Interview Edward Friedman

Interview starts at 3:23

Huang: Today we want to focus on your life after your … at school. So let’s talk about your first job. Why did you accept a job and at what company?

Friedman: So that’s actually interesting too. I’m in the job market in the year ’66, ’67, the American economy is still unbelievably strong or at least seemed so at the time. Education is outstanding and so it really is a moment of opportunity. So even if you are a stupid person like me, you still would have lots of opportunities. So I had requests from Michigan, Stanford, and Wisconsin, and Harvard asked me to stay on. So the question becomes why didn’t I choose to stay. I only can tell you three quarters of the answer cause one quarter of the answer I have to say negative things about some people and I don’t want to say negative things. So I didn’t wanna stay at Harvard. I was leaving Harvard. There was no way I was gonna stay there. Harvard took better finishing people, used them for ten years and then threw them away. And it was a very seniority based kind of thing in which I would always be the lowest. And, the worst part, I had seen people who had stayed 10 years and then had to leave Harvard. They would be unhappy wherever they went because they would see Harvard as paradise. And so I wasn’t gonna let myself be put in that position. So it was not a question of whether I was gonna stay. I mean Harvard never understands why you leave. So, no rational person should do that. I couldn’t go to Stanford because my parents were getting on in years so, and my parents don’t understand, non-educated people, long gone now, too far away for them compared to living in New York City. So that was that. For reasons I don’t wanna mention as I said I didn’t wanna go to Michigan so I really only loved Wisconsin. So I could state the reasons why I chose Wisconsin. But the truth was, if Stanford was too far and I didn’t want to be in Michigan, and I wasn’t going to go to Harvard, there was only Wisconsin.

Huang: Not for the cheese, not for the?
Friedman: It’s less of a choice, even though I seemed to have more opportunities. It wasn’t a decision.

Huang: Ok, so the first job you took was in Wisconsin. I thought you had been living there before?

Friedman: No, I had been in the Mid-west, because one of my closest friends in graduate school, Richard Arnold Krauss, came from Kansas. His wife came from a farm family, her father had a heart attack before the wheat harvest. So I went to Kansas for the wheat harvest, which, by the way, is how I actually got involved in doing things in rural areas. It made it much easier for me to care about that and go on to China doing things like that. I had been to Chicago a number of times. The mid-west wasn’t a strange area, but Madison certainly was.

Huang: Were you the first one in your department that focused in your research on China at that time?

Friedman: Yes.

Huang: Then how did you…I mean that most of the scholars in the US are actually working lonely, I could so, and people just focus on their own job, I think the problem about the mid-west is that, it seemed that it’s harder to get sources during research and also get connections.

Friedman: So that is not true. First your general point is correct but that it not true about Wisconsin. Wisconsin has some very special features about it. One of them is it has a research foundation, that money made by patenting and licensing the work of faculties goes for faculty research. Right now our university owns all the patents for cloning. Universities scientists discovered how you put vitamin D in milk. It’s endless things. And the rule is that this money goes back to research funds for the faculty. So it turns out that the university had its own faculty research foundation. But I did not know that. And so, in terms of research grants in the United States, it’s always in the top 5. It doesn’t matter which year you’re looking at. It can never be number 1 because we do not do classified government research. People who do get a lot of defense contracts worth a lot of money. So a place like Caltech or MIT will always be number one for those kinds of reasons. But Wisconsin is a very serious research university and research is extremely well funded at the university.
Huang: So it sounds like you’re really satisfied with the environment?
Friedman: No. But I don’t really wanna talk about that, either, for the same reasons why I don’t wanna talk about Michigan. Wisconsin is a lovely place to live. The city is a lovely place to live. I leave home, I don’t have to worry about locking my door. Things like my daughters went out late at night. I never worried if something was gonna happen. You can walk into restaurants almost at any time without a reservation and have a seat. The city is surrounded by farmland. So the price of land is essentially determined by the next acre of land. If it’s farmland it’s obviously much cheaper than urban land. So property prices historically there in the city will be lower and therefore a business can make money with a restaurant with less income and less customers cause you’re paying less in property taxes than you would in a large metropolitan area. So it’s a very pleasant place to live. The problem was that these were the years of the anti-Vietnam protests. These were the years of the Black Power movement and the state is divided between Joseph McCarthy right-wing and Robert La Follette progressive left-wing. It’s very divided. And so a lot of the legislators and governors in regions did not like that so many of these movements were happening at the university. So there was a lot of nasty influence from these kind of state bodies on the university. I don’t think that created a wonderful atmosphere. A chancellor was forced to resign because he was seen as too soft on the students who were demonstrating. There were a lot of people who actually agreed with that kind of viewpoint. That did not make for a really wonderful environment in my early years at the university. The state was very divided and people were very suspicious of each other.

Huang: So have you ever cooperated in any project with your colleagues in university?
Friedman: Yes. That’s really one of the nice things about the university. The university is a tremendously decentralized university. It may be, as far as I know, the most seriously decentralized university on planet earth. And that means that it is very easy to cross boundaries of departments and schools. So I’ve done lots of things in cooperation with law, business, engineering, medicine, and mostly with the school of agriculture. They care about rural things and I was doing research on rural things. So I’ve done a lot of work, even principal investigator on a grand with the National Science Foundation, that was really a school of agriculture grants. But they were doing it in China. So I was very
useful to them on the project. So in many ways my closest friends in the university were not at my department. They were in these other schools in which I had these cooperative relations. Especially in agriculture.

Huang: Interesting. So have you ever went to China with them?

Friedman: Many times.

Huang: Would you…What would be the most impressive project that you have ever done in cooperation with the department of agriculture?

Friedman: We had a grant which lasted seven years in which we worked on sustainable development in the so-called foothills of the Himalayas in the North-West tip of Yunnan province where the Yangzi, and the Mekong and the Salween are about 50 miles from each other. And of course the area is in the process of the same rapid development as anywhere else in China, being destroyed and polluted. The Chinese were interested in trying to save the area because it has about 50% of the bio-genetic materials of all of China because the geography comes from so high and it goes down so fast. It’s quite a unique environment. It’s called an environmental hot-spot. It has all sorts of UN protection. And so we had a cooperative project to work with counterparts from the Academy of Science in China, training graduates, doing some cooperative work to solve environmental problems. Most of the people who did it were in various of these sciences for the obvious reasons. We also had people from political science, anthropology, a lot of non-Han people up there. The projects we created and the cooperation we created, I think they have very long-run consequences, hopefully, for international cooperation for our students throughout their lives. Hopefully they made some partners, colleagues, friends in China. We brought some students from China to our place too because UW has better lab facilities which the Chinese were always interested in. So I would like to believe that the work will have some long-term good consequences from the various projects that we helped facilitate in that seven year period. My last of three graduate students in the project is out there right now I think. Working on crisis management. How to handle things when earthquakes happen and whatever, floods hit, just in terms of protecting people from all the things from which you have to protect. So, in terms of utility and potential long-term consequences, in a cross-disciplinary perspective, this project was probably the best.
Huang: Yeah, that is a pretty interesting because I never thought of that, I mean having a cooperation with the department of agriculture.

Friedman: I have done a land reform mission in Albania. Lots of non-Chinese things which you would not think of me in terms of, I go to do because of the ties with the School of Agriculture. The land reform mission in Albania right after the Communist regime fell, that was also one of the best things I thought we ever did. And it’s also very exciting for a person in political science to learn you have use to people who are in natural science. Cause you know, you go out to fields, these people could do things like pick up the soil, rub it, and smell it and say 10% too much phosphorous. I would pick up the soil and I would say “it smells like shit!”

Huang: I think I would say that too.

Friedman: Over time, working with them, even though I was never able to say 10% too much phosphorous, I was able immediately to see of a piece of land was well taken care of, or whether it had tremendous problems. You somehow learn from these natural scientists a lot of these kinds of things. But I had, from being in political science, a much better idea of the politics. So if you gonna do things like land reform, you have to bring someone on board who knew what the political problems are from new legislation to how you keep local people happy. If you decollectivize the first thing that happens is that a lot of people have no work. Cause collectives are a sort of a labor prison. It keeps people looking but keeps them from going to going to where there might be a better job. If you suddenly decollectivize, you’ve exposed a lot of people who have nowhere to go. I think that, in the Albania land reform project, we worked also with the European bank for development. I think that was really useful stuff. I did lots of those kinds of things with the School of Agriculture. Most people who I know in the China field don’t even know that I do those kinds of things. Cause why would they care if I go to Albania or something like that? But that was great stuff for me. It was tremendous: It also gave me much more educated eyes when I would go to the Chinese countryside. I have tremendous comparative experiences from being in places all over the world in rural areas. This was only possible in Wisconsin. Of great agricultural schools in the United States there are three. One is in the California system. It is at Davis. It’s not at Berkeley. And in New York state, it is at Cornell. There is no great public university in New York
state in the same kind of way as Wisconsin. In Michigan the School of Agriculture is at Michigan State. It’s not in Ann Arbor. So Madison is the only place in the whole United States where all of these activities are in one campus. The things which actually made my academic life exciting at Madison, which I’m very very grateful for, gave me eyes which I never would have had and experiences I never would have had. I had no idea these resources existed when I went to UW. That was fortuitous. I am very grateful.

Huang: Do you still remember what was the first reason or the idea that came to your mind like oh, I can have a cooperation with agriculture. Because I think our normal training won’t teach us like we can reach, you know, our hand to outside of our field.

