

Security, Conflict and Cooperation
in the Contemporary World



Britain, France, West Germany and the People's Republic of China, 1969-1982

MARTIN ALBERS



Security, Conflict and Cooperation in the Contemporary World

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Britain, France, West Germany and the People's Republic of China, 1969–1982

The European Dimension of China's Great
Transition

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Administration of the Free and
Hanseatic City of Hamburg
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To my family

NOTE ON SPELLING AND TRANSLATIONS

For Chinese words I have generally used Hanyu Pinyin romanisation as the system most widely in use and officially employed by the People's Republic of China. The only exceptions are names that are very familiar in English in a different spelling, in particular the name of Chiang Kai-shek.

I have translated all quotations originally in languages other than English in order to facilitate reading.

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All remaining errors and shortcomings are exclusively my own responsibility.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AUMA	Ausstellungs- und Messe-Ausschuss der Deutschen Wirtschaft
BCPIT	British Council for the Promotion of International Trade
BDI	Bundesverband der Deutschen Industrie
BOT	Board of Trade
CAAC	Civil Aviation Administration of China
CBI	Confederation of British Industries
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CCPIT	China Council for the Promotion of International Trade
CDS	Chief of Defence Staff
CDU	Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands
CFCE	Centre Français du Commerce Extérieur
CHINCOM	China Committee within CoCom
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CNPF	Conseil National du Patronat Français
CNRS	Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique
CoCom	Coordinating Committee for Multilateral Exports Controls
COMECON	Council for Mutual Economic Assistance
CPGB	Communist Party of Great Britain
CPIFA	Chinese People's Institute of Foreign Affairs
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
CSCCE	Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe
CSU	Christlich Soziale Union in Bayern
DIN	Deutsches Institut für Normung

DM	Deutsche Mark
EC	European Community
EEC	European Economic Community
EFTA	European Free Trade Association
ENA	Ecole Nationale de l'Administration
EU	European Union
FCO	Foreign and Commonwealth Office
FDP	Freie Demokratische Partei
FF	French francs
FO	Foreign Office
FRG	Federal Republic of Germany
GBCC	Great Britain China Centre (formerly Committee)
GBP	Pound sterling
GDR	German Democratic Republic
GMD	Guomindang
HMG	Her Majesty's Government
IMF	International Monetary Fund
KPD	German Communist Party
KGB	Soviet Committee for State Security
MI5	Security Services, Military Intelligence, Section 5
MOD	Ministry of Defence
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NIOG	Nationalised Industries Overseas Group
NSDAP	Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PLA	People's Liberation Army
PRC	People's Republic of China
SACU	Society for Anglo-Chinese Understanding
SBTC	Sino-British Trade Council
SED	Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands
SEZ	Special Economic Zone
SFIO	Section française de l'Internationale ouvrière
SOAS	School of Oriental and African Studies
SPD	Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
USA	United States of America
USSR	Union of Socialist Soviet Republics

For the sake of convenience 'Germany' refers to West Germany, 'Europe' to Western Europe, and 'China' to the People's Republic of China, unless otherwise specified.

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Introduction

My wife was born in the nineteenth century. Or at least the living conditions in which she grew up resembled in many ways those one finds in accounts from the time before the advent of mass consumer society in Europe, the USA and other developed countries. Her family would grow vegetables and keep chickens in the backyard not as a sign of postmodernist, degrowth lifestyle but as an essential compliment to their normal diet. Eating meat was a luxury. There was only one room in the house she shared with her parents, and everybody in the neighbourhood had to use communal showers to wash. Transport was basically still dependent on muscular force and a bicycle was a highly valued piece of household equipment. This was the early 1990s in a small provincial town in Shandong province.

Yet change had started to set in, even in a corner that seemed centuries away from the already bustling megacities of Shanghai and Shenzhen. When she was six years old, the combustion engine entered her family's life as her father bought his first motorcycle, much admired by relatives and neighbours alike. By the time the family bought its first car a few years later, their living standards had essentially reached Western levels with a three-bedroom flat, and all electric household appliances from freezer to TV—including the obligatory rice cooker. Less than ten years later, the young Chinese student from a country town travelled to Europe for the first time, to begin her studies at Cologne University. Though her grades were good, the main reason for her being able to study alongside peers

who had grown up under entirely different conditions was not so much a particular talent, gift or extraordinary hard work. Rather, it reflected in one individual story the effects of three decades of breakneck economic growth and increasing international connections at nearly all social levels.

In other words, in less than 20 years she had experienced a social progression that took several generations, about a century earlier, in Europe and the USA. This story of China's radical transition and opening has been told many times.¹ Yet it remains one of the most unlikely and incredible processes of the recent past, essential for making sense of today's world and for grasping the future scenarios that seem possible.

Understanding it takes us back to a wholly different story, to 3 November 1839. On that day three British ships attacked a Chinese fleet off the coast of Kowloon and fired the first shots of the conflict known as the First Opium War.² This conflict forced China to confront the West and worked as a catalyst for the long political and economic decline of the Middle Kingdom that was only stopped in 1949 or perhaps even in 1976. In between lay a period when China was unable or unwilling to show serious initiative in the international system.³ It was only in the 1970s that a unified and independent China chose to appear on the stage of world politics to peacefully interact with the Western world on equal terms.

As it had from the 1840s–1860s, China began opening up again to Western influences. And if the West's economic and political interaction with China in the nineteenth century had taken place in the context of the 'first globalisation', the transformation of the largest nation on earth into the workshop of the world a long century later became one of the icons of the 'second globalisation'.⁴ The circumstances of China's second opening to the West, however, were fundamentally different from the first. In the period after 1969 it was the leadership of the People's Republic that largely decided the terms on which it would deal with the outside world. Though still economically poor, the country could freely determine the speed and scope of the process of reintegration into an increasingly interdependent world.

It is the aim of this book to study certain international aspects of this process, the consequences of which we feel every day when we go shopping, switch on the news or look at the stock market. Put differently, I try to show how we got from diplomatic decisions of war and peace to students from Shandong province studying sociology in Cologne. More specifically, I look at one chapter of this story that has, surprisingly, been

left almost blank until today—the role of Western Europe in facilitating China's great transition.

When dealing with the period in focus, 1969–82, it is impossible not to have in mind a better known story, which is the relations between China and the two superpowers, notably the USA.⁵ But my main concern is to go beyond this triangle and see China through the eyes of three Western European countries: France, Great Britain and the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG). All three had a long tradition of interacting with China and they all shared with the People's Republic of China (PRC) the fate of territories under direct threat of conventional as well as nuclear warfare.

Similarly, London, Paris and Bonn were all implicated in the Helsinki process and the general developments of détente that seemed to loosen the bloc structures and give the medium powers more room for manoeuvre.⁶ Though their approaches to European integration were different and changed over the course of the period studied, Bonn, Paris and London were also key players in the European Community (EC), which was of critical importance to the Chinese leadership in its search for ways to balance Soviet power. Finally, France, Britain, and the FRG were still dwarfing China's gross domestic product (GDP) and were among the first to expand their commercial relations with the PRC after the end of the Cultural Revolution's most radical phase in 1969. Even more importantly, the three countries shared the bulk of Sino-European trade, as they do today. This has become one of the key factors in the global economy, with China being the EU's second largest trading partner and the EU even taking first place among the PRC's suppliers and customers.⁷ There are therefore many reasons why the European perspective on developments in China is crucial, and why analysing the three countries' bilateral relations with the PRC seems relevant. Yet, despite their evident importance for today's world, surprisingly little has been written about how current Sino-European relations came about, especially if compared to the libraries filled with studies on the ups and downs of ties between Washington and Beijing.⁸

Earlier periods of Sino-European relations have been studied to some extent, and over the past decades a few scholars have begun to look at bilateral relations between Britain, France and Germany on the one hand and China on the other, often from the perspective of political science.⁹ But with very few exceptions, no historical research has been undertaken to analyse Sino-European relations in a wider context during the 1970s

and 1980s, the crucial period when the foundations for China's economic and political rise were laid.¹⁰

Overall, this neglect of the relations between Western Europe and China in the 1970s is related to the fact that China policy often took a less prominent place in public debates than other international issues. But it is the purpose of this book, firstly, to challenge the notion that China only played a marginal role in British, French and German policies during these years; and, secondly, to look at the origins of China's rise as a global power during the decade in question.

The aim of this book is threefold. In the following chapters I will first of all look for the main factors guiding European China policies and, secondly, discuss the impact these policies arguably had on the PRC and the international scene, asking, finally, how far this helps us to understand interactions between Western democracies and authoritarian states on a more general level.

Though periodisations in history can always be challenged, the years 1969–82 seem appropriate for studying a number of major transitions. In 1969 the radical phase of the Cultural Revolution ended in China and the country started taking a new interest in developing relations with the outside world.¹¹ Thirteen years later, in September 1982, the 12th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) marked the full integration of Deng Xiaoping's reform programme into the ideological canon.¹² Between these important dates lay the political opening towards the West under Mao, followed by the economic opening under Deng. In other words, the years between 1969 and 1982 laid the foundation for current economic and political ties between Europe and China.¹³

As mentioned above, this is a self-consciously Eurocentric study, adopting the perspective of three Western countries. The main reason for such an approach is that public records in China are not nearly as accessible as in Europe. This not only means the effective impossibility of analysing the two sides of bilateral relations to the same degree. It has also led to the absence of a comparative body of secondary literature to place the PRC's international relations in a wider context. There are some recent studies of Beijing's foreign policy. Interestingly, however, they mostly leave out the foreign policy of the 1970s and early 1980s, dealing either with foreign strategy under Mao or with the time after 1978 when the reforms had started.¹⁴ The time span between 1972 and 1978 is largely neglected even though many key figures (most notably Deng Xiaoping)

were continuously active.¹⁵ Most books on Chinese foreign policy during the Cultural Revolution end well before the late 1970s, and understandably concentrate on the radical phase between 1966 and 1969 and on the rapprochement with Washington.¹⁶ China's early UN policy, its implication in Third World conflicts and its perception of European détente therefore do not receive much attention. Chen Jian is a rare exception in this regard. He makes a compelling case for the links between Mao's domestic programmes and China's role in the Cold War.¹⁷ Chen's work provides an excellent guide to the PRC's foreign policy in general, and is therefore highly important for my research. Many of Chen's findings on Beijing's relations with the two superpowers are also directly relevant to Sino-European relations.

In other words, there exist a number of publications that somehow touch upon the topic that this book is covering. But hardly any original research has been done to address some of the key questions regarding European China policy. It is therefore clear that the existing literature leaves a gap to be filled. Given the importance of Europe's current relations with the PRC, we simply do not know enough about how governments in Bonn, Paris and London set about developing these in their crucial early period after 1969.

DIMENSIONS OF SINO-EUROPEAN EXCHANGE

In order to study this period, one main challenge lies in positioning this book's approach with regard to recent developments in international and comparative history. While classical diplomatic history remains very much alive, the field has been greatly enriched by a number of innovative approaches. These include the focus on cultural phenomena, the rise of transnational history and the transition from world history to global history.¹⁸ At the same time it cannot be denied that in terms of their heuristic motives and their objects of study, transnational history, global history and diplomatic history have much in common.¹⁹ They all concentrate on modern history with a focus on the very recent past, and they all acknowledge the importance of developments that involve exchange across borders.²⁰ Most studies of the mentioned fields also attribute a pivotal role to the state as the most powerful form of human organisation in the recent past.²¹ Put differently, the study of foreign policy has been transformed over recent decades but it still seems highly relevant even for many proponents of transnational and global history.

Following these assumptions I mainly concentrate on the national governments of the three European states studied, putting the following study in the realm of classical international history. Yet it is an international history very much aware of the developments in the field. The traditional concentration of diplomatic historians on issues of military strategy and defence obviously plays a role because the framework of the Cold War, with its ideological and strategic imperatives, bound all Western European countries. But since Sino-European relations rarely directly touched on vital issues of security on either side, my interest goes much further than the question of war and peace.

At the time of writing, China's power and influence on Europe are not only felt in terms of military might or diplomatic leverage. China's continuously rising defence budgets certainly contribute to its increasing weight in global affairs.²² But equally, if not more salient, is its importance as a global consumer of Western goods, as a large-scale producer of everything from toys to real-estate bubbles, and as the biggest creditor the world has ever seen. And China's rise is also about perceptions of the country as a potential threat to many things the West claims to cherish, from intellectual property, secure jobs and human rights to the vision of sustainable development in Africa and Latin America.²³ Finally, China's post-1976 development is increasingly affecting Western and global culture, be it in sports, movies, or through the hundreds of thousands of students it exports.²⁴ If one attempts to go back to the origins of China's rise and the Western European role therein, it therefore seems futile to concentrate solely on matters of professional diplomacy and summit-level politics. What is needed instead is a multi-dimensional analysis of Sino-European encounters. That means combining diplomatic history with approaches from other subdisciplines such as transnational and global history.

To meet this challenge from an economic perspective, this book seeks to uncover the state's role in the development of transnational economic exchange between Europe and the PRC. In so doing, it points up a clear overlap with the research interests of many transnational historians as well as researchers working on the origins of the globalisation we currently experience.²⁵ While being aware of the pitfalls when using theoretical approaches from other disciplines, I also take some inspiration from recent concepts of political economy. The relatively open and empirical approaches by Peter Hall and David Soskice are particularly useful for my work. Though in my case it does not seem appropriate to apply all of their models and theories, they provide a comparative analytical framework to

study the interactions between the state and private actors in market societies, highlighting how different sets of institutions influence economic outcomes as well as politics in capitalist societies.²⁶

With these arguments in mind, it is important to understand how Western European governments sought to facilitate market entry into China for their national industries. This issue plays an important role, for example, in Chaps. 4 and 6, where the role of economic associations is discussed, using sources from these organisations where available. Here I argue that while governments tried to influence such associations and their China policies in various ways, they all had to face business and organisational structures that had deeper roots in the respective political economy and could therefore not be altered at will. The making of economic exchange thus depended on government leaders as well as on opposition politicians and business representatives, who had direct contacts with China, making this a truly transnational field of study.

In addition to the economic perspective, cultural diplomacy and issues of perception play an important role in this study. Perhaps surprisingly, this does not concern Western Maoism, which had next to no impact on actual Sino-European relations.²⁷

But there was a crucial cultural dimension of classical interstate contacts with important political and economic implications for this book's topic. Unlike in the nineteenth century, European countries could not force their way into China by means of military intervention. Instead they had to seek cooperation with the PRC on an equal footing if they wanted to improve bilateral relations. Areas where such cooperation seemed most promising were science and education, in other words classical fields of cultural transfer and cultural diplomacy.²⁸ This was closely linked to the expectation of political decisionmakers that cultural exchange with the PRC would influence the way the Chinese elite thought and acted with regard to Europe. Though there is not enough room for a detailed examination of these expectations and what they say about Western identities, cultural transfers figure prominently in this study. These too were often connected to government policies but not totally dependent on them. In many instances private actors were important agents of cultural and economic transfer, and these private contacts created both opportunities and challenges for the respective governments. Individuals like Joseph Needham from Britain or the German Otto Wolff von Amerongen, for example, had a very high reputation in the PRC long before their countries sent ambassadors to China. The economic and cultural associations

they were active in thus marked a dimension of transnational exchange in their own right, as well as a factor to be dealt with by professional diplomats from London and Bonn.

Finally, the global context of European China policy plays a crucial role for this study. This obviously concerns the framework of the Cold War in Europe and Asia, but it goes much further than that. European integration, the end of the Bretton Woods system, the oil crises, and the increasing challenges to Keynesian interventionism in the West were all factors that affected China policies, at least indirectly. The French attempts to sell nuclear technology to the PRC, for example, can only be understood against the background of national and international debates on energy policy. Likewise, the dream of German businessmen to help build China's heavy industries in exchange for non-ferrous metals reflected their perceptions of ongoing changes in the global economy. To really understand how European governments dealt with China one therefore has to take cultural and economic factors into account and see China policy in the context of both the Cold War and accelerating globalisation.

Pursuing this kind of international history requires adopting a relatively wide definition of China policies as the main object of study. Not all of the fields and topics mentioned can be researched to the same degree in a single monograph. Instead I have chosen a pragmatic approach that concentrates on national governments while also trying to take cultural and economic factors into account wherever they seem relevant. This leads to the definition of 'China policy' as the sum of strategies and actions by representatives of the state that aim to influence political, economic or cultural relations between the respective country and China, or to use these relations for other political ends. Consequently, the main actors in the book are professional politicians and diplomats. But businessmen, scientists and cultural representatives also played active roles in China policy. It was thus that the incarceration of a British journalist by the Chinese, the transfer of technical norms from Germany to the PRC, and even the gift of panda bears to European visitors had an impact on intergovernmental relations as well as on perceptions and wider societal exchange between China and Europe.

COMPARING BRITAIN, FRANCE AND WEST GERMANY

Transnational and comparative history are closely related conceptually.²⁹ At the same time it is striking that comparative history in the field of international affairs is not yet very developed when it comes to relations

between Asia and the West. One reason for this is certainly that studies of international or global history involve, by definition, two or more countries with all the complexity and challenges regarding access to sources that this implies. Bringing in additional case studies therefore increases the workload for the historian almost exponentially. Despite this challenge, the comparison in the case of European China policies brings a number of advantages, which apply to most comparative studies. On a general level, the comparative approach, as a tool traditionally used in social history, helps to place national diplomatic processes in a wider social and economic context. This makes it possible to balance the focus on individual actors with a consideration of the historical structures and constraints that shaped their lives.³⁰

As Hannes Siegrist points out, 'it is the aim of the comparison in social and cultural history to grasp, understand, and explain the general and the particular nature, meaning, and function of a phenomenon in space and time'.³¹ This also holds true for this book. By adopting a comparative perspective I aim to achieve three things. First of all, I try to identify common developments with regard to China to see to what extent one can talk of a 'European' or 'West European' China policy. In so doing I also try to position Western Europe in a context of accelerating globalisation after the end of the postwar boom.³²

Secondly, the identification of common traits contrasts with the discussion of national particularities. Looking at what set the three countries apart enables us to differentiate between developments that were induced by European and global structures and forces on the one hand, and those that had their origins in particular national or even regional combinations of historical factors. This is connected with a discussion of possible alternative reactions to similar situations. In 1978, for example, the Chinese asked all three countries for support in setting up a French, a German, and a British university in China. The three governments responded very differently to this invitation and the university projects developed consequently in distinct ways. In cases like this the comparison is about as close to a controlled experiment as a historian can get.

Thirdly, the comparative approach also reveals something about China's policies towards Europe. By seeing how differently the Chinese treated the Europeans in similar situations, it becomes clear that they pursued particular strategies in their relations with Europe and that they differentiated between its main countries. One example is the treatment of the Taiwan question in bilateral negotiations. In the communiqués establishing diplomatic relations between the PRC on the one hand and Britain, France

and West Germany on the other, the Chinese demanded of the Europeans very different formulas, even though the status of these communiqués in international law is very similar. By comparing the three countries I therefore not only reveal more about Western Europe but also about China.

Britain, France and West Germany seem the most appropriate case studies for this kind of approach. Of course the focus on these three countries leaves out many important facets of Sino-European relations. As Henry Kissinger once famously complained, Europe did not have a single telephone number in the 1970s and in light of the complexities of the different countries' bilateral relations with China and the important role of organisations like the EC, European Free Trade Association (EFTA) and the Western European Union, it is impossible to speak of one common history regarding Europe and China.³³ At the same time, Britain, France and West Germany cover a remarkable range of experiences in Europe's political encounters with China, and thus allow for a very interesting comparison. They all recognised the People's Republic at different times, with Britain leading the first batch of Western states to establish relations with Beijing in the early 1950s, France spectacularly courting Mao in 1964 and the FRG following only in the wake of Nixon's visit to China, thus displaying the different options and constraints of European policymakers at the time. Together, the three countries also accounted for most of Europe's trade with the PRC and they shared very similar levels of economic and social development, comparable political systems, and were broadly similar in terms of demographics and economic potential. At the same time there were a number of very different and interesting factors affecting their national China policies. Most prominent among those was the British imperial heritage including the colony of Hong Kong, the French policy aim of independence and national *grandeur* established by de Gaulle, and the German division with its implications for German sovereignty. Finally, they also frequently served as reference points for one another in formulating policies towards China, a fact which makes comparing these policies even more plausible.

Though a comparison promises to be fruitful, it also brings the challenge of selecting sources in order to study objects that are actually similar in nature. As Jürgen Kocka has pointed out, 'to compare always also means to abstract' because in order to compare one has to compromise on the amount of detail one can include in each individual analysis.³⁴ I therefore try to follow Kocka's dictum and use 'as much abstraction as necessary, as much concretion and reference to the context as possible'.³⁵

In this case this means that government records are used to a roughly similar degree, concentrating on the executive in all three countries in order to have a good foundation for the comparison.

In addition to institutional records of the three governments I have made use of several other sources of non-state actors and institutions. These include most notably the papers and records of business associations active in Sino-European relations. These records of private or semi-private organisations, however, are often not complete and not similarly accessible for all three countries, which is why they only serve as complementary evidence to the main theses developed in the text.

Because of the complexity of the subject the book follows a simple chronological structure. It opens with a background chapter that presents a bird's-eye view of how China policies developed between the nineteenth century and the 1960s. This is followed by three main parts, each subdivided into two thematic chapters. These parts are mainly based on events in the PRC that affected the European countries in similar ways.

The first part looks at the period between 1969 and 1972 when the Chinese leadership undertook its dramatic turn from near-complete isolation to the political opening towards the West. Against the backdrop of détente in Europe this enabled the European countries to normalise diplomatic ties with the PRC and tentatively expand bilateral trade, building on the semi-official relations that had started to unfold in the 1950s. While the three countries' relations with China were very different at the start of this period, they had all reached a comparable level of exchange by 1972, reflecting a process of convergence within Europe with regard to Cold War politics.

This is followed by the second part, covering the years 1973–77. This last spell of Maoism was marked by a further improvement of relations in some areas and stagnation in others as the PRC oscillated between a relapse into the Cultural Revolution and the first tentative steps towards economic reform. The latter eventually prevailed and is hence the dominating theme of the last part that looks at the years 1978–82. This period saw the beginning of a ground-breaking transformation of Chinese politics and the advent of new opportunities and challenges for the makers of European China policies, related both to bilateral ties with China and to a changing set of global political and economic structures. Within each of the three parts, the first chapter looks at how the three governments set about developing political relations in the classical sense in the context of the Cold War. The following chapter in each section then discusses state

strategies to increase exchange in the fields of trade and culture, with the latter mainly consisting of educational and scientific cooperation.

While each of the subperiods studied saw crucial political shifts in the PRC as well as important turns in domestic and international politics affecting the three European governments, a number of interrelated themes run through the entire book. These are namely the imperative for politicians in Britain, France and Germany to deal with the ongoing decline of European power and influence in Asia, the determination of the Chinese communists to restore what they regarded as China's legitimate place in international relations, the changing role of the nation state and its government in an environment of accelerating globalisation, and the Cold War as the overarching strategic framework motivating and limiting policy choices. These topics are often only indirectly addressed but together they create the setting in which French, British and West German China policies are studied in the following seven chapters.

The conclusion of the book then returns to the three questions mentioned at the beginning, and reflects on the main driving forces of European China policies, the historical significance of Sino-European relations, and possible implications for the future.

Historical Background to Sino-European Rapprochement in the 1970s

Most experts agree that the main driving force behind most if not all of Chinese politics in the twentieth century was the will to leave behind the legacy of European and Japanese imperialism.¹ Because of the importance this experience of confrontation with Europe had for the Chinese, it seems therefore necessary to point out several crucial differences regarding the long-term background of the respective bilateral relations since the nineteenth century. This constitutes the first part of the chapter. Then follows a summary of the main developments in bilateral relations between 1949 and 1969, providing the immediate historical backdrop to the core of the comparison between the three countries' China policies in the 1970s and early 1980s.

THE LEGACIES OF IMPERIALISM

In the nineteenth century all three European countries acted as imperialist powers in China. Especially in the period between 1895 and 1914 their policies showed some similarities, and the three were key members of the Eight-Nation Alliance during the Boxer War of 1900. Yet for this study the differences in the colonial histories matter more than the common traits. These differences explain many of the particularities of European China policies during the 1970s.

Britain stands out in this regard for two reasons. First of all, until the 1930s no other foreign power had a comparable influence on the course

of Chinese history. This influence, from the forced opening of the country after the First Opium War onwards, had an effect that was both modernising and deeply traumatising for the Chinese.² For the communist leaders born between 1893 (like Mao) and 1904 (like Deng Xiaoping), the experience of unequal treaties, extraterritorial rights for foreigners, and economic and financial penetration of China by Western companies was still a reality as they began their political work in the 1920s.³ While other countries were also involved in the process of China's domination from outside and the ensuing domestic conflicts after 1911, the British role as the first and, for a long time, most prominent power present in China would mark the country's image for more than a generation.

Secondly, unlike Germany or France, there was an unbroken British line of continuity from the First Opium War in 1842 until the return of Hong Kong to China in 1997. Regardless of the fact that the scope and size of the British Empire in Asia radically changed over this period, Britain was still an imperial power during the 1970s. As we shall see, this had very real and often negative consequences for Sino-British relations. On the one hand the British engagement in Asia since the 1840s and the foothold in Hong Kong provided British diplomats with expertise and intelligence relating to China that were unrivalled by any other foreign country, particularly when it came to diplomats' language skills. On the other hand it made very difficult the process of transition from being the most powerful nation in Asia to the status of a European state of regional importance.

France too had a long tradition of imperial presence in China, not least through the Catholic missionaries who enjoyed French protection.⁴ Though the focus of French colonial interests was in Indochina, French interventions there were partly justified by an alleged need to access the Chinese market through Vietnam.⁵ Shortly after the First Opium War, France started its imperialist encounter with China and soon tried to rival Britain for influence in the Middle Kingdom. While its impact could never compare with that of the UK or later the USA and Japan, the French presence in China developed progressively between 1863 and 1939. During this period, France fought three major wars in China, including the Arrow War or 'Second Opium War' of 1863/64 when British and French troops razed Beijing's famous Yuanmingyuan palace to the ground and looted a considerable number of artistic treasures.⁶ This imperial past would impact on Sino-French relations well beyond the end of the Second World War.

Similar to British influence in China, however, the French imperial project in Asia also opened up new channels for modernising forces in China. The French concession in Shanghai, for example, became effectively a city of its own comprising almost half a million inhabitants who enjoyed considerable political and economic freedoms.⁷ It was no accident that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) was founded here in 1921.⁸ In the 1920s France also became a crucial destination for young Chinese who wanted to study the West in order to strengthen their colonised homeland. Most prominent among them were Zhou Enlai, Chen Yi, and Deng Xiaoping who won their first political spurs organising radical Chinese students in France.⁹ The Sino-French experience of transcultural contact in the context of imperialism was therefore multilayered. Yet, as in the British case, there was a strong element of impeding Chinese sovereignty by military force for more than half a century.

Germany also had a significant imperial past in China. Like Britain and France, Germany benefited without hesitation from the 'Unequal Treaties'. In Qingdao there had been an attempt to build a German Hong Kong, an 'ideal colony', and during the Boxer War German troops had taken part in genocidal actions.¹⁰ Yet Berlin had been last to join the imperial race for concessions and colonies in China. And when the Japanese occupied Qingdao in 1914, Germany also became the first state to drop out of that race. Since the short spell of Berlin's aggressive expansionism in China came after the shock of the Opium Wars and before the atrocities committed by the Japanese a generation later, it did not inflict serious damage on the German image in China. Even mainland scholars who emphasise the chauvinist character of the German presence agree on the positive effects the colony in Qingdao had in influencing the Chinese education system and modern city planning.¹¹

After 1918 the two countries normalised their relations quickly and the Sino-German accord of 1921 can be considered as the first treaty between equals both for the Weimar Republic and for the Chinese Republic founded in 1911.¹² In the interwar period Germany then developed into the main arms supplier for Chiang Kai-shek's Guomindang Government (GMD), and German industries once again became very active in the Chinese market.¹³ The de facto alliance between the GMD and Nazi Germany came to a sudden end when Hitler embraced Japan as partner in 1937. But geographic distance meant that the Chinese felt little direct effect of this cooperation other than the sudden withdrawal of Wehrmacht instructors for Chiang's army. Through the NSDAP member John Rabe, who

courageously saved many lives during the Nanjing Massacre, a Nazi even became a national hero of the Chinese fight against Japan.¹⁴ The German presence then came again to a complete end when diplomatic relations were broken off in 1942 and the overwhelming majority of German citizens left shortly thereafter.

There was thus a clear break between pre-war Sino-German relations and exchange after 1949, similar to the one between France and China in 1954. Yet in several ways, the prewar period influenced bilateral relations during the Cold War. The early end of German colonialism in China meant that the historical burden of imperialism was much lighter than for Britain or France. It is somewhat ironic that the Chinese image of Germany would remain positive after the establishment of the PRC. From a communist point of view, Germany had been on the wrong side in each conflict involving China since the 1880s. Yet the impact on China of the German participation in these conflicts remained small. And though the Chinese communists always remained opposed to Nazism, even Hitler's pro-Japanese policies created little deep-seated resentment.¹⁵ Geographical distance from Europe and the fact that the Chinese had to face so many other domestic and international problems limited their attention to German actions and left the image of Germany relatively untainted by the Second World War and the Holocaust. The experience of relations on an equal footing after 1919 was therefore more important. Moreover, the interwar period and the activities of German companies in China allowed a small group of business representatives to get a personal impression of the Middle Kingdom and a sense of opportunity with regard to the local market. Though few in number, several of these figures would be pioneers of Sino-German relations after 1949.¹⁶

What is perhaps more important, however, is the context of Germany's long-term relationship with China as it developed in the late nineteenth century, and especially between 1919 and 1945. Despite German policy's limited direct impact on China, observers there, both in the GMD and in the CCP, were strongly aware of Germany's centrality to developments within Europe and world politics in general. During the First World War, Sun Yatsen had hoped that a German victory might help to improve China's situation. There was indeed some German financial support for the GMD but, more importantly, it was obvious that the war's outcome would alter power relations in Asia and potentially reduce the influence of the other foreign powers in China.¹⁷ While this did not occur, Germany remained the pivot of European politics and both Chiang Kai-shek and

Mao Zedong followed events there with great interest.¹⁸ Together with the fascination for German discipline and technology (especially regarding manufacturing and armaments) and German thought, this impression of Germany's importance for Europe arguably created a general perception that the country in Europe's centre greatly mattered for global developments. Mao himself was interested not only in Marxism but also in other German thinkers, including Kant, Hegel and Ernst Haeckel.¹⁹ Despite offending his Chinese hosts and falling out with Mao, the fact that the only foreigner to play a role of any influence in the Long March (Otto Braun of Munich) came from the homeland of Marx and Engels arguably strengthened further the Chinese leaders' belief in Germany's general significance for world politics.²⁰ Though this belief did not have any direct impact on bilateral relations, it would resurface during the 1970s and helps to explain Mao's interest in relations with Germany and his hope that the country might bind Moscow's attention and military forces in Europe following the Sino-Soviet split.

EUROPE'S AMBIVALENT PAST IN CHINA

To understand Chinese-European relations in the 1970s, it is important to consider what can be termed China's 'first encounter with modernity' in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This past matters in two ways. First of all China's initial contacts with Britain, France and Germany were in many ways traumatising. Admittedly, recent scholarship emphasises that transcultural exchange before 1945 does not always correspond to dualistic notions of imperialist exploitation.²¹ Foreign presence in China often created spaces and opportunities for patterns of modernisation that were more beneficial to the Chinese society than to the Western powers.²² Yet, if one focuses on the actions of the three states in China, it remains true that these essentially followed an ideology of dominance and forcible imposition of European concepts, disregarding Chinese sovereignty and long-term impacts on the local society.²³

Secondly, the European contribution to this traumatising experience was very unevenly shared among the countries studied here. Whereas Britain remained present as an imperial actor until 1997, France had a definite break with its colonial past in 1954 and Germany was forced to fundamentally reconsider its China policy as early as 1919. In all three cases the imperial past would influence bilateral relations in the 1970s. The British could benefit from the long-term China expertise of their dip-

lomatic and policy staff. But at the same time Hong Kong, as a direct remnant of nineteenth-century imperialism, would cause considerable problems when dealing with Beijing, and during negotiations about the future of the colony old anti-colonial resentments would come up again in China. Germany, by contrast, could benefit from the early end of its colonial presence and from the fact that by the 1940s it had already established a tradition of providing modern industrial technology to China. For France, finally, the remnants of a colonial past in Asia and beyond would remain an obstacle to a flexible China policy until the early 1960s. Once this was overcome, however, the conscious decision to seek a new start with a clean slate and to leave behind the legacies of the nineteenth century would be strongly appreciated by the Chinese.

With regard to the purely demographic facts and against the background of long-term historical trends, one has to admit that the power and influence the European countries enjoyed in Asia until well into the twentieth century appear as an anomaly. In a global perspective the retreat of European empires from East Asia must therefore be regarded as a process of normalisation. Yet from the point of view of the political actors involved things seemed different. If one locates the start of modern history in the late eighteenth century, Europe's power had been on the rise for most of the period after that, especially in Asia. Politically and militarily, Britain, for example, had been superior to China almost from the moment the two countries had their first encounter of governments in 1793 until the fall of Hong Kong in 1942. For Germany and France the situation was not very different. This made accepting Europe's new role as a marginal player in world politics difficult. Yet all three countries would eventually have to face the challenge of adapting to the decline of power in Asia and of pursuing national interests with the means of developed but medium-sized countries.

RAPPROCHEMENT TRIED AND FAILED: LONDON, HONG KONG AND BEIJING, 1949–69

For most of the period 1949–69 there was little movement between Europe and China as each of the countries involved was blocked by the imperatives of the Cold War.²⁴ Indeed, Britain was only able to recognise the PRC because it did so relatively early in the Cold War.²⁵ At the time, a number of Western European states established diplomatic rela-

tions, of which the UK was clearly the most important.²⁶ With the notable exception of France, the countries of Western Europe recognised the PRC either before 1954 or after 1969. Apart from London it was mainly the small democracies such as Switzerland and the Scandinavian states which opted for Beijing right after the end of the Chinese Civil War. They did so for their own reasons, but at least in some cases, the respective government decided to wait until after Britain as a world power and permanent member of the UN Security Council had taken the lead.²⁷

What allowed the UK to take this pioneering role was the fact that it granted recognition to the PRC in January 1950, before the outbreak of the Korean War.²⁸ At this point the future of the Nationalist Government on Taiwan seemed very uncertain and a general diplomatic breakthrough of the PRC, including taking over the Chinese seat in the United Nations (UN), appeared likely.²⁹ In order to save British trade interests and prevent a Communist attack on Hong Kong, a quick improvement of relations was therefore deemed the best choice in London.³⁰ Hong Kong in particular played an important role in London's strategic assumptions. Driven by the economic chaos of the GMD's final years and the increasingly realistic spectre of a communist command economy, a substantial part of the Shanghai business community had shifted activities to Hong Kong, thus upgrading the colony's importance as entrepôt and financial centre.³¹ With many anticommunists fleeing to Hong Kong and the Hong Kong Dollar circulating as effective currency in large parts of southern China, the island therefore seemed to stand for everything the CCP opposed. At the same time, the Communist leadership was quick to realise the benefits it could derive from an open currency market and thriving free port at its borders. Despite their antagonistic political systems, Hong Kong and Southern China maintained various economic links, and the PRC started using the colony to generate foreign exchange through exports, to import Western goods and to gain access to international financial markets.³² The British government, highly aware, that the PRC had a stake in Hong Kong's viability as long as it remained politically and economically stable thus sought to quickly improve relations with Beijing as a signal to the colony's population that Hong Kong's security was not at risk. Furthermore, the UK China experts believed (contrary to the dominant view in Washington) that Chinese cooperation with the West would lead to Sino-Soviet frictions and prevent the PRC from becoming a close ally of Moscow.³³

For the PRC, in turn, the prospect of Britain as a permanent member of the UN Security Council supporting Beijing's claim to represent all of China was highly attractive.³⁴ Furthermore, the Chinese leadership focused on the possible impact relations with London might have on the US position on recognising the PRC.³⁵ There were, however, bilateral differences to be solved. In particular, the negotiations concerning the return of Chinese aircraft interned in Hong Kong and the British voting in the UN dragged on for several months with only very slow progress.³⁶

With the escalation of the conflict in Korea, fronts then quite suddenly hardened. The Americans reversed their earlier verdict on Taiwan and decided to defend it as an outpost of Western influence.³⁷

One consequence for Britain was to find itself in a kind of diplomatic limbo with regard to China. Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalists were no longer recognised as the government of China, but the British consulate in Tamsui continued operating to provide some kind of liaison.³⁸ London also started supporting the Nationalists in the UN, and continued giving at least indirect support until 1971.³⁹ In terms of Britain's overall policy in Asia, London would have preferred improving ties with Beijing, exchanging ambassadors and finding a working relationship over practical matters in Hong Kong.⁴⁰ Different governments took small steps in this direction, and in the wake of the Geneva conference in 1954 there seemed to open up a window of opportunity.⁴¹ Prime Minister Eden met Zhou Enlai and they managed to agree on several points, including the posting of a Chinese chargé d'affaires to London.⁴² Apart from the aim of completing the process of normalisation, the interest in improved trade relations played an important role for both sides. Following the end of the Korean War, the Chinese saw the chance of getting some access to Western technology. And while bilateral exchange remained minimal in overall numbers, the prospect of facilitating and stabilising the business relations that already existed was also attractive to the government in London.⁴³ Especially in the 1950s, trade relations with the UK (with its relatively slow economic growth) played an important role in the PRC's efforts to undermine the Western embargo on the communist countries by selectively promoting trade with Western European countries and Japan.⁴⁴ While the alliance with the USA was never questioned, the British business community was indeed eager to maintain a presence on the Chinese market, and the UK became a source for a number of crucial imports, including chemical fertiliser, machinery and electronic equipment.⁴⁵

The process of rapprochement did not advance further, however, for two main reasons. First of all, the special relationship with the USA and the imperatives of the Cold War in Europe necessitated a realignment with the government in Washington, which remained fiercely opposed to anything that looked like a concession towards the Chinese communists.⁴⁶ Secondly, the PRC was not only regarded as a nation state of strategic importance for Britain, but also as a political enemy and anti-imperial subversive force.⁴⁷ The Korean War and the continuous direct confrontation at the border across Hong Kong led to a fundamental ideological opposition being ingrained in the minds of many British diplomats and politicians until well into the 1970s, despite the general belief that negotiating with Beijing would help drive a wedge between the PRC and the USSR.⁴⁸

The Chinese themselves were aware of the double-sided character of British China policy. In 1965 they observed that London was becoming more forthcoming with regard to commercial exchange. At the same time, however, the British continued 'to attack our country, follow American imperialism and support a two-China policy', thus impeding a real political rapprochement.⁴⁹

This complicated and precarious situation seemed to become slightly more flexible after the end of the Great Leap Forward. As Chen Jian has shown, the domestic campaign to industrialise China by force was paralleled by and linked to an increasingly radical and aggressive diplomatic strategy.⁵⁰ The more pragmatic readjustment policy that followed from 1962 onwards, also had a diplomatic side, marked by a more open policy towards some Western countries.⁵¹ In pursuing a slightly more moderate line, the Chinese followed the aim of alleviating the economic crisis caused by the Great Leap Forward and overcoming their increasing international isolation.⁵² At a time of acute need for economic stabilisation, rapprochement with the developed countries in Europe and Japan allowed the PRC to complete its reorientation away from trade with the Soviet bloc.⁵³ Politically, pragmatism towards Europe corresponded with Mao's elaborations on alleged divisions between the European democracies of the 'second intermediary zone' and the USA that China should seek to exploit.⁵⁴

This was the context of a trade agreement between China and Italy, Sino-French normalisation, and the Sino-German trade negotiations discussed below. It also led to tentative steps towards a Sino-British rapprochement. In late 1961 Britain again agreed to export Vickers Viscount civilian aircraft to China after more than ten years, and in 1964 and 1965

there were even visits by junior ministers of each country.⁵⁵ The sale of Viscounts was particularly important as the first major export of such technology to the PRC, conducted on British credit.⁵⁶ Although the aircraft and the critical components were obsolescent when negotiations started, Washington opposed the deal and the British eventually decided unilaterally to grant the necessary export licences.⁵⁷ This put the US-led system of export controls under serious strain, and marked an important tactical victory in the PRC's attempts to overcome the Western embargo concerning high-tech goods.⁵⁸

Yet due to the continued British support for Taiwan in the UN and unresolved problems regarding Hong Kong, the negotiations concerning diplomatic normalisation made little progress until 1965 when the PRC's foreign policy once again became more radical. As with all other countries, the Cultural Revolution effectively ended Sino-British political exchange. But owing to the ambiguous diplomatic state of affairs and the situation of Hong Kong, it also led to a very serious political crisis between Beijing and London. Within the colony riots broke out in the spring and summer of 1967, making the city nearly ungovernable.⁵⁹ Thousands of people were arrested in what effectively became a guerrilla war on British territory.⁶⁰ At one point the Cabinet seriously contemplated an evacuation if 'the situation in Hong Kong deteriorated to the extent that the Hong Kong government ceased to be able to maintain law and order'.⁶¹

In response to British arrests of suspected communists in Hong Kong, Red Guards attacked the British mission in the Chinese capital and burned down a building.⁶² When the British government in turn limited the freedom of movement of Chinese diplomats in London and demonstrators assembled in front of the Chinese mission there, scuffles broke out between representatives of the PRC and British police in which the Chinese used axes and clubs and several people were injured.⁶³ In short, bilateral relations reached an all-time low.

In China, the British attracted the anger of left-wing radicals both for their imperialist role since the nineteenth century and for their collaboration with the USA. The 'confrontation', as the conflict in Hong Kong was soon known, had deeper roots in bad working conditions, a shortage of housing, and the extreme social inequality of the colony. Without these social conflicts, the Cultural Revolution on the mainland could never have had such dramatic repercussions in Hong Kong.⁶⁴ What nevertheless seems clear in retrospect is that the British authorities could only react to events that were ultimately under the control of Beijing.

At the same time, the position of the Chinese leadership was far from clear. Rhetorically, the rioters in the colony had Mao's full support as anti-imperialist revolutionaries. But economically, the PRC had no interest in a direct takeover or a situation of instability similar to what had happened a few months earlier in Macao. By selling food, water and other goods to the colony, Beijing generated desperately needed export earnings. Furthermore, dozens of state-owned companies operated in Hong Kong, including the Bank of China, fulfilling crucial tasks such as trading in foreign currency and channelling remittances from overseas Chinese to the mainland.⁶⁵ When being offered the opportunity to take back Macao in January 1967, the Chinese government had in fact refused assuming sovereignty. Instead, Beijing opted for a formal continuation of Portuguese rule with key areas of governance under *de facto* control of the CCP, thus indicating that, despite the anti-imperialist rhetoric, the PRC saw little benefit in a premature withdrawal of the colonial powers.⁶⁶ But with the pragmatic CCP leaders being pushed to the side by the proponents of the Cultural Revolution, and the PRC on the brink of sliding into complete anarchy amidst increasing radicalisation of the Red Guards, it seemed highly possible that Beijing might intervene militarily or stand by as the confrontation further escalated.⁶⁷

In this confused situation there was little room for an active British China policy because London lacked the military and economic means to enforce public order in Hong Kong and at the same time give a powerful response to the Chinese attack on British diplomats in Beijing. Unlike Germany and France, the continued British presence in Asia actually limited London's room for manoeuvre and stood in the way of it realising objectives thought to be in the interest of Britain.

The 1967 crisis also exposed a more general problem of British Asia policy. The UK was without the necessary power to back up its claim of continuing an imperial presence in China or to defend its diplomatic rights. In its actual policies the Wilson Government accepted this reality and opted to work cautiously towards a peaceful understanding with China. Such a reaction to the Chinese assault on British diplomats would have been unthinkable 25 years earlier. Yet the crisis was not serious enough to cause a fundamental reassessment of British policy aims in the Far East in order to find a strategy that corresponded to the UK's actual status as a European regional power. This was in marked contrast to Germany and France, both of which had been forced to make such a reassessment by the mid-1960s.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF 1964 FOR SINO-FRENCH RELATIONS

Until 1954 France had found itself in a similar situation to the UK's. The conflict between the reassertion of a colonial presence in Vietnam on the one hand and the revolutionary dynamic of left-wing nationalism in Asia on the other had led to a direct confrontation with Chinese communism.⁶⁸ CCP support for the Vietminh in the late 1940s made an early recognition of the PRC by Paris impossible.⁶⁹ As in the case of Britain, French troops faced People's Liberation Army (PLA) units in the Korean War, French business interests in China were eliminated by force, and French dependence on US support led to a complete embrace of the American position in the UN.⁷⁰ France even continued to formally consider Chiang Kai-shek's government as the official administration of China. Yet, unlike the British presence in Hong Kong, the French defeat at Dien Bien Phu in 1954 had the eventual effect of allowing Paris to fully face the decline of its power. Withdrawing from Vietnam was the first step. Chinese support for anticolonial movements elsewhere, however, Paris's North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) commitments, and the emotional burden of the defeat in Asia ruled out an immediate rapprochement.⁷¹ Similarly to Britain, the FRG and Japan, French companies got involved in the slowly evolving Chinese trade with the West, including the export of wheat to the PRC and the sale of tractors and other machinery.⁷² But while Paris was receptive to the Chinese offers of increased business, and joined its European allies in their attempts to reduce Western trade restrictions, the time was not yet ripe for direct political contacts.⁷³

It was not until 1963 that the conditions on both sides made it possible to begin a new chapter in Sino-Western relations. As pointed out above, Chinese policy had become more flexible at the beginning of the 1960s. Moderate economic exchange with the West and the PRC's entry into the UN were now desirable goals for Beijing, fitting into Mao's new theory of the 'three worlds'.⁷⁴ Since the US was at the same time increasing its presence in the escalating conflict in Vietnam, a Chinese rapprochement with Washington was not realistic. Improving ties with Western Europe, by contrast, seemed feasible and could serve as a first step towards breaking China's international isolation.⁷⁵

In Paris the newly installed Fifth Republic under de Gaulle had just solved what had arguably become the single most important foreign policy challenge to France after the Second World War—the independence of Algeria.⁷⁶ This not only gave de Gaulle a free hand to readjust French

foreign relations, it also took away a major source of tension between France and China, namely Chinese support for the anti-French Front de Libération Nationale in North Africa.⁷⁷

Following preliminary talks between the foreign ministers Couve de Murville and Chen Yi during the Cambodia conference in Geneva in 1962, former prime minister Edgar Faure travelled to Beijing as de Gaulle's unofficial envoy to negotiate a Sino-French agreement.⁷⁸ The only serious obstacle was Paris's relation with Chiang Kai-shek. The basic problem of how to deal with Taiwan and the PRC's claim on the island would later be faced by all states normalising their relations with Beijing, most notably the USA and Britain. In light of the later bilateral talks, the solution found in 1964 seems very accommodating towards the French. In the communiqué that was finally agreed, Paris acknowledged that Beijing was representing all of China, but Taiwan was simply not mentioned at all.

The French diplomats assumed that by clearly recognising Beijing they could provoke Taipei into taking the initiative and breaking relations with France. This is what Chiang Kai-shek eventually did, but there was no absolute necessity for it to happen.⁷⁹ What probably contributed to Chiang accepting the role assigned to him by de Gaulle was Paris's relatively sensitive way of informing the GMD leadership. The French president sent General Zinovy Peshkov, who had known Chiang for years, as personal envoy prior to announcing his decision.⁸⁰ While Chiang Kai-shek was obviously upset by the French move, this certainly gave the GMD more 'face' than was the case 15 years later when Chiang's son and successor was awakened in the middle of the night to be told that the US government would announce diplomatic recognition of Beijing a few hours later.⁸¹

The French move also irritated the Americans, partly because only weeks earlier de Gaulle himself had told the US ambassador that recognising China was a matter for the future and that Washington would be informed beforehand.⁸² Yet, internally, the US leadership quickly agreed to react in a low-key manner. The Americans realised that even serious protests would have produced little effect in Paris and, more importantly, they too were contemplating recognition of Beijing.⁸³

Once Chiang had broken off relations with Paris, the way was open for exchanging ambassadors between France and the PRC, and de Gaulle could claim that he had accepted no preliminary conditions to this exchange. The fact that the Chinese agreed to normalise relations without having France first cut its links with Taiwan indicates how keen they were

on the diplomatic coup of establishing full diplomatic ties with a major Western power. For years to come, they would express their gratitude and respect for de Gaulle and for his defiance of US pressure.⁸⁴ Indeed, de Gaulle's decision of 1963/64 laid the basis for Sino-French relations until the early 1980s and beyond. It is therefore worthwhile taking a brief look at de Gaulle's motives.

Despite some published research on the subject, few personal statements by the General are known regarding China. One can nevertheless roughly differentiate between three motives. First of all, the step must be seen as part of the wider Gaullist foreign-policy agenda.⁸⁵ By leading the way in overcoming the PRC's political isolation, de Gaulle could lay claim to an independent international strategy that once again positioned France as a global player, symbolically and diplomatically if not in terms of military and economic power.⁸⁶ The most immediate aim in this regard was to come to a negotiated settlement of the Vietnam conflict that would lead to a neutralisation of most of the area.⁸⁷

Secondly, he was impressed by the sheer size of the Chinese population and thought it obvious that the effective and 'active' government of such a country had to be taken seriously.⁸⁸ From this perspective, recognising the Middle Kingdom was an act of historic necessity, regardless of the short-term consequences.⁸⁹

Only after these two motives came the immediate bilateral benefits of having some form of cooperation with Beijing. Both countries shared the position of minor nuclear powers trying to set themselves apart from the superpowers. They thus had common aims with regard to the test-ban treaty discussed between Moscow and Washington. Furthermore, de Gaulle himself encouraged French businessmen to seek commercial opportunities in China.⁹⁰ At the same time, he also warned of unrealistic expectations concerning the Chinese market, insisting that in the near and mid-term future it would not acquire serious importance for France.⁹¹

This general approach to China would influence French policy towards the PRC during the following decades. Relations with the People's Republic were first and foremost political relations, a field on which to demonstrate French international influence. The dimensions of real bilateral collaboration with Beijing in the international arena and of trade relations with the Chinese communists clearly came second.

For Beijing, in turn, establishing relations with France was a major diplomatic coup. It seemed to mean the final defeat of the Western strategy of isolating the Chinese communists. More important, however, was the

fact that it apparently confirmed the Maoist interpretation of international relations whereby the countries in the two 'intermediary zones' were increasingly rebelling against the hegemony of the superpowers. While the PRC in this reading took the lead in the 'first intermediary zone' consisting of the developing countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America, France under de Gaulle seemed destined to play a similar role in the 'second intermediary zone' of the industrialised countries other than the USA.⁹²

In practical terms, the pay-off for normalising relations proved ambiguous, especially for France. De Gaulle's assumption about the limits of cooperation and exchange were largely proven right, and this experience would also influence French diplomats in the following decade.

An embassy was set up in the Chinese capital in due course, and in the same year a tiny French school opened as well.⁹³ Furthermore, a small cultural centre was inaugurated, which included a library and facilities to project movies.⁹⁴ Like the school, Chinese were not allowed to enter it but, within the isolated diplomatic and expatriate community, the centre acquired the status of an important venue for distraction and meeting other foreigners. In 1963 and 1964 French trade with China also increased, indicating that political and commercial ties were not regarded as completely separate in Beijing. For example, from February 1966 on, Air France was the only Western airline to serve China.⁹⁵

These successes set France apart from all other Western countries, yet progress beyond a level that remained essentially symbolic proved impossible. There were some major sales of high-tech machinery around the time of normalisation, including an order for a chemical plant.⁹⁶ But other prospected deals, such as the export of Caravelle aircraft, did not come to a conclusion and if some French businessmen had hoped that diplomatic normalisation would also lead to an economic breakthrough, their expectations were clearly disappointed.⁹⁷

Likewise, French diplomats faced the same tough restrictions as all other foreign representatives, being allowed to move freely only within Beijing and two nearby tourist spots. Most of the embassy staff were career diplomats with a background in general humanities and public administration, unable to communicate in Chinese. The language barrier and the absence of reliable sources made it extremely difficult for the French to understand political developments in Beijing. As the first ambassador complained, 'after one year we know almost as much as the British'.⁹⁸ Given the expertise of the British officials in China this hardly seems like an exaggeration, and indicates that regardless of the Chinese gratitude to

de Gaulle, the French were not given much preferential treatment. Despite some rapprochement with Italy and West Germany, no other country recognised the PRC. The governments in Paris, Beijing and probably even in Washington had expected a development towards general recognition of the PRC.⁹⁹ The fact that this did not happen also limited the positive effects of the French moves, making Chinese support for French initiatives in the UN impossible. And even the overall modest progress in developing bilateral relations came to a sudden and dramatic halt when the Cultural Revolution began in 1966.¹⁰⁰

DIVIDED STATES IN THE EARLY COLD WAR: WEST GERMANY AND CHINA AFTER 1949

Unlike Britain and France, the FRG had no serious bilateral disputes with China by the time both states were founded in 1949. Yet the Cold War setting in Europe implied that West Germany would have only very limited room for manoeuvre with regard to Asia policy. Especially in the 1950s the ideological divide between East and West made any rapprochement a remote option. China recognised the German Democratic Republic (GDR) in 1949 and derided the FRG as a militarist puppet of the USA.¹⁰¹ Chancellor Konrad Adenauer nevertheless resisted pressure from the Americans and from his own party to recognise the GMD Government in Taiwan.¹⁰² Among those who lobbied the chancellor to stay out of the inner-Chinese conflict were business representatives who would later help open the way to diplomatic normalisation.¹⁰³

Documents from the foreign ministry of the PRC show that Beijing developed an interest in the reasons for the rapid economic growth in the FRG in the late 1950s, and in his later memoirs Adenauer claimed that as early as 1952 he had foreseen the Sino-Soviet split and its relevance for divided Germany.¹⁰⁴ In the mid-1950s he certainly did state that he regarded the PRC as profoundly different from the other Soviet satellites in that the Chinese would never accept complete submission under Moscow.¹⁰⁵ But the ideological conflict during the 1950s was such that both sides categorically ruled out normalisation.¹⁰⁶

Many of the German companies that had traded with China survived the war, however. Once the economic situation in the newly established FRG had stabilised, the old China hands in these firms became active again. As early as the 1950s, German trade with China began to increase yearly.¹⁰⁷

An important moment for trade with the West, including the FRG, came in 1954 when Chinese officials made contact with Western businessmen in East Berlin and Zhou Enlai invited representatives of industry as well as politicians and businessmen to 'come and see'.¹⁰⁸ The Chinese aim was to increase trade with Europe and Japan, especially in high-tech goods, thus simultaneously undermining the Western embargo and reducing dependence on the Soviet Union and its client states.¹⁰⁹ Tangible results of this initiative towards the West included the creation of the British Council for the Promotion of International Trade (BCPIT) and the '48 Group' of British traders, and it gave a boost to the Britain-China Friendship Association, all of which the government considered as fellow-traveller organisations.¹¹⁰ In Germany it had a different effect. The clear ideological fronts, the interest of several important German companies in the Chinese market, and the absence of major interstate disputes comparable to the British presence in Hong Kong or the PRC's implication in anti-colonial wars against France led to the emergence of a particular kind of economic diplomacy between the FRG and the PRC.

Still at a very low level, economic exchange during the 1950s was often facilitated by people who had gained experience of China during the interwar period, such as the leading figures of the China Commission in the Committee on Eastern Economic Relations of German Industries (Ost-Ausschuss der deutschen Wirtschaft, henceforth Eastern Committee) to be discussed below.¹¹¹ Interestingly, the Chinese communists had few ideological problems about doing business with these capitalists, even at a time when they still received support from the Soviet Union.¹¹²

Against this background, and similarly to the diplomatic improvement between Britain and China, the 1954 Geneva conference marked an important moment for Sino-German trade. Representatives of the German business community who were in town to attend a meeting organised by the UN met the Chinese delegation.¹¹³ At the centre of the discussion was the question of how the Chinese could directly import goods from the FRG instead of having to go via British or Swiss middlemen. They were mainly interested in cars and railway engines as well as pharmaceutical and chemical products.¹¹⁴ Even at the height of the Cold War there was thus a certain continuity in the structure of German exports to China, reflecting the trade relations of the interwar years and anticipating the much more vibrant exchange in similar goods later in the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. By the same token, in 1956 a fact-finding mission from the heavy-industrial corporation Krupp came to China at the invitation of

the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade (CCPIT).¹¹⁵ The Krupp team toured various cities, and the Chinese repeatedly assured them of their great interest in continuing German industrial projects that had been started in the 1930s.

German businessmen who wanted to trade with China had to face obstacles associated with the China embargo implemented by the UN in the wake of the Korean War and the regulations of the Coordinating Committee for Multilateral Exports Controls (CoCom) and its China Committee (CHINCOM). Accordingly, Bonn shared the interest of France and Britain in making export controls more flexible to allow for increased trade with the Soviet Union and China.¹¹⁶ But, unlike in Britain, there were hardly any links between FRG communist circles and the China traders. The apparent reason for this was that the German Communist Party (KPD) was politically marginalised and then outlawed altogether in 1956. Consequently, the minuscule German China Association that emerged had no communist affiliation and included some slightly obscure right-wing politicians long before the Sino-Soviet split.¹¹⁷ From the mid-1950s onwards the main exchange between China and the FRG was therefore one of an essentially 'un-ideological' and commercial nature.

During these years the Eastern Committee became the main clearing house not only for commercial relations with China but also for contacts with the political leadership. The Eastern Committee and its China Commission (Arbeitskreis China) represented the elite of German business with an interest in Eastern Europe and China. On a personal level, the president of the Committee, Otto Wolff von Amerongen, the president of its China Commission, Heinz Hufnagel, and the Commission's chairman, Rolf Aoudouard, were all considered 'old friends' of China since they could look back on decades of China experience. Even though they and their companies had been active in China before the Revolution, the Chinese communists decided that in doing so they had not harmed the 'honour of China'.¹¹⁸ Since they were on good terms both with the ministries in Bonn and the Chinese leadership, the Eastern Committee acquired a semi-official position in Sino-German relations from the 1950s onwards. Interestingly, this was also acknowledged by the Chinese, who realised that the FRG government's attitude towards trade with China was 'reserved on the outside but secretly supportive'.¹¹⁹

In 1957 the Eastern Committee and the CCPIT negotiated a first commodity agreement that aimed at facilitating bilateral trade.¹²⁰ The German ministries had been informed at all stages of the process, had

given their consent, and published the agreement in the Federal Gazette. In the absence of normal diplomatic relations, the special role of the Eastern Committee at the intersection of politics and business enabled Sino-German trade to flourish at a modest level. We find here a marked difference from the situation in Britain where two groups of pro-China organisations emerged, one being supported by the state and the other considered a communist front organisation. In the FRG this situation never occurred. The businessmen with good personal connections to China (Wolff, Hufnagel and Audouard) were all very well connected in the political circles of Bonn.¹²¹

This overall stable situation only changed in the early 1960s. Just as with Britain and France, the bilateral climate between Bonn and Beijing improved after the end of the Great Leap Forward in 1961 and the break between the PRC and the Soviet Union that came out into the open in the early 1960s. Within the tight framework of export controls, bilateral trade grew as China tried to modernise its industries with the help of European and Japanese technology.¹²² On the German side the business community would certainly have welcomed the establishment of diplomatic links between the two countries. And also politically there was some movement.

According to one source, it was during the final negotiations of the Elysée Treaty that Adenauer encouraged de Gaulle to go ahead in sending a chargé d'affaires to China because this would put pressure on the Soviets. Bonn would then swiftly follow in recognising the PRC.¹²³ We have seen in the French context that de Gaulle and others, including some in Washington, shared the underlying assumption of an imminent general recognition of the PRC by the West. But it seems doubtful that Adenauer could have exchanged ambassadors with communist China before a decisive move from the US. In any case, Ludwig Erhard replaced the first chancellor of the FRG in October 1963 and under the Atlanticist Erhard recognition seemed out of the question.¹²⁴ As a well-known free-trader Erhard nevertheless supported the idea of a commodity agreement to facilitate bilateral economic exchange. The domestic climate in the FRG also seemed right after trade agreements had already been signed with a number of communist countries in Eastern Europe.¹²⁵ Otto Wolff von Amerongen, who by then had become the unofficial German chief diplomat with regard to China, arranged preliminary negotiations on a trade accord, which took place in the two countries' embassies in Bern.¹²⁶ A total of five talks were held but the projected agreement failed for a number of reasons. While interpretations of the Bern talks differ, it seems clear

that the German side was reluctant to go beyond an absolute minimum of rapprochement or make any concessions that could upset the US allies.¹²⁷

CONCLUSION

Starting in 1966, the Cultural Revolution affected China's relations with Britain, France, and Germany in similar ways as much of the PRC's diplomatic apparatus ground to a halt.¹²⁸ Yet the prospects of improving relations after the eventual end of China's self-imposed isolation varied greatly among the three countries.

