albert consistently interrupted Chinese Foreign Minister Qiao Guanhua in a meeting by misciting

³ Priscilla Roberts, *Window on the Forbidden City: The Beijing Diaries of David Bruce* (Hong Kong: University of Hong Kong Centre of Asian Studies, 2001).

⁴ Quoted in William Burr, ed., *The Kissinger Transcripts: The Top-Secret Talks with Beijing and Moscow* (New York: New Press, 2000), 304.

⁵ Engel adds to his credibility among readers who might question his close affiliation with Bush's legacy by illuminating this tension early on in the text. "State Department officials," Engel writes, "recognized at once that Bush's natural enthusiasm as a host, and his desire in 1974 to further develop his political war chest through distribution of...valued invitations, might limit their own ability to control high-level access to China." Engel, 8.

the Shanghai communiqué (“we all agree there is but one Taiwan”) Albert got a note from Bush telling him to “shut up.” The next day Albert made a mash of meeting with Deng and Qiao. “It was not a disaster but it was pretty bad,” noted Bush, blaming the alcohol (230-231).⁶ In spite of such hiccups, Congressional delegations served an important purpose for Bush, keeping his network healthy in the United States, but doing so within the framework of an expanding Sino-U.S. bilateral relationship. It was not only the Chinese groups who used foreign relations as a screen for primary domestic goals!

If Congressional groups were mostly helpful for his career, Bush had more difficulties with the proliferation of “friendship groups” and scholarly exchanges. In one of the longer analyses in the entire diary of a single conversation, Bush describes an unnamed linguist from the October 1974 Committee on Scholarly Communication delegation. The scholar, Bush recalled, wanted the U.S. to normalize immediately its diplomatic relationship with China so that ideas could be more rapidly exchanged. Countering that “there was a certain unreality to the pitch,” Bush critiqued the scholar’s “lack of recognition that in a quest to discover more about language he was prepared to forget any global political problems....he was so overawed with getting his toe in the door” (31). Later, Bush notes the tendency of “China hands” in the U.S. to “continue to slam us around...I say they are doing it too much, because I worry more about American public opinion than some of our China specialists, and the public opinion’s effect on our being able to perform and fulfill a policy” (319). As prime examples of prevalent China specialists, Michael Oksenberg and Lucian Pye’s work turns up at various points in the diary. Thinking aloud about Oksenberg’s assertion that declines in American trade with the PRC were linked to dissatisfaction with U.S. support for Taiwan, Bush responds with West Texan argot, blurting “Hogwash!” (316). Rough and exasperated, Bush stated at the outset of his tenure that “the professors don’t know a hell of a lot more about what’s going to happen in China than the politicians or the military” (8). His growing reliance on scholarship by American academics, however, implies respect of a certain type.

As a would-be ambassador and potential presidential candidate, Bush was more interested with his own image. The diary is accordingly studded with references to Bush’s jogging and especially bicycling through Beijing in an effort to raise his public profile in China.⁷ But Americans are Americans, and automobiles inevitably come to the fore. In an anecdote about his wife Barbara, family dog Fred, and Guo, the family chauffeur, Bush reveals his displeasure with an incident with a few neo-colonial overtones:

“Bar [Barbara Bush] took Fred downtown, went to the store yesterday, came out and there were a hundred people surrounding the car staring at the Guo-driven Chrysler. Really staring at Fred. I told her not to do that anymore. It

⁶ Carl Albert Foreign Travel Series, Box 7, Folders 10-18, “Visit by Carl Albert and John J. Rhodes to China,” University of Oklahoma Library Special Collections.

⁷ According to the Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen, Bush’s bicycling paid off in 1989, when Deng Xiaoping brought it up as a kind of joke to break the ice soon after the arrival of Bush’s National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft to Beijing after the violence of June 4, 1989. See Qian Qichen, *Ten Episodes of Chinese Diplomacy* (New York: HarperCollins, 2006) 135

put Guo in a funny position. Fred can go to the Ming Tombs and run around out there, but I don't want to have the image of a chauffeur-driven dog kind of thing." (216)

Bush was also wary of driving around town quite simply, because an employee of the Liaison Office had killed a Chinese civilian in a car accident and had had to be expatriated. And Bush, to his credit, appears highly aware of treading in footsteps redolent of Western privilege in China. A few long conversations with Jan Viseboxse, the ancient Dutch ambassador who had been feeding Americans intelligence from the city since 1948, may have helped to shape his sense of the sensitive history surrounding the Western presence in the city (137). And Bush's compound lacked a contingent of U.S. Marines, after all, because China, citing the humiliations of the late 1940s, demanded they be sent back (59).

Foremost, the diary is a window into the diplomatic enterprise of the foreigners in Beijing – a window focusing on the foreign legations, the insular life there, the daily comings and goings of mainly non-Chinese. This is the tragedy of the diary – that it has much more in common with diaries of the missionaries and diplomats in Beijing in the late 19th century than memoirs being written today. After voicing his frustration with not being able to pick up the phone and get some information from any Chinese, Bush makes a morose observation that might well serve as the epigraph to his entire diary: "It is just this middle kingdom syndrome. We are the foreigners, the barbarians" (301). Bush reads books about Empress Dowager Cixi during his tenure, and in some ways the communist court seems equally distant. (Senators like Warren Magnuson and Mike Mansfield could meet with Zhou Enlai, while Bush never did.) The rather tight expat culture is seen also in Bush's fascinating interactions with the talented Holdridge family and the gregarious (and intellectually formidable) Lilleys. And the old world is present in Bush's discussions with the veteran ambassadors, even as he reaches out to his colleagues from the Middle East and Africa.

In sum, this is a fine new source, and Engel and his press deserve much applause for placing it in the public record. One can only hope that it will be translated soon into Chinese so that scholars and graduate students on the mainland and Taiwan can also wrestle readily with what it ultimately means.

Anyone who is concerned about the Sino-U.S. relationship and its evolution will welcome the publication of George H. W. Bush's memoir of his role in the early stages, documented in his *China Diary of George H. W. Bush*. For Bush, the diary of his Beijing experience was intended to be a purely personal record of his posting in China towards the end of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). For Professor Jeffrey Engel of Texas A& M University's Bush School of Government & Public Service, this historical record provides rare insights for both scholars and the public to understand Bush's subsequent foreign policy through his pre-presidential experiences. "Only a handful of future presidents kept detailed private journals in the years before they moved into the Oval Office. An even smaller number took time to enunciate their views on global affairs before their time in office. (xviii)" This primary source is a valuable addition to the growing body of literature on Sino-U.S. relations.

Bush senior served as the head of the United States Liaison Office (USLO) in Beijing from October 1974 to December 1975, *de facto* ambassador to a country with which the U.S. did not yet have formal diplomatic ties. *China Diary* is an account of his thoughts and experiences during his brief tenure there (he stopped writing in his diary in August of 1975). He did not write daily, but rather dictated to a tape recorder as thoughts occurred to him. Years later the tapes were transcribed by assistants. The personal nature of the diary conveys an informal, colloquial style which makes for pleasant and often humorous reading. Sensitive policy issues were left out, but well-documented via official reports to the State Department or President Gerald Ford. Although "verbal elegance is not Bush's strongest suit (xix)" the diary offers unique insight into Bush's relationship with Henry Kissinger, then Secretary of State, and his personal thoughts on the Chinese leadership. It also conveys vividly his diplomatic style and the life of the diplomats in Beijing during last years of Mao's China.

Jeffery Engel does a superb job of tying the otherwise disjointed pieces of a personal diary into a coherent book by providing well-researched chapter introductions, extensive footnotes, and a well-written summary essay. Engel divides Bush's 10-month diary into eight chapters chronologically. Each chapter focuses on one theme with a succinct chapter introduction setting the stage for each theme. More than 20 pictures provided by the George H.W. Bush Presidential library make George and Barbara Bush's experience in China more vivid for the reader.

Like any ambitious career diplomat, Bush starts his China experience with a healthy dose of idealism and energy. "It is my hope that I will be able to meet the next generation of China's leaders...the fun of this job is going to be to try to do more, make more contacts." (6). Bush departs from the more aloof practices of his predecessor, David Bruce, by attending national day ceremonies of the diplomatic community in Beijing, initiating more conversations and meetings with Chinese leaders, and inviting other diplomats to USLO for Fourth of July festivities despite disapproval from the State Department.

Ultimately, readers learn that the biggest disappointment for Bush was the inconsistency of Beijing's policy. Publicly, the Chinese media took every opportunity to attack the U.S. vehemently. Privately, the rhetoric was simply meant to win Third World friends. The Chinese wanted Bush to understand their empty "cannons of rhetoric (108)," and pay attention to actions and not words. But Bush remained unconvinced and considered it detrimental to U.S.-China relations throughout his tenure in Beijing (328, 337, 353). Several entries also show that Bush was frustrated by the lack of access to Chinese leaders. He constantly compared his position with that of Huang Zhen, his Chinese counterpart in Washington D.C. where Huang had much more access to information and activities (278, 364).

Readers come to sympathize with George H.W. Bush's firm belief and unflagging efforts in personal diplomacy. He went to the embassy receptions of small developing nations in the hopes of winning friends and bumping into Chinese officials. He also frequently invited the Chinese to the Bush's residence. He made friends with other diplomats as well as the Chinese through tennis-playing, ping-pong games, and all kinds of parties. He made efforts to learn Chinese. He even hoped that by bicycling around Beijing, he and Barbara would convey the message that Americans are not aloof, and "are not dominating imperialists, not superior, not super formal and super rich (181)."