Friedman: The best recollection is I didn’t find them, they found me. I was teaching Chinese politics. When China opened, our School of Agriculture was already very international. It has a huge international program. It has a very high number of international students. In fact, the first person I ever met from China at the campus was someone who had been educated there before ’49. When China opened up the government wanted to send people back to bring them up to date, he came to Madison. It was somehow expected that cause I did China, therefore I should be able to have something in common with international people at the School of Agriculture, which was at the time not quite true. They wanted to reach out to programs in China. They looked for cooperation internationally, China was not unique. They asked me if I would join them. And at that time, I had been at UW almost a decade. By that time I know that this cooperation would be a wonderful opportunity. I think when I first arrive at the campus I had a very Harvard mentality in which one only talks to the President and God.

Huang: Oh, really…

Friedman: Well there’s a famous story about Harvard that when Kennedy was president and he was attending a meeting of the board, overseers I think they are called at Harvard, they run the university basically, and a phone call came through for the president. And Harvard has only one president, and it’s certainly not John Kennedy, but the president of Harvard. Kennedy stood up to take the call and, they told him to sit down and gave the phone to the Harvard president. So I think at Harvard, Willy-nilly, you unconsciously pick up those kinds of mindsets. I think it took me about three years to get rid of them. But you certainly come out of Harvard with those mindsets.
Huang: Interesting. Ok. So yesterday we talked about your first trip to China.
Someone else: So which year did you start to come/go back?
Friedman: I would guess 2004 was my start for the School of Agriculture NSF Project.
Someone else: So was this project proposed by Wisconsin or by China?
Friedman: I’m not sure whether I know all the details. As soon as China opens up university agricultural research, they begin to have cooperative relations with UW. They get to know each other. Wisconsin, as I said, is big on getting research grants. The School of Agriculture in general is very active in getting research grants. So they knew people at the Chinese Academy of Sciences who wanted cooperation. The academy of sciences in China put up a little money. The project could only continue if Wisconsin would put up more money. So a grant application was put in to the National Science Foundation by the School of Agriculture in which I was invited to be one of five principle investigators. But you have two stupid governments, which do not make it easy for cooperation. UW would like that when a Chinese finishing graduate student comes to our campus, we fund him. We would like that when our graduate students go to China, the Chinese side would fund them. Given local currencies, accounting, it is a lot easier. But both governments have stupid rules where you can’t fund non-citizens in these kinds of ways. So this required a lot of creative accounting in order to make sure you balance things. You wouldn’t wanna ask too many questions about how the funding actually works. You have to abide by the formal rules of the two stupid governments. And you had to make the project work out. So a lot of cleverness goes into making those things occur.
Someone else (low voice): How long did you stay in China?
Friedman: I went almost every other year, I probably went four times as a part of this project. It could be more. Especially in the early years because we’re up in North-West Yunnan and you have national parks, which is one set of administrative boundaries. We are working with the Academy of Sciences, which is the central government. And then you have Yunnan provincial things. So my basic job was to make sure that all three parts of the political system coordinated. So I had lots of time talking to these political people to make sure that we were not going to run into obstacles when the scientists were going to places. That was a lot of fun. It was a wonderful learning experience watching them have to relate to each other and have to relate to us. I was, as it turned out, useful. I could
tell in a minute that they had terrace fields from the 學大家運動 which obviously did not work. But the scientists wouldn’t know what the 學大家運動 was. So I could almost figure out things that were invisible to the scientists and they could see other kinds of things which I couldn’t. What was bad field management for raising yaks and when they didn’t keep the breeds pure. I couldn’t tell the difference between a Yak that was a 100%, 70% etc. I wasn’t necessary after the first few visits when we got things running.

Someone else (low voice): Apart from the officials on both the central and provincial levels and also scholars from both countries, did you have the chance to meet environmental NGO’s or local people?

Friedman: Yes we did meet with the environmental NGO’s. We met with all the environmental NGO’s, absolutely. From my own research agenda, it’s very complex, this is an area which has a Tibetan majority. And you know what is going on in Chinese politics about Tibet. I end up learning a lot of things about China there is no point in publishing.

A_2/B_2: Continuation of A_1/B_1

Low voice: So regarding the developmental NGO’s what do you think of the official attitude towards the NGO’s?

Friedman: Yunnan was created the same way as Shenzhen. It was created as a Special Economic Zone. Yunnan was created as the special province for dealing with environmental NGO’s. So an NGO can do things in Yunnan which it can’t do in other provinces in China, in the same way as Shenzhen when it was a pioneering export zone. So yes it is actually easier to do NGO work in Yunnan. And basically what the local groups learn, and this is not a secret, is a matter of suspicion by the authorities. So how do the NGOs handle that? The easiest way is to make sure that the party and the 公安 know everything that you are doing because you are doing nothing wrong. So you invite them to your meetings. You show them that you have absolutely nothing to hide. You don’t become clever and do something behind the government’s back. You want them to放心. That is what the NGOs tend to do.
Low voice: So according to your observation do you think that the prime intention of environmental NGOs in China will prevent emergencies in the People’s Republic of China?

Friedman: So we all know what a loaded question that is and what a complex question that is. And there are different notions of what civil society is. If you take it simply to mean everything that isn’t market, state, or family, then by definition the answer is yes. It’s not market, state, or family, which is one way of understanding what civil society is. If you have another understanding of what civil society is, in which it is a free voluntary sphere in which people can cooperate for various kinds of purposes. That is not the case in China. It’s certainly not free. You want to make sure that the 公安 is aware of what you are doing. So from that point of view, it is definitely not civil society. But the government is aware that it can’t solve all of China’s problems. And if it would try to, it would become even more bureaucratic, even more expensive, even more corrupt. And, as everyone knows, they already have enough problems that way. So it serves government purposes to find NGOs which will help solve problems. No budget involved. So that’s what they are looking for. These environmental NGOs they wanna stop the dams on the new Nu river. But the way you make money if you are in the party in China is by development, by land sales, by real estate, by kickbacks. So by god you are going to see that developments occur cause it’s not only a way you get money, it’s a way investment comes in. It’s a way you create all sorts of networks. So there’s always a struggle. Usually, in that struggle, the party wins. The NGO doesn’t have a chance. Sometimes it’s able to embarrass the party for a short period of time. So no, I don’t want to say there is civil society in China. But there are lots of good people who say “look, this political system is going to persist. Waiting for democracy is not how to live your life. This system is going to persist. So within the system what can I do to make life better, to solve problems among young people everywhere, there is a percentage who are full of ideals and hopes. It’s true in China too. So there is a significant number of young people especially at colleges, in their early college years, who are looking to do good works. Who are we to tell people in another country, who live under that system, that they should or should not cooperate to help solve problems. It’s not my job to change the Chinese government.
Zun Jinhao: So if you are to prefer (4:57)... there is an emerging of Southern national identity, so, will it change China from Guangdong or …?

Friedman: So no one knows the answer to your question. I do write on national identity in China, on conflicting visions of national identity in China. It is a topic which interests me. In fact I think I was the first person who ever wrote about North-South conflicting identities in China and how they influence politics inside of China. I have a feeling that one of the results of the decentralization that has come with the opening up to the world market and more market things in China, is local identities are growing very powerful. And although, the CCP has instilled an official Leninist 56 nationalities policy, these nationalities are really silly categories. Hakka is not even one of the official ethnic groups in China. So these are made up categories. They are not categories which describe how people talk to each other in China. When you are in China everybody knows Huabei, Dongbei, Shanbei, Subei, Jiangnan, Chaozhou, or whatever it is gonna be. They are real categories that people actually use all the time to describe who they are where they’re from and who other people are. So these categories are really I think increasingly becoming identities for people. I can imagine at some point where these identities become mobilizable for political purposes, without making a prediction. So I think there are still inside of China political forces which have a potential for outcomes that very few people are even thinking about these days. If people move from one place to another, who is gonna help you? Who is gonna help you are the people who have the same 鄉原 as you, who eat the same food as you do, who, when their parents die, commemorate it in the same way. These are immediate identities, without having the formalities of 同鄉會. You have the equivalent of 同鄉會 in terms of how communities are growing inside of China. I think that has potential for some day becoming part of a very different kind of politics.

Zun Jinhao: Can it be related to civil society?

Friedman: Yes, I’ll give you an example in which it is very easy to see why that happens. So you come from some place ... (8:00) and you are in a city and you don’t have the proper 户口. So you can’t get your kids into school. But you want your kids to get an education. Who’s gonna pool the money? It’s gonna be the 同鄉 people. So you will
create a school with that commonality. I think that is a civil society activity. It’s not quite legal. But it serves a state purpose because the state doesn’t want these kids to be undereducated or out on the streets or turn into hoodlums or gangsters. So the state doesn’t always crack down on non-legal activities. Because they understand that these activities actually serve a good purpose. People say there are elections in Chinese villages. Now, elections as you understand elections in Taiwan, do not happen in China. Because if the party is unhappy with the results, the party will make sure that the results don’t matter in 95% of the cases. But if you allow an election campaign, it becomes a place where people seek support of other people. So candidates identify problems. Then you have to mobilize support, which in a village will always be done with a 家族. So even if the election will turn out to be meaningless in the sense that the party is going to make sure of who has power, you have now identified an issue and you have mobilized 家族. Villagers will then afterwards often cooperate to solve that problem. So the election is a fraud. Yet there are real and positive consequences. If Chia had real democratic elections, you would see it happen easier. So there are these things which resemble civil society activities. But they are not part of a formally legal structure. They are very fragile and vulnerable. Yet they happen all the time and all over the place. I understand the seriousness of the question, is there a civil society? It’s very complex. The main thing is not to worry which word we use, but to make sure that we agree on what the dynamics and the facts are.