France could claim a first-mover advantage thanks to de Gaulle's bold decision of 1964. Paris's general strategy would be to build on this basis in order to preserve the status of Beijing's main political partner in Europe. As we shall see, the political fallout of the Cultural Revolution was comparatively mild in the French case, and the country's diplomats would do their best to exploit their advantageous position in Beijing. Their focus was upon political relations with an important symbolical aspect to it, arguably a direct legacy of the way de Gaulle had set about relations with China. Commercial relations had, if anything, been positively affected by the developments of 1964 but there had been no China boom and therefore few people in France hoped for a dramatic expansion of trade with the PRC.

In the British case, one can argue that ever since 1949 it had been a continuous policy objective to normalise relations with Beijing. After the dramatic bilateral crisis of 1967 this aim slowly came once more to the fore as the decade closed. Yet there were serious obstacles in its way that neither the FRG nor France had to face. Furthermore, it appears that from a Chinese perspective an improvement of relations with London (despite London's activities to promote bilateral trade) offered fewer obvious advantages than cooperation with de Gaulle's independently minded France or the prospects of importing high-tech manufacturing goods from the booming FRG economy. The bilateral problems between the UK and China were (directly or indirectly) all related to fundamental British policy choices after 1945: namely, to maintain a colonial presence in Asia, and to seek power by proxy through the special relationship with the USA. Only after significant strategic changes in Beijing and Washington as well as in London could Britain move ahead and establish full diplomatic relations with China.

In addition to that, the schizophrenic diplomatic situation of the 1950s and 1960s and the confrontation of 1967 in Hong Kong had led to deep-seated suspicions about the nature of the Chinese communists and a Cold War mentality with regard to the PRC. These would affect British China policy until well after diplomatic normalisation. The bipolar conflict also provides the key to understanding the FRG attitude towards China at the end of the 1960s, although in slightly different ways. Thanks to Adenauer's cautious decision not to recognise the government in Taipei in the 1950s, there were no bilateral disputes between Germany and China. The improvement of economic relations since 1957 had led to the creation of a small China lobby that would have welcomed diplomatic normalisation even though it saw no immediate need for it. Preventing the Bonn government from contemplating such steps was the general political situation in Europe. Other things had to be settled first. In particular, the FRG's dependence on the USA meant that recognising Beijing against the will of Washington would have been almost impossible. And while the Hallstein doctrine was slowly losing significance, the fact that the PRC had been among the first countries to recognise the GDR contributed to Bonn's reluctance to approach the Chinese about an exchange of ambassadors. The key questions in the German case were therefore to what extent the pattern of the Cold War in Europe could be altered and how that would influence the sovereignty of the FRG.

What is also interesting in the case of the FRG is the role played by economic diplomacy. During the late 1950s and 1960s the Eastern Committee as a business organisation acted as a go-between and provided indirect contact between the two governments. The organisation's non-ideological way of dealing with the Chinese communists showed that, unlike in the UK, there were few domestic conflicts in Germany between 'friends of China' on the one hand and Cold Warriors on the other.¹²⁹ This helped prepare the ground for the pragmatic FRG China policy of the 1970s.

Despite these differences, it is also striking that all three countries shared the common goal of normalising diplomatic ties and reaching a positive and productive working relationship with Beijing without harbouring any hopes that this might fundamentally change their own strategic situation, lead to spectacular economic gains, or allow them direct influence in China. These similar aims explain the partial convergence of national China policies during the 1970s.

Western Europe and Détente in East Asia, 1969–72

The disrupting effects of the Cultural Revolution on public life in China and especially on the party machinery and the state bureaucracy, as well as on foreign strategy, can hardly be overestimated.¹ The years 1966–69 marked the height of China’s international as well as ideological isolation.² Despite the normalisation with France and the attempts to increase trade with Western Europe in the mid-1960s, the PRC had started to follow increasingly erratic policies internationally well before the Cultural Revolution actually started in 1966.³ Following the Sino-Soviet split, Beijing progressively lost or alienated its friends in the Third World from Cuba to Algeria and Indonesia.⁴ The outbreak of the Cultural Revolution then led to the total collapse of both Beijing’s international strategy and its diplomatic apparatus, and it would take several years to repair these damages.

THE CULTURAL REVOLUTION AND CHINA’S FOREIGN RELATIONS

By mid-1966, China’s foreign policy had come to a near standstill. With the exception of Huang Hua, then ambassador to Egypt, all of China’s top diplomats were called back to Beijing to undergo sessions of self-criticism for their allegedly bourgeois lifestyle and to swear allegiance to the Cultural Revolution’s radical aims.⁵ Then, in 1967, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was effectively taken over by radical Red Guards and many

of its most skilled and experienced diplomats (including foreign minister Chen Yi) were humiliated and imprisoned.⁶ This was the background to the burning of the British mission discussed in the previous chapter. With Soviet, Indian, Indonesian, GDR and other diplomats getting similarly attacked, the PRC eventually had conflicts with 30 out of the 50 countries it entertained relations with, and alienated even its closest allies in Hanoi and Pyongyang.⁷ While this most dramatic period came to an end in the summer of 1968 when the PLA suppressed the Red Guards, the Chinese perception of foreign affairs turned from revolutionary enthusiasm to paranoia, following the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in August, which led to an acute fear of a major Russian military operation against the PRC.⁸ Thus, with its diplomatic apparatus barely functioning and surrounded by enemies (at least to some extent of its own making), China's foreign policy was practically paralysed.

Furthermore, the Cultural Revolution also effectively cut off any possibility of seriously engaging with other revolutionary or left-wing movements abroad. Despite the short-lived rise of Western Maoism, Beijing's revolutionary rhetoric and the moral support for uprisings and rebellions all over the world, radical Maoism had in fact led the CCP on a terrain where only the most obscure communist parties (such as the one ruling in Tirana) were ready to follow.⁹ Establishing relations with the USA and Europe from 1969 onwards was therefore much more than the mere recognition of the factual situation in Asia by the West. For Beijing, it was the manifestation of an entire reorientation of international strategy and of a reconstruction, almost from complete ruins, of a foreign policy worthy of the name.

But in 1969 such a return to diplomatic normality seemed highly unlikely. While the PRC largely withdrew from the international stage, foreign-policy problems kept mounting. To the south, the escalation of the conflict in Vietnam seemed to threaten a repetition of the Korean War with direct Chinese involvement.¹⁰ More important still were the tensions with the Soviet Union. After several smaller skirmishes, the year 1969 brought a number of open military clashes along the Sino-Soviet border. With hundreds of soldiers getting killed and PRC rhetoric becoming ever more radical, the two countries seemed on the brink of war. With their back against the wall internationally, China's leaders began reconsidering their political priorities and slowly reconnecting with the world. Yet after China's breaking of most diplomatic conventions between 1966 and 1969, and with Mao still in charge, change seemed likely to remain slow.

It was in this situation that the three West European countries took steps to normalise their ties with the PRC and help China reintegrate into the international community.

FRANCE: PRESERVING THE GAULLIST LEGACY AND STRIVING FOR A MULTIPOLAR WORLD

In late 1967 French observers started noticing indications that not all of Beijing's diplomats appreciated the international isolation that resulted from 'revolutionary diplomacy'. During a reception at the Cuban embassy in January 1968, for example, PRC foreign minister Chen Yi made some friendly remarks to the French ambassador about Mao's respect for de Gaulle.¹¹ And in March 1968 Chen came to the French embassy to have lunch with the ambassador. In a cordial atmosphere, the foreign minister promised that the Chinese ambassador would return to his post in Paris within the next 12 months.

During the protests of May 1968 in Paris, however, relations once more took a turn for the worse as Beijing openly welcomed what it took to be the start of revolution in France.¹² Moreover, amid the student demonstrations, several youths from South Vietnam assembled near the Chinese embassy in Paris and vandalised parts of the building.¹³ Together with Beijing's moral support for French rioters, this incident caused another moment of bilateral tension between the two countries, frustrating the attempts of moderate diplomats on both sides. Yet the China watchers in the Quai d'Orsay observed that the Chinese condemnations of the South Vietnamese students remained far less radical than those in other, similar cases.¹⁴ Despite the obvious difficulties that the events of May 1968 meant for Sino-French relations, bilateral ties remained far more stable and constructive than the PRC's relations with Britain or the USA. Once Beijing started pursuing a more cooperative policy towards the West, French and Chinese diplomats could build on this relatively solid foundation and quickly improve political links. The Gaullist French policy in East Asia had stood an important test. Whereas Britain as colonial power in Hong Kong faced one of the most severe crises of Anglo-Chinese relations since the nineteenth century, France was spared most of the anti-imperialist attacks during the Cultural Revolution, and there were even early Chinese feelers for restoring cordial ties. This enabled Paris and Beijing to normalise political relations quickly after 1969.

Indeed, one can almost go as far as saying that the later observed ‘myth of privileged relations’ originated as much in the time between 1969 and 1972 as in the years 1964–66.¹⁵ In the earlier period, French recognition had made it possible for the two countries to regard each other as more or less equal partners. But in the years immediately after 1969, China was in much greater need of improving relations with the West. At the same time no Western country rivalled France in the quality of ties to Beijing and therefore the French were the first to benefit from Beijing’s new willingness to engage with the world.

Much as Chen Yi had predicted in 1968, the Chinese ambassador to France was sent back to his post in May 1969.¹⁶ He was only the second high-ranking diplomat to return to his post following the Cultural Revolution’s radical phase, the other being his colleague representing the PRC in Albania.¹⁷ Considering the particular ideological friendship between Tirana and Beijing in these years, this chronology is further proof that the Chinese leadership saw France as a highly important partner on the international stage.

Paris in turn was determined to make the most of this new Chinese openness. Ambassador Huang Chen was immediately invited to the Quai d’Orsay, where both sides agreed that they were ready to move on after the conflicts of the past weeks and months.¹⁸ There were no bilateral differences between France and the PRC, Huang explained, and therefore economic and cultural exchange should increase as soon as possible.¹⁹ The French could not have agreed more.

The new French ambassador to China, Étienne Manac’h took up these positive signs in his first talks in Beijing, underlining that his government wished to set up a real dialogue between the two countries’ leaderships. Manac’h arrived in Beijing just at the right time to usher in a new period of Sino-French cooperation, and he was probably better suited than anyone else in the French Foreign Service to do so. Like most French diplomats in China, Manac’h was a *normalien* without knowledge of Chinese. Yet, given his personal biography, he had arguably learned how to adapt to new political situations and could serve as an intermediary between very different ideological positions. A communist in the 1930s, Manac’h had left the party at the time of the Hitler-Stalin pact, but he allegedly remained a source of information for the KGB until the 1970s.²⁰ What later gave him anti-Soviet credibility in the eyes of the Chinese, however, was the fact that in 1951 he had been expelled from Prague after allegations of espionage, and he had then served in different French adminis-

trations as a member of the socialist SFIO.²¹ In the crucial years between 1960 and 1969 Manac'h had been director of the Section Asie-Océanie where he was responsible both for the PRC and for Indo-China. In this position he had discreetly transmitted messages that came from Beijing via Bucharest and were destined for Bonn.²² By the time he became ambassador, Manac'h was therefore very familiar with the situation in Asia as well as the aims and options of French strategy in the region.

Manac'h's aim of establishing a Sino-French dialogue was very much in line with the overall China policy under President Pompidou. In a way, such a dialogue between the two sides had already been established by Edgar Faure in 1963 when he had been de Gaulle's unofficial envoy.²³ Through the embassies and some high-level visits it had been continued ever since.²⁴ Following the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution this dialogue had just about survived since both embassies kept working at a minimum level. But from the beginning of 1969 onwards, an opportunity presented itself to the French to fully reestablish high-level communication with the CCP leadership and even go beyond the mid-1960s. In 1969 and 1970 alone, the French and the Chinese met 36 times for high-level talks, including several meetings with Zhou Enlai or Mao Zedong.²⁵ Since most of these talks took place in Beijing, the French sent a number of politicians who were well-known in the PRC and yielded considerable influence at home, including former minister and member of parliament Alain Peyrefitte in 1970, former prime minister Pierre Mendès France in 1971 and finally foreign minister Maurice Schumann in 1972.²⁶ Peyrefitte and Mendès France were not government representatives. But the coherence between their personal opinions and the general line of Paris, as well as their cooperation with French diplomats on the ground, gave these visits an almost official character.²⁷

Though far less important than Paris's policy towards Moscow, the Sino-French dialogue nevertheless constituted a part of the overall approach towards détente during the Pompidou years, serving several strategic purposes. It first of all complemented the ongoing talks with the Soviets, demonstrating that France could develop and implement an independent foreign policy with global reach while at the same time reducing the impression that détente with the USSR might lead to a French dependence on Moscow.

With regard to bilateral Sino-French relations, the dialogue was, secondly, a step towards creating a climate of trust and facilitating cultural and economic exchange. Thirdly, the meetings with Chinese leaders and

officials enabled the French to better understand the Chinese situation and explain their own policies in Europe, including their concept of cordial relations with Moscow, thus trying to create a link between détente in Asia and détente in Europe in order to simultaneously entertain stable relations with both communist powers.²⁸ Finally, and perhaps most interestingly, the French took on the role of a mediator between East and West by arguing the case for rapprochement between the PRC and the capitalist world.²⁹

The first such instance happened in January 1969 when the normalisation process between the PRC and Italy was started. Pietro Nenni, the Italian foreign minister, took the initiative and expressed his country's interest in opening relations with Beijing. This wish was transmitted by Manac'h, then still in charge of the China desk in the French foreign ministry and about to be sent to Beijing as ambassador.³⁰ The Chinese replied by sending their chargé d'affaires to the Quai d'Orsay. He warmly thanked the French for their good offices and stated that his government had agreed to a meeting with an Italian envoy at the Chinese embassy in Paris. After learning of this response, the Italians started communicating directly with the Chinese and in due course this led to the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries.

In later months, French diplomats and representatives similarly tried to explain to the Chinese how FRG *Ostpolitik* might improve international relations, enquired about the prospects of British attempts to overcome the Cold War with Beijing and even made a case for détente-minded forces in Tokyo.³¹ But the two issues that were clearly most important from Paris's point of view were Sino-US relations and Vietnam.

It seems reasonable to assume that it was only in early 1969 that Mao began reconsidering the assumption that China could challenge both superpowers at the same time that had held sway during the Cultural Revolution. For a few weeks around the Sino-Soviet clashes of Zhenbao Island, Beijing and Moscow were on the brink of total war and a sudden nuclear strike from the Soviet Union was a very real possibility, at least until the meetings between Zhou Enlai and Kosygin in September 1969.³² But while tensions with the USSR were boiling over, Mao for a long time categorically ruled out any rapprochement with Washington. Above all he remained deeply suspicious that the US engagement in Vietnam was ultimately aimed at encircling China and toppling the CCP.³³ Furthermore, the Chinese foreign ministry was still limited in its capabilities after the 'struggle sessions' of the Cultural Revolution.³⁴ Many mem-

bers of the PRC elite had spent some time in the West, and high-ranking cadres had access to select translations of Western news articles.³⁵ Yet the more experienced foreign policy experts were only slowly being rehabilitated and the leading Chinese diplomats in Beijing had few opportunities to talk to senior counterparts from the West to hear their opinions.

Talking to the French thus provided an early and, given the quality of bilateral ties, highly valuable opportunity for the Chinese to get to know a different and relatively neutral perspective on Washington's strategy in Asia. In a number of meetings from May 1969 onwards, the French attempted to convince their interlocutors from the PRC that the Americans were able and likely to fundamentally reconsider their policies in Asia. The French also insisted that the USA was not intent on weakening the PRC but rather trying to end its presence in Vietnam without a total fiasco and to 'find a way to China' through diplomatic means.³⁶

Supporting a lessening of Sino-US tensions was in the French interest for several reasons. It must first of all be seen in the context of President George Pompidou's attempts to improve relations with Washington after having taken over from General de Gaulle.³⁷ But apart from this generally more benevolent perspective on US influence in global politics, the arguments that the French used to convince Beijing of Nixon's peaceful intentions were based on information from different sources that Washington was re-considering its China policy following the clashes on Zhenbao Island in March 1969.³⁸ At the funeral of former US president Dwight Eisenhower two weeks after the main Sino-Soviet encounters, Nixon allegedly asked de Gaulle to inform the Chinese leadership of his wish to improve bilateral relations.³⁹ A few years later, Zhou Enlai confirmed that the French president had indeed played a role in transmitting this message to Beijing.⁴⁰ Moreover, there is evidence that French banker Jean Sainteny informed the French government of Nixon and Kissinger's ideas concerning China early on. During the Second World War, Sainteny had played a fairly important role in the French Resistance, which had allowed him to establish personal links with the US intelligence community that he maintained after the end of the war. Since he was also an intimate of Charles de Gaulle and later Georges Pompidou he could personally pass on his knowledge without going through the regular policy apparatus.⁴¹ In September 1969, for instance, Sainteny met with the leader of the US delegation to the Paris peace negotiations, Cabot Lodge, with the explicit aim of discussing China. A few months later Henry Kissinger even tried using Sainteny as a backchannel to establish contact with the Chinese

ambassador to France. Eventually, he stopped this attempt, however, because he believed that Sainteny would share his information with the office of the French president, thus threatening the high level of secrecy that Kissinger deemed necessary for the whole undertaking.⁴² Indeed, Sainteny continued to have access to the highest political circles in France, especially with regard to China.⁴³ Thanks to him and the personal meeting between Nixon and de Gaulle, the French were thus among the first to know that the Americans were taking concrete steps towards improving bilateral relations with the PRC, and they consciously used this information in their attempts to reduce the Chinese distrust of the West and Washington in particular.

At first the Chinese seemed reluctant to talk about relations with the USA but Manac'h insisted, making it one of the principal subjects of Sino-French conversations.⁴⁴ After a few attempts this worked and the Chinese started showing curiosity in the French assessments of US policy. By October 1969 Deputy Foreign Minister Luo Guibo appeared to be 'itching to approach the question' of how the newly elected Nixon Government would set about its strategy in Asia, interrupting Ambassador Manac'h in order to learn further details.⁴⁵

So why did the French government try to facilitate Sino-US rapprochement? Continued French interest in the developments in Vietnam was certainly a factor, and in a way Manac'h's manner of thinking was very much in line with the Gaullist policy on Indochina. Contributing to peace in Vietnam could, according to this logic, preserve some French influence in the region, particularly in Cambodia, at least until the coup of Lon Nol in 1970. Playing a constructive role in ending the most violent conflict of the time would also be a sign that France had truly left behind its imperialist past, and thus restore some French prestige in Vietnam and in the developing world in general. With more direct regard to the PRC, a US recognition of the government in Beijing would underline the wisdom of de Gaulle's 1964 decision and thus remind the major powers of France's influence in world politics. Finally, Manac'h's arguments in Sino-French talks more generally reflect the European and particularly the French approach to superpower détente. In a bipolar world constantly on the brink of nuclear warfare, a minor power such as France could never wield any serious influence on international developments. But if global politics became less marked by ideological confrontations, and followed non-violent rules of deliberative diplomacy, it would become possible for France as a medium-sized country to find space of strategic flexibil-

ity in which to pursue its own interests, thus preserving some degree of national sovereignty and independence. With regard to détente, this arguably meant that France had to follow its own approach to triangulation. Since Kissinger and Nixon were also attempting new ways of negotiating with Moscow, Paris welcomed Sino-US détente as a development that would reduce the risk of a global Soviet-American condominium and in turn make the close ties with France more valuable for Moscow. This was because if the USSR became nervous about the contacts between Washington and Beijing, it would become more willing to preserve stability on its Western borders and therefore improve the French position in talks over détente in Europe.

Concerning Indochina, French China policy did not live up to its aims, as Laurent Cesari has demonstrated.⁴⁶ While Paris remained an important venue for negotiations on peace in Indochina, the Pompidou Government had hardly any influence on these negotiations. By the time the conflict ended, nothing remained of the French connection with Phnom Penh.⁴⁷ With regard to the question of the Sino-French dialogue's general influence, it is more challenging to determine if it had a real impact and particularly how important it was considered in Beijing. Given the PRC's overall successful project of overcoming the country's almost total isolation, it is reasonable to assume that Paris's policy to help China come out of its shell facilitated this development, at least to a small extent. In particular, the talks concerning the USA should be considered in this regard. The clear and positive statements by French representatives about the nature of US policies provided crucial food for thought for those in the Chinese government who were in charge of the rapprochement process with the USA. The cordial atmosphere of the Sino-French dialogue and the sense of trust and partnership that had been created since 1964 meant that the French were in an ideal position to reduce the Chinese concern about US encirclement, and allowed them to provide inspiration for reconsidering China's own strategy regarding the USA. To be sure, China was not among the top priorities of Georges Pompidou's foreign policy.⁴⁸ But if anything this gave Ambassador Manac'h more flexibility to follow his Gaullist ideas of global influence. Furthermore, Pompidou shared de Gaulle's perception that the world was moving towards a multipolar system and that France should actively support this development. The French attempts to persuade the PRC leaders of a more collaborative line towards the West therefore correspond with the general picture of Pompidou's cooperation with Washington and London.⁴⁹

Notwithstanding these efforts and the French awareness of Nixon's general intentions regarding China, the observers in Paris were taken completely by surprise when Kissinger's secret trip to Beijing and the US president's planned visit to the PRC were made public in July 1971. But unlike in Britain there were no bad feelings about not having been informed. Paris fully welcomed the US policy as finally demonstrating the wisdom of de Gaulle's decision of 1964 to recognise the PRC.⁵⁰ And while Beijing's attention had now fully turned towards Washington, thus reducing the value of cooperation with France, Paris could still lay claim to the first official visit of a Western foreign minister to the PRC.⁵¹ When Maurice Schumann arrived in Beijing in May 1972, he talked to Zhou and Mao and they agreed on a number of steps to raise cultural and economic exchange to new levels, thereby also showing that in practical terms France was still a step ahead of the USA, which had only started to dismantle its system of sanctions against the PRC.⁵² More importantly, even though the French contribution to Sino-US rapprochement was less than decisive, Nixon's visit to Beijing created a sense of nervousness in Moscow that could only benefit Pompidou's aim of cementing France's role as a key Soviet partner in the West.

Overall, the French policy of establishing an ongoing top-level conversation with Beijing to be used for the cause of détente can therefore be considered to have reached its objectives. The rapid improvement of Sino-French relations from the beginning of 1969 onwards owed much to the dramatic Chinese, foreign-policy U-turn after the end of the Cultural Revolution's most radical phase. But it would have been impossible without the sensitive French way of using the opportunity presented to them. Though aware of its limited capabilities, the French government attempted to employ its diplomatic influence in the name of détente and this showed substantial results. In time, however, the fact that more and more Western countries were normalising ties with the PRC, sometimes with substantial assistance from the French, would create a situation where Paris had to compete with its allies for Beijing's attention and cooperation. Ironically, the successful policy of luring the PRC out of its self-chosen isolation would eventually undermine the basis of France's 'privileged relations' with China.

BRITAIN: COMING TO TERMS WITH DIFFICULT PARTNERS

By the time the Sino-French conversation started to approach sensitive topics, relations between the PRC and Britain were still at one of the lowest points since the end of the Chinese Civil War.⁵³ In 1969, the immediate crisis over Hong Kong and the burned British mission was over. The situation in the crown colony had stabilised and the harassment of British diplomats in Beijing had stopped. But the atmosphere of bilateral relations was far from friendly and few in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) dared predict how long it might take to reach a level of normal diplomatic and economic exchange.

Yet it would be wrong to assume that the government in London had given up its aim of coming to terms with the PRC.⁵⁴ Especially after the Conservative Party under Edward Heath won the election of 1970, piercing the bamboo curtain and improving ties with Beijing once again moved to the top of the diplomatic agenda in Asia.⁵⁵ Already during the 1960s, Heath had expressed his interest in travelling to Beijing, the capital of what he considered a coming world power.⁵⁶ At the same time the Chinese leadership greatly appreciated Heath's anti-Soviet rhetoric and his publicly voiced doubts regarding some aspects of détente with Moscow.⁵⁷ There was thus much to suggest that the Tory Government would make a renewed attempt to reach an understanding with Beijing.

Unlike France and the FRG, however, Britain first had to overcome a number of serious bilateral disputes with China that directly affected British interests. Over a dozen British subjects remained in Chinese custody as political hostages for those pro-PRC activists who had been arrested in Hong Kong during the 1967 'confrontation'.⁵⁸ Among these was the Reuters correspondent Anthony Grey, who had been detained since July 1967 and would eventually spend 27 months in Chinese confinement.⁵⁹ Beijing furthermore refused to apologise for the attack on the British mission building. Finally, there was disagreement regarding several issues that had come up in the 1950s and 1960s, the most important of which concerned China's UN membership. In the words of a British diplomat, 'No-one here is under any illusions that in the foreseeable future we can expect to have close and friendly relations with China, given the present Chinese leadership and its likely successors. There are too many deep-rooted obstacles: history, competing ideologies, our close links with the United States, our votes on the China seat in the United Nations and our views on the status of Taiwan.'⁶⁰

The nature of these conflicts and the lack of direct high-level communication between London and Beijing prevented both sides from meeting at a conference to find compromise solutions for all of them simultaneously. Instead, it took the two governments almost three years to settle the different disputes one after another. First there was Hong Kong, 'the crux' of 1970.⁶¹ Once this and the connected fate of British citizens in China were solved, the British position at the UN became crucial. And after London accepted the PRC's conditions regarding its seat on the Security Council, the complexities of Taiwan's legal status delayed complete normalisation until the spring of 1972.

One factor that complicated the normalisation process was the latent conflict of interests over Hong Kong within the British foreign-policy apparatus. The episode where this became most obvious concerned the question of how to deal with the remaining Chinese prisoners who had been arrested during the 1967 confrontation. Since shortly after its founding, Hong Kong had been run by the Colonial Office, which underwent several reforms before becoming part of the FCO in 1968.⁶² These reforms reflected the political realities and in many ways facilitated the implementation of British foreign policy. As the dominions and most dependent territories became sovereign states, the FCO was turned into an 'ordinary' ministry of foreign affairs that simply absorbed the staff from the formerly separate Colonial Office.

It was probably only in the case of Britain's last real colony Hong Kong that difficulties arose. The FCO officials posted to Hong Kong found themselves responsible for the wellbeing of a city of more than 3 million people, itself a product of the British Empire.⁶³ A substantial number of these people had come as refugees from the mainland. They had chosen to live in Hong Kong because it promised safety and the stability necessary for restarting a business after losing everything in the turmoil of the Chinese Civil War and the subsequent communist takeover. Arguably, the British administrators sent to Hong Kong, despite or perhaps even because they were unelected, felt that they had a moral obligation to defend the interests of the colony's citizens, especially in the wake of the 1967 riots.⁶⁴ Moreover, Hong Kong's economy was largely independent of Britain's but the colony nevertheless supplied much-needed foreign currency reserves to stabilise the Pound. The PRC provided basic necessities such as water and food, and the colony generated most of China's foreign currency surplus to pay for imports from Western Europe and Japan. Beijing had an obvious interest in this situation, and it seemed doubtful

that concessions to Chinese political demands would help the local business community or instead undermine confidence in the British authorities. The stability of Hong Kong therefore came first for the British-led administration of Hong Kong, both with regard to the interests of the colony and of Britain. For someone living and working in sight of People's Liberation Army (PLA) units, known to be vastly superior to the small British garrison, a convincing commitment to stand up to a threat from the Chinese communists therefore mattered more than symbolic gestures between London and Beijing.

From the point of view of the diplomats working in the British mission in Beijing and at the China desk in the FCO, by contrast, improving relations with the PRC was a highly important objective. For a career diplomat, the burning of the mission in 1967 and the 'Battle of Portland Place' at the Chinese representation in London were shocking events and the opposite of what Sino-British relations should look like. There are very few parallels in twentieth-century international history of such a complete breach of diplomatic etiquette in times of peace. Without rebuilding stable relations with Beijing it would be impossible to even think about an active British diplomacy in East Asia. Apart from global influence, the FCO staff responsible for the PRC also saw British economic interests at stake. Despite its booming economy, Hong Kong imported relatively few goods from Britain and nothing indicated that this would change in the future. The PRC, by contrast, promised to become a market of gigantic proportions one day. Furthermore, the funds necessary for Hong Kong's defence seemed hard to justify in times of scarce currency reserves. If the colony were bound to fall in a matter of days if not hours if China attacked, what was the use of maintaining a major British outpost in the Pacific?⁶⁵ On most important policy decisions there was of course consensus between those in the FCO responsible for the PRC and their colleagues in Hong Kong. But the fact that the FCO was simultaneously charged with running a colony created in the nineteenth century and for coming to terms with a potential communist superpower sometimes led to conflicts within the policy apparatus that would have been unthinkable in Bonn or Paris.⁶⁶

In autumn 1969, Beijing had finally allowed Grey and several other British citizens detained during the 1967 crisis to return home. The question of how Britain should react triggered an internal debate in the FCO that revealed the different positions on the value and future of Hong Kong. Should London release some of the rioters arrested in 1967 to make a gesture of goodwill to Mao, or refuse to do so in order to show

commitment to law and order in the colony? The colonial officials in Hong Kong who had come to identify with the interests of the city's populations clearly preferred the latter option. While often sharing a similar personal and professional background with the FCO personnel in Beijing, they saw themselves as different from 'the F.O.' that they regarded as ready to sacrifice 'genuine British interests especially of a commercial or financial nature for the sake of smiles and insubstantial generalities'.⁶⁷ A.F. Maddocks, an official working in the colonial secretariat in Hong Kong, summarised this position:

[What] we might hope to get out of China—more trade, release of British subjects, political influence, better treatment for our diplomatic mission—seem to me very small objectives (or if big, have to be heavily discounted because they are unlikely to be gained) compared with the very substantial values we have at stake in Hong Kong, not only economic, but political, intelligence and human. I shall therefore argue that we ought to think more about Hong Kong and less about China (even that we should think more about improving relations with the Hong Kong Government than with the Peking Government!)⁶⁸

The diplomats stationed in the PRC or recently returned from there, by contrast, favoured a quick release of the confrontation prisoners in return for Grey's freedom, to use the opportunity of finally normalising relations with Beijing. Hong Kong, in their opinion, came second. Percy Cradock, for instance, who had witnessed the 1967 incident in Beijing and would later rise to become one of the FCO's most senior China experts, replied to Maddocks in July 1970:

Mr. Maddocks should give more thought to the future: on the one hand the declining importance (and increasing embarrassment) of Hong Kong; on the other the increasing importance of China.

[...] As for the present, if we are to take a hard look at the Peking/Hong Kong/London triangle, let us not overlook Hong Kong. What does H.M.G. gain from Hong Kong? It would be interesting to see a balance sheet.⁶⁹

The memo by Maddocks showed that his objectives were very similar to those of Cradock and the China desk: opening markets for British exports, maintaining British political influence in Asia and getting access to intelligence regarding events in the PRC and Taiwan. Yet, in practice, it proved

sometimes difficult to reconcile the aim of preserving stability in Hong Kong, the paramount goal of the colonial administration, and the desire of the British diplomats in London and Beijing to improve ties with the PRC. This further complicated the already complex process of developing a viable China policy. Eventually, the question of the confrontation prisoners was solved when the Chinese demonstrated goodwill, making it easier for the British side to make concessions, also. The PRC authorities released most British citizens who remained in Chinese custody, and reduced pressure on Hong Kong concerning the convicted rioters.⁷⁰ In January 1971 British foreign minister Alec Douglas Home then instructed Governor David Trench to pardon most of those who had been arrested in 1967.⁷¹ This reflected the Heath Government's forthcoming line towards the PRC. But it arguably demonstrated also that the supporters of an active China policy in the FCO had finally gained the upper hand over the colonial bureaucrats who preferred a focus on Hong Kong. Yet the basic conflict between cooperating with Beijing and preserving the interests of the last real British colony would come up again several times during the following years, regarding practical questions such as a shipping agreement or the right of British airlines to serve PRC airports.⁷² The debate within the FCO about the future of Hong Kong can thus be seen as another symptom of Britain's dilemma in Asia. On the one hand the UK remained committed to its colony. On the other hand it pursued a policy of rapprochement with Beijing that seemed to correspond better to its means and interests as a medium-sized European country but was difficult to reconcile with pretensions of global influence. The contradictions between these two policy aims led to frictions even within the UK's own foreign ministry.

Given the heated debates in 1970 it is striking how fast the issue of the Hong Kong prisoners was forgotten and replaced by another long-standing bilateral dispute, namely Britain's voting in the UN on questions of China's membership.⁷³ During a conversation between Parliamentary Under-Secretary Anthony Royle and the Chinese chargé d'affaires in London, 'the Chargé did not refer to two other matters on issue between us—the release of the remaining confrontation prisoners in Hong Kong and our view that the status of sovereignty over Taiwan is undetermined'. The FCO concluded, 'we should therefore be free to maintain our policy on both these matters'.⁷⁴

In other words, normalising diplomatic relations seemed finally within close reach. The issue of whether Taiwan or the PRC represented China in

the UN was of secondary importance for London, and closing the consulate on Taiwan was a price that the British government was ready to pay for opening an embassy in Beijing.⁷⁵ Yet it would again take several months before a diplomatic breakthrough could be achieved. First, the Chinese soon turned out to be far less willing to accept London's position on sovereignty over Taiwan than the British were hoping. Secondly, the complexities of Henry Kissinger's secret diplomacy with Beijing obstructed London's China policy.

The situation between Washington and London was indeed complex. During the 1950s, Britain had joined the United States in supporting Taiwan's claim to represent all of China in the UN. But in 1962, the British delegation officially switched sides and voted for the motion, tabled year after year by Albania, to give China's seat to the PRC. With most of the recently independent UN members also supporting China's entry, the USA had introduced the 'important question resolution' that until 1971 was adopted yearly by a majority vote. This resolution declared the Taiwan-PRC question an 'important question' which, according to UN statutes, needed a two-thirds majority to be decided. With the PRC unable to gather such overwhelming support, the US resolution became a political tool to prevent Beijing from taking over China's seat.

The UK backed the 'important question resolution', which had a signal effect for other Commonwealth countries. Therefore, despite officially endorsing Beijing's position in the UN, London's vote supported Washington and Taipei. But in 1970 the PRC's bid to take China's seat gained momentum, and Beijing brought forward ever more forceful demands for the UK to change its voting on the 'important question' resolution. For Edward Heath, in turn, the fact that the GMD still pretended to represent all China was anachronistic and an understanding with the PRC seemed possible.⁷⁶ But since the Taiwan question directly touched on US interests, the British felt that they could not drop support for the GMD without talking to the USA first.

As Victor Kaufmann and Andrew Scott show in their work, the Americans repeatedly pressured London to postpone announcing their support to the PRC officials, invoking intra-Alliance solidarity, while keeping their British allies in the dark regarding their own ongoing negotiations with Beijing. It was only in July 1971 that the Heath Government got the green light from Washington to agree to Beijing's conditions regarding the UN.⁷⁷ By then, however, the number of countries supporting the PRC had substantially risen, and the British vote seemed less and less relevant.

Washington thus indirectly undermined London's negotiating position and further prolonged the normalisation process between London and Beijing. Consequently, London lost what little there had been left of the first-mover advantage of 1950, and its fears that Beijing might raise their conditions were confirmed.⁷⁸

After having triumphantly taken China's seat in the UN in September 1971, Beijing now started focusing on the British position over Taiwan's legal status.⁷⁹ For several reasons, the Chinese challenged London far more on Taipei than they did Paris or Bonn, and these reasons were directly linked to the special relationship between London and Washington. First, the aforementioned delay in Sino-British relations that the Americans had caused meant that Britain was overtaken by a number of countries in the race to quickly normalise ties with the PRC. By 1971 London therefore clearly felt more pressure to bring negotiations to a quick end than did Beijing, allowing the Chinese to raise their demands. This was in a way the opposite situation to what the French had experienced in 1964 when the PRC had been a pariah state in great need of a diplomatic success.

Secondly, it soon became obvious that the Chinese wish to have its claims to Taiwan formally accepted by Britain was linked to the ongoing Sino-US negotiations on a bilateral *communiqué*.⁸⁰ Of all Western countries normalising relations with the PRC, only Britain and the USA had signed the Cairo and Potsdam declarations during the Second World War.⁸¹ In these declarations, the main wartime Allies had declared that, following the defeat of Japan, Taiwan should be given back to China.

In the British interpretation, the Japanese had indeed lost sovereignty over the island, but since no generally recognised government had taken its place, the status of Taiwan remained legally 'undetermined'. Since the British had maintained this position for more than two decades, they found it impossible to now suddenly declare that Taiwan had been part of the PRC all along. London's diplomats thus had to find a formula that satisfied the Chinese demands while also being consistent with earlier statements on Taiwan.⁸² From Beijing's point of view, in turn, it was crucial that both Western signatories of the Cairo and Potsdam declarations clearly accepted the PRC's claims. Otherwise, any concessions to London might have been used by Washington as a precedent.

Given all these legal and strategic assumptions on both sides, it is not surprising that negotiations again went on for almost half a year. Eventually Britain agreed to the Chinese proposition on the condition that it could choose how to translate the last sentence. The final declaration read 'the

Government of the United Kingdom, acknowledging the position of the Chinese government that Taiwan is a province of the People's Republic of China, has decided to remove its official representation on Taiwan'.⁸³

But even after finding a solution to this last major bilateral dispute, Britain had to wait until the end of Nixon's trip to China and get US approval before signing the final communiqué with the PRC.⁸⁴ This seemed all the more humiliating as the unexpected news of the US President's visit to the PRC had already caused considerable damage to the 'special relationship', undermining British confidence that they would be informed beforehand of important US policy initiatives.⁸⁵

On 13 March 1972 the PRC and Britain announced their intention to exchange ambassadors, marking the normalisation of bilateral relations.⁸⁶ Of all European governments the British had accepted the most far-reaching Taiwan formula, almost identical to the wording of the Shanghai communiqué between the PRC and the USA.⁸⁷

Compared to the crisis of 1967, Sino-British relations had improved spectacularly. But against the background of China's general opening to the West, including to the USA, this improvement seemed almost insignificant. Ironically Britain (the state with the best China experts, which had been among the first to recognise the PRC, and had a major overseas presence on its borders) was far less able than the other European countries to act autonomously and fully benefit from the diplomatic opportunities that presented themselves in East Asia.

WEST GERMANY: SELLING *OSTPOLITIK* TO BEIJING

Until the autumn of 1972, the FRG, despite being the PRC's most important European trading partner, remained among the few Western countries without any representation in China. Even after Nixon's visit, it took well over half a year before ambassadors were exchanged.⁸⁸ But despite the similar timing to the British case and the unquestionable importance of US policy, the German situation was marked by a number of particularities. Above all it was the constraints of the European Cold War scenario that stood in the way of Sino-German cooperation. For Bonn, as for Paris, entertaining relations with Beijing was intimately connected to the concepts and developments of détente policy in Europe, albeit in a fundamentally different sense.

The FRG and the PRC shared the situation of having major Soviet forces stationed on its border. Furthermore, both states had to find ways

of managing exchange with another country that was also divided by the Cold War.⁸⁹

For decisionmakers in Bonn, the main challenge was to avoid the impression that their China policy was directed against Moscow. The assumption ran that such an impression could cause Soviet overreactions and destabilise the process of European détente. This meant that rapprochement with the USSR and its client states had to be secured first, before greater cooperation with the PRC became an option.⁹⁰ As an FRG diplomatic memo summed up, ‘formalising relations with Beijing as an alternative to our Eastern policy is [...] out of the question. Anything that might create such an impression must therefore be avoided.’⁹¹

But as Bernd Schaefer has pointed out, the leaders in Beijing were similarly far from enthusiastic about cooperating with the social-liberal Government in Bonn, which they considered to be too soft on the Soviets.⁹² Following a very simple strategic logic, the Chinese had been averse to European détente since the start of the Sino-Soviet split. In their interpretation, reduced tensions on the Elbe would directly increase the Soviet threat on the Ussuri River.

But with regard to the German question, Beijing adopted a more nuanced strategy. The Social Democratic Party (SPD) Government under Brandt, CCP publications argued, used détente to cover up militarist plans to take over the GDR.⁹³ The narrative went that *Ostpolitik* was in fact a scheme jointly designed in Bonn and Moscow to hand over the socialist GDR to the Western imperialists.⁹⁴ What the Chinese hoped to achieve by criticising Brandt’s policies is not clear. It can be doubted whether they seriously believed that the GDR leadership might follow the Romanian example and attempt a policy of greater independence from Moscow.⁹⁵ Not only would Ulbrecht’s regime have found it difficult to survive without Soviet support. His leadership publicly and internally welcomed *Ostpolitik* and rejected the Chinese claim that the GDR’s sovereignty was at stake.⁹⁶

Rather than following an elaborate strategy, Beijing’s attacks on *Ostpolitik* were probably simply aimed at harassing and destabilising the process of détente in Europe. After the Chinese realised that *Ostpolitik* was successful in concluding several treaties that recognised the postwar borders in the centre of Europe, they stopped the attacks on Brandt and changed their tactic.⁹⁷ Instead of denouncing the German rapprochement with Moscow, Beijing now took a number of steps with the apparent aim of pushing the Bonn government towards a policy more forthcoming to

the PRC, using economic and political channels. For two decades, German businessmen had traded with China without seeing a real need for diplomatic relations between the PRC and the FRG.⁹⁸ That having an ambassador in Beijing had only limited economic value was proven by the example of France, which exported far less to China than the FRG despite its 'privileged relations'.⁹⁹ But in the spring of 1971 the Chinese started politicising trade with Germany. During the yearly Canton trade fair, German businessmen were informed that, in order to maintain current levels of imports and exports, their government would have to adopt a more China-friendly policy.¹⁰⁰ The Eastern Committee and the East Asia Association (Ostasiatischer Verein) as the second organisation representing German commercial interests in Asia in turn transmitted this pressure to the Bonn government.¹⁰¹ From the German perspective, the amount of trade with China was extremely small. But there was clearly an important potential for future commerce, not least because of the PRC's gigantic population. Since FRG exports to China were indeed falling slightly while competitors from France could increase their market shares, the German business community felt they had to take these threats seriously.¹⁰² Consequently, Otto Wolff began to call openly for a quick normalisation.¹⁰³ But as long as the main aims of *Ostpolitik* had not been secured, the government in Bonn felt unable to commit to any open steps towards improving ties with Beijing. Foreign Minister Scheel therefore arranged an informal meeting with the main representatives of the China traders and they agreed that as soon as the ratification of the main Eastern Treaties was certain, an ambassador would be sent to Beijing without delay.¹⁰⁴

Politically, the Chinese used their contacts with German Opposition leaders to put pressure on the Brandt Government. In order to understand the significance of these contacts one has to consider the intense domestic debate in the FRG over the aims and contents of *Ostpolitik*. From the point of view of German conservatives and the leaders of the expellees' association representing millions of people from Germany's former eastern territories, the policy of the Brandt Government were nothing less than high treason and the debate about the 'borders of 1937' was fought with highly emotional arguments by both the right and the left.¹⁰⁵ China's position was never a major issue in this context. But since the days of Chancellor Adenauer, the conservative Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union (CDU/CSU) had been aware that conflict between the USSR and the PRC might have direct implications for Germany's strategic situation.¹⁰⁶ Since the debate about *Ostpolitik* coincided almost exactly with

the most dramatic phase of the Sino-Soviet split, Beijing's policies naturally raised the interests of Brandt's opponents.¹⁰⁷ Especially in the months leading to the crucial 1972 elections, the rift between Beijing and Moscow became an issue, and it was former foreign minister and Opposition MP Gerhard Schröder who became the most prominent face of the CDU's friends of China. Schröder had voiced an interest in going to China in 1971 but had not received any response from Beijing. A year later, when he repeated his wish to travel to Beijing, the race for the CDU candidacy in the upcoming elections had not yet been decided and Schröder was among the most promising contenders.

In this situation, half a year before the election, the Chinese leadership responded to Schröder's enquiries and issued an invitation. The announcement did not go unnoticed in Bonn because Foreign Minister Walter Scheel had very recently made some comments that indicated his government's readiness to normalise relations without getting a similar reaction.¹⁰⁸ When confronted by German diplomats, the Chinese explained that, unlike Scheel, who had not specifically addressed Beijing with his remarks, Schröder had explicitly asked for an invitation.¹⁰⁹ But the real reason for inviting Schröder was clearly the latter's uncompromising criticism of *Ostpolitik*.¹¹⁰

Publicly, Beijing could present the invitation of the prominent CDU politician as an expression of its wish to improve relations with Bonn. At the same time, however, the Chinese were providing Schröder with pictures for a future election campaign and creating pressure for the FRG's government to react to the opposition MP's trip.

At least with regard to attention in the media and his public image, Schröder could consider his visit a success.¹¹¹ Before leaving Bonn, he had talked to the chancellor and the foreign minister, who could not oppose his initiative, but who did not endorse it either.¹¹² In China, Schröder and his hosts nonetheless presented a declaration that called for an immediate improvement of bilateral relations. This declaration, he would claim after the end of his political career, brought the breakthrough in Sino-German relations.¹¹³ Schröder had not voiced any open criticism of his own government and could therefore present himself in the media as a statesman who focused on German national interest rather than domestic politics. But in case the social-liberal Government did not take quick steps towards reaching an understanding with Beijing, Schröder could use his trip to China in the election campaign and accuse the Government of foregoing a diplomatic opportunity.¹¹⁴ The PRC thus showed great skill in using the

German domestic debate in an attempt to build closer relations with the FRG, which might help improve Beijing's position vis-à-vis Moscow.

From Bonn's point of view, Beijing's pressure necessitated a reaction. In addition to the PRC's moves and the general FRG willingness to entertain cordial relations with all countries, the political influence of the PRC among developing countries also contributed to an increasingly fast rapprochement between Bonn and Beijing. One result of *Ostpolitik* was that it opened the way to UN membership for both German states. As the entry into the UN approached, FRG officials began thinking about strategies for the diplomatic competition with the GDR that would soon ensue. Their assumption was that those of the newly independent countries in Asia and Africa that had opted for Chinese rather than Soviet support, would positively react to cordial Sino-German relations and would hence be more likely to chose the FRG's policy initiatives over those of the GDR.¹¹⁵

Therefore, while European détente remained at the top of the foreign policy agenda and necessitated a somewhat reserved treatment of China, it was obvious to many experts that relations with Beijing would eventually improve and allow the exchange of ambassadors.¹¹⁶ Apart from expressing their intentions through talks with German businessmen and during the visit by Schröder, the Chinese also directly approached FRG diplomats about the possibility of upgrading bilateral ties.¹¹⁷ But despite the Chinese pressure, the FRG only officially replied after the main Eastern Treaties had been ratified.¹¹⁸ In late July 1972 both sides finally agreed on taking up negotiations to normalise relations. The Germans proposed to hold these talks in a third country, but the Chinese insisted on Bonn as the venue.¹¹⁹ Arguably, this was meant as a signal towards the USSR that the FRG was moving closer to the PRC.

Once this was settled, there was very fast progress, with only two minor issues causing some bilateral discussions. In contrast to their talks with the British, the Chinese abstained from demanding a particular formula on Taiwan. As in the Sino-French communiqué signed in 1964, the final text did not make any mention of the disputed island. Since the FRG was not compelled to acknowledge the PRC's claim of representing all of China, FRG diplomats described the normalisation as taking place 'under ideal conditions'.¹²⁰ But while Beijing was lenient regarding Chinese territory, it refused to formally honour Bonn's claim to West Berlin. Only after several weeks did the two countries' diplomats find a compromise whereby the final communiqué would apply to 'Berlin (West)', in accordance with the

current situation', thereby avoiding any definite statements on the city's legal status.¹²¹

The second problem had to do with how the PRC translated the FRG's name into Mandarin. The translation which was in use could have several meanings, but the Germans felt it was actually closer to 'German Federal Republic' rather than 'Federal Republic of Germany'. If this was the case, Bonn's diplomats objected, it would undermine the FRG's claim to speak in the name of the German nation in its entirety.¹²² The Chinese responded that many Chinese words could be used as an adjective and as a noun, which was the case for the proposed translation. To prove their point they, somewhat ironically, referred to the example of the Mandarin translation for the East German Socialist Unity Party (SED) newspaper *Neues Deutschland* ('New Germany'), which used the same rendition for Germany as the draft communiqué with the FRG. This was enough for Bonn to accept the proposed wording, albeit under the condition that the PRC pay great attention to using the West German state's name correctly whenever mentioning it in languages other than Chinese.¹²³

Compared with the fate of British hostages in the PRC or China's entry into the UN, these were obviously minor issues. But they say a lot about the legal complexities of the Cold War that came into play when two divided nations of different political systems tried to establish diplomatic exchange. While there were no real bilateral disputes, both Bonn and Beijing had to be extremely cautious about defending legal positions that might prove essential in the case of reunification.

Yet the overall process of setting up diplomatic relations was smooth and swift, compared to the difficulties experienced by London earlier. Since the Eastern Treaties were ratified and German-Soviet relations had reached a new level of stability, the earlier strategic reasons to delay diplomatic normalisation no longer existed and on 9 October 1972 both sides announced the imminent exchange of ambassadors.

By then, Bonn, unlike London, also benefited from the fact that the most dramatic moments of Sino-US rapprochement had already passed. Nixon's journey and the PRC taking China's seat in the UN implied that the USA had ceased to regard closer cooperation between the PRC and the West as a threat to US interests. Consequently, the FRG did not feel obliged to consider US sensitivities and get its approval for every move in their endeavour to normalise relations with the PRC. As former chancellor and then minister of defence Helmut Schmidt put it in 2013, 'we did not ask anybody before doing it.'¹²⁴ The Nixon Administration was pleased

with Bonn's general policy towards Beijing, and therefore did not see any need for intervention.¹²⁵ This was in marked contrast to the way the US government had critically monitored the development of *Ostpolitik*.¹²⁶ Brandt's policy towards Moscow had at times stretched the limits of what Kissinger and Nixon could accept.¹²⁷ But for reasons of timing and strategic significance, the normalisation with Beijing did not cause any worries in Washington.

CONCLUSION

Two points are important regarding Sino-European relations in the context of détente and Nixon's and Kissinger's China policy.

First, there is the common European experience of détente with China, which has received very little attention so far. Without Mao's decision to improve relations with the West this would of course have been impossible. Yet the factors that led to the Europeans' reacting positively to this decision are equally crucial. In the year Nixon travelled to Beijing, all three West European countries had their ministers of foreign affairs pay official visits to the PRC. These visits were demonstrations that all of them had dramatically improved relations with the PRC, including the establishment of embassies in Beijing. This incidental timing would have been unthinkable without Beijing's opening to the USA. But similarly important was the fact that the political leadership in Europe had come to the conclusion that China had to be taken seriously as a future power and that building up bilateral cooperation was in their countries' national interest. Since none of the European states had the military or political means to force China to cooperate, this policy was in practice marked by the ideas of détente: slowly reaching agreement across an ideological divide by pursuing incremental negotiations. In implementing this approach the makers of China strategy in London, Paris and Bonn always had to take Washington's China policy into consideration. Yet they developed their national versions of détente largely independently from the USA. Britain and France started their rapprochement with the PRC years before knowing details about the USA's contacts there. And while the FRG benefited from the fact that ties between the PRC and the West became less controversial after Nixon's meeting with Mao, other factors were far more important in determining the evolution of Sino-German relations. Especially in the period after 1972, the simultaneous détente policy with Beijing and Moscow arguably contributed to international stability. For the Chinese,

Europe would remain interesting as a potential partner against the USSR, particularly after Sino-US relations reached a deadlock in 1973. The Europeans reacted by including the PRC in a strategic dialogue without ever questioning the ultimate priority of stable relations with Moscow. In this sense, West European détente in Asia strengthened the moderate forces in the Chinese leadership and worked as a complement to the US policy of triangular relations.

Secondly, despite sharing the goal of piercing the bamboo curtain, this chapter has shown that the China policies of Bonn, Paris and London were marked by particular national political incentives and challenges.

France was in the most advantageous position, mainly thanks to de Gaulle's bold decision of 1964. From 1969 onwards, Paris used China policy once more to display French *grandeur* and to demonstrate that the country had not relinquished its ambition to play a role of global influence. For London, by contrast, Hong Kong, as a legacy of imperialism, proved a major challenge in normalising Sino-British relations. Once the question of the confrontation prisoners and the remaining British detainees in China was solved, US intervention delayed further rapprochement between Britain and the PRC for several months. Ironically, it was not US aversion to 'Red China' that caused Washington to intervene, but, on the contrary, Nixon's and Kissinger's own attempt to come to terms with Beijing, which they considered more important than their allies' interests. Given all these factors, it is nevertheless not surprising that it was the Heath Government that reached the breakthrough in bilateral relations. During the Heath years, Britain seemed to try and trade the imperialist past for a place in Europe. The Chinese welcomed this policy's implications and it eventually facilitated making concessions over Hong Kong and Taiwan.

For the FRG, finally, it was the situation as a divided nation that inspired *Ostpolitik* and, consequently, also China policy. The FRG had first to increase its degree of sovereignty through détente in Europe before seeking closer ties with China. Bonn had thus far fewer political ambitions in Asia than London or Paris, and this made it easier to exchange ambassadors with the PRC once the European situation allowed it.

Promotion of European Exports to China and the Role of Economic Diplomacy, 1969–72

From the start, one important motive for developing diplomatic relations with China was gaining access to the Chinese market. High hopes for a dramatic increase in exports to the PRC always contrasted with more realistic views that focused on the overall effects of bringing the country back into international society. This was true for Britain, France and West Germany. But the relations between industry and diplomats, and the strategies pursued by the foreign ministries, differed in many ways. After the beginning of the Chinese reform policy in the late 1970s, the prospects for doing business with the PRC would change dramatically. Yet the diplomatic and institutional frameworks of Western trade promotion that were in place after 1978 were actually created in the early 1970s. The purpose of this chapter is therefore to look at how businesses and diplomats cooperated in each of the three states and to identify where the focal points of trade policy towards China were at the time when diplomatic relations were normalised.

CREATING ECONOMIC LINKS IN A CHALLENGING ENVIRONMENT

In surprising contrast to the political tumult of the Cultural Revolution, the economic background to Sino-European relations in the early 1970s was marked by relative stability.¹ The chaos caused by the Red Guards

did of course affect the development of China's economy, especially in its industrial centres. In 1967 and 1968 the PRC consequently experienced a short but severe recession.² But the impact on the economic sphere was nevertheless nowhere as dramatic as it was on the party apparatus, the education system or foreign affairs.³ Importantly, the Cultural Revolution, unlike the Great Leap Forward, remained a largely urban phenomenon in a predominantly rural country.⁴ Even after 1968, when millions of students were sent 'down to the countryside', this did not fundamentally affect the way the rural Chinese economy was run.⁵ And once the PLA was commanded to pick up the pieces of the weakened party structures after the attacks of the Red Guards from late 1967 onwards, China's officer class was effectively in charge of large parts of the national economy. They did not have much business knowledge but were familiar with the structure of the five-year plans. Furthermore, this militarisation of the economy corresponded well with the policies adopted between 1964, when the relatively liberal period following the Great Leap Forward ended, and the onset of the Cultural Revolution in 1966.⁶ During this period, Mao had ordered a gigantic programme of moving strategic industries from the coasts to the more remote and rural Chinese hinterland so as to make the PRC able to withstand the perceived threat of a simultaneous US and Soviet attack. After 1969 these policies of forced industrialisation and the build-up of defence industries in the Chinese interior were resumed. The main difference was that the US threat was now considered to be waning while the fear of a Soviet attack became even more acute.⁷

The militarisation and abolition of material incentives that followed were coupled to a concentration on agriculture and an austere approach towards industrial development and consumption, which prevented a repetition of the disaster of the Great Leap Forward.⁸ Finally, it seems that the radical leftists who drove the Cultural Revolution, including the infamous 'Gang of Four' around Mao's wife Jiang Qing never yielded much influence on economic policy and instead concentrated on cultural matters and party infighting over the definition of the revolution's spirit.⁹ Together, this helps to explain why China's economy kept growing at nearly the same speed as during the early 1950s and between 1962 and 1966.¹⁰ This relative continuity in general economic development after the Great Leap Forward is also reflected in Beijing's approach towards foreign trade during these years. Until the end of the Maoist era, the People's Republic basically pursued a policy of autarchy and import substitution.¹¹ Following the experience of forced opening in the nineteenth century and the exter-

nal conflicts of the early years of the PRC, it seemed reasonable to rely on China's own capacities and resources for making the country strong again. Imports were reduced to the minimum necessary—mainly things China could not produce itself in the required quantities, including Western technology.¹² Exports in turn had the sole purpose of paying for imports, and the two were always balanced as the Chinese communists refused any kind of foreign long-term loan after paying back the PRC's debts to the Soviets. This general approach towards foreign trade remained remarkably stable throughout the early years of the People's Republic and even during the Cultural Revolution. What changed were the main partners, from the Soviet Union and its allies towards stronger exchange with Japan and Western Europe.¹³ The relative amounts of trade did not fluctuate much before 1978. An important consequence of this was that imports and exports made up only a very small percentage of China's gross domestic product—nowhere near, where it would be after 35 years of reforms. So even though the European countries were major suppliers and clients for the PRC, this relative importance did not translate into political influence because trade in general remained marginal (Table 4.1).

For the far bigger economies of Western Europe, trade with China was even more negligible, remaining well below 1 percent of total foreign trade for all three countries (Table 4.2).¹⁴ For individual sectors and companies, however, the PRC could become a crucial market.¹⁵ Furthermore, the size of the Chinese population indicated that even modest growth of bilateral trade could eventually create opportunities for doing business on a much larger scale. There was therefore a general sense of expectation in parts of the European business communities that justified spending disproportion-

Table 4.1 Chinese trade with Europe as part of total Chinese imports and exports

	<i>Imports from Europe</i>			<i>Exports to Europe</i>		
	<i>1969</i>	<i>1975</i>	<i>1982</i>	<i>1969</i>	<i>1975</i>	<i>1982</i>
UK	9.41 %	2.96 %	1.11 %	5.00 %	2.08 %	1.48 %
France	3.22 %	6.19 %	2.09 %	4.24 %	2.73 %	1.90 %
FRG	11.36 %	8.68 %	5.30 %	4.85 %	3.51 %	3.05 %

Source: Calculations by the author, based on International Monetary Fund, Direction of Trade Statistics Database (DOTS)

Table 4.2 European trade with China as part of total European imports and exports

	<i>Imports from China</i>			<i>Exports to China</i>		
	<i>1969</i>	<i>1975</i>	<i>1981</i>	<i>1969</i>	<i>1975</i>	<i>1982</i>
UK	0.66 %	0.75 %	0.40 %	0.18 %	0.33 %	0.18 %
France	0.44 %	0.29 %	0.71 %	0.35 %	0.32 %	0.38 %
FRG	0.35 %	0.54 %	0.58 %	0.48 %	0.30 %	0.45 %

Source: Calculations by the author, based on International Monetary Fund, Direction of Trade Statistics Database (DOTS)

ate amounts of money and energy on the Chinese market even though the prospects for short-term profit were far from spectacular.

Given the state of sources, it is difficult to establish a coherent picture of relations between business and foreign policy in all three countries. Records of industry organisations are not always available, and where accessible they are often incomplete.¹⁶ The view in this chapter therefore remains focused on political archives and on the government perspective.

Despite important differences, some things are common in all three cases. On a general level, it must be taken into consideration that in the period studied in this chapter, up until 1972, all three countries were marked by the experience of the ‘Golden Age’ or the *trentes glorieuses* after the late 1940s.¹⁷ Before the collapse of the Bretton Woods System and the first oil crisis, it was reasonable to assume that the world economy would continue growing and that Western Europe would remain among the main regions to benefit. Macroeconomic conditions in the three countries were different in many ways and this also affected the policy towards trade with China. But a shared sense of modest optimism could nevertheless be observed in Britain, France and Germany.