But Bush's personal diplomacy conflicted with Secretary of State Henry Kissinger's ideas of diplomacy as a tool of realist statecraft. One of the more unique and insightful angles offered by *China Diary* is its revelation of the discord between Bush and Kissinger. The Secretary of State advised Bush not to be too active or visible in China, fearing information leaks and desiring to control all aspects of American China policy by himself. "He is so concerned about security leaks that information we should have is not forthcoming. And yet he tells me he wants me to have it. ...There is a communications breakdown here that is fairly serious. ... (107)" Bush was also appalled by the way Kissinger treated his subordinates. "He is ungracious, he yells at his staff, he is intolerable in terms of human feelings (106)."

Although Bush's frank diary entries may suggest a certain idealistic naïveté, to his credit, he adopted more nuanced interpretations of American foreign policy during a period in Beijing that was filled with potential diplomatic landmines. At the height of America's failed policies and defeat in Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Bush reiterates his conviction in the Domino Theory which held that Communism was a contagion that would spread as successive countries succumbed. But his interpretation of the theory was more "subtle and sophisticated (193)" than the conventional understanding as initially espoused by President Eisenhower. Bush was very much concerned about the decline of American credibility in the aftermath of the Vietnam War. In February 1975 he wrote, "We just must not lose sight of our own perspective and of our own *raison d'être* as a nation. So much of the world depends on the United States. So much depends on our own self-confidence in our ability to cope....The point is that if we make a commitment we ought to keep it. We must deal straight forward so we can have trust. I hope that the Chinese continue to trust the United States (160-161)." The same idea was articulated in his April 2nd and 9th, 1975 entries (243, 245). It was Bush's Beijing experience that convinced him that multilateral

cooperation and working with the United Nations would be the strategy for the post-Vietnam international system (268).

In another shrewd observation, Bush criticized America's double standards for the Soviets and Chinese. "We are permitting China to get away with murder on the Jewish question. They are far worse in their statements about Israel than the Russians, and yet the Russians, because of their own Jewish immigrants, get all the heat. China doesn't let their people go to and from very easily either. (384)" Indeed, some scholars have long been puzzled by the question of why the United States treated the two communist giants so differently. There has been a historical tendency for journalists, politicians, missionaries, and economists to view the Chinese more favorably than the Soviets. Undoubtedly, the romanticization and personal story-telling power of Pearl Buck and Edgar Snow presented the Chinese in a better light before the Western public had much exposure to or understanding of the Chinese. Portrayals of the Chinese people as essentially hard-working, family-oriented, and not fundamentally political conveyed a sense of the Chinese as being "not really Communists" which persisted to the Cold War period. Bush remarks on it and opens the question up to potential scholarship in the future.

For all its revelations and insights, one disappointment of *China Diary* is its silence on how the relationship between Deng Xiaoping and Bush helped the latter deal with the student democracy movement in 1989. In the preface, Bush wrote "the relationship I began then with Deng Xiaoping was very valuable during my presidency, especially during the Tiananmen Square protests." (xiv-xv). But the book fails to shed light on the exact nature of the relationship and its subsequent effect on his executive response to the movement. In fact, Bush's handling of this crisis point was not only an important chapter in U.S.-China relations, but also a critical event to understand his particular approach to personal diplomacy. There has been little substantial research on the subject to date, making it all the more regretful that the diary did not provide more detailed insights.

Overall, however, *China Diary* clearly reveals George H.W. Bush's growth from a novice in the diplomatic world to a sophisticated practitioner of foreign policy. It also highlights the issues that were of primary significance for Bush, such as the best way to work with the Chinese in the early stages of establishing U.S.-China official ties, the best way to educate the Chinese about America, and America's role in post-Vietnam world. It is his thoughtful, nuanced, and deeply committed reflection of fundamental issues that ultimately shaped his own administration's post-Cold War foreign policy and established him as the first globally engaged American president since the end of the Cold War.

Some years ago I edited the Chinese diaries David K. E. Bruce kept during his stint as head of the Beijing Liaison Office, opened in early 1973 as a way station on the route to the resumption of full diplomatic relations between the People's Republic of China and the United States.¹ Reading Jeffrey Engel's skillfully edited volume of the diaries of Bruce's successor, George H. W. Bush, I was struck more by the contrasts than the similarities between the two men and their approaches to diplomacy. Both Bruce and Bush were Ivy League patricians from privileged backgrounds, who were acquainted with each other. Between the world wars Prescott Bush, the younger man's father, had even been associated with the merchant bank Brown Brothers Harriman, when Bruce was likewise employed there. Neither of the first two directors was a China expert, though both had a highly qualified staff well able to supply any deficit in their own knowledge. Each possessed a vast and ever expanding network of friends and contacts whose international ramifications extended way beyond the United States.

Further resemblances, however, are harder to discern. Although one more assignment, as US ambassador to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, still awaited him, Bruce was in his mid-seventies and close to the end of a distinguished career, during which he had become the only American to serve as his country's ambassador to France, West Germany, and Great Britain. He owed his appointment in part to the fact that, since the Chinese had shown how seriously they took their new relationship with the United States by appointing their most eminent diplomat to head the counterpart Chinese Liaison Office in Washington, the American side felt obliged to reciprocate by naming the doyen of American diplomats to head USLO in Beijing. Bruce also recognized that his first loyalties ran, not to Richard Nixon's Secretary of State, William Rogers, but to National Security Adviser Henry A. Kissinger, whom the wealthy Bruce and his elegant and accomplished wife, Evangeline, had befriended and made an habitu  of their Georgetown mansion. Bruce, one of the decidedly few individuals whom Kissinger praised not merely to his face but behind his back, in turn respected Kissinger's intellectual abilities and drive, while largely ignoring the younger man's penchant for self-promotion and his tendency to abuse and berate his inferiors. Although a Democrat, he had served in every presidential administration since that of Franklin D. Roosevelt. Impeccably tailored and invariably suave and polished, Bruce won the respect of his Chinese hosts as a superb and venerable specimen of the experienced American diplomat, to be honored for his years and attainments. He initially approached his assignment to China with considerable excitement, but within less than a year had largely resigned himself to the somewhat unpalatable truth that, due to a combination of internal political factors in both China and the United States, and developments on the international stage, further progress in Sino-American relations was unlikely in the near future. "I am," he wrote in August 1973, "perhaps by temperament as patient as Orientals are supposed to be. If there is no business to transact (and I am unaware of anything pressing), I am not inclined to beat the bushes to disturb a tranquil bird."²

¹ Priscilla Roberts, ed., *Window on the Forbidden City: The Beijing Diaries of David Bruce, 1973-1974* (Hong Kong: Centre of Asian Studies, University of Hong Kong, 2001).

² *Ibid.*, 40.

How different, how very, very different, from his hyper-kinetic successor, a man a generation younger who celebrated his own fiftieth birthday while in Beijing. Bush arrived in China as a well-connected Republican politician of considerable ambition whose accomplishments to date had at best been somewhat mixed. A former oilman, he had won and lost a congressional seat in Texas, and then served as U.S. ambassador to the United Nations under President Richard Nixon. Nixon and Kissinger both regarded Bush as an amiable lightweight, and were particularly cavalier in undercutting his efforts to retain Taiwan's seat in the United Nations. For much of the Watergate scandal, Bush had held the unenviable post of chairman of the Republican National Committee, seeking almost until Nixon's resignation to excuse and explain away the president's conduct. In the aftermath of Watergate, Bush was considered a leading contender to become President Gerald Ford's vice-president, but the new incumbent eventually selected Nelson A. Rockefeller. As a consolation prize, Bush was offered any diplomatic ambassadorial position within the president's remit, with the suggestion he deserved one of the top-level European embassies, either London or Paris. Instead, Bush rather brashly shoehorned himself into the post in Beijing, which Bruce had expected to fill until the following February.

Bush's reasons for doing so were mixed. He had shrewdly recognized that China was a rising great power, a state whose relations with the United States were still in flux and developing. "China was, quite simply, the place to be," he recalled. (Engel, xiii) For Americans of the mid-1970s, visas to mainland China were a prized commodity, as seasoned travelers stood in line for the opportunity to re-enter a country that had been closed to them for almost a quarter-century. U.S. ambassadors to Britain and France invariably enjoyed a glittering social life, mingling with the elite of the host country, but their role was largely ceremonial. China might, by contrast, offer Bush the chance to re-establish ties with its own leaders and make substantive diplomatic initiatives. It was also a cheap date. After a decade in official positions, Bush was feeling the financial pinch. Occupants of the London and Paris embassies needed deep pockets; they were expected to entertain lavishly, and inevitably had to supplement government funds from their own resources. Social life in Beijing was, by contrast, extremely restricted, with diplomatic functions a mixture of rather lackluster national day celebrations, rigidly choreographed receptions, and official dinners. But, while devoid of scintillation and sparkle, life in the Liaison Office was undoubtedly extremely economical.

Bush was also a man in flight from the Watergate scandal. His time as chairman of the Republican National Committee, loyally defending an ever more beleaguered president, had left him emotionally drained, and fearful that insinuations that he himself knew more than he had admitted about Watergate had tarnished his own political prospects. Mid-1970s Beijing was far removed from the Washington hothouse: telephone communication was erratic, newspapers and mail only arrived about once a week, and current news had to be gleaned from listening to the BBC and Voice of America radio broadcasts. China offered Bush welcome sanctuary from political complications and a completely new environment in which to regroup and consider his future.

If not a neophyte in international affairs—he had, after all, been U.S. ambassador to the United Nations from 1971 to 1973—Bush was not considered a serious foreign policy expert. His diaries reveal that he himself thought that his assignment to Beijing would help him burnish his credentials in this area, and add a useful line to his resumé. Bush only spent about fifteen months in Beijing, and clearly did not expect his assignment to be particularly lengthy; he and his wife never gave up their house in Washington and, once he had recovered from his immediate post-Watergate trauma, he soon turned his attention to contemplating his long-term political future.