Someone else: (10: 35 very unclear) how do you …. about regionalism?
Friedman: You mean what is the basis for it?
Someone else: Yes.
Friedman: That’s what I see all the time.
Huang: Is there any reason that triggered your interest?
Friedman: When I left the US congress in 1983, I had had a lot of interaction with the Chinese Foreign Ministry. They asked me if I could give a series of lectures at various places from north to south on the role of Congress in making America’s China-policy. It was the first and only time where I made a trip in China where I started in the North and then kept going South. I gave the same talk in each place and I got different responses. The responses showed that people were coming from different consciousnesses about
their patriotism. I simply had this experience imposed upon me. It just happened to me. I experienced it. It made me conscious of something which I was not aware of before. As you become conscious of the North-South divide you can start asking questions about it. Then you begin to look for it. That is definitely how it occurred, from this accidental North-South trip to give lectures on the role of the US Congress on US foreign policy on China.

Huang: Was that in the late eighties?
Friedman: I think it was ’85.
Huang: Ok, interesting.
Friedman: I’ll give you the easiest example I couldn’t help but pick up from this trip. What was the Northern view of reform versus the Southern view of reform? Most of Mao’s models were Northern. The South was treated as the place that was polluted by capitalism. One had to be wary of the South. So the North had an experience that reform was stealing from them their correctly privileged place. And then they told themselves stories why they deserved to be privileged. They were still poor and backward, yet when the Japanese invaded we were the ones who sacrificed. When the Mongols invaded, when the Manchus invaded. We were martyrs for the nation. Those weren’t the stories the South told us. Why was China in such a bad state? It was because these idiot Northern people who know nothing about money were being given all of the money by the government while all of us people who understand the market in the South were ignored or ripped off to subsidize the North. Around ’84-’85, these stories were coming to consciousness. People were creating identities. Hearing different stories, you couldn’t miss the contrasting identities.

Huang: And you had never heard such stories while you were still in the States?
Friedman: No. The next question then, could you trace the North-South difference back to Han and Chu, and Liu Bang, the great king of Chu, the military conquest by the Han of the South which had a much more humane feel and knew Taoist love poetry. I became aware of how deep and long the North-South split was. It was thrown in my face by this experience.

Someone else: Some people say that (15: 36 inaudible part)…. is already Sinified now so that the situation is different now?
Zun Jinha: And that because of the rise of China the CCP can use nationalism to unite people together?

Friedman: Well, they are going to try. But the official CCP nationalist story doesn’t make sense to a lot of people anymore. What is the dominant CCP nationalist story? It says that modern China began as a response to the Opium War. But of course that is not Deng Xiaoping’s nationalism, that is Mao’s nationalism. For Mao, the Opium War narrative legitimated breaking off dealings with an exploitative world market. It legitimated anti-capitalism and anti-imperialism. Once Deng comes to power China wins in the world market. China wants to link up to the world market. Therefore you have a different China story. The story is that China was great until after the 明朱棣 dies. He supported the Zheng He expeditions. Afterwards, the Ming burned all the shipyards and they face away from the ocean towards the North. China is no longer able to take advantage of the new maritime opportunities. Deng tells a very different China story than did Mao. Similarly, if you ask conservatives with a Northern consciousness “why did the communist party of the Soviet Union fall?”, it’s because Moscow carried out reforms in the party. To Deng, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union fell because they got rid of the reformer Khrushchev and put in place the conservative Brezhnev who stopped the reforms. On a host of topics, you will find a very different national myth. I don’t make any predictions on what comes out of this politics. But I do think that there is a tension inside the system. Evidence exists in the different stories Chinese tell about the history of the nation.

Huang: I really want to go back to your life in Wisconsin because I find it interesting and it should be influential as well. I have been reading your CV and you have been working only in Wisconsin at a formal faculty there. And later you had a chance to serve in the US congress. What was the reason that made you connected to, to work in a congress.

Friedman: While it’s true that Wisconsin was my only tenure-track position, I went to lots of places. I spent a year in Hong Kong, I spent time in Illinois. I spent time in Michigan, I took lots of research opportunities and left Madison. Until 1983, I was away from Madison half of the time. Wisconsin rewards public service. If you wanna take a research leave, there are rules which limit how much time you can be away. If you do public service, you can be away forever. You should be doing public service if you are at the University of Wisconsin. You should be serving the state; you should be serving the
country; you should be serving the world. So it was not a problem to go away from Wisconsin to do public service. It was structured into the university. I had gotten involved with the US government already when I was here in Taiwan as a graduate student. I continued involved for the Kissinger trip to China writing a Taiwan paper for the NSC. An opportunity came when there was a new chair in the Asia and Pacific subcommittee of the Foreign Affairs committee, Steven Solarz. He invited me to Washington to be his China-Taiwan-East Asia person. It seemed a natural and a wonderful opportunity. I was happy to go do it, I was very happy doing the work. I think I was a lot better at the government work than I am at academic politics. I hate academic politics. Academic politics is always about why I’m right and you’re wrong. I’m not very good at that conversation. Real world politics is about putting together coalitions and making compromises and working with a team of people who get something done. It turned out I was much more comfortable and better at doing that kind of thing. So I had a wonderful time doing it.

Huang: So you must have a, I mean, real conversation with Kissinger, did you?
Friedman: No, I just take orders. My conversations were with his executive secretary. Kissinger would be in the room, but if something occurred, you don’t deal with him. You deal with his executive secretary, his chief of staff.

Huang: So how would you evaluate Kissinger in terms of his China policy? We all know that he just published a…
Friedman: I haven’t read it.
Huang: Ah, ok.
Friedman: Well…

Huang: You don’t need to give a very complicated, you know, or very…
Friedman: When I was a graduate student at Harvard, there were two members in the faculty whose courses I did not want to take. One was Samuel Huntington, who I experienced as a racist. I found him so narrowly Western-centric in his notion of values, found it ugly ugly ugly. So I made sure that I never had any relationship with Huntington. He was very smart and he was extraordinarily knowledgeable about international affairs. In his individual interactions with international students, he was wonderful to them. When you get to the real person, ideology gets complicated very quickly. I knew that
about Huntington. But in terms of his intellectual perspective, I really hated it. And the other one whom I avoided was Kissinger. Kissinger struck me as someone who had no faith in democracy. He had a mindset to cut deals with dictators. Democracies he saw as weak, decadent, divided. He had no feeling for the resilience and power inside of a democracy. He was a globalist who thinks there is an average point of view for the globe. I thought that he did not have an understanding of how important regions were. There were a lot of things which I just didn’t like about Kissinger. So I kept away from him too. And it is very important to realize that the opening up of China, although Kissinger portrays it in his writings as his policy, it wasn’t his policy; it was Nixon’s policy. And Kissinger knows nothing about it until Nixon asks him to carry out the policy. It is very important to understand that it was Nixon’s policy and Kissinger carries out Nixon’s policy. I think that Kissinger has identified his success in the world in terms of his role in opening China up to the United States. That gave him a large stake in not being hard-headed and realistic in dealing with China. He had a huge ego stake in a friendly China. A lot of people think it’s because he was making so much money. I think they can only say that because they have no idea how big his ego is. The ego is much bigger than the wallet. But I think that at the same time, in recent years, he has actually become more realistic about the complications resulting from what a rising China means. If you were to look at his most recent writings, you will find a Kissinger who is becoming more complex about China. I think he has changed in a million ways from the one whom I knew about in graduate school. For example, when I was in graduate school, his realism was military realism, nuclear weapons. He knew nothing about the economy. The dominant view of people who did that in the United States was Japan didn’t matter because Japanese were merely Sony salesman. They didn’t understand how international politics really worked. Eventually Kissinger would learn the importance of the economy. He would never underestimate today the importance of the international economic factor. So as Huntington turns out to be a complicated person, Kissinger changes over time. I assume we are all complex and mutable.

Huang: I suggest that we take a break.

Friedman: Whatever you want.

Huang: Well you can choose to just take a break and stop talking or something else.
Friedman: Well, I’ll just take a walk, a walk is always good.

**B_3**

Huang: From where then, Wisconsin as well?

Friedman: Ah we met at Wisconsin. She was a finishing graduate student and I was a first year faculty member and we were introduced by some friends who thought that we were correct for each other, and we have been together ever since. It is very strange to have someone introduce us, someone who knows you better than you know yourself who is the right one for you.

Huang: I know

Friedman: So I’ll tell you a strange story. You interviewed Victor Lippit? And have you interviewed Mark Selden? You know that we three were in the same class in high school? And Victor lived one street away from me.

Low Voice: Question inaudible

Friedman: No not, Selden lived in a wealthier neighborhood. His father was a very successful dentist.

Low voice: Question inaudible

Friedman: Yeah, he tends to be a bit Marxist.

Huang: So you know each other since you were in childhood. And you turned to doing similar…

Friedman: Totally accidental.

Huang: Why?

Friedman: I have no idea, yeah very strange.

Huang: Interesting.