Secondly, all three countries were members of the Coordinating Committee for Multilateral Exports Controls (CoCom), and thus had to take its regulations and procedures into account when doing business with China. Founded at the beginning of the Cold War, CoCom had the task of preventing sensitive technology and arms from being sold to Communist countries.¹⁸ Most NATO countries and Japan joined this organisation and, while technically all member countries had a voice, Washington de facto had the last word on any deal of importance.¹⁹

As it was up to national authorities to oversee the enforcement of CoCom decisions, the organisation turned commercial deals into matters of alliance diplomacy. When a company had progressed in preliminary negotiations with a Communist country, its government was expected to bring up the project in the regular meetings of CoCom. If a member state (most often the USA) refused to give its agreement to the deal, the respective government could still give the green light to the company in question. But in doing so it risked serious diplomatic tensions with Washington. Furthermore, the companies involved faced the possibility of being put on US blacklists and being largely excluded from access to the US market.

Though originally directed against Moscow, China was included in the CoCom embargo lists early on and this did not change after the Sino-Soviet split.²⁰ With regard to the PRC, a special committee (CHINCOM) was formed in 1952, based on an embargo list that included even more articles than the ordinary CoCom one aimed at the USSR and its client states.²¹ Following Japanese and West European pressure to facilitate trade with Beijing, this ‘China differential’ was substantially reduced in 1957 and CHINCOM was suspended after the UK unilaterally withdrew from the subcommittee.²² But the general system of tightly controlling technology-exports to the PRC was maintained. Only the Reagan Administration would start adopting a more forthcoming position towards some trade with China in strategic goods.²³

From the Chinese perspective, the CoCom system seemed like a major impediment to development as it blocked commercial access to the technologically most advanced countries. From the 1950s onwards, Beijing therefore consciously aimed at exacerbating divisions among the allies.²⁴ While all CoCom members agreed to limit the military potential of the PLA, Washington also hoped that the embargo would slow down China’s economic and military rise and destabilise the communist government.²⁵ In the 1950s and 1960s the Korean War, the Taiwan Straits crises, and the Chinese support for North Vietnam provided the proponents of a trade war on the PRC with arguments for maintaining a strict embargo. The European countries and Japan, by contrast, did not share these more far-reaching objectives and instead regarded trade with the PRC as an opportunity to develop an export market with great potential. This repeatedly led to frictions, which the Chinese were happy to exploit. The CCP leadership’s strategy of selectively promoting trade with Japan and Western Europe (with a special focus on France, Britain and West

Germany) showed positive results when the USA yielded to the pressure of their allies and accepted the end of CHINCOM in 1957 and further eased trade restrictions between 1961 and 1965.²⁶ Yet Beijing did not succeed in undermining Western solidarity altogether and the embargo system as such remained in place, even after Washington dropped its principled opposition to non-strategic trade with China in the context of Sino-US rapprochement from 1969 onwards.

For West German trade with China, CoCom mostly played a marginal role. The concern not to provoke the Soviets and the fact that Bonn was already involved in a number of CoCom debates about trade with COMECON states meant that the government was extremely reluctant even to think about strategic trade with the PRC.²⁷ In the cases of Britain and France, however, CoCom politics mattered for most of the major deals with China. Usually the governments in London and Paris considered the projects in question as unlikely to effectively increase China's military potential. But the strict rules of CoCom nevertheless implied that opposition from the USA was likely. CoCom therefore meant that the role of the state for trade with China was further increased, but also that this trade was made more difficult for all parties involved.

FRANCE: THE FAILURE TO TURN DIPLOMATIC ADVANTAGE INTO ECONOMIC SUCCESS

The early establishment of diplomatic relations gave French diplomats unparalleled access to top Chinese decisionmakers with regard to economic questions. Many French politicians and diplomats shared in a general Western fascination with the Chinese market but their hopes materialised even less than in the case of German or British trade with the PRC. At first sight one might think that French industries were simply less competitive than those of other countries, and that the Chinese were willing to accept exchanging political favours with the French only as long as these came free of charge. Especially from 1969 onwards the Chinese repeatedly referred to a statement by Zhou Enlai that, given equal price and quality, they would always opt for French companies.²⁸ Given the fact that Sino-French commerce never exceeded 4 percent of total Chinese trade, this seemed like an essentially hollow promise even at the time.²⁹

Yet the political economy of Sino-French trade since the 1960s was arguably more complicated than that. As early as 1964, General de Gaulle had cautioned his fellow countrymen that for the time being, trade with

China would not exceed certain limits.³⁰ This is a central point because, as mentioned, for de Gaulle, an active China policy was not primarily trade-oriented. His main objectives were political. De Gaulle's successors did not change the basic set of priorities. Political motives came first and miracles were not expected from the China market, at least not in the Elysée or the Quai d'Orsay.

But at the same time it was a continuous aim of French China policy to increase exports to the People's Republic, and this fitted well into the general attempt to nurture strategic industries that could be competitive on international markets. A country like the PRC with a gigantic, young population and a unified central government seemed like an obvious client for many of the business sectors supported by the state, from energy production to armament and railway technologies. Though not always as pronounced as the political aim of multipolarity, there was therefore a continuous element of strategic trade promotion in French China policy. Diplomatic recognition had indeed given a small boost to bilateral trade, even though the overall figures remained unspectacular.³¹ The mid-1960s had also seen the conclusion of several important deals between French companies and Chinese government agencies. These included an initial order for Berliet trucks, three cargo ships and a plant for ethyl ethanol.³² After 1969, there were further positive signs. Especially in 1970 and 1971, France seemed on the way to catch up with its main competitor, the Federal Republic of Germany (Table 4.3).³³ Since this development

Table 4.3 European trade with China in million US\$, 1969–72

	1969	1970	1971	1972
FRG Exports	158	167	138	167
FRG Imports	88	84	95	107
FRG Balance	70	83	43	60
UK Exports	131	107	69	78
UK Imports	91	81	77	89
UK Balance	40	27	-8	-11
France Exports	45	81	111	60
France Imports	77	70	71	105
France Balance	-32	11	40	-45

Source: Calculations by the author, based on International Monetary Fund, Direction of Trade Statistics Database (DOTS)

Note: Provided are the figures for bilateral trade in goods. 'FRG Exports', for example, refers to exports from the Federal Republic to China, 'FRG Imports' stands for Chinese imports into the FRG

coincided with the most severe Chinese criticism of *Ostpolitik* and anti-German remarks at the Canton trade fair, the French regarded the relative expansion of their exports to China to be the result of political decisions in Beijing.³⁴ Furthermore, Sino-Italian trade also increased following Rome's recognition of the PRC and the signing of a commercial agreement in 1971, underlining that cordial political relations with Beijing could yield economic benefit.³⁵ But even during the period between 1969 and 1971 when the considerable improvement of Sino-French bilateral relations was paralleled by a positive development of commercial exchange, the outlook for future trade was not altogether promising.

A substantial part of French exports to the PRC was made up of cereals after a number of bad Chinese harvests.³⁶ The deliveries of grain were crucial for social and political stability in the PRC, especially following the disastrous economic experiments of the Great Leap Forward.³⁷ But while the positive image of France as a country not controlled by either superpower almost certainly helped in the case of the wheat deals, these were not the kind of exports that the officials of the modernising French state hoped for. They did nothing to help the high-tech industries nurtured by Paris, and they were hard to predict, leading to severe fluctuations of the bilateral trade balance.³⁸ Furthermore, future potential for trade in this sector was clearly limited.

A different case was the Chinese purchase of 600 Berliet trucks in 1972. These were eventually delivered but the Chinese did not exercise their option for another 1,200 trucks. This was crucial because such a deal would have given the French a strong position in the then very small Chinese market for utility vehicles. It seems that the Chinese reluctance to expand business with Berliet was caused by a sudden increase in the price demanded by the French company.³⁹ Berliet apparently communicated this decision to the Chinese in a way that made it easy for them to renounce the contract, thus hurting the image of France as a supplier of industrial technology. Even the French diplomats, normally inclined to support their national industries, admitted that Berliet's actions had been maladroit because the company had been close to gaining a near-monopoly on the Chinese market, having sold several thousand trucks to the PRC since 1964.⁴⁰

Though this case was singular, it is a striking example of a general lack of interest among French businessmen in actively engaging in the China trade. According to a briefing for President Pompidou, French industry considered the Chinese market as 'too much determined by the arbitrary

up and down of [PRC] domestic policies, marked by extreme competition and generally marginal'.⁴¹ In other words, it was not only the Chinese who let down their French partners when it came to questions of trade. On the contrary, each time political relations improved, French trade also increased, both after 1964 and after 1969. But neither Chinese goodwill nor active trade promotion on the side of French diplomacy could make up for a business community that did not seem to believe in the potential of the Chinese market.

Unlike in Britain or Germany, no business association existed to represent the interests of companies doing business with China. There were some early calls for such an institution but it was not formed until 1976 and only started to expand its activities in the late 1970s.⁴² The existing, more general bodies, namely the Conseil national du patronat français (CNPF) as the main employers' association and the Paris Chamber of Commerce and Industry, did not display much enthusiasm about China either. Hong Kong, Taiwan and India were apparently more interesting markets from the point of view of these associations.⁴³

This lack of organised business initiatives further underlined the role of the state when dealing with China. As the following years would show, the French were most successful where diplomats could directly intervene on behalf of industries either owned or indirectly controlled by the state. Here they could use the close contacts with the Chinese leadership and defend French commercial interests.

Yet progress with regard to high-tech exports was also limited, due to a combination of hesitant decisionmakers in the Quai d'Orsay and, again, reluctance on the side of businessmen to take risks when making deals with the Chinese. Probably, the most important failure in this regard in the early 1970s was the case of a submarine coaxial telephone cable that the Chinese wanted to buy. Before the deal could be signed, doubts arose about whether selling the cable might breach CoCom regulations. When approached, the Americans replied that the project could go ahead only if it was assured that the cable would serve civilian purposes. This corresponded to the general US line on China trade, which saw a substantial relaxation of export controls but continued to emphasise that exporting countries had to make sure that the goods they provided were for civilian use only.⁴⁴

The French inquired in Beijing where exactly the cable would be placed, but the PRC authorities refused to give any information, insisting that as a sovereign nation they could decide themselves where to install the cable

and did not have to justify their actions.⁴⁵ And as long as the Chinese withheld this information, Paris and Washington were concerned that the cable might be used to connect the Chinese garrison on the disputed Paracel Islands with Hainan in southern China.⁴⁶ Given the proximity of the Paracel Islands to South Vietnam, Washington therefore opposed the deal.

In the end the French decided nevertheless to approve the sale of the cable, believing the Chinese declarations and the unanimous expert opinion that the cable could not give the Chinese any military advantage.⁴⁷ Yet the French companies involved did not want to run the risk of being put on a blacklist in the USA and asked the Chinese to renegotiate the contract.⁴⁸ But by then the Chinese had had enough. They opted for a Japanese offer, this time quickly making public where they wanted to install the cable.⁴⁹ It turned out that the use was indeed purely civilian and had nothing to do with the Paracel Islands. Arguably, the Chinese regarded the cable project as a test of French willingness to sell them high-end technology.⁵⁰ This would explain why Beijing was so reluctant to provide specific information about the cable's later location. The French did not pass this test and their diplomats were therefore right to regard the matter as a setback that went beyond the commercial scope of the individual project.⁵¹

The case of the submarine cable arguably highlights the link between two crucial issues that constantly reappear in China's foreign relations, and especially Sino-European relations over the twentieth century (and perhaps to this day), namely sovereignty and technology. From a very early point onwards, one can observe a highly strategic approach towards importing key technologies. Ultimately, this drive towards modernising the country and getting access to advanced knowledge had the aim of allowing the PRC to catch up with the Soviet Union and the West and restoring the country's central role in international affairs. For this, in turn, it was crucial not to become dependent on a single source of technology as had been the case during the Sino-Soviet cooperation of the 1950s.⁵² And while the Soviet Union and above all the USA appeared as the main points of reference in all relevant fields of scientific developments, Western Europe too had plenty of technological goods to offer that were of great interest to the Chinese leadership. But it also seemed essential to Beijing that China should not compromise on its autonomy by accepting any conditions to technology imports. When the French government failed to quickly push through the cable deal, this therefore worked as a signal that, at least for the time being, the country was not ready to offer sufficiently favourable terms for technology transfer.

Another interesting failure to improve commercial relations through large-scale state-sponsored deals was the trade in aeronautical equipment, particularly regarding Concorde. From 1970 onwards, the Chinese began expressing an interest in French aeroplanes, including Concorde.⁵³ In Paris, this interest was received positively even though it was clear that most dual-use technology could not be sold to China.⁵⁴ Diplomats in the Quai d'Orsay argued that the comparative advantage of cordial political relations between Beijing and Paris would soon disappear and that fixing the deal should therefore be given priority.⁵⁵ Yet, despite the generally positive assessment, the government did not move ahead decisively. The actual negotiations advanced slowly because the officials in the Quai d'Orsay believed that the Concorde deal would not pass CoCom and that the necessary US licences could not be obtained in time.⁵⁶ The failure of the cable deal furthermore undermined Chinese trust that France was ready to give them access to sophisticated technology. In July 1972, a contract was nevertheless signed for two Concorde options from France and one from Britain.⁵⁷ By this time, however, the Americans had actively started to engage the Chinese market themselves, with Boeing negotiating the sale of 707 planes to the PRC. But while this seemed to indicate that Washington would adopt a more lenient stance on the export of aircraft technology in general, the US CoCom officials still refused clearance for a number of crucial components of Concorde.⁵⁸ More important still, the arrival of a powerful US competitor underlined the fact that France had entirely lost any commercial advantages deriving from its earlier monopoly on close political ties with Beijing. Even before the first oil crisis, the French leadership does not seem to have supported the Concorde sale to China wholeheartedly and the project never moved beyond the stage of the option contract.

The overall record of the period 1969–72 is therefore mixed. On the one hand, political relations improved fast and Beijing received French visitors at a very high level. Commercial relations also benefited from the opening, and, just as in 1964, the political and economic climate between the two countries improved in parallel. On the other hand, with few exceptions, French industries failed to secure a position in China that would have corresponded to the country's pioneering role in rebuilding political ties.⁵⁹ Several factors played a role in this failure. First, one must consider the Chinese reluctance to become too dependent on any single country. Secondly, the French business community seems to have lacked interest in the Chinese market and in investing in a long-term cooperation that

might not produce major profits in the foreseeable future. Thirdly, the energy of French political diplomacy in East Asia was never coupled with a similar level of commitment when it came to supporting trade with the PRC.⁶⁰ The pioneering role of France even worked as a handicap in some instances. Since the general climate in the West was still quite reserved towards China until relatively late in 1971, the French government hesitated to sell technologically sensitive material to the PRC that would not be accepted by the US representative in CoCom. As a result, the Chinese got the impression that the well-sounding declarations about Sino-French cooperation did not imply a privileged treatment of Chinese requests for advanced technology. Here Paris's attempt at pursuing an independent China policy and playing an influential role in Asia clearly reached its limits. Both its businessmen and its politicians were not inclined to take the risks involved in accepting Beijing's conditions for economic exchange.

There thus seems to have been a lack of dedication both among political and private sector decisionmakers when it came to China. This had as much to do with the structure of the French political economy during the heyday of *dirigisme* as with the priorities of Paris's foreign policy.

But despite this lack of dedication, the government identified France's poor performance in the Chinese market as a problem, and started to think of possible remedies. This explains Paris's forthcoming attitude towards technology transfer in the later 1970s.

BRITAIN: STATE INTERVENTIONISM AND ITS LIMITS

When we look at the relationship between business and diplomacy in the early 1970s, there were three factors that influenced British policy toward China most dramatically: the macroeconomic need for foreign currency; the attempts to keep afloat Britain's manufacturing industries; and the fear of losing control of China trade to pro-Communist groups. These developments took place at different levels but together they help explain a good deal of British trade policy towards the PRC. There was first of all the particular difficulty of maintaining the external value of Sterling as well as monetary stability within Britain.⁶¹ Having to deal at the same time with rising inflation, industrial underperformance and a constant pressure towards devaluation, there was a sense of tension in the British economy well before the oil shock of 1973.⁶² The progressive collapse of the Bretton Woods System in the early 1970s made an already difficult situation even direr. At the same time, the consensual strategy of state

intervention implied that it was the government that had to find remedies. Increasing industrial exports seemed, at least in theory, to be an adequate instrument to fight unemployment without raising inflation, help ailing British industries and lessening the risk of further runs on the pound.⁶³ But since devaluation was, for most of the decade, out of the question, other ways of increasing exports had to be found. This is why, unlike the relatively successful Germans and more than the French, British politicians and diplomats pinned their hopes on the Chinese market. To some in London the PRC looked like a potential client for many of the products that could not be sold elsewhere. Since its economy was entirely state-run, political initiatives could lead to major deals for British companies without any of the painful preconditions for greater market success elsewhere, such as devaluation or austerity at home. Or so it seemed. In a Cabinet meeting in 1971, the policy goals with regard to the PRC were stated as follows: ‘the objectives of our policy towards China are: a. to normalise and improve our bilateral contacts; b. to increase our share of the Chinese market, in particular in capital goods’.⁶⁴ Other aims, including the safety of Hong Kong, seemed less important. While the figures for actual British exports were far from spectacular, the hopes of selling major quantities of high-end products to the PRC gave London’s commercial policy towards China a real strategic relevance with potential effects on the British economy in general. This approach towards the Chinese market was behind the second important aspect: the concentration on strategic goods, mainly in the field of aeronautical technology.

Chinese interest in British aeroplanes also had a history that was related to the changing nature of the British Empire. In terms of civil aviation, the international market after the Second World War was essentially oligopolistic. The USA and the Soviet Union produced civil aircraft but most other nations soon ceased to be present in this market except for niche products. In the 1950s and 1960s, the UK had still sought to actively play a national role in the entire range of aircraft technology.⁶⁵ The idea that a successful aerospace industry could help preserve some of Britain’s global influence while the Empire was in retreat had been most popular during the 1950s. But the decisions taken then could still be felt two decades later. In 1961, British companies had succeeded in selling six Vickers Viscount aircraft to the PRC, partially circumventing CoCom.⁶⁶ Through this contract, the British still had a foot in the door when diplomatic relations started improving a decade later. Furthermore, it was believed in Whitehall that success in the Chinese market would substantially improve the position of

the British aircraft industry in the upcoming process of Europeanisation of the sector.⁶⁷ This assumption corresponded well to the project of the Heath years to play an active role in Europe.

As soon as the Chinese invited a delegation from the company producing the civilian jet Trident, Hawker Siddeley, in February 1971, the Foreign Office gave its full support to the project.⁶⁸ The Chinese were indeed highly interested but negotiations were tough from the beginning because Beijing insisted on getting the latest technology. This in turn implied that numerous pieces of equipment involved fell under CoCom regulation.⁶⁹ When approached, Henry Kissinger somewhat surprisingly indicated that the White House would not block a sale of Trident to the PRC.⁷⁰ As the Americans put it, a British success would prevent the Soviets from selling their own jets to the PRC, thus potentially facilitating a Sino-Soviet rapprochement. Furthermore, US approval would make it easier for US companies to deal with China in the future.⁷¹ Given that Boeing was about to enter the Chinese market, this is likely to have been the main reason for Washington's positive reaction to the Trident project.⁷²

Apart from demanding the best technology, the Chinese negotiators of the state-owned MACHIMPEX were also driving a hard bargain on the price of the aircraft. In times of high inflation at home, this was the weak spot for a project that would stretch out over several years. The final agreement became possible only because an order of four planes already produced for another airline was cancelled at short notice. These four planes could then be sold to the Chinese at a discount to make the whole deal profitable.⁷³ To secure the deal the British government agreed to offer an exceptional export credit guarantee of 100 per cent.⁷⁴

When the Chinese signed the Trident deal, officials in London regarded this as an 'outstanding achievement' and as a 'major breakthrough'.⁷⁵ In the following months the Chinese indicated that, like the cable deal for the French, Trident had indeed been an experiment to test how far the British were ready to go in exporting technology.⁷⁶ Though Chinese sources on the Trident deal are not available, this was probably true. While the number of countries offering similar civilian aircraft was limited, it would have been opportune from a Chinese point of view to approach the French first who could offer planes of a quality at least equal to that of Trident.⁷⁷ But by buying the British product instead, the Chinese could combine political and economic pressure. There are indications that the prospect of the Trident deal even affected the British stance on confrontation prisoners in Hong Kong, and it certainly created the impression

that political rapprochement with the PRC would improve the chances of further export deals with China.⁷⁸ This was of no small importance in the context of the ongoing negotiations about an exchange of ambassadors.

Furthermore, Trident must be seen in the context of the changing relationship between the USA and China. Eventually Beijing decided to also buy Boeing aircraft, which were in several ways superior to Trident.⁷⁹ But the deal with Hawker Siddeley, as well as the ongoing negotiations with London and Paris on Concorde, allowed the PRC to promote competition among the Western allies and demonstrate that Beijing was not dependent on the USA for the development of its civilian airlines.

The British officials hoped that Trident would eventually lead to other major projects in the field of avionics.⁸⁰ This was put at the top of likely fields of trade expansion with China.⁸¹ Among the projects to be pursued were Concorde, Spey jet engines and Harrier combat aircraft.⁸² It was clear from the beginning that Spey and especially Harrier would cause major difficulties in CoCom. Yet the prospect of gaining a dominant position on the Chinese market for aeronautic technology was too tempting. The Cabinet therefore told the companies involved to go ahead with negotiations even though it was not evident whether a final deal was realistic.⁸³

The hard bargaining of the Chinese over the price of Trident, and their demand for access to the newest technologies in a highly politicised sector of industry, could have raised questions about the prospects of future aircraft sales. Already during the Trident negotiations there were indications that success in this market would not be possible without substantial state support. This commitment in turn could produce tensions with the Soviets as well as with British allies. Whether the UK really had a comparative advantage in the field to allow for future growth in exports seemed far from clear. But by the end of 1971 what mattered was the initial success of Trident that seemed like a promise for further business. It also contrasted with the French failure to sell the submarine cable or enter into serious talks about a Chinese purchase of French aircraft. John Brown Engineering's sale of four turbines to the PRC later in 1971 seemed indeed like a first spin-off of the Trident talks.⁸⁴ Furthermore, both the general idea of nurturing a national aircraft industry and the more particular policy of the FCO to do anything it could to help exports of British aircraft to the PRC corresponded well with the thinking on economic planning then in vogue in the UK.⁸⁵ The British focus on marketing aircraft technology in China can finally be seen as an attempt to reassert Britain's influence in East Asia after the end of Empire. From this standpoint, the goal of developing a

national high-tech industry under the guidance of a strong, intervening state was to reclaim some of the sovereignty that was being lost by the retreat from the former colonies. If Britain could barely hold on to Hong Kong, the prospect of developing China as a major client for its manufacturing companies seemed like a potential compensation for losing imperial influence. This approach reflected Heath's interest in leaving the imperial past behind and concentrating on a European future for the UK with fewer global ambitions. In the case of China, it produced some impressive results. The problems of this strategy would become clear only later during the decade when it proved impossible to secure major add-on sales.

Apart from the strong focus on aeronautics, the second particularity of Sino-British trade relations concerned the strange nature of Whitehall's relation with the China-oriented parts of the business community. This was not so much related to Britain's economic problems as to the diplomatic schizophrenia of the 1950s and 1960s described in Chap. 2. Though the UK had recognised the PRC in 1950 and sent a *chargé d'affaires* to Beijing in 1954, the government still considered 'Red China' an ideological enemy. In the field of trade, this created a particularly delicate situation.⁸⁶ With extremely few exceptions, the new Communist government liquidated all British business in China.⁸⁷ The China houses, with Jardine Matheson in the lead, were hit especially hard, and most of them relocated to Hong Kong. Yet at the same time it was also clear that the PRC would be likely to entertain some kind of commercial relations with the West. This implied future opportunities for British exports. For consecutive British governments this meant the dilemma of how to support British business interests in the Far East without collaborating with a Communist regime or its fifth column at home.

In the polarised climate of the early 1950s, two communist front organisations were created that established direct links to the PRC.⁸⁸ One was modelled on the pro-Soviet friendship associations. Called the 'British China Friendship Association', it tried establishing cultural exchange with the 'New China' and improving the latter's image among the British public. The second one, the British Council for the Promotion of International Trade (BCPIT), had the aim of promoting trade with the PRC. In 1953 the BCPIT organised the famous 'ice-breaker' mission to Beijing of 16 businessmen that succeeded in signing deals worth GBP15 million.⁸⁹ While the eventual volume of sales was considerably smaller (not least due to the enforcement of embargo restrictions) it was followed a year later by another delegation of China traders who met with

CCPIT officials in East Berlin. This second trip, with representatives from 48 companies, was at the origin of the '48 Group' of British traders. Less openly political than the BCPIT, the 48 Group's main leaders came from the BCPIT and they maintained close contacts with left-wing supporters of the PRC.⁹⁰ And while the BCPIT soon faded into obscurity, the 48 Group established itself as a key actor in the China trade with good contacts to the CCP leadership.

Until establishing full diplomatic relations with the PRC, the friendship association did not pose a challenge to the government's China policy and was treated like any pro-communist group.⁹¹ The 48 Group, however, was a more complicated case. Because of its origins and the background of its main protagonists, British diplomats and civil servants thought of its members as blockade breakers and unreliable 'fellow travellers'.⁹² Yet the 48 Group also succeeded in arranging a number of substantial deals with the Chinese government agencies and this eventually attracted the interest of businessmen without any communist leanings.⁹³ In order to counter the influence of the BCPIT and the 48 Group on those companies, a government-sponsored competitor was created, the Sino British Trade Council (SBTC).⁹⁴ Nominally an independent organisation and with the backing of the China Association and the Confederation of British Industries (CBI), the SBTC received its funding from the Board of Trade (BOT) and the BOT and FCO had considerable influence on the way it was run.

Apart from the state, the China Houses played a key role in the SBTC, with Jardine's as the most important one. It is therefore not surprising that it was the company's non-executive chairman and most influential shareholder John Keswick who acted as president of the SBTC between 1963 and 1973.⁹⁵

Under Keswick's leadership, the SBTC offered direct access to the BOT and the organisations of the British business establishment such as the CBI. But the 48 Group clearly had the better contacts among the Chinese leadership, who remained grateful for its support in the darkest days of China's isolation.⁹⁶ The Chinese themselves watched these developments with interest and decided that it was best to maintain support for the 48 Group while also developing friendly relations with the government-sponsored SBTC.⁹⁷

This situation continued for several years. When diplomatic ties improved and China seemed to open itself up towards the West, the FCO and the Board of Trade (BOT) once more began taking greater interest in managing economic relations with China. The 48 Group was still

regarded as having members who were 'politically not very desirable' and there seems to have been no direct contact between the government and the leaders of the 48 Group.⁹⁸ But there were problems with the state-sponsored SBTC as well. Some leading activists complained that the FCO did not inform them well enough and that they were not taken seriously as partners of the ministries in Whitehall.⁹⁹ More important still, the British diplomats became critical of the role of John Keswick. As one of the diplomats stationed in Beijing put it, 'I also suspect that there is some tendency to regard the SBTC as dominated by the kind of thinking which they associate with Jardine Matheson and the old China trade'.¹⁰⁰ A representative of the British Trade Commission in Hong Kong likewise summarised the situation as follows: 'these firms, and especially this one [Jardine's], are associated in the Chinese mind with the bad old days of opium trading, foreign concessions, gun boat diplomacy, etc.'.¹⁰¹ Though the Chinese themselves displayed remarkable pragmatism in dealing with Western capitalists and made few comments in that direction, the FCO feared that the PRC might refuse cooperation with a company like Jardine Matheson because it would renew memories of foreign intervention before 1949.¹⁰² In other words, the FCO wanted to dissociate bilateral trade from the emotional legacy of British imperialism, and Keswick stood in the way of that.

But the criticism of Keswick was not only a matter of overcoming Chinese suspicions of British imperialism. There also seemed to be a manifest conflict of interests as Keswick acted in the name of Jardine's, even though he was supposed to represent British business in general. While negotiations regarding Trident were underway, he had offered BAC 1-11s as an alternative to the Beijing government.¹⁰³ Since Jardine's represented BAC in China, this would have generated a handsome profit for Keswick's own company. The diplomats were not only angry that this threatened success for the Trident deal that they evidently supported. They were also afraid that Keswick's offer might irritate the Chinese in their interest for British aviation technology and lead to the order going to Russia instead.¹⁰⁴ Moreover, they considered the episode as proof that Keswick was not interested in a success for British industry but merely in his company's profit. To the observers in the FCO it increasingly seemed as though Jardine Matheson was 'quite likely to switch their interest from British to American goods if they think there is a market'.¹⁰⁵ As an international trading house, Jardine's was becoming a multinational company in the real sense, run from Hong Kong and with relatively few direct attach-

ments to Britain. It was never questioned that Keswick was highly competent as an expert on trade with East Asia. But in the economically difficult situation of the 1970s, what mattered from the point of view of the FCO was that the SBTC helped foster Sino-British trade in a way that would be beneficial to specifically national aims of industrial growth. It was therefore decided that the SBTC as a tool for trade promotion with China had to be preserved and support continued, but without Keswick.¹⁰⁶ The latter had to go eventually; he retired in 1973 after the British industrial exhibition in Beijing.

Together, the issue of John Keswick and the Trident deal illustrate well the contradictions in the way the British government and particularly the FCO and the BOT set about trade with China. Through direct state support and government intervention, the sale of industrial products was to be promoted to help ease the constant strain on the economic situation in the UK.

Yet this strategy conflicted with the legacies of Empire. After years of conflict with Chinese communists, a Cold War mentality prevailed among many in the British ministries and the business community. Consequently, the resources of the 48 Group in terms of personal connections to Chinese leaders could not effectively be tapped into. But also a decidedly anti-communist businessman like John Keswick could become a burden if he seemed to pursue company aims that were not directly beneficial to the British economy. There clearly were successes of the efforts to promote specific British exports. But at the same time important dimensions of bilateral trade were shut out from government support. In other words, the British government displayed a highly interventionist attitude towards China trade, in marked contrast to the corporatist approach adopted in Germany at the time. Yet it was never able to influence and guide trade with the PRC in the way the French managed to do. Again, the UK's imperial legacy loomed large over Sino-British relations, and (economically as well as politically) Britain seemed stuck halfway between an imperial past and a possible European future.

WEST GERMANY: RHENISH CAPITALISM AND CHINA TRADE

Unlike London and Paris, Bonn had no diplomatic representation at all in China before its embassy was opened in late 1972. The foreign ministry therefore played a fundamentally different role in the economic exchange with the PRC than it did in the cases of Britain or France. A second impor-

tant difference concerns the macroeconomic situation of the FRG in the early 1970s. Like France, it had experienced strong growth during most of the 1960s and after a short recession in 1967, growth took up again as the 1970s began. Thanks to Germany's continuously expanding export industries, the Deutschmark was much stronger than the Pound and the Franc. If anything, it was the constant inflow of currency and a rising exchange rate that worried those in charge of monetary policy in Frankfurt and Bonn.¹⁰⁷ Consequently, there was far less pressure for the government to push up exports than in the British and French cases.

This situation corresponded well with the paradigm of a liberal social-market economy put in place by the CDU but not fundamentally challenged by the SPD. In the system of Rhenish capitalism, the state would provide the environment for economic growth but refrain from directly intervening in the economic process.¹⁰⁸ The interests of capital and labour were to be articulated through powerful business organisations and unions that cooperated with the state where necessary but remained otherwise independent. In the politically sensitive field of trade with socialist countries, this system sometimes reached its limits. Especially during the Korean War, the Adenauer Government had intervened to prevent deals between West German heavy industry and the Soviets.¹⁰⁹ But already during the 1960s, the Eastern Committee of German industries had been given greater leeway to negotiate trade with Eastern Europe.

As a business organisation sponsored by five of the most powerful commercial associations of the FRG, the Eastern Committee was on close terms with the CDU and the pro-business Free Democratic Party (FDP).¹¹⁰ But since its main companies had an interest in expanding trade with Eastern Europe and especially the Soviet Union, they also welcomed Brandt's *Ostpolitik*. The three leading figures of the Committee (Berthold Beitz of Thyssen, Otto Wolff von Amerongen of the Otto Wolff Group, and Ernst Mommsen who was chairman of Krupp) all had close ties with the SPD leadership.¹¹¹ Otto Wolff as the most influential China trader was, among others, an acquaintance of Hans-Jürgen Wischniewski, the federal party secretary of the SPD.¹¹² The two knew each other through local Cologne politics, the famous 'Klüngel' where jovial personal connections often counted more than political positions. These ties of personal trust between the Eastern Committee and the political leadership greatly facilitated the arms-length relationship between the German state and the China traders. Otto Wolff as long-time president of the Eastern Committee was also president of the important Association of German Chambers of Industry

and Commerce, one of the five sponsors of the Eastern Committee.¹¹³ This further enhanced his influence within the German business community and his power when dealing with the government. Understanding this structure of interests and power is important because it partly explains why China trade was so much less politicised in Germany than in Britain.

Another important factor was the structure of business interests with regard to the PRC. With the East Asia Association and the Eastern Committee's China Commission there existed two interest groups with a stake in the China trade, with different traditions and focal points. The East Asia Association was traditionally influenced by the China trading houses and the shipping lines based in the Hanseatic cities.¹¹⁴ These companies (such as Melchers or Jessen and Jebsen) were in many ways comparable to Jardine Matheson. They had a diversified portfolio of trade interests, much of which had been concentrated in China before 1949. But after the war they were also active in other parts of Asia including Taiwan. The Eastern Committee, by contrast, was dominated by heavy industry companies from the west of Germany which were keen on selling steel products and turnkey plants to the socialist states of the Council of Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON) and the PRC.¹¹⁵ There was thus a potential clash of interests comparable to the case of John Keswick, who tried to sell BAC's aeroplanes while Hawker Siddeley was negotiating for Trident.

But in reality no such conflict occurred. First of all the older East Asia Association and the newer and more powerful Eastern Committee were closely interlinked, both in terms of the leading personnel and through common sessions of their China commissions. The president of the Eastern Committee, Otto Wolff, was also on the board of the East Asia Association and the latter's president was automatically one of the two chairmen of the Eastern Committee's China Commission.¹¹⁶ The two bodies therefore coordinated their activities and developed slightly different regional profiles. As mentioned in Chap. 2, the Eastern Committee became the main clearing house for commercial contacts with the PRC from 1957 onwards. The East Asia Association, by contrast, concentrated its work on Taiwan, and helped maintain economic ties with the GMD in the absence of diplomatic relations.¹¹⁷ Furthermore, there can be no question about the predominance of manufacturing interests in the two organisations and particularly in the Eastern Committee. Unlike in Britain, the West German heavy-industry corporations enjoyed unbroken economic success and were arguably at the height of their political and social influ-

ence.¹¹⁸ This strong position of manufacturing corporations in turn also prevented trade with China from being drawn into the domestic polarisation over *Ostpolitik* and China policy in the FRG. In the political sphere there was a constant tension between the aim of maintaining good, stable relations with Moscow and improving ties with the PRC. But in the field of trade, most companies were interested in both markets. For the Eastern Committee, the Soviet Union and other COMECON states had a clear priority over China because until the 1980s trade volumes would remain substantially higher (Table 4.4). This does not mean that China was neglected but it certainly did much to prevent the Eastern Committee from supporting the CDU/CSU's friends of the PRC in their attacks on *Ostpolitik*. In other words, there existed an economic link between German détente with Moscow and with Beijing. To a certain extent, the economic diplomacy of the Eastern Committee compensated for Bonn's reluctance to embrace China as a political partner, and led to an intensification of Sino-German exchange. By keeping an arms-length relationship with the eastern traders, the FRG also limited the risk of overstepping the precarious limits of its sovereignty and engaging in political activities that the USA or the USSR could not tolerate.

The lack of state intervention in the China trade, however, also had a downside. West Germany's particular role as the main defeated power of the Second World War at the frontline of bipolar conflict meant that exporting arms and other sensitive material such as modern aircraft was ruled out. The autonomy of heavy-industry trade with China was based on the tacit agreement that the companies involved would refrain from

Table 4.4 West German trade with the main socialist countries in 1975 in million DM

<i>Country</i>	<i>Volume of trade</i>	<i>German surplus</i>
Soviet Union	10,188	3,706
Poland	4,649	1,777
Czechoslovakia	2,835	521
Romania	2,601	613
Hungary	2,323	511
PRC	1,845	739
Bulgaria	1,255	791

Source: RWWA, BDI, 175-32-2. Ost-Ausschuss Aufzeichnung über die Vorstandssitzung in Köln, am 11. February 1976

offering strategic goods to a communist regime. In these sectors, the FRG could never compete with Britain or France. Once China started to dramatically increase its trade with Western Europe after 1978 this would become a problem because Bonn was unable to link arms deals to the sale of other products in the way the governments in London and Paris could.

But in the early 1970s the overall structure of Sino-German economic relations satisfied the government and the business community. Until the late 1960s, German exports to the PRC had steadily grown.¹¹⁹ Despite the slump in Sino-German trade immediately after the end of the radical phase of the Cultural Revolution, the Eastern Committee still provided the most high-ranking links with official China. In the absence of official relations, the Committee was approached with demands that would normally be addressed to a foreign ministry. While the number of foreigners in China at this point was minimal, there were a few cases of German citizens in the PRC who were accused of espionage and often cut off from contact with their relatives for months or years at a time. The relatives in Germany of such prisoners approached Otto Wolff as head of the Eastern Committee to use his personal contacts in order to help the jailed German citizens. It was well known that he had much better access to Chinese leaders than anyone in the government.¹²⁰ Wolff usually promised to try his best but in reality there was little he could do. The government was perfectly aware that Wolff and the China Commission maintained relations with high-ranking PRC leaders and encouraged the Eastern Committee to continue these relations.¹²¹ There was a tacit understanding that as long as trade flourished, politics and business should not interfere with each other.¹²² On the one hand this meant that businessmen involved in the China trade could not rely on official support. But on the other hand, the depoliticisation of commercial relations often facilitated exchange. The Chinese in turn regarded the German industrialists as reliable partners without ideological or political aims.¹²³

As mentioned in the previous chapter, there was only a short period when German businessmen felt political pressure because of Bonn's reluctance to normalise ties with the PRC. But even in this situation a solution was found through personal, informal agreement between Foreign Minister Scheel and the Eastern Committee's president Otto Wolff. In the German case, the flag clearly followed trade and not the other way round as in France. Unlike France and Britain, the FRG had from an early point onwards a well-organised China lobby. As in Britain, there were long-standing personal connections between figures in business and the

Chinese leadership. But in the German case these were not tainted by any alleged or real pro-communist views. From a political perspective, there was no necessity to change this system, which fits well into more general analyses of organised capitalism in the FRG.¹²⁴

There was one early problem, however, that marked trade policy during the entire 1970s. Until the beginning of Deng Xiaoping's reform and opening policy, the PRC tried to balance its foreign trade, not only in total but also with each individual country. Behind this was the Maoist aim of autarchy, not so much as an economic goal in itself but as freedom from dependency on any foreign power.¹²⁵ Beijing's ministry of foreign trade and the state-owned agencies always kept an eye on not letting a trade deficit with any country get out of hand. In the cases of Britain or France, this was not a problem. But the successful exports of high-value goods from the FRG soon exceeded the West German capacity to absorb products from China.¹²⁶ All that the PRC was willing to offer were primary products, mostly agricultural produce, in quantities too small to have an impact on the trade balance. This created a strategic concern for the West German makers of trade policy. If exports to China were to increase continuously, the conditions for importing goods from China would have to be improved. For most of the 1970s, the business community would favour an expansion of Chinese exports of natural resources including oil and rare earth metals. But the Chinese would press on improved market access for agricultural products and, later, light industrial goods including textiles. Since France in particular feared Chinese competition in these sectors, this would become a major issue of intra-EC debates in the later 1970s. The economic roots of this conflict were already developing before a German embassy was opened in Beijing.

CONCLUSION

The diplomatic process of normalising relations with China largely followed a political logic. But from the start it also had a very important trade-related element, linked to the respective economic situations of the three European countries and the perception of promising long-term prospects of the PRC as a market. Improving bilateral relations facilitated direct contact between Western company representatives and Chinese leaders, and it allowed governments to directly influence commercial negotiations. Furthermore, the international developments that facilitated political rapprochement (above all Sino-US détente) also had a significant

impact on trade relations as Washington's more positive attitude towards economic exchange with the PRC made it easier for its allies to offer high-tech products to Beijing. This had different implications for Bonn, Paris and London as each country had its own approach to trade in strategic goods.

Against this background it is not surprising that by the end of 1972, when all three countries had opened embassies in Beijing and the foreign ministers had paid official visits to the PRC, there had also emerged three distinct frameworks of conducting and managing trade with the PRC.

In France, the priority of political motives over commercial aims was most pronounced. As a direct legacy of de Gaulle's Asia policy, the tasks of the embassy in Beijing were primarily of a political nature and the French government under Pompidou was reluctant to provoke open conflict with the USA over selling sensitive goods to the PRC. This corresponded to a lack of interest on the side of French businesses that concentrated on the classical markets of France in Europe, the USA, Africa, and the Middle East. The PRC seemed too difficult to engage with and had not lived up to the expectations of the mid-1960s. The situation slightly improved towards the end of 1972 but the focal points of French export promotion to the PRC would remain in the areas where political and commercial interests overlapped.

Britain, by contrast, was marked by an almost desperate drive to promote exports to the PRC that can only be explained by the domestic economic challenges. The PRC was to be cultivated as a future market for industrial goods, and for that, the images of colonial exploitation had to be left behind. At the same time, the ideological confrontation with China in the 1950s and 1960s resulted in a Cold War mentality that differentiated between 'good' and 'bad' China traders and excluded from state support the 48 Group with its excellent connections to the Chinese leadership. This led to the British government taking a very active role in the China trade, both through its involvement in major deals like the sale of Trident and through funding and overseeing the SBTC.

In the case of West Germany, finally, the spheres of government China policy and commercial relations with the PRC seemed most clearly separate. The government in Bonn categorically ruled out the sale of strategic technology, and, in the absence of any formal contacts until 1972, all exchange with China was exclusively organised by non-governmental actors with the powerful Eastern Committee at the forefront. This system of self-administration of China trade fitted into the system of West German

corporatism, of which the Eastern Committee's president Otto Wolff was an almost ideal-type exponent. Furthermore, the robust performance of exports to China and the West German economy as a whole implied that there was rarely any need for the government to interfere with Sino-German economic exchange. When diplomatic relations were normalised, this had therefore no direct impact on the government's pragmatic line of cooperation with the Eastern Committee for fostering bilateral exchange.

Despite these different trajectories, there were also important common aspects. The three governments found themselves in a similar position of inferiority when it came to bargaining with China over conditions for market access. Even though they together provided over one-quarter of China's high-tech imports in the early 1970s, they never developed any serious leverage on the pragmatic foreign trade cadres of the CCP. This was largely because the PRC's economy as a whole was much less trade-dependent than the European states'. Furthermore, the Chinese always tried to make sure that even the purchase of highly sophisticated technology was not linked to any political conditions.

Secondly, there were some overarching links between economic and political détente. Both factors led to a commercial policy that was in effect very forthcoming towards Beijing and would develop into outright development assistance after the start of the reforms. Though eventually a deal with Western companies had to benefit both sides, the Chinese were clearly in the better position to demand favours from West European governments and companies. The French cable deal, the hard bargaining over Trident with London, and the pressure on German businessmen to gain political leverage in Bonn are all examples of this. Though the three governments were often frustrated by the hard-headed Chinese style of negotiating, they nevertheless did not lose interest in cooperation with the PRC. This leads to the second, important, common characteristic, namely the ways in which economic détente complemented political détente. All three countries were of course interested in the success of their companies in the Chinese market. But this was not the only motive for seeking exchange. Instead, they pursued long-term strategies in order to improve their positions in a much larger Chinese market, and to bind the PRC to the Western camp. Yet they also took great care not to supply the PRC with goods that could seriously increase its military potential against the Soviet Union. This caution was related both to détente in Europe and to the obligations of CoCom. In effect it produced a commercial structure that worked towards greater international stability.

The Diplomacy of High-Level Visits During the Twilight of Maoism, 1973–77

By the end of 1972, the foreign ministers of all three European countries had paid official visits to the PRC. At this point Mao Zedong was nearly 80 years old but still the unchallenged leader of the Chinese revolution. He continued meeting foreigners but his health was deteriorating almost by the day. So was Zhou Enlai's, whose cancer was diagnosed in 1972; by 1975 he was barely able to work at all.¹ After the mysterious death of Mao's announced successor Lin Biao in September 1971, nobody knew who would succeed Mao and how he or she would influence Chinese politics. It was only in 1978, over a year after Mao's death, that a new leadership had fully established its power and could actively start to decide the course of China's politics.²

The long twilight of Maoism between 1972 and 1978 was marked internally by power struggles and several changes of direction. In 1972, Zhou Enlai succeeded in bringing back a number of cadres who had been purged during the Cultural Revolution, including Deng Xiaoping.³ Until 1975, these politicians under the effective leadership of Deng and with the backing of Zhou sought to rebuild the party and economy after the turmoil of the late 1960s. Yet these moderate cadres were not fully rehabilitated. Instead, they were effectively on probation to see if they could serve the PRC without challenging the ideological programme of the Cultural Revolution. Besides the returned cadres like Deng there was a strong fac-

tion of ardent Maoists who had risen through the Cultural Revolution. They included the infamous ‘Gang of Four’, with Mao’s estranged wife Jiang Qing among them.⁴ This group controlled the propaganda apparatus and could rely on the younger cadres who had enjoyed spectacular careers after 1966 when more experienced veterans of the Revolution had come under attack from the Red Guards. Though in many instances not fully qualified for positions of higher responsibility, they could usually boast ‘proletarian’ backgrounds and remained committed to the spirit of the Cultural Revolution.⁵

The unstable balance between pragmatists and radicals had profound effects on China’s national development. While the economy could be stabilised, the education system remained in pieces. The PLA had taken over many sectors of administration in the chaos caused by the Red Guards. In doing so, it had become an inflated organisation with outdated equipment and far too many staff on its payroll.⁶ Though in some provinces more reform-minded cadres like Zhao Ziyang managed to make agriculture more efficient, the cult of ‘learning from Dazhai’ (a model commune in the style of Stalinist Stakhanov brigades) had to be held up by officials throughout the country.⁷

BEIJING’S INTEREST IN WESTERN EUROPE

With regard to the PRC’s foreign policy, most aspects remained remarkably stable and were not subject to inner party debate. This concerned primarily the conflict with the Soviet Union. Until his death, Mao believed that war with the Soviets was inevitable. Following the clashes on Zhenbao Island in March 1969, relations remained tense throughout the 1970s. Against the background of constant anti-Soviet rhetoric and propaganda, and inconclusive negotiations to avoid a nuclear standoff, Sino-Soviet ties fluctuated between uneasy stability and acute war scares.⁸ In 1974 and 1975, tensions reached a climax as troops on both sides of the border were massively increased within a matter of months.⁹ During the 1970s, and particularly around the middle of the decade, the security concern vis-à-vis the USSR was clearly the main driving force of Chinese foreign policy, and inspired the way Sino-European relations were conducted.

Though Mao professed time and again that the Red Army would be drawn into a lengthy guerrilla war and drowned in the sea of Chinese people, it appears that the Chinese leadership was deeply afraid of an armed

confrontation.¹⁰ Well aware of their military inferiority, the CCP leaders sought allies wherever they could find them. Of particular importance in this regard was Western Europe, where the modern armies of the USA and its NATO allies could hold down Soviet forces. This explains the fundamental opposition of the Chinese to the Helsinki process and détente in Europe, and their affinity with conservative and right-wing critics of the USSR.¹¹

This strategic assessment of the situation in Europe and Asia had been the main motivation of China's rapprochement with the USA, and it remained in place more or less unchanged until the 1980s. Yet in other ways the opening process of the 1969–72 period came to a halt and there were contradictory signals from Beijing as to what direction its course towards Europe would take. The rapprochement with the USA, for example, ran into a deadlock that would not be overcome until 1979.¹² As most governments in Western Europe supported détente, it was not clear how Beijing could deal with them or how to reconcile intergovernmental relations with China's support for European opposition groups. The time between 1972 and 1977 can therefore be regarded as a transitional period, not just within the PRC but also for Beijing's relations with Western Europe. Based on the improvement of diplomatic ties, bilateral exchange could be widened and deepened. For China, in turn, Western Europe as a counterbalance to the Soviet Union had greater strategic significance than at almost any other point in the Cold War, as can be seen for instance in the numerous talks that Mao had with European visitors at the time. While the meetings with Pompidou, Heath, Strauss and Schmidt discussed below were arguably the most significant ones, the CCP chairman also made a point of talking to leaders of smaller European states such as Denmark and Belgium.¹³

Yet it was not clear what one should make of the PRC as a partner, and both sides still had to learn how to deal with one another politically. This context forms the background for the following two chapters. Chapter 5 looks at how the Europeans used the new political possibilities of exchange, focusing on a number of high-profile visits. Chapter 6 addresses the policies of the three states in the fields of economic and cultural exchange. Against the background of the PRC's anti-Soviet rhetoric, the governments in Bonn, Paris, and London sought to develop ties with China that would serve domestic interests and fit with their general Cold War strategies.

FRANCE: A SYMBOLIC PARTNERSHIP CONTINUED

Between 1973 and 1977 there were a number of high-profile visits from Europe to China that can be used to study changing national policies towards the PRC. In addition to this there was the visit by Deng Xiaoping to France in 1975, his first such visit to a Western country since 1949. With regard to the European visits, an interesting chronology reflects the order of exchanging ambassadors with the PRC. Having been the first Western country to fully recognise the People's Republic, France was also the first nation to send its head of state to China in October 1973. This was followed by the peculiar trip of Edward Heath to the PRC in May 1974, even though Heath was no longer prime minister by then. The Germans came third with the official visit of Chancellor Helmut Schmidt in September 1975.

The visits involved both government representatives and leaders of the Opposition, and this triggered specific national debates about China policy in the cases of Britain and Germany. Furthermore, the diplomacy of high-level visits arguably reflected a process of political learning and strategic development on the Chinese side. At the beginning of this process, the Chinese were not yet sure how to conduct relations with Western Europe or which forces they should support. But by 1975 they had set the main priorities and assessed the values of all potential partners.

With much effort, Paris succeeded in preserving some of the symbolic status of being China's chosen political friend in Europe. In terms of political visits, the trend of the early 1970s was continued. France remained the closest partner of Beijing. There were several high-level delegations from Paris, and unlike its dealings with other countries such as Britain or West Germany, the PRC retained something of a balance when it came to return visits. As Ambassador Manac'h pointed out in 1974: 'China—that is an old tradition—likes receiving and likes others to court her but does not always consider herself bound to return visits. She owes dozens of visits of heads of state, prime ministers or foreign ministers to foreign countries. This is not the case for our country though'.¹⁴ The most important political tourists in this regard were President Georges Pompidou, who came to China in 1973, and Vice Premier Deng Xiaoping who paid a return visit in 1975.

Richard Nixon's visit in 1972 had received worldwide attention, but in legal terms had been only a private journey by a US citizen because the PRC and the USA did not recognise each other. The honour of paying the

first Western state visit to China went therefore to the *Grande Nation*.¹⁵ Pompidou came both as the representative of France and as the personal successor of Charles de Gaulle, who had been scheduled to travel to China after he stepped down but died shortly before the planned trip.¹⁶ Pompidou's September visit therefore underlined the French claim to a pioneering role in the relation with Beijing. He was received as an 'old friend of China' and enjoyed several long talks with the top figures in Beijing.¹⁷ In these meetings, the Chinese reaffirmed a true respect and gratitude for the French move to recognise the People's Republic in 1964. Pompidou used the opportunity to present himself not only as the unquestioned leader of France but also as a pioneer of European unification. As the French noted, the Chinese still displayed a lively interest and vocal support for a European community that would be economically and politically integrated.¹⁸ Through his conversations with Mao and Zhou Enlai, Pompidou could underline the French commitment to European integration and remind them who had first normalised relations with the PRC.¹⁹

Yet at the centre of Chinese concerns was the Soviet threat, and Zhou Enlai explicitly stated that he hoped for French initiatives towards European unity to counterbalance the Soviet military. 'The realisation of European unity', Zhou said, 'will cause difficulties for the Soviet Union. If we are undertaking preparations [for a defensive war against the Soviets] in the East, we are pursuing the same aim.'²⁰ Despite all the politesse, this was a statement in complete contradiction of French policy towards the USSR. There was no question in Paris that ties with Moscow were valued more highly than the friendship with Beijing.²¹ Though Pompidou visited China for nearly a week, he travelled to Moscow no fewer than three times, the last occasion only weeks before his death when he was in the final stages of cancer. In reply, Brezhnev came to Paris twice during Pompidou's five years in office.²²

Furthermore, the French had difficulties understanding the Chinese fear of an imminent Soviet attack. According to Paris's intelligence sources, the Soviet troops on the Chinese border were nowhere near as numerous and well equipped as the Chinese claimed, and could not be compared to the Warsaw Pact forces in Europe.²³

In the talks with Zhou and in the following press conference, the French President stayed very polite but made some remarks that indicated his line of thinking. Pompidou for example mentioned that the French did not share the Chinese view about the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia

in 1968 or the deployment of Soviet troops in Mongolia.²⁴ For both actions he displayed a certain understanding even though these were key elements of the Chinese worldview vis-à-vis Moscow. The CCP leadership regarded Red Army forces in Mongolia as a direct threat to Chinese security. The suppression of the Prague Spring and especially the emergence of the ‘Brezhnev doctrine’ were, from a Chinese point of view, a prelude to similar actions against the PRC.²⁵

Much of the international press also shared the impression that Chinese opposition to détente stood in the way of closer Sino-French relations.²⁶ Furthermore, Pompidou’s unwavering support for détente in the face of Chinese criticism is underlined by the fact that, after his return to Paris, he sent two personal letters about his visit to Brandt and Heath, but also one to Brezhnev.²⁷ A similar letter to Nixon does not seem to exist or was at least considered in a different category from the other three. In the letter to the Soviet Secretary General, Pompidou summarised the main impressions from his visit and emphasised his firm commitment to ‘détente, entente, and cooperation’ with the Soviet Union.²⁸

One must differentiate between the West German and the French position on détente, however. As is further discussed below, the social-liberal government in Bonn ruled out any perspective on using ties with Beijing against the Soviets. The French, by contrast, laid claim to pursuing a global policy in which they were free to cooperate with both communist powers to an extent that was not deemed possible in the FRG. Exploiting the conflict between Beijing and Moscow was never official French policy. But nor was it completely beyond the limits of what could be discussed in the Elysée Palace. As a briefing paper for the Pompidou visit put it, ‘we wish that our friendship for China cannot be interpreted as a “reverse alliance” against the USSR (even though, to a certain extent, it strengthens our position towards the latter)’.²⁹ Pompidou himself confirmed this view, personally noting on a memo regarding the PRC: ‘Our relations with China have, among others, the aim to strengthen our hand vis-à-vis the two others [the Soviet Union and USA] but do not have the priority’.³⁰ While it was clear that ties with both Moscow and Washington were more important for France than cooperation with China, cordial ties with the PRC would raise the French weight in international affairs. Particularly with regard to the USSR, Sino-French relations could serve to remind the Russians that they needed détente in Europe to avoid being pressured from two sides, and that Paris was a crucial partner for this.

This should not be seen as a change from the policy pursued prior to 1972. There was still the hope to combine détente in Europe and in Asia. The attitude displayed in documents like those quoted above is one not too different from nineteenth-century Great-Power politics with a global reach. France as an independent power could at the same time develop its interests with regard to China and the Soviet Union, and be recognised by both if not as an equal than at least as a factor to reckon with.

As had French visitors before him, Pompidou proposed to act as a mediator in Indochina and the Chinese reacted positively to this.³¹ But after 1972, there was not much France could do to further advance détente between the West and China. Bilateral relations reached an impasse, as the French government was not willing to sacrifice détente in Europe for an alliance with Beijing. Arguably, the clear commitment of the Brandt Government to *Ostpolitik* also played a role. There was a sense of fear that not only the Americans but also the Germans were overtaking the French as the main interlocutors of the Soviets.³² This created pressure to move closer to Moscow and not let China policy threaten the cordial relationship with the Kremlin.

The refusal to come out more clearly against what the Chinese saw as Soviet expansionism greatly reduced the value of the French as a partner in their eyes. If Pompidou was unwilling to put pressure on Moscow, cooperation with Paris was of little use to Beijing. This was what made West Germany and especially Britain under Edward Heath look increasingly attractive as partners in Europe. The French were aware of this and tried to convince the Chinese that they were the better partners, for example by highlighting their commitment to European integration.³³ But ultimately they had little of substance to offer to Beijing.

The visit by Deng Xiaoping to France in 1975 was similarly an important symbolic gesture without many immediate results in terms of bilateral cooperation. Yet, nevertheless, it was arguably a key moment in Sino-French relations during the 1970s, and it would have lasting significance for China. The visit derived its importance from two factors, one being strategic and the other personal with regard to the development of Deng's thought.

The strategic significance lay in the fact that no other Western country received such a visit from China until 1979. Since Zhou Enlai was already too sick to travel, most observers correctly perceived the trip by his effective replacement Deng as a *de facto* Chinese state visit, the first one to a Western country since 1949.³⁴ The visit marked the high point of Chinese

attempts to use the ideological divide in Europe in order to increase their own security. After Edward Heath had lost the two British elections of 1974, the Chinese renewed their interest in France as the most promising partner against the Soviet Union. Moreover, Sino-US relations were still in an impasse that seemed unlikely to be overcome while the Watergate Scandal dominated US politics. This arguably increased the urgency for the Chinese to find ways of managing the perceived threat from the Soviet Union.

In the bilateral talks, Deng warned of the Soviet intentions and attacked détente while showing a forthcoming attitude towards the intensification of bilateral cooperation with France, particularly in the field of sophisticated technology.³⁵ Though the new president Valéry Giscard d'Estaing never questioned Pompidou's commitment to détente, he emphasised how much common ground there was between him and Deng. He also avoided public announcements that openly conflicted with Beijing's line in the style of Pompidou's press conference in 1973.³⁶ Furthermore, Giscard consciously tried to reaffirm the special character of Sino-French relations. He criticised the USA for its energy policy and could agree with Deng on Henry Kissinger's total failure to grasp the Third World's economic problems. Giscard also highlighted that the FRG government was a major obstacle in the process of integrating Europe's defence structures and blocked attempts at reforming the international economic order.³⁷ In so doing, he reacted to the fact that other Western countries (notably the USA and FRG) threatened to marginalise France, both within Sino-Western relations and in the ongoing debate about the future of the Western economic and security systems.³⁸ As Deng did not have a chance to talk to other Western leaders during the 1975 trip, the visit presented a unique opportunity to bid for Chinese support for the French policies of national independence.

Since a decisive breakthrough in terms of bilateral strategic cooperation was never a realistic option, the French diplomats considered the cordial talks a success, not least because Deng agreed to the establishment of a mixed commission on economic affairs and increased ministerial consultations.³⁹ After the sobering experience of Pompidou in Beijing, the visit by Deng therefore partly restored the sense that France enjoyed the privilege of being China's main political partner in Europe. It also prepared the ground for the intensified Sino-European cooperation during the first year of the Chinese reforms in 1978.