Bush was, nonetheless, eager to put his own stamp upon the Beijing Liaison Office. Distance from Foggy Bottom, in terms of both space and ease of communications, gave him some scope for this. Kissinger, secretary of state since summer 1973, and other State Department personnel were constantly apprehensive that Bush would try to implement his own policies in Beijing, heedless of their own warnings that for the immediate future little further progress could be expected in Sino-American relations. Bush did not, however, share Bruce's close ties to Kissinger, and chafed at the latter's efforts to control his behavior. Memories of Kissinger's dismissive treatment of himself during his United Nations days still rankled, and did so, Engel suggests, even into his presidency. Bush's diaries reveal his frequent frustration over the fact that the secretary largely excluded him from his confidence, and for the most part ignored the voluminous cables of advice with which Bush at first bombarded the State Department. (Bruce, by contrast, was someone to whom Kissinger sometimes actually turned for advice, on China-related and other issues.) While admiring Kissinger's abilities, Bush also criticized the secretary's style of conducting diplomacy, which he considered overly personal and secretive, deplored the temperamental rages he often unleashed on his subordinates, and had serious reservations over the manner in which his superior courted media attention.

Bush clearly wished to differentiate himself from Bruce, whose very eminence perhaps meant that he was often a rather distant head of mission. Learning that some of the USLO staff had never attended any social event in the director's living quarters, Bush quickly issued invitations to all his subordinates and their families. Turnover among USLO staff was fairly brisk, and Bush welcomed the departure of most of those who had first served under Bruce. He also moved quickly to increase the visibility of USLO personnel upon the Beijing diplomatic scene. In his first weeks in Beijing, Bush raised the profile of the Liaison Office, whose precise diplomatic status was ambiguous, by decreeing unilaterally that from then onward its members would attend the National Day celebrations of other foreign missions in the city. Although he more than once subsequently bemoaned the tedium — “These things are deadly but I'm glad we are doing it” (60) — that too often characterized such social occasions, stodgy gatherings his venerable predecessor had generally been delighted to have an excuse to avoid, Bush saw this move as a step on the way to full normalization of Sino-American relations, which both sides perceived as the ultimate objective of their opening to each other.

Bush did not pretend to be an intellectual; the lengthy tours d'horizon of the international scene that were highlights of Bruce's occasional but cherished encounters with Prime Minister Zhou Enlai and Chairman Mao Zedong were not his style then or later. It seems,

indeed, that he never actually met the premier, who was gradually succumbing to the cancer that finally killed him in early 1976. Sports had always been an important outlet for Bush's abundant physical energies; after Bush's appointment was announced, British diplomats correctly prophesied that "the US Liaison Office will probably find themselves engaged in endless tennis tournaments." (438) Bush's diaries do indeed recount his constant games of tennis at the International Club in Beijing, the city's main watering hole for foreigners, matches played with and against young Chinese and a wide variety of partners drawn from across the diplomatic corps. For a while, ensuring that the Club's tennis courts were resurfaced to his satisfaction became one of Bush's major preoccupations. "Sports is [sic]," he said in 1975, "a great equalizer." (279 n. 38) "Sports really are marvelous for getting across political lines," he noted on another occasion. (131) Bush firmly believed that when crises or difficulties arose, it was far easier if he could deal with people with whom he had socialized, on the tennis court, at the dinner table, or watching movies at home, for example. Seeking to understand Chinese character, in his diary Bush commented in detail on the performance of his Chinese tennis partners and just how hard several of them strove to win, evidence, in his view, that egalitarianism had not totally eradicated personal ambition in China. Beginning with a Chinese invitation to a U.S. ping-pong team in 1971, sport did, indeed, play a significant role in the early stages of the resumption of Sino-American relations. In mid-1973, the unexpected appearance of Jiang Qing (Madame Mao Zedong) and her radical followers at a Beijing basketball game between Chinese and a visiting American women's team was taken as an indication that all factions in the Politburo favored the opening to the United States. Bush himself confessed in May 1975 that he "felt real pride as the [visiting American track team] tore around" a stadium in Beijing, winning most of the events in what USLO staffers later considered a tangible demonstration of U.S. power. (297) Given his passionate interest in sports as an avenue for international exchange and understanding, it was more than appropriate that Bush was an honored guest at the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

Unlike the more cosmopolitan Bruce, Bush also had a rather touching belief that, through his own personal style, he could have a major impact on the atmospherics of Sino-American relations. Where genuine friendship between the People's Republic and the United States was concerned, Kissinger and his State Department advisers on China had extremely limited expectations of the opening to China. Kissinger and Nixon believed that well-founded fears of the Soviet Union had impelled Chinese leaders to turn to the United States, and that the new relationship was based upon mutual geopolitical self-interest, not upon shared values of any kind. They thought it unlikely that the presence of a few American diplomats, journalists, and businessmen in China would bring any real warming or closer personal ties. Nor did they expect the still staunchly communist Chinese government to espouse American political norms or to moderate its criticism of the United States. Bruce shared this outlook, one reinforced by his own extensive reading in Chinese history and politics. In October 1973 he emphasized to the visiting journalist Cyrus Sulzberger that, "while the Chinese are exceptionally polite, they remain basically antiforeign. It is idiotic

for Americans to assume that they ‘love’ us.”³ “The more I read Chinese history,” he wrote in his diary one month later,

the more I am convinced of their innate, traditional disapproval, even dislike, of foreign barbarians. If they cannot absorb them, they will suffer their presence only insofar as it is necessary in the light of their national self-interest.

The Chinese will never forget our exploitation of them, especially during the Century of Humiliation. It must also be galling to observe the privileges and luxuries enjoyed by a conspicuous handful of strangers in their midst.⁴

Bruce had observed with wry tolerance, even admiration, the Chinese diplomatic style of public rhetorical attacks upon the “capitalist” and “imperialist” United States and private acceptance of the Americans, if only as a necessary evil.⁵

Such sophisticated Olympian detachment was not for Bush. A constantly recurring theme in his diary was his resentment of the fierce Chinese propaganda condemnations of United States behavior on the international scene, even as Chinese officials encouraged the United States to maintain large anti-Soviet military forces in Europe and, Bush believed, were willing to tolerate a continued American troop presence in both Korea and Japan. Months of experience in Beijing did nothing to acclimatize Bush to such behavior or enhance his tolerance of it; if anything, over time he found it ever more galling. In a footnote to a later compilation of his personal letters and diaries, Bush subsequently suggested that most of these attacks were designed for domestic Chinese consumption.⁶ At the time, however, he argued that, should the general American public ever come to realize just how anti-American standard Chinese political discourse was, this might derail the entire Sino-U.S. opening.

From Bush’s perspective, though, it seems that more was at stake. Indeed, his eagerness during his time in Beijing to win hearts and minds seems almost eerily reminiscent of the young American anti-hero Alden Pyle in Graham Greene’s novel *The Quiet American* (1955). Arriving in China, Bush rather naively hoped to have the opportunity to meet and befriend a new generation of young Chinese leaders. Through his own personal behavior, he sought to impress upon both elites and ordinary Chinese “the fact that people from the United States are not imperialists, not dominating imperialists, not superior, not super formal and not super rich.” (185) One way Bush and his wife sought to accomplish this was through their own diplomatic style. Slightly ironically, giving his own patrician Ivy League background, Bush consciously tried to present himself as down-home, folksy, and approachable. On visits to Beijing landmarks, Bush sought to ingratiate himself with

³ Cyrus L. Sulzberger, diary entry, 3 October 1973, in Cyrus L. Sulzberger, *Postscript with a Chinese Accent: Memoirs and Diaries, 1972-1973* (New York: Macmillan, 1974), 299.

⁴ Bruce, diary entry, 2 November 1973; cf. Roberts, ed., *Window on the Forbidden City*, 38-41.

⁵ Roberts, ed., *Window on the Forbidden City*, 39-41.

⁶ George Bush, *All the Best, George Bush: My Life in Letters and Other Writings* (New York: Scribner, 1999), 212.

ordinary Chinese sightseers by taking instant Polaroid snapshots of them which he then handed over. To the accompaniment of country and western music, at its annual July Fourth reception in 1975, USLO served guests with hot dogs, potato crisps, and beer, with several hundred frankfurter buns specially airfreighted in.

Perhaps most famously, when possible the Bushes also chose to bicycle informally through the streets of Beijing, dressed in the kind of casual clothes college students might wear, as opposed to being chauffeured in the Liaison Office limousine. Bush also regularly went out jogging, accompanied by C. Fred, the family's cocker spaniel. One of the few dogs in Beijing at the time, the animal drew attention by his very presence. Reflecting on his job in February 1975, Bush made it clear that he believed his personal lifestyle in Beijing could convey its own messages:

I am trying to show the Chinese that Americans are not aloof. Going to the receptions of the small third world countries help[s]. We see Chinese there and the word spreads. Bicycling in Peking helps. Having the Chinese in our residence helps. The trade minister comes today for lunch. Living informally helps. Hitting with the Chinese tennis players helps. (144)

Noting the stares he habitually attracted as he cycled around Beijing, Bush remarked later that month that, although some of his starchier diplomatic colleagues deprecated his informality: "I get the feeling that the Chinese like the feeling that the U.S. ambassador is not some stuffy guy above everyone else. In fact I am quite confident of this though not absolutely positive." (158) The last caveat may have been wise; Bush's Chinese driver apparently feared that he might replace with a station wagon the Cadillac the chauffeur considered the appropriate conveyance for such a distinguished personage.