Low Voice: Question inaudible

Friedman: Yah we did much of that yesterday so…

Huang: Yeah but I think I also have another question which I feel very interested in, (Victor Lippit) we have kind of a controversial question that we feel very interested in. Being a Jewish scholar in academia, do you feel anything that like unfair, (fragment unclear 2: 25), but in how people identify you in terms of being a Jewish.
Friedman: There is a book by a philosophy professor of Princeton, named Anthony Appiah, which I think is called *In My Father’s House*. He tells of what happens when his father dies. He was from a tribe in eastern Ghana. His father was the son of the chief. His father went off to Cambridge University to become a lawyer. And I think the father was a Methodist. The father married in Cambridge the daughter of the minister, who was English obviously. And Anthony Appiah is one of the sons of that marriage. The father became the organizer of the anti-colonial labor movement in Ghana, and was an ally of Nkrumah. When Nkrumah got power and became corrupt and useless, the father turned against Nkrumah. The father was denounced and had to flee the country. Eventually Nkrumah is overthrown. In the period in which the father was being denounced, nobody wanted to have anything to do with the Appiah family. By the time the father dies, Nkrumah is long gone and the father has become a hero. He was the first person who saw how bad Nkrumah was becoming, that Nkrumah was gonna ruin the country. So when the father dies, they all want to be in charge of the funeral. They all want to get the political credit. The political party, the government, the tribe. The son, Anthony, is part of all of these identities. He goes back, and he actually confronts all these people. He is the oldest one. They expect him to say how his father should be buried. They don’t ask his father’s wife, his mother. Anthony finds he has different identities with these different kinds of people. He’s the son of the heir to the chief; he’s the person tied to the party; the labor union; the state. He asks his mother how should the funeral be carried out. And his mother says, those are all sons of bitches who didn’t care about us when your father was in trouble; screw them all, I want to have a small burial with all members of the family who always loved and respected your father. So he uses these different identities to give his mother what his mother wants. I think of identity very much in this kind of way. Identities are things we all have, we have multiple identities. We can be from a nation; we can be from a family; we can have a gender; we can have a religion; we can have a so-called race. All these identities are powers that we possess and can deploy. But if anyone puts you into just one of these identities, it will work against you. We are all intellectuals. That’s ok. But all the other identities, no one is allowed to say that just one of them is who you are. You are allowed to use those identities when they serve your purposes. When you use them they empower you. If others use them, they’re confining
you. You are Asian, you are Taiwanese, you are a woman. But you are not merely one of them. As long as it’s you who deploys identity, you are still all of them. If someone else wants to identify you in terms of just one category, it doesn’t matter how he does it. It’s actually none of his business. It’s an attack and I don’t like it. Any more than if you said I was Harvard or New York, or a Westerner, or white, or any other of those categories. They are none of your business. But proudly I shall embrace everyone, because they are me. I shall not reject any of my identities. So, to get to your question, the only place where I ever confronted the religious category being used in ways that were diminishing me was when I was a graduate student at Harvard. So I never had any experience in Wisconsin which would make me have those thoughts. I never had the experience, whatever people would say in private conversations, that would not bother my life. The only place they really come into my life, was after I married. My wife, a Congregationalist, has a family burial plot since 1632. And we had to figure out what we’re gonna do with our children and their identities. So we made some decisions on that. As it turned out, the children grew up so very differently and in their own way. My younger daughter is married to someone from Alexandria, Egypt, who is an American citizen, who is a banker, who is a sweetheart. I would not want anyone else to define him by his religion. It is none of anyone’s business. He decides. He loves Arabic culture, Arabic music. Those are part of him. If my wife and my relationship made it easier for my daughter to find happiness with this very lovely human being, that was a good thing. Otherwise I couldn’t care less.

Huang: Thank you, that is very good to know.

Friedman: By the way, your question is very interesting. Why was there a generation of China scholars in the United States that has an unbelievably large percentage of people who are Jewish: Ben Scharwtz, Joe Levinson. It’s an interesting sociological question. I’m not denying the interesting sociological question, I have no idea what the answer is.

Low voice: Question inaudible.

Friedman: The thing is do you have a Chinese wife is always an interesting question. You speak anything in Chinese and people say you must have a Chinese wife. My older daughter who was born in Hong Kong went to China in 1985, when she was 14, she came back from China and she could only say one sentence in Chinese: 有沒有啤酒?
Huang: I think it’s because of, I don’t know, many people in academia that do research in China they do marry to Chinese.
Friedman: It’s probably true. Intellectuals love what they study topological, algebra, whatever.
Huang: The people that I met, especially the younger generation, so…
Friedman: I can think of opposite cases too. It’s quite humorous. Did you ever read the work of Vivian Shue? So many people think, going by the name, that she’s Chinese. But she is Celtic with an ancient French-English heritage. But people see the name and they assume she is Chinese. She has many humorous things happen to her from people who assume that she is Chinese.
Huang: Ok. I’m kind of interested in your working experience in the congress. Is there anyone who you feel of has shaped your ideas on US foreign policy on China at the time? Any figure during that time?
Friedman: I’m a staff person. Many people who do staff things, even Kissinger, who worked for Nixon, have a tendency to tell the story as if they are the policy maker. My experience is that a staff person is not the policy maker. The person who is elected is the policy maker. The staffer carries out policy for the electee. If you can’t be on the team with that person, you should get another job. I think I was hired by someone who felt that we had similar values, and I could be trusted. Trust is always important in politics. The elected person has to believe that the staffer would never do anything which caused the elected person problems. So I’m not sure how much my views had to do with actual making policy. I worked for the Foreign Affairs Committee in ’81, ’82, ’83. Reagan had just been elected president. I work for the Democrats. There was uncertainty on the Chinese side as to what Reagan’s China policy was going to be. The Chinese are anxious Reagon’s too close to the Republic of China on Taiwan. He had opposed the normalization of U.S. relations with China. But, as it would turn out, Reagon was basically anti-Soviet. While Reagon’s views would evolve over time as Russia changed, Reagon was very much at first the ultimate Cold-Warrior against the Soviet Union. He saw China in terms of how it could contribute to an anti-Soviet agenda, which is perfectly OK with the Deng government in 1981. There actually was in this period military cooperation between Washington and Beijing. His policies were determined by much
larger forces than me sitting as an aid to a representative on the Foreign Affairs committee who does China. Large historical forces are at work shaping the policy. A staffer is a tool of these larger forces. The US and China are gonna have to economically normalize policies. So you begin to work on aligning the legislation which makes that possible. There was places in which the Foreign Affairs Committee took initiatives. But you won’t care. It’s mostly in Central America, because Reagan was getting America involved in wars in Central America. No matter what my specialty was, the most important thing one had to do then was to make sure that America did not get involved in wars in Central America. So we all became Central America specialists. I spent much more time in Central America then in Asia. I saw Castro more than I would see Chinese leaders. I can tell you for example that one of Castro’s favorite foods is 北京烤鴨 . In terms of China policy, the only thing we had an impact on was one of the unintended consequences of the way US-China relations were normalized. Taiwan had lost its immigration quota for the United States. It was simply handed over to China. Taiwan was suddenly without an immigration quota. So our office wanted to get back the immigration quota for Taiwan. The chair of the Asian-Pacific sub-committee left the details to me. He said, see if you can get this quota back by law. But you have to do it in a way which doesn’t cause me any problems with China. I don’t make that policy. I am given a task. I did go to the Chinese embassy and I met a lot with the chargé d’affaires. We worked out a formula. We had to write it down but what is Taiwan? Almost anything one labels Taiwan, Beijing goes crazy. Worried if it facilitates two China’s, or one China one Taiwan. So you have to write what this place Taiwan is that’s getting the immigration quota. I invented a category, which exists only in this law. Taiwan is called ‘Taiwan’, and then there’s a parenthesis, and it says ‘China’: “Taiwan (China)”. So the ROC could believe that the wording meant Taiwan is China. Beijing could persuade itself it meant that Taiwan is part of China. When I wrote the phrase, I had no idea what it meant. I just wrote multisemic words so that the others would not make a fuss when we got the law changed. So Taiwan got back its immigration quota. And the Chinese did not complain. We said to the Chinese that America for a long time had very racist immigration quota against Chinese. Therefore, it’s correct that people from China now have a double quota. There’s a phrase in public administration called ‘the axe is in the soup’. If someone
knocks on the door and says to you, do you have some food for me, you can reply “I can’t because the axe is in the soup”. I have no idea what this sentence means. But the person asking can’t see what is happening. The axe is in the soup, God knows what it means. And so it is with Taiwan parenthesis China, Taiwan (China). Nothing happened. There wasn’t really any controversy. This was a honeymoon period in US-China relations. It was the only period in which the US provided military technology to China, as long as it didn’t roll, fly, or swim. Anything that was defensive was ok. So, on the Foreign Affairs Committee, I ended up putting emphasis on Central America and more time on Taiwan. We did the first human rights hearings on Taiwan. We tried our best to keep alive the Kaohsiung prisoners by badgering the ROC government all the time, the people who were in the DC area office. All, of course, hated me. It was a fun experience.