Arguably, of greater importance was the fact that this was Deng's only real visit to the West prior to travelling to the USA in 1979.⁴⁰ The week-long trip to France allowed him to compare what he saw with his memories from the 1920s. Getting such a comprehensive impression was apparently a key aim of Deng in preparing the visit. He asked to limit the protocol part to the absolute minimum and expressed his interest in seeing a farm and ordinary peasant homes.⁴¹

The French in turn were determined to impress their visitor. Most of the travel within France was done in French helicopters or airplanes, to allow for a wide range of destinations and also to display French engineering.⁴² While visiting a farm near the French capital, Deng could see how productive French agriculture had become and how much the infrastructure and the economic status in rural areas had improved. According to the French press, he showed much more curiosity on the farm than during the preceding visit to Versailles.⁴³

When travelling to Lyon (France's second city, where he had lived in the 1920s), Deng must have realised that the changes wrought during three decades of high growth after 1945 were not limited to the capital. His hosts showed him a modern automobile plant as well as a nuclear research facility in southern France, where the elite of French scientists worked on a prototype fast-breeder reactor. The French claimed to be ahead even of the Americans in this area of research, which could not fail to impress the Chinese communists.⁴⁴ Press pictures show Deng, dressed in protective gear, looking in awe at the technological installations. More than anything else the visit must have shown Deng how backward China was in terms of scientific and economic development. There are few known statements on the visit by Deng, but he was apparently much impressed by what he saw in France.⁴⁵

Overall, it was not least through the successful Sino-French visits that France managed to maintain something of the privileged relations in the mid-1970s. Yet at closer inspection, the situation since the early 1970s had changed. France was no longer the only country in Europe the Chinese could turn to. The French commitment to détente with the Soviets, particularly the embrace of the Helsinki process, considerably reduced the value of a partnership with Paris from the Chinese perspective.⁴⁶ The fact that a liberal-conservative government pursued such policies arguably made matters worse. For in Germany and Britain the Chinese for some time put their hopes on right-wing parties that seemed to share their scepticism about the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE).

In France there was no such party and there was therefore little hope in Beijing that Paris would change its support of détente in the foreseeable future. Symbolically France remained at the head of Western Europe when it came to collaboration with the PRC. But this was not true for the substance of the Sino-French liaison.

BRITAIN: PREFERENTIAL TREATMENT FOR THE TORIES

What stands out in the case of Britain is first of all the rapid improvement of relations after exchanging ambassadors in 1972. Following the success of normalising relations the Heath Government continued its policy of seeking closer ties with Beijing, and the Chinese in turn began to express their support for the British at numerous occasions. Behind this was the feeling that Edward Heath, rather than Pompidou, stood for what Mao wanted to see in a European government.⁴⁷ There was first of all the issue of Europe and the parallel cooling down of the special relationship with the USA.⁴⁸ The slightly greater distance between Washington and London seemed to suggest that the UK would challenge the ‘hegemony’ of the USA over Western Europe in the way Chinese propaganda predicted. At the same time, Anglo-American cooperation was still much closer than the partnership between Washington and Paris. Crucially, from a Chinese point of view, this reduced the danger of US troops pulling out of Europe and giving the Soviets a free hand.

More important, however, was Heath’s embracing of European integration and his personal commitment to have Britain positioned as one of the driving forces for closer cooperation in matters of security and foreign policy.⁴⁹ From Beijing’s perspective, this directly corresponded to the Chinese desire to see a united Europe emerge as an international ‘pole’ and balancing bloc to the Soviet Union.⁵⁰ It is therefore not surprising that Chinese support for the Heath Government was paralleled by Beijing’s first steps towards recognition of the European Community, discussed below.⁵¹ As Commissioner for external relations and Vice President of the Commission, Christopher Soames played a key role in setting up PRC-EC relations. Being a close associate of Edward Heath, Soames apparently shared the latter’s beliefs in a European future for Britain and in the importance of close ties with Beijing.⁵² This is underlined by the fact that he boldly moved ahead in travelling to Beijing in 1975 while keeping in close contact with the FCO to allow for a coordination of policies.⁵³ There was

therefore a direct connection between Heath's approach towards Europe and the development of EC-China relations.

Last but not least, the Tory Government of the early 1970s seemed to be the least détente-prone and most anti-Soviet leadership in Western Europe.⁵⁴ Apart from numerous public statements, the expulsion of over a hundred Soviet diplomats under accusation of espionage in late 1971 must have impressed the Chinese.⁵⁵

While traditional ties with France remained intact, Beijing increasingly concentrated on cooperation with Britain from 1972 onwards. The British government in turn sought to use its new, positive image in Beijing to broaden cultural contacts and foster economic exchange, but also as a way to strengthen its own position vis-à-vis Moscow.⁵⁶ High-water marks of this new collaboration were ministerial visits in both directions and a number of commercial and cultural projects with high symbolic value, treated in the following chapter in greater detail. Already, the visit by foreign minister Alec Douglas-Home in the autumn of 1972 was a success in this regard: the two sides could agree on many things, including a cautious view of the CSCE.⁵⁷ In a meeting with Zhou Enlai, for example, Douglas-Home stated that 'British policies since the war had been bedevilled by Soviet subversion, backed by the threat of military force'.⁵⁸ This was much more outspoken than the respective comments by Scheel and Schumann during their visits a few months earlier. It was also exactly what the Chinese wanted to hear, and Zhou therefore reacted very positively. Yet a request by the FCO for a meeting between Douglas-Home and Mao, 'to follow the successful French precedent for the visit of Maurice Schumann', was turned down.⁵⁹ This indicates that although the Chinese appreciation for British policy progressively developed after 1971, by 1972 it had not yet reached the same level as Beijing's support for Sino-French relations.

Then, in the summer of 1973, came the highest-level Chinese visit to date, by foreign minister Ji Pengfei. Tellingly, Ji was the first Chinese foreign minister to come to Europe on an official visit, and he started this trip by going to London before flying to France.⁶⁰ In the run-up to that visit, the British assessment of the PRC's views was summarised as follows:

The Chinese appear to see Britain as the most forthright country in Western Europe in dealing with the Soviet Union, which is now characterised by the Chinese as the more dangerous of the two super powers. The Chinese have frequently expressed admiration for the Prime Minister himself and for the foreign policies of the present Government, in particular their European policies.⁶¹

The importance of this visit was underlined by the presence of Wang Hairong, an intimate of Mao, who was allegedly her granduncle.⁶² Despite being only 34 years old, she had already risen to the position of an assistant foreign minister. Though she did not contribute to the official talks, the fact that a member of Mao's inner circle came to the UK was an important sign. It arguably contributed to the Chairman's admiration for Heath, who received Ji's party, including Wang. The reception by Heath of the Chinese delegation reflects the interest the British government was taking in closer relations with China.⁶³

This set of successful visits in both directions seemed to head for a climax with Heath's upcoming trip to China, of which 'great things' were expected.⁶⁴ The trip had been scheduled for January 1974, less than half a year after Pompidou's. Heath himself had professed an early interest in going to China, stating that he hoped 'to get to Peking before the [US] President'.⁶⁵ While this had become impossible not least due to US unilateralism in dealing with Beijing, the bilateral signs for the 1974 visit stood extremely well. What came in its way was the domestic crisis in Britain. With the miners' strike, three-day week and public order seemingly on the brink of collapse, Heath had to postpone his trip for an indefinite period. After the Tory defeat and the hung parliament in the February 1974 elections, Heath became leader of the Opposition and an official visit was a remote prospect. At the same time it was far from clear how long the minority government under Harold Wilson would be in power, and who would win the next General Election, expected to take place before the end of the year.

It was in this situation that the Chinese renewed their invitation to Heath personally and he agreed to go to Beijing in May, after it seemed certain that there would not be another election until the summer.⁶⁶ Technically, this visit was private in nature and not necessarily something to have a major impact on Britain's China policy. But the fact that the invitation to Edward Heath was of a special kind soon became obvious when it was announced that it was indeed the Chinese government and not one of its 'people's diplomacy' organisations that sponsored Heath's trip.⁶⁷ Except for some minor issues, the PRC leadership received Heath with the full protocol of a head of state in power.⁶⁸ The Chinese had even arranged for cheering crowds to welcome the guest from the UK and express their support of Sino-British friendship.⁶⁹ The climax was the personal reception by Mao. For nearly an hour-and-a-half Mao talked to Heath, reiterating his warning about the Soviets and encouraging the British politician

to continue his policy towards Europe.⁷⁰ Allegedly, Heath also agreed with Mao that sovereignty over Hong Kong would be handed back to China in 1997, ideally in a peaceful way.⁷¹

The final detail to underline how much the CCP supported Heath came towards the end of his visit. When Heath inquired about the possibility of acquiring pandas for London Zoo, vice foreign minister Qiao Guanhua replied to everyone's surprise that the Chinese government would like to offer two pandas as a personal gift to Heath.⁷² This was indeed a very special gesture. Giving the rare animals as presents to foreign dignitaries had allegedly been a practice in the Tang dynasty. The most well-known incident in modern times had been the two pandas given to Nixon in 1972.⁷³ Pompidou too had been given a pair. But before officially renouncing the tradition in 2007, the PRC government would only offer 23 pandas in total as gifts to foreign leaders.⁷⁴ It is difficult to track down all of them, but it seems that Heath was the only person who was not a head of state or government in office by the time he received the gift.⁷⁵

Apart from its symbolic value as an extremely rare present (at the time of writing, there are fewer than 2,000 pandas alive on earth), the decision to offer one to Heath also contributed to the impression that the Chinese were aiming at the British electorate with their treatment of the British Conservative politician. The pandas given to Washington Zoo by Nixon had become very popular with the public, with no fewer than 20,000 people seeing them on the first day.⁷⁶ The fact that Heath was able to bring two animals home to Britain was certain to give him public credit and to emphasise that the visit to China had become an outstanding success.⁷⁷

Back in February 1973, Mao had agreed with Kissinger that a victory of the conservative Opposition in the FRG would have been preferable to the social-liberal coalition.⁷⁸ Likewise, he had repeatedly stated that he 'had voted for de Gaulle' in the French elections and referenda.⁷⁹ Following the rapid improvement of bilateral relations under Heath, and given Harold Wilson's public support for détente, we can be sure that Mao and the CCP leadership were very disappointed by the Labour victory in February 1974. It is therefore likely that the special treatment of the British leader of the Opposition was an attempt to facilitate a way back to power for the Conservative Party, headed by Heath. This was also the way it was interpreted in London, at least internally within the FCO.⁸⁰

On the outside, the Chinese treatment of Heath did not have an impact on inter-governmental relations. Heath himself had informed the Prime Minister as well as foreign minister James Callaghan ('Dear Jim') of the

visit and they had approved of it.⁸¹ Accordingly, the British diplomats in charge of the China desk at the FCO decided that 'the line taken to explain the level and warmth of the welcome given to Mr Heath is that it is to mark the friendship between the Chinese and British peoples and as due to him as a distinguished statesman'.⁸²

Yet there can be few doubts that Wilson was not amused by the visit and especially by the behaviour of the Chinese government. Even before Heath's trip, Wilson was far from enthusiastic about closer relations with China.⁸³ During his first period as prime minister there had been a number of conflicts with the Chinese when the PRC had caused headaches for the leadership in London.⁸⁴ Apart from the double crisis of 1967 in Beijing and Hong Kong, British moral support for the US engagement in Vietnam and the continued alignment with the USA in the United Nations had not improved Wilson's image in China.⁸⁵ More important were his attempts to reinvigorate détente with the Soviets while at the same time manoeuvring over Europe in a way that the Chinese feared would lead to Britain leaving the Community.⁸⁶ All this meant that China was far lower on Wilson's agenda than it had been for the preceding Tory Government. The Heath visit could only strengthen the tendency towards greater distance vis-à-vis Beijing, and it made certain that the Prime Minister would not visit the PRC before the next election to avoid a comparison with the treatment of his rival.

So while the Heath visit could have marked the beginning of a new era of close Sino-British cooperation, it had the opposite effect. After the initial moves towards détente with the Soviet Union had largely failed, British policy again became more China-friendly from 1976 onwards.⁸⁷ Especially after the outcome of the referendum on EC membership in 1975, there was more freedom of manoeuvre with regard to Beijing.⁸⁸ But by then, the power struggle for Mao's succession had entered its critical stage, which made an immediate improvement of bilateral relations impossible. Furthermore, the Heath visit had a follow-up that arguably contributed to the reluctance of Labour politicians to seek close ties with Beijing. After being replaced as leader of the Opposition in February 1975, Heath travelled once more to China in September of that year and was again received by Mao.⁸⁹ This second visit, even more than the first, underlined the personal admiration Mao had apparently developed for Edward Heath. Given the level of respect Heath received in China in 1974 and 1975, one can compare this personal dimension only to Mao's fondness for Richard Nixon.⁹⁰

Then, in 1977, Heath's successor as Conservative Party leader Margaret Thatcher paid a visit to the PRC. Though this time it was only the non-governmental Chinese People's Institute of Foreign Affairs (CPIFA) that invited Mrs Thatcher, she was received by Mao's successor Hua Guofeng, with whom she talked for several hours.⁹¹ But by the time Thatcher travelled to the PRC, the Chinese had already modified their policy. The invitation of Heath and, to a lesser extent, the visit by Franz Josef Strauss discussed below, could be seen as attempts to interfere with the domestic politics of European countries. Those conservative Opposition politicians, who travelled to China after 1975, like Thatcher or Dregger, Marx, and Filbinger from Germany, were also welcomed with high honours. One could still see that the Chinese were willing to cooperate with them against the Soviets. But the difference to official visits was clear and the later visitors therefore received less public attention than Heath and Strauss who had met with the almost legendary figure of Mao Zedong. The later, low-key visits were therefore much more compatible with the etiquette of intergovernmental diplomacy. In the case of Thatcher, it is moreover interesting to note that (unlike most foreign visitors) she did not seem to develop an emotional affection for China, comparable to that of Heath with whom she clearly did not want to be associated. Despite her diplomatic tone, it is obvious from her memoirs that she suffered under the summer heat, remained decidedly unimpressed by the Chinese cuisine, and was appalled by what she essentially regarded as a poor, dirty dictatorship.⁹² This lack of a personal connection with China would come to play a role in the negotiations over Hong Kong.

One must also differentiate between West Germany and Britain. After 1974, the Chinese faced a somewhat similar situation in that both countries had centre-left governments whom Beijing perceived as too pro-Soviet. And in both countries there were strong conservative parties that the Chinese would have liked to see in power. But arguably the polarisation of China policy in Germany was much stronger than in Britain. In the FRG, the theoretical option of closer cooperation with China was directly linked to *Ostpolitik*. As mentioned in Chap. 3, substantial parts of the German electorate and political class perceived the détente policy of Brandt as a sell-out of national interests. Particularly those who had been evicted from the East after 1945 felt directly affected by the FRG's treaties with Poland, Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union. For them the treaties ended the hope that they might one day return to their former hometowns. China did not play a major role in the public debate over *Ostpolitik*.

But when Franz-Josef Strauss went there in 1975 this was a move that directly addressed the feelings of the opponents of *Ostpolitik*.

In Britain, by contrast, the situation was more similar to the one faced by the French. Balancing Soviet and China policy was an important issue but not directly linked to questions of national survival. One can assume that after the October 1974 elections the Chinese changed their mind as to the relative value they assigned to relations with Britain. Whereas until 1974 there were several indications that the leadership under Mao regarded Britain as the preferable partner within Western Europe, there were no such signs after that and the Chinese turned back to France and then, ultimately, to the FRG.⁹³ But both on the Chinese and the British side, the changes of policy towards one another were ones of degree and not of principle.

Even the cooling-down of relations under Wilson did not imply a fundamental break with the China policy pursued under Heath. Most projects of Sino-British cooperation begun before 1974 were continued and expanded, as we shall see in the following chapter. Callaghan planned a visit as foreign minister for early 1976 but, like Schmidt in 1974, he had to postpone it when he became prime minister.⁹⁴ Instead, his successor as foreign minister, Anthony Crosland, travelled to China on a working visit that was reasonably successful but without much glamour.⁹⁵

The number and nature of high-level visits between 1972 and 1977 nevertheless reflect the development of British policy towards China well. Before 1974, the UK was on the way to replace France as the principal partner of the PRC in Western Europe. The visit by Edward Heath both underlined this development and marked the end of it. After that, the UK was once again looking for a role with regard to the PRC and lacking a clear strategy towards Europe, the USA, and détente with the Soviet Union, while facing mounting economic problems at home. The Conservatives, on the other hand, could agree on many things with the Chinese government.⁹⁶ But since they too redefined their relation with the European Community, developed a certain imperial nostalgia, and adopted increasingly ideological free-market positions, the personal affection of the Chinese leaders for Heath was not automatically extended to Thatcher. It is therefore not surprising that the next impulse for fundamental change in bilateral relations would come from the PRC and the first official visit by a head of government would actually be a Chinese one, by Hua Guofeng in 1979.

WEST GERMANY: DOMESTIC POLARISATION AND SCHMIDT'S PRAGMATIC CHINA POLICY

At first sight, the German record regarding high-level visits to China reads like a synthesis of what we have seen for Britain and France. Whereas Pompidou as president met with Mao in 1973 and Heath as leader of the Opposition in 1974, there were two similar visitors from Germany who were received by the Chairman in 1975, one being from the Opposition and the other the head of government. The reasons for this sequence of events are partly accidental, as we shall see. And in the absence of full access to Chinese archives it is impossible to trace all the connections between the different developments mentioned. But connections certainly exist and without too much speculation one can argue that the exchange of visitors with Western Europe between 1973 and 1975 reflects a process of learning on the Chinese side as well as of orientation as to which of the three countries should be chosen as preferential partner. At the end of this process, Beijing would concentrate on the FRG as its main partner in Europe.

In 1973, however, this was far from predictable. The PRC had stopped its rhetorical attacks against *Ostpolitik*, and bilateral trade was on the increase again.⁹⁷ But the deep suspicion of Willy Brandt had not disappeared, as can be seen, for example, in the conversations between Zhou Enlai and French visitors.⁹⁸ After 1972, a number of government figures travelled to China. Among them were minister of education Klaus von Dohnanyi and minister of the interior Hans-Dietrich Genscher, who would later serve as foreign minister from 1974–92. Both visitors, in October and November 1973, were received with respect but none was met by anyone above the level of junior or vice minister.⁹⁹ And while in 1973 the Chinese expressed their interest in a visit by Chancellor Brandt, the only return visit was by then vice foreign minister Qiao Guanhua in 1974, who was on the way back from the UN in New York and had a stopover of barely more than 24 hours in Germany.¹⁰⁰ In other words, neither the West German nor the Chinese government made great efforts to intensify relations. The main reason for this reluctance was Bonn's commitment to détente. In order not to provoke Soviet Union, the West German government kept a very low profile with regard to China.

This was quite different for the Opposition. The Schröder visit of 1972 had already indicated a certain ideological closeness between German conservatism and the CCP. Whereas the interest of the ruling Social Democrats

in China was limited because of Beijing's opposition to détente, this was precisely the factor that attracted conservatives to Maoism.¹⁰¹ In October 1974, the Chinese invited the leader of the federal CDU, Helmut Kohl, who met with the PRC's foreign minister as well with Deng Xiaoping.¹⁰² After the defeat in the 1972 federal elections, the race for the 1976 nomination was still open and both Kohl and Franz Josef Strauss had good chances of becoming the conservative candidate. When Strauss asked in Beijing to come to visit just as Kohl had done, his critics among FRG journalists interpreted this as an attempt to be seen on an equal footing with Kohl.¹⁰³

Strauss himself had for a long time been a vocal supporter of the anti-communist regime in Taipei.¹⁰⁴ But with the escalation of the Sino-Soviet confrontation and the beginning of détente in Europe, he quietly switched his allegiance to the PRC and his Bavarian CSU soon became the main base for those conservatives who called for the 'China Card' to be played against Moscow.¹⁰⁵

The Chinese replied to Strauss's interest in October 1974, and indicated that he could come in January or February. Incidentally, this was right before a projected visit by Chancellor Schmidt. The mere fact that Beijing invited Strauss to come only weeks before the Chancellor was seen as an affront in Bonn.¹⁰⁶ As a reaction, the head of the Chancellery Manfred Schueler confidentially met the Chinese ambassador, in late November 1974. The purpose of the meeting was to ask the Chinese for two things: that they not receive Strauss with official protocol and that he not meet Zhou Enlai or Mao Zedong.¹⁰⁷ It seems obvious that Schueler had the Heath visit in mind when he approached the PRC's ambassador. The Chinese reacted evasively, however, and the discussion ended without a clear commitment on their side.¹⁰⁸

In China, Strauss was indeed spontaneously informed that Mao wanted to see him.¹⁰⁹ The actual encounter between Mao and Strauss was much along the lines of similar meetings between the Chairman and Western guests—an exchange of compliments and a lecture by Mao on the general situation of global politics.¹¹⁰ For Strauss, the meeting was nevertheless the highlight of his visit, a 'historic event of super dimensional scale'.¹¹¹

Shortly after this, his hosts drove Strauss's party to the hospital where Zhou Enlai was being treated. The legendary Premier received Strauss in a meeting room, welcoming him in German and repeating that he did not know a town called Kaliningrad. To him it would always be Königsberg just as in the days when he, Zhou, had stayed in Germany in the early

1920s.¹¹² The German Ambassador Pauls summarised in a cable: ‘despite [being] similar in the level of protocol with the China trip by Kohl, the receptions by Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai have greatly distinguished the visit by Strauss. Kohl did not meet with either and US Senator Mansfield was received by Zhou but not by Mao.’¹¹³

In Germany, there was an immediate reaction in the media. The *Bayernkurier* from Bavaria, whose chief editor was accompanying Strauss, hailed the CSU chairman for having met one of the last remaining great leaders of the twentieth century.¹¹⁴ Other papers, however, were less positive. The liberal press interpreted Strauss’s casually talking to Mao as an attempt to use a foreign power for a barely veiled attack on *Ostpolitik*.¹¹⁵ Especially harsh was the magazine *Der Stern*, which devoted a lengthy editorial to the visit. Titled ‘alliance between Chink and rascal’ and using confidential diplomatic cables leaked by the Schmidt Government, it portrayed Strauss’s trip and his Chinese hosts in a very negative light.¹¹⁶

The Chinese were shocked by this reaction. They discreetly apologised to the Schmidt Government by using a retired German diplomat as a back-channel.¹¹⁷ This episode highlighted how far Germany and China still were from understanding each other’s political processes. If the Chinese leadership had tried to influence FRG domestic politics by granting Strauss a meeting with Mao, it backfired badly. The reactions of the German media in turn showed that China was still largely seen as a strange and slightly suspect country with dubious political credentials, not to mention the racist undertone in some articles. After the short spell of interest in the PRC in the wake of the Nixon visit and normalisation, the Cold War had again taken over as the main category for evaluating China.

It is also worth taking a closer look at the role of the USA in the Strauss affair. In 1972 and 1973, Kissinger had explained to Zhou Enlai that he regarded Strauss as the most formidable conservative politician in the FRG. At the same time, he was very critical of the Brandt Government and expressed his fear of German ‘Finland-isation’ if the SPD stayed in power.¹¹⁸ After the visit by Strauss, in a meeting with the Chinese in September 1975, Kissinger reiterated his criticism of Brandt as being too close to Moscow. But he also insisted that Helmut Schmidt was different, and that as long as Schmidt was in power, Western Europe would oppose the Soviets. The Chinese should therefore do everything they could to strengthen Schmidt rather than the Christian Democrats who were in danger of becoming soft on communism as could be seen in Italy.¹¹⁹ With regard to Schmidt, the Americans believed that the experience of

meeting the tough anti-Soviet figures in Beijing would bolster his anti-communist credentials. A memo for President Ford argued that Schmidt would 'greatly benefit from Chinese perceptions. It would strengthen him domestically and benefit the whole European situation, since Schmidt also has great influence with Giscard'.¹²⁰ Chinese interest first in Strauss and then the very successful visit of Schmidt indicate that they took Kissinger's opinion very seriously. In this light, the receptions of both Schmidt and Strauss appear as Chinese moves in their bigger strategy against the Soviet Union.

In the long run, however, the importance of the Strauss visit for Sino-German relations lay elsewhere. Since the meeting with Mao had amplified Strauss's genuine interest in China, he would use what possibilities he had to develop ties with the PRC on the sub-national level of the FRG *Länder*.¹²¹ Strauss travelled again to China in September 1975 to attend the German trade fair, and in the following years he tried to make sure that any high-ranking delegation to Germany also visited Munich. He would furthermore be instrumental in one of the first regional partnerships between Bavaria and Shandong province.¹²² The role of state-level cooperation with China is discussed in the following part. But the political polarisation of the mid-1970s played an important role in its development, and the Strauss visit was the most visible sign of this polarisation. Similar to Margaret Thatcher, a number of aspiring CDU politicians went to China after Kohl and Strauss, for example Hans Filbinger, Werner Marx and Alfred Dregger. Their visits did not cause much attention at home but most of them would play an active role in advancing projects to support the Chinese reforms through the state governments where the CDU had a majority. Arguably, the trip by Strauss was an important inspiration for this kind of trans-ideological collaboration.

The more immediate question raised by the visits of Kohl and Strauss was whether they would affect bilateral relations between the two governments. Helmut Schmidt later claimed that he 'took note' of the visit but that it did not have any influence (either positive or negative) on relations between Germany and China.¹²³ At first, this is difficult to believe. The official visit by the Chancellor was moved from March 1975, only weeks after Strauss had met Mao, to October of that year; and this seems like a direct reaction to the Chinese *faux pas*.

Yet this is not very likely. After the coup of Strauss's meeting with Mao, the German ambassador in Beijing, Friedrich Pauls, advised Schmidt not to alter the dates.¹²⁴ Indeed, the usually well-informed Ford Administration

expected the March visit to take place as late as 20 February—over a month after the meeting between Mao and Strauss.¹²⁵ What seems to have brought about Schmidt's change of mind was not the rivalry with Strauss but a very serious bout of flu. During a severe political crisis in late February and early March, a high fever prevented Schmidt from taking part in several important meetings.¹²⁶ It therefore seems almost certain that Schmidt was indeed ill in the crucial weeks and that he would otherwise have travelled to China.

When he did finally go there in October 1975, Schmidt could claim that his trip was not a reaction to Strauss but an expression of his long-term interest in China.¹²⁷ Schmidt had, from the outset, a more global view on politics than Brandt, who had been shaped by his years as mayor of Berlin during the erection of the wall and the Cuban Missile Crisis.¹²⁸ In 1969, Schmidt had written a book on international politics in which he argued that the PRC had to be taken seriously as a future power.¹²⁹ He predicted that during the 1970s Washington and Moscow would have to pay more and more attention to Asia and that China's weight in global affairs would rise substantially. In 1971, Schmidt travelled to East Asia and Australia with the aim to 'take a look at China from outside'.¹³⁰ But his interest in the PRC was not directly related to issues of FRG foreign policy. Instead, he regarded the PRC as too important to be ignored and as a factor that had to be reckoned with, even if its influence on Europe was marginal.¹³¹ The official visit by Schmidt in 1975 reflected his general interest rather than any strategic aims regarding the FRG. Sino-German talks therefore concentrated on a number of international developments whereas bilateral issues were not considered equally important. The idea was to explain the position of the German government on détente but also to bring up those issues where the two countries could agree in principle without directly facing common problems such as developments in Vietnam or Angola.¹³²

The actual meetings between Schmidt and Mao Zedong and then vice premier Deng Xiaoping were held in a friendly climate, and bilateral issues were barely mentioned at all. Regardless of the fundamental incompatibilities between the world views of Schmidt and Mao, the German Chancellor felt an honest respect for the magnitude of the historical consequences of Mao's work. For Mao, in turn, Schmidt was among the last and most powerful of a whole string of European leaders whom he had received between 1972 and 1975, making this a very important meeting.

After several strokes, the Chairman's speech was impaired and even his personal interpreters had serious difficulties understanding his words.¹³³

But his ideas still had a high degree of coherence. He lectured Schmidt on the inevitability of a coming world war, brought about primarily by the Soviet Union whose strength was on the rise while the USA had to withdraw and was too weak morally to sustain a prolonged conflict. *Détente*, Mao argued, directly played into Moscow's hand. Schmidt responded that NATO in general and the FRG army in particular were combat-ready and sufficiently equipped to withstand a Soviet attack. Therefore, he explained, *détente* did not in any way reflect Western weakness but the rational aim of promoting stability and peace.

Mao listened attentively but repeated his scepticism. He was certain, he claimed, that war was coming but that most Europeans refused to acknowledge this because they were weak and afraid. 'By comparison, the Germans and the Yugoslavs were a little better'. But 'if Europe failed to achieve political, economic and military union in the next ten years, it would suffer'.¹³⁴ The meeting ended with this open disagreement but, following a somewhat ambiguous comment by Mao, on a cordial note.¹³⁵

By the time Schmidt travelled to Beijing, Zhou Enlai, then in the final stages of cancer, was unable to see visitors. But Schmidt for the first time met Deng Xiaoping and talked to him for several hours. Deng followed Schmidt's exposition on the situation of the international economy with great interest. For the Chancellor, very knowledgeable as well as self-confident about his understanding of economic issues, this was a good occasion to explain the current problems of international trade and the monetary system.¹³⁶ The meeting with Deng indicated that the latter, unlike Mao, was interested in a wider range of international issues, including opinions that did not conform to his own. But, in 1975, he did not display any divergence from Mao's line of policy, either in international matters or with regard to questions of domestic reform.

Interestingly, neither Schmidt nor Strauss was offered a panda in 1975. It was only four years later, when Mao's successor Hua Guofeng came to Europe, that he gave a pair of the rare animals to Schmidt.

Taken together, the Chancellor's visit did not immediately affect Sino-German relations but its importance should nonetheless not be underrated. Schmidt and some of his staff got a first-hand impression of Mao's belief in the inevitability of a major war, the way he saw the Soviet Union and his support for European integration. The trip to China also left a deep personal impression on Schmidt, further contributing to his already keen interest in Chinese history and politics. For the rest of his time in office, he would personally receive all high-ranking Chinese visitors who

travelled to Germany, and thus maintain a continued dialogue with the Chinese leadership on world affairs.¹³⁷

In the short run, however, closer political relations were prevented by the PRC's uncompromising stance against the Soviets. For instance, the foreign ministry in 1975 stated that 'the aim for the coming years must be to overcome, in patient detail work, psychological barriers and create a broader basis of contacts to enable the Chinese to one day treat their policy towards Germany not only as a function of their strategy against the superpowers but as a valuable relation in its own right'.¹³⁸ This meant that better relations with China seemed achievable and desirable from the point of view of the government in Bonn. But they were only possible in the (then unlikely) case that the Chinese abandoned their radical rhetoric and stopped seeing all foreign policy through the prism of the military conflict with the Soviets.

In another way, though, the Schmidt visit arguably marked a turning point in that the PRC leadership started to regard the FRG as a partner of at least equal importance to France. After the disappointment over Wilson's return to power, there had probably been a good deal of insecurity in the Chinese leadership about whom to turn to in Europe. Deng Xiaoping's visit to Paris again strengthened the Sino-French friendship, and it looked as though France had successfully reclaimed the place as Beijing's preferred partner. But the Giscard Government remained as committed to détente with the Soviets as its predecessor. The social-liberal coalition in Bonn likewise never questioned the need for cordial relations with Moscow. Yet the FRG was also the main trading partner in Europe and its economy seemed to cope considerably better with the end of the Bretton Woods System and the oil crisis than those of Britain and France. Furthermore, Schmidt seemed much tougher on security issues than Brandt, and the conventional forces of the FRG appeared as the biggest challenge to a Soviet advance in the West. Here the old Chinese fascination with Germany's record of military dominance in the centre of Europe certainly played a role.

On the German side there was finally the issue of German division. For both Strauss and Schmidt, the Chinese were interesting because of their public statements in support of reunification. At a time when both superpowers had accepted the existence of two German states, such moral support was very welcome in Bonn. The Chinese, in turn, consciously used the German question to provoke the Soviets. Neither Britain nor France could offer similar opportunities to annoy Moscow. So while Helmut

Schmidt essentially continued *Ostpolitik*, he also succeeded in strengthening Sino-German ties in a way much appreciated in Beijing.

EXCURSION: ENTER THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY

Finally a word must be said on the relations between the European Commission and China that developed at the same time. As mentioned earlier, this book concentrates on bilateral policies of Bonn, Paris and London towards Beijing. But since the establishment of formal relations with the EC falls into the same period as the ground-breaking political visits addressed in this chapter, it is also important to consider the European dimension. As Marie Julie Chenard has demonstrated, European institutions (mainly the Commission, but also the European Parliament) rather than the national capitals were the driving force for EC-China relations.¹³⁹ The member states in several cases gave their tacit support to initiatives from Brussels. Though the Commission's relevance increased, especially in the field of trade, EC-China relations and the member states' policies evolved largely in parallel but without much mutual interference.¹⁴⁰ When the PRC became the second communist country to recognise the EC after Yugoslavia in 1975, this was a major step forward. Since all major member states had by then succeeded in building up stable ties with Beijing, they welcomed the Chinese move but it had no immediate influence on their policies towards the PRC.

For this study, the EC's role before 1977 mainly matters in two regards. First of all, as Chenard has demonstrated, the governments of the member states appreciated the fact that EC-PRC relations increased the political weight of the community but emphasised that this should not in any way threaten détente with Moscow.¹⁴¹ This largely corresponds to the image of individual China policies drawn here, even though Paris and London at times considered playing the 'China Card' to a greater extent than was the case for Bonn.

Secondly, the role of Christopher Soames further underlines the fact that Heath's approach towards Europe and towards the Cold War were most compatible with Mao's ideas about relations with Western Europe. This again demonstrates that for a short historical moment there indeed existed the possibility that Britain would leave its ambitions as a global power behind and take a very active role in promoting an integrated European foreign strategy. Taking Heath's and Soames's initiatives towards China together indicates what such a strategy could have looked like in Asia:

close cooperation with the PRC, especially concerning high-tech exports, a slightly more critical stance towards the Soviet Union, and the self-confidence to show that Europe did not have to wait for US instructions to develop a collaboration with China.

CONCLUSION

The European political visits to China and the trip by Deng Xiaoping to France can be said to highlight both the extent and the limits of China's turn towards Europe in the final years of Maoism. With the perceived threat from the USSR ever more dangerous and Sino-US rapprochement having reached an impasse, Mao's meetings with European leaders provided crucial opportunities to encourage anti-Soviet forces in the West. The visits were unprecedented events; never before had European and Chinese leaders met on such a level and in such circumstances. After the tumultuous years following the beginning of the Cultural Revolution, they were therefore also signs of normality, albeit a normality that had not been imaginable for the best part of the previous 150 years.

In terms of substance, it is much harder to say how important the visits were for each country. In the case of France, the tradition of symbolical favours was continued. But Paris's clear priority of 'détente, entente and cooperation' with Moscow, and the absence of a personality for whom Mao had a particular personal affection (such as de Gaulle, Nixon or Heath) meant that from a Chinese point of view there was not much to be gained from strategic interaction with France.

For some time, the Chinese interest therefore shifted to Britain under Heath who allegedly regarded China as the 'country of the future'.¹⁴² But his defeat in the two elections of 1974 led to an abrupt end of this interest. Heath's visit to China showed that there had indeed been potential for a much closer cooperation between the two countries. But if anything, it only further reduced the already limited ambitions of the new government under Wilson to build up a real partnership with Beijing.

In Germany, finally, the CCP leadership still regarded the Brandt Government with great distrust, and it took some time for the Chinese to see where his successor Helmut Schmidt would focus in terms of international politics. In this situation the already existing Chinese interest in collaboration with conservative Opposition parties further increased, not least as potential strategic partners for the future. This policy reached its climax in 1974 and 1975, exemplified in the visits by Strauss and Heath.

After that, conservative politicians continued travelling to Beijing, but they received considerably less attention than these two leaders. Apart from the problems the treatment of Heath and Strauss caused for inter-governmental relations with Europe, the fact that neither of them gained power in the elections following their visits arguably contributed to the Chinese abandoning their particular efforts in this direction. Instead, it eventually became clear that Schmidt's Germany seemed to be a promising partner for the years ahead.

From the European perspective, the visits reflect the main focal points in China policy. For France, maintaining the privileged relationship with China was an expression of the Gaullist ambition to pursue a policy with global reach. But the clear priority of détente meant that China could never become a partner of first-hand importance for Paris. Under Heath, the British government continued its strategy of improving ties with the PRC. This corresponded with the British interest in ensuring the security of Hong Kong, the sceptic position towards détente with the Soviets and Heath's ideas of an independent European role in the world.¹⁴³ After Wilson returned to power, this trend was reversed and the British government distanced itself from Beijing. For the FRG, finally, Schmidt's visit was a step towards improving relations with China despite the latter's attacks on *Ostpolitik*. What mattered here was overcoming the Chinese preconceptions against détente and reaching an understanding on global affairs.

Both Mao and Zhou left the political stage shortly after 1975, but Deng Xiaoping played a crucial role during the period of the visits. This period therefore had effects well beyond the end of Maoism.

Widening and Deepening the Relationship with China Before the Reforms, 1973–77

In the previous chapter we saw through the lens of high-level visits how political relations between the three European countries and China developed after the normalisation of diplomatic relations. Yet these visits only reflect a small part of what can be considered ‘China policy’. They were important for setting out the broad lines of bilateral relations. But they affected very few people directly and only for a short time. Apart from such special occasions, national policies towards the PRC were designed and implemented through tedious work on the ground. Consequently, this chapter turns towards the lower level of China policy, namely the activities of state and non-state actors in the fields of trade and culture. Because this involved so many agents in complex interactions with each other, it is impossible to present a complete picture in just one chapter. Instead, I am trying to point out some larger trends for the three countries.

In the commercial sphere, this inquiry directly connects to Chapter 4 and the different structures of export promotion with regard to China. The economic dimension is complemented by a look at the growing cooperation in the areas of science, education and culture. Before 1972, these were not entirely absent. In particular, the French tried promoting exchange in these fields as soon as the embassy in Beijing was opened in 1964.¹ Likewise, Britain had attempted to send exchange students to the PRC in the mid-1960s.² Britain was also the European country where civil society groups with an interest in China were strongest in the 1950s and 1960s.³ Even from the FRG, there were some early attempts

by China associations to forge contacts with the PRC.⁴ But the scope of such exchange was in most cases extremely limited and there was little Western governments could do to promote it. This did not change radically in 1972, but the political opening of the period between 1969 and 1972 created new opportunities for European states to become active in this field. Having regular diplomatic representations made it possible to station a cultural attaché in Beijing and to create officially sponsored programmes of exchange.

In many ways, state-sponsored activities in the cultural spheres were closely connected to projects of trade and investment and guided by strategic considerations of a political nature. For Britain, for example, its role as the main destination of Chinese language students had political as well as economic implications. This is why cultural and economic exchange are discussed together in this chapter. Finally, there is an overlap with the tentative steps towards military exchange taken by France. By sending delegations from military training and sports units, first contacts were made. But it was only after 1977 that the question of strategic cooperation, including the sale of arms, gained real political urgency. This explains why military exchange is here subsumed as ‘low level’ exchange whereas it is treated alongside high-level negotiations in the following chapter.

FACING COMMON CHALLENGES

Before again looking at each country individually, a word must be said about the common aspects they shared and especially about the challenges they faced. Here it makes sense to differentiate between, on the one hand, developments in the West that provided the background to policies pursued by countries here in China; and, on the other hand, obstacles to implementing these policies put up by the Chinese.

As we have seen in Chapter 4, there was a sense of tension in the British economy well before 1972. But this was definitely enhanced by the collapse of the Bretton Woods System and the first oil crisis between 1971 and 1973. These two macroeconomic shocks also hit France and the FRG, which had enjoyed nearly uninterrupted high growth for several decades. Much has been written about the end of the ‘golden age’ and the idea of ‘crisis’ as the dominating theme of the 1970s.⁵ If one follows this interpretation, the end of the postwar boom in 1973 was the most important watershed in contemporary European history before 1989 and possibly beyond.⁶ In fact, the monetary crisis of the Bretton Woods System and

the supply shock after the Yom Kippur War did not have obvious effects on China policy. Both the political leaderships and their bureaucracies largely continued working along the same lines as before. The Cold War as overarching paradigm and the particular search for détente in Europe remained the guiding themes of Western Europe's foreign policy. But the experience of the oil crisis, rising unemployment, monetary instability, and stagflation provided the backdrop to the policies that were developed and applied after 1973. In all three countries, one can find the idea that China could become an important, though not enormous, market for industrial technology. The possibility that the PRC might become a major producer of consumer goods, by contrast, was completely overlooked. To many European observers it was obvious that China's economy could only develop if the country put to use its abundant labour force.⁷ Yet, based on their experience of the USSR, they expected that the PRC's main export potential would be in the field of raw materials.⁸ This is all the more interesting because, as will be discussed below, already during the mid-1970s the PRC had begun increasing its exports of textiles and other light-industrial products.⁹ Despite the examples of countries like Taiwan, Singapore or indeed Hong Kong, which succeeded in quickly modernising their economies by pushing up industrial exports, the overwhelming majority of Western analysts did not expect something similar to happen in China. As the postwar boom was coming to a close, the European minds were still set on an economic order in which they exchanged capital-intensive products for raw materials from the developing world. The idea of developing China as a market for Western goods in return for primary resources had been around for decades.¹⁰ But after 1973 it gained new urgency for the Europeans because of the economic problems at home.

The second common feature in the development of China policies on the ground comprised the politically harsh conditions in the PRC at the time. In this regard, all three countries faced a situation of great contrasts that arguably made the daily work of the embassies all the more difficult. Politically, the PRC showed great respect for its European partners. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the perception of an imminent threat from the Soviet Union meant that Western Europe had to be cultivated as an unofficial ally against Moscow. This was a clear break from the pattern of self-proclaimed anti-imperialism that had dominated Beijing's foreign policy since 1949 and particularly between 1966 and 1969.¹¹ There was also some movement economically. The forced industrialisation and militarisation of the 'Third Front' policy in China's interior was

replaced by a somewhat less rigid line. There were several setbacks, especially during the ‘criticise Lin Biao, criticise Confucius’ campaign in 1973 and 1974.¹² But overall a trend towards economic stabilisation dominated, approved by Mao himself and including an important component of increased commerce with the outside world.¹³ Between 1972 and 1974, under the influence of Zhou Enlai and then, from 1974 onwards, Deng Xiaoping, the PRC pursued a slightly more liberal policy of economic consolidation that saw more efficient investment in the coastal regions, as well as increased economic exchange with the West.¹⁴ China’s total foreign trade (most of it with the USA, Japan and Western Europe) almost tripled between 1970 and 1975.¹⁵ Significantly, this included the decision to import Western industrial equipment worth US\$4.3 billion.¹⁶ The German steel mill at Wuhan and the British aircraft engines mentioned below all fell under this programme. On the export side, the PRC began to raise its share in the global garment market.¹⁷ While consumer goods did not yet play a role of primary importance for China’s exports, the figures for the mid-1970s can be seen as early indicators of the country’s potential to follow the lead of other Asian economies that had developed a comparative advantage in similar industries. This greater openness was also reflected in the intensified Chinese attempts to gain access to desperately needed Western industrial and technological knowledge as is discussed below.¹⁸

Yet with regard to culture and domestic politics, the Cultural Revolution had simply entered a new phase. The Red Guards’ terror had ended but the entire society remained under the influence of radical propaganda that was usually very xenophobic in tone.¹⁹

This dimension of relations with China was not seen by the visiting statesmen who basically met with Zhou Enlai or Mao Zedong as equals. In their everyday life and work, diplomats, businessmen and exchange students faced a system of extremely strict state controls, and, consequently, a Chinese public difficult to interact with. Due to these factors, Beijing had a reputation for being one of the posts with the hardest living conditions for German diplomats.²⁰ The French, in spite of their ‘privileged relations’, faced very similar problems. When, in early 1974, an intern from the prestigious Ecole Nationale de l’Administration (ENA) asked to train in Beijing, Ambassador Manac’h was not enthusiastic and emphasised that such a placement in the Chinese capital would be quite unpleasant. As Manac’h explained:

in China, contacts with the local population are absolutely impossible. The meetings with diplomats from the Waijiaobu [Chinese foreign ministry] are strictly limited, based on the rank of the foreign interlocutor and the importance of the subject discussed. The possibilities for an intern to meet locals are practically nil and would not take place except at the embassy during receptions.²¹

British embassy staff usually had the huge advantage that they could read and speak Chinese. This enabled them to engage more easily with the local population. The picture British diplomats painted of China in the mid-1970s is therefore slightly less bleak than the impressions of the Germans or French with their lack of Mandarin skills.²² In particular, a series of reports entitled ‘local colour’ contain many examples of personal encounters between diplomats and locals that imply interests and ideas were not entirely different after all. In November 1972, for example, such a report read:

At an incident in the Old Summer Palace when members of the embassy spent the afternoon with some Chinese children, one of the children seized a Coca-Cola tin with obvious excitement: many of the others positively came to blows with each other over the disposal of a number of other Coca-Cola tins. The red and silver aluminium cans have obviously become a prized trophy in post-Nixon-visit China. On a similar theme I watched the head-waiter in one of the smarter Peking restaurants accept with obvious pleasure the remains of a bottle of brandy which had been left undrunk at a dinner I attended recently.²³

In December of the same year, a member of embassy staff witnessed the reappearance of keeping singing birds as a leisure activity.²⁴ And another diplomat noted that the notorious dance shows put on display by military units for foreign visitors were becoming ‘more relaxed and human’.²⁵

These reports are anecdotal and may not have been representative of the overall mood in China. Yet, in their consistency, they certainly say a lot about how British diplomats viewed the Chinese public at large.²⁶ British embassy staff could also read the posters put up by party committees and individuals in various places that played such an important role during the Cultural Revolution.²⁷ It was not least through these posters that they got a better understanding of what was currently happening in the CCP leadership. As exceptions to the rule, the British reports nevertheless confirm the general picture drawn by their French and German colleagues.

Most of the difficulties mentioned applied to all Western diplomats. Even the British had extremely little contact with locals, and often faced a very uncooperative and non-transparent bureaucracy.

All three countries were therefore in the similar situation that, on a general level, the incentives for exchange with China, particularly in the economic sphere, increased. At the same time, the practical obstacles to such an exchange in the climate of the Cultural Revolution were immense.

FRANCE: THE DIRIGISTE MODEL OF CHINA POLICY

Even though France was continually represented in China through an embassy, the cautious beginnings of cultural and scientific exchange in the mid-1960s had come to a near complete halt in 1966. Whereas the political dialogue could be reinvigorated relatively easily in 1969, the turning point for cultural and scientific cooperation was 1972, much as for Britain and Germany. During his trip to China in July 1972, foreign minister Maurice Schumann agreed on a 14-point programme of bilateral activities.²⁸ China remained an essentially closed society, but the 14 points were at least a start and they indicated the direction French cultural policy in China would take over the following years. The focus of exchange was on education and science. The reason for this was that the Chinese were extremely sceptical about any kind of cultural or societal contacts, such as French youth groups or artists coming to the PRC.

Both sides would send a roughly equal number of students on government scholarships to the other country, around 30 per year.²⁹ As the French later pointed out with some pride, their quota was higher than for any other Western state.³⁰ Yet the limits of student exchange also began to show quickly. On the one hand, the Quai d'Orsay remained in almost desperate need of language expertise in China.³¹ There was a shortage of specialist interpreters and, until the late 1970s, there was no good and comprehensive bilingual dictionary that would have corresponded to linguistic developments in the People's Republic.³² But, on the other hand, most of the students who managed to cope with the living conditions in China and hold on until the end of their stay did not find a job after returning to France.³³ It is telling that in the mid-1970s the French economy needed fewer than 30 Chinese speakers per year. The mid-term goal therefore became to actually reduce the number of outgoing students and concentrate instead on better selection and preparation.³⁴

These negative experiences further contributed to the impression that the best prospects for Sino-French partnership were in the field of natural sciences and technology. Since China was far behind the Western World in terms of scientific achievement in these areas, the interest of such an exchange for the French was mainly commercial. Paris consciously tried raising Beijing's interest in nuclear technology, where government efforts increased after the oil shock of 1973, and informatics in which France tried to reduce the American lead with regard to innovation and production.³⁵ Another objective lay in the field of resource extraction. By fostering cooperation among geologists, the French hoped to secure better conditions for the extraction of petrol and non-ferrous metals in the future.³⁶

After a failed earlier attempt, an agreement was reached in 1974 between the Academia Sinica and the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS). Since the latter was under central government control, it was easy to focus the partnership on those areas that the French government had identified as strategic priorities.³⁷ The onset of the campaign to 'criticise Lin Biao, criticise Confucius' in China in 1973, however, also led to a more restrictive atmosphere in the scientific and especially the cultural sphere.³⁸ French attempts to build up cooperation in agricultural technology almost completely failed in this period.³⁹ This would have been one of the few areas where the French believed they could really learn from China. But in the mood of the Cultural Revolution, even the acquisition of Chinese breeding animals by foreigners was regarded as an act of espionage.⁴⁰

This episode reflects very well the schizophrenia of Chinese politics in the final period of Maoism. In actual terms, the PRC desperately needed modern technology, as well as scientific input for its education and research system. After the end of cooperation with the Soviets and the destruction caused by the Cultural Revolution, China was decades from producing high-tech goods itself, with its experts often even unable to reverse-engineer Soviet technology.⁴¹ The USA, Japan and Europe could not only offer the best quality in most areas concerned, but, given the intense conflict with the Soviet bloc, they were also the only possible source for advanced knowledge and products. It is therefore not surprising that even Mao agreed to import Western technology in the early 1970s.⁴² Yet at the same time, the radicals around Jiang Qing remained totally opposed to any foreign influences and repeatedly succeeded in taking their

ideological struggle to the field of technological exchange, thus effectively cementing China's backwardness.⁴³

But whereas at least some limited exchange regarding technology or natural and applied sciences was conceivable, the same could not be said of artistic exchange. After 1972, there had been some promising signs, even though many observers noted that the Chinese were eager to present themselves abroad while not letting in foreign cultural influences.⁴⁴ The 1973 exhibition of Chinese archaeological findings in the Petit Palais in Paris became a major success. Likewise, a tour of Chinese acrobats in the spring of 1973 was sold out and received positive press coverage.⁴⁵ Yet all initiatives to balance this flow came to naught. After the London Philharmonic Orchestra had been able to perform in China in 1972, an extensive tour by the Paris Philharmonic was scheduled to catch up with the British.⁴⁶ But the Chinese eventually cancelled the orchestra's tour at short notice. Since the left-wing radicals were especially strong in the fields of propaganda and culture, their struggle with the moderates had particular effects in this field and made any real contact across national borders impossible.⁴⁷

One field that should have been exempted was sports, for this did not touch upon areas considered as sensitive during the Cultural Revolution. On the contrary, even in the mid-1970s, the CCP encouraged physical education, and whenever a Chinese team did well in an international contest, this was considered as a triumph of the revolution.⁴⁸ The problem with sports, however, was that most international federations still recognised Taiwan and refused to expel the GMD representative. This was an obstacle faced by all three European countries and it prevented them from sending teams to the PRC for show matches in some of the most popular European sports, including football. Exchange was therefore limited to table tennis, handball and gymnastics.⁴⁹ Few people in France and China could actually come to see these competitions and they did not have anything other than symbolic importance.

The French authorities tried nevertheless to use sports exchange as a way of starting military cooperation, sending a sports unit to China. Following early Chinese feelers in 1972, sports seemed like a way of testing the waters in this sensitive field without too much risk of damaging Franco-Soviet relations.⁵⁰ But when in 1974 the movie *Les Chinois à Paris* came out, the PLA stopped the programme underway and cancelled a scheduled delegation of gymnasts.⁵¹

The comedy, a French-Italian coproduction, portrayed a Chinese occupation of France by the PLA, which eventually proves incapable of ruling the country and has to withdraw. Though also ridiculing the French, the movie played on all clichés of Chinese communism that were known in the West, including irrational mass campaigns, omnipresent propaganda posters and despotic leaders. What was worse for a left-wing leadership was that the Chinese occupation of Paris in the movie strikingly resembled the time when Hitler's troops had invaded France. The apparent qualification of the PRC as a fascist state deeply hurt Chinese pride. This can arguably only be fully understood against the background of the whole Maoist project to overcome Chinese humiliation at the hand of foreigners.⁵²

As soon as the Chinese learned that the project was underway, in 1973, they called on French diplomats to prevent the release of the film.⁵³ The latter were well aware of the negative effects the movie could produce, and the civil servants took all possible measures to distance the state from the movie.⁵⁴ Filming on the Champs Elysée was forbidden, no official representatives were to be seen attending showings, and any financial support by the government was to be cut.⁵⁵ But by the time the government took these decisions, it was too late. The producers used private means to fund the movie and some scenes in the Hippodrome de Vincennes had already been shot. When the film was finally released, the Chinese reacted furiously. The acting foreign minister summoned the French ambassador in Beijing, the Chinese ambassador in Paris intervened five times at the Quai d'Orsay to protest, and several bilateral projects were cancelled, including the military sports exchange.⁵⁶ Meanwhile, it seems that greater damage was mainly prevented by Zhou Enlai himself, who maintained a friendly attitude towards Ambassador Manac'h.⁵⁷

The episode shows the complex connections between politics, culture and export promotion. As is discussed below, an important motive for developing military cooperation with China was the hope of eventually raising the Chinese interest in strategic goods from France. But in order to lay the foundations for such cooperation, the political climate had to be friendly. And for this, cultural relations played an important role. The latter could easily be interrupted by any move that conflicted with the orthodoxy of the Cultural Revolution radicals, including a French comedy.

It was only in November 1975 that Paris made a new attempt at military cooperation. A group of Chinese target shooters came to France to take part in competitions and other teams followed.⁵⁸ But when a French frigate was scheduled to pay the first official visit by a Western naval unit

to China, the French cancelled the mission at the last minute. The eponym of the ship, a Lieutenant Henry, had been a French officer active in East Asia in the nineteenth century who had died in China. This would have reminded the Chinese of the imperialist past of bilateral relations and could have amounted to a loss of face.⁵⁹

Despite these problems, officers and military delegations toured the other country on a semi-official basis from 1973 onwards. Often the French reports about these trips were positive, but military relations with China remained a sensitive subject. In particular, the unequal number and treatment of visitors were a problem. Whereas in other fields the Chinese did not send abroad enough high-level cadres to balance the number of incoming visitors from the West, the opposite was true in the field of military exchange. In November 1974, for example, a French officer remarked:

The Chinese know very well how to use our goodwill, but also the frequent carelessness in our country. We make sure that some doors remain closed but we open wide all the others. No reports are made of these visits. No framework exists for this (unidirectional) exchange. Reciprocity has been an empty word for a long time: the Chinese hardly show anything at all to the French in the PRC. The only PLA facility that our military attaché could see in Beijing was a uniform tailoring.⁶⁰

Bilateral exchange in this field was nevertheless slowly extended, and in June 1976 General Mery became the first Western chief of staff to officially visit China. During his visit, he was received by Hua Guofeng, who had just been named Chinese premier, and the mission was regarded as an overall success.⁶¹ A year later, his counterpart, General Yang Chengwu came to France where he met with Prime Minister Barre and the minister of defence.⁶²

The French hoped that these visits would not only strengthen political cooperation but also lead to armament deals. In the early 1970s, Paris had hesitated to sell certain civilian products to the Chinese because of their potential strategic value. Five years later, however, French officials were quite openly speculating about becoming the main supplier for the PLA in the latter's efforts to modernise.⁶³ Following Sino-US rapprochement and the successful Helsinki conference, the international situation now seemed to allow France to contemplate supplying the PRC with some strategic goods. By the second half of the 1970s, military cooperation with China

therefore had a strong commercial component even if political doubts about such deals with the PRC persisted.

The French furthermore hoped that the visit by Yang would give new impulses to cooperation in the field of nuclear technology that started to develop in the mid-1970s.⁶⁴ Few documents on this cooperation are available but one can nevertheless observe that it was closely linked with Sino-French political and military relations and was therefore also a late product of de Gaulle's policy of the mid-1960s. After many turns, it would eventually lead to the sale of two French nuclear power plants to China in the mid-1980s.⁶⁵ Furthermore, Paris's strong and largely unchallenged position in the field of nuclear technology probably also contributed to Beijing's general demand for other types of French energy-related equipment.⁶⁶ This, together with equipment for chemical industries, was one of the few fields where French companies could sign considerable deals in the 1970s.⁶⁷

Apart from military and scientific cooperation, the French state also chose more direct ways of helping French companies in China. Among the major initiatives of the period was the French industrial exhibition in 1974. The economics ministry was directly involved in the planning and funding of the exhibition.⁶⁸ Unlike in West Germany, the French committee responsible for this kind of event, the *Comité des Foires et Manifestations Economiques à l'Etranger*, was a state agency under the control of the economics ministry. The participating companies covered one-third of FF6 million cost and the other FF4 million were paid by the state.⁶⁹ With 200,000 visitors and 309 companies on 150 stands, the exhibition was seen as the largest such venue in China up to that time. Yet, again, the success of the exhibition remained within limits. The officials in the economics ministry were particularly concerned about a lack of enthusiasm by some of the French companies involved. As usual in such cases, the Chinese had made it clear beforehand that they were only interested in high-end technology from a limited number of sectors and the organisers had to turn down applications from firms from other industries. For the officials involved, it was therefore all the more frustrating to see that some of the companies that could have offered their products to the Chinese did not bother to present their entire range in Beijing. This included cranes, coal-cutting machines and textile machines—equipment which other industrialised countries were successfully selling to China.⁷⁰

Overall, the various activities of the French state in the mid-1970s showed mixed results. There were some promising signs. In 1974, China

bought an IRIS 60 mainframe PC from the French. This deal was directly connected to Paris's efforts to set up scientific cooperation in the field of information technology.⁷¹ Similarly, the consistent attempts to interest the Chinese in nuclear collaboration seemed to pay off. In 1979, both sides signed a framework agreement in direct preparation of the final project.⁷²

French total exports to China also rose markedly after 1973 to reach all-time records in 1975 and 1976 (Table 6.1).⁷³ In these years France was also running a considerable trade surplus with China after four years of incurring deficits.⁷⁴ This seems to suggest a positive effect of French policy, including the 1974 trade fair. But the structure of bilateral commerce was more complicated than this. Unlike the Chinese exports to France, the orders of the PRC in the West in general and France in particular fluctuated strongly and often erratically. The People's Republic sold mainly raw materials to France, many of which were agricultural in origin.⁷⁵ Demand for these products was relatively stable and could be expanded progressively during the 1970s. French exports, by contrast, mainly relied on the Chinese making huge orders for complex industrial projects. One order would then be delivered over several years. Because of the high relative volume of such deals, the balance of trade was only affected with a time delay. If one looks at the development of these projects, the overall fluctuations are even more extreme. The real record years here were 1973 and, to a lesser degree, 1974 when French companies were able to sign contracts worth nearly FF2.5 billion, directly benefiting from the PRC's

Table 6.1 European trade with China in million US\$, 1973–77^a

	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977
FRG exports	311	421	523	622	501
FRG imports	150	194	223	272	288
FRG balance	161	227	300	350	213
UK exports	207	167	178	123	109
UK imports	117	156	132	153	182
UK balance	90	11	46	-30	-73
France exports	90	161	373	355	95
France imports	148	184	174	195	194
France balance	-58	-23	200	160	-99

Source: Calculations by the author, based on International Monetary Fund, Direction of Trade Statistics Database (DOTS)

^aThe figures provided are for bilateral trade in goods. 'FRG exports', for example, refers to exports from the FRG to China, 'FRG imports' stands for Chinese imports into the FRG

scheme to import Western technology.⁷⁶ Apart from the aforementioned computer, exports also included several chemical plants by Speichim, Rhone-Poulenc, and Heurtey as well as helicopters and trucks.

These successes were followed by several lean years when the total volume of orders collapsed from FF920 million in 1974 to FF29 million in 1975 before a modest recovery set in. Unlike the German companies, French ones failed to either secure add-on sales or to find Chinese clients for more regular and continuous trade. After orders had ceased coming in, the value of exports contracted in 1977 to about a quarter of the 1976 figure. The sudden drop in orders had different reasons that had to do with developments in the Chinese economy but also with the general difficulties of French growth from 1973 onwards.⁷⁷ But when compared with the numbers for Britain and Germany, they also give further credibility to some of the arguments made earlier. They seem to confirm the general failure of French companies to make serious efforts at cultivating China as a long-term market. And they add to the picture of Beijing's shifting focus of interest in Western Europe. Whether the Chinese leadership was first disappointed by the performance of French companies and then realised that neither Pompidou nor Giscard would seriously challenge the Soviets, or the other way around, is difficult to establish. In every case, France clearly failed to fulfil the Chinese expectations and lost its status as the latter's only real partner in Europe. Based on the orders of 1973 and 1974, France was China's third main supplier after Japan and the FRG until 1976. But whereas the FRG could sustain and expand its level of exports, the French fell to a dismal eighth place in 1978, behind the USA, Canada and Britain, and also behind Australia, Romania and Belgium.⁷⁸

As is true for Germany and Britain, the various activities of the French state in China followed several aims at the same time. Yet one can observe a number of encompassing trends. In the centralised political culture of the Fifth Republic, the government in Paris maintained direct control of exchange in such fields as scientific cooperation, military delegations and the organisation of industrial exhibitions. The degree of coordinated planning was clearly higher than in the other two countries studied, and even extended towards attempts at interfering with the filming of a privately produced movie. The overarching aim was first of all to improve the prospects of sales in those areas of industry that were identified and subsidised by the state as sectors of future growth, such as informatics, nuclear energy or high-tech arms. Secondly, one can observe the consistent goal to project French *grandeur* by symbolically outdoing the Western competitors, for

example in sending over the most exchange students, the highest-ranking officer or organising the biggest trade fair. These efforts were not entirely without success but eventually the limits of a medium-sized power and a stagnating economy proved impossible to overcome.