Unlike Bruce, Bush rather naively and selectively believed that the American historical record toward China had largely been one of disinterested friendship. Complaining of "some of the [Chinese] rhetoric aimed against the United States," a hurt Bush "[thought] back to our own recent experience. World War II. We sought no territory. We were trying to defeat a common enemy. We came to help and yet we are bitterly attacked and lumped in with those who tried to colonize and pillage. We are the imperialists." (131) Shaking hands with the widow at the funeral of a senior Politburo member, he wondered "whether her mind wastes back to the Korean War or some other hostility, or whether she thought back longer to times when Americans had helped China enormously." (240) In May 1975 Bush was so offended when both Chinese and Russians, celebrating the thirtieth anniversary of the end of World War II, joined forces and completely ignored the American contribution to the victory, that he boycotted their various festivities. Bush hoped, through his personal contacts with Chinese high and low, to modify the prevailing image of the United States. Annoyed by the constant Chinese anti-American propaganda barrage, he also believed that American diplomats and other officials should abandon Kissinger's policy of not reacting to such assaults and, instead, forcefully defend the U.S. position against criticism that he often considered biased and unfair. Reflecting on the best tactics toward China, on George Washington's birthday in February 1975 Bush stated:

We must deal straight forward so we can have trust. I hope that the Chinese continue to trust the United States. It is important to our relationship that they believe what we say and that we deal truthfully and openly and honestly with them. In spite of the fact that they in history did not always deal direct, much of their dealings have traditionally been through nuances and in great subtleties. I don't think we must adopt the same method in dealing with them. We must be Americans. We must be what we are. We must be sure they understand what we are. And that we not be devious or be indirect in dealing with them. I think they would appreciate it if we are more frank. (161)

Opportunities for such frankness would rarely arise during Bush's time in Beijing. After half a year in Beijing David Bruce—who did manage to establish a fairly convivial relationship with Foreign Minister Qiao Guanhua, a fellow *bon vivant*—had lamented in January 1974: “I have not made a single Chinese friend.”⁷ When Bush took up his assignment in September 1974, he optimistically hoped that the combination of his obvious goodwill and strategic invitations to the rising generation of Chinese officials would facilitate his ability to make close personal ties with at least some top leaders and leaders-to-be. State Department officials in Washington thought these expectations unrealistic, but seem to have decided that Bush would have to learn through bitter experience that they were likely to prove fruitless. Again and again, Bush lamented his failure to entice his Chinese counterparts into frank, open, and informal discussions of assorted contentious issues—including Taiwan, anti-U.S. propaganda, and Chinese encouragement of revolution in other countries—that still divided the United States and China.

It was perhaps ironical that Bush, the professional politician, showed himself far less sensitive than Bruce, the seasoned diplomat, to the savage internal political constraints fettering Chinese officials at this time. With Party Chairman Mao Zedong and Premier Zhou Enlai both in failing health, within elite Chinese political circles virtually all attention was focused upon how best the different factions might position themselves for what would almost certainly be a bitter and hard-fought struggle for power. Any close contacts particular leaders had with American—or other Western—diplomats were likely to expose them to brutal attacks by their political enemies. In summer 1975, Bush was shocked when he read a memoir by the British journalist Anthony Grey, who had experienced twenty-six months of harsh imprisonment, including physical and psychological torture, during the Cultural Revolution. Verbal and written accounts of the sieges of foreign embassies and harassment of diplomats by Red Guards, which had occurred only a few years earlier, also left him quite horrified, and very conscious, despite the politeness his hosts invariably demonstrated, that such maltreatment of non-Chinese might easily recur, and he could become a prime target. Yet Bush showed little if any awareness that the position of even such prominent figures as Vice Premier Deng Xiaoping, recalled from political disgrace in 1973 but still surrounded by vicious enemies, was extremely precarious, and that, if purged, they and their families risked not simply the loss of power but brutal physical

⁷ Roberts, ed., *Window on the Forbidden City*, 40.

humiliation, suffering, and even death. It is difficult to exaggerate the ferocity of Chinese internal politics during the previous two decades, or the harshness of the sufferings of those who lost out in internecine battles. Somehow Bush never quite took on board, as he lamented his failure to make warm friendships with the officials and other Chinese he encountered, that Chinese, not foreigners, were the principal victims of the Cultural Revolution, and virtually everyone he met, from the highest ranking official downward, had excellent reason to fear that undue closeness to any American might transform him or her into the target of another vicious struggle session.

It is easy to criticize Bush, at least at this time, as unsophisticated and culturally insensitive. But one can argue that, in part due to his own political background, and also to a certain underlying shrewd common sense, he did have some genuine achievements in Beijing. It is also fair to say that Bush was perhaps more successful than either Kissinger or Bruce in identifying and highlighting issues which would in future loom large in Sino-American relations. After reading Barbara Tuchman's volume on American envoy General Joseph W. Stilwell and China policy of the 1940s, Bush was willing to recognize that there had been major limitations on American power to influence events in China at that time, confiding to his diary in July 1975: "The talk about how we lost China infuriates the Chinese and now it infuriates me. I can see where it is very clearly wrong. China was not ours to lose and that has been part of the problem." (356-357) One should ask, however, whether Bush perhaps overestimated the impact which the United States might have on evolving events in China of the mid-1970s.

When Bush went to Beijing, State Department officials worried that Bush's enthusiasm in issuing invitations and sponsoring well-connected political and business friends and allies on trips to China might bring in an unfortunate slew of influential, unpredictable, and uncontrollable individuals whose vagaries could easily rebound upon the making of official policies toward China. Bush was undoubtedly far more eager than his predecessor to facilitate the travels to China of his numerous associates, many of them influential senators and congressmen, and he even—albeit politely—reminded unenthusiastic Foggy Bottom functionaries that if they turned down his requests this might rebound politically upon the State Department. The long-suffering Barbara Bush found herself escorting a constant caravan of visiting firemen and women on approximately weekly visits to the Great Wall, Ming Tombs, and other tourist highlights, whose beauties she had perhaps rather more occasion than she might have wished to appreciate. Kissinger and the State Department feared that unscripted gaffes and *faux pas* by elite American political and business leaders, especially after they had indulged rather too freely in *mao tai*, had the potential to derail the still sensitive and developing Sino-American relationship, and would be seized upon and exploited by Chinese officials opposed to the opening to China. One point that Bush made in support of granting such guests easy access to China was that, while there might be some occasional embarrassing episodes, these, however unfortunate, were a regular and standard feature of the American political process, and the Chinese government would have to learn how to deal with them. In the long term, this fairly relaxed attitude was probably more realistic than futile efforts to insulate Sino-American contacts from U.S. politics.

On what was then the most sensitive and divisive issue facing his own country and China, the status of Taiwan, the advice Bush offered President Ford and Kissinger likewise seems quite astute and reasonable. Nixon and Kissinger had originally hoped to move to full diplomatic recognition of China by the end of Nixon's second term, a development they thought was predicated on abandoning relations with Taiwan and possibly acquiescing in a Chinese takeover of the island. Nixon's downfall and replacement by Gerald Ford, an unelected president who needed the support of the right wing of the Republican Party, made it politically impossible for Ford to jettison Taiwan, even as the impending power struggle in Beijing anticipated after Mao's death meant that no potential Chinese contender for high office could afford to compromise on the status of Taiwan. Bush repeatedly denied and even characterized as "Hogwash" claims that the downturn in Chinese imports from the United States during 1974-1975 was in any way related to resentment by mainland Chinese officials of the failure by the United States to break all ties with Taiwan and leave the island to the mercies of the People's Republic. While better harvests in China may, as Bush claimed, have been partially responsible for the decline in Chinese purchases of American products, annoyance over Taiwan was almost certainly another significant factor impelling Deng Xiaoping and other top Chinese leaders to look to European rather than American suppliers when placing orders overseas.

If Bush had little feel for internal Chinese politics, he was nonetheless decidedly *au fait* with the prevailing climate among his own country's Republicans. His recommendations almost from the time he arrived in Beijing that the United States government dampen any expectations of rapid change where Taiwan was concerned, and recast anticipated visits to China by Kissinger and Ford in late 1975 as part of an ongoing international relationship between the two countries that was experiencing steady though unspectacular progress, offered an undramatic but prudent and matter-of-fact spin on an issue that could easily have been presented as a major road-block in the smooth course of Sino-American understanding. Bush was, it seems, moving toward the evolution of the position on Taiwan that still obtains today, whereby the United States, while not maintaining full diplomatic relations with Taiwan, insists that the eventual resolution of the cross-strait relationship must be a peaceful one. When he had only been in Beijing a few weeks, Bush was already questioning whether the United States should simply abandon Taiwan. He hoped, rather optimistically, that Chinese officials would moderate their own rhetoric on Taiwan. In summer 1975 he wrote: "Why can't the two sit down and work something out between them. That would be the real answer. . ." (371) Even after U.S. recognition of China, Bush hewed determinedly to the line of considering good relations with China essential to the United States while demanding a peaceful resolution of the Taiwan issue, views he forcefully defended in 1982 to Senator Barry Goldwater, a leading Republican supporter of Taiwan.⁸

Human rights was another issue on which Bush was probably better attuned to American domestic political sensibilities than either Kissinger or Bruce. Impelled in part by his persistent resentment of Chinese propaganda against the United States, he pointed out that China's record on human rights was at least as bad as, perhaps even worse than, the Soviet

⁸ Bush to Goldwater, 28 May 1982, in Bush, *All the Best*, 318.

Union's. Bush rightly anticipated that in the future this issue, almost totally ignored in the early years of the American opening to China, might come to loom much larger.