Huang: A fun experience?
Friedman: Yes it was a fun experience, because what did it matter what they thought of me? The main thing…
Huang: Well…
Friedman: I had my job. They can’t touch that. The Committee had an agenda. The thing was to get the agenda done. If it upsets the ROC MOFA people, they have to deal with it. And I didn’t particularly love to deal with them. It was no fun having them lie about the Kaohsiung incident. What we did on the Taiwan issue was useful. In contrast, there was a consensus on China policy at that time. It really just is a honeymoon situation. So I can’t think of anything where ‘I did this’ on China, or even that we offered a unique initiative on China. There just was a consensus in America at that time.
Huang: Let’s look at the period from the other side. Would you say there’s anything that make you feel proud or that was influential on you or your research or your further research or your ideas or your perspective on China?
Friedman: Sure, absolutely, absolutely.
Huang: What was the most important?
Friedman: It was a wonderful experience being part of policy making processes. There are many strange things which you wouldn’t know from the outside. Let’s say the vice-president, Mr. Bush, took a trip to China. The vice-president is also the president of the senate. He’s actually allowed to break a tie-vote. It almost never happens, but the
constitution allows it. So when Mr. Bush comes back from China, by the rules of the Congress, he has to brief the other party. I became the person he would have to brief, because everybody is too busy. So I become the stand-in for the Committee. So I had some very interesting interactions with George H. W. Bush as a person, which were really quite intriguing. I enjoyed getting to know informed people and watch people trying to put together coalitions and watch them mistrust the intelligence agencies and to learn how much the intelligence agencies feared leaks. That could get them into trouble with their jobs. As my wife can tell you, I’m the worst person in the world to gossip with because I never pass gossip on. It just dies with me. So the intelligence agencies came to love me because anything they told died with me. So I had much more access as a result of these kinds of strange things, I had some extraordinary experiences which took me inside the system. I don’t know if you know who Oliver North is. He was Reagan’s person who did all sorts of illegal things with Iran, and eventually gets into trouble and was forced to resign. And very early on the Defense Department and the State Department wanted North gone. They couldn’t get any Republican to do anything. So they approached my boss in the Foreign Affairs Committee. And then he says to me, well, if you can help get this done and don’t cause me any problems, then go do it. So I got involved in this effort to get rid of Oliver North, who worked in the White House as a military liaison for the president. So I’m learning lots of things which are going on inside the political world which I never would otherwise have access to. Traveling with the Committee. Spending nine hours at a time with Fidel Castro. Going up into the mountains to see guerilla forces in Central America. Seeing the heads of the death squads. Day after day, it was an introduction to politics at work. I think the major thing that I learned was that what America did in the world, which seemed to America inconsequential, had life and death consequences for other people. That’s what it meant to be a superpower. For example, my boss got approached by Amnesty International. Some folks had tried to organize a solitary labor union in Cuba. They were sentenced to death. AI says, you see Castro in Cuba. Since you have these ties, can you save the labor activists lives? Again the way it works out is that the head of the Committee says to me, well, if you can save their lives and don’t cause me any trouble then, ok. It’s always if you don’t cause me any trouble. No one ever wants trouble. So go save their lives. So suddenly you have to go
save their lives. But where have I gotten any practice to prepare me for how to go to the Cuban government to save these six lives? Committee work got me involved in politics and foreign policy at a level of personal and human pain, which I never otherwise would have had. It had a tremendous impact on how I experience foreign policy, how politics work, how a policy is made. It enriched my understanding of the world.

Zun Jinhao: Regarding to you as foreign policy, how do you consider the division between the red and blue team in the policy of America?

Friedman: They’re not part of my life that set of categories. Since I tend to be very concerned with human rights issues, on those issues, the reddest of the red and the bluest of the blue cooperate. On the Republican right wing, they care very much about religious freedom. And among the Democrat left wing, they care very much about environment, labor, and human rights. They both therefore cooperate on human rights issues. So many of my friends became the hardest of the red and the hardest of the blue.

Low Voice: Like Perry Link?

Friedman: Perry Link is a dear friend, absolutely. But so is June Dreyer, because on this kind of issue they aren’t distinguishable. So it’s not part of my life this opposition of red and blue. I also think the Chinese find that the color group out of power tends to be very critical of America’s China foreign policy. America is too soft. It makes too much concessions. But when it gets in power, it finds China is a great power that America has to deal with. In power, you find yourself on the side of more engagement and less confrontation. So I am not sure how much practical consequences red versus blue actually has. If you are inside the government, it will matter in things like this: every year the Defense Department is required to put out a report on the Chinese military. The people who are toughest on China want to put in that report every scary fact that they can. The people who want to have engagement go ahead want to put in as few of those things as they can. So, inside bureaucratic politics, you will find a red-blue fight over something like writing the report on Chinese military. It’s probably the same for the people who write the annual report on the human rights record of China. But I think red versus blue has much less impact on making policy. Making a policy comes out of much larger forces, as with the so-called pivot to Asia, Vietnam is screaming ‘help me!’, Philippines is screaming ‘help me!’, India is screaming ‘help me!’ . An American official didn’t invent
that in Washington. Friendly governments are saying this to America. Then the USG is forced to think about what to do in response. In the real world of foreign policy, everybody experiences themselves as defensive and responding, and virtually no one experiences his government as initiating and causing bad things to occur. Nobody ever blames themselves. Everybody thinks of themselves as defensive, including the Chinese government. But I just don’t see the red-blue distinction as a policy force in the way the literature says it is. That’s just not my experience. There are places where you can see it working in the way as I pointed out, but…

Low Voice: In my interview with Perry Link, Perry criticized red and blue more directly, he said red and blue is a …, I wrote to a public people in …

Friedman: So as I’ve done here, I don’t like to make public judgments about these kinds of things. As I said before, Perry Link is a dear friend of mine.

Zun Jinhao: In dealing with China did the United States launch engagement or containment?

Friedman: You can’t contain China. That’s another one of these false distinctions, containment versus engagement. It’s absolutely impossible to contain China. It’s hard to even know what the concept means. The Chinese word that is translated as the English ‘contain’ actually means ‘constrain’ in Chinese. It does not mean contain. It’s a much stronger term in Chinese. It has an implication of almost suffocating, taking away China’s breath space. I hate this. The Chinese know very well what they are doing when in Chinese they use a word which means constrain and in English they use contain. You can only contain something that is expanding. China does not claim it is expanding. The only US policy that could come close to either contain or constrain up to now has been the attempt to deter a Chinese attack on Taiwan. That’s the only thing. But since 2009 we are seeing increased China assertiveness. China is moving South in the South Sea, the Philippines call it the West Philippines Sea. The United States is trying to figure out what it should do. It hasn’t taken a side. That is, the United States makes no statement about whose territory it is or it isn’t. So you can see the continuing desire of the United States actually not to military constrain China. Its position is that the parties should find a way to peacefully solve the issue. But China keeps moving South. So what should the US do in this kind of situation? No one really knows what is going to come out of this situation.
But it’s a very dangerous one. It’s a very explosive one. It’s very very worrisome. So I don’t think the language of containment versus engagement makes sense. Everybody wants to engage China. It’s such a dynamic economy. There’s no country in the world that doesn’t want to benefit from deep engagement with China. So everybody is committed to deep engagement with China. I don’t know any government who is not committed to deep engagement with China. But then you have this rise of a superpower. Anyone can imagine what kind of negative things that can lead to. Therefore governments anxious about the new superpower’s expansion begin to think of ways to hedge against worst case possibilities that they would not like to have occur. But the goal is not to contain. The goal is to be prepared for something which you hope to keep from happening. So governments hedge. The American hedging policy towards China really began with the Taiwan Strait strike in ’95, ’96, in which the United States government made the decision to begin to forward position military capabilities in Guam. From a Chinese Government point of view, that’s an American aggressive action. To themselves, the Chinese are not responsible for the 1995-96 Taiwan Strait crisis. From their point of view Lee Teng-hui is. Or Clinton for allowing Lee Teng-hui into the United States. The Chinese government really has a hard time imagining any government responding to anything it does. The CCP government always experience itself as the 傷害著, the victim. Sincerely, as they experience the world, they do see themselves as defensive and others trying to constrain them. But if you are the United States Government obviously, and if you’re Japan obviously, if you’re South-East Asia then that’s not your experience of intensifying Chinese territorial assertiveness. More of these China-related events are happening. So it’s a very dangerous moment.

Zun Jinhao: Do neighbor countries feel Han nationalism internationally?
Friedman: Great question. There are countries where it’s obvious that Han-chauvinism is threatening, -- Vietnam, Burma, Mongolia, and Korea, especially North Korea.
Zun Jinhao: Just cold (40: 38 question unclear)
Friedman: Beijing and Pyongyang are close which can be dangerous for ruling groups in North Korea. If you go back to the 1950’s on Taiwan, the CIA was involved in plots to get rid of Chiang Kai-shek, and to not let Chiang Ching-kuo succeed him. It was able to do that because Taipei and Washington were so close. The weaker becomes dependent on
the stronger. Becoming close is very dangerous for the weaker. That’s the North Korean situation. It’s dependent on the PRC as Chiang Kai-shek was in the 50’s on the United States. It’s very dangerous, to the weaker scary how the influence of the stronger might be used. So I do not think that the North Korean government is at one with the Chinese government, even though they are very close. Chiang Kai-shek would say to his staff, after whoever the American general, ambassadors, CIA agent left the office, if you ever do anything those Americans said, you are fired. But meanwhile he seemed to appease the Americans at the highest level.

Zun Jinhao: Please tell us about the other countries feeling Han Nationalism, Burma, Vietnam, Mongolia.