BRITAIN: IN SEARCH OF A COHERENT STRATEGY

As stated above, the British faced the same restrictions as the Germans and French in China. It is therefore not surprising that the promotion of exchange by the British government took a similar direction. The focus was on science and technology, with a direct connection to trade promotion. As a secondary objective, the government sought generally to bind China closer to Britain and to Western Europe through exchange. An important difference, however, was the use of state-funded specialist organisations by the British government. The case of the Sino-British Trade Centre has already been discussed in Chapter 4 and will receive further attention below. But before turning to economic relations in the narrow sense, it is worth looking at cultural policy in the mid-1970s.

Unlike the economic connections of pro-communist groups with the PRC, cultural exchange by such groups had received little attention by the government until 1972.⁷⁹ At first sight, this is interesting because the trade-oriented 48 Group and the Society for Anglo-Chinese Understanding (SACU) that concentrated on cultural exchange had common roots and close links. Both had originally had close contacts with the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) and were regarded as front organisations by the government.⁸⁰ After the Sino-Soviet split, these bodies distanced themselves from the CPGB but, as we have seen for the 48 Group, this did not affect the government's assessment of the groups. The president of SACU, for example, Cambridge biologist Joseph Needham, had been under MI5 surveillance since the 1930s because of various leftist activities.⁸¹ After the Sino-Soviet split he sided with China and continued sympathising with the PRC as well as with different leftist groups in Europe.⁸² Despite the changing official attitude towards China, there is no indication that British officials ever changed their view of him as an unreliable communist sympathiser.⁸³ While being at odds with his own government, Needham was also among the Westerners with the highest reputation in China and the best contacts among the CCP leadership.⁸⁴

But while the government did not make any attempts to use SACU as a mediator for forging contacts with the Chinese leadership, there were

no active steps against its work either. This changed only in 1972. With the opening of embassies came new opportunities for social exchange, and both the FCO and the British Council were afraid that SACU could extend its monopoly on organising group visits to China. In order to maintain control over social and cultural exchange with the PRC, the FCO therefore sought solutions for sidelining SACU, similarly to the creation of the Sino-British Trade Council (SBTC) in 1954.

When in the autumn of 1971 it became clear that relations would soon be normalised, plans emerged to create a rival organisation to Needham's SACU.⁸⁵ The model for the new organisation was the Great Britain/USSR Association founded a decade earlier for coordinating exchange with the Soviet Union. In close cooperation with the British Council, a China committee was established with a similar aim. Since 'securing an impressive "letter head" of sponsors interested in China' was crucial, the FCO drew up a list of first and second choices for the main posts who were then approached by civil servants.⁸⁶ Members should come from the main political parties, the Royal Society, the SBTC, the British Academy and the universities.⁸⁷ Initially, the organisation was housed by the British Council and funded out of the latter's budget.

The GBCC, first as the Great Britain China Committee and then as the Great Britain China Centre, was created in March 1972. But it only went public shortly after the Chinese archaeological exhibition in 1973 in London. The exhibition, the FCO believed, would 'create a climate of enthusiasm for the recruitment to the new Centre'.⁸⁸ From then on, the FCO had a tool to control and channel exchange with China. In the following years the activities of the Centre expanded progressively, and it came to play an important role in organising group visits to the PRC and cultural events in the UK.

At the same time the GBCC, much like the SBTC in the field of trade, also divided the potential for cultural exchange with China. In the mid-1970s, SACU continued to move to the political left and was slowly marginalised by the GBCC's competition. But due to its experience and network, Needham's organisation maintained an astonishing level of activity and remained the leading organiser of private trips to China.⁸⁹ Furthermore, the Chinese leaders did not stop giving the organisation preferential treatment in several ways, not least by receiving SACU groups with considerable protocol.⁹⁰ The personal contacts of SACU's leadership therefore continued to exist but could not be used for government objectives such as facilitating British exports to China or scientific cooperation.

Shortly after the exchange of ambassadors, bilateral contacts nevertheless made a promising start. The visit of the London Philharmonic Orchestra in 1973 was a success and one of the two landmark events of that year, together with the archaeological exhibition mentioned above.⁹¹ Likewise, the exchange in science and especially education expanded quickly.⁹² Compared to its European competitors, the UK had a clear advantage with regard to linguistic exchange. It seems that the Chinese leadership had taken the clear and early decision to turn towards English as the main foreign language to be taught at schools after having abandoned Russian. China was therefore in clear need of English skills and Britain seemed the best supplier.⁹³ Consequently, language exchange developed far more easily for Britain than for Germany or France. British diplomats were conscious of this first-mover advantage and sought to use this 'unique opportunity to influence future opinion formers and customers in a country whose importance to us and in the world is likely to increase radically over the coming decades'.⁹⁴ As a result, the number of Chinese language students in Britain soon exceeded that of all other Western countries combined. As early as 1972, China was willing to send 200 students a year, of whom 150 came to Britain in 1973.⁹⁵

Yet, the division between SACU and the government also affected the language exchange as the FCO and the British Council sought to shield the incoming students from any influence of circles they did not like, particularly the 'psychophantic [sic] clutches' of SACU.⁹⁶ It also seemed important that the Chinese students should appreciate Britain's culture and way of life without liking their host country too much: 'While we would like the students to become as closely integrated into British life as other good foreign students, we do not want them to become so enamoured with our way of life that they defect. To avoid this, we will encourage a reasonable amount of contact between the students and the Embassy'.⁹⁷ To sum up, the British policy regarding language students was slightly schizophrenic as the government sought to keep the students separated from British friends of the PRC but not to let them get estranged from their motherland either.

Following an agreement between the Royal Society and the Academia Sinica in 1972, a small scientific exchange developed.⁹⁸ Much as in France, there was a commercial edge to the exchange. Furthermore, it was argued that 'Britain [had] a broad political interest in involving China more closely with the EEC and ourselves and science [was] a field where this [could] be achieved'.⁹⁹ In this vein, three British scientists were sent to a British

machine tool exhibition in Beijing and companies like Hawker Siddeley and Rolls Royce started to include scientific internships for Chinese engineers in the framework of the Trident and Spey deals. Apart from aeronautics, focal points were, as in France, nuclear energy and information technology.¹⁰⁰

Yet one has to distinguish between the British and French approaches. The increased attention to commercial aspects of scientific cooperation seems to have been in large part a reaction to the French moves, out of fear of losing the competition for the future Chinese market in high-end technology.¹⁰¹ Unlike the French, the British scientific institutions involved were difficult to control and less state-centred. The Royal Society, one FCO official complained, was too focused on academic research and therefore not very useful as a vehicle for promoting British engineering.¹⁰² So even though there was considerable direct involvement of the state, the British programmes of exchange were less focused and somewhat less effective than those of France. Whereas the French concentrated over a long time on a limited number of scientific cooperation projects in the hope of helping the national industrial champions in these fields, the FCO had the objective of bringing China towards a pro-Western line and of seeking cooperation in as many fields as possible. This corresponds to the overall set of aims in China policy. In addition to the continued interest in cultivating the PRC as a client for British exports, the security of Hong Kong had to be considered and, apart from a short period in 1974 and 1975, the People's Republic was regarded as a geopolitical partner against the Soviets. But none of these very different aims had a clear priority. It therefore looks as though the British government started numerous initiatives, such as the creation of the GBCC and cooperation between the Academia Sinica and the Royal Society, but failed to coordinate them and follow them through over a longer period of time, as the French did.

As with cultural diplomacy, there was considerable state activity in the field of direct trade promotion. But again one does not detect a comprehensive strategy over the entire period and there were several setbacks. The relatively poor trade record of the UK in the early and mid-1970s is explained by reasons that lay beyond the direct influence of the government.¹⁰³ Most important among them was British companies' lack of competitiveness due to their inability to quote fixed prices in a period of high inflation in Britain.¹⁰⁴ But the government's policies also played a role and it therefore makes sense to compare these actions with those of the French and Germans.

A case in point is the government's treatment of the two business associations discussed in Chapter 4—the state-sponsored SBTC and the independent 48 Group. Ironically, just as the government intensified efforts to sideline left-leaning China enthusiasts in the field of culture, the ideological confrontation with regard to trade became less salient. By the mid-1970s, most companies involved with the 48 Group seemed to care more about making business deals with China than about the country's ideology. Consequently, the Board of Trade and the FCO became more willing to see the SBTC work hand in hand with the 48 Group.¹⁰⁵ Together, the two associations organised the British industrial exhibition in China in 1973. Yet the successful cooperation was not to last long. After 20 years of competition, the main figures in both organisations had developed such a level of personal hostility towards each other that effective cooperation proved very difficult.¹⁰⁶ Because of this, the government continued supporting the SBTC as its main vehicle of export promotion and the 48 Group kept up its own, independent work. This prevented the British government from making use of the particular personal standing of some leading figures in the 48 Group in Beijing.¹⁰⁷ It was only in the early 1980s that the conflicts between the two groups became less acute and a possible merger was directly considered.¹⁰⁸

Apart from the relation with the two trade organisations, the second big field of government activity remained aeronautics. The Trident project was extended over the course of 1973 and 1974 to eventually reach 35 aircraft.¹⁰⁹ Soon after the conclusion of the initial Trident deal, negotiations over the sale of Spey jet engines entered a critical phase. In addition to importing a substantial number of these state-of-the-art engines, Beijing also wanted to acquire the necessary technology to build up its own production line. From the British point of view, the export of Spey meant a logical continuation of the Trident sale. But it was also another step towards giving the Chinese access to sophisticated defence technology. From the start, it was clear that the project was potentially the biggest case of technology transfer from the West to China since 1949. It would be the prelude to a licensing agreement and a manifestation of Britain's leading position in the Chinese market for aeronautical technology. As it was put in the Cabinet's subcommittee for strategic exports in 1973, 'it would now be wise to treat the Spey order as the key to the fate of the remaining business'.¹¹⁰

There was, however, again the question of what to do about CoCom. Giving the PRC full access to the technology of Spey was in clear breach

of the committee's regulation. Furthermore, the British government was afraid that communicating the fact of the ongoing negotiations to all allies would attract unwanted competition in the only field of exports to China where the UK had really had some success.¹¹¹ At the same time, it was crucial to keep at least the Americans informed and get their support. The Nixon Government, however, sent contradictory signals. On the one hand, Henry Kissinger confirmed that, strategically speaking, the USA was in favour of strengthening China through the Spey deal.¹¹² But when the case was formally submitted to CoCom in 1973, the USA 'put forward an objection couched in exceptionally uncompromising terms'.¹¹³ The British government believed that one reason for this was the US efforts at accommodating the Soviets during a crucial stage of Washington's détente policy towards Moscow. The Americans indeed used the argument of not alienating the Soviets in their attempts to convince Britain to stop the project. But above all it was the concern that a communist country would get full access to first-rate aircraft technology that caused US opposition in CoCom.¹¹⁴

Following further assurance from Kissinger, however, the UK government finally decided to bypass CoCom and directly authorise Rolls Royce to sign the Spey deal. Though eventually successful, the episode showed how difficult it would be to further develop the Chinese market for aeronautics.

In the end, it proved easier to convince the allies of the deal than the Chinese themselves. Especially after the British election in February 1974 and in the months prior to the referendum on British EC membership in 1975, the Chinese seemed decidedly unsure about the Spey deal with Britain.¹¹⁵ The course of events thus showed the direct connections the Chinese made between political developments in Europe and decisions on Sino-European trade. From a British point of view, problems concerning Spey underlined the difficulties of bilateral relations during most of the second premiership of Harold Wilson. But the negotiations also highlighted the fact that in most practical matters the Wilson Government actually pursued policies very similar to those developed under Heath, for the Spey deal was supported with the same energy as before. Just prior to signing, the Chinese again raised numerous objections on prices and legal matters. This led to frustration on the British side and a considerable reduction in the size of the deal. Though still profitable and by far the biggest bilateral business project, it eventually only covered some £80 million and not over £100 million as had initially been planned.¹¹⁶ For Beijing,

the deal meant a breakthrough after 25 years of strict enforcement of the Western embargo against it.¹¹⁷

Yet the Spey deal also effectively marked the end of the line for the British in terms of strategic cooperation. The Chinese interest in Harrier combat aircraft was still to be 'hedged'. But at the same time the Cabinet in London made clear that military cooperation should not be extended to actual arms deals.¹¹⁸ Referring to the Spey deal, the officials in the Ministry of Defence argued, 'we believe that HMG [Her Majesty's Government] would not wish to repeat such a saga, and therefore see very limited opportunity for the development of defence relations through defence sales in the foreseeable future'.¹¹⁹ Given the challenges that had to be overcome to make the deal work, this attitude is certainly understandable. Yet in order to develop a long-term partnership in aeronautics, it would have needed the opposite signal. For the Chinese, the Spey project was in many ways an experiment. Rather than relying on reverse engineering, they would import technology to produce a highly sophisticated product based on Western licences. The better this worked, the more likely it would be that they would seek further cooperation with Britain. But against the background of economic difficulties at home and a relatively low priority of China policy in the FCO, the decisionmakers in London felt unable to meet the Chinese wishes for a comprehensive technology partnership.

The overall picture one gets of the British policy towards China in the fields of scientific, cultural and economic exchange is a contradictory one. There were several serious government initiatives and real progress, especially up to 1974. This applied to 'hard' sectors such as the sale of aircraft technology as well as the 'soft' field of student exchange. These policies were continued after Labour took over from the Conservatives in 1974. Yet no clear strategy was apparent, particularly after 1974. On the one hand, the Spey deal was pursued by the Labour Government with much energy and brought to a successful close. On the other hand, military exchange did not seriously develop because of hesitations about a lack of parliamentary support.¹²⁰ Both the government-sponsored SBTC and the GBCC were eventually criticised for being inefficient and not living up to their tasks.¹²¹ Yet the Wilson Government refused to take real steps towards overcoming the Cold War mentality among these organisations. What seems to have contributed to this lack of clear direction was that both the Chinese and the British political leaderships were distracted in their relationships to each other. In Britain, the precarious economic situation and political instability needed all the attention of the political elites,

and the CCP leadership was absorbed with internal struggles over Mao's succession. Whereas the diplomats and civil servants on the ground kept working on individual projects such as the student exchange or the cooperation with the government-sponsored entities, there was no clear sense of direction for these initiatives, especially during the mid-1970s.

Until the February elections of 1974, the Heath Government, while still keeping the Maoists out, quite clearly worked towards closer relations with the PRC in terms of politics, trade and culture. Then the Wilson Government took over with its greater distance towards Beijing, Wilson's 1975 Moscow trip, and the EC referendum. All this greatly irritated the Chinese. From the autumn of 1975 onwards, the internal struggles in the CCP leadership in turn paralysed most aspects of foreign relations on the Chinese side. It was only in 1977 that a new sense of direction could be felt in the British policy towards China with the attempt to bring together the experience in selling aeronautical technology, the government's support for scientific exchange, and the newly arising interest in the PRC as Cold War ally as European détente became increasingly difficult.

WEST GERMANY: HIGH IDEALS AND HARD-HEADED BUSINESSMEN

In the case of the FRG, research on the general evolution of cultural diplomacy in the 1970s has advanced relatively far. Since this evolution provided the background to the establishment of cultural and scientific cooperation with the PRC, it makes sense to take a closer look at them. Up until the 1960s, the FRG had followed a largely conventional style of promoting its national image abroad by presenting German achievements in the cultural sphere through events such as classical concerts and art exhibitions.¹²² Not surprisingly, an important stimulus for such activities had been the desire to overcome the negative image of Germany created by the Second World War, and to counter it with a positive vision of enlightened Western civilisation.

With the advent of the social-liberal coalition under Brandt, however, the situation had begun to change. More than simply taking over the government after years of opposition, the SPD aspired to introduce a general sense of reform into the political debate. Having fled from Nazi Germany with an untainted record of antifascism, Brandt set out to redefine the FRG's role in the world and, at the same time, 'dare more democracy' at

home.¹²³ This latter, domestic, agenda was not entirely unconnected from foreign policy developments. One of the leading intellectuals who had helped prepare the ground for many of the aforementioned reforms was the sociologist Ralf Dahrendorf. Apart from an impressive academic career in Britain and Germany, Dahrendorf had been a prominent voice within the liberal FDP, arguing in favour of a social-liberal profile and cooperation with the Social Democrats.¹²⁴ In 1969, he was made parliamentary state secretary in the foreign ministry. There he took over responsibility for reassessing the FRG's cultural diplomacy or 'foreign cultural policy' (*Auswärtige Kulturpolitik*). Dahrendorf only stayed for a few months before leaving in frustration over his lack of influence.¹²⁵ Yet during his short time in office, he produced a remarkable paper on the future design of cultural diplomacy that was published in 1970.¹²⁶ In these 'theses on foreign cultural policy', Dahrendorf presented his vision of an holistic cultural diplomacy that he described as 'foreign societal policy' (*Auswärtige Gesellschaftspolitik*). Instead of exporting German culture, the focus was on creating a two-way exchange in which a wide range of social actors (such as churches, trade unions and the German political foundations) was to participate. The Dahrendorf paper provided important inspiration for an ongoing debate on the aims and means of foreign cultural policy, as can be seen in the report of a Bundestag committee of enquiry that was published in 1975.¹²⁷ It took up the spirit of Dahrendorf's paper as well as Egon Bahr's concept of 'change through rapprochement' and the development policy of Erhard Eppler who had been in charge of development cooperation between 1968 and 1974.¹²⁸ Both the Dahrendorf paper and the report of the committee were thus products of a similar, high-minded spirit to alter the practice of diplomacy in order to seek a real dialogue on a broad base. In spite of the often moralistic rhetoric, the government of the FRG and its agents still pursued interests that were often very tangible. In the fields of culture and development aid, export promotion and competition with the GDR remained important motives throughout the whole of the 1970s. But there was also at least a tendency towards welcoming cultural exchange with other countries as an end in itself. This can be seen, for example, in a document from 1974 that summarised in telegraphic style, 'positive balance sheet not yet sufficient. Aim: German-Chinese relations not just as a function of Sino-Soviet conflict but with its own significance [...] broadly based cooperation in all sectors has to be continued.'¹²⁹

In practical terms, West German cultural diplomacy resembled British and French policies. The Max Planck Society signed an agreement with

the Academia Sinica in 1974, there were bilateral matches in minor sports like badminton and amateur football, and a student exchange was slowly set up.¹³⁰ Where the different approach was arguably felt most was in the absence of strategic intervention by the state in this exchange. Scientific cooperation was left to the Max Planck Society without guiding the latter's interest towards sectors that seemed important to German industries as happened in France. Likewise, there were no attempts to cut out perceived Maoists from Sino-German exchange. When diplomatic relations were established in 1972, a number of pro-Chinese cultural organisations sprung up in Berlin, Hamburg, Stuttgart, Düsseldorf, Frankfurt and Munich, joined by an older group in Cologne. Similarly to SACU in Britain, these groups were thought to be directed by people with left-wing leanings, spreading Beijing's propaganda.¹³¹ The West German foreign ministry was nonetheless relaxed about pro-PRC activities in the Federal Republic and saw no need for action.

It was only from 1977 onwards that academic exchange became more focused. During a visit by the federal minister for research and technology, Hans Matthöfer, the two sides signed a protocol that set out the main areas of cooperation. These concentrated on sectors close to German industries already active in China, such as steel production. Even here the choice of focal areas was apparently mainly driven by the Chinese. Bonn aimed to broaden scientific exchange and it seemed easiest to do this in the fields where German exporters had already opened doors. In other words, unlike in the other countries, it was not only academic exchange that was to be used to foster exports but also the other way round.¹³²

Furthermore, the cooperation between state and industry functioned much along the same lines as had developed until 1972. Through the Eastern Committee, there existed a regular but indirect exchange between the ministries in Bonn and the main corporations involved in China. The government supported attempts to expand exports to the PRC but there was little interference with the actual activities of FRG companies in the PRC. Another important difference to Britain and France was the clear and principled decision of the German government not to allow exports of strategic goods to any region affected by political crisis, including China. This meant that even in the case of a large project like the Wuhan steel mill contracted in 1974, there was little need for government intervention or for seeking the agreement of other countries.¹³³

In other words, the structure of bilateral commerce gave the German authorities little to worry about (except for the question of how to increase

imports from China in the long run) and there was thus little need to interfere with China trade. Arguably, the most important example of public-private partnership with regard to China was the 1975 German industrial exhibition Technogerma. The situation in 1975 was originally not altogether in the West Germans' favour. There had already been 18 industrial exhibitions by other Western countries. Most important among these had been the ones organised by Britain and France in 1973 and 1974, where several companies presented themselves that directly competed with those from the FRG. The officials in Bonn understood that these two events had set new standards of Western trade promotion in China.¹³⁴ There thus existed a certain pressure for the German exhibition to outshine those of Britain and France and to make up for lost time. What helped was that the Chinese themselves were showing great interest in a German exhibition, not least to overcome the impression that bilateral relations had suffered after the Strauss visit in February.¹³⁵ If this interpretation of the Chinese actions is correct, bilateral relations ironically benefited from the Chinese treatment of Strauss in 1975. Arguably the negative reactions of the FRG press and government to the visit worked as a wake-up call and led to intensified efforts on the Chinese side to woo German businessmen and government politicians.

Without determined action on the German side it would nevertheless not have been possible to set up a project that could compare with those orchestrated by the governments in London and Paris. For all practical matters the Technogerma of 1975 was planned and managed by the *Ausstellungs- und Messe-Ausschuss der Deutschen Wirtschaft (AUMA)*, an organisation run by the main trade-fair companies in Germany and the major industrial associations, including the sponsoring bodies of the Eastern Committee. The AUMA commission responsible for the Technogerma was led by the chairman of the Eastern Committee's China Commission, Heinz Hufnagel, a close associate of the *eminence grise* of German China trade, Otto Wolff.¹³⁶ He was seconded by the secretary of the China Commission, Rolf Audouard, who also joined the board of the organising commission for the Technogerma.¹³⁷ In other words, the exhibition was organised by the Eastern Committee, which could employ its expertise and the personal connections of its leaders with the PRC. Since it was clear that the fees of participating companies could not cover the costs, the economics ministry provided a grant of DM4 million and the foreign ministry covered the travel costs for the organisers of another DM40,000.¹³⁸ Apart from that there was little involvement by the

government and the China Committee was left to fend for itself, negotiating with the Chinese and dealing with the companies that took part in the exhibition in Beijing.

The stage for the Technogerma was set by a Chinese exhibition in Cologne in the summer of 1975. This became the biggest event of this sort that the PRC had organised abroad, and no fewer than 190,000 people came to Cologne to see it.¹³⁹ The Chinese organisers benefited from the location of Cologne, close to the densely populated regions of West Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium and France. They also attracted visitors by putting on display arts and crafts, and selling Chinese food.¹⁴⁰ By doing so they again highlighted the basic asymmetry in Sino-Western relations because when dealing with the organisers of the Technogerma, they insisted that only the latest technology be shown. Any cultural displays beyond technical films were ruled out.¹⁴¹ While this was frustrating for the diplomats interested in cultural exchange, Hufnagel and Audouard did not protest as they concentrated on the commercial aspects of the exhibition.

The Technogerma itself became a huge success. There were clearly more sales than during the French and British exhibitions but nowhere near enough to even cover a substantial part of the government subsidies.¹⁴² Yet, this had not been the expectation of any of the parties involved. What mattered was presenting a positive image of German industries in China, and doing better than Britain and France. Though the German government had to pay about 50 % more than the French, it could convincingly argue that it had scored the symbolic success of organising the biggest industrial fair in China to date. No fewer than 350 German companies were present at the event, and in total 260,000 Chinese visitors came to see the fair.¹⁴³ The symbolic dimension should not be underestimated as diplomats of all three countries tended to compare their national performance with that of the others. This comparison could be used to justify actions and served also as a motivation for the governments' agents on the ground.¹⁴⁴

More important, however, the Technogerma reflected a dimension of Sino-German relations that would become crucial once the reforms took off in China. On the German side, the business representatives had managed to organise a very impressive display of German industrial clout. For the most part, German businesses were highly interested in taking part in the show, confirming the earlier impression that West German exporters, including many small and medium-sized companies, were more eager to

conquer the Chinese market than their French and British counterparts.¹⁴⁵ Most companies gave very positive feedback, showing their belief that investing in a presence within the PRC was worthwhile.¹⁴⁶ The exhibition indeed helped boost exports, particularly in those sectors where German engineering and manufacturing were strongest, such as steel tubes, chemical products and machinery, thus further strengthening the position of German companies in these crucial areas (Table 6.2).

On the Chinese side, the exhibition came at the right time to strengthen the trend towards concentrating on the FRG as a major partner in Europe. During the months of the exhibition, a study was published by the University of Shanghai that used Western material to present Germany's reconstruction after the war.¹⁴⁷ Being available only to higher-level cadres, it contained much Marxist language and references to Mao. Its message was nevertheless clear. The Federal Republic had successfully managed what Chinese leaders dreamed of—building a first-class developed economy from virtual rubble. The Technogerma further contributed to this positive image of the FRG as a rich, successful, high-tech industrialised country. According to German journalists, the free give-away bags became icons of style in the mostly drab world of Chinese communism.¹⁴⁸

In the short run, 1975 was the peak of German success in China. As in the case of France, most orders for German industries concerned projects that were implemented over several years. This pushed up export figures

Table 6.2 Structure of German trade with China in million DM, before and after the Technogerma exhibition

<i>Imports</i>	1974	1975	<i>Exports</i>	1974	1975
Preserved fruits and vegetables	54.3	52.7	Steel tubes	248.5	501.2
Articles of gut	54.0	61.7	Iron sheet	176.9	98.7
Chemical semi-finished goods	26.3	22.8	Rod Iron	84.4	49.8
Bedsprings	25.4	21.4	Semi-finished chemical products	81.8	105.3
Industrial rocks and minerals	18.9	20.5	Other machinery	67.4	104.6
Leather goods	17.2	20.0	Means of transport	64.3	22.6
Crop plants	14.8	10.4	Machine tools	35.7	99.1

Source: PA AA, Zwischenarchiv 103.163, Entwicklung der deutsch-chinesischen Wirtschaftsbeziehungen, 3 November 1976

for 1976 while in fact the number of new orders dropped for the first time since 1972. The main reasons for this, however, can be found in the general crisis of the People's Republic that saw the death of three of its main leaders, one of the most devastating earthquakes in human history, and a series of very serious leadership struggles all within less than a year. Once this crisis had come to a close with the arrest of the 'Gang of Four' and its followers, the prospects for German exports almost immediately improved. The official visit by foreign minister Hans Dietrich Genscher in 1977 was already proof of this encouraging development.¹⁴⁹ It became the first modern official visit in that Genscher was accompanied by a group of business representatives. The latter were not only interested in getting a general impression of the PRC but in advancing specific export projects. The group again included Wolff, Hufnagel and Audouard, and the public feedback from Germans and Chinese was strongly encouraging.¹⁵⁰ Yet these were merely silver linings on the horizon. It was only from the beginning of 1978 onwards that the real impact of the new Chinese leadership could be felt.

CONCLUSION

The time between 1973 and 1977 was a transitional period in several ways. In China, there was first of all the transition from the Cultural Revolution to the Reform Era, from Maoism to the collective leadership under Deng Xiaoping. This could be felt in the asymmetric structure of exchange whereby some projects of scientific exchange and the import of modern technology from Western Europe became possible while almost any kind of European cultural performance in China was ruled out as counter-revolutionary. Consequently, government activities of the three Western European states were mainly confined to promoting cooperation in the fields of research and trade. Even though progress was slow, these projects prepared the ground for the rapid expansion of economic exchange after 1978.

Despite thus facing similar challenges, the three countries followed different routes to move from the 1950s and 1960s logic of superpower conflict in Europe towards the late twentieth-century logic of globalisation. In the French case we can identify a largely coherent set of dirigiste policies whereby scientific exchange, political visits, and military cooperation had the common aim of projecting French *grandeur* and promoting a long-term Chinese interest in the products of select French industries. This

corresponded with parallel attempts at continuing an independent China policy in the style of de Gaulle. Through high-level political meetings and promotion of specific types of exchange, the French government tried to preserve its status as China's privileged partner. Giscard and Pompidou considered this as an end in itself but also as a means to raise their influence in global affairs, especially in Moscow and Washington. This policy showed some success, both politically and economically, if one takes for example the visit by Deng Xiaoping in 1975 or the cooperation in the field of civil nuclear technology. Yet there was no decisive breakthrough and the limits of French great-power policy were becoming increasingly visible. In the context of the oil shock and superpower détente, France simply lacked the critical mass (politically and economically) to have major influence in China.

British policy resembled the French approach in some important ways, at least until 1974. With its pro-European position, the Heath Government seemed to accept that Britain's capabilities as a global power were limited and left behind imperial ambitions. At least in China, this produced positive results. After the crisis of 1967 and the frustration over US interference in the process of diplomatic normalisation, Sino-British relations improved rapidly after 1972 because Mao greatly appreciated Britain's embrace of Europe. With regard to commercial and cultural relations, the Heath Government similarly pursued a policy of actively intervening in order to fully capitalise on the potential that Britain (rather than the Empire or the Commonwealth) provided in terms of international influence. The interventionist approach was reflected in the focus on aeronautical trade, the continued support for the SBTC and the creation of the GBCC in order to guide private cultural intercourse with the PRC. This relatively coherent ensemble of policies showed promising results, including closer and closer political ties and the developing negotiations over Spey engines. Yet after Heath left the stage, Britain's China policy lost momentum and a clear sense of direction. Some policies were continued under Wilson, such as the support for aeronautical exports and the use of government-sponsored trade and cultural organisations. But at the same time the Chinese personal treatment of Heath, Wilson's trip to Moscow in 1975, and the referendum about EC membership led to a cool-down of relations. Furthermore, the domestic problems (in both Britain and China) made it difficult to redefine a clear line of policy. The question of what role Britain could and should play in Asia was therefore still unanswered when the Chinese reform policy began.

For Germany, finally, the main factors influencing state activities in China were the tradition of economic diplomacy in the context of German corporatism, the idealistic approach towards cultural diplomacy developed under the social-liberal coalition, and the commitment to détente in Europe by the Brandt and Schmidt Governments. These factors led to a policy that refrained from any strategic cooperation and supported bilateral exchange on pragmatic terms. Though the FRG was consequently less successful than Britain or France in the fields of academic and cultural exchange, it further developed its position as the main economic partner of the PRC in Western Europe. Following the consolidation of *Ostpolitik* and the comparatively strong performance of the German economy after the crises of 1973, the political weight of Bonn increased in Europe and beyond. Though still severely limited in its freedom of manoeuvre, the FRG government took tentative steps towards a greater presence in China. This became obvious during the 1975 visit by Schmidt and the Technogerma in Beijing. Yet the success of German export industries and (more important still) the particular Cold War imperatives in the divided Germany meant that Bonn did not use its increasing influence for tangible strategic purposes. Instead, almost any kind of exchange seemed in the interest of West Germany and was therefore supported by the government.

This leads finally to the question of European influence on China. In their different ways all three governments basically continued strategies that had the effect of increasing global stability. Unlike in the nineteenth century, the European countries appeared as partners willing to support China's modernisation without encroaching on its sovereignty. They reacted to Beijing's almost desperate search for allies against détente in a way that strengthened the moderates in the PRC leadership but did not substantially affect relations with Moscow. They did so by fostering economic exchange with China, promoting technology transfer, and expressing a general interest in closer ties without seriously raising the option of 'playing the China Card' through a real strategic cooperation with Beijing. Consequently, the Europeans contributed to Beijing's continuing its pro-Western policies without this leading to an escalation of Sino-Soviet tensions.

The ‘Alliance Era’ and Strategic Cooperation with China, 1978–82

Sino-European relations in the late 1970s and early 1980s were marked by two key developments: the Chinese policy of ‘reform and opening’ and, interrelatedly, the heightening of Cold War tensions around the world. Within China the last phase of the Cultural Revolution and the instability in the party leadership were replaced by a reform policy under Hua Guofeng and Deng Xiaoping.¹ These reforms were not set out as a coherent system of long-term strategies. Instead they were developed through an incremental process that saw several fundamental changes of policy. But a number of key features were prominent over almost the entire period from 1978 until the early 1990s. These included the progressive reintroduction of market principles in agriculture and industry, the rebuilding of education and research institutions, the import of modern technology, and the eventual opening of China to foreign trade and investment.

DENG’S REFORMS AND THE CRISIS OF DÉTENTE

What particularly matters for our purposes are the two first phases of reform policies. Between the end of 1977 and early 1979 Beijing pursued a course of economic modernisation that had the aim of rapidly developing China’s heavy industries with the help of imported Western turnkey plants, mostly financed by foreign loans.² Until Sino-US relations were normalised, this coincided with an orientation towards Japan and Western Europe as the PRC’s main suppliers of capital and technology.³ Beijing’s strategy, which

is sometimes compared to the industrial policy of the Great Leap Forward, soon ran into difficulties, not completely unlike those experienced after 1958.⁴ The industrial framework of the PRC proved unable to absorb the imported technology, and inflation as well as foreign debt threatened to spiral out of control.⁵ While maintaining the overall aim of modernising China's economy, the priorities therefore changed. Between 1979 and the early 1980s the PRC followed a policy of 'readjustment' whereby orders for industrial plants were put on hold or cancelled. The CCP leadership shifted the focus to macroeconomic stability and growth in agriculture and light industries. Though not directly related, this was accompanied by a shift in foreign policy. Following the establishment of diplomatic relations at the beginning of 1979, and Deng's famous visit to the USA in the spring of that year, the PRC turned towards the USA as the main model and outside driving force of the modernisation process.⁶ This also reduced the importance of Sino-European relations for Beijing. Yet at the same time Beijing remained in almost desperate need of partners abroad while facing a number of challenges. Despite the aforementioned turn towards the USA as the main source of technology and inspiration, bilateral problems were far from solved, at least until about 1982.⁷ With the 'Taiwan Relations Act' passed in April 1979 and Ronald Reagan (an outspoken anticommunist who had publicly expressed his support for the GMD on Taiwan) elected president the following year, Sino-US relations continued to be marked by tensions as well as cooperation.⁸ Similarly important was the escalation of the conflict with the former Vietnamese ally in early 1979. In a dramatic fashion, the attack on Vietnam demonstrated the low combat value of the PLA and led to acute fears of open warfare on the Sino-Soviet border. In the following years, Beijing had to face hostile powers in the North and the South, while trying hard to avoid further confrontation in order to gain breathing space to modernise its industries and military.⁹ Maintaining close ties with London, Paris and Bonn therefore remained crucial for keeping up pressure on Moscow and tapping into the resources of the advanced economies of Europe. Despite the USA replacing the Europeans as the main Western point of reference for China, the overall prospects of economic exchange dramatically improved for Western Europe after 1977 and in many ways, the Western Europeans provided crucial support for the reform process.

The other main development concerned the (re-)intensification of Cold War confrontations in Europe and beyond. Shortly after the 1975 Helsinki Conference the process of *détente* ground to a halt and tensions intensi-

fied from 1977 onwards.¹⁰ Progress on the main issues of disarmament and troop reductions seemed impossible. Furthermore, proxy conflicts outside Europe created the impression that the Soviet Union was bent on a course of overall expansion.¹¹ In 1979 and 1980, the diplomatic climate between the two blocs then turned dramatically cooler, marked by events such as the election of outspokenly anti-Soviet governments in Britain and the USA, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the NATO double-track decision to counter the deployment of modern Soviet medium-range missiles in Europe. The declaration of martial law in Poland in December 1981 further added to the sense of tension between the blocs.¹² These parallel and partly connected developments forced European governments to reconsider their relations with Moscow as well as with Beijing. Central was the question of how to strengthen ties with China as a possible partner against the Soviet Union and more specifically whether or not to deliver strategic technology to it.

The following two chapters take a closer look at how the governments in Bonn, Paris and London reacted to the challenges of Cold War tensions and the reforms in China. In this chapter, I discuss European policies towards the PRC that followed the resurgence of the question of if and how to play the ‘China Card’ against the USSR. This is done by studying how the three countries set about selling defence technology to the PRC and how they used the opportunities arising from a number of top-level meetings, including the first Chinese state visit to Western Europe by Hua Guofeng in the autumn of 1979.

Chapter 8 then moves on to the policies of export promotion and scientific and technical cooperation outside of armament. As a CIA report neatly summarised China’s approach towards Europe in 1978: ‘For Peking, two considerations are dominant: rapid economic development and greater security vis-à-vis the Soviets’.¹³ This chapter concentrates more on the security aspects whereas the following one looks at the economic dimension.

FRANCE: NEW COOPERATION AND OLD DILEMMAS

French China policy after 1977 was marked by ambivalence. Until 1979, the Giscard Government stressed the overall advantages of closer Sino-French relations that could even include military collaboration. But when Cold War tensions intensified, France backed away from such plans and concentrated on its efforts to save détente in Europe. Crucial to this shift

was the French assessment of the superpowers. At least until the beginning of 1979, French experts identified the fear of China as the primary driving force of Soviet policy.¹⁴ Furthermore, there was a considerable degree of scepticism about the perceived naiveté and idealism of President Carter.¹⁵ Together, this raised French concerns about a possible agreement between Washington and Moscow that would neutralise Europe and lead to a Soviet veto on European trade with China.¹⁶ What became apparent here was the old French fear of falling victim to a bilateral settlement by the superpowers. In this situation, an increase of China's strength could bind Soviet forces and reduce Moscow's ability to interfere with French interests in Africa.¹⁷ Furthermore, as during the early and mid-1970s, Sino-French cooperation seemed like a way of increasing Paris's influence with both superpowers.¹⁸ This explains the increasing French interest in collaborating with Beijing on a global scale, including trade in sophisticated weaponry.

The initial policy of the PRC in this regard brought new opportunities for the French to (re)establish privileged relations and benefit from the already high quality of political dialogue. France generally welcomed the new Chinese openness and continued its policy of high-level consultations. In 1978 Raymond Barre became the first Western head of government to meet with the Chinese leadership after the death of Mao, and by mid-1979 Ambassador Arnaud could still point out that 'during the past years, none of our European partners has received such a great number of [...] Chinese delegations'.¹⁹ In total, the French ambassador estimated the number of people involved in bilateral visits to have been over 6,000 for 1978 alone.²⁰ This figure indicates that the character of bilateral missions had started to change. The delegations of the early and mid-1970s had been important occasions for high and top-level decisionmakers to exchange views on political matters. But from late 1977 onwards, many more mid-level cadres were involved who went to the West to get ideas and direct support for China's modernisation.²¹ In other words, the transnational exchange through these official visits gained in depth. Since France had already been the main destination for visitors from China before the beginning of the reform policy, it also preserved an important position afterwards. But at the same time political factors became less important for the mid-level delegations and this progressively reduced the French advantage because other economies could offer similar or even better technology in many of the fields that the Chinese were interested in.

Apart from the increasing frequency of official delegations travelling both ways, there was also a substantial improvement regarding political cooperation, most importantly in the field of disarmament talks. Already in the 1960s, China and France had had common interests with regard to nuclear proliferation.²² When the two countries normalised relations, China was just about to acquire a nuclear capability and the French *force de frappe* was merely four years old. Both countries regarded the attempts of the superpowers and Britain to limit the development of nuclear weapons as an impediment to national independence.²³ But the initial French hopes that the Chinese might support them on these matters in the UN were largely disappointed. While the influence of the Cultural Revolution was still strong, the PRC simply used the UN as a platform for ideological declarations attacking the superpowers and in particular the USSR.²⁴ A real cooperation with France was therefore impossible.

This changed, however, when the ‘Gang of Four’ was removed from power and the reform and opening policy began to take hold. Suddenly the UN became of interest to the PRC in its search for international stability and material support for modernisation. In this context, France with its veto power in the Security Council appeared increasingly valuable as a partner.²⁵ By then, the French position on nuclear non-proliferation had begun to shift towards a more collaborative stance concerning multilateral agreements. But especially with regard to conventional disarmament there were still striking parallels.²⁶ Paris actively supported the entry of the PRC in the disarmament commission and the Chinese were grateful for being informed beforehand about the French point of view on a number of matters.²⁷ In the late 1970s and early 1980s, both countries promoted the idea of general disarmament without touching on the sovereignty of smaller nations. At the same time there was a parallel change in policy towards greater participation in the international systems of arms control.²⁸ This put France and China in a very similar situation and created a sense of shared interests. In 1978, the French foreign minister even commented on a report about Chinese support for a French position: ‘[I]f the Chinese did not exist, one would have to invent them! What great allies for New York. Encourage them’.²⁹

Though this cooperation produced few long-lasting effects, the general French will to use China policy as a means for advancing a sovereign policy with global reach and to avoid domination by the superpowers is evident. Paris could certainly feel propped up in its efforts to act as an independent power in the international arena. For the Chinese the cooperation

brought international prestige after the many turns of Maoist international doctrine that had alienated most of the former allies.

A similar example where the two sides gave each other moral support on a strategic matter was the French intervention in Zaire.³⁰ In the Shaba region of the country, French forces had helped repel an invasion by left-wing guerrillas from Angola who were receiving support from Cuba.³¹ For Deng Xiaoping this was a welcome rallying point during the time of China's attack on Vietnam in February 1979 that many Western politicians criticised. He openly praised the French for their decisive actions against Soviet proxy forces and called on the USA to do the same.³² Deng's comments also highlight that Beijing and Paris indeed shared the aim of reducing Soviet influence in Africa.³³

But clearly the most important issue with regard to supporting China's rise was the question of arms exports. During the 1960s and 1970s, France had already sold some low-profile strategic goods to China, most notably helicopters, radar technology and electronic equipment. And as seen above, the military exchange between the two countries had the aim of improving French chances in the Chinese market. Though Paris also hoped to increase civilian exports by inviting Chinese army experts, it was obvious that incoming PLA delegations would mainly enquire about the possibility of purchasing military technology. The earlier deals had mostly concerned dual-use material. But from 1977 onwards the question of whether or not to sell the Chinese combat weapons arose.³⁴ The PRC was primarily interested in anti-tank and anti-aircraft missiles.³⁵ Especially the potential purchase of Milan and HOT anti-tank missiles had a political, symbolical and potentially strategic significance. During the mid-1970s, both systems had been developed jointly by the FRG and France to be used in the event of a massive Soviet armoured attack on Western Europe. The Chinese faced a comparable strategic challenge in that the PLA was clearly inferior to the USSR's troops stationed along its northern borders. Since all their equipment was at least 15 years behind what the Red Army possessed, they would have had nothing to oppose their enemies in an open battle.³⁶ Buying European anti-tank weapons would therefore have considerably increased the fighting power of the PLA. And it would also have confirmed the Chinese interpretation of international relations whereby Western Europe and China were essentially in the same situation vis-à-vis the Soviet Union.³⁷

In France, as in Britain, the government believed that a major arms deal could substantially improve the French position in other fields of

industry and lead to follow-up orders.³⁸ The prospect of catching up with the export figures of West Germany through strategic exports certainly increased French interest in such trade.

But the issue that really dominated the debate on arms sales was of course the effect it would have on the Soviet Union. It was obvious that Moscow would feel seriously threatened by any major European arms deal.³⁹ Unlike for the FRG, however, the argument that arms sales to the PRC could provoke the USSR cut both ways. If the Soviets felt some pressure in Asia but were not provoked excessively, they might become more conciliatory in Europe and pay greater attention to the relationship with France as a long-term partner. Here we can see marked differences to Britain and the FRG. Unlike in West Germany, arms sales to the People's Republic were not ruled out in principle. Many in the French leadership believed that there was some room for manoeuvre to pursue strategic and global interests by cooperating with the Chinese.⁴⁰ A similar attitude prevailed in Britain. But in contrast to the latter, the close relationship with the Soviet Union that France had developed since the 1960s was always considered as more important than a partnership with China.⁴¹ Paris regarded a strategic cooperation with China not so much as an alternative to its détente policy but as a way to strengthen it and avoid getting sidelined by the superpowers. There was furthermore an economic argument for continuing talks on arms sales lest Beijing opted for other suppliers. While political exchange with France was particularly close, the Chinese were encouraging competition among its Western partners, simultaneously voicing their interest in purchasing arms from all major European countries, including Italy.⁴²

Against the background of these strategic assumptions, Chinese interest in HOT, Milan, anti-submarine missiles and even Mirage aircraft was nurtured in order to keep all options open. As US observers put it, 'the French reaction to China's probes [had] two predominant themes: an avid interest in the possibilities, mingled with anxiety over the reactions of the superpowers'.⁴³

In October 1978, the French government announced its decision to sell \$700 million worth of anti-aircraft and anti-tank missiles to the Chinese.⁴⁴ Together with the Sino-British talks over Harrier and the Sino-Italian negotiations on defence equipment, this clearly alarmed the Soviets and in November 1978 Brezhnev sent four personal letters to the leading politicians of France, Britain, Italy and West Germany in which he asked them not to give strategic technology to China.⁴⁵ In a way this showed

that the French tactic had worked and the USSR was taking the European governments seriously. At the same time the letter highlighted the fact that Paris was about to risk the gains from over a decade of détente with Moscow, and President Giscard d'Estaing was consequently very cautious in his reaction. His reply to the Brezhnev letter underlined French sovereignty but also stated that France did not seek to increase tensions between the PRC and the USSR. Likewise, when China attacked Vietnam in early 1979, Giscard expressed his appreciation of the Soviet restraint and supported the German initiative for a common EC declaration. Surprisingly quickly, this declaration was agreed on and published by the nine member states. While not explicitly taking sides, it could be read as criticism of China.⁴⁶

The talks about armament contracts dragged on until the first turnaround in Chinese purchasing policy in 1979. By then it became increasingly clear that, in the short run, Beijing was not willing to invest the sums needed to make the arms deals viable. Furthermore, the normalisation of Sino-US relations and the ensuing close cooperation between the two changed the global strategic outlook.⁴⁷ For analysts in Paris it was obvious that Europe's importance for Beijing would be reduced by the PRC's turn towards Washington.⁴⁸ In this situation, the French president's advisors argued that Paris should seek balanced relations with Beijing, Washington and Moscow without coming under too much influence from any of them.⁴⁹ This meant that a strategic partnership with Beijing, which would always remain in the shadow of direct Sino-US ties, further lost its interest for Paris.

With few exceptions, no French military technology was actually sold to China. When the Red Army invaded Afghanistan and the Cold War further escalated, Giscard sided with Schmidt's Government in Bonn in an attempt to save European détente.⁵⁰ This further reduced the possibilities of intensified strategic cooperation with Beijing. At the same time the intensification of the Cold War also took away the perceived French need for playing the 'China Card'. It became obvious that Washington was willing to use the Sino-Soviet conflict as a tool against Moscow and to freeze détente, thus making any bilateral Soviet-US control of global affairs very unlikely. For France, this implied that the government had to concentrate on preserving its close ties with the Soviet Union rather than join the USA in building up China as a *de facto* ally. In other words, the French deliberately dropped the option of strengthening strategic ties with China to put pressure on the Soviets.

These attempts to balance the different goals of supporting the Chinese reforms, preserving close ties with the Soviet Union and living up to the ambition of an 'independent' foreign policy are also reflected in the two top-level visits of these years by Hua Guofeng, to Paris in 1979, and next by Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, to Beijing in 1980. Both visits highlighted the continuation of the symbolical partnership between Paris and Beijing. France was the first of four European countries that Hua visited and there was much talk of the close relationship between the two countries. At the time of the visit, Raymond Aron, perhaps then the most influential French intellectual, even called for an alliance with China.⁵¹ Yet, again, in terms of substance there was little actual progress. Wherever possible the French concentrated on promoting exports of civilian technology and tried not to bring up the Sino-Soviet conflict. The Chinese respected the French reluctance to risk their cooperation with Moscow. Unlike during Pompidou's visit in 1973, they did not openly attack the Soviet Union during the top-level meetings but showed restraint and focused on bilateral issues. This was in stark contrast to Hua's visit to Britain shortly afterwards, where his agreement with Margaret Thatcher regarding vigilance towards the USSR was widely noticed.⁵²

Similarly, the trip in October 1980 by Giscard made France the only Western European country with two state visits to China in less than a decade. Six months after his visit to Moscow, during which Giscard had taken a relatively moderate line on the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the French President then used the opportunity to explain his support for détente to the Chinese leadership. Arms deals were not mentioned at all but an important focal point for Giscard was the projected Chinese nuclear power plant and progress here seemed possible.⁵³ Furthermore, the French president adopted a position very similar to Helmut Schmidt's five years earlier. Détente, he explained, was not at all a sign of weakness but could only work if Europe and particularly France showed military strength. Giscard's visit thus signified another important point in the bilateral relationship. More importantly, it arguably marked a crucial stage in Beijing's slow development from focusing on confrontation with Moscow towards using foreign strategy as a tool in the reform effort. By underlining the French commitment to military strength in Western Europe and by pushing for the transfer of high-end technology with potentially strategic value to the PRC, Giscard helped to reassure China that the West would keep up the pressure on the Soviets. He thereby also made a case for the value of Franco-Chinese cooperation to Beijing, and signalled to

his critics at home and abroad that France was still trying to play a role in Asia. The Chinese indeed accorded far more than merely symbolical importance to the visit.⁵⁴

At the same time, Giscard did not explicitly break with the line he had taken in Moscow a few months earlier, and repeated his general belief in détente. Thus, he did not openly challenge the Soviets and avoided the impression that Western Europe was heading towards a real military alliance with the Chinese. Consequently, the Chinese received the message that France would remain supportive of détente but also preserve its independence from Soviet influences and continue assistance for the Chinese modernisation efforts, even in potentially sensitive fields such as nuclear technology. At a time when it was not yet clear how Reagan's earlier pro-Taiwan rhetoric would translate into actual policy, the French therefore did much to strengthen the confidence of the Chinese leaders that the West in general would continue cooperation with China.⁵⁵ Against the background of the almost desperate efforts of Schmidt and Giscard to save détente in Europe, this was more than Beijing might have hoped for and arguably showed that the Europeans were valuable partners after all.

The overall balance of this visit for France was mixed, however. On the one hand there were no breakthroughs as both sides clearly disagreed over détente and the situation in Indochina, where France continued some of its development assistance for Vietnam.⁵⁶ The French press therefore remained unimpressed by Giscard's performance.⁵⁷ But on the other hand, the bilateral top-level dialogue was maintained and the French tried, not unlike ten years earlier, to balance détente with the Soviets and a constructive inclusion of China in international society.⁵⁸ Though this made further rapprochement with the PRC difficult, it was honoured in the USSR.⁵⁹ It therefore seems reasonable to argue that the visit had an overall stabilising effect on international relations in Asia at a time of rising tensions.

When Francois Mitterrand became president in 1981, he largely continued Giscard's policies. For a long time the Chinese had been very concerned about left-wing governments in Europe, including France.⁶⁰ The PRC's relations with the FRG until 1972 and with Britain following the second election of 1974 had clearly suffered because of Beijing's claim that European social democracy was too soft on Soviet communism. But the case of Mitterrand was slightly different, highlighting again the importance of the personal factor in Sino-European relations. He had already travelled to the PRC in 1961 and met with a number of high-ranking cadres. Shortly before the elections of 1981, he paid another visit to China,

again insisting on his great interest in cordial relations between Beijing and Paris.⁶¹ After becoming president, he could build on this earlier experience when he went on a state visit in 1983, using the occasion to emphasise French support for the Chinese reforms.⁶²

Overall, the return of Cold War crises and China's new policies led to a reinvigoration of French interest in strategic cooperation with China. Opportunities seemed to open up for Paris to increase its global influence by developing diplomatic cooperation with Beijing. There were various points in which Chinese and French interests seemed to converge—in the UN, in Africa, and even regarding arms deals. But when the Cold War once more intensified it became obvious again that France's political weight was not enough to manoeuvre between Beijing and Moscow. While continuing civilian cooperation with China, the French clearly decided for détente in Europe and against a real strategic partnership with the People's Republic.

The fundamental problem of how to seek cooperation with Beijing while maintaining close ties with Moscow could not be solved before the end of the Cold War in the late 1980s. Until then the French aim of pursuing an independent foreign policy contradicted itself. In order to support its own high-tech arms industry, for example, deals with countries like China had to be sought.⁶³ But concluding them would have implied renouncing the national approach towards détente with the USSR and eventually drifting back into the bipolar setting of the 1950s. In light of the limited Chinese interest in ordering huge quantities of French equipment, this price seemed too high to pay. Though the wavering over arms sales exposed some of the weaknesses of Paris's China policy, one has to admit that its approach towards Beijing and Moscow nevertheless contributed to stabilising the international situation in a time of great uncertainty. Despite being clearly limited in its means, the French ambition of an independent foreign policy with global reach was therefore more than pure fiction.

BRITAIN: COMMON INTERESTS BUT NO ALLIANCE WITH CHINA

For Britain, the advent of China's reform policy under Deng Xiaoping almost exactly coincided with a new-found flexibility towards the People's Republic. By 1977, most obstacles to a proactive China policy had been

cleared. The outcome of the EC referendum pleased the Chinese and allowed the Labour Government to set about playing an active role in Europe through the British EC presidency in 1977.⁶⁴ After the 1975 climax of Wilson's détente policy when he and Callaghan visited Moscow, Anglo-Soviet relations took a turn for the worse from 1977 onwards.⁶⁵ With the 1976 International Monetary Fund (IMF) crisis over, the government, it seemed, could move on from immediate crisis management to long-term projects.⁶⁶ Finally, the replacement of Harold Wilson by James Callaghan facilitated a new start for both sides involved.⁶⁷

It was in this climate that the FCO and the ministry of defence (MOD) developed a new China strategy to deal with the increased Chinese interest in British defence technology. The resulting concept paper again focused on the commercial side of Sino-British relations and put the PRC's interest in armament technology and particularly in Harrier aircraft first.⁶⁸ The Harrier deal alone, it was claimed, could 'amount to as much as GBP 500 m and [...] generate up to 16,000 additional jobs in the aerospace and allied industries in the UK. Multiplier effects would add to this'.⁶⁹ What also played a role was the British desire to catch up with the French in their relations with China. Even though the Germans were still outselling all other European countries, the French had become the main reference for British policymakers.⁷⁰

Against this background, the FCO/MOD planning paper came to the conclusion that there was 'no overriding strategic reason from the British point of view against sales of military equipment and technology to China'.⁷¹ In a very optimistic manner, the authors of the study assumed that other CoCom countries would not seriously oppose such deals and that 'the Soviet Union would dislike military sales to China and would probably complain about the sale of complete weapons system. But it is highly improbable that such sales would have any effect on détente or other aspects of East/West relations, although they might affect British commercial interests'.⁷² The implication of the paper was that if the Americans gave at least their tacit agreement, a series of arms deals, including Harrier, would be in Britain's best interest.

This corresponded with the new military exchange that was under way. After the difficulties of the mid-1970s, Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) Neil Cameron paid an official visit to the PRC in 1978, which received much attention in Britain, the USSR but above all in the PRC.⁷³ During the visit, he made a number of sharp remarks against the Soviets that provoked some criticism at home but were praised by the Chinese. Cameron told

the Chinese that ‘our two countries are coming more and more together. This must be good because we both have an enemy at our door whose capital city is in Moscow’, and also declared ‘we must share our common tank experience so that we are in the best position to take on the Soviet tank force if this should ever be necessary’.⁷⁴ The Labour Left was furious, calling for Callaghan to sack Cameron as a sign of clearly distancing himself from the CDS’s comments.⁷⁵ Callaghan indeed underlined that Cameron had not spoken for the government but kept him as CDS, allegedly because he agreed with him that China had to be treated more as a partner than the Soviet Union.⁷⁶

Apart from his unconsidered remarks, Cameron took the tasks of his China trip seriously. These included explaining to the Chinese the government’s forthcoming attitude regarding a possible sale of Harrier and underlining the British emphasis on strengthening relations with China.⁷⁷ Despite his gaffe and the public debate that ensued, Cameron called his visit an ‘outstanding success’ and remarked that the Chinese were ‘undoubtedly very interested’ in Harrier and other equipment. He concluded ‘it is all go and I just hope we do not miss the boat (which will be leaving soon) on the sales side’.⁷⁸ For the PRC defence experts, the Harrier seemed to fit well with the PLA strategy of drawing the Soviets deep into Chinese territory and wearing them down in a long guerrilla war. The aircraft promised to be able to withstand the superior Soviet air force and carry out attacks on ground forces while starting and landing from improvised bases in the Chinese countryside.⁷⁹ Because of its high cost, the potentially high combat value, and the sensitive technology involved, it seemed like the ideal test case for a major Chinese arms purchase in the West.⁸⁰ On the British side, there was furthermore the strong impression that more than in the actual aircraft Beijing was interested in a public gesture underlining preferred treatment for the PRC compared with the USSR.⁸¹

Given the explicitly spelled-out tasks for Cameron and Callaghan’s moderate position in the debate following the CDS’s remarks, one can quite clearly see that the British government tended to approve of the sale of Harrier to the Chinese. Yet Harrier remained diplomatically a very delicate subject because it was far from obvious that the support of the USA and other CoCom partners could be secured.⁸² There was also considerable opposition from members of the Labour Left.⁸³ They claimed that sales of Harrier to China would be extremely harmful to détente with the Soviets. Such a view was apparently confirmed by the aforementioned letters that Brezhnev sent in November to Bonn, Paris, Rome and London. While

not explicitly threatening the Europeans, the letter to Callaghan included phrases such as:

I like to say with absolute frankness that we are of course concerned that governments of some countries are inclined to meet in full or at least in part the requests of Peking about deliveries of weapons or materials which can directly contribute to increasing the military potential [...] Evident now is a dangerous development around military deliveries to China, and such a development must be stopped, and stopped in time, without delay.⁸⁴

In his response, Callaghan tried to avoid a further escalation but nevertheless insisted that Britain had the right to export military goods to China and might continue to do so in the future.⁸⁵ When the PRC attacked Vietnam in February 1979, the British reaction was less critical than that of France and the FRG. While visiting Washington, Deng Xiaoping had informed Carter about his plans for a punitive strike against Vietnam. US secretary of state Cyrus Vance then personally passed on this information to the British foreign secretary, David Owen, who was told he could tell Callaghan but no-one else.⁸⁶ Thus, knowing about the Chinese intentions, the British government was not seriously worried about an escalation and took a comparatively benevolent stance towards Beijing's actions. Secretary of state for industry Eric Varley, who was at the time in Beijing to negotiate the Harrier deal, was not called back. On the contrary, it was during the Sino-Vietnamese War that the Callaghan Government publicly confirmed its intention to go ahead with the Harrier deal. In Moscow and East Berlin, this was taken as a clearly anti-Soviet move.⁸⁷

But what seemed like a firm pro-Chinese position was only the final point after a long period during which the British government had, not unlike its French counterpart, tried to keep its options open. The various obstacles to closer cooperation with the PRC had led to a number of government statements that indicated a generally positive attitude to the deal but did not show outright enthusiasm for it.⁸⁸ Despite the Chinese repeatedly expressing their intention, and the British government's general support of a deal, progress on the sale of Harrier was extremely slow.⁸⁹ The inability of both sides to reach a quick agreement, however, contributed much to eventually derailing the deal. During the short spell of 1978 when the PRC leadership sought to kick-start the economy by importing technology from abroad, Chinese ministries and state agencies tried signing as many contracts as possible to commit the Beijing government to

finance their specific sector of responsibility.⁹⁰ Though the British could not know this, there was only a short window of opportunity until the end of 1978, which had to be used to sign at least a preliminary contract, before Beijing adopted its first austerity measures in the spring of 1979. This was not done, however, and the ‘winter of discontent’ in late 1978 and early 1979 then meant that the Labour Government had to fully concentrate on domestic issues and could not afford any controversial initiatives regarding China policy. Notwithstanding the promising outset in 1977, the Callaghan Government was unable to achieve any major successes in China policy or move bilateral relations to a higher level.⁹¹

Its successor government seemed set to do better. With its clear anti-Soviet stance, London and Beijing had much to agree on. When the question of defence sales was reassessed by the new Tory Government, it was confirmed as a high-priority project and the Chinese were informed of the British intentions to go ahead with this and further deals.⁹² The Thatcher Government indeed pushed for a more lenient CoCom policy towards China and sided with the USA in the latter’s efforts to liberalise strategic exports to the PRC.⁹³ As a result, an informal China differential was accepted that would allow CoCom countries to export most sensitive items there.⁹⁴ Likewise, during the visit of Hua Guofeng, the British diplomats noted with satisfaction that Britain was the only European country where the Chinese premier could openly express his hostility towards the USSR.⁹⁵

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan further contributed to a sense of shared strategic aims, even though the FCO remained sceptical about intensifying Sino-British cooperation as a way of putting pressure on the Soviet Union.⁹⁶ All this seemed to suggest that the prospects for increased collaboration in the sector of security and defence were substantially improving under the new government, and that major sales of military material including Harrier would soon be finalised.