Bush was even capable of being more realistic than the self-styled realists, pointing out on several occasions that, so long as Sino-Soviet relations remained acrimonious, China needed the United States as a strategic protector and counter-balance just as much and probably more than his own country needed China. His real concern was whether, after Mao's death, China's new leaders would move to repair the alliance of the two Communist great powers. Bush also felt that, due to the evidence of genuine data, many of the professional China-watchers in USLO, the American consulate in Hong Kong, and foreign embassies in Beijing, fell into the trap of over-interpreting and analyzing to the point of diminishing return every scrap of information or chance word from Chinese officials on both domestic and international politics.

What, in concrete terms, did Bush accomplish in Beijing? He may well have functioned as a politically sensitive voice of pragmatic common sense on China policy, an achievement which has perhaps been undervalued, not least by the coterie of American officials who considered themselves China experts. He served as an intermediary in U.S. negotiations to win Prince Sihanouk of Cambodia a share in his country's government after the 1975 Khmer Rouge takeover, and in efforts to persuade the Chinese government to pressure Cambodia to release the *Mayaguez*, a US merchant vessel seized by Cambodia in May that year. These were not, however, major attainments, and Bush was becoming ever more conscious of his distance from Washington and the need to concentrate on his future. By mid-1975, moreover, his first flush of interest in China had long since worn off, as Bush went through the early enthusiasm followed by letdown and disillusionment with the country which was a very common trajectory for foreigners who came to live there. The recurrent twin drumbeat of Bush's resentment of continuing Chinese criticism of the United States and his regrets over his failure to engage Chinese officials in any meaningful dialogue became ever more insistent themes of his journal. Bush did not leave Beijing until early December 1975, but from late August that year he ceased to keep any diary.

Engel views Bush's time in Beijing as central to his education as an international statesman. It is interesting to note that, while Bush and several other twentieth-century presidents spent lengthy periods overseas serving in the armed forces, only two others had any extended non-military experience as adults outside the United States: William Howard Taft, as governor general of the Philippines, and Herbert Hoover, as a mining engineer. For fifteen months, Bush was able to observe at first hand a society organized on principles almost diametrically opposite to those of the United States. Bush had little time for those visiting Americans who praised all aspects of Chinese society, especially when they also criticized the United States. Unlike some of his compatriots in the 1960s and early 1970s, Bush did not romanticize Mao's China, nor did he regard it as a model future society. He himself admired Chinese attainments in eliminating poverty and enforcing social discipline, even as he commented on "the basic closed society aspect of things. Lack of freedom. Discipline of people. Sending them off to communes. Little criticism. No freedom to criticize. There is a certain gray drabness amongst the people that makes one wonder how they could possibly be happy. Makes one wonder if there is real happiness there." (30) For

the rest of his time in Beijing, Bush would wrestle with these questions, reflecting in December 1974: “You respect the discipline. You respect the order. You respect the progress but you question the lack of gaiety, the lack of creature comforts, the lack of freedom to do something different.” (127) Bush did not believe the Chinese system could endure indefinitely. Seven months later, he “[kept] coming back to the society here, wondering how long there will be no individualism. How long everyone’s head will be down and tail up. How long before there is a real quest for individual decisions, what standard of living people want, freedom to travel, freedom to read, freedom to study, freedom to get away from the music and propaganda.” (363) For him, it was the “Continuous question. How long will China be able to keep this discipline, this uniformity, this lack of consumerism, this lack of dissent? How long can it last?” (391) In his final diary entry, in August 1975, Bush stated: “I am convinced that at some time in the future the society will have to adapt to the basic laws of supply and demand and incentive. No question about it.” (394)⁹

Beijing’s isolation and the lack of entertainment gave Bush time to think, to read (though far less widely than Bruce had done), and to develop a working set of principles as to how Americans should conduct international relations. The philosophy that Bush developed arguably represented a more genuinely American outlook than the supposedly realistic and amoral continental but fundamentally non-American diplomatic sensibility that both Bruce and Kissinger embodied. Walter Russell Mead has argued that, throughout the entire history of the United States, one can discern at least four strands of thinking on foreign policy: a Hamiltonian national interest tradition focusing upon economics and security; Wilsonian missionary interventionism; Jeffersonian retreatism; and Jacksonian unilateral militarism. Mead argues that at no time has any single school of thought been able to dominate the making of that nation’s foreign policy, and the periods when the United States has enjoyed the greatest success in the international arena have been those when policymakers have melded elements from two or more schools into a fruitful if somewhat incoherent kaleidoscope capable of attracting pervasive domestic support.¹⁰ Even Kissinger, perhaps the most prominent advocate of realism, eventually came to argue that realism alone was not enough, stating in 2001:

Certainly, to be truly American, any concept of national interest must flow from the country’s democratic tradition and concern with the vitality of democracy around the world. But the United States must also translate its values into answers to some hard questions: What, for our survival, must we seek to prevent no matter how painful the means? What, to be true to ourselves, must we try to accomplish no matter how small the attainable international

⁹ Certain aspects of the socialist Chinese system impressed Bush. It is undoubtedly intriguing to learn that in July 1975 George W. Bush, then twenty-nine, paid 60 cents in a Beijing clinic for successful treatment of a tooth, after a US hospital had charged him 650 dollars “to get it drilled out” and left him “in great pain.” According to his father: “He is now a great admirer of the Chinese medicine, and he is struggling, as a lot of us are, as to whether this universal health care—how it should work, etc., etc.” Engel, 352.

¹⁰ Walter Russell Mead, *Special Providence: American Foreign Policy and How It Changed the World* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2001).

consensus, and, if necessary, entirely on our own? What wrongs is it essential that we right? What goals are simply beyond our capacity?¹¹

From this perspective, Bush's thinking on international affairs while in Beijing, although fairly unsophisticated and less than systematic, might plausibly seem to embody fundamental American values absent from the simple realism then dominant in the State Department.

Did the personal style of diplomacy Bush so emphasized actually make any difference at all to Sino-American relations? To Chinese leaders, the United States was a great power, from which they hoped to benefit in both strategic and economic terms. While not necessarily responding to his overtures of friendship, Chinese officials would therefore seek to tolerate what they may well have considered his rather baffling informality and eccentricities. Bicycling and jogging around Beijing and battling to resurface the International Club's tennis courts were mere foibles, easily enough indulged in an influential foreign envoy. Whatever their past differences of opinion, when he ascended to the vice-presidency and then the presidency, the rulers of Beijing were more than happy to accord Bush the status of a long-time and early American "friend of China," adding retrospective luster to a relationship which both sides by then found decidedly advantageous. Bush's pronounced emphasis on friendship and individual contacts with foreign leaders may have been something of an idiosyncrasy, owing a great deal to his temperamental proclivities and perhaps, too, reflecting a quintessentially American eagerness to be liked as well as respected. It was also an example of the employment of what Joseph S. Nye, Jr., has famously termed "soft power," the desire to win friends and influence people on the international scene by employing carrots rather than sticks.¹² Underpinning it, however, was a demand that other nations show respect for the United States, and the readiness to use military force as and when this might be required.

Bush's outlook evolved at a time when the international scene was in flux, and Communist takeovers of South Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos cast doubt, at least in his mind, upon the validity of his country's commitments to its allies in Asia and elsewhere. Mingling on a daily basis with diplomats from around the world, Bush also noted how many of them criticized American support for authoritarian, non-democratic, and totalitarian allies, in South Vietnam and South Korea, for instance, while ignoring even more egregious breaches of human rights by nations opposed to the United States.

The American people do not have any concept of how others around the world view America. We think we are good, honorable, decent, freedom-loving. Others are firmly convinced that, though they like the people themselves in our

¹¹ Henry A. Kissinger, *Does America Need a Foreign Policy? Toward a Diplomacy for the 21st Century* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001), p. 31.

¹² Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *The Paradox of American Power: Why the World's Only Superpower Can't Go It Alone* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); and *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: PublicAffairs Press, 2004).

country, that we are embarking on policies that are anathema to them. We have a mammoth public relations job to do on all of this. (286)

The worst thing, in Bush's view, would be an American failure to respond to these attacks. On numerous occasions, Bush stated his own belief that the United States should stand up for its own principles, and defend them against criticism, whether this came from China or other quarters of the diplomatic community. "It gets a little annoying at times," he remarked, "but I must say that I like to defend our position and battle with some of these guys. I am convinced that Chinese respect one for that, and I am convinced that some of these foreigners, like the Somalians and some others, do too." (385) Like Bruce, he found enormously impressive mainland China's well-honed tactics for winning support from emerging nations, noting how Chinese officials invariably showed great respect to visiting third world leaders, greeting them with effusive airport welcomes, and staging huge official parades and other events, marked by banners and cheering crowds, symbolic and relatively inexpensive gestures which supplemented the economic and military aid the Chinese provided and generated enormous goodwill. Bush saw his assignment in Beijing as an opportunity to improve his own personal contacts with diplomatic representatives from these nations, seeking – as he had already done when at the United Nations – to win their friendship and respect.