Friedman: China is in the phase of a first generation of great growth of wealth. Any country with the experience of a first generation of great new wealth becomes the equivalent of the ugly American. Your people feel superior to other people. They feel, what can’t we do in the world? We are great. You are inferior. It’s not Chinese culture, it comes out of this new rich experience. Whether it was Germany when it rose, whether it was Japan when it rose, whoever is rising now. China is going through this experience now. When Chinese go into a place like Burma, whether it is tours, whether it is for business, whether it is just for fun, Chinese who live near the Burma border, this is their view. They can bribe anybody with a pack of cigarettes and go anywhere, and do anything, and treat the locals any which way, and there’s no trouble which would come to China. Such behavior has left a nasty impression on the Burmese military. The Burmese military may have been racist. It may have been fascist. It may have been tyrannical. But it also was very patriotic Burmese. It may have been fascist. It may have tyrannical. But it also was very patriotic Burmese. That is how they see themselves, a part of the people, the Buddhist Burmese people. Chinese activity, chauvinist activity, I don’t think it comes out of the Han identity. Over 2000 years, you can find a lot showing that the Han have long acted that way. But I think all centralized empires look down on the less powerful people. An ‘ethno’s’, that’s a Greek category which essentially means the savages in the Greek neighborhood. Although you can find condescending, arrogant, historical attitudes throughout Han history, I don’t think it comes from the Hanness. It comes from the strength of the centralized empire. All centralized empires saw the less powerful the same kind of thing. The Burmese are experiencing the consequences of this first generation rise
where Chinese people tend to be very arrogant. In Burma and other countries which are poorer and not as militarily strong, you can see Chinese throwing around their power.

Zun Jinhao: How about the ethnic minorities in China…

Friedman: What about them?

Zun Jinhao: do they feel the effect of Han nationalism?

Friedman: I don’t know the answer to the question, I think it’s very complex. Obviously if you’re Uygur you do experience Han chauvinism. Obviously if you’re Tibetan, you do too. But it’s not clear if you’re Hui that you do. Even Tibetan areas, there are other ethnic minorities who hate Tibetans, because the Tibetans came in and took their land many centuries ago. An awful thing about human communities is that they all learn reasons to hate each other. Human beings are great haters. I think that it is the case, especially since 1991 when the Soviet Union dissolved into ethnic republics, that the Chinese Communist Party came to the conclusion that the Leninist ethnicity policy did not work. The Chinese Communist Party then changed its ethnicity policies. It adopted the old Kuomintang policy after the Xinhai Geming, in which the view is that the Han is the father race which everybody else should benefit from. The Han are presumed to be a superior people. The Han have had a Confucian culture for 2000+ years. This cultural chauvinism has self-consciously grown in the so-called return of China going on inside of China. It is very popular after the end of Mao’s devastation of the culture. There is growing inside of China a very nasty kind of Han racism. I don’t know how it is experienced by every different particular group. But for sure I think it is growing.

Huang: I want to ask you about your experience in Hong Kong. When is the first time that you?

Friedman: 1964, December.

Huang: Ok, what’s the reason?

Friedman: That was winter break at National Taiwan University, for New Year’s, December January. So I went off to Hong Kong. I actually had one interesting experience in terms of the larger issues that we were discussing yesterday. I had two experiences which I wasn’t expecting. One I experienced for the first time the power of Chinese culture. I wasn’t aware when I was in Taiwan how I got wrapped up in all sorts of petty issues people cared about, that the culture was defining how I thought about the world.
When I got away to Hong Kong I was looking back on the things that would take up my daily conversations in Taiwan and I suddenly had an experience of how powerful Chinese culture was and what it was doing to me in Taiwan. It made me care about family business, holiday, status, or whatever gossip people were involved in. It dominated my life. I really had a feeling, when I got away to Hong Kong, how powerful Chinese culture was. The second thing was I felt free in Hong Kong. But I was embarrassed. Do I feel free because Hong Kong is a racist colony? I asked myself, why am I feeling free in a racist colony? Is this some skin privilege? Should I be embarrassed that I’m having this skin? Eventually I met some Hong Kong Cantonese people who went home for the holidays and then came back to Hong Kong. They said that when they left Mao’s China and came back to Hong Kong, they too felt free. Three decades later, I knew the PLO (Palestine Liberation Organization) representative in Beijing. He was also the PLO representative to North Korea. He would say, ‘each time I get back to China from North Korea, I feel so free’. It made me conscious of the relationality behind these experiences.

Huang: Interesting. So how long did you stay in Hong Kong the first trip? You just went there to see things?
Friedman: I went there because the dorm was emptying out and I didn’t want to be all alone in the dorm.
Huang: But you did spent money at the flight?
Friedman: The dollar at that time was extremely powerful. The cost of my room in Taida at the time was a dollar seventy-five a semester. I saved enough money from my time in Taiwan so that when I got home to the United States, I did something I could never do again in my entire life. I walked into a Volvo car dealership and I bought a Volvo, giving the dealer the entire money in cash from my savings from when I was a grad student. In 1964 I am a poor American student in Hong Kong. But the American dollar is on my side. In Tokyo, I could stay at the Okura, which is a very plush. Now I couldn’t afford to walk into the Okura. But as a graduate student I could stay at the Okura. So it wasn’t me. It was the dollar. That was a good experience, to understand that I wasn’t rich, but people such as me could behave as ugly Americans. Today, ugly Chinese don’t say ‘oh it’s the renminbi and the Chinese economy, and I am but the beneficiary, people feel ‘it’s all me’.
So I learned it wasn’t all me, thank God, from those experiences. In 1964, I stayed at that cheapest hotel, Chunking Mansion on Nathan Road. It seemed a fire trap. It was disgusting. The building was full of places where prostitutes came at night. But I felt I had to keep my costs to an absolute minimum. Acting as a poor student, I didn’t eat my meals at the Hilton hotel. I ate my meals down side streets at little mom and pap places which were not expensive. Yet the dollar was so powerful at that time.

Huang: And how many times have you been returning to Hong Kong since your first visit?
Friedman: Well I went back in ’65, I went back in ’66. By that time I was doing research in Hong Kong for my dissertation, which I didn’t do on the first trip. By the second trip, I’m aware of lots of scholarly resources in Hong Kong. I learn where I can find old newspapers from the 1911 revolution era, from 清朝末年. So on the second and third trips, I may have lived at a university, because of using archival resources on those trips. In 1970 I lived in Hong Kong for a year. My wife gave birth to our older child at the Evangel Medical Clinic in Hong Kong. I was just in Hong Kong for a second channel conference put together by military people on both sides. I try to get back. My elder daughter who was born in Hong Kong, in ’84 or ’85, joined a group of American teenagers that was gonna live five weeks at home in Hong Kong, and then live in China. She had left Hong Kong when she was eight days old. So she didn’t remember anything about it. I said to her, you’ll like Hong Kong. It’s wide open. It’s part of the open world. You will have a wonderful time there. But in Beijing, well I’m not sure. Instead, she actually had a more interesting time in China. I think she went to Guangzhou, Hangzhou, Beijing. Anyway, I told her she would have an awful time in China. Her experience was the exact opposite. She hated Hong Kong. She lived in homes where the girls only cared about fashion and styles and make-up. They didn’t have a serious thought or ideal in their head. She just couldn’t stand the Hong Kong girls. She got to China in ’84, ’85. It’s a period of optimism and idealism. She had a wonderful time meeting teenage girls in China who were full of dreams and hopes. Then, as you know, ’86, ’87 is a crackdown on Hu Yaobang. So ’84, ’85 is a sort of innocent, idealistic moment. She met these young girls and she just loved them and had wonderful wonderful time with them. Unless you’re in somebody else’s shoes, you should be very careful about thinking you understand their world. She came back thinking I was the stupidest person in the world, because I had
described the opposites of the truth she lived. Experiences are generational. When I go to China in ’84, ’85, I’m dealing with senior intellectuals who are beginning to feel the danger of what will lead to the removal of Hu Yaobang, while she’s meeting a different set of people. So she has a very different experience. One becomes conscious of the dangers of believing your own perception of the world are the truth of the world. It makes you more self-critical, showing a need to learn other people’s views, and other people’s truths.

Huang: That’s true. Remember that Hong Kong is actually under some specific kind of system, and how would you say, would you say Hong Kong probably inspired some of your thoughts? No?

Friedman: I did not have inspiring experiences in Hong Kong. When I was there in 1970, one of my closest friends was from the Free University in Germany, Dietmar Albrecht. He was Lutheran. He was very social justice oriented. He got involved with leftist worker movements inside of Hong Kong, which the British secret police monitored, totally. He eventually was thrown out of Hong Kong. I was made aware of how Hong Kong really was a colonial state. There was a secret police. It was a racist kind of place. That led to the Cantonese language movement. So I did not have inspirational views of Hong Kong. I loved that it was a place where you could do research on China, which had the material, which had refugees whom you could speak with, I think that in Hong Kong I learned for the first time really informed that authoritarian Taiwan was useless for me as a site of research in Hong Kong. I watched people from Ningbo, and people from Shanghai. I could see all tensions and hear myths that they had about each other. It was the first time I experienced the actual variety inside of Chinese communities. I learned a lot and had good experiences in Hong Kong. But I sure didn’t have any experience which would change the way I thought about the world at all.

Huang: I’m going to get you to the question about your extensive cooperation with Chinese local trained intellectuals in China. Before that, could you tell me, how would you evaluate the difference between people intellectuals doing research about China in Hong Kong and China? The differences?

Friedman: I don’t have a good answer to your question, so we shouldn’t stick there.