But in the meantime several things had changed. First of all, as in the French case, the Chinese started losing interest in spending large amounts of scarce foreign currency on military goods that, as British evaluations repeatedly stated, would not fundamentally change the immediate strategic situation of the PLA.⁹⁷ Secondly, from the early 1980s onwards, Chinese foreign-policy doctrine started to evolve. Already in 1975 in Paris, Deng Xiaoping had received considerable attention for his remark that China needed a stable and peaceful international environment for its development.⁹⁸ After the incursion into Vietnam and the start of the

readjustment policy at home, this motive was further highlighted. Beijing now increasingly concentrated on maintaining stability at its borders in order to focus on the economic reforms at home.⁹⁹ This reduced the need for high-profile military deals with the West, even though the Sino-Soviet conflict persisted.

Despite this development, it is not wholly clear why the Harrier deal did not see a successful conclusion. Archival evidence suggests that ultimately the British were willing to sell but that Beijing backed off from a project unlikely to deliver substantial strategic gains while costing more than the PRC could afford during an acute macroeconomic crisis.

While Chinese interest in Harrier waned, the issue of Hong Kong began to take centre stage in Sino-British relations. The basic problem was that while Hong Kong Island and Kowloon had been, theoretically, given to the Crown in eternity, the so-called New Territories had been leased from China for 99 years and that lease was due to expire in 1997.¹⁰⁰ The reason why the future of Hong Kong became an issue in the late 1970s was the British policy concerning land rights. Land was not sold by the Crown but leases were given that normally lasted for several decades. Leases in the New Territories, however, all legally ended in 1997. As long as it was not clear what would happen then, this threatened to make investors nervous well ahead of that date.

Ever since the end of the confrontation in the early 1970s, it was believed by London that Beijing shared its interest in preserving stability and prosperity in Hong Kong.¹⁰¹ This positive assessment was strengthened by the advent of the more pragmatic post-Maoist leadership under Deng Xiaoping. It was in this context that Governor MacLehose arranged a visit to Beijing for early 1979 in order to bring up the future of Hong Kong.¹⁰² The visit's objective was to obtain a statement from the new leaders that the Chinese would continue their policy of cooperation with the colony and that its status would not change. Then leases could be given out that went beyond 1997.¹⁰³ What MacLehose got instead was the slightly ambiguous response from (an apparently unprepared) Deng Xiaoping that Hong Kong was a part of China, together with an assurance that its people and businessmen need not to worry about the future.¹⁰⁴ This created the basic conflict that would only finally be resolved in 1984. The Chinese made it clear that they would use the opportunity of 1997 to claim back sovereignty over all of Hong Kong, whereas the Thatcher Government sought to maintain some degree of British control.¹⁰⁵ How this could be done was not clear, and over the following years there was

little progress on the Hong Kong question. After a number of Chinese remarks, the FCO accepted that China would not just let 1997 pass by and that Britain would definitely have to cede sovereignty over the New Territories. Yet there seemed other legal options than completely withdrawing, such as leasing back Hong Kong from the PRC or continuing British administration under Chinese sovereignty.¹⁰⁶ But as long as there was no official Chinese declaration as to what exactly the future of Hong Kong would look like after 1997, investors were bound to grow increasingly worried as that date came nearer. This was the situation at the time Margaret Thatcher paid the first official visit by a British head of state to China in September 1982.¹⁰⁷

Afterwards, Thatcher commented relatively little on her personal impressions of China, and outside observers disagree about her reactions.¹⁰⁸ On the one hand, there are the voices that claim that, unlike most foreign visitors, she had profoundly disliked China since the first time she went there in 1977 and experienced the whole 1982 trip as a physical, psychological and, above all, political defeat.¹⁰⁹ On the other hand, there are those like Ezra Vogel who play down the Anglo-Chinese disagreements over Hong Kong during the visit and essentially highlight the cordiality of relations.¹¹⁰ The truth is arguably in-between these two extremes, but the facts indicate that the visit was a very problematic episode of bilateral relations.¹¹¹

From the beginning, the Chinese displayed a relatively reserved attitude. In 1975 Schmidt had been the first Western guest to see China's most western province Xinjiang (clearly an attempt to provoke the neighbouring Soviet Union), and Giscard became the first European dignitary to travel to Tibet in 1980. Thatcher, by contrast, came on a 'working visit', without any such regional highlight.¹¹² The timing of the visit shortly after the Falklands War was certainly important in this regard because the Chinese had not at all supported the British campaign to win back the Falklands.¹¹³ This arguably corresponded to the Chinese diplomatic way of thinking: projecting developments in other parts of the world onto themselves. In this vein, the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, for example, was taken as a possible precursor to a similar attack on China. Right up to the present day, foreign interventions in other countries for 'humanitarian' aims are considered as potential precedents for similar action against the PRC over issues such as Tibet or human rights. That the PRC denounced the British relapse into imperial traditions could therefore hardly have surprised. Yet it is interesting how little attention

was given to China's historical sensitivity in the briefings for Margaret Thatcher. On the contrary, the briefing on the history of China callously brushed over the role British imperialism had played in China's decline in the nineteenth century, not even mentioning the Opium Wars.¹¹⁴

When the British prime minister travelled to China, she was still under the influence of the Falklands victory in June. Having just been able to defend far-flung islands in inhospitable waters once, Thatcher initially questioned the assumptions of her staff that a reduced British presence on Hong Kong Island and Kowloon would be untenable.¹¹⁵ This caused the FCO to play through a number of scenarios to defend Britain's legal claim to Hong Kong Island and Kowloon. But by the time the prime minister travelled to the PRC in September 1982, all ministerial studies confirmed that there was no realistic option of maintaining Hong Kong against Beijing's will.¹¹⁶ This was all the more obvious since the Chinese made it clear that they wanted to reclaim sovereignty over all of Hong Kong. Their position highlighted how much the legal status of the colony was a relic of the nineteenth century. For the CCP leadership, the 'Unequal Treaties' that had followed the Opium Wars had never been legitimate agreements between equals. While they accepted the factual relevance of the 1997 date, the Chinese did not consider the treaties as valid contracts.¹¹⁷

Britain's next line of defence was to continue British administration while returning sovereignty to the PRC. Thatcher justified this proposal by claiming that Hong Kong's stability and prosperity could only be preserved under the current administration. But the Chinese would not have it. As Deng Xiaoping insisted, they would guarantee the social and economic system of Hong Kong but could not accept continued foreign rule. They were ready to take the colony by force if no agreement was reached. Deng famously added that the PLA could invade Hong Kong the same afternoon if he wanted.¹¹⁸ He would not be a second Li Hongzhang, Deng pointed out, who gave away Chinese interests to foreign powers.¹¹⁹ This not only forced the British to bow down and eventually accept the full incorporation of Hong Kong into the PRC as a Special Administrative Region. It also seriously affected the personal relationship between Thatcher and Deng. Though they should have been able to agree on many things based on apparently shared ideological inclinations, she regarded him as 'cruel' and had difficulties accepting the clear British defeat so shortly after the success in the Falklands.¹²⁰

During the visit, both sides contributed to the sense of tension by making undiplomatic statements to the press. Chinese premier Zhao

Ziyang told the media that China would take back Hong Kong one way or another even before meeting with Thatcher. The latter responded in kind when, after the difficult meeting with Deng, she stated at a press conference that ‘there are three treaties in existence [...] We stick by our treaties unless we decide on something else. At the moment, we stick by our treaties’.¹²¹ Though this made sense from a British point of view and catered to the feelings of MPs at home, it arguably showed a complete lack of understanding of the way the Chinese leadership thought. For Thatcher, British rule over Hong Kong was based on a solid legal position. But for people like Deng Xiaoping, the claim to this legality stood for everything they had fought against for more than 60 years. Ironically, the respect of the CCP leaders for Thatcher’s Tory predecessor Edward Heath arguably made matters worse. Even after 1975, the Chinese repeatedly invited Heath to Beijing where he met with Deng Xiaoping. Apparently, the Chinese leadership would have liked to see Heath as a mediator in the questions of Hong Kong and Harrier.¹²² But Heath and Thatcher had an extremely difficult personal relationship during these years and there is nothing to suggest that Thatcher would have sought Heath’s help over a matter such as Hong Kong.

Thatcher’s lack of personal empathy for the Chinese (‘she never particularly liked them’, according to former ambassador Sir Percy Cradock) added to the impression that Sino-British relations were difficult.¹²³ In the meeting with Deng she quite explicitly argued that the Chinese would be incapable of guaranteeing the confidence of investors.¹²⁴ Saying this to the face of the PRC’s most senior veteran revolutionary was tantamount to a major loss of face for the Chinese. This was no accidental gaffe but reflected Thatcher’s approach to the problem. Just before going to Beijing she had met senior representatives from Hong Kong. The latter pointed out that the new Chinese leadership showed a great deal of pragmatism and that therefore a solution could be found that respected the interests of both sides. But ‘the prime minister questioned whether the Chinese were pragmatic. They were Marxist and their system was centralist. Having been born and bred under a Marxist Leninist system, they did not understand what was necessary to maintain confidence. Our duty was to the people of Hong Kong, who wished to live under our administration. Her instinct was to concede nothing until it was clear that we could obtain precisely what we wanted’.¹²⁵ Such an attitude was not likely to gain her many friends in Beijing.

Finally, the impression that Thatcher's visit was not turning out well for Britain was not helped when she slipped on the stairs of the Great Hall of the People, appearing vulnerable, angry and not in control of things. It was this scene that stayed in the public mind of Hong Kong citizens after the visit.¹²⁶ To many it seemed like an omen that the British head of government involuntarily bowed down to Mao's mausoleum on Tiananmen Square.¹²⁷

The importance of all this should not be overestimated. In many ways bilateral exchange flourished just as it did with the FRG and France. After the failure of the Harrier deal, the PRC in 1982 signed a contract with British companies worth more than £180 million for refitting two destroyers, making it the biggest ever Sino-British defence deal.¹²⁸ Against the background of Sino-US cooperation against the Soviets under Reagan, and the special relationship between London and Washington, Britain was thus ready to become a supplier of crucial strategic technology to the People's Republic.¹²⁹ Furthermore, the future of Hong Kong was eventually settled by the joint declaration that guaranteed the continuity of the colony's economic system and some political rights for its inhabitants.

But the way the Thatcher Government handled Hong Kong destroyed the possibility of reviving the kind of relations that had appeared in 1973/74 when, under Edward Heath, Britain and China had seemed to be heading for a very close relationship with the potential to develop into something of a tacit alliance. Moreover, the personal dimension played an important role and here the differences between the European countries are striking. When Hua Guofeng came to Germany in 1979, Helmut Schmidt was aware that the FRG could not offer him much in terms of symbolic or strategic favours. Yet he and his staff made sure that the Chinese did not lose face and did not have any reason to question their positive image of West Germany. In a similar way, French diplomats repeatedly intervened in order to avoid situations that confronted the Chinese with their past of national decline and foreign occupation.¹³⁰ Thatcher, by contrast, never seemed to have cared about the delicate historical issue of Britain's imperial presence in Asia. Given the importance the Chinese accorded to individual personalities (even beyond their time in office, as the example of Heath showed) and the fact that the CCP leaders of Deng's generation considered it their historical task to fully restore China's sovereignty, the visit marked a crisis of bilateral ties rather than the beginning of more intense collaboration.

WEST GERMANY: NO GUNS FOR THE CHINESE COMMUNISTS

The heightening of Cold War tensions presented the FRG with a more serious dilemma than that facing Britain and France. Brandt's *Ostpolitik* had given the Federal Republic a freedom of movement and a political weight in Europe that was greater than at any time since 1945.¹³¹ More importantly, it had opened up new possibilities of intra-German exchange and cooperation. These were meant to preserve the unity of the German nation while accepting the reality of the existence of two separate states.¹³² When European détente became more difficult after 1976, cooperation with the GDR was nevertheless maintained and even extended.¹³³ But from the autumn of 1978 onwards, it seemed as though the two German states could be dragged into the growing tensions of the bipolar conflict. Rising friction between Washington and Moscow implied that two of the fundamental rationales of German foreign policy came into conflict with each other. On the one hand, the German commitment to NATO and European integration was not to be questioned. On the other hand, a sound relationship with Moscow as well as with East Berlin was the precondition for keeping German-German cooperation afloat.¹³⁴ The attempt to solve this dilemma explained Helmut Schmidt's approach to the perceived imbalance in medium-range missiles in Europe as well as the German policy towards the superpowers in the late 1970s and early 1980s.¹³⁵ And it was also the guiding motive behind German China policy.¹³⁶

The double-track solution of NATO that was in no small part inspired by Helmut Schmidt firmly committed the FRG to the Western defence efforts.¹³⁷ At the same time it called for a negotiated settlement with the Soviet Union in order to withdraw the medium-range missiles of both sides. This was a clear signal that, if necessary, Bonn would take a tough stance on defence matters. Yet it was also, for the time being, the furthest that the social-liberal coalition was willing to go in risking détente. While the negotiations called for in the double-track decision did not make progress, Bonn went out of its way to maintain cordial relations with Moscow and East Berlin in as many fields as possible.¹³⁸ This also implied that arms deals with China were out of the question.

The PRC in turn had never openly asked for FRG armaments. Yet it was clear to any informed observer that the leaders in Beijing were highly interested in such cooperation.¹³⁹ In 1977, the Chinese invited former minister of defence Manfred Woerner of the CDU and a number of retired

generals, some of whom had served in exposed NATO-positions, to visit.¹⁴⁰ They had several meetings with high-profile Chinese leaders, including Deng Xiaoping, highlighting the allegedly shared strategic interests of the PRC and FRG.¹⁴¹

After this first visit, the Chinese continued approaching private figures with good connections to the armament industry and the armed forces. One example was the former lieutenant colonel Niemoeller. Niemoeller travelled to China several times and organised a return visit by a Chinese delegation.¹⁴² On at least one of these visits, Niemoeller was accompanied by several German company representatives who had paid very high commission fees in order to take part in the journey. He told the participants quite openly that the Chinese foreign ministry's department for military affairs had invited him and that the main purpose of the trip was to prepare sales of strategic technology to the PRC. 'In order to avoid problems with the respective authorities, it was necessary to give the trip a cultural framework.'¹⁴³ For this purpose, two professors were hired to give lectures on Chinese culture and history during the tour. In their attempts to acquire German defence technology, the PRC government also got involved with some more obscure figures. These included people such as Hans-Joachim Seidenschnur, a convicted fraudster and arms dealer notorious among German diplomats for his dubious business practices.¹⁴⁴ Perhaps more noteworthy was Albert Schnez, a former lieutenant general and inspector of the army, who had played a key role in attempts to create a clandestine anti-communist armed organisation in the FRG during the late 1940s and 1950s.¹⁴⁵ In the event of a Soviet invasion, this organisation would have been activated to offer initial resistance and form the base of a yet to be created West German army. One can assume that Schnez shared many of the political beliefs of the military advisors who had travelled to Chiang Kai-shek's China in the 1920s and 1930s, and in an ironic way his contacts with Beijing (doubtless inspired by an interest in profit as well as his anti-Soviet thinking) seemed like a late echo of the Sino-German cooperation until 1937 and the even older tradition of German freelance advisors for the Qing army.¹⁴⁶

The German ministry of defence apparently had no objections to the activities of people like Niemoeller, Schnez and others who probably still had close personal ties to the ministry.¹⁴⁷ When the Chinese communicated their interest in German aeronautical technology, the responsible civil servants in the economics ministry and the ministry of defence were positive about cooperation with Beijing, at least for dual-use products. But

the ministry of foreign affairs strongly opposed any such projects. Selling technology in this field to the Chinese ‘would directly touch key aspects of the German *Ostpolitik* ... where respect for the Soviet Union is crucial’.¹⁴⁸ After learning some details of Niemoeller’s activities, state secretary van Well summoned the Chinese ambassador to the foreign ministry to explain the German position.¹⁴⁹ When the ambassador asked van Well about the possibility of buying machine tools for armament production in a way that would ‘keep up appearances’, this too was ruled out.¹⁵⁰ This was also the position of the chancellery, which would have the final say on any deal requiring an export licence. All available archival evidence therefore shows that the Schmidt Government firmly opposed arms sales to China, and it is quite clear that the priority of *Ostpolitik* was never challenged.¹⁵¹

This was also confirmed by the way the Schmidt Government treated the Brezhnev letter in November 1978 and the Chinese attack on Vietnam in February 1979. At first, it tried to keep the Brezhnev letter secret.¹⁵² Though the FRG essentially complied with Brezhnev’s demand not to sell arms to China, the attempted Soviet interference into its domestic affairs threatened to provide ammunition for the Opposition in Bonn. Schmidt also proposed to the British and French governments that the Europeans react jointly to the letters. At least in London, however, this was not supported as it would have seriously limited the room for manoeuvre.¹⁵³ After the press learned of the letters to Callaghan, Andreotti and Giscard, it soon became obvious that one had been sent to Schmidt as well. The government merely declared that there had never been plans to sell arms to Beijing and that Germany would stay loyal to NATO, thus trying to avoid an open public debate on China policy.¹⁵⁴

In terms of international politics, the most immediate challenge was the Chinese attack on Vietnam. From a German point of view, the importance of this conflict lay in the reaction of the Soviet Union. If the USSR launched a full-scale attack on the People’s Republic, the USA might be forced to intervene to help the PRC. Improbable as that seemed, the border war in South East Asia meant a crisis that went far beyond the immediate perimeter of the actual conflict.¹⁵⁵ For obvious reasons, the chancellery and the foreign ministry paid most attention to Moscow and one can imagine that there was considerable relief when it became clear that the Soviets did not fear an immediate collapse of the Vietnamese army and were not preparing to intervene.¹⁵⁶ The statements of the German government were much in line with those of its allies, focusing on international stability and rejecting the use of force. Yet the internal documents make

it quite clear that Germany effectively supported the Soviet Union, and Schmidt personally honoured the moderate reaction of the leadership in Moscow. The chancellor believed Moscow's 'smart, moderate reactions' to be signals towards the West which had to be respected.¹⁵⁷ As a chancellery memo put it, 'doubtless the Soviet Union expects our recognition of its cautious and "responsible" stance as has indeed been expressed by Chancellor Schmidt'.¹⁵⁸

Another episode that illustrates the FRG effort to balance cooperation with the PRC against cordial ties with the USSR was the visit of Hua Guofeng to Britain, France, Italy, and the FRG in October 1979. It was the first official visit by a Chinese head of state to Western Europe. Furthermore, Hua at this point was (formally) more powerful than even Mao had been, holding the post of premier and party chairman. This gave his trip to Europe a political and symbolic relevance no other Chinese delegation had had. The visit was ultimately a success as Schmidt and Hua exchanged views for much longer than had been planned and gained a favourable impression of each other.¹⁵⁹ Important bilateral agreements were signed covering numerous fields; they are discussed in greater detail in the following chapter. Crucially, it was also during the 1979 visit that Schmidt was promised a pair of pandas, six years after Pompidou and five years after Heath had received this honorific present. This arguably highlighted that China had come to accept West Germany and Schmidt personally as a partner despite the latter's reluctance to offer arms deals to the People's Republic.

Yet the preparation of the visit also made clear that, on the German side, any impression that Bonn was forming an alliance with Beijing was to be avoided. Hua made this easy for the Germans by refraining from any open attacks on the Soviet Union similar to those he had made in London earlier.¹⁶⁰ Schmidt could therefore openly state that the Sino-German cooperation was not directed against anyone, to make sure the Soviets got the message.¹⁶¹

This cautious attitude even extended to gift giving. The Chinese had, for example, indicated that Hua Guofeng would be particularly happy to receive a rare Mauser pistol. While the Germans understood that this would give Hua personal pleasure, the idea was quickly turned down.¹⁶² Schmidt's advisors argued that, apart from its very high price, the pistol would create a false impression of Sino-German relations and make an unwanted reference to Germany's recent past. Instead, the diplomats in Bonn opted for the Latin recollections of a Jesuit priest from Germany

who had lived in China during the Qing dynasty. Hua was not known to be an intellectual, nor was he proficient in any language other than Chinese. But the gift made sure that no doubts could arise about the nature of Sino-German relations and that was what mattered.

Ambassador Wickert also wrote a personal letter to Schmidt encouraging him to invite Hua to his private house in Hamburg as he had done with Brezhnev and Giscard d'Estaing as well as with the prime ministers of Poland and Norway, Gierek and Nordli.¹⁶³ Wickert emphasised the importance of such personal gestures in the Chinese political culture, and the fact that Hua would not be offered a similar favour in Britain or France.

The chancellery, however, advised strongly against this proposal. Its experts argued that the leaders Schmidt had invited to his house in Hamburg had either a personal relationship with Schmidt or that Germany entertained relations of a particular importance with their countries. 'None of this applies to Hua', the memo went on, 'an invitation would therefore receive particular attention as a political gesture, especially in the Soviet Union [...] in the eyes of our European neighbours, particularly the Soviet Union, this would create the—unwanted and false—impression that we regarded our relation with China as equally important as our ties with them'.¹⁶⁴ In order not to let the Chinese lose face, it was proposed that Schmidt should not be present while Hua visited Hamburg because of other commitments, and that the Chinese chairman be invited to the Chancellor's bungalow in Bonn. Schmidt personally marked the file 'carefully make sure my schedule is arranged accordingly'.¹⁶⁵

These examples (the evaluation of the Sino-Vietnamese war, Schmidt's refusal of arms sales, and the treatment of Hua Guofeng) illustrate that Bonn not only refrained from any particular efforts to accommodate Beijing, but also that the federal government wanted the Chinese and more importantly the Soviets to understand this. Judging from the material in the former East German archives Schmidt's Government was largely successful in this regard. Both the Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands (SED) and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) paid close attention to West German China policy. But in the late 1970s and early 1980s they found very little to complain about. On the contrary, Soviet observers were relieved that 'Schmidt told comrade Brezhnev that the FRG will not sell military technology to China. Regarding the China policy of the FRG Schmidt expressed the view that China was far away and unable to contribute to the solution of European problems'.¹⁶⁶ The reports that the Soviets shared with the East German communists also point out how,

unlike Britain, the USA and Japan, West Germany and France criticised the Chinese attack on Vietnam.¹⁶⁷ Furthermore, Brezhnev also directly informed Schmidt that he trusted him with regard to China.¹⁶⁸

In light of this it is all the more interesting to see how transnational exchange below the level of strategic diplomacy flourished, as will be discussed in the following chapter. Despite, or in some instances because of, a strategic alignment with the PRC not being possible, Germany became the most important European partner for reform-China and managed to gain more influence than Britain or France.¹⁶⁹

CONCLUSION

The reappearance of Cold War tensions highlighted the basic strategic dilemma that all three countries had faced since the late 1960s. They all shared Beijing's worries about being threatened by the Soviet Union and in this sense there was a convergence of interests. Yet China was far away, poor, backward and in most ways too weak to be of major relevance to Europe even in balancing the USSR on its eastern border. Furthermore, the PRC had a communist government with a record of highly erratic and often aggressive policies. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, China quite suddenly seemed more open and pragmatic in its foreign relations, and this increased the potential gains for Bonn, London and Paris from a close cooperation with Beijing in all possible fields. At the same time, the renewed confrontation with the Soviet Union meant that the 'China Card' gained in value. The question that the West faced was therefore how far to go in collaborating with China in the strategic environment after détente. The answers the three countries found were very different but the outcomes were comparable. The French government attempted to choose a middle way of working with China in several fields, while not questioning the priority of close bonds with the Soviet Union. In 1978, there was even a general willingness to sell arms to the PRC and overall relations seemed to become even better than in the mid-1960s. Yet the rise of bipolar tensions in 1979 and 1980 paradoxically had a negative effect on Sino-French relations. Major arms deals did not materialise because the Chinese had to scale down their programme of foreign imports. And in an alliance with Bonn, Giscard d'Estaing attempted to save détente in Europe against pressure from Washington.

The British government was similarly very interested in selling arms to the Chinese, particularly Harrier. But after failing to secure a quick agree-

ment in 1978 the chances for an immediate rapprochement decreased. Margaret Thatcher's Government could not reverse this development because China's main attention turned from rapidly modernising its military to maximising the pace of economic growth. And here the UK, still in recession, did not look like a partner of first-rank importance. From 1979 onwards the issue of Hong Kong increasingly burdened bilateral relations until the agreement of 1984.

Only the government of the Federal Republic refused to engage in projects to bind China closer to the West by offering defence technology. Though Beijing made some efforts to test the waters in this field, the SPD/FDP Government left no doubts that stable and cordial relations with Moscow were more important than the friendship with China. In doing so the government came close to letting the Soviet Union dictate its China policy. But as we shall see in the following chapter, the concentration on less sensitive fields of cooperation eventually brought bigger rewards than the British and French support for arms deals with China.

Chinese interest in cooperation with Western Europe reached a climax in 1978, before relations with the USA were normalised. During this short time, between the end of 1977 and the beginning of 1979, the Europeans did not succeed in convincing Beijing that they possessed the necessary resources to serve as the main strategic partner for the PRC's modernisation process. The Chinese clearly saw the high level that each of the three countries had reached in terms of economic and technological development, including in the defence sector. But the Europeans failed to show decisively that they were willing to support the People's Republic and provide (through arms deliveries and pressure on the Soviet Union) external security for China's domestic reforms. The European governments could not do so because they were trapped by the political and military framework of the Cold War. After 1979, the Chinese strategic interest evidently concentrated on the USA, and the developed countries of the EC mainly became another source of capital and civilian technology along with Japan and the USA. Yet the post-1978 China policies at least of the FRG and France developed a significance that has so far been overlooked. By clearly committing themselves to détente in Europe, they made China's rise look less threatening for Moscow. Berlin and Paris thus had a stabilising influence on the international system that ultimately also benefited China with its need for peace to concentrate on its national development.

Promoting Transnational Exchange with China in the Age of Reform, 1978–82

The advent of the reform era eventually led to an opening up of China's society and economy that surpassed anything experienced before. Not long after 1980, China's integration into global streams of goods, services, capital, knowledge and people went even beyond the heyday of imperial penetration in the 1920s. Such a development could not have been foreseen when the reforms started in 1978. But the pace of change was intense from the beginning and it was obvious to all observers that opportunities to engage with the PRC in numerous ways multiplied within a few years. In 1977, fewer than 500 Chinese exchange students had travelled to Europe in total. By 1980, there were almost a thousand in West Germany alone. During the mid-1970s, a concert of Western classical music was banned as counter-revolutionary. In 1987, the first KFC restaurant opened in Beijing.¹

The small trickle of exchange students, businesspeople and cultural representatives quickly swelled into a broad flow crossing borders in both ways between China and the West, including Western Europe. For an active British, French or German China policy this created unheard of opportunities. But it also had the effect of eventually reducing and transforming the role of the state in this exchange. If the Chinese reforms can be described as having 'grown out of the plan', a similar description fits the Western intercourse with the PRC. Though Western governments had never been willing or able to control all possible exchange with China, they had been involved in most decisions that preceded communication

of any kind with the totalitarian Maoist state. This now gradually changed as freedom grew for individual non-state actors to seek cooperation with China. Yet that does not mean that the state suddenly withdrew from involvement in low-level exchange with China. On the contrary, the activities of all Western governments in China increased considerably from 1978 onwards, and political considerations under the influence of the Cold War played a crucial role in this process. As is discussed below, national evaluations about strategic cooperation with China directly impacted on the way the three European governments set about pursuing low-level exchange with the PRC.

Despite these differences, France, Germany and Britain all welcomed the reform policy and sought to help China on the path to modernisation and opening. They did so out of political as well as economic motives in order to pull China closer towards the West and to position their respective countries in the increasing competition for the Chinese market. This created a slightly paradoxical situation. On the one hand, new opportunities for government action in cooperation with China were actively used. On the other hand, actual exchange grew at such a rate that the state increasingly lost the ability to control and direct the flows in and out of China.

The reform policy also dramatically increased competition among Western states to improve relations with Beijing. Even before 1978, there had been a sense of competition in European China policies. British and German diplomats and politicians looked with envy at the number of high-level visits between France and China.² Likewise, West Germany was clearly leading with regard to trade and neither the French nor the German diplomatic service matched the China expertise of the FCO.³ Yet this competition changed in quality from 1978 onwards. The immediate potential of the Chinese market grew just at a time when the Western economies all started once again to face serious difficulties after a relatively favourable phase from around 1975–77. Furthermore, normalisation of Sino-US relations in 1979 meant that the world's most dominant economic power quite suddenly entered the race for the Chinese market. Throughout the 1960s and early 1970s, Western Europe as a region had been China's second most important trading partner after Japan. Now, this changed within a very short time, as the USA quickly left behind its European allies with regard to China trade, making competition for the arising opportunities all the more intense (Fig. 8.1).

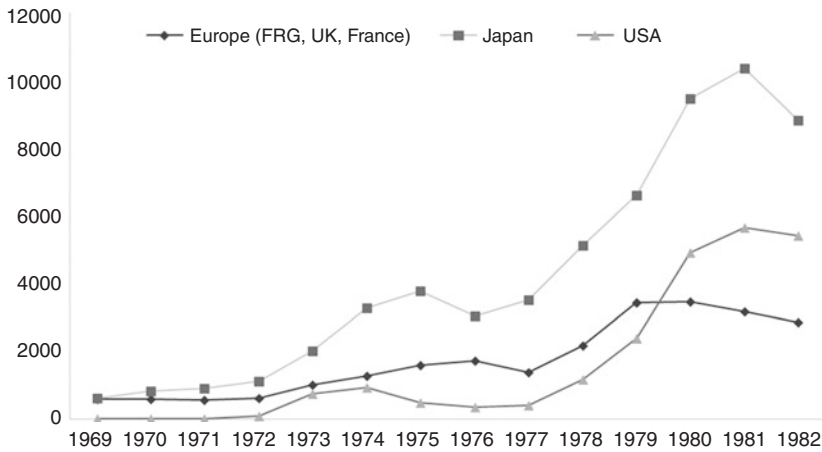


Fig. 8.1 Western trade with China, 1969–82 in million US\$ *Note:* Included are the figures for export plus the figure of imports of goods. Services are not included. Europe here only refers to the sum of the figures for Britain, France and West Germany

Source: Calculations by the author, based on International Monetary Fund, Direction of Trade Statistics Database (DOTS)

More important, however, were the long-term prospects of a continuously growing and Westernising China. Very few Western observers actually imagined a prolonged boom like the one eventually experienced. But the size of China's population and its regional influence meant that its economic and political importance would almost certainly increase in the future if it succeeded in modernising. The chances arising from such a long-term development for the Europeans were not to be missed.

EUROPE'S IMPORTANCE FOR CHINA'S GREAT TRANSITION

From Beijing's perspective, Europe potentially mattered in at least four ways with regard to reforms: as a source of high-tech imports, as a market for consumer goods, as an intellectual reservoir, and as a stabilising force in world politics.

The PRC needed first of all the hardware and technology to modernise its economy.⁴ This concerned basically the entire range of modern machinery and electronics but some sectors were especially concerned. In

the short time of the ‘great leap outward’, the focus was on heavy industries, energy and resource extraction, as well as on armaments.⁵ Once this very expansionist policy was replaced with a more austere line of ‘readjustment’, these sectors remained crucial, but other fields became more prominent as the PRC intensified its efforts to build up modern export industries similar to those that Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore and Korea had started to develop two decades earlier. Thus, machine tools for the production of consumer goods, more efficient agriculture and a better infrastructure in the Special Economic Zones became priorities, too.⁶ But there were also early strategic decisions to invest in a modern chemical industry and catch up in the field of electronics and informatics. In all these fields, Europe could provide technology that was mostly similar in quality to the US and Japanese competition. Of course, the Chinese experts first looked to the latter two countries and also made abundant use of Hong Kong as entrepot.⁷ But the size of the task was such that the Europeans could also hope for a substantial share of orders. In particular, West Germany, with its export-oriented manufacturing sector and sophisticated medium-sized machine tool producers, could offer much of what China needed.

Secondly, the PRC needed to finance its reform programme and for this it had to find ways to tap into the coffers of the rich countries in the West. In the period from late 1977–79 there was much talk of taking up loans in the West, as discussed below. Foreign credit and financial aid would indeed come to play a crucial role in the reform effort.⁸ After the start of the readjustment policy, however, the question of export markets and attracting foreign direct investments became much more important.⁹ Here Europe’s role was very much comparable to that of the USA and Japan. If China were to seriously stand a chance of generating the huge sums necessary to catch up with the modern world, it had to sell its products in return. So gaining access to the European markets for low-tech consumer goods, such as ready-made garments and toys, became a key to economic success.

Thirdly, China had to generate human capital to repair the damage of the Cultural Revolution.¹⁰ This meant sending abroad thousands of students as well as rebuilding its own institutions of research and learning with foreign know-how. Here, too, Europe was to play an important role, not least because many of the leading figures of the reform era, including Deng Xiaoping, had studied there before the revolution.

Finally, the PRC needed a friendly and peaceful international environment to concentrate on its domestic development. As discussed in the previous chapter, the Europeans mattered in this regard as allies (albeit of secondary importance behind the USA) and, insofar as they continued détente policies towards Moscow, as a stabilising factor in Europe and for Cold War relations in general.

The importance of these four factors was admitted by Beijing to very different degrees. But overall it seems obvious that cooperation with Western Europe was one of many essential conditions for the success of the Chinese reform programme, and that much depended on how France, Britain and West Germany would react to the new Chinese openness.

FRANCE: CHINA'S OPENING AS ECONOMIC CHALLENGE

The opportunities arising from Deng Xiaoping's reform programme clearly reinvigorated French China policy. From 1978 onwards, the French started a number of new initiatives in the fields of trade and culture. The continuation of focused support by Paris for key areas of exchange brought impressive results. Yet there were also new challenges that soon showed the limits of French China policy.

In some regards, France again took the lead among European countries. This can be regarded as a direct outcome of the 'privileged' political relationship and therefore as a late result of de Gaulle's 1960s policies. The fact that of all European countries France had the highest number of political visits with China greatly facilitated the state's promotion of exchange in the fields of trade and culture, and provided opportunities to offer assistance in the reform of Chinese institutions.¹¹ During such visits, talks were held in which individual projects could be brought to the attention of the Chinese leaders.¹² High-ranking delegations also often provided the background to signing major bilateral agreements that had been prepared beforehand.

The first such agreement of the reform period concerned cultural and scientific cooperation. It was negotiated in late 1977 and signed during the visit by prime minister Raymond Barre in January 1978.¹³ Though worded in general terms, the agreement was meant to put the existing collaboration on a new footing. The five core areas of agricultural research, chemistry, computer science, geology and technology were maintained and further developed.¹⁴ As before, the strategic aims were clearly spelled out in the French documents, particularly in terms of economic goals.

Cooperation in the aforementioned areas would help the French economy in three ways, the diplomats argued. Most directly, it could lead to sales of scientific tools, laboratory equipment and licences. Secondly, the creation of expert networks and an improved image for French high-end technology would facilitate exports to the PRC, both in the industrial and the agricultural fields. Finally, a stronger, more developed China was believed to be better able to trade with France. As the French pointed out, 'our best clients are very advanced countries'.¹⁵ In other words, China's modernisation was clearly in the interest of France.

This approach was not new but it was now adapted to the changing realities of a Chinese state that seemed bound for fast economic and technological development. Interestingly, the main preparatory memo for the 1978 scientific agreement also proposed to coordinate efforts with Britain and the FRG, pointing out that together the three countries could increase considerably their influence in China and the impact of their efforts in the area of scientific cooperation.¹⁶ As with similar examples in Britain and the FRG, this shows that there was awareness of the problem of national competition within the relevant ministries. Yet, when it came to practical decisions, no country wanted to give away an advantage and effective cooperation could not develop.

Furthermore, a number of positive developments in bilateral exchange seemed to indicate that European policy cooperation was not really needed. From late 1977 onwards, the number of delegations and the quality of the emerging expert dialogue increased rapidly.¹⁷ In May 1978, the French government organised an exhibition of nineteenth-century paintings, one of the first presentations of Western culture after the arrest of the Gang of Four. This exhibition became an outstanding success, with highly benevolent coverage in the Chinese media and an extension following the great interest shown by the Chinese.¹⁸ In late summer 1978, the Chinese announced the first major programme to send abroad large numbers of students, and the French state reacted very positively.¹⁹ Then, in September 1978, vice premier Fang Yi visited France and the FRG and his comments gave rise to the project of a French university in China, discussed below.

All these developments were welcomed by the French officials involved, who consciously provided logistical and, wherever possible, financial support. There was concern that exchange could be too one-sided, and observers noted that the Chinese were often eager to acquire Western

knowledge without giving much in return. A delegation of French agricultural experts, for example noted in 1977:

One would barely exaggerate to describe the ‘cooperation’ that has been established in some areas (CNRS, telecommunication, nuclear) between France and China as the Chinese coming to France to visit our laboratories to see the level of our research, get access to our publications, and send their own experts to get trained in our institutions while our scholars in China can visit certain labs but above all give lectures to ensure the training of China’s scientists.²⁰

Yet the government effectively considered this an acceptable price to pay in view of the opportunities which arose. Furthermore, intensifying competition with countries like Germany seemed to leave little room for choice. If the French did not agree to the Chinese conditions of exchange, it was feared, the Germans and Japanese would, thus increasing their political, cultural and economic influence in the PRC.²¹

As in the areas of science and education, the years after 1977 also saw a new kind of state activity in the field of direct trade promotion. In 1978, the French government declared its intention to offer China loans of up to US\$7 billion to finance imports of French technology.²² The loans were given at the absolute minimum interest rate agreed on by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). This implied the government’s willingness to grant credit subsidies to China. Another initiative that showed promising results was mixed delegations to China by members of the French administration, the semi-private business organisations such as the subsidised Comité France Chine, and company representatives.²³ From the autumn of 1978 onwards, these tried to use the cordial political relations in order to develop personal business contacts and gather market intelligence for French companies.

That scientific cooperation and commercial exchange were closely related could furthermore be seen in the fact that the visit by Fang Yi in 1978 also provided the occasion for an ambitious bilateral agreement on economic relations along with an expansion of cultural cooperation.²⁴ In total, it projected an eightfold increase of bilateral trade within five years and was regarded as an important signal to French exporters.²⁵

The project where the French government was most active concerned the plan for two nuclear reactors in Guangdong near Hong Kong. While the PRC had been able to develop nuclear weapons that could compare

with those of the superpowers, it did not yet possess a civilian nuclear industry. And though China could draw on enormous reserves of fossil fuels, it was clear that atomic energy would play an important role in the project of modernisation, both to provide energy and to catch up with the Soviet Union and the West in this field of high-end research. The Guangdong project therefore seemed like the entry point into an important market for nuclear technology that was only about to develop. Similar to the arms industry, the French nuclear energy sector was heavily subsidised and therefore geared towards exports.²⁶ This explains why ministers and presidents paid so much attention to the Chinese market.²⁷ The 1979 agreement that promised the project to French companies was therefore regarded as a major success and as an outcome of several years of promoting nuclear cooperation with China.²⁸ All this suggested that the centralised efforts of the French government to promote and coordinate exchange with China that had begun shortly after 1969 were finally coming to fruition in the context of Deng Xiaoping's reform policy.

But despite the promising developments of 1978, France failed to overcome its problems in increasing high-value exports to China. During the short boom of 1978, French companies did not manage to score major deals that could compare with those signed by German or Japanese firms. Apparently this was not least due to the latter being more aggressive than the French companies, which remained reluctant to form consortia with other companies and banks and invest in the Chinese market.²⁹ Though this meant that France was less severely hit by the Chinese economic retrenchment between 1979 and 1983, it pointed to an old problem—the lack of enthusiasm for China in the French business community. It was only in 1979 that two smaller associations were merged into a united business organisation, the *Comité France Chine*.³⁰ The *Comité* was sponsored by France's most powerful business organisations, including the employers' federation CNPF and the Paris Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Also involved was the state's agency for export promotion, *Centre Français du Commerce Extérieur* (CFCE). Its aim was to provide market intelligence and advice to French companies interested in China, to welcome incoming delegations from the PRC, and to organise its own trips to help French entrepreneurs explore the market. Though this was not spelled out at the time, it seems likely that its model was the German Eastern Committee.

Yet unlike its German equivalent, the *Comité France Chine* lacked the grass-roots support of its members. Its very creation had been prepared by the state because it was the bilateral agreement on economic exchange

that provided the initial momentum.³¹ After a time of increased activity in its early years, interest in China seemed to decline. Compared to markets such as India and even Taiwan, the French business community did not regard the PRC as similarly attractive.³²

A different though not unrelated development that hampered Sino-French economic exchange was the critical situation of French light industries, particularly textiles. After scaling down Hua Guofeng's plans to expand the industrial base of China within a few years by importing technology from abroad, the Chinese leadership decided to focus on light industries instead. The aim was to quickly increase exports to pay for importing modern equipment. The field where this plan was implemented most quickly and successfully was textile industries.³³ Here China could copy the models of other Asian states that had recently industrialised. It could also draw on financial resources and expertise from Hong Kong. But all this would remain without major effect if the rich countries continued to protect their own light industries by high tariff barriers. By the time the Chinese started intensifying their efforts in this regard, the European Community had taken over responsibility for all questions of international trade and consequently an agreement was to be negotiated between the PRC on the one hand and the nine EC member states on the other.³⁴

Of all EC countries, France had the most important and crisis-prone garment industry.³⁵ Understandably, there was considerable pressure from the respective business organisations to limit textile imports from China.³⁶ In the negotiations during the summer of 1979, the French delegation therefore became the one keenest on keeping import quotas low. Most other countries, however, especially Britain and West Germany, pushed for a quick liberalisation.³⁷ Unlike France, the FRG was continuously running a trade surplus with China and in order to further increase German sales to the PRC, Bonn sought to expand Chinese exports.³⁸ France was isolated within the EC and had to accept increasing its yearly import quota from an initial 14,000 tons to 16,000 tons and then 18,000 tons.³⁹ But as discussions in Beijing advanced, it became clear that the Chinese had settled for a figure of at least 20,000 tons. Apparently, Deng Xiaoping himself had taken an interest in the issue and decided that, for symbolic reasons, China would not sign anything below that number.⁴⁰ By this time, Deng, 74 years old, did not bother with the details of daily politics.⁴¹ The fact that he personally intervened shows that the agreement with the European Community had become a matter of principle for the Chinese leadership. The minister of foreign trade, Li Qiang, told Ambassador Arnaud that

there was serious concern in the Politburo about the reasons for the French stubbornness, and that the conflict might impact negatively on bilateral political relations.⁴² The Chinese also indicated that they would consider the French position on textiles when deciding on the purchase of the nuclear and thermal power plants under negotiation.⁴³ Pressured by the European allies and China alike, the French government finally gave in and signed the agreement. As the following years would show, the French fears were not unfounded. China quickly increased its garment exports and France frequently had to call upon Brussels to stop imports exceeding the quotas, sometimes quite early during the year.⁴⁴

The negotiations displayed how fast Chinese statements about particularly cordial bilateral ties could give way to political pressure when it came to opening the European market for Chinese goods. The question of textile imports therefore once more highlighted that for the Chinese leadership, relations with France were not an end in themselves. What really mattered was how best to modernise China at a reasonable cost. Political sympathies had to take second place.

This could be felt even in the field where the French were arguably strongest in China—nuclear energy. After signing the 1979 declaration, it took more than five years of negotiations before construction really started. During this period, the Chinese repeatedly tried to play off Western companies against each other for specific parts of the power plant.⁴⁵ Eventually, France got most of the important contracts but only after the central government, including President Mitterrand, intervened several times to make sure that the Chinese conditions were met.⁴⁶ By the time construction started in the mid-1980s, analysts believed that the state-owned Framatome had made such concessions as to make virtually no profit at all from the Guangdong project.⁴⁷

With regard to the government activities in culture and education there were similar limits that could not be overcome, and these were, again, linked to the limits of French global power. Most striking in this regard is the case of French support for Wuhan University. Since there existed very similar cases of bilateral academic cooperation between China and Britain and Germany, Wuhan can also be taken as a good example to illustrate the particularities of the French approach towards cultural diplomacy.

During the period of high imperialism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, there had been a number of universities in China that were run by foreigners but catered to local students. These had included the Protestant American Yenching University, the Jesuit French Université

l'Aurore and the German Tongji Medical College and Engineering School.⁴⁸ Some of the leading Chinese communists had studied at these institutions, including foreign minister and Yenching alumnus Huang Hua.

When vice premier Fang Yi visited Western Europe in the autumn of 1978, he approached his hosts about the possibility of connecting to this tradition and bringing foreign professors to individual Chinese universities. Students of these universities would follow the foreign national curriculum in the language of the respective country.⁴⁹ Of all the European governments, the Giscard administration reacted most positively. The idea that French could become the medium of instruction for at least part of the elite in the biggest country on earth aroused the fantasies of diplomats and the public alike, albeit not always in a productive way. The Superior General of the Jesuits in France, for example, falsely claimed that the Society of Jesus would soon be invited back to China to continue their work from before 1949.⁵⁰ Even in the more open climate after 1978, this was at no point what the Chinese would have wanted. The statement caused serious embarrassment for the Quai d'Orsay, which had to row back and explain that the French state would provide support but that the Jesuits would not be involved. French diplomats later believed that it had been partly due to overenthusiastic articles in the French press that the Chinese decided on Wuhan instead of the bigger and more important Shanghai as the location of the Sino-French University.⁵¹

Despite this setback, the Giscard government remained committed to the whole project, and soon the Chinese confirmed their interest.⁵² Delegations of experts were exchanged in order to outline the scope of cooperation, and Paris was willing to send over language instructors and professors as soon as possible to build up French degree programmes in science and the humanities.⁵³ Unlike the Germans and the British, the French were ready to invest heavily in a French university in China. It soon turned out, however, that the Chinese were reluctant to adopt French because most scholars and students preferred English.⁵⁴ Paris did not manage to convince the Chinese that French-speaking experts would be of similar value to those proficient in English, the language of the superpower to which the PRC increasingly turned for inspiration. This was emblematic for French China policy in the early years of reform. France's support for Wuhan clearly helped the Chinese in their endeavour to modernise the education system, but it never became the purely French university in China the Quai d'Orsay dreamed of.

With the official embrace of ‘reform and opening’ at the Third Plenary Session of the CCP’s Central Committee in December 1978 came also a progressive decentralisation of policy decisions with regard to economic matters.⁵⁵ This opened up new channels of bilateral exchange, and for Chinese regional politicians France offered interesting opportunities for cooperation because of its status as a developed country.⁵⁶ Yet given the limited autonomy of France’s *départements*, it proved more difficult for the centralist French political system than for a federal state like the FRG to deal with the relatively diffuse nature of Chinese politics. For the ‘privileged’ diplomatic relations between Paris and Beijing, this meant a further loss of relevance.⁵⁷

It is nevertheless clear that French state support for greater economic and cultural exchange showed positive results. Those Chinese who visited France as students or technical experts were often very impressed and proposed adopting French institutions in China, for example in the fields of agriculture or finance.⁵⁸ Most importantly in this regard is probably the delegation led by Gu Mu that came to Paris in 1978 and is discussed in greater detail in the section below on Germany. In some fields, France even established itself as the unchallenged leader in China. This concerned most notably nuclear technology, but also some niche markets such as wine, where Remy Martin opened one of the first successful Sino-French joint ventures in the PRC.⁵⁹ Yet on balance, the representatives of the French state mostly failed to reach their high targets. Seen from Paris, Deng Xiaoping’s policies were a major opportunity, but Paris had neither the economic nor the soft power to translate the will to promote French *grandeur* in East Asia into large-scale exports or decisive cultural influence.

BRITAIN: THE STATE SCALES BACK ON CHINA POLICY

When it comes to the British policy towards fostering exchange with China in the early years of reform, it is possible to differentiate between two periods. In 1977 and 1978, there was a considerable increase in state activity to promote trade and academic exchange with China. This was followed by a retrenchment under the influence of Margaret Thatcher’s austerity policies and the impact of the recession in the early 1980s.

As explained in the previous chapter, the general prospects for a proactive China policy under Labour improved from 1976 onwards. This was also reflected in the practical measures in the fields of economic and

academic cooperation. In early 1977, talks about shipping and air traffic agreements were taken up again.⁶⁰ Through the shipping agreement, the British government hoped to increase the percentage of bilateral trade that was transported by British shipping companies. The air traffic agreement had the purpose of establishing direct connections by British Airways and the Chinese state airline CAAC. In both cases, agreements had been drafted under Edward Heath. But in 1973, negotiations had collapsed because the Chinese insisted that, if Hong Kong were to be included in the two agreements, flight and shipping connections between the colony and Taiwan had to be severely restricted.⁶¹ Since Hong Kong relied on trade with the expanding Taiwanese economy, this was unacceptable to its British administration. As in 1970, the colony stood in the way of closer Sino-British relations and was the reason why Air France could maintain its status as the only Western airline serving China. But once negotiations started again after Mao's death, both sides were more willing to make compromises, and the agreements were signed during the visit by Hua Guofeng to Britain in October 1979.⁶²

A second field where the Callaghan Government showed initiative was cultural and scientific cooperation. Here, the visit by secretary of state for education Shirley Williams in 1978 played an important role. Williams was welcomed by the Chinese as an exponent of the pro-European right wing of the Labour Party, which Beijing wanted to see strengthened.⁶³ This indicated that the CCP leadership had overcome its frustration after Heath's defeat and was ready to cooperate with the British government under Callaghan. For Williams, the trip to China also provided the opportunity to develop Britain as a destination for foreign students—an issue in which she professed to take great interest.⁶⁴ The only problem was that her delegation had to leave in a rush after four days because a vote had been called in the House of Commons and the government's slim majority seemed in danger.⁶⁵ In a very graphic manner, this illustrated how British China policy suffered from the lack of political stability at home.

Williams's visit nevertheless became the occasion for preparing an agreement on scientific and technological cooperation that was very forthcoming to China.⁶⁶ The agreement provided places for 250 Chinese students in 1979, with the explicit aim of reaching the Chinese goal of 1,000–1,200 students as fast as possible.⁶⁷ Britain also agreed to organise an exchange of senior researchers as well as cooperation in numerous other fields involving research libraries, the Royal Society, the Open University and the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London. One impor-

tant difference from the German and French agreements, however, was the greater British caution with regard to costs. Whereas Paris and Bonn agreed to pay for incoming students while they were in Europe, the British insisted on a 'sending side pays' model.⁶⁸ At the time of the agreement, in late 1978, money did not seem to matter for the Chinese. Consequently, not much consideration was given to this difference between the British exchange programme and those of the FRG or France. The comparable British unwillingness to pay for bilateral exchange would only become a problem once the Chinese readjustment policy forced the Beijing government to focus on cost-efficiency in their dealings with the West.

Not surprisingly, the proposed accord was in large part motivated by the British ambition to increase exports to the PRC. Initially the agreement on scientific and educational exchange even had an annexe that pointed out key sectors of industry where stronger technological cooperation was sought, including aerospace, mining and steel production, machine tools and chemical industries.⁶⁹ In order to support these sectors during the brief China boom of 1978, the government took further measures. These included a line of subsidised credit similar to the French one, to which it was a direct reaction. Like the arrangement made by Paris, it covered up to US\$7 billion at the lowest rate the UK could offer without breaching its international commitments.⁷⁰ During the time in 1978 when Chinese delegations were negotiating for several billion dollars' worth of turn-key plants, the Callaghan Government also created a 'China unit' in the Department of Trade. The unit had no parallel in other countries because its five civil servants had the sole task of fostering exports to the PRC.⁷¹ This indicates that, at least for a short time, China enjoyed a high priority among potential markets for British exports.

Finally, the Harrier deal discussed in Chapter 7 was given an important civilian component. Following Chinese interest in other British products, the Callaghan Government offered the PRC a package deal.⁷² Apart from Harrier, this included several hundred million pounds' worth of plant and equipment. The projected Harrier sale also raised hopes that Britain's nationalised industries could score major contracts with China. A special China working party was set up and there was even talk of opening an office of the Nationalised Industries Overseas Group (NIOG) in Beijing.⁷³ These efforts culminated in the visit by secretary of state for trade Eric Varley to China. During Varley's visit, a commercial agreement was signed similar to those between China and Germany and France, respectively. The agreement projected an increase of bilateral trade to reach US\$14

billion by 1985 and committed both governments to support economic exchange in all possible ways.⁷⁴

The government's measures showed promising results. British companies lost out on the deals for two steel plants but they nevertheless won some contracts for smaller factories. Furthermore, by the beginning of 1979, it looked as though firms from the UK could get additional sub-contracts and there were high hopes, particularly in the area of mineral extraction and coal-mining machinery.⁷⁵ This led to a substantial increase of exports in 1978 and 1979 when the UK overtook France as China's second biggest European trading partner (Table 8.1).

At this point, the Thatcher Government took over. The fundamental aims of increasing cultural and commercial exchange with China did not change and the general expansion of cultural and academic exchanges continued at a considerable pace, comparable to bilateral relations with other Western countries.⁷⁶

Yet there were distinctive effects of Thatcherism on China policy, particularly with regard to public spending on educational exchange programmes. This concerned first and foremost the question of who was to pay for incoming students. The Chinese not only had to face the relatively high living costs of their students in the UK. Unlike in Germany and France, the students also had to pay tuition fees. These must have seemed astronomical to any individual citizen of the PRC, and they meant a serious drain on scarce government reserves of foreign currency.⁷⁷ Since

Table 8.1 European trade with China, 1978–82 in million US\$

	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982
FRG exports	995	1493	1145	1017	853
FRG imports	367	534	808	769	702
FRG balance	629	959	337	248	151
UK exports	176	453	394	252	179
UK imports	214	293	357	365	339
UK balance	-38	160	37	-113	-161
France exports	199	339	303	274	336
France imports	226	327	467	510	437
France balance	-27	12	-164	-235	-101

Note: Provided are the figures for bilateral trade in goods. 'FRG Exports', for example, refers to exports from the FRG to China, 'FRG Imports' stands for Chinese imports into the FRG

Source: Calculations by the author, based on International Monetary Fund, Direction of Trade Statistics Database (DOTS)

most other countries were more than willing to offer conditions that were far better, the Chinese reaction was obvious. By 1982, fewer than 700 Chinese students were studying in Britain.⁷⁸ This was a far cry from the 1,000 aimed for in 1978 and considerably fewer than in France or the FRG, not to mention the 4,000 students who went to the USA. In 1981, the British government decided to spend £386,000 of development aid each year until 1984 on educational exchange.⁷⁹ Given Thatcher's dedication to fiscal restraint, the severe recession, and the fact that the development budget was cut overall for these years, this was more than a mere gesture. But it could not compare to the sums that the FRG and France were spending on educational exchange and other programmes of technical assistance.⁸⁰ It was also far from sufficient to keep the leading place that the UK had had as a destination for Chinese language students. As a developed English-speaking country, Britain remained an attractive partner for Beijing with regard to cooperation in the field of science and education.⁸¹ But the clear British lead over other countries and the possibility to participate more actively in the reform process were entirely lost due to the restrictive funding policy.

It is not surprising either that the British government was not enthusiastic when the Chinese approached it about setting up a British university in Chengdu. With a focus on technology and applied science, it promised to create interesting opportunities to combine scientific cooperation with export promotion, and there were proponents in the British Council. The government under Margaret Thatcher would not have been averse to helping the Chinese find British lecturers interested in going to China. But funding was out of the question.⁸²

While Britain fell back with regard to cultural exchange, trade also stagnated. Though the Chinese eventually cancelled many of the deals projected in 1978, those that were implemented were sufficient to make 1979 a record year for Sino-British trade.⁸³ It was also the only year in a decade that Britain had a substantial trade surplus with China. After that, sales to the PRC went down even more dramatically than in the cases of other European countries, placing the UK behind France and Italy.⁸⁴ What was worse was the continued increase of imports, which were soon twice as high as British exports to the PRC. The decline lasted until 1982 when China's readjustment policy ended and the country started to reinvest in acquiring technology abroad.⁸⁵ Its exact causes are difficult to establish but the changed government attitude must have played a role. For most of the 1970s, the British government concentrated on developing

China as a market for British aircraft. After the failure of the Harrier deal, however, the prospects for continuing this policy were not very positive. Only through the British stake in Airbus was there some continuity in the exports of aircraft technology to the PRC. Yet it is interesting that more was not done after nearly ten years of great efforts by the state and the industry. Attempts to interest the Chinese in the BAe 146 short-range aircraft never really took off. Neither Airbus nor BAe 146 became a priority for China policy. In a way, this reflected the changed industrial policy of the new government. Right up until Callaghan, the state had been willing to maintain a large national aircraft industry through tax-financed subsidies. Now, as the remaining merged company British Aerospace was prepared for privatisation, the incentive to invest in long-term sales to China also disappeared and there was no serious alternative in terms of industrial exports to be supported by the government.

Likewise, cooperation with the business community continued along the lines of the past without any new initiatives or attempts at strategic planning. Despite its formerly communist affiliation, the government regarded the 48 Group as essentially helpful with regard to China trade.⁸⁶ Yet the idea of a merger with the government-sponsored SBTC did not make progress because the leading figures of both associations could not overcome their personal differences. The Board of Trade in turn did not want to push for the dissolution of the 48 Group for fear that this could send the wrong signal to the Chinese, who still regarded its members as ‘old friends of China’.⁸⁷ Consequently, Britain continued to lack a strong China lobby that could represent the entire business community when dealing with the governments in London or Beijing. This hands-off approach of simply keeping on working within the existing structures was in marked contrast to the French creation of the *Comité France Chine* in 1979. It further contributes to the impression that the Thatcher Government did not have a clear strategy to develop the China trade and instead preferred not to intervene in the economy.

The only project that was pursued with considerable energy and state involvement was the Guangdong nuclear power plant. From 1977 until the mid-1980s, London worked hard to persuade Beijing to award major contracts to Britain.⁸⁸ The project interested London for two reasons. First of all the power plant’s main customer would be Hong Kong. This, the FCO believed, would increase China’s interest in the colony’s stability and prosperity, and improve Britain’s position in the negotiations about the post-1997 period. It would also give more substance to Sino-British

relations and constitute a major contribution to the Chinese modernisation effort.⁸⁹ Apart from these political considerations, there was also the economic dimension of the deal. The total volume of potential exports linked to the project was thought to be in the order of £1.8 billion. This would have ensured tens of thousands of jobs in a high-tech industry at a time when British unemployment figures were approaching historical records.