In the interests of their broader global strategy, which called for resuming relations with China and withdrawing American forces from Vietnam, Nixon and Kissinger had been prepared, albeit after what some critics termed a "decent interval," to abandon American allies in both Taiwan and South Vietnam to communist rule. Bush implicitly challenged the wisdom of these decisions. In February 1975, as the situation in Vietnam became ever more critical, with the United States absorbed in tackling its own economic problems and domestic malaise, Bush observed:

We just must not lose sight of our own perspective and of our own *raison d'être* as a nation. So much of the world depends on the United States. So much depends on our own self-confidence in our ability to cope. If we project this confusion and failure and discouragement it will show up around the world. People wonder anyway when they see commitments unkept. I think of Cambodia, and I think of Vietnam, and I think of what that means to the Chinese government and others as they see us unable to fulfill commitments any more. I happen to be concerned about Cambodia and Vietnam and think the American people don't care about them anymore. But that isn't the point. The point is that if we make a commitment we ought to keep it. (160-161)

Observing the near-stampede of Asian leaders seeking to reopen relations with China after the fall of South Vietnam, Bush concluded that this event had called into question the value of all commitments by the U.S. government to American allies, leading such nations as the Philippines and Malaysia to respond by gravitating toward the rising power of China. To his dismay, these states were cosyng up to mainland China despite its continuing support for communist revolutionary movements in their own countries. "They have to," he wrote,

“because they don’t see in the U.S. the firm kind of interventionist support that they have been able to count on in the past.” Bush himself had no easy answers as to what the United States should do in this situation. He recognized just how hostile Congress was at that time to pledges of military and even economic aid, and how particularly reluctant to do anything more in Southeast Asia. He himself felt that it would be premature at this juncture for the United States to recognize a united Vietnam or give any economic aid to that country; American recognition of Vietnam did not, indeed, come until the presidency of Bush’s successor, Bill Clinton. Wondering what he himself would do were he directing American foreign policy, Bush confessed:

I can’t honestly feel that Southeast Asia is vital to the security of the United States. We must make some new kinds of declarations, but if somebody said to me today what would you declare, I’d be damned if I know how I’d define it. . . . Some of our treaty obligations seem to be outdated. Perhaps we need a bold new look at all of them – all of the treaties – and then a restatement of what kind of support we will give to Southeast Asia, free countries and the socialist and communist countries. (279)

Engel argues that Bush’s experiences in Beijing convinced him that, even if no tangible American national interests were at stake, should the United States fail to defend one beleaguered ally its overall credibility amongst other allies would suffer, eroding its international position and influence. This was his own customized version of the famed domino theory. Bush’s personal perspective in Beijing, which enabled him to observe firsthand the impact of the fall of Vietnam upon a very wide range of foreign powers, some allies of, some neutral, and some hostile to the United States, therefore played an important role in his decision to wage the First Gulf War and expel Saddam Hussein from Kuwait.

In making Bush’s China diaries available to a wider audience, Engel provides a fascinating window into one of the formative influences on the foreign policy outlook of a president who would hold office during the time of transition from the Cold War to the post-Cold War world. The principles he developed during his time in Beijing could with little difficulty be applied equally well in both situations. Engel has done an excellent job of editing what must have been a difficult text, and tracking down a wide variety of background materials from Bush’s own papers, other archives, and printed sources, including a selection of revealing family photographs. His judicious and thoughtful concluding essay gives an extremely informative appraisal of Bush’s experiences before his time in China, setting the diaries in a broader perspective. Perhaps because the book was prepared a little too hastily, there are some careless minor typographical and factual errors. The venerable journalist Clare Hollingworth, now ninety-seven, would not be amused her name was misspelt as Hollingsworth. Admiral Noel Gayler, not Gyler, headed the U.S. Pacific Command in 1974. In 1971 Nixon had no discussions as to who might be the best man to head up USLO in Beijing, for the simple reason that the idea of opening the facility was not even mooted until early 1973. The delicacy Bush’s cooks prepared for various banquets was almost certainly shark’s fin soup, not shark’s skin soup. More importantly, one wishes Engel had done more to pull together materials that told the story of Bush’s last three or four months

in Beijing, when he hosted high-profile visits by both Kissinger and Ford, had his one and only prized encounter with Mao Zedong, and accepted the presidential invitation to become director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), an appointment that convinced at least some suspicious Chinese that Bush's primary function in Beijing had always been espionage. In July 1975 Bush made a week-long trip to Northeast China, during which he visited oil fields and other industrial facilities. Engel claims that Bush made no diary entries during this excursion, yet several are included in Bush's own published letters and other writings.¹³ The diary's abrupt ending is disconcerting, and some account, however sketchy, of the end of Bush's assignment would have been useful in rounding off the tale.

Engel might also have gone further in putting Bush's China experiences in context. Beijing was by no means the end of the story. After leaving China, Bush headed the CIA, ran for the 1980 presidential nomination, and won three national campaigns, twice as Ronald Reagan's vice-presidential running-mate and once as president in his own right. He also spent eight years as Reagan's vice president, traveling almost incessantly. However formative Bush's years in China may have been in terms of his worldview, they cannot have been the only influences upon his international outlook, or even in terms of his thinking on China. As Bush's 1982 letter to Goldwater cited above suggests, for the Republican right, and indeed for others, the status of Taiwan remained a perennial and contentious subject. We are told that Bush also kept diaries as vice president; what did he have to say in them about China? Where did he stand on human rights? How did he view the expanding economic and commercial relations between China and the United States in the late 1970s and 1980s? It is hard to believe that in June 1989, when Bush sought to maintain at least a modicum of contact with Deng Xiaoping after Chinese tanks cleared Tiananmen Square of protesting students, he did so simply because he had met the Chinese leader in 1974 and 1975. In the intervening years, the redoubtable Deng had been purged yet again, staged a comeback, ousted the Gang of Four, and launched major reform policies within China. As head of USLO and then as CIA director, Bush must have been privy to intelligence gathering and sharing arrangements between China and the United States that apparently continued to flourish during and after the June 1989 crisis. One wishes that Engel had speculated at greater length on just how Bush's China experiences in 1974-1975 fitted into the broader trajectory of his career in terms of affecting his overall handling of foreign affairs. Even so, Engel has done an outstanding job of editing Bush's diaries, which are not only a good and entertaining read, but will undoubtedly be an essential volume for all serious students of Sino-American relations or the presidency of George H. W. Bush.

¹³ Bush, *All the Best*, 231-232.

During his mission as head of the United States Liaison Office (USLO) in Beijing thirty-five years ago, George H.W. Bush and his wife Barbara left the image of an intimate, open, and friendly American couple in the memory of the Chinese people. Their dog-walking in the streets of Beijing and bicycling in the Tiananmen Square still remain an amusing tale that some Chinese dwell upon with delight. This style of personal diplomacy no doubt provided a resource that Bush could capitalize on for his subsequent long-term dealings with China.

The China Diary of George H.W. Bush reveals a detailed private record of Bush's diplomatic sojourn in China from October 1974 through August 1975. More than just a memo of daily activities and minutes, this work brings to light the innermost views and observations Bush then cultivated regarding Sino-American relations, U.S. foreign policy, American politics, the Vietnam War, and crucial issues of international affairs. Given the fact that Bush was elected vice president and eventually president of the United States, the publication of this diary offers a unique microscopic viewpoint to comprehend the nexus between the seeds of thought Bush developed during his stay in China and the prominent role he later played in international politics. Hence, Bush's China log, with Jeffrey Engel's succinct contextual survey, supplies a useful primary source for the study of Bush's life and career.

The timing and the manner in which Bush chronicled his ventures in Beijing vouch for *The China Diary's* authenticity and credibility as first-hand historical information. Bush left for China at a time when his political career and reputation had reached a nadir. Crestfallen over the Watergate scandal (during which time he was chairman of the Republican National Committee) and branded as Nixon's defender if not a cohort, Bush had a strong penchant for leaving behind "all the ugliness" of American domestic politics, as he confided to his diary. That desire seemed to figure in Bush's decision to be the head of USLO far away in Beijing, for another prestigious ambassadorial post to London or Paris was also available as a reward for his loyal service to the Republican Party. On the other hand, Bush decided to go to China "because of the intrigue and fascination that is China," (5) a mysterious Communist bastion that had remained America's arch-foe until the ice of hostilities began to thaw following Nixon's visit to Beijing in 1972. Aware of China's value in U.S. global Cold War strategy, Bush hoped to get first-hand experience assessing China's place in world affairs while there. For a tarnished politician at a low point, he had nothing to lose.

For his eyes and mind only, Bush recorded what he saw and felt in Beijing. According to the diary entries, Bush worked in earnest to pursue what Engel calls a "personal, pragmatic diplomacy" through tactful activities, instead of fulfilling curiosity and seeking wonder like innocents abroad. Bush sincerely believed that "personal diplomacy [could] be very useful and productive" (xv) for handling bilateral national and international relations. To that end, as his journal discloses, Bush undertook various actions, diplomatic or social. Regardless of the USLO's status as semi-official representation of the United States at a time when Washington and Beijing had no formal mutual recognition, Bush took the initiative to

raise the visibility of American presence by formal protocol calls on Beijing's foreign legations and related governmental ministries, thereby broadening the range of contact and information sources. He also endeavored to promote multilevel person-to-person contacts with China and its people, as evidenced by his effort to solve the visa problems for his friends in political and business circles who wanted to visit China. And his pastimes of walking his dog and riding his bicycle were aimed at presenting a genuine amiable American face to the mass of ordinary Chinese still in the tight-jacket of Maoist ideology. By means of personal diplomacy, above all, Bush wanted to "meet the next generation of China's leaders—whoever they may prove to be." (6) For that matter, the diary divulges Bush's social get-togethers with some high-ranking Chinese officials and his post-gathering observations.

More than mere diplomatic ventures, the China journal unveils, Bush performed those personal—sometimes high profile—exploits as a reaction to the status quo of troubled Sino-American relations at the time. During his tenure in Beijing, Bush witnessed stagnation between the two countries following the initial rapprochement in 1972, because of major difference between China and the United States over crucial bilateral and international issues. Bush figured that a personal approach with the Chinese could engender an affable atmosphere conducive to producing flexibility for Chinese-American negotiations. In addition, he felt that visible diplomatic action was bound to produce positive effects domestically and internationally. He took issue with Secretary of State Henry Kissinger's high-handed domination and secretive handling of Washington's relations with Beijing. However, Bush's tactics annoyed Kissinger, who then controlled American foreign policy in the capacity of National Security Assistant to President Gerald Ford and as Secretary of State. To keep the check and balance in the strategic order of the Washington-Moscow-Beijing triangle, Kissinger—and Foggy Bottom—treated Sino-American relations as his exclusive domain. Thus, Kissinger considered Bush's personal diplomacy as troublesome for a stable relationship between Beijing and Washington, as much of the Bush diary explicitly indicates.