Huang: Do you see there’s any difference?
Friedman: I understand this project and why you are asking the question. So I should have something sensible to say about it. I think the truth is that I’m just not close enough to enough scholars who live and work in Hong Kong to say anything useful about the question. There are a few scholars in Hong Kong who I am very close with, and like and respect very much. But I am much more interested in spending my time with intellectuals in China, for the obvious reasons. I don’t think I have ever made enough close contacts with Hong Kong scholars to be interesting on your question.

Zun Jinhao: David Zweis?

Friedman: Sure, very well.

Zun Jinhao: …who wrote China (unclear: 01:02:12). He lived in Hong Kong

Friedman: Yes. I speak to him all the time, although almost never in Hong Kong. I see him in international conferences. We talk on e-mail all the time. I think he does very very good work. He’s Canadian. When I am in Hong Kong it does not strike me that I should go see David and have a conversation. It’s just not a thought that would cross my mind.

Low Voice: Peter Lee?

Friedman: Peter Lee. I don’t know him, I don’t know these people as I said, I’m not lying.

Huang: So then let’s go to the question about the Chinese scholar who was, well, I know it might probably be a silly question, but who was the first Chinese scholar with whom you had a real cooperation in terms of doing research or did a project with you in China?

Friedman: There was only one who was really cooperative in my original research project. He was chair of the history department at Nankai in Tianjin, Wei Hungying. He happened to be a historian of North China base areas. Our research was being done in a former North China base area. As I said last time, we were very suspicious of official stories of what happened in the bad old days. He was a very good historian. He was a very real help providing real data about a lot of things. He eventually lived in my house when he came to the United States. I was just last year or the year before in Tianjin on a university mission. He is long retired. He’s older than I am. I made sure he got invited to a proper kind of dinner so I could, in front of their 校長, thank him and say how wonderful he was. But I don’t have a cooperative research project with Chinese intellectuals. I have very close and dear friends, I see myself as learning from them. They are much better attuned than I am. I learn from Qin Hui, who really knows about rural things, he’s at Tsinghua.
And Xu Jilin, who follows intellectual debate at Huadong Shifan Daxue, and many other people. I see myself as their student wanting to learn from them. They seem to find it useful to talk to me: Gao Hua, who recently died, was magnificent. When I was in China, I would get to Nanjing. We would go out for hours and just talk. Yang Kuisong I think is magnificent. There’s just a host of those kinds of people. I see myself as learning from them. I’m always surprised that they are interested in spending as much time with me as they do. I see myself as the beneficiary. But they seem to think it benefits them too. I’m never clear why that is. That’s not a humility statement. That’s a factual statement. So when I first went to China, the generation of intellectuals I got to see was the old generation, Yu Guangyan, Su Shaozhi, Wang Ruoshui, Li Shenzhi, those kinds of people. Then I began to meet a generation which was coming up. Yuan Weishi from Guang Zhou who is just a magnificent human being, I would go out of my way to spend time and just listen to Yuan Weishi tell me about whatever he does. He’s finishing a book right now. Qingmo Minchu history. There is a large number of those kind of people. And then you have ‘lesser’ intellectuals. I learn from them about intellectual life in China, as a caste system. I knew Wang Hui. I was on the editorial board of a journal of which Wang Hui is an editor of Zhongguo Yanjiu. At an editorial meeting, an idiot like me, the only strange looking person sitting at the editorial board meeting, and the conversation is high-powered, pomo poco, postmodern, postcolonial. I’m hanging on by my fingertips to the conversation, I’m thrilled that I think I’m getting the gist of the conversation. Then suddenly they turn to me and say, do you agree? And I hope I got enough of this. It was zooming around me with everybody intervening. But I say luckily a correct answer. So I haven’t had any research projects with high-powered Chinese intellectuals. But I think I had a number of real world experiences where I benefited tremendously from interactions with these brilliant people. I believe that if you go to China as an outsider, this is how you learn. People have to whisper into your ear and explain the meaning of things you think you’re seeing. Otherwise you’ll misunderstand what you’re seeing. I’ll give a non-intellectual example of that. I spent seven years up in Tibetan areas. I spent a lot of time in Tibetan villages. One of the things I quickly saw was that certain villages are better run than other villages. It is very hard to ask the question, why is this one better run. But if you talk to people, you eventually learn the answer. You can’t see the causes with your
eyes. But the better-run village would almost always be a village where back when the
red army first came into the area, a father or a grandfather was martyred in standing up
against the red army. The family subsequently suffered greatly because children
respected what their parents did. Villagers trusted that this family which sacrificed
wouldn’t be greedy and corrupt in office. There would always be a personal story. I knew
enough from doing research in the Chinese countryside that without knowing the story, I
would be interested in learning by listening. That was the only way you’d learn it. You
can’t see with your eyes. You can’t see anybody’s history, family history with your eyes.
So it’s in one’s interest to talk talk talk talk, with people who will eventually actually say
something, rather than 你中國話說的非常好，or 你是中國通. These are horrible
sentences. They destroy any possible conversation from going on. So my relations with
Chinese intellectuals are much more of this sort. Some of them have wonderful, I went
for many years to the most right wing of the think thanks. Dangdai Zhongguo backed by
Deng Liquan would yell at me for three hours. But Chinese culture is at work. Afterwards,
you eat and drink together and they say, that was great. Come back again next year. That
wouldn’t happen in the United States. You would not end three hours of yelling at each
other with a very pleasant meal, asking about how your kids are doing, and saying come
back next year. There’s a difference in how academics in other cultures work. But I try to
see a wide array of people, so I hear Chinese talking about China. There’s no other way
to do it than to get involved with Chinese intellectuals and get into debates with them so
they have to respond. The goal is not to win the debate. The goal is to listen and to
understand about how they see things happening. So I think my relations with some
Chinese intellectuals, are very warm. Gao Hua, Qin Hui, Xu Jilin are three of the closest.
I sent a statement to Gao Hua’s memorial service. Those are to me very very precious
experiences. And never ever do I write anything in which I say anything about anything
they ever say to me in private. That is just how I understand the situation. So it’s not
research in anybody’s ordinary understanding. But for me it’s real research. They teach
me. I am their student. And I’m very happy to be the student of these people. I learn a lot
about how the Chinese system works, I’m most grateful to these Chinese intellectuals.
Huang: So is that also what you would suggest to the younger generation in the United
States that are doing their research about China?
Friedman: Now you’re into a really different question. I don’t know how to deal with it. My experience is that these younger scholars are serious professionals. They go to China to do a research topic. They have a methodology to apply. They come home with the results of their research topic. But they do not do the things which we just mentioned. I tend to find, some are very narrow. They do not seek the basis for larger views and larger judgments. They do not get involved in the Chinese conversations which do not fit into their research whose results the profession insists they get published in order to get promoted. In political science, I see myself as a member of a dying breed. I’m not blaming them. It’s just how the profession and the economy is evolving. Their professional incentives were not mine. I had the good fortunate to have amazing experiences and friends.

Huang: Well I think, I didn’t know a lot, cause I know that I was trained in the States as well, I think we all have the difficulty of reading the publications written by Chinese scholars, because you know, we couldn’t read it, you’re right, it’s hard to see things with our eyes, but what if that’s the only resource? I mean it’s hard to read the truth from the language.

Friedman: Right. There are ways to read things. You never read the conclusions. You never read the first paragraph. You know that these things are written for public consumption purposes with censors in mind. There’s no substitute for knowing the people. Then you can better understand what it is they are saying when they write. The real topic is often implicit.

Huang: Do you think there is the problem in terms of the training of the methodology?

Friedman: The new tendency dominates the academy because of how funding works, that funding wants to prove that what you’re doing is scientific, and if you’re not scientific, money is not gonna go to you. Imagine if I would write a research plan in which I would say, ‘hey I wanna speak with these intellectuals, I don’t even know what questions I’m going to be discussing, I’m going to follow whatever is on their mind. Could you give me a grand to go speak to these people? I think I’ll learn a lot’. No one is going to fund that. I mean, that’s a joke. The way you get funded is to be scientific. The money commands the product. I think this is just the way political science is going.
Low Voice: There’s something about Chinese intellectuals, you just mentioned Wang Hui, and yeah, I don’t know what your accusation of this kind of new research in China is, because, yeah, as long as I remember in one article about the Tibet issue, Wang Hui goes back to the history of imperial, so at least these kinds of anti-imperial, anti-hegemony, a discourse which they open its own market in the, do you have a ?(01: 18: 49 question not fully understandable)
Friedman: Of course, of course. I’m on the side of both enemies. What could be more obvious? But I can also tell you that in terms of working with him on that editorial board, he is a very nice person. He’s quite an intellectual star. Yan Xuetong, who is also at Qinghua, and writes on international relations, comes out of a similar kind of mindset. In the classroom he is a very fair minded person to his students. People are complex, Yan Xuetong is complex also. Someone like Yan Xuetong will not wanna sit and argue with me. He doesn’t want to do that. Wang Hui would, by the way. So I think that this deep history, pseudo-left mindset is a very dangerous mindset. It’s also very appealing, for two reasons. One, it claims to be addressing the rich-poor gap, which everybody knows is occurring. And it seems to be patriotic. It has justice and patriotism going for it. But it blames everything on the market, and is incapable of discussing the actual corrupt, authoritarian political system which serves the people with power. The problem, if you’re in China, for the opponents of the New-Left is that in order to win the argument, you have to point out how the political system actually works. Obviously, you can’t quite publish that in an authoritarian order which punishes its critics. So they have to use a somewhat implicit language. They really can’t challenge the New-Left assumptions as they really would like to challenge them. How could you get something published in which you would say something like ‘hey, the family connections of all the leaders look like the Bo Xilai family, and you can’t control the corrupt selfishness unless you get rid of this political system. Of course all the leading families are going to want you out of the country. You tell me where you publish something like that inside of China. So the opponents of the New-Left are really what the English would call ‘back-footed’. They can’t stand firm and respond to the sweet sounding propaganda line of the New-Left. So that’s another advantage that the new-leftists have. The opponents begin with one hand tied behind their back. This is very scary stuff. We also know the New Left totally
embraced the Bo Xilai phenomenon, and became, I’m quite willing to say, apologists for it. The Bo Xilai incident was a stunning event for the New Left because it makes them look bad. These are not people who care about law, human rights, or what makes for human dignity. In democracy, as a political system, there’s a limit to what you can do to losers. What happened to Chen Shuibian in Taiwan is undemocratic. There really should be a limit to what winners can do to losers. It’s very important. It doesn’t matter that he was immoral. In authoritarian China, there is no limit. Even critics who try to play it safe, unintentionally cross the line. The lines of the permissible and the impermissible change all the time. This leads to strikes, to Ai Weiwei getting in trouble, etc. That system turns people into fools, cowards and the complicit. That’s not a good thing for human beings.