Yet by 1982 it was already becoming obvious that the chances for the British offer were getting slimmer. The project's size meant that the government would have had to issue export guarantees that went far beyond those for other big contracts. These loans would not have been repaid until 2005 and it was doubted in London whether internal stability, economic growth and a pro-Western foreign policy could be maintained in China for such a long time. This scepticism was based on China's record of political upheaval. Even after Mao's death, the sudden announcement of the readjustment policy and the unclear structure of Chinese power sharing raised doubts about the PRC's long-term future.⁹⁰ Furthermore, analysts pointed to the fact that China potentially faced a shortage of food and other economic problems.⁹¹

The involvement of US companies and licences further complicated the project. British companies alone were unable to provide all the technology needed, and an offer only made sense as a joint Anglo-US undertaking. Yet already in 1982, the Reagan Administration threatened to intervene because of concern over the PRC's non-adherence to the non-proliferation treaty.⁹² In the future, it was feared, problems could arise similar to those concerning the pipeline deal with the USSR. In the winter of 1981/1982, the Soviet Union had agreed to a major compensation agreement with West European companies that would supply pipeline technology in return for deliveries of natural gas. The governments involved regarded this as an important contribution to détente and welcomed the much-needed demand for industrial products. But the Reagan Administration was strongly opposed to the entire project, and threatened to seriously punish European subsidiaries of US companies involved in the deal. Apart from French, German and Italian companies, that also affected Washington's closest ally Britain.⁹³ The Thatcher Government therefore wanted to avoid a similar conflict over nuclear exports to China. Taken together, these problems meant that the room for manoeuvre for the Thatcher Government was not sufficient to tip the balance in favour of the British offer.

Overall, it is difficult to clearly label British policy towards the Chinese reforms under Callaghan and Thatcher. But it seems that after a short boost under Labour during the euphoria of 1978, the following Tory Government saw only very limited need to invest in commercial and cultural relations with China. This becomes all the more obvious if one compares the performance of the British government with that of Germany or France. In all three cases one can find a common rhetoric of welcoming the Chinese opening towards the West. But in the British case, this was not backed up with major programmes to support the reform process and increase Britain's cultural and economic presence in China.

WEST GERMANY: FOSTERING EXCHANGE BELOW THE RADAR OF COLD WAR POLITICS

Of all European countries, West Germany was the one where the initial reforms were felt most immediately and which in turn had the biggest influence on the modernisation of China.

First came increased Chinese interest in high-level expert delegations studying the FRG's economy. The background to this was the Chinese leadership's decision to learn more about the advanced economies as a first step to developing policies for China's modernisation and to prepare closer cooperation with the West.⁹⁴ But the most obvious destination for such study-visits, the USA, was not fully accessible to Chinese cadres as long as the bilateral difficulties remained unresolved.⁹⁵ Until this was done in late 1978, Japan and Western Europe were the focus of Chinese experts' visits overseas.⁹⁶ Consequently, the nature of the visits that took place from the end of 1977 onwards was fundamentally different to those of the preceding years. Until the end of Maoism, the usually short trips abroad by Chinese leaders had mainly served to exchange views on political developments and rhetorically attack the Soviet Union. By contrast, the visits in 1978 were at the same time fact-finding missions, networking events, shopping trips and opportunities for strategic talks with an interesting partner in Western Europe. Arguably, the most important effect was that they confronted a substantial number of Chinese decisionmakers with what life in an industrialised country looked like, thereby providing crucial inspiration for adopting new policies at home.

After Mao's death, there was consensus in the Chinese leadership that the national economy dramatically needed modernisation. But in 1977

and 1978 it was still subject to debate how this modernisation could be achieved.⁹⁷ Here, the impressions of those who had visited Europe gave much-needed arguments to the high-ranking cadres who challenged the Soviet model of growth driven by heavy industry and strict planning. Instead, they proposed giving more room to trade with the West and a generally more pragmatic economic policy.

Though France and Britain also saw a multiplication of Chinese delegations, the change with regard to the FRG was particularly dramatic. Until 1978, the only important visitor had been then vice foreign minister Qiao Guanhua, who came to Bonn in 1976 on a brief stop-over while returning from Paris. For several years, the obvious divergence between the number of German delegations travelling to the PRC, including one led by the chancellor, and the few Chinese return visits had been an issue of minor concern to FRG diplomats. In order to change this imbalance, the Germans repeatedly invited the Chinese leadership, only to receive evasive replies.⁹⁸

Now in 1978 there was almost a rush of Chinese leaders visiting other countries, particularly Western Europe and Germany. An early political highlight came in April 1978 when the minister of foreign trade Li Qiang made the first ministerial visit to Germany after visiting the UK and France.⁹⁹ Wearing not the Mao suit but Western dress with a 'fashionable necktie', Li impressed the German business community by his profoundly different approach to trade and foreign credit.¹⁰⁰ In contrast to earlier Chinese statements, he said that Beijing would now consider using long-term debt. Furthermore, he invited foreign companies to import semi-finished goods and machinery into the PRC and benefit from the cheap labour costs to process them and re-export the final products. The fact that a leading Chinese communist wooed the executives of major Western firms in such a way was something completely new and raised the interest of the business community.

Yet the most important trip was when the vice premier Gu Mu came to the FRG in May 1978.¹⁰¹ Gu came with a delegation of high-level experts to get an impression of the situation of the most advanced societies in Europe and think of ways how China could learn from them. By visiting industrial plants, port facilities and airports, as well as museums and shopping streets, Gu Mu saw the high level of technological and economic development that had been reached.¹⁰² Travelling by car on the German highways, train, helicopter and locally produced aeroplanes, Gu saw much of the country while also experiencing German engineering expertise at

first hand. There are few Chinese documents available on the journey, but Gu Mu's report leaves no doubt that all members of the delegation were extremely impressed.¹⁰³ It was not only the general level of development and the high living standard of ordinary people in Europe that amazed the delegation but also the warm welcome they received and the European willingness to cooperate with China.¹⁰⁴

This is indeed a factor that becomes very clear from Western archival documents on the visit. For example, when preparing the visit's itinerary, German diplomats pointed out that 'in accordance with our aim to guide China out of its long period of isolation, we should concede to their requests'.¹⁰⁵ Consequently, the German government made sure that Gu met with Chancellor Schmidt as well as with all relevant ministers, and ensured that he could see all civilian facilities he had an interest in. Hands-on study visits like the one by Gu Mu seemed an ideal opportunity to impress the Chinese with German technology without alarming Moscow. This willingness to support China's modernisation arguably played an important role in the early phase of the reforms. Gu Mu's report, for example, directly led to a plan to invest US\$50 billion in technology imports from the West.¹⁰⁶

During the late 1970s and 1980s, Gu would hold positions of crucial influence, being head of the planning commission and overseeing the establishment of the Special Economic Zones (SEZs)—China's first regions that could compare with Europe regarding infrastructure, economic opportunities and industrial output. Ezra Vogel has acknowledged the importance Gu's trip had for pushing the reforms.¹⁰⁷ What has been overlooked though is that Gu also maintained a vivid interest in closer Sino-German cooperation.¹⁰⁸ This can be considered a direct result of the German government's forthcoming attitude during Gu's visit.

The visits also directly affected German exports to the PRC. In February 1978, the National People's Congress brought the announcement of 120 major industrial projects to be undertaken with the help of imports. As a result, the Chinese delegations to Europe and the increasingly numerous business representatives who travelled to the PRC started signing contracts and declarations of intent for a multitude of large-scale deals.

By October 1978, these included talks about a steel-rolling mill at Baoshan near Shanghai, worth more than DM1 billion, machinery for the exploitation of several Chinese coalfields totalling up to DM8 billion, four chemical plants worth up to DM260 million as well as the delivery of 1,750 coal haulers.¹⁰⁹ The biggest project was announced in November

when the engineering licensing company Lurgi signed a preliminary agreement with the Chinese state.¹¹⁰ According to this agreement, Lurgi would provide plants and equipment for the digging and processing of Chinese ores in return for shipments of non-ferrous metals. The scope of the deal was to be DM15 billion over ten years, which would have been China's biggest international trade project up to then. For a few months there seemed to be no limits in the Chinese market for industrial equipment.¹¹¹

Consequently, German sales to the PRC rose sharply, until the Chinese suddenly announced their readjustment policy in early 1979. Beijing's policy turn-around hit the FRG particularly hard because its companies had signed many of the contracts affected.¹¹² The readjustment strategy was a reaction to the manifest macroeconomic difficulties experienced after the wave of technology imports, and was a result of leadership struggles in Beijing.¹¹³ The opening policy as such was not questioned—the first SEZs were opened and the first joint ventures took up work shortly after the beginning of the readjustment period. But for Western exporters, especially in Germany, it quite suddenly ended a time when China had seemed like 'the new Klondike'.¹¹⁴

The situation was not helped by the almost simultaneous normalisation of Sino-US relations on 1 March 1979, which meant the entry of the world's biggest economy into the competition for the Chinese market. In the following years, the Chinese could therefore use a sharpened sense of competition among the Western countries to get better conditions for acquiring the capital, the technology and the political support they needed to implement the reform agenda.

All this increased the need for the German state to improve relations with China. Yet the timing could not have been worse because the onset of the renewed Cold War tensions made it imperative for the social-liberal coalition in Bonn to act cautiously in all matters that could provoke Moscow. Hence, the FRG could not offer the PRC strategic cooperation in return for improved trade relations. Apart from arms deals, the Schmidt Government categorically refused all kinds of subsidised loans to China despite strong pressure from Beijing.¹¹⁵ When the Chinese asked why Germany could not offer something similar to the lines of credit given by Paris and London, the official response was that this was incompatible with the principles of the FRG's social market economy. Yet it is quite clear that political reasons were paramount because a massive direct contribution to finance China's modernisation could have provoked the Soviet Union.¹¹⁶ Unable to improve relations with the PRC by making political

concessions, the German government instead had to concentrate on low-level projects below the radar of the Cold War. These often attracted little public attention but directly affected transnational connections between the two countries in the fields of culture and trade. Their impact was all the greater as decentralisation began in the PRC. After the failed attempt to kick-start Chinese industrialisation by inserting Western technology into the system of five-year plans, the CCP decided to give regions and individual state agencies greater leeway in questions of management and international cooperation.¹¹⁷ This made Sino-European cooperation much more complex than before. But especially for the FRG with its federal political system and its manifold corporatist institutions, it created new possibilities to expand and depoliticise transnational relations with China at the same time.

The list of German initiatives to promote Sino-German trade is long, though it seems as if they did not form a coherent programme beyond the general notion that German industries had to be supported in an important market.¹¹⁸ Among the activities with an almost exclusive focus on trade, one can point out the continued cooperation with the Eastern Committee and the initiatives at the state level. In addition to this, there were also a number of cases where Bonn provided direct assistance by giving Beijing privileged access to knowledge and technical expertise.

The first field where Bonn helped trade with China was through cooperation with the Eastern Committee. Whenever a Chinese delegation came to the FRG that had some relevance for the China trade, the Committee was included in the official preparations and could organise a business meeting with the guests from China. Likewise, high-ranking officials from the ministry of economics and the German foreign office met the delegations invited by the Eastern Committee.¹¹⁹ When the FRG and PRC drafted a treaty of commercial cooperation in 1979, the Eastern Committee had a say just like the ministries involved.¹²⁰ At the height of the crisis over cancellations of contracts during the readjustment period, business community and government even worked together to send a special mission to Beijing. Former federal president Walter Scheel, considered as an ‘old friend of China’ for his role as foreign minister at the time of diplomatic normalisation in 1972, travelled to China with a small group of influential business representatives, including Otto Wolff.¹²¹ Though technically retired, Scheel was given an official mission and the foreign ministry covered his expenses.¹²² The group held a number of talks with Deng Xiaoping, Gu Mu and others that allowed the Chinese to explain

their economic difficulties and helped rebuild trust between the German exporters and PRC authorities.¹²³ The regular and efficient exchange between ministries and the business community was thus continued, creating mutual confidence that facilitated the expansion of German trade in China.

The second important field where the public sector directly promoted commercial exchange with China was at the level of the federal states or *Länder*. The *Länder* organised their own delegations, invited politicians from China, and prepared industrial fairs on a smaller scale.¹²⁴ These initiatives contributed to a diversification of ties with China that made German China policy both more complex and less political in Cold War terms. The Soviets cared whether German anti-tank rockets would be sold to China or if the People's Republic could directly tap into the strength of the West German economy through subsidised loans, not whether Bavaria gave assistance to Shandong province.

Yet there was also an ideological aspect to the states' China policy. It had been the conservatives and right-wing liberals who had pioneered regional cooperation after 1972. When opportunities for trade and the Chinese interest in technical cooperation grew, it was once again more often than not right-wing politicians from these states who took the first steps.¹²⁵ Following the trip of minister-president Filbinger to China in 1977, for instance, Baden-Württemberg started to develop its own cooperation with the PRC.¹²⁶ The *Land* organised its own industrial exhibition, provided some technical assistance, and encouraged local companies to invest in China. Franz-Josef Strauss in Bavaria likewise invited Hua Guofeng for breakfast at his personal home in Munich, and made sure that this did not go unnoticed in the media.¹²⁷

This political aspect is further revealed when one compares the geographical distribution of member companies of the East Asia Association with bilateral state cooperation.¹²⁸ The two states or *Länder* with the most member companies were Hamburg and North-Rhine Westphalia, both states where Social Democrats governed with a strong majority.¹²⁹ Yet though nearly all Chinese delegations to Germany visited Hamburg to see the port, it took until October 1979 until the city sent a delegation, led not by Mayor Klose but by his senator (state minister) for the economy, Steinert.¹³⁰ Johannes Rau, prime minister of North-Rhine Westphalia, home to many of the heavy-industry companies involved in China, waited until 1983 before he made his first visit to the People's Republic.¹³¹

One can therefore see that Social Democratic state politicians were comparatively late to realise the potential of relations with China even in regions where the economic structure made ties with the People's Republic look natural.¹³² This is not to say that the SPD completely neglected China¹³³; it simply took longer to overcome earlier resentments because the anti-SPD rhetoric and the warm welcome for Strauss were hard to forget and *détente* had become part of the party identity since 1969.¹³⁴

The particular nature of the German federal system thus allowed two parallel foreign policies: a national one where cordial ties with the Soviet Union clearly had priority, and a regional one where politicians used every possibility to promote trade with China and offer assistance to the PRC. This was an advantage that France and Britain did not have.

Finally, one has to look at the different German initiatives to influence the reform process in a way that would indirectly improve the standing of companies from the FRG. The general problem was again that the cooperation had to be small-scale because it was not to cost too much and, above all, not to create a false impression about the nature of Sino-German relations.

A first important project was inspired by Ambassador Wickert. In early 1979, Wickert invited as his private guest Wolfram Engels, one of the leading German economists and consultant to the Schmidt Government.¹³⁵ The German ambassador then invited some 40 Chinese economists and the vice-president of the Chinese Academy of Social Science to the embassy. Here Engels gave a talk, focussing on how the German economy had been reconstructed after the Second World War.¹³⁶ The 'Chinese interest surpassed all expectations' and they asked Engels to give a series of further presentations in front of another 200 economists. Vice premier Gu Mu even hosted a private dinner for Engels and Wickert. According to the German ambassador:

Gu said, without further ado, that China had to combine the current system with a market economy. The question was only how this could be done. The principle that the means of production were publicly owned, however, was to be adhered to. He asked himself, if the laws of a market economy could work under this condition, to regulate economic activity. Professor Engels affirmed this and gave several examples.¹³⁷

If one is to believe Wickert, this was the first time that high-ranking cadres and economic specialists openly discussed their views with a Western scholar. The success of Engels's seminars was further underlined when the Chinese invited him to come back to share his expertise.¹³⁸

Following this, the German government approached another prominent economist, Armin Gutowski, to give economic advice to the Chinese leadership in July 1979.¹³⁹ Apart from being in the official economic advisory committee of the German government, Gutowski was also well connected in the German business community and had close ties with the Eastern Committee.¹⁴⁰ He spent three weeks in China and came back for similar consultancies in the following years.¹⁴¹ While it was quite clear that Gutowski's mission was to advise the Chinese on economic policy, he was asked to label his trips to the PRC as a mere 'exchange of views'.¹⁴² His trip was sponsored not directly by the government but by its cultural diplomacy agency, the Goethe Institut. Though this was not spelled out, one can assume that the downgrading of Gutowski's visit had again the purpose of reducing public attention and avoiding false impressions. After all, Wickert himself had visited China for the first time in a period when German consultants tried to modernise Chiang Kai-shek's GMD against its communist enemies.

The consultancies by Engels and Gutowski were to have a lasting impact on China because they reflected a long-standing Chinese idea about the economies of Western Europe and especially that of Germany. Since at least the mid-1970s, the Chinese leadership had been fascinated by the way West Germany had rebuilt its infrastructure and industry after the war.¹⁴³ This fascination also played an important role in the reports by Gu Mu in 1978.¹⁴⁴ Gu and others essentially hoped that China could somehow repeat the FRG's 'economic miracle' of the 1950s and 1960s. The German China specialists knew about this fascination and Wickert apparently briefed them accordingly.¹⁴⁵ As former vice premier Li Lianqing put it later with regard to Gutowski, 'in fact, the German expert's lectures came as something of a conceptual "breakthrough" for China's government officials, who had the planned economy deeply ingrained in their minds and opened their eyes to the market economy'.¹⁴⁶

Arguably, the German success in presenting the FRG as a modern and advanced economy in 1978 and 1979 also contributed to the Chinese interest in copying German standards and institutions. From 1979 there developed a lively cooperation between the semi-private German institute for standardisation (Deutsches Institut für Normung [DIN]) and the

Chinese authorities.¹⁴⁷ What helped the Germans was that some factories in China, especially those in the former German colony in Shandong, were still using German norms from before 1914.¹⁴⁸ Largely without government subsidies, the DIN sent expert delegations to the PRC and provided the Chinese with copies of many German norms, leading to China adopting most of the FRG's industrial standards.¹⁴⁹ This later gave German industries a further advantage in crucial sectors such as automobiles and machine tools, thus making the aid project beneficial to both sides.

Similarly, the Chinese developed an interest in German patent law—an institution of pivotal importance when trying to build up a market-driven industry.¹⁵⁰ In coordination with the Eastern Committee, the federal ministry of justice acted quickly in order to seize this opportunity. In a fast and non-bureaucratic manner, the German government set up a technical-aid project, costing DM15 million, to train Chinese experts in the German patent law and give them a basic set of technical patents.¹⁵¹ The way this was handled again underlined Bonn's forthcoming attitude when it came to low-key projects of technical aid that could be organised and financed without raising the spectre of a Sino-German alliance.

In the cultural sphere, too, Bonn became very active, not least because there was less risk here of upsetting Moscow. By 1980, the FRG was at the same level as Japan in terms of incoming Chinese students, second only to the USA. In terms of scholarships provided by the hosting country, the FRG even surpassed the USA according to internal reports of the ministry of education and science.¹⁵² In order to prepare the Chinese students, the Goethe Institut sent an increasing number of teachers to the People's Republic and as early as 1978 the Chinese developed plans to make the Tongji University in Shanghai once again a hub of German language academia in China.¹⁵³ A partly FRG-funded German language school opened in 1979, and similar to the Wuhan project of a bilingual Sino-French university, the Chinese even approached Bonn with a plan to reintroduce German as the main language of instruction in the entire university if the FRG agreed to pay for 30 to 40 professorial staff.¹⁵⁴ But the German reaction was very different from the French one, and Bonn did not show great willingness to engage in this project, which was not only prestigious but also very expensive. Only a few years earlier, a comparable attempt to establish a German university in Iran had incurred great costs, while producing only mixed results.¹⁵⁵ Furthermore, the FRG's general aim of promoting the German language could not be compared to the place of *Francophonie* in French cultural diplomacy.

But even without major government support for the university project, the general exchange programme became a success. Within a few years, many future elite cadres got a first taste of Western life and culture, bringing home an image of engineering supremacy, efficiency and economic success.¹⁵⁶ That this would help increase exports to China was clearly among the main aims of the German government in supporting student exchange.

Not all FRG initiatives were successful. If one looks at the number of projects scheduled in 1978, few of the high hopes for selling dozens of turnkey plants to the PRC materialised. By 1982, Sino-German trade had started to fall once again, despite some major deals, including the equipment of the Baoshan steelworks.¹⁵⁷ Attempts to get a share of the Guangdong nuclear project failed just as projected deals for uranium or rare earth metals.¹⁵⁸ Furthermore, there were soon the first instances of Chinese illicitly appropriating German intellectual property—precursors of the much more serious problems that would arise two decades later.¹⁵⁹

Yet it is clear that Sino-German exchange benefited both sides. Unlike the governments of Britain or France, Bonn refused to risk irritating Moscow by making open concessions to China. Instead, the Germans focused on areas of exchange that could be considered non-political by Cold War categories. The numerous actors involved in this cooperation (federal ministries, state governments, the business community and individual figures such as Gutowski and Engels) overall managed to work together in an effective and pragmatic manner. This allowed Sino-German relations to develop smoothly, and facilitated a spectacular increase and diversification of transnational exchange.

In pursuing such a policy of low-key cooperation, the FRG materially and symbolically benefited from its economic strength. First of all, there was enough money to support China through modest projects of technical aid. This was true for the federal government and for other actors such as the state governments or the DIN. The latter used the freedom that the corporatist and federal German system gave them in order to establish a multitude of individual channels of exchange. Secondly, the German nimbus of having established and maintained Europe's strongest economy after the War with highly successful, cutting-edge technology companies impressed the Chinese and raised their interest in taking the FRG as a model to learn from. In both respects the Federal Republic had a clear advantage over Britain and France, and this largely explains why German policies had a more lasting impact on China's reforms.

CONCLUSION

During the years 1978–82, the governments of Britain, France and the FRG pursued distinct programmes of China policy with varying results. The country that left most room for individual initiative by companies and semi-private organisations in the areas of science and culture was clearly Britain under Margaret Thatcher. Its reluctance to intervene and invest in exchange with China, however, effectively reduced the British chances of benefiting from the Chinese opening. The advantage that the UK had enjoyed in some fields such as aeronautics or the provision of places for Chinese exchange students vanished almost completely. And even where the government tried to intervene, it was held back by concern over the special relationship with the USA and fiscal stability.

France followed a very different strategy and invested heavily in promoting Sino-French cooperation. The policy of a centralised effort to guide and control transnational ties with China was continued on a much larger scale. Though this produced some success, France lacked the economic and political power to have the impact its government aimed for.

In many ways the Federal Republic therefore seems the most successful European country with regard to its China policy. Bonn's main political worry was not to provoke Moscow. Consequently, most initiatives in China were meant to offset the disadvantage of the FRG's inability to offer strategic cooperation. The actions that grew out of this approach had limited symbolic value but considerable practical effect on Chinese development. This was ensured by the strong position of business representatives like Otto Wolff who had an interest in *Ostpolitik* towards Moscow but also recognised the potential of the Chinese market. Germany's federal system further contributed to the expansion of transnational exchange without drawing the federal government into strategic cooperation with China.

Taken together, the Europeans thus provided crucial support to the Chinese reform project. In doing so, the European governments directly contributed to the process of accelerating globalisation.

Conclusion

Returning to the questions posed in the Introduction, this final chapter presents a number of conclusions in three main areas. After summarising the main factors driving West European China policies in the 1970s, the chapter reflects briefly on the role of Europe in Asia and finally on the more general issue of how democratic governments can address transnational exchange with authoritarian regimes.

THE MAIN FACTORS DETERMINING EUROPEAN CHINA POLICIES

One of the aims of this comparison was to discern the main driving forces behind the national approaches to China. These can be mainly divided into three categories, namely internal, external and historical influences. When making this distinction, it is clear that most of the factors mentioned were interrelated. In the French case, for example, the external oil crisis led to a policy of developing nuclear energy in a national framework. And this in turn implied the need to find international clients for the home-grown nuclear industry, including the PRC. Yet in order to turn the complexity of history into a manageable argument, it is helpful to distinguish between these three large types of constraints and incentives for European government approaches towards the People's Republic.

*External Factors: Managing Europe's Decline in a Cold War
Context*

From the preceding chapters, we have seen that Britain, France, and West Germany faced similar challenges with regard to their international environment. For all three countries, the Cold War and the immediate Soviet threat to West European security clearly determined China policy. Secondly, they had to answer the question of what role their countries should play in Asia at a time when Europe's global influence continued to wane.

On the one hand, all three states shared the notion that cordial and above all stable relations with Moscow were of crucial importance. In this they were all affected by the idea of European *détente* and the spirit of the CSCE. At the same time, the USSR remained the ideological and potential military enemy par excellence. The fact that conflict with the Soviets was also the leitmotif of Chinese foreign policy from at least 1969 made a closer collaboration with Beijing interesting to the Europeans, but also raised the danger of antagonising the Soviet Union and making it feel more insecure. The three countries gave very different answers to the challenge of balancing these two interdependent sets of interests. For the FRG, the strategy was most obvious and straightforward. As a semi-sovereign state, with over a million Red Army troops only a few miles from its border, a real strategic partnership with Beijing was out of the question. *Ostpolitik* under Brandt and Schmidt had given the FRG greater freedom of manoeuvre with regard to foreign policy than at any time since 1949. In order not to threaten the achievements of *détente*, Bonn had to self-censure and limit its options with regard to Beijing. Of all states, the FRG therefore most clearly committed itself to cordial ties with the Eastern Bloc, which crucially included the GDR. Yet, while being reluctant to cooperate with the PRC on strategic matters, the FRG could not ignore it, above all as a market for German products. China showed great interest in German economic and military potential, and the fact that China was one of the very few countries that openly called for German reunification had to be honoured. Consequently, Bonn opted for a policy that left no doubts about its support for *Ostpolitik* but nevertheless aimed at building friendly and increasingly broad ties with Beijing.

For Britain, the situation was more complex. The former world power could act more freely with regard to the Soviet Union and China. At the same time, the colony of Hong Kong meant that London constantly had

to worry about the precarious security situation along a border between British and Chinese territory. More than the Cold War, this explains the long-term policy goal of Whitehall to reach an understanding with Beijing. At times the issue of Hong Kong even pushed Cold War assumptions entirely into the background, for example during the internal debate about the release of confrontation prisoners in 1971 or Margaret Thatcher's visit to the PRC in 1982. Yet for Britain, too, there was the overarching Cold War issue, and here different British governments tried different paths. Under the Tory Edward Heath, the combination of an active embrace of European integration with critical statements about détente led to a marked amelioration of Sino-British relations, making Britain's prime minister a favourite of Mao Zedong. The Wilson Government, however, started a fresh attempt at improving ties with Moscow, and together with Labour's unclear policy on EC membership this caused a cooling down of Sino-British relations. Both Callaghan and Thatcher then basically adopted the view that détente was not to be dismissed entirely but that a stronger bond with China would help to contain a Soviet Union that seemed bound on expansion in the Third World. In other words, these two British Governments went furthest in playing the 'China Card' against Moscow.

French foreign policy, finally, was largely driven by the aim of promoting national *grandeur* and demonstrating that the country could play an independent role internationally. An important aspect of this strategy was the French version of détente with Moscow that had developed in the 1960s. While going in parallel with *Ostpolitik* and superpower détente during the early 1970s, it always maintained a distinct character in that Paris tried to be seen as an independent, sovereign actor rather than as a mere component of the Western Bloc. Much of France's China policy was therefore inspired by the search for an independent role in the world and especially with regard to the USSR and USA. Unlike the FRG, France did not rule out a closer collaboration with the PRC in order to put some pressure on Moscow. But, in contrast to British policy in the years after 1977, the 'China Card' was not simply seen as a tool to weaken the Soviets. Instead, it was part of an effort to push the USSR towards taking a greater interest in Franco-Soviet relations and thus eventually strengthening collaboration between the two. Yet in practice this complex set of assumptions rarely worked because the political weight of Paris was not sufficient to develop a major influence on Beijing, Washington or Moscow. The success of European détente in the mid-1970s allowed France more flexibility with regard to the PRC, allowing it progressively to

develop military exchange and consider arms exports. But when the bipolar conflict intensified towards the end of the decade, Paris had to clearly opt for cordial relations with Moscow in order to avoid being pushed back into a rigid Cold War framework.

Therefore, despite reacting in different ways to the chances and challenges of China policy in a Cold War context, none of the three states really managed to transcend the constraints of bipolar confrontation and adopt an approach towards the PRC that would have seriously been at odds with vital concerns of either the USA or the USSR.

This leads to the second important external factor guiding British, French and West German China policies, namely the changing role of Europe in world politics. Especially when seen in a long-term perspective, Europe's influence in East Asia continued to decline during the period studied. In the late 1960s, France still hoped to play a mediating role in the Vietnam conflict, while Britain retained major military positions east of Suez. Ten years later, it seemed unthinkable that any European country could seriously project political or military power in the region. To most observers it was clear that European relations with countries like China had therefore to be fundamentally different from the past in order to take note of Europe's decreasing relevance. If at all, Europe could only play a role in Asia through its economic and cultural potential, not by direct political means. Bonn, Paris and London could at best develop strategies to react to the transformations of China's foreign policy, but the main initiatives had to come from Beijing.

Again, this was most obvious in the case of West Germany and its very short history of colonialism in China. Bonn consciously sought to present the country as a partner without direct political interests in the region. This was done as a concession to the aforementioned Cold War constraints, but also with a view to promoting exports and improving the FRG's image among developing countries. The latter aspect also played a role because of the ongoing global competition with the GDR, which meant that the FRG had to avoid at all costs the impression of being an imperialist or neo-imperialist state. The practicalities of this China policy included government support for industrial fairs, small-scale projects of technical cooperation and inviting students and scholars to Germany. Notwithstanding several setbacks, this led to a quickly growing cultural and economic German presence in the PRC. Though still clearly limited in its sovereignty, the FRG thus eventually re-emerged on the East Asian scene and came to have a considerable impact on the PRC.

France too opted for a clear break with the imperialist past but at the same time tried to use its limited means to preserve at least some degree of great-power influence. Through its active diplomacy of high-level visits, Paris attempted to increase its role in global affairs, for example in the UN commission on disarmament or when President Giscard d'Estaing convened with Deng Xiaoping on common approaches to the international energy crisis. The French government also tried to coordinate its political, commercial and cultural policy towards China to maximise its influence. This can be regarded as an original strategy to make the most of a difficult situation and it showed some positive results, including the sale of civilian nuclear technology to China. But on the whole, France did not have the critical mass in economic, political and cultural terms to give the country a real influence in China. By 1979, France simply had nothing special to offer that the Chinese could not get from other sources, mainly the USA.

Britain, above all, seemed to have difficulty establishing a strategy during the 1970s. The Heath Government came close to adopting the French approach, albeit with an even stronger focus on Europe as the main vehicle for pursuing British interests in the world. Even a premature withdrawal from Hong Kong seemed possible within the FCO at the time. Though this led to improved relations with China, Heath failed to get a broad bipartisan consensus for his approach. After the second Wilson Government, Callaghan once more showed greater interest in an active China policy, but domestic problems and his defeat in the 1979 elections prevented the Labour leadership from forming the various initiatives into a coherent strategy. With Thatcher there came another turn-around, this time towards a neo-imperial attitude, coupled with anti-communism and a close relationship with Washington. Instead of assessing British interests and capabilities in Asia in a wider perspective, the government focused on preserving its colony of Hong Kong, almost regardless of the costs to Sino-British relations. Here, a personal dimension comes into play as well. Most foreign leaders like Schmidt and Heath were profoundly impressed by Beijing's hospitality and tried to accommodate Beijing's hopes and wishes as best they could. Thatcher, by contrast, never managed to like the Chinese and regarded them as Marxists rather than nationalists trying to overcome what they considered humiliations of the past. Beyond structures of global politics, this arguably had a direct impact on bilateral relations and contributed to the British government's relapse into imperialist rhetoric. Once this failed, there were few options left for a larger China policy, apart from a relatively unspecific line of export promotion.

*Varieties of China-Oriented Capitalism and the Domestic Face
of the Cold War*

As with external factors, there were clear similarities between the three countries with regard to domestic factors, but they worked in very different ways in each state. Mainly, these internal factors were the different political economies of China trade and the domestic impact of the Cold War that reflected back on foreign policy. Looking at these not only helps one to better understand Sino-European relations. With regard to future research agendas, the connections between economic structures and international relations take one back to the links between diplomatic history and global and transnational history discussed in the Introduction. The examples of European China policies show that diplomatic history, when understood broadly, adds not only to our knowledge of issues related to war and peace but also of economic exchange and integration and the interplay of state and economy in the process of globalisation and modern capitalist development.

This understanding goes beyond simplistic notions of unidirectional causality where economic forces determine foreign policy or vice versa. Instead, as I have argued in the preceding chapters, foreign policy and economic forces influenced and overlapped each other in ways that were often complex but can nevertheless be traced as historical developments. Chinese foreign policy during the reform era, for instance, partly followed economic imperatives. But exchange with the Europeans, for instance in the form of delegations like the one led by Gu Mu or the consultancy missions by German economists, in turn directly affected the course of the reforms and the PRC's transformation towards its very own form of capitalism. The ways in which European leaders and diplomats conducted relations with Beijing were similarly directly connected to their notions of their respective national economic interests and the institutions and business communities they dealt with at home. In some cases this led to businessmen and experts playing the role of diplomats themselves, sanctioned by the state. But professional diplomats and politicians also contributed to the creation of particular environments for exchange, thus reinforcing or influencing the economic and political power structures in their respective societies.

All three European governments shared the aim of developing the Chinese market and increasing industrial exports to the PRC. This was due not least to the economic difficulties that most developed countries

experienced during the 1970s, which led to an intensified search for new customers overseas. In Britain and especially in France, the government reacted to this at first through an interventionist policy that concentrated on industries close to the state—like nuclear energy, aeronautics, armaments and informatics. Apart from direct political support for individual deals, scientific and cultural cooperation were coordinated in such a way as to penetrate the respective Chinese market. While such a technocratic approach had a longer tradition in France, Britain had greater success in the early and mid-1970s, being more willing to sell sensitive technology to the PRC. After a lull under Wilson, the Callaghan Government made renewed efforts to push up exports of national industries. Its successor, the Thatcher Government, however, abandoned this approach almost completely and adopted a policy that was far less interventionist, even though exports to the PRC were still welcomed. These changing political priorities can be seen as reflections of crises in the British economy and the search for a new political strategy to overcome structural problems. Ironically, the statist approach of the Heath years, which is now largely discredited for its failure to put Britain on a path of sustainable growth, was quite successful with regard to China. Thatcher's policies (today often perceived as having saved the UK from total chaos) by contrast did not show similar results concerning the China trade, at least not during the period studied. One important reason for this is that austerity, deflation and the promotion of the financial sector led to intensified deindustrialisation precisely at the moment when the PRC turned to the West in search of industrial technology.

In France, there were no similar policy changes, mainly because the country experienced more political and economic stability. After several years, the French efforts seemed to pay off, with the sale of the Guangdong power plant and serious Chinese interest in French military equipment. But even though the French strategy was coherent and corresponded to the political aim of national sovereignty and international influence, it lacked real support from the business community. Despite continuous government intervention, French exports therefore always remained below government targets.

The story was different in the German case. Here, the government was far less active than in Britain or France. This lack of interventionism was partly due to the continued success of German exporters in China, which set the pace for other Europeans and gave the coalition in Bonn little to worry about. Another cause was the established practice of corporatism

with regard to China policy, where the business associations (mainly the Eastern Committee) did most of the economic diplomacy. The almost ideal-type cooperation between the government and strong business associations seems to confirm the general notion of coordinated capitalism in the FRG. Yet its success was not only due to the long tradition of German economic activity in China and a generally prominent role of a few powerful organisations representing private companies. Two other factors played a part. First of all, the main manufacturing firms active in China also had a major stake in the economic dimension of *Ostpolitik* and therefore worked towards cordial relations with the leaders in both Moscow and Beijing. This arrangement allowed the government to stay in the background and avoid the impression of active attempts to strengthen China's economic base against the USSR.

In addition to the focus on trade promotion, the Cold War also had effects on domestic politics, which in turn shaped China policies. In different ways this was true for Britain and West Germany, though less so for France where China policy did not cause major ideological conflicts. For the UK, the Cold War confrontation with China in the 1950s and 1960s had led to an identification of the PRC as ideological enemy that ran deeper than in any other European country. Arguably, this partly explains why someone like Margaret Thatcher took Deng Xiaoping for a real Marxist rather than a pragmatic reformer. It was also the reason why London tried for a long time to sideline Sino-British cultural or economic exchange organised by people whom the government regarded as politically unreliable. Despite the Sino-Soviet split, these attempts reached their climax in the first half of the 1970s when the government ran its own organisations to compete with the allegedly pro-Communist SACU and 48 Group in the fields of culture and trade. The following governments continued this policy, even though the initial fear of British fellow travellers working for Beijing largely disappeared. Unlike in Germany or France, this excluded some of the people with the best personal connections to Beijing from government support in a way that produced little gain for Britain. Ironically, the British Tory governments ruling from 1970–74 and again from 1979 were also the most anti-Soviet administrations in Europe at the time, which raised the interest of the Chinese who quite openly showed that they preferred to see Heath, and later Thatcher in power, at least until the latter's policies and insensitivity to China clashed with Deng Xiaoping's views on Hong Kong.

Similarly, in Germany it was not left-wing but right-wing politicians with whom Beijing wanted to cooperate. The reluctance of the social-liberal Government to actively seek benefits from the Sino-Soviet split led a number of prominent members of the CDU/CSU travelling to Beijing to discuss global politics with the CCP leaders. Mao's meeting with Franz Josef Strauss received most attention in this regard but Chinese attempts to collaborate with conservative opposition leaders lasted at least until 1978. The China policy of the CDU/CSU had little direct impact on Germany's foreign relations. But it created some pressure for Brandt and Schmidt to develop ties with the PRC in order not to leave the field entirely to the opposition. Furthermore, it initiated the direct regional cooperation between individual German states and Chinese provinces that developed from the late 1970s.

The visits of Strauss and Heath in Beijing therefore exemplify the complex repercussions of the Cold War for Europe's relations with the People's Republic. In addition to outside constraints and internal impulses for China policy, the third important factor for the three governments was the past of Sino-European interaction since 1842.

Ghosts of the Past: The Importance of History

During the 1970s, China's relations with Europe were still marked by Beijing's strong desire to overcome the legacy of perceived national decline since the nineteenth century.¹ Both symbolically and materially, relations with Europe served to make China stronger. Symbolically, the queuing-up of European leaders to pay formal visits confirmed the PRC's status as a power of foremost importance and provided legitimacy for the Communist Government in its competition with the GMD in Taiwan. Materially, the Chinese sought to gain access to crucial knowledge, products and privileges at as low a cost as possible without giving away national sovereignty as had happened during the time of Western imperialism. This observation is not surprising, but the preceding chapters illustrate it through many examples and therefore add to an increasingly coherent picture of Chinese foreign policy after 1949.

But it was not only on the Chinese side that the *longue durée* played an important role. Events in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries also directly affected the Western European stance towards China, albeit not always as one would expect.

This clearly goes beyond the most obvious example of Hong Kong. The colony brought several advantages for Britain. In theory it gave Western and above all British firms a potential way of accessing the Chinese market. Furthermore, it provided the FCO with a source of intelligence and a training ground for its diplomats that had no comparison. Yet overall, the negative effects of the imperial entanglement in Asia outweighed these advantages for Britain's China policy. The aforementioned ideological confrontations of the 1950s and 1960s could never have developed if Hong Kong had been returned in 1945, and the colony does not seem to have contributed much to London's key aims in its China policy—raising British manufacturing exports and developing a stable and increasingly close relationship with the government in Beijing. On a number of occasions it instead blocked the way to improving bilateral relations, and the interests of Hong Kong seemed to conflict with the goals pursued by the FCO and the embassy in Beijing. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the tensions over the colony's future largely coincided with the best opportunities to put European relations with the PRC on a new footing in the context of Deng's reform. Just as they became willing to accept Western models of development, the Chinese saw themselves confronted with an apparent British relapse into nineteenth-century-style imperialism, combined with an anti-communist ideology that did not try to seriously differentiate between the PRC and the USSR. While practical relations between Hong Kong and China developed into a fruitful symbiosis between the booming colonial economy and the early reforms on the mainland, the legacies of empire proved a burden rather than an asset to overall British China policy.

Long-term effects of imperialism also become apparent in German and French relations with China. Though de Gaulle succeeded in breaking politically with the tradition of French colonialism in Asia by recognising the PRC in 1964, the imperial past in China before the 1940s resurfaced several times, especially in the cultural and symbolic sphere. Examples are the cancelled visit of the French sloop *Enseigne de Vaisseau Henry*, named after a hero of France's colonial wars in China, and the debate about reopening the Université l'Aurore. The fresh start with a clean slate that de Gaulle had attempted worked in the political arena but the ghosts of the past led to a number of embarrassing situations and setbacks for French China policy and reduced the effects of the political rapprochement.

The German case can be considered as the most ironic. For here, the past of German capitalist and, until 1914, imperialist presence in China actually proved beneficial to bilateral exchange. This past was crucial for

the formation of business networks that played an important political and economic role in the 1970s. One factor that definitely helped was that, despite the effective German alliance with Chiang Kai-shek until 1937, economic cooperation before and after 1949 was not tainted by political interference of the German government in China. Furthermore, developments in Europe in the 1940s and afterwards convinced the Chinese leadership that Germany had a major influence on the strategic situation on the continent and therefore had to be taken very seriously, despite the country's total defeat in 1945. The almost unbroken continuity of German economic presence in China was thus welcomed by the communist leadership in Beijing and did much to give the Federal Republic a positive image despite the evident ideological divide. Even the colonial history of Germany in China became a positive reference in bilateral relations. Examples here are the explicit connections with the former German Tongji University or the remark by Chinese politicians that cooperation with German companies in Shandong would be particularly welcome because factories there had continued to use German technical norms since colonial times. In these cases the perception of Germany as a traditional partner rather than enemy of China had direct implications for economic and political cooperation. Taken together, these examples show that European China policies in the 1970s were still very much connected to the imperial past of the nineteenth century.

WHY DOES THIS MATTER? THE IMPORTANCE OF EUROPEAN TIES WITH THE PRC

As argued in the preceding chapters, the study of Western European China policies generates valuable new insights for the study of China's relations with the West, which has hitherto focused almost exclusively on the USA. In addition, it improves our understanding of China's reintegration into the international community and of the success of China's reforms. In both of these areas, as this book has shown, the Europeans contributed considerably.

The European Dimension of Sino-Western Relations

The present study complements research on Sino-US relations in several ways. Though highlighting the importance of Nixon's opening to China in February 1972, it first of all questions the commonly held assump-

tion that the improvement of relations between China and most European states until 1972 was a mere appendix to the so-called 'week that changed the world'. Instead, the Europeans pursued their own agendas and faced distinct challenges in piercing the bamboo curtain. France, for example, tried to act as a mediator between the USA and China well before Kissinger went to Beijing. For London, by contrast, the security of Hong Kong was paramount, while the Federal Republic saw China policy mainly in the context of détente in Europe. The Chinese leaders for their part also treated each of these European countries very differently: cooperating with France, pressuring Britain on Taiwan and the UN, and attempting to influence *Ostpolitik* in an anti-Soviet way. All this therefore makes for a more complete but also more complex picture of Sino-Western détente in the early 1970s.

From 1973 onwards, Europe even became the centre of China's foreign-policy activities. As negotiations about the diplomatic normalisation between Beijing and Washington stalled, the PRC tried to strengthen its ties with Britain, France, and the FRG in order to manage the Soviet military threat. Between his handshake with Nixon in 1972 and the inconclusive discussion with Ford three years later, Mao received numerous European leaders, including Georges Pompidou, Edward Heath, Franz Josef Strauss and Helmut Schmidt, each time repeating his conviction that they should all oppose Moscow's expansionism. Another highlight was Deng Xiaoping's weeklong visit to France in 1975, the only such overseas visit by a top-level Chinese leader during these years. Furthermore, commercial, cultural and economic exchange between China and Europe was far more intense at this time than Sino-US ties. Though China's attention was still on the USA, Beijing clearly tried developing cooperation with Western Europe as a complement and possible alternative; a fact barely mentioned in studies of China's foreign relations.

With the start of the post-Maoist era, Chinese interest in Europe further intensified. Prior to Sino-US normalisation, the PRC attempted to conduct its 'great leap outward' mainly with high-tech imports from Europe and Japan, and showed a serious interest in buying large amounts of European military equipment to modernise its armed forces. From Beijing's point of view, the three European countries complemented each other in a way that further increased the Chinese interest in Europe. Britain delivered aircraft technology, and, until 1974, the Heath Government seemed to work for something close to the politically integrated Europe that the Chinese desired as a counterweight to the USSR. France, by contrast, could offer

the tradition of top-level consultations that had developed since 1964, and until 1979 Paris seemed most forthcoming with regard to military exchange. Germany had the most advanced economy and could supply crucial industrial technology to China.

After the normalisation of Sino-US relations in January 1979, the USA clearly became more important in its influence than Europe. Yet Western Europe nevertheless remained a pivotal economic partner for the Chinese and contributed to the success of Deng Xiaoping's reforms in multiple ways.

*Material Aid and a Favourable Global Environment: Helping
China Reintegrate into International Society*

The European countries studied here did much to help China overcome the political and economic isolation in which had it floundered during the 1960s. It is possible to roughly distinguish between two ways in which Europe provided assistance: directly giving material aid, and benignly influencing the global environment.

Immediately after the end of Maoism, the forthcoming attitude of countries like France and Germany provided critical support for reformers such as Gu Mu who wished to cooperate with the West in order to modernise China. In the years that followed, European governments helped China on this path through various measures that were often small in scale but together had an important impact. Germany was most active in this regard with its economic consultancies for China, regional cooperation through the *Länder*, and technical assistance in legal or agricultural questions. But France too spent considerable sums on academic and educational cooperation, an exchange of agricultural expertise, and subsidised loans. Even the British government somewhat reluctantly agreed to give subsidies for educational exchange that familiarised members of the PRC's future elite with its technology and way of life.

At least equally important as this direct support for China's modernisation, however, was the fact that Bonn, Paris, and London contributed to an international environment that was highly beneficial to Beijing. All three governments accepted in principle a situation of competition for the Chinese market. When one government agreed to make concessions, the Chinese would immediately use this to put pressure on the competing countries, driving down prices and limitations to technology transfer. The Europeans were aware of this asymmetry where a highly centralised

planned economy could negotiate with a multitude of actors from different countries which would not normally exchange information among each other. There were proposals by individual diplomats and politicians to coordinate European activities vis-à-vis the PRC, and there were even some promising cases where this worked, for example the EC's declaration concerning the Chinese attack on Vietnam. In other words, the Europeans clearly could have chosen to make more serious attempts at coordinating their China policies. There seem to have been two reasons why such cooperation never materialised. Firstly, as seen above, the different state-industry relations with regard to China made a common effort by the national governments unlikely. Secondly, relations with the PRC never had such a vital political importance as to make them an issue of European integration. Put differently, China was regarded as too important to leave the market to companies from other European states, but not important enough to inspire an initiative of top-level policy coordination.

A second way in which Britain, West Germany and France contributed towards a favourable international climate was in combining cooperation with China with the continuation of détente in Europe. This is most obvious in the German and French cases, but it holds true even for Britain. It was clear to most experts that London needed stable ties with Moscow and that the benefits of a *de facto* alliance with Beijing would always remain limited. Hong Kong in this regard played a pivotal role because it was the main reason for adopting a pragmatic policy towards the PRC that concentrated on the immediate security of the colony, rather than long-term strategic collaboration against the USSR. This and Margaret Thatcher's anticommunism prevented a real strategic Sino-British cooperation from developing, despite London's critical stance on détente. Thus, Britain also took part in the general European process of reintegrating China into the international system without increasing global tensions.

In the absence of full access to Soviet and Chinese archives, it is difficult to assess comprehensively the impact of the Europeans' combining détente with Moscow and business with Beijing. Yet it is generally agreed that the European commitment to détente had a stabilising effect on the Soviet Union.² The French and German combination of continued support for cooperation in Europe with their pragmatic assistance to the Chinese reforms was particularly important in making the rise of China look less threatening from Moscow's perspective. Judging from the former SED documents in Berlin, even Sino-British cooperation caused some worries for the Soviets but never reached the point of seriously alarming

Moscow. At the same time all three governments constructively accompanied China's policy of opening and did what they could to turn it into a success. Western Europe thus worked as a stabilising factor in world politics and this greatly benefited the Chinese because, as Deng Xiaoping continuously reiterated, China needed a peaceful environment for its modernisation.

European governments did not usually make this point in public, but effectively they pursued a policy of peace and development towards China. While this took place in the shadow of superpower relations and Sino-US cooperation, it arguably had a very real effect on the international scene and constitutes an important factor in the remarkably peaceful economic and political rise of China. The internationally stabilising effects of European policy is therefore a theme that deserves more scholarly attention.

With regard to Sino-European relations today, we still see the continuation of many elements that have their origins in the 1970s. Despite a brief interruption after 1989, the general policy of cooperating and integrating the PRC into the international community has continued much along the lines that had been established by 1982. Two aspects in which this is most obvious are trade and academic exchange. The European Union has become China's most important export market and the second source of imports behind the USA.³ Likewise, the EU today imports more goods from the PRC than from any other country in the world. With regard to student exchange, the UK has clearly taken a lead within Europe, fully capitalising on the language advantage. But given the fact that most Chinese coming to French and German universities have to learn relatively difficult languages as a prerequisite for their studies, which promise fewer professional benefits than the command of English, both countries still attract very substantial numbers of students.⁴ This can be seen as a direct outcome of the governments' forthcoming attitude, allowing foreign students to attend institutions of similar quality to those in Britain or the USA at a far lower cost. Obviously the policy of promoting integration and cooperation with the PRC has benefited Europe at least as much as China. The profits generated by the German automobile industry (still one of the pillars of German manufacturing) on the Chinese market are just one example to illustrate this.⁵

Of course there are many issues that separate Beijing from Brussels and Berlin, Paris and London, ranging from human-rights concerns to intellectual property disputes and different approaches to security policy or climate change; but, overall, the story has been one of peaceful and mutu-

ally beneficial cooperation. When taken against the background of erratic Maoist policy turns and the past of European imperialism, this current pattern is far from self-evident. It therefore seems that the gamble that the Europeans took in the 1970s and 1980s when they wholeheartedly embraced the Chinese steps to increase interaction with the Western world paid off and is likely to create further gains for both sides in the future.

WHERE DOES THIS LEAVE US? WESTERN DEMOCRACIES AND TRANSNATIONAL EXCHANGE

Historians rightly tend to underline the singularity of their objects of study. Since no historical situation is exactly like another, it is hardly ever possible to 'learn' from history in the sense of directly replicating actions that seemingly brought success in the past. But while keeping this in mind, it is also true that one goal of historical study is to better understand the present and make well-informed decisions for the future. And since the basic situation of medium-sized democratic governments having to deal with authoritarian regimes, including the People's Republic, is likely to stay with us for some time, it makes sense to ask for possible lessons to be drawn from European China policies in the 1970s and early 1980s.

In a simplified way, Britain, Germany and France can be said to have followed three different models of China policy. Both London and Paris attempted in their own distinct ways to punch above their weight and combine support for transnational relations with the search for an active political role in China. In the British case this meant combining export promotion with a continued presence in Hong Kong, thus in a way bringing together approaches from the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries which were not always compatible. The French government, by contrast, tried to control and organise political and transnational relations in a way that was essentially technocratic and seemed to correspond better to the country's post-imperial situation. The FRG finally did not pursue direct strategic interests in China beyond the integration of the PRC into the global networks of trade and communications. Hence, the government of the Federal Republic supported almost all kinds of transnational exchange as long as they did not conflict with Bonn's vital interests such as *Ostpolitik*. With regard to trade figures, but also when looking at Germany's overall influence on the Chinese reforms and the country's image in China today, this seems to have been the most successful approach. As stated, it

is clear that this success was not solely due to voluntary political decisions. Because of its particular position in the Cold War, Bonn had few other options. Furthermore, the adopted strategy owed much to the corporatist organisation of the West German economy, and the FRG had the least burden in terms of past imperialist confrontations with China. Yet it seems possible to argue that what can be termed Bonn's 'realist policy of peace' was the most appropriate approach for a developed country with limited means of power politics and might therefore serve as inspiration for European politicians in the future when looking for ways to successfully manage the further decline of the continent's influence in global affairs.

Applying this analysis to today's relations between Europe and China means that the Europeans should continue to pursue their interests but also acknowledge the limits of their influence. Much less able to insulate themselves from crises in other parts of the world than the USA, the Europeans are even more interested in global stability and prosperity. Their tools to pursue this will remain much the same as those that already showed the biggest impact in the 1970s and 1980s. In other words, attempts like the one by Margaret Thatcher to think through a military defence of Hong Kong did not succeed in influencing Chinese policies, while sending over top German economists to consult the Beijing leadership did. For the present and the future this means that trade, exchange and dialogue are the only ways to promote stability in China and the world, not in order to challenge the CCP government but to share best practices, create win-win situations, and sometimes also to convince the Chinese of the benefits of transparent and accountable governance.

In the most optimistic scenario, such an approach will continue to help both sides and have positive effects on other regions in the world where conflict is likely, such as the Middle East or the region of China's maritime borders. Yet, as in the past, Europe is extremely likely to stay in the shadow of the USA, especially in Asia. Though the Europeans should continue to follow their own approach to détente and cooperation, this means that they should also accept their overall strategic dependence on the USA, not just at home but also in the Far East. Concretely, this implies that, as in the past, they should follow the US lead in matters of fundamental strategic importance, for instance by maintaining the commitment to NATO. But within this framework of security, essentially decided in Washington, the Europeans should pursue their own policies of cooperation, even when partners can be difficult due to their political systems and their own strategic concerns. Of course, as in the past from the 1940s

until the 1980s, this also implies the need for US elites to understand the value of partners, particularly in Europe, and work with them accordingly even where, outside core security issues, they act in ways not completely congruent with Washington's policies.

As I have argued in this book, Europe's influence in Asia in the 1970s and 1980s was positive in the sense that it contributed to greater international stability and prosperity. Since the Europeans also benefited from this global climate, these policies have largely been continued until the present day. In order to maintain a similar, positive influence in Asia in the future, the Europeans need the independent will to seek cooperation and peaceful, eye-level exchange with countries like China, while remaining close allies to a USA willing to assume a stance of responsible hegemony in the West.

ENDNOTES

Chapter 1

1. See e.g. Barry Naughton, *The Chinese economy: transitions and growth* (Cambridge, MA: 2007); Ian Johnson, *Wild grass: three stories of change in modern China* (New York, 2004); Wu Jinlian, *Understanding and interpreting Chinese economic reform* (Singapore, 2005).
2. Julia Lovell, *The Opium War: drugs, dreams and the making of China* (London, 2012); Wei-Bin Zhang, *The rise and fall of China's last dynasty: the deepening of the Chinese servility* (New York, 2011), ch. 10.; Robert Bickers, *The scramble for China: foreign devils in the Qing empire, 1832–1914* (London, 2011); Michael Greenberg, *British trade and the opening of China 1800–42* (Cambridge, 2008).
3. June Grasso, Jay Corrin, and Michael Kort, *Modernization and revolution in China: from the Opium Wars to the Olympics* (Armonk, NY, 2009); Jonathan D. Spence, *The search for modern China* (New York, 2013, third edn.), pp. 152–565; Jonathan Fenby, *The Penguin history of modern China: the fall and rise of a great power, 1850–2008* (London and New York, 2008), pp. 10–350.
4. Jürgen Osterhammel, *Die Verwandlung der Welt: eine Geschichte des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Munich, 2009), pp. 1010–1055; for contemporary debates see Nick Knight, *Imagining globalisation in China:*

- debates on ideology, politics, and culture* (Cheltenham, UK and Northampton, MA, 2008); Yang Yao and Linda Yueh (eds.), *Globalisation and economic growth in China* (Hackensack, NJ, 2005); Wilfried Loth, 'Staaten und Machtbeziehungen im Wandel', in Akira Iriye and Jürgen Osterhammel (eds.), *Geschichte der Welt 1945 bis heute: die globalisierte Welt* (Munich, 2013), pp. 177–179; Thomas Zeiler, 'Offene Türen in der Weltwirtschaft', in Iriye and Osterhammel (eds.), *Geschichte*, pp. 310–315; Odd Arne Westad, *Restless empire: China and the world since 1750* (London, 2012), chs. 10–12.
5. Richard Louis Edmond, 'China and Europe since 1978: an introduction', in Edmonds, Richard Louis (ed.), *China and Europe since 1978: a European perspective* (Cambridge, 2002), p. 2.
 6. Daniel Möckli, *European foreign policy during the Cold War: Heath, Brandt, Pompidou and the dream of political unity* (London and New York, 2009); Andreas Etges, 'Western Europe', in Richard H. Immerman and Petra Goedde (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of the Cold War* (Oxford, 2013); Wilfried Loth, *Overcoming the Cold War: a history of détente, 1950–1991* (Basingstoke and New York, 2003); Jussi M. Hanhimäki, 'Détente in Europe, 1962–1975', in Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad (eds.), *The Cambridge history of the Cold War, vol. 2: crises and détente* (Cambridge, 2010).
 7. European Commission, *Directorate-General for Trade, European Union, Trade in goods with China*, 10 April 2015.
 8. See e.g. James Mann, *About face: a history of America's curious relationship with China, from Nixon to Clinton* (New York, 2000); Warren I. Cohen, *America's response to China: a history of Sino-American relations* (New York, 2010); William C. Kirby, Robert S. Ross, and Gong Li (eds.), *Normalization of U.S.-China relations: an international history* (Cambridge, MA, 2005); Ezra F. Vogel, Yuan Ming and Tanaka Akihiko (eds.), *The golden age of the U.S.-China-Japan triangle, 1972–1989* (Cambridge, MA, 2002); Margaret Macmillan, *Seize the hour: when Nixon met Mao* (London, 2006); Henry Kissinger, *On China* (London, 2011).
 9. For Germany see Christoph Nesshöver, *Die Chinapolitik Deutschlands und Frankreichs zwischen Aussenwirtschaftsförderung und Menschenrechtsorientierung (1989 bis 1997): auf der Suche nach Balance* (Hamburg, 1999); Margot Schüller (ed.), *Strukturwandel in den deutsch-chinesischen Beziehungen—Analysen*

- und Praxisbeziehungen* (Hamburg, 2003); Jinfu Tan, *Die Entwicklung der deutsch-chinesischen Kulturbeziehungen 1949–1989: ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der auswärtigen Kulturpolitik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Regensburg, 1997); Yu-ru Lian, *Bestimmungsfaktoren der Westeuropapolitik Chinas: Die Beziehungen der Volksrepublik China zur Bundesrepublik Deutschland in den 80er Jahren* (Frankfurt am Main and New York, 1995); For Britain see David Clayton, *Imperialism revisited: political and economic relations between Britain and China, 1950–54* (New York, 1997); James Tang, *Britain's encounter with revolutionary China, 1949–54* (Basingstoke, 1992); Zhong-ping Feng, *The British government's China policy, 1945–1950* (Keele, 1994); for studies on France see Qu Xing, *Le temps de soupçon: les relations franco-chinoises, 1949–1955* (Paris, 2005); Thierry Robin, *Le Coq et le Dragon. La France face à la Chine: des relations économiques sous contrôle (1944–1964)* (Geneva, 2013); Fredrik Logevall, 'The French recognition of China and its implications to the Vietnam War', in Priscilla Roberts, *Behind the Bamboo Curtain: China, Vietnam and the world beyond Asia* (Washington, D.C., 2006).
10. The pioneers in this field include scholars such as Bernd Schaefer and Chi-kwan Mark who must be credited with breaking new ground on recent Sino-European relations from a historical perspective. Bernd Schaefer, "Europe must not become Greater Finland": opponents of the CSCE—the German CDU/CSU and China', in Andreas Wenger, Vojtech Mastny, Christian Nuenlist (eds.), *Origins of the European security system: the Helsinki process revisited, 1965–1975* (London, 2008); 'Ostpolitik, "Fernostpolitik", and Sino-Soviet rivalry: China and the two Germanys', in Carole Fink and Bernd Schaefer (eds.), *Ostpolitik, 1969–1974: European and global responses* (Cambridge, 2009), 129–147; Chi-kwan Mark, *China and the world since 1945: an international history* (London and New York, 2012).
 11. Roderick MacFarquhar and Michael Schoenhals, *Mao's last revolution* (Cambridge, MA, 2006); pp. 315–323; Richard Curt Kraus, *The cultural revolution: a very short introduction* (Oxford, 2012), pp. 92–95; Jisen Ma, *The cultural revolution in the foreign ministry of China* (Hong Kong, 2004), pp. 307–321.
 12. Ezra Vogel, *Deng Xiaoping and the transformation of China* (Cambridge, MA, 2011), p. 452.