While Bush was in China, the United States was also experiencing an arduous moment in both domestic and foreign affairs, including the erosion of public faith in government, the unraveling of the Cold War détente, the commotions in the Middle East countries, the Khmer Rouge's rise to power in Cambodia, and the fall of Saigon in Vietnam. While staying in Beijing, the forefront of American global strategy, Bush personally experienced and observed all these crises. Privately, he recorded his deliberations on how to redefine the theoretical foundation for America's global role and how to overhaul the practice of U.S. foreign policy. The decline of American power on the international stage reinforced Bush's belief in the domino theory, as his diary suggests. Drawing on the reality of current events, however, Bush gave an innovative interpretation of the domino effect. For him, the waning of the leading position of the United States in the world was due more to the loss of American credibility than the spread of Communism. Seeing that the leaders of the third world countries, particularly American allies such as Lee kuan Yew of Singapore and Ferdinand Marcos of the Philippines paid calls to Beijing, Bush attributed the visits not to the appeal of Maoist Communism but rather to concerns about sole reliance on the United States as well as these leaders' strategic calculation to seek an alternative partnership.

Thus, Bush claimed in his diary that Washington needed to clarify what the United States stood for and realistically reassess where America's vital interests lay. As a strategy for restructuring U.S. foreign policy, Bush proposed to "use the UN more and multilateral aid," though Washington should pursue that policy "only with insistence of credit." (268)

The China Diary throughout chronicles a range of impressions Bush held about China itself. The China journal conveys the views of the head of the USLO regarding the Chinese Cultural Revolution and the conflict between the moderates and leftist radicals in the Chinese Communist regime. Bush particularly learned of the discrepancy existing between the propaganda and actual behavior of the Chinese leadership. He privately vented his frustrations and fury about Beijing's public barrage on the United States while simultaneously pursuing cordial relationships with the top "imperialist country" in the world. As a counter-measure, Bush believed that America should spare no time clarifying its positions and stood firm for its principles, while handling concrete bilateral issues with prudence. The diary further reveals that Bush made an effort to become acquainted with the Chinese economy and to explore opportunities for Sino-American trade.

Deep in substance, *The China Diary of George H.W. Bush* affords a valuable primer for those in pursuit of Bush's burgeoning ideas that later influenced his performance as a leading figure in international politics. The book also opens a window into his personality, style, and inner-world. While a valuable primary source, the diary suffers without Engel's contextual explanations and it could have been helped with some caveats. For example, Bush complained about the Chinese lukewarm reaction to his personal diplomacy but little is said about the fact that in China the very top leadership exclusively controlled China's contact with the United States, which allowed for no individual spontaneity. Nonetheless, this tome deserves praise as a significant addition to the emerging scholarship on George H.W. Bush's career and U.S. foreign relations from the late 1970s to the present.

Author's Response by Jeffrey A. Engel, Texas A&M University

It is traditional to begin a response to such wise critiques by thanking the critics. Manners matter, after all. Bowing to the traditional is not only appropriate, but in this case, genuine. The reviewers tasked by Professor Yafeng Xia and H-Diplo with digesting this book clearly took considerable time to think through the text and to place it fully within the literature. Their comments have further sharpened my own understanding of Bush's *China Diary*, this nearly five years after I first encountered it. George H.W. Bush, of course, is the book's real author. Thanks in no small part to thoughtful reviewers such as these, I learn more about the diary, and Sino-American relations of the mid-1970s, with seemingly ever passing day. Their nuanced points will be discussed below, in particular the way the group largely understood Bush's time in China as an important moment in his life; the way reviewers quite rightly noted that Bush's diary revealed more about the man and the expatriate community in Beijing during the 1970s than about Sino-America relations strictly defined; but yet finally how this very point tells us something important about those relations indeed.

Lest readers of this forum yearn for more tension, I will eventually note below where our interpretations diverge. Bush's *China Diary* is, at its most basic, a primary text. My hope in publishing this archival source was to provide others with evidence for making their own interpretations of the man and of this period. Far be it from me to rage when the interpretations of learned scholars differ from my own. Fostering discussion based on such divergent conclusions was the point of the project, after all.

Before leaving the vein of thanks, this forum offers a useful moment to elaborate on two additional issues raised in editing and then publishing Bush's *China Diary*. I appreciate in particular Professor Cathcart's noting my "credibility," revealed through my commentary on Bush's text, despite my "close affiliation with Bush's legacy." I presume Cathcart refers to my employment at Texas A&M University's non-partisan Bush School of Government & Public Service. Being unable to think of any other "affiliation," I will appreciate the compliment, appreciating as well his recognition of the tension that naturally arose less from scholarly work on a man whose name adorns our letterhead, but more the tension that invariably arises when one studies a subject who is not only still alive, but who owns copyright to the very text one seeks to study. Such tensions, and ensuing questions of credibility, were forever on my mind when researching and writing this project. I can honestly report that I never once perceived pressure or tension from anyone associated with the school to think differently about my historian's view of Bush's legacy. The state of Texas pays the bills here, not the Bush family or foundation.

While Bush donated his "Peking Diary" (its original name) to the Presidential Library that bears his name for the benefit of researchers, he was under no further obligation to see his private thoughts published, parsed, and subsequently distributed. He consented to this dissemination, to my probing of his memories about the 1970s in numerous interviews, and to aiding my interviews with other associates from that period (most often by providing a private phone number or address, leaving the rest to me) for the simple reason

that he wanted to aid an historian based at a university close to his heart. Yet at no time did Bush ever—not once—imply that the interpretation of the book’s content, or judgment of his actions from this period or from his presidency, were in any way subject to his review. On the contrary, he agreed when drawing the contract separating copyright in the book (he retained copyright over the original diary text, while I laid claim to the remainder, a division initiated by his lawyer who prudently suggested I would not want to be subject to a libel lawsuit for anything Bush had written in the 1970s, a point I in ignorance had never considered), that neither he, nor anyone from his office, would see a final copy of the book, including my notes and explanatory essay, until it arrived fully bound and in print. There would be no opportunity for interference in the scholarly process, in other words.

Bush remained true to his word. I mention this point, which is touched on briefly in the *China Diary*, because it reveals not only the tension created by scholarly work on a living subject, but also the way in which that subject, if sufficiently cosmopolitan in his or her views of the academic process, might do more than foster scholarship. They might promote it as well, through their studied indifference to the product if nothing else. Bush innately understood that those who made history, and those who wrote about it, worked in different spheres. So too did he embrace my desire to keep those spheres as separate as possible, for the sake of what Professor Cathcart termed my “credibility.” I prefer the term “impartiality.” Either way, the quest for such scholarly detachment was omnipresent in my writing and thinking about this book, and it warms me to see that quest noted by my academic peers.

A bit of inside history not included in the original forward to the diary proves further the lengths taken to preserve the book’s academic credibility, while pointing as well to the other group which deserves praise. Editors at Princeton University Press, especially Brigitta van Rheinberg and Clara Platter, along with Director Peter Dougherty, backed the full scholarly examination of Bush’s diary without hesitation. Two instances make this point. First, they never once imposed a limit on the size, length, number, or scope of the notes designed to illuminate the text, no matter how esoteric their content, and not even when the book’s length exceeded initial expectation. Other presidential diaries have been published in recent years with minimal editorial commentary, save identification of principals named in the text. Princeton allowed far more, in hope of making the book appealing to the scholarly community. This indulgence was, as my fellow historians can well imagine, of great value indeed.

More dramatically, the press stood its ground when plans to publish a Chinese translation of the diary for Asian distribution—as called for by Professor Cathcart among others—fell to contemporary political realities. There is today no (legal) Chinese edition of Bush’s *China Diary*, because the press refused to sell its reputation or values, or for that matter to put a price on mine. I thank them for this indeed.

The time for thanks is at an end; it is therefore time to turn more directly to the critiques of the reviewers. I begin with Professor Ting Ni, who notes that Bush arrived in China full of idealism and energy. He hoped to meet China’s current and future leadership, but as Professor Ni writes, “several entries also show that Bush was frustrated by the lack of

access to Chinese leaders.” She is not alone in remarking on this point. Professor Guoqiang Zheng notes that “Bush complained about the Chinese lukewarm reaction to his personal diplomacy,” while further remarking that “little is said that in China the very top leadership exclusively controlled China’s contact with the United States, which allowed for no individual spontaneity.”

These are important points indeed, especially the latter point that Chinese officials—in the last days of the oft-violent Cultural Revolution—were hardly eager to move too far ahead of the curve in promoting both Sino-American relations and relationships with individual Americans. This latter point should indeed have been made more forcefully in the book. Indeed, it is a point I typically make to audiences when describing Chinese politics of the period, and I was thus dismayed when reviewing the text yet again in preparation for this response that there was indeed scant mention of this important point about Chinese internal politics. American diplomacy is both my specialty and the focus of the book’s notes; the explanatory essay focuses on Bush from a biographer’s perspective. While I consulted several specialists in Chinese domestic and international history during the course of this project, I cannot deny its focus on American sources and perspective. Professor Zheng notes that the book “affords a valuable primer for those in pursuit of Bush’s burgeoning ideas that later influenced his performance as a leading figure in international politics,” further noting it “opens a window into his personality, style, and inner-world.” Cathcart goes further, calling it a “tragedy” that the diary is primarily “a window into the diplomatic enterprise of the foreigners in Beijing—a window focusing on the foreign legations, the insular life there, the daily comings and goings of mainly non-Chinese.”