Huang: When I was in Beijing, I’d share one of the, I’m not going to tell you a name, but he asked me the question, because I criticized a lot of what I saw on the street, that’s my second time in Beijing and I speak Chinese but I still had a culture shock, it just made me feel so different from what I experienced in my own country, and he asked me, 你哪裡覺得不自由? And I say, ‘well, I don’t need to check my bag when I go into the subway, and I don’t need to check my bag when I go into some square like the Tiananmen Square. And he says, well, ‘you can criticize’. And I ask, ‘how should I criticize?’ ‘Well, you can criticize by yourself, just don’t criticize with a group of people’.

Friedman: So that’s actually true. It’s even truer than he says. I remember going to China soon after the implosion of the USSR. I was asked to do a seminar on comparative Leninist state systems, something I had published on. I did it very carefully, I didn’t wanna get anyone into trouble. But people begin to interrupt and say ‘don’t you mean this?’ when skirted or softened the topic. ‘Yeah I mean that’. Afterwards we went out to dinner. The Chinese scholars are screaming at the top of their lungs about the corrupt party. It’s one of the great things that occurred after June 4th. For the first time in the People’s Republic, people did not rat on each other. The authorities came around and said ‘what did you do?’ Previously you always told what you saw other people doing. And people ratted on each other. But after June 4th people didn’t do that. So self-confidence grew that you could now have friends you could trust, and you could have a private life. I think it actually is experienced in China as a great change that you now have much expanded private space. Obviously it’s not freedom. But people do have a private sphere
in which they can do things which they previously couldn’t do because you were not allowed a private sphere. And that private sphere is often much larger than one thinks. What was it that struck you as being so different in Beijing than in Taiwan?
Huang: Well, I think it was a lot.
Friedman: 比方說？
Low Voice: …a certain kind of…walking in the streets, and even some kind of…(fragment unclear 01: 27: 13)
Friedman: My friends in China who are college faculty in China, when they come to Taiwan, their first experience, when they get off the plane, is based on the first thing they see. It’s the 廣告, they are all in 簡體字, and not 簡體字. So their first thought is, ‘I have come to the real China’. Then they meet Taiwanese people, and people say 您. It’s such a more polite place Taiwan. The mainland is a very impolite place where no one says 對不起, or 麻煩你. People wouldn’t even understand what you’re saying if you say 麻煩你. The experience of my Chinese friends who come here is, this Taiwan is Chinese civilization. Of course, that’s not what the local people experience. I’m walking on a Saturday night on 中山北路. I see a lot of young people out. It’s crowded, and it’s so very safe. It’s so noisy, it’s really 熱鬧, and it’s quite wonderful. No one has a worry, as you will in the streets of Beijing after a certain hour. So I have my own comparative experience. We all have our own comparative experiences of seeing how different China and Taiwan are.
Huang: That’s true, for example to cross the road. I didn’t even know how to cross the road the first time, and I was so scared, because…it’s like the traffic light, it has no meaning there. Anyway, but I think China is in the process of changing, so…
Friedman: Let’s hope.
Huang: Let’s hope, yeah.
Low Voice: Would you think that democratization would be more appropriate for China?
Friedman: I don’t see China democratizing in any foreseeable future. I think that most Chinese assume that the system will persist. A question they ask themselves is what practical work can I do to make life better? Without thinking about changing the political
system or even imagining such a thing occurring. It looks to me like a system that is very stable.

Low Voice: …in China…democratize…? (Question unclear: 01:30:00)

Friedman: No. I don’t know the future, but if you ask me, that’s my opinion.

Low Voice: …(question inaudible: 01:30:18)

Friedman: Democracies are never fully democratic. First job in any really existing democracy is to make the democracy more democratic. I don’t care where your democracy is. This is true anywhere in the world. If you’re in Taiwan, you should care about deepening Taiwan’s democracy. If you’re an American, you should care about that in the United States. But there is a real gap, a significant rupture between what is authoritarian and what is democratic. Obviously America is a much better place after the Civil Rights Movement than it was before. But it was a democracy before. Yet the quality of the democracy has so greatly improved. As there are differences among democracies, there are endless distinctions amongst kinds of authoritarian systems. China is an authoritarian system. It was an authoritarian system under Mao. Yet you need a different category for post-Mao authoritarian China so you can explain why, although the PRC is still a single party dictatorship, it is a fantastically better kind of place. You can’t end your distinctions with authoritarian versus democratic. If that’s all you have, you still have some thing of great value, I think the difference is very very important. But you don’t have that much unless you make finer distinctions.

Huang: Our last question for this section.

Friedman: Yes.

Huang: Is that, tell me about where were you when 六四 happened, did you predict it?

Friedman: I’m not a predictor. Predictors are really interesting, I don’t know how you can predict politics, So I try never to be in a situation of predicting. But all sorts of people want you to predict. So after 六四, the foreign affairs committee and the college that I’m now working for, get in touch with me and they say, we have to pass a law which will give asylum to Chinese students in the United States who don’t want to go home. There’s this question about what kind of law to pass. In order to draft a good law, we have to make an estimate about how bad the repression will be. The Congress is trying to do something immediately. How many people do you think will be executed? And how
many people do you think will be imprisoned? I first say, ‘how the hell do I know?’ And they say, ‘we know you don’t know’. But the reason they ask is then they can say, if they turn out to be wrong, they asked the experts. Therefore the so-called expert is to blame. Therefore they gotta ask the expert. I thought about it for a long time. I then said, nobody will be executed who is a student. I thought that no more than 20,000 would be imprisoned. Both turned out to be right. Afterwards, I thought, why was I right on both things? I concluded think that it purely was because I was lucky. It’s very important not to conclude that it was because I was smart. People who are just as smart as you come to opposite conclusions. They are just as intelligent. When you predict, you often get it wrong. I was home when 六四 happened. In my house, there was a visiting Chinese scholar who was in touch with people in the Square. She was giving them up-to-date information on what she was seeing on all the TV stations about what was happening. I was in my home allowing a person to use my telephone. Then I had a phone call from somebody in Beijing who told me that my very good friend Su Saozhi was on the regime’s wanted list. They wanted to help him get out of China. Could I help? Could I have people I knew in the American embassy get him a visa. I said I could try. But I’m sure that any conversation I have with you is going to be eavesdropped on by Chinese security services. Of course it will, Beijing responds. Who doesn’t know that? But they are overwhelmed right now. They have so many other things that they have to do. They are trying to catch people. It is going to take months before they ever get to your phone conversations. So ways were found to facilitate Su getting a visa. He flew out of China. I’m sure it’s all in my files in China.

Huang: Were you surprised?

Friedman: I wasn’t surprised or not surprised by the use of overwhelming armed force. I really didn’t have an opinion on it. I watched debates on whether force would be used or how it would be used. I’m sure in retrospect I would have believed I saw it coming. But you should never trust those happy opinions of being correct. So I’d much rather say that I had no idea what I thought or expected at the time. Knowing me, I probably tried not to make a prediction. That’s my best guess as to what my view was. But I was saddened. I was very close to Su Saozhi, I knew him to be a very good human being. He was a democratic Marxist. He remained a Marxist, a democratic Marxist. I couldn’t help but
have the feeling that if this happened to him, this was not good for the country. What do you mean by what do I think of 六四?

Zun Jinhao: Well, because this event changed the research agenda in the United States, and it changed the research ways to do research, and many scholars feel shocked by this event…

Friedman: That’s interesting. You are probably right. I have never thought about it in that way. I had no research agenda assuming that China was going to evolve into a democracy. I taught a course called ‘Challenges of Democratization’. I have never liked the evolution into democracy argument. I do not think Taiwan ‘evolved’ into a democracy. I think the Taiwan government had a legitimation crisis when international recognition of China went to the PRC. Taiwan then lost its legitimate space in the international world. The Kuomintang became worried about its future. People in Taiwan became much more forthright in speaking critically. I think, in the same way, that Korea did not ‘evolve’ into a democracy. I think there was a political crisis with the assassination