13. Among others, this periodisation is also adopted by Roderick MacFarquhar in his overview of late-Maoist politics in the PRC. Roderick MacFarquhar, 'The succession to Mao and the end of Maoism, 1969–1982', in Roderick MacFarquhar (ed.), *The politics of China: sixty years of the People's Republic of China* (Cambridge, 2011 edn.).
14. For the latter, see e.g. Thomas Robinson and David Shambaugh, *Chinese foreign policy: theory and practice* (Oxford, 1994); David Lampton (ed.), *The making of Chinese foreign and security policy in the era of reform* (Stanford, CA and Cambridge, 2001).
15. This is even true for the brilliant biography of Deng Xiaoping by Ezra Vogel, which treats Deng's foreign policy in detail but only with regard to Hong Kong, the USA, and Asia in the 1980s. Vogel, *Deng*.
16. Barbara Barnouin and Yu Changgen, *Chinese foreign policy during the Cultural Revolution* (London, 1998); Ma, *Cultural revolution*.
17. Chen Jian, *Mao's China and the Cold War* (Chapel Hill, 2001); see also Chen Jian, 'China and the Cold War after Mao', in Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad (eds.), *The Cambridge history of the Cold War, vol. III: endings* (Cambridge, 2012).
18. The number of quality studies in these fields is far too big to even list all the relevant works of historiography. Some relevant titles include Jessica Gienow-Hecht and Frank Schumacher (eds.), *Culture and international history* (New York, 2003); Akira Iriye, *Global and transnational history: the past, present, and future* (Basingstoke, 2013); Jost Dülffer and Wilfried Loth (eds.), *Dimensionen internationaler Geschichte* (Munich, 2012); David Reynolds, 'International history, the cultural turn and the diplomatic twitch', *Cultural and Social History*, 3(2006), 75–91; Antony Best, 'The "Cultural Turn" and the international history of East Asia: a response to David Reynolds', *Cultural and Social History*, 3(2006), 482–489; Patrick Finney, 'The diplomatic temptation', *Cultural and Social History*, 3(2006), 472–481; David Reynolds, 'Culture, diplomacy and language: some further thoughts', *Cultural and Social History*, 3(2006), 490–495; Kiran Klaus Patel, 'Überlegungen zu einer transnationalen Geschichte', in Jürgen Osterhammel (ed.), *Weltgeschichte* (Stuttgart, 2008) See also Wilfried Loth and Jürgen Osterhammel (eds.), *Internationale*

- Geschichte: Themen, Ergebnisse, Aussichten* (Munich, 2000); Patrick Finney, *Palgrave advances in international history* (Basingstoke, 2005).
19. C.A. Bayly, Sven Beckert, Matthew Connelly, Isabel Hofmeyr, Wendy Kozol and Patricia Seed, 'AHR conversation on transnational history', *American Historical Review*, December (2006), 1440–1464, pp. 1442, 1445.
 20. This view is shared by e.g. Dominic Sachsenmeier, *Global perspectives on global history: theories and approaches in a connected world* (Cambridge, 2011), pp. 2, 70–72. Jessica Gienow-Hecht adopts a similarly broad definition of international history that seems helpful even if her focus on the search for dominance might be problematic in some ways: Jessica Gienow-Hecht, 'Nation Branding', in Dülffer and Loth (eds.), *Dimensionen*, p. 65.
 21. For a discussion of the central role of the state for historical analysis beyond national borders see also Eckart Conze, 'Abschied von Staat und Politik? Überlegungen zur Geschichte der internationalen Politik', in Eckart Conze, Ulrich Lappenküper and Guido Müller (eds.), *Geschichte der internationalen Beziehungen: Erneuerung und Erweiterung einer historischen Disziplin* (Cologne, 2004).
 22. See the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), 'The SIPRI Military Expenditure Database', <http://milexdata.sipri.org/result.php4>, accessed 15 November 2015.
 23. See e.g. Jamil Anderlini, 'Pretoria defends China's Africa policy', *Financial Times*, 24 August 2010; Thomas Lum, Hannah Fischer, Iulissa Gomez-Granger, and Anne Leland, 'China's foreign aid activities in Africa, Latin America, and Southeast Asia', *CRS Report for Congress*, 25 February 2009.
 24. BBC online, 'Zhongguo chujing liuxue renshu quanqiu zui duo' [China leads the world in the number of exchange students], 18 April 2011 http://www.bbc.co.uk/zhongwen/simp/china/2011/04/110418_china_overseas_students.shtml, accessed 15 November 2015.
 25. See e.g. Hubert Zimmermann, 'Die politische Ökonomie der internationalen Geschichte', in Conze et al., *Geschichte der internationalen Beziehungen*; Bruce Cummings, 'Political economy', in Patrick Finney (ed.), *Palgrave advances in international history* (Basingstoke and New York, 2005).

26. Peter A. Hall, David Soskice (eds.), 'Introduction', in Peter Hall and David Soskice, *Varieties of capitalism: the institutional foundations of comparative advantage* (Oxford, 2001); Peter Hall, *Governing the economy: the politics of state intervention in Britain and France* (Oxford, 1986).
27. For the development and influence of European Maoism see Sebastian Gehrig, Barbara Mittler and Felix Wemheuer (eds.), *Kulturrevolution als Vorbild? Maoismen im deutschsprachigen Raum* (Bern and Oxford, 2008); Sebastian Gehrig, '(Re-) Configuring Mao: trajectories of a culturo-political trend in West Germany', *Transcultural Studies* 2 (2011), 189–231; Richard Wolin, *The wind from the East: French intellectuals, the Cultural Revolution, and the legacy of the 1960s* (Princeton, NJ, 2010).
28. Johannes Paulmann, for example, defines 'intercultural transfer' as 'the directed transmission of knowledge, goods, people or institutions from one system of political-social patterns of behaviour and interpretation to another.' Johannes Paulmann, 'Grenzüberschreitungen und Grenzräume: Überlegungen zur Geschichte transnationaler Beziehungen von der Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts bis in die Zeitgeschichte', in Conze et al., *Geschichte der internationalen Beziehungen*, p. 180.
29. See e.g. Johannes Paulmann, 'Internationaler Vergleich und interkultureller Transfer: zwei Forschungsansätze zur Europäischen Geschichte des 18. bis 20. Jahrhunderts', *Historische Zeitschrift*, 267:3 (1998), 649–685; Michael Stürmer and Bénédicte Zimmermann, 'Vergleich, Transfer, Verflechtung. Der Ansatz der Histoire croisée und die Herausforderung des Transnationalen', *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 28: 4 (2002), 607–636.
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31. Hannes Siegrist, 'Perspektiven der vergleichenden Geschichtswissenschaft. Gesellschaft, Kultur und Raum', in Kaelble and Schriewer, *Vergleich und Transfer*, p. 305.
32. For a discussion of the relevance of these topics for (European) contemporary history see also Anselm Doering Manteuffel and

- Lutz Raphael, *Nach dem Boom: Perspektiven auf die Zeitgeschichte seit 1970* (Göttingen, 2008), p. 56.
33. Historical research on other European countries' ties with China is far from complete, but in recent years a number of very good studies have been published. For Sino-Italian relations see e.g.: Enrico Fardella, 'A significant periphery of the Cold War: Italy-China bilateral relations, 1949–1989', *Cold War History* (2016); Ariane Knuesel, *Framing China: media images and political debates in Britain, the USA and Switzerland, 1900–1950* (Farnham and Burlington, 2012); Kjeld Erik Brødsgaard and Jan Rowinski, 'Diplomatic and political relations between Denmark and the People's Republic of China 1949–97' in Kjeld Erik Brødsgaard and Mads Kirkebak (eds.), *China and Denmark: relations since 1674* (Copenhagen, 2001). See also Enrico Fardella, Christian F. Ostermann and Charles Kraus (eds.), *Sino-European relations during the Cold War and the rise of a multipolar world: a critical oral history* (Washington, D.C., 2015).
 34. Heinz-Gerhard Haupt and Jürgen Kocka, 'Historischer Vergleich: Methoden, Aufgaben, Probleme. Eine Einleitung', in Heinz-Gerhard Haupt and Jürgen Kocka (eds.), *Geschichte und Vergleich: Ansätze und Ergebnisse international vergleichender Geschichtsschreibung* (Frankfurt, 1996), p. 23.
 35. Haupt and Kocka, 'Vergleich', p. 24.

Chapter 2

1. See e.g. Wang Gungwu, 'China and the international order: some historical perspectives', in Wang Gungwu and Zhen Yongnian (eds.), *China and the new international order* (London, 2011), pp. 25–27; Niu Jun, *From Yan'an to the world: origins and development of Chinese communist foreign policy* (Norwalk, CT, 2004), pp. 316–319.
2. Jürgen Osterhammel, 'Britain and China, 1842–1914', in: Andrew Porter and Alaine Low (eds.), *The Oxford history of the British Empire, vol. 3, the nineteenth century* (Oxford, 1999).
3. Jürgen Osterhammel, 'China', in Judith M. Brown, Roger Louis and Alaine Low (eds.): *The Oxford history of the British Empire, vol. 4, the twentieth century* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 645–653.

4. Dieter Brötel, *Frankreich im Fernen Osten: imperialistische Expansion und Aspiration in Siam und Malaya, Laos und China, 1880–1904* (Stuttgart, 1996), pp. 223–227.
5. Robert Lee, *France and the exploitation of China: a study in economic imperialism* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 1–2; Brötel, *Frankreich im Fernen Osten*, p. 223.
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 100. Krouck, *De Gaulle et la Chine*, pp. 485–504.
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110. Buchanan, *East Wind*, pp. 142–3, 154–159.
111. Majonica, *Bonn-Peking*, pp. 42–46.
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118. Wolff, *Weg nach Osten*, p. 243; RWWA, BDI, 175-32-2, Transcript of an interview with Rolf Audouard, chairman of the China Commission of the Eastern Committee (untitled), 1982 (undated).
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121. Wolff, *Weg nach Osten*, p. 269.
122. Mitcham, *Economic relations*, pp. 94–108.
123. Peyrefitte, ‘Témoignage’, p. 28.
124. Wolff, *Weg nach Osten*, p. 269.
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Chapter 3

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3. Sergey Radchenko, *Two suns in the heavens: the Sino-Soviet struggle for supremacy, 1962–1967* (Washington, D.C, 2009), p. 165–166.
4. Westad, *Restless empire*, pp. 350–353.
5. Barbara Barnouin and Yu Changgen, *Chinese foreign policy during the Cultural Revolution* (London, 1998) p. 13.
6. Chi-kwan Mark, *China and the world since 1945: an international history* (London, 2012), pp. 63–68
7. Mark, *China*, p. 64; Westad, *Restless empire*, p. 354–355.
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9. Xiaoyuan Liu and Vojtech Mastny (eds), ‘China and Eastern Europe: proceedings of the international symposium: reviewing the history of Chinese–East European relations from the 1960s to the 1980s, Beijing, 24–26 March 2004’, *Zürcher Beiträge zur Sicherheitspolitik und Konfliktforschung*, 72, p. 81–82.
10. Chen Jian, *Mao’s China and the Cold War* (Chapel Hill, 2001) pp. 216–221, 239–240.
11. Archives diplomatiques du Ministère des Affaires étrangères, La Courneuve (hereafter MAE), Série Asie-Océanie, 1968–1972, Sous-série Chine (hereafter AO, 1968–1972), 747, Telegram No. 07–09, Beijing, 3 January 1968; Telegram No. 43–49, Beijing, 5 January 1968.
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13. See e.g. in MAE, AO, 1968–1972, 662, Politique intérieure et extérieure de la Chine (1 au 15 Septembre), Beijing, 15 September 1968. See also MAE, AO, 1968–1972, 747, Telegram No. 1189, Beijing, 27 May 1968.
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15. For the ‘myth of privileged relations’ see Françoise Mengin, ‘La politique chinoise de la France: du mythe de la relation privilégiée au syndrome de la normalisation’, *Critique internationale*, 12 (March 2001), 89–110.
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17. MAE, AO, 1968–1972, 747, Circular No. 243, Paris, 30 May 1969.
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19. MAE, AO, 1968–1972, 747, Entretien avec le Vice-Président Tung Pi-wu le 22 Mai 1969, p. 3.
20. It is far from clear, however, how reliable these allegations are. Bérénice Manac’h, ‘Introduction’, in Bérénice Manac’h (ed.), *Etienne Manac’h: Journal intime 2: de la France libre à la Guerre froide* (Morlaix, 2010), p. 8; Christopher Andrew and Vasili Mithrokhin, *The Mitrokhin Archive: the KGB in Europe and the West* (London, 1999), pp. 199–200. For an alleged personal connection between Zhou Enlai and Manac’h, see also Thierry Wolton, *La France sous influence: Paris-Moscou. 30 ans de relations secrètes* (Paris, 1997), p. 79; Bérénice Manac’h, ‘Introduction’, p. 10.
21. Bérénice Manac’h (ed.), *Journal intime 2*, p. 443.
22. Jeremi Suri, *Power and protest: global revolution and the rise of détente* (Cambridge, MA, 2003), p. 323.
23. Bernard Krouck, *De Gaulle et la Chine: la politique française à l’égard de la République Populaire de Chine* (Paris, 2012), pp. 277–282.
24. Krouck, *De Gaulle et la Chine*, pp. 365–80; Archives nationales, Pierrefitte-sur-Seine (hereafter AN), AG/5(2)/1029, Note: compte rendu d’une conversation avec le Premier Ministre CHOU-EN-LAI, 14 July 1971.
25. MAE, AO, 1968–1972, 747 (untitled list, 1971).
26. As Ge Fuping points out, Alan Peyrefitte in 1970 led the first Western delegation to visit China after the beginning of the Cultural Revolution. Ge Fuping, *Zhongfa guanxi shibua* [A brief history of Sino-French Relations] (Beijing, 2011), p. 167. Mendès-France and Zhou Enlai had known each other since the Geneva conference of 1954, where they had cooperated to find solutions acceptable to all sides. Chen, *Mao’s China*, pp. 141, 143.

27. AN, AG/5(2)/1029, Peyrefitte to Pompidou, Paris, 20 August 1971; AN, AG/5(2)/1029, Note: compte rendu d'une conversation avec le Premier Ministre CHOU-EN-LAI, 14 July 1971.
28. MAE, AO, 1968–1972, 752, Compte-rendu de l'entretien de M. Mendès France avec M. Chou En-lai, Beijing, 7 January 1972, pp. 10–11.
29. Laurent Cesari, 'Les relations franco-chinoises sous la présidence de Georges Pompidou (1969–1974)', in Laurent Cesari and Denis Varaschin (eds.), *Les relations franco-chinoises au vingtième siècle et leurs antécédents* (Arras cédex, 2002), p. 267.
30. MAE, AO, 1968–1972, 747, Note, 6 February 1969.
31. MAE, AO, 1968–1972, 760, Procès-verbal de l'entretien confidentiel du 7 juillet 1972 (de 15h à 18 h 10) de M. Maurice Schumann avec M. Chi Peng-fei, Beijing, 18 July 1972; MAE, AO, 1968–1972, 758, Compte rendu de l'entretien de M. Mendès France avec M. Chou En-lai le samedi 25 décembre 1971, p. 17.
32. Shen Zhihua and Li Danhui, *After leaning to one side: China and its allies in the Cold War* (Washington, D.C. and Stanford, CA, 2011), p. 224; Li Mingjiang, *Mao's China and the Sino-Soviet split: ideological dilemma* (London and New York, 2012), pp. 146–147.
33. Shen, Li, *After leaning to one side*, p. 226.
34. 'Struggle sessions' were party meetings during which those accused of deviating from the party line had to make public self-criticisms and undergo physical and psychological abuse. This often affected cadres who had joined the CCP long before 1949 but fell victim to the many ideological turns of the Cultural Revolution. See e.g. Jisen Ma, *The Cultural Revolution in the foreign ministry of China* (Hong Kong, 2004), pp. 308–310, 320, 326.
35. Huai Yan and Suisheng Zhao, 'Notes on China's confidential documents', *Journal of Contemporary China*, 2:4 (1993), 75–92. Many of the PRC's top scientists, artists, and intellectuals had spent time in Europe or the US, in some cases several decades. See e.g. AN, AG/5(3)/472, Réception à la résidence de France de personnalités chinoises des arts, des lettres et des sciences, 16 October 1980.
36. MAE, AO, 1968–1972, 747, Telegram No. 2149–56, Beijing, 29 October 1969.
37. Maurice Vaisse, *La puissance ou l'influence? La France dans le monde depuis 1958* (Paris, 2009), p. 554. See also AN,

- AG/5(2)/1029, Texte manuscrit du Président de la République, 16 August 1971.
38. MAE, AO, 1968–1972, 761, Telegram No. 2725–27, Washington, 20 June 1969.
39. Shen, Li, *After leaning to one side*, p. 223.
40. MAE, AO, 1968–1972, 766, Telegram No. 3211/15, Beijing, 20 July 1971.
41. Assemblée Nationale, ‘Jean SAINTENY’, http://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/sycomore/fiche.asp?num_dept=6236, accessed on 15 November 2015.
42. Steven E. Phillips (ed.), *Foreign relations of the United States, 1969–1976, Volume XVII, China, 1969–1972* (Washington, 2006), Document 90. Memorandum of Conversation, Paris, 27 September 1970, p. 230.
43. In 1973 he even joined the official delegation of President Georges Pompidou to the PRC, apparently as an advisor to the latter. AN, AG/5(2)/1030, Note pour Monsieur Balladur, 31 July 1973.
44. MAE, AO, 1968–1972, 747, Entretien avec le Vice-Président Tung Pi-wu le 22 Mai 1969, p. 8.
45. MAE, AO, 1968–1972, 747, Telegram No.2149–56, Beijing, 29 October 1969.
46. Cesari, ‘Les relations franco-chinoises’, pp. 281–285.
47. Vaisse, *La puissance*, p. 475.
48. Kenichi Fujisaku, ‘La politique asiatique de la France après de Gaulle, 1969–1972’, *Relations internationales*, 134 (2008), 83–92.
49. Vaisse, *La puissance*, p. 554; Georges-Henri Soutou, ‘Les relations franco-américaines sous Georges Pompidou et Valéry Giscard d’Estaing’, in René Lukic (ed.), *Conflit et coopération dans les relations franco-américaines du général De Gaulle à Nicolas Sarkozy* (Québec, 2009), p. 95.
50. See e.g. MAE, 119QO/766, ‘Entretien entre le Secrétaire Général et l’Ambassadeur du Japon’, Paris, 20.7.1971.
51. US Secretary of State William P. Rogers accompanied Nixon on his trip to China. But since, unlike France, the USA had not yet normalised relations with the PRC, this visit was, formally, not an official visit to a recognised foreign country.
52. MAE, AO, 1968–1972, 760, Voyage du Ministre en Chine, 18 July 1972.

53. K.A. Hamilton, 'A "week that changed the world": Britain and Nixon's China visit of 21–28 February 1972', *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, 15:1 (2010), 117–135, p. 119.
54. John W. Young, *Britain and the world in the twentieth century* (London and New York, 1997), p. 178–179.
55. Andrew Scott, *Allies apart: Heath, Nixon and the Anglo-American relationship* (Basingstoke, 2011), p. 63.
56. Philip Ziegler, *Edward Heath: the authorised biography* (London, 2010), p. 456.
57. Wang Weimin, *Bainian zhongying guanxi* [A century of China-Britain Relations] (Beijing, 2006), p. 271.
58. The National Archives, Kew (hereafter TNA), Foreign and Commonwealth Office (hereafter FCO) 21/643, China: Annual Review for 1969, Beijing, 1 January 1970, p. 24–25.
59. Anthony Grey, *Hostage in Peking* (London, 1970).
60. TNA, FCO 21/715, Hong Kong and Sino-British relations, 3 July 1970, p. 2.
61. TNA, FCO 21/715, Prospects for Sino-British relations, London, 25 March 1970.
62. John W. Young, *Twentieth-century diplomacy: a case study of British practice, 1963–1976* (Cambridge, 2008), p. 31.
63. Sir David Trench was the last governor who came from the colonial service in the classical sense. After his tenure ended in 1971, all governors until 1992 would be career diplomats from the FCO without experience in running a municipal polity. Brian Hook, 'From repossession to retrocession: British policy towards Hong Kong 1945–1997', in Li Pang-kwong (ed.), *Political order and power transition in Hong Kong* (Hong Kong, 1997), p. 13.
64. Steve Tsang, *Governing Hong Kong: administrative officers from the nineteenth century to the handover to China, 1862–1997* (London and New York, 2007), pp. 85–86.
65. TNA, Cabinet Office (hereafter CAB) 148/116, Hong Kong defence contribution, 6 July 1971.
66. Such conflicts had indeed been foreseen before the merger of the two offices. But since so few territories were affected, the merger went ahead nevertheless. Young, *Twentieth-century diplomacy*, pp. 37–38.
67. TNA, FCO 21/715, Sino/British Relations, 12 June 1970, p. 3.
68. TNA, FCO 21/715, Sino/British Relations, 12 June 1970, p. 2.

69. TNA, FCO 21/715, Sino-British Relations, 3 July 1970.
70. Robert J. Jarman (ed.), *China: political reports 1961–1970* (Chippenham, 2003), ‘China: annual review for 1970’, 12 January 1971, pp. 537–552.
71. TNA, FCO 21/831, Telegram no. 24, 8 January 1971.
72. See e.g. TNA, FCO 21/1498, UK policy towards China, 16 December 1976.
73. TNA, CAB 14/115, Defence and Overseas Policy Committee: Minutes of a Meeting held at 10 Downing Street SW1 on Wednesday 16 June 1971, p. 3.
74. TNA, CAB 14/116, Relations with China: proposals for improvement, 7 June 1971.
75. TNA, CAB 14/116, Relations with China: proposals for improvement, 7 June 1971, p. 2.
76. Ziegler, *Heath*, p. 399.
77. Scott, *Allies apart*, pp. 63–66; Victor S. Kaufmann, ‘“Chirep”: The Anglo-American dispute over Chinese representation in the United Nations, 1950–1971’, *The English Historical Review*, 115: 461 (April 2000), 354–377.
78. TNA, FCO 21/833, Brief Defence and Overseas Committee, 15 May 1971.
79. TNA, FCO 21/986, Exchange of ambassadors with China: Memorandum prepared by the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, 31 December 1971.
80. TNA, FCO 21/820, John Denson to Michael Wilford (FCO), Beijing, 15 November 1971.
81. Enrico Fardella, Christian F. Ostermann and Charles Kraus (eds.), *Sino-European relations during the Cold War and the rise of a multipolar world: a critical oral history* (Washington, D.C., 2015), p. 119.
82. TNA, FCO 21/986, Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, 31 December 1971.
83. The declaration went on ‘We think that the Taiwan question is China’s internal affair to be settled by the Chinese people themselves’. TNA, FCO 21/986, Telegram no. 469, 25 February 1972. The Chinese used the term 承认 (chengren), which has several meanings but is most often translated as ‘to recognise’ rather than ‘to acknowledge’, especially in a diplomatic context. R.H. Mathews,

- Chinese-English Dictionary: revised American edition* (Cambridge, MA, 1956); p. 51.
84. TNA, FCO 21/986, Telegram no. 693, 25 February 1971. See also Memo, John H. Holdridge to Henry Kissinger, January 18, 1972, 'New British formulation on Status of Taiwan', folder 'United Kingdom—Sep 1971—Sep 1972—Vol. VII', box 729, National Security Council (NSC) Files: Country Files—Europe, Richard Nixon Library.
 85. Scott, *Allies apart*, pp. 54–69.
 86. TNA, FCO 21/1087, China: Annual Review for 1972, 8 January 1973.
 87. Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amts, Berlin (hereafter PA AA), B37 660, Chinas Behandlung der Taiwan-Frage bei der Aufnahme diplomatischer Beziehungen, 20 March 1972, p. 3.; Harish Kapur, *Distant neighbours: China and Europe* (London, 1990), p. 128.
 88. PA AA, Zwischenarchiv 163.788, Wirtschaftsjahresbericht, 26 March 1975.
 89. PA AA, B150, Telegram no. 1290, New York, 9 October 1971.
 90. PA AA, B150, China, 2 August 1972.
 91. PA AA, B37 660. Memo, Bonn, 7 August 1972.
 92. Bernd Schaefer, 'Ostpolitik, "Fernostpolitik"', and Sino-Soviet rivalry: China and the two Germans', in Carole Fink and Bernd Schaefer, eds., *Ostpolitik, 1969–1974: European and Global Responses* (Cambridge, 2009), pp. 130–134.
 93. Tim Trampedach, *Bonn und Peking: die wechselseitige Einbindung in aussenpolitische Strategien 1949–1990* (Hamburg, 1997), pp. 89–96.
 94. Claudie Gardet, *Les relations de la République populaire de Chine et de la République démocratique allemande (1949–1989)* (Bern and Oxford, 2000), pp. 339–346, 357–359.
 95. For the difficult bilateral relations between China and the GDR between the early 1960s and the late 1970s see Zhong Zhong Chen, 'Defying Moscow, engaging Beijing: The German Democratic Republic's relations with the People's Republic of China, 1980–1989', unpublished PhD thesis, London School of Economics and Political Science (2014), pp. 48–50.

96. See e.g. Gregor Schöllgen, *Die Außenpolitik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland: Von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart* (Munich, 2004), pp. 118–122.
97. Bernd Schaefer, ‘Ostpolitik, “Fernostpolitik”’, pp. 134–136.
98. Rheinisch-Westfälisches Wirtschaftsarchiv (Archives of the Economy of Western Germany, hereafter RWWA), Otto Wolff papers, 72-1183-2, Protokoll, Vorstands- und Beiratssitzung Ostasiatischer Verein, 10 March 1972; RWWA, Otto Wolff papers, 72-1183-2, Sitzung des Länderausschusses VR China, gemeinsam mit Arbeitskreis China des Ost-Ausschusses, 4 September 1969, p. 4.
99. See the table on Sino-Western trade in the Appendix.
100. RWWA, Archives of the Federation of German Industries (hereafter BDI), 175-8-3, 24, Sitzung des Arbeitskreises China des Ost-Ausschusses der Deutschen Wirtschaft, 9 February 1971.
101. RWWA, BDI, 175-8-3, Audouard to von Carnap (Cologne?), 26 April 1971.
102. MAE, AO, 1968–1972, 812, Les relations commerciales de la République Fédérale d’Allemagne avec la République Populaire de Chine, 16 August 1971.
103. Airgram A 53, ‘Wolff von Amerongen Speaks Out on Relations with the People’s Republic of China’, Bonn, 19 January 1972, 4-20-70 POL CHICOM F-G, box 2184, entry 1613, Record Group 59 (RG 59), General Records of the Department of State, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD (hereafter NACP).
104. RWWA, 175-32-2, Memorandum by Rolf Audouard (untitled), 19 February 1982.
105. See e.g. Timothy Garton Ash, *In Europe’s name: Germany and the divided continent* (London, 1993), pp. 28–32, 71.
106. In his memoirs, Adenauer claimed that Khrushchev had told him of his fear of China in 1955. Alexander Troche, *Berlin wird am Mekong verteidigt* (Düsseldorf, 2001), pp. 61–3; Mao and Deng Xiaoping later repeated this claim though it is possible that they too simply quoted Adenauer’s memoirs which Mao had read with great interest. TNA, FCO 21/1240, Meeting between Chairman Mao Tse-tung and Mr Heath, 25 May 1974; MAE, Série Asie-Océanie, 1973–1980, Sous-série Chine (hereafter AO, 1973–1980), 2166, Compte-rendu de l’entretien restreint entre M. Pompidou et M. Chou En-lai, 12 September 1973.

107. Gardet, *Relations*, pp. 367–369.
108. ‘Schroeder trip catalyzes early recognition of the PRC’, 25 August 1972, 4-20-70 POL CHICOM F-G, box 2184, entry 1615, RG 59, NACP.
109. PA AA, B37 660, Vermerk für: Herrn Professor Carstens, Herrn Dr. Schulz, 11 April 1972.
110. Wang, *Maos Mann*, p. 75.
111. See e.g. ‘Schröder aus China zurück: Bonns Ostpolitik besser mit Peking?’, *Der Spiegel*, 7 August 1972.
112. Bernd Schaefer, ‘Ostpolitik, “Fernostpolitik”’, p. 138.; See also PA AA, B150, Gespräch BM Scheel/Dr. Schröder, 5 July 1972.
113. Gerhard Schroeder, *Mission ohne Auftrag: die Vorbereitung der diplomatischen Beziehungen zwischen Bonn und Peking* (Bergisch Gladbach, 1988), pp. 37–38.
114. See e.g. ‘Das Chinesische Meer ist tief’, *Der Spiegel*, 7 August 1972.
115. PA AA, B37 660, Aspekt einer Kompetition mit der DDR in der Dritten Welt, 29 February 1972.
116. PA AA, B150, Überlegungen zum deutsch-chinesischen Verhältnis im Lichte möglicher Auswirkungen der VN-Mitgliedschaft der VR China auf den deutschen VN-Beitritt, 23 November 1971.
117. See e.g. PA AA, B37 660, Vermerk, 11 April 1972; PA AA, B150, Telegram no. 53, Hong Kong, 20 June 1972.
118. Bonn’s diplomats went to great lengths to make sure that both Moscow and the FRG’s Western allies were well informed and consented to the process of normalisation. PA AA, B150, China, 2 August 1972; PA AA, B150, Telegram no. 1876, Washington, 7 August 1972.
119. Ilse Dorothee Pautsch, “Worte, die wir ausgesprochen haben, gelten wie immer!” Die Aufnahme diplomatischer Beziehungen zwischen der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und der Volksrepublik China 1972’, in Wolfgang Elz and Sönke Neitzel (eds.), *Internationale Beziehungen im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert: Festschrift für Winfried Baumgart zum 65. Geburtstag* (Paderborn, 2003), p. 470; PA AA, B150, Telegram 2251, Paris, 14 August 1972.
120. PA AA, Zwischenarchiv 100.092, Verhältnis Bundesrepublik Deutschland/VR China Sachstand, 3 January 1972.
121. PA AA, B37 660, Deutsch-chinesische Beziehungen, 26 September 1972.

122. PA AA, B37 660, Chinesische Bezeichnung für ‘Bundesrepublik Deutschland’, 11 September 1972.
123. PA AA, B37 660, Chinesische Bezeichnung der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, 12 September 1972.
124. Interview with Helmut Schmidt, Hamburg, 11 February 2013.
125. PA AA, B37 660, Telegram no. 1994, Washington, 17 August 1972.
126. Holger Klizing, ‘To grin and bear it: the Nixon administration and Ostpolitik’, in Fink, Schaefer, *Ostpolitik*.
127. See e.g. Memo, Helmut Sonnenfeldt to Henry Kissinger, December 11, 1970, folder ‘Country files, Europe, France, Vol. VII’, box 677, National Security Council (NSC) Files: Country Files—Europe, Richard Nixon Library.

Chapter 4

1. Barry Naughton, *The Chinese economy: transitions and growth* (Cambridge, MA, 2007), pp. 74–76.
2. Dwight H. Perkins, ‘The centrally planned economy (1949–1984), in Gregory C. Chow and Dwight H. Perkins (eds.), *Routledge handbook of the Chinese economy* (Abingdon, 2015), p. 47.
3. Dwight H. Perkins, ‘China’s economic policy and performance’, in Roderick MacFarquhar and John K. Fairbank (eds.), *The Cambridge history of China, volume 15: the People’s Republic of China, Part 2: Revolutions within the Chinese revolution 1966–1982* (Cambridge, 1991), p. 486.
4. Roderic MacFarquhar and Michael Schoenhals, *Mao’s last revolution* (Cambridge, MA, 2006), p. 268.
5. Li Huaiyin, *Village China under socialism and reform: a micro-history, 1948–2008* (Stanford, CA, 2009), pp. 139–140; Helena K. Rene, *China’s sent-down generation: public administration and the legacies of Mao’s rustication program* (Washington, D.C., 2013), p. 86.
6. Naughton, *Economy*, pp. 74–76.
7. Chen Jian, *Mao’s China and the Cold War* (Chapel Hill, 2001), pp. 239–243.
8. Naughton, *Economy*, pp. 74–76.

9. Rebecca E. Karl, *Mao Zedong and China in the twentieth-century world: a concise history* (Durham and London, 2010), pp. 147–9; Naughton, *Economy*, p. 77.
10. For the growth figures, see e.g. the graph in Anthony P. D’Costa and Amiya Kumar Bagchi, ‘Transformation and development: a critical introduction to India and China’, in Anthony P. D’Costa and Amiya Kumar Bagchi (eds.), *Transformation and development: the political economy of transition in India and China* (Oxford, 2012), p. 8.
11. Joseph Chai, *An economic history of modern China* (Cheltenham, UK and Northampton, MA, 2011), pp. 118–119.
12. See e.g. Chen Donglin, ‘Zhongguo gaige kaifang qian de dui wai jingji yinjin’ [China’s economic inputs from abroad before the reform era], *Dangshi Bolan* [Readings on Party History], 1 (2011), 4–8.
13. Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amts, Berlin (hereafter PA AA), Zwischenarchiv 100.104, Die Wirtschaftsbeziehungen der Bundesrepublik Deutschland zur VR China, August 1974, p. 4.
14. In 1973, for example, Sino-French trade reached an all-time high of over FF1 billion Francs. Yet this was just 0.3 % of total French trade. British and German figures for that year were higher than those for France in absolute numbers but also well below 1 percent of total trade. Archives de Paris (hereafter AdP): Chambre de commerce et d’industrie de Paris (hereafter CCIP), 2 ETP 6-6-40-4, Les relations économiques franco-chinoises, 22 November 1977; PA AA, Zwischenarchiv 100.104, Die Wirtschaftsbeziehungen der Bundesrepublik Deutschland zur VR China, August 1974.
15. For Germany see e.g. Margot Schüller, ‘China—Deutschlands wichtigster Wirtschaftspartner in Ostasien’, in Margot Schüller (ed.), *Strukturwandel in den deutsch-chinesischen Beziehungen—Analysen und Praxisbeziehungen* (Hamburg, 2003), pp. 113–117.
16. According to its successor organisation, no records of the British organisations with a China focus exist. In the French case, some documents from the main employers’ organisation and the Paris Chamber of Commerce provide a patchy picture of French trade with China. In West Germany, finally, records of the China Commission of Eastern Committee of German Industries are partly stored in the Rheinisch-Westfälisches Wirtschaftsarchiv

- (Archives of the Economy of Western Germany, RWWA) in Cologne but are far from complete.
17. See e.g. Eric Hobsbawm, *The age of extremes: the short twentieth century, 1914–91* (London, 1995), pp. 271–274.
 18. For the early history of CoCom see e.g. Tor Egil Förland, *Cold economic warfare: CoCom and the forging of strategic export controls, 1948–1954* (Dordrecht, 2010).
 19. Förland, *Warfare*, pp. 25–26.
 20. Michael Mastanduno, *Economic containment: CoCom and the politics of East–West trade* (Ithaca, NY, 1992), pp. 98–100.
 21. Chad J. Mitcham, *China’s economic relations with the West and Japan, 1949–1979: grain, trade and diplomacy* (London, 2005), p. 6.
 22. Frank Cain, *Economic statecraft during the Cold War: European responses to the US trade embargo* (London and New York, 2007), pp. 87–91.
 23. See e.g. Memo, Richard Allen to Ronald Reagan, June 5, 1981, folder ‘Presidential Directives on Export Control Policy to China’, box RAC 13, George A. Keyworth Files, Ronald Reagan Library; see also Mastanduno, *Containment*, p. 3.
 24. Shu Guang Zhang, *Beijing’s economic statecraft during the Cold War 1949–1991* (Washington, D.C. and Baltimore, MD, 2014), pp. 27–34, 46–57.
 25. Cain, *Statecraft*, pp. 27, 185.
 26. Mitcham, *Economic relations*, pp. 216–218; Zhang, *Economic statecraft*, pp. 315–316.
 27. Angela Stent, *From embargo to Ostpolitik: the political economy of West German-Soviet relations 1955–1980* (Cambridge, 1981), pp. 228–229.
 28. Archives diplomatiques du Ministère des Affaires étrangères, La Courneuve (hereafter MAE), Série Asie-Océanie, 1968–1972, Sous-série Chine (hereafter AO, 1968–1972), 714, Telegram No. 688/3693, Beijing, 25 August 1972. While the Chinese often used this formula, it might actually have been the French who proposed it for the first time, in the hope of gaining commercial advantages from their political relations with Beijing. Archives nationales, Pierrefitte-sur-Seine (hereafter AN), AG/5(2)/1029, Note: compte rendu d’une conversation avec le Premier Ministre CHOU-EN-LAI, 14 July 1971.

29. AdP, CCIP, 2 ETP 6-6-40-4, Les relations économiques franco-chinoises, Paris, 22 November 1977.
30. Thierry Robin, 'La France face à la Chine populaire (1949–1965): dimensions économique et financière', unpublished PhD thesis, Paris (2011), p. 593.
31. Bernard Krouck, *De Gaulle et la Chine: la politique française à l'égard de la République Populaire de Chine* (Paris, 2012), pp. 401–402.
32. AdP, CCIP, 2 ETP 6-6-40-4, Les relations économiques Franco-chinoises, Paris, 22 November 1977.
33. MAE, AO, 1968–1972, 812, Telegram, Bonn, 16 August 1971.
34. MAE, AO, 1968–1972, 812, Telegram, Bonn, 16 August 1971.
35. Enrico Fardella, 'A significant periphery of the Cold War: Italy–China bilateral relations, 1949–1989', *Cold War History* (2016), p. 9.
36. For the wheat deals, see also Min Song, 'Economic normalization: sino-american trade relations from 1969 to 1980', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Georgia, 2009, p. 98–99.
37. Mitcham, *Economic relations*, pp. 79, 95.
38. After years without any demand, there were major orders in 1970, 1974 and 1980 as well as some requests to channel US grain through France so as to avoid drawing public attention to the fact that the PRC was buying wheat from the imperialists. MAE, AO, 1968–1972, 711, Telegram No. 5014/16, Beijing, 12 September 1972; Archives nationales du monde du travail, Lille (hereafter ANMT), Conseil national du patronat français (hereafter CNPF), 2000-021-004, Economie et Commerce [Journal of the China Committee of French industries], June 1981, p. 3; MAE, Série Asie-Océanie, 1973–1980, Sous-série Chine (hereafter AO, 1973–1980), 2104, Relations économiques franco-chinoises, Paris, 15 September 1977, p. 4.
39. MAE, AO, 1968–1972, 711, Echanges commerciaux franco-chinois, Paris, 23 June 1972. p. 10.
40. AdP, CCIP, 2 ETP 6-6-40-4, Les relations économiques Franco-chinoises, Paris, 22 November 1977.
41. MAE, AO, 1973–1980, 2167, Relations économiques franco-chinoises (1), 20 June 1973, p. 8.
42. For early initiatives to create such an organisation see AN, AG/5(2)/1030, Gérard Gruson (CNPF) to Michel Freyche (Secretariat of the Presidency), Paris, 24 August 1973.

43. Both the Chamber of Commerce of Paris and the CNPF paid more attention to Hong Kong and Taiwan than to mainland China. See e.g. the archival files ANMT, CNPF, 72-AS-1940; ANMT, CNPF, 72-AS-1939; AdP, CCIP, 2-ETP-6-6-40-12.
44. Cain, *Statecraft*, p. 182–183.
45. MAE, AO, 1968–1972, 718, Telegram No. 734/37, Beijing, 4 February 1972.
46. MAE, AO, 1968–1972, 718, Fourniture à la Chine d'un cable sous-marin pour télécommunications, 16 November 1971; MAE, AO, 1968–1972, 718, Telegram no. 183/87, Paris, 21 February 1972.
47. MAE, AO, 1973–1980, 2167, Relations économiques franco-chinoises (1), 20 June 1973.
48. MAE, AO, 1973–1980, 2167, Relations économiques franco-chinoises (1), 20 June 1973.
49. MAE, AO, 1973–1980, 2167, Relations économiques franco-chinoises (1), 20 June 1973.
50. The Chinese themselves had announced that if the cable deal were successful, they would consider buying an entire system of telecommunications infrastructure from France. MAE, AO, 1968–1972, 718, Fourniture à la Chine d'un cable sous-marin pour télécommunications, 16 November 1971.
51. MAE, AO, 1968–1972, 711, Telegram no. 2115/2118, Beijing, 17 April 1972; MAE, AO, 1968–1972, 711, Telegram no. 2760/2761, Beijing, 17 May 1972.
52. Naughton, *Economy*, pp. 353–355.
53. MAE, AO, 1968–1972, 714, Telegram no. 2260/63, Beijing, 25 May 1971.
54. MAE, AO, 1968–1972, 714, Séjour en France d'une mission aéronautique de la République populaire de Chine, 11 September 1970.
55. MAE, AO, 1968–1972, 714, Séjour en France d'une mission aéronautique de la République populaire de Chine, 11 September 1970.
56. MAE, AO, 1968–1972, 714, Note pour le Ministre: vente de matériel aéronautique à la Chine, 16 August 1971.
57. MAE, AO, 1968–1972, 714. Telegram no. 1762–65, Paris, 15 September 1971.
58. Cain, *Statecraft*, p. 177.

59. See e.g. 'France: Chinese visit bears little fruit', 15 October 1971, FT1 CHICOM-FR, box 1056, entry 1613, Record Group 59 (RG 59), General Records of the Department of State, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD (hereafter NACP).
60. The commercial section of the French embassy, for example, was notoriously understaffed until 1972. MAE, AO, 1973–1980, 2082, Rapport de fin de mission, 7 March 1975, p. 7.
61. Douglass Wass, *Decline to fall: the making of British macro-economic policy and the 1976 IMF crisis* (Oxford, 2008), pp. 12–19.
62. Wass, *Decline*, pp. 36–8. See also Brian Harrison, *Seeking a role: the United Kingdom, 1951–1970* (Oxford, 2009), pp. 301–311.
63. On export-led growth see e.g. Alec Cairncross and Barry Eichengreen, *Sterling in decline: the devaluations of 1931, 1949 and 1967* (Basingstoke and New York, 2003), p. 159.
64. The National Archives, Kew (hereafter TNA), Cabinet Office (hereafter CAB) 148/116, Relations with China: proposals for improvement, 7 May 1971.
65. See e.g. Jeffrey Angel, *Cold War at 30,000 feet: the Anglo-American fight for aviation supremacy* (Cambridge, MA, 2007).
66. Angel, *Cold War*, pp. 222–251.
67. TNA, CAB 148/122, Sale of aircraft to China, 11 December 1972.
68. See e.g. TNA, Foreign and Commonwealth Office (hereafter FCO) 21/845, Memorandum: exporting to China, March 1971, p. 8.
69. TNA, FCO 21/852, Note of a meeting held on 3 May to discuss the Sale of Trident Aircraft to China, 4 May 1971.
70. TNA, FCO 21/852, Telegram no. 2197, Washington, 28 June 1971; TNA, FCO 21/852, Telegram (number unclear) (Belfast?), 30 April 1971; TNA, FCO 21/852, Telegram no. 2056, Washington, 16 June 1971.
71. TNA, FCO 21/852, Trident, 6 July 1971.
72. Mitcham, *Economic relations*, pp. 208–211.
73. TNA, FCO 21/852, Trident for China, 23 June 1971.
74. TNA, FCO 21/852, British aircraft for China, 4 May 1971.
75. TNA, FCO 21/845, John Denson to Michael Wilford, London, 2 November 1971.
76. TNA, FCO 21/845, Sino-British trade negotiations, 17 September 1971.

77. MAE, AO, 1968–1972, 714, Telegram no. 2115/2118, Beijing, 17 April 1972.
78. TNA, FCO 21/852, Telegram no. 142, Beijing, 22 February 1971.
79. Mitcham, *Economic relations*, pp. 208–11; Cain, *Statecraft*, p. 175–176.
80. TNA, CAB 148/109, Export of civil aircraft to China, 13 November 1970.
81. TNA, FCO 21/845, British exports to China, 18 August 1971.
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93. TNA, Board of Trade (hereafter BT) 248/2686, China: The 48 Group, 17 April 1973.
94. Buchanan, *East wind*, p. 158.
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Chapter 5

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3. Frederick C. Teiwes and Warren Sun, *The end of the Maoist era: Chinese politics during the twilight of the Cultural Revolution, 1972–1976* (New York, 2007), p. 28.
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30. AN, AG/5(2)/1029, Texte manuscrit du Président de la République, 16 August 1971.
31. MAE, AO, 1973–1980, 2167, Voyage de M. le Président de la République en République Populaire de Chine, 11–17 Septembre 1973, Note de Synthèse, 28 June 1973, p. 11.
32. Maurice Vaisse, *La puissance ou l’influence*, p. 255
33. MAE, AO, 1973–1980, 2167, Voyage de M. le Président de la République en République Populaire de Chine, 11–17 Septembre 1973, Note de Synthèse, 28 June 1973, p. 8.
34. While he would again be purged at the end of 1975, Deng was the acting head of state and the most important party leader after Mao when he travelled to France. MAE, AO, 1973–1980, 2082, Rapport de fin de mission, 14 June 1979; Vogel, *Deng*, pp. 118–119.

35. MAE, AO, 1973–1980, 2174, Compte-rendu verbatim des entretiens de M. le Premier Ministre avec M. Teng Hsiao-Ping, 12 May 1975; MAE, AO, 1973–1980, 2174, Verbatim des entretiens du Président de la République avec M. Teng Hsiao Ping, Vice-Premier Ministre de la République Populaire de Chine, deuxième entretien, 14 May 1975.
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38. Vaisse, *La puissance*, pp. 122, 191–194.
39. MAE, AO, 1973–1980, 2174, Circular telegram no. 432, Paris, 23 May 1975.
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61. TNA, FCO 21/1107, Visit of the Chinese Foreign Minister: 6–10 June, 7 June 1973.
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126. The CDU candidate in the Berlin elections, Peter Lorenz, had been kidnapped by left-wing terrorists. Due to his illness, Schmidt was unable to veto the decision to accept the demands of the terrorists. Matthias Dahlke, "Nureingeschränkte Krisenbereitschaft". Die staatliche Reaktion auf die Entführung des CDU-Politikers Peter Lorenz', *Vierteljahreshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 55: 4 (2007), 641–678.
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128. Mathias Haeussler, 'A "Cold War European"? Helmut Schmidt and European integration, c.1945–1982', *Cold War History*, 15:4 (2015), 427–447, pp. 430–431; Kristina Spohr, *The global chancellor: Helmut Schmidt and the reshaping of the international order* (Oxford, 2016), pp. 34–35.
129. Helmut Schmidt, *The balance of power: Germany's peace policy and the super powers* (London, 1971).
130. Interview with Helmut Schmidt, Hamburg, 11 Februar 2013.
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133. Helmut Schmidt, *Menschen und Mächte* (Berlin: Siedler, 1987), p. 356.
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135. Schmidt, *Menschen*, 362.
136. Schwarz (ed.), *Akten zur Auswärtigen Politik 1975*, vol. II, doc. 322, Gespräch des Bundeskanzlers Schmidt mit dem chinesischen

- Stellvertretenden Ministerpräsidenten Teng Hsiao-ping in Peking, 29 October 1975, pp. 1486–1494.
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139. Chenard, ‘Opening’, pp. 87–90.
140. Chenard, ‘Opening’, p. 122.; PA AA, Zwischenarchiv 101.547, Telegram no. 98, Dublin, 26 May 1975; MAE, AO, 1973–1980, 2130, La Chine et la Communauté Européenne, 18 April 1975. Eberhard Sandschneider, ‘China’s diplomatic relations with the states of Europe’, in Richard Louis Edmonds (ed.) *China and Europe since 1978: a European perspective* (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 42–43.
141. Chenard, ‘Opening’, pp. 128–129.
142. Ziegler, *Heath*, p. 456.
143. Chenard, ‘Opening’, pp. 60–69.

Chapter 6

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2. Robert Boardman, *Britain and the People's Republic of China* (New York, 1976), p. 153.
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12. Frederick C. Teiwes and Warren Sun, *The end of the Maoist era: Chinese politics during the twilight of the Cultural Revolution, 1972–1976* (New York, 2007), p. 197.
13. Teiwes, Sun, *End of Maoist era*, pp. 49–54.
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74. See the table on Sino-Western trade in the appendix.
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82. See e.g. the various documents relating to leftist activities in the Needham Papers. Cambridge University Library, Joseph Needham papers, K 218.
83. Needham had indeed agreed to analyse the alleged proofs of US employment of biological weapons during the Korea War and had supported the Chinese case even though the evidence later turned out to be forged by the PRC. Chen, Shiwei, ‘History of three mobilizations: a reexamination of the Chinese biological warfare allegations against the United States in the Korean War’, *Journal of American-East Asian Relations* 16.3 (2009), 213–247.
84. This is shown, for example, by the exclusive access Needham had to officials in the Chinese foreign ministry who actively consulted him about the creation of SACU after the Sino-Soviet split. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Beijing (hereafter MOFA), document no. 110-01695-03, Yingguo Yingzhong youxie huizhang Lin Yuesan yichengli xin youxieshi [The chairman of the Britain-China Friendship Association Joseph Needham has set up a new friendship association], 17 June 1964.
85. TNA, British Council (hereafter BW) 2/769, The need for a Sino/British cultural council, 1 October 1971.

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90. Simon Winchester, *Bomb, book and compass: Joseph Needham and the great secrets of China* (Camberwell, Vic., 2008), pp. 243–247. Needham had directly asked the Chinese for funding in the 1960s and there is evidence that Beijing gave considerable financial support to SACU. MOFA, document no. 110-01695-03, Yingguo Yingzhong youxie huizhang Lin Yuesan yichengli xin youxieshi [The chairman of the Britain-China Friendship Association Joseph Needham has set up a new friendship association], 17 June 1964.
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93. See e.g. TNA, BW 23/63/1, M.H. Morgan (Beijing embassy) to E.V. Vines (FCO), Beijing, 10 December 1973.
94. TNA, BW 23/63, Sino/British educational exchanges, 18 July 1979.
95. TNA, FCO 34/116, Students, 21 December 1972.
96. TNA, FCO 34/116, G. Barrass (FCO, Cultural Exchange Department) to M.H. Morgan (Embassy Beijing), December 1972.
97. TNA, FCO 34/116, G. Barrass (FCO, Cultural Exchange Department) to M.H. Morgan (Embassy Beijing), December 1972.
98. TNA, Cabinet Office (hereafter CAB) 164/1474, Draft Paper: Scientific Exchanges between the UK and China, 29 March 1976.
99. TNA, CAB 164/1474, Draft Paper: Scientific Exchanges between the UK and China, 29 March 1976.

100. TNA, CAB 164/1474, Draft Paper: Scientific Exchanges between the UK and China, 29 March 1976.
101. TNA, CAB 164/1474, Draft Paper: Scientific Exchanges between the UK and China, 29 March 1976.
102. TNA, CAB 164/1474, Scientific Exchanges between the United Kingdom and China, 2 April 1976.
103. The only real exception was 1973, when the Trident deal's impact on the balance of trade could be felt most strongly. See the table on Sino-Western trade in the appendix.
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107. See e.g. the reception of a 48 Group delegation by high-ranking Chinese cadres. TNA, BT 248/2686, R.D. Clift (Beijing Embassy) to J. Myall (Department of Trade), Beijing, 22 October 1974.
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109. Chad J. Mitcham, *China's economic relations with the West and Japan, 1949–1979: grain, trade and diplomacy* (London, 2005), p. 212.
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113. TNA, CAB 148/137, Sale of Military Spey to China: Note by the Chairman of the official Sub-Committee on Strategic Exports, 5 September 1973.
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115. TNA, Ministry of Defence (hereafter DEFE) 11/830, The Rolls-Royce Spey Deal with China, 13 January 1976, p. 2.
116. TNA, Ministry of Defence (hereafter DEFE) 11/830, The Rolls-Royce Spey Deal with China, 13 January 1976. Interestingly, the total sum of the deal in the Chinese literature is given at £173 million but it is not clear if this might include related projects. Wang Weimin, *Bainian zhongying guanxi* [One hundred years of Sino-British relations] (Beijing, 2006), p. 282.
117. Wang Hongxu, *Qishi niandai yilai de zhongying guanxi* [Sino-British relations since the 1970s] (Harbin, 1996), p. 84.
118. TNA, DEFE 11/830, United Kingdom defence relations with China: report by the Defence Policy Staff, 3 October 1977.
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120. TNA, DEFE 11/830, United Kingdom defence relations with China: report by the Defence Policy Staff, 3 October 1977.
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122. See e.g. Johannes Paulmann, 'Auswärtige Repräsentationen nach 1945: zur Geschichte der deutschen Selbstdarstellung im Ausland', in Johannes Paulmann (ed.), *Auswärtige Repräsentationen: deutsche Kulturdiplomatie nach 1945* (Cologne, 2005), pp. 5, 14.
123. For a concise summary see e.g. Peter Borowsky, 'Sozialliberale Koalition und innere Reformen', *Informationen zur Politischen Bildung*, 258 (1998), 31–40. For a more scholarly reference see Arnulf Baring, *Machtwechsel: die Ära Brandt-Scheel* (Stuttgart, 1982).
124. Matthias Micus, 'Ralf Dahrendorf—Scheitern eines Experiments', in Robert Lorenz and Matthias Micus (eds.), *Seiteneinsteiger:*

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125. Micus, ‘Dahrendorf’, pp. 48–49.
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127. Deutscher Bundestag, *Bericht der Enquete-Kommission auswärtige Kulturpolitik* (1975).
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130. See e.g. various documents in PA AA, Zwischenarchiv 107.745.
131. PA AA, Zwischenarchiv 101.552, Anfrage von Frau Dr. Hamm-Brücher, 27 February 1975.
132. PA AA, Zwischenarchiv 103.768, Die kulturellen Beziehungen zwischen der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und der Volksrepublik China, 8 April 1977.
133. See e.g. PA AA 100.104, Telegram No. 92, Beijing, 15.3.1974.
134. See e.g. PA AA, Zwischenarchiv 100.105, Britische industrietechnologische Ausstellung in Peking vom 26. März bis 7. April 1973, 12 April 1973.
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136. Rheinisch-Westfälisches Wirtschaftsarchiv (Archives of the Economy of Western Germany, hereafter RWWA), Archives of the Federation of German Industries (hereafter BDI), 175-32-2,

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Chapter 7

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134. Helga Haftendorn, *Deutsche Aussenpolitik zwischen Selbstbeschränkung und Selbstbehauptung, 1945–2000* (Munich, 2001), p. 291.
135. Kristina Spohr, ‘Helmut Schmidt and the shaping of Western security in the late 1970s: the Guadeloupe summit of 1979’, *The International History Review* (2013); See also Gregor Schöllgen, *Die Außenpolitik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland: Von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart* (Munich, 2004), pp. 146–156.
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142. PA AA, Zwischenarchiv 107.512, Aufzeichnung: Gespräch mit Staatssekretär Dr. Schnell im Bundesministerium für Verteidigung

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 148. BArch, B196/21635, Haltung des Ministeriums zu möglichen Kooperationen der deutschen Luft- und Raumfahrtindustrie, 20 February 1978.
 149. ACSP, Richard Jaeger papers (NL Jaeger), C 214, Schlussvortrag van Well, 13 December 1979; BArch, B196/21635, Haltung des Ministeriums zu möglichen Kooperationen der deutschen Luft- und Raumfahrtindustrie, 20 February 1978.
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 151. See also PA AA, B150, Van Well to Schueler, Bonn, October 1978; PA AA, B150, Beschluß des Bundessicherheitsrats, 17 November 1978.
 152. TNA, PREM 16/1536, Defence sales to China: President Brezhnev's message to the Prime Minister, 1 December 1978.

153. TNA, PREM 16/1536, Reply to President Brezhnev's message on defence sales to China, 6 December 1978.
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155. Odd A. Westad and S. Quinn-Judge (eds.), *The third Indochina War: conflict between China, Vietnam and Cambodia, 1972-79*, London (2006), here especially chs 1 and 8.
156. BArch, B136/16621, Telegram, Moscow, 19 February 1979,
157. BArch, B136/16621, Vermerk für die Kabinettsitzung am 21 Februar 1979, 20 February 1979, p. 2.
158. BArch, B136/16621, Telegram, Moscow, 26 March 1979, p. 2.
159. Archiv der sozialen Demokratie (hereafter AdsD), Helmut Schmidt papers, 1/HSAA006300, Sprechzettel für Parteivorstand, 2 November 1979; Helmut Schmidt, *Menschen und Mächte* (Berlin, 1987), pp. 375-383.
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161. See also PA AA, B150, Gespräch im Bundeskanzleramt mit einer Delegation des Obersten Sowjets der UdSSR, 3 October 1978; PA AA, B150, Gespräch des Herrn Staatssekretärs van Well mit dem Abteilungsleiter im ZK der KPdSU, L.M. Samjatin, am 27.10.1978, 17-18.30 Uhr, 30 October 1978.
162. AdsD, 1/HSAA008865, Memo, 12 October 1979.
163. AdsD, 1/HSAA008865, Wickert to Schmidt, Brissago, 15 August 1979.
164. AdsD 1/HSAA008865, Memo, 3 September 1979.
165. AdsD 1/HSAA008865, Memo, 3 September 1979, p. 2.
166. SAPMO, DY/30/ IV B 2/20/126, Memo, Embassy of the GDR in Moscow, 29 May 1978.
167. SAPMO, DY/30/13931, Memo, 3 April 1979.
168. Archiv Helmut Schmidt, Hamburg, UdSSR volume 4, folder 2, Vermerk: Gespräch mit L. am 23. November 1978. This is the record of a telephone conversation between Schmidt and a very high-ranking Soviet official, probably Leonid Brezhnev himself.
169. This view was shared by many observers, including in East Berlin and Moscow. SAPMO, DY 30/IV B2/20/593, Rede des Gen. Bruno Mahlow „Zur Entwicklung des innen-und außenpolitischen Kurses der VR China zu Beginn der 80er Jahre“, 11 June 1980.

Chapter 8

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2. See e.g. The National Archives (hereafter TNA), Foreign and Commonwealth Office (hereafter FCO) 21/1558, UK/Chinese relations and Franco/Chinese relations, 8 November 1977; Interview with former German diplomat Kurt Leonberger, Bonn, 12 January 2012.
3. In 1977 a Chinese journalist ‘considered that the GDR embassy in Peking contained the greatest expertise on China, compared to other Embassies. The British came second.’ TNA, FCO 21/1558, Supper with the China News Agency journalists, 8 August 1977.
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Chapter 9

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APPENDIX

Table A.1 Western trade with China in million US\$, 1969-1982

	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982
FRG exports	158	167	138	167	311	421	523	622	501	995	1493	1145	1017	853
FRG imports	88	84	95	107	150	194	223	272	288	367	534	808	769	702
FRG balance	70	83	43	60	161	227	300	350	213	629	959	337	248	151
UK exports	131	107	69	78	207	167	178	123	109	176	453	394	252	179
UK imports	91	81	77	89	117	156	132	153	182	214	293	357	365	339
UK balance	40	27	-8	-11	90	11	46	-30	-73	-38	160	37	-113	-161
France exports	45	81	111	60	90	161	373	355	95	199	339	303	274	336
France imports	77	70	71	105	148	184	174	195	194	226	327	467	510	437
France balance	-32	11	40	-45	-58	-23	200	160	-99	-27	12	-164	-235	-101
USA exports	0	0	0	64	690	807	304	135	171	824	1724	3755	3603	2912
USA imports	0	0	5	35	68	123	171	223	224	357	656	1164	2062	2502
USA balance	0	0	-5	29	622	684	133	-88	-53	466	1067	2591	1540	410
Japan exports	391	569	579	619	1042	1983	2258	1666	1955	3074	3674	5109	5076	3500

	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1982
Japan imports	235	254	322	499	973	1304	1529	1373	1560	2045	2933	4346	5283	5338
Japan balance	156	315	256	120	70	679	729	293	395	1029	741	763	-207	-1838
Hong Kong exports	6	11	10	19	53	59	34	30	44	63	382	1249	1965	1939
Hong Kong imports	446	467	550	690	1094	1190	1372	1593	1735	2250	3021	4401	5272	5397
Hong Kong balance	-439	-457	-539	-671	-1041	-1131	-1339	-1563	-1691	-2187	-2639	-3152	-3307	-3458

Source: Calculations by the author, based on International Monetary Fund, Direction of Trade Statistics Database (DOTS)

Provided are the figures for bilateral trade in goods for the three European countries and Hong Kong. For reference purposes the figures for the United States and Japan as the two other main Western trading partners of the PRC are provided as well

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