I prefer to see the glass as half-tragic. These reviewers are unquestionably correct in noting Bush’s effectual isolation from most things Chinese during his stay in China. Yet as Cathcart rightly notes, his memoir therefore “has much more in common with diaries of the missionaries and diplomats in Beijing in the late 19th century than memoirs being written today.” This is an important point, but it need not be tragic. It rather reminds us of, and moreover reveals to us, the tension inherent in Sino-American relations at that moment in history but a few years removed from Nixon’s historic visit. More broadly the real isolation of the city’s diplomatic community further highlights the very point Zheng makes, that Chinese leaders were as cautious in dealing with foreigners as the foreigners on their soil were in dealing with them. The diplomatic cables from this period—those American cables reviewed for this study, I should emphasize—are replete with large and small concerns that the wrong gesture, the wrong move, the wrong statement, would somehow insult the Chinese, leading to a rapid deterioration of relations. As noted throughout the *China Diary*, Kissinger wanted to control Sino-American talks because of his penchant for control; but at the same time, his entire foreign policy bureaucracy perceived that this relationship, perhaps among all diplomatic relations Washington enjoyed and endured at the time, was sensitive.

Bush’s isolation, while indeed a shame for the historian eager to learn more about Chinese life and politics in the 1970s, nonetheless reveals the way Beijing was not yet in the 1970s the international city it is today. Perhaps this is an obvious point, but the fact that we learn

far more in the *China Diary* about the city's transient diplomatic community than about its permanent residents is itself a useful marker for the historian eager to trace the evolution of China's internationalism. Cathcart is entirely right in noting that Bush's diary reads like a missionary's tale from centuries past. But even if those texts tell us little about China as it was, they still tell us much about the China that was perceived. I can only agree with him, and with Professor Zheng for longing for a more transnational reading of the period, time, and place, and even with Professor Ni's description of Bush, upon arrival at least, as suggesting "a certain idealistic naiveté." He was no China scholar upon arrival. I will discuss his credentials in this realm later in his life below. But I think that the picture he paints is, nonetheless, revealing about American diplomacy, and the city's diplomatic community, if not more broadly of this interim moment in Sino-American relations caught between the excitements of Nixon's visit a few years in the past and the formal recognition that was still five years in the future. As historians we should be careful to analyze the sources we find more than we critique them for failing to address our own questions.

Parenthetically, I too would like to know more about the 1989 experience as it played out inside Bush's White House, as does Professor Cathcart. So too would I like to read Bush's diaries from his vice-presidential and presidential years, as Professor Roberts rightly notes would make for an excellent source. These sources are not yet available to researchers. I urge the reviewers, as well as the readers of this forum, to join me in filing the freedom of information and declassification requests necessary to bring these documents into the public light.

Furthering the point of Bush's experience while in China—or rather, the experience he took from it—the reviewers generally noted Bush's lack of Chinese expertise, at least upon his arrival. There is merit in Professor Ni's description of Bush as idealistic if naïve upon his first landing in Beijing. Yet Bush tried to learn. With her, I agree that "he adopted more nuanced interpretations of American foreign policy" during his tenure in Beijing. It is that long-term impact of his China stay on Bush's overall diplomatic worldview that is to my mind the diary's most intriguing aspect. That interest surely colored my notes and the emphasis of my interpretation. Like Ni, who sees an evolution in Bush's thinking during his Beijing stay, and like Cathcart, who notes the "useful source...reveals much about its author," I contend that China mattered to Bush. His experience there certainly made him believe in his own expertise on all things Chinese, a point that surely underlay his avid interest—if not monopolization—of China policy during his Presidency, especially during the tumult of 1989. Whether wise or foolish in thinking himself a learned China hand after his Beijing stay, there can be no doubt that Bush indeed took control of China policy as with no other primary area of his foreign policy.

There are numerous important questions embedded within this one, raised not only by these reviewers, but by others. In a late 2008 session at the Woodrow Wilson Center's Cold War International History Project devoted to discussing the *China Diary*, for example, Professor Nancy Bernkopf Tucker asked a searing question, one I had not fully considered beforehand (and which I will here paraphrase): "why did no one bother, in 1989, to tell Bush that he was *not* in fact a China expert?" I admit to have been musing this question ever since. Having gone out of my way to show that Bush commanded China policy by

virtue of his self-proclaimed expertise, I did not sufficiently pause to judge his wisdom. Quite clearly the absence of such an obvious critique in 1989 demonstrates a potential (and perhaps even ongoing) flaw in the American political system. When tanks rolled into Tiananmen in 1989, and when Bush took command of the American response on the basis of his own intimate expertise and experience in China, in particular with leaders he had met in the early 1970s such as Deng Xiaoping, none of his advisers dared point out that the emperor, metaphorically, wore no clothes. Bush relied for advice on genuine experts, such as his Ambassador, James Lilley, who had in fact spent a career studying the Chinese. But whereas he typically left nuclear policy to savants like Brent Scowcroft, or international negotiations to the lawyerly James Baker, on China he took advice only to form his own policies. And as several of the reviewers note, he was hardly a China expert upon arriving in Beijing, just as Professor Tucker's comment makes plain that, by any academic or professional standard, he was hardly more of a Sinologist by the late 1980s.

Professor Roberts goes further still, arguing in effect that Bush learned remarkably little about China while stationed there. Before addressing this point, readers should recognize my own debt to Roberts for her magisterial editing of David Bruce's diaries from his own time in China. They epitomize what a scholar might contribute to a primary source. Hers is the better edited and annotated book, I contend.

Her critique of the *China Diary*, however, which boils down to the charge that Bush paled as ambassador when compared to her own Ambassador Bruce, misses the mark. Both ambassadors came to China experienced in other areas. Certainly Bruce had more diplomatic experience. Then again, his experience trumped nearly any international diplomat save John Foster Dulles or Bismarck. But to suggest that Bruce, by virtue of reading deeply in Chinese history while stationed in Beijing in relative isolation behind the USLO's walls, somehow became more of a Sinologist than Bush, who also spent considerable time reading while in similar isolation from Chinese officials and citizens, I think obscures the larger point that in each case Washington sent to Beijing a de-facto ambassador with quite little knowledge of China, its history, culture, or people. Bush too read while in China. What he read there of Chinese history certainly changed his opinion of the Chinese experience. As Bush noted, China was not Washington's to lose in 1949, further revealing that the Chinese he met seemed to consider him and his foreign colleagues "barbarians."

How different, really, is this from the very passage from Bruce's diary that Roberts quotes, where he wrote "the more I read Chinese history, the more I am convinced of their innate, traditional disapproval, even dislike, of foreign barbarians."

To say that Bruce wielded "sophisticated Olympian detachment" beyond what Bush could muster is, at the least, not supported by the evidence. Bruce noted it was "galling" for Chinese to "observe the privileges and luxuries enjoyed by a conspicuous handful of strangers in their midst." But how different is that understanding of the way wealth appears in a sea of relative poverty than Bush's harsh condemnation of his own wife for leaving their dog in the back of their chauffeur-driven car, lest the image of an American dog driven like royalty behind a Chinese worker validate the Chinese government's

condemnations of capitalists. In each case the diary writer is noting the realities of Chinese history vis-à-vis western influence, and noting moreover the contemporary implications. Rather than critique one man for understanding this point better than the other, or chastising one more for reading less well than the other, is it not better for we as historians to note at least the way these contemporary equivalents of the 19th century missionaries and traders set down in the midst of a foreign land were, at the very least, trying to understand the situation from China's perspective? If tragedy is but farce repeated, then it seems we might at least note the absence of tragedy perhaps fostered by a post-1971 desire on the part of American diplomats to avoid the tragic lessons of the past. Both Bruce and Bush tried to learn not only about China while there, but also to appreciate China from a Chinese and international perspective. Their effort is an important step indeed, and one I think they shared. Both men lamented their isolation in China. Bruce said "I have not made a single Chinese friend." Bush's lack of genuine Chinese engagement has been well noted by each of these reviewers. How different, really, were their experiences?

Roberts ultimately asks what I think is the most perceptive of questions for readers of the *China Diary*: "what, in concrete terms, did Bush accomplish in Beijing?" Not much in terms of forwarding Sino-American relations. Though as with Bruce there was far more to lose and to scuttle in this sensitive period of the 1970s than there was ever real room to maneuver and to gain. What mattered more for Bush—a generation younger than Bruce—was what he took from China. I contend he left China in effect more like the vastly more experienced Bruce had already been when he arrived: a more sophisticated international observer. For a man by his own admission on a "sabbatical" in China from his real career in Washington, this is no small achievement indeed.

Gauging the impact of this experience on his later presidential diplomacy was not only what first drew me to the book, but also the point of my contributions, including the concluding essay. As noted above, we must await the full release of documents from Bush's presidency to judge the full impact of his pre-presidential career upon his White House decisions. I look forward to joining with Professor Roberts, and with the other fine reviewers of this roundtable, in that quest once the archive vaults are fully opened.

Of greatest importance in this entire set of reviews is, I fear, Professor Robert's quite correct critique that I failed to catch the typographical error misnaming shark's fin soup. As the progeny of New York Jews, Chinese food was (and remains) my native cuisine. Furthermore, my graduate school education was made possible only by the tips generated through service as a waiter in a (quite authentic) Chinese restaurant. Of all the mistakes I have ever made in a book, and goodness knows there are many, this culinary typo will forever pain me the most.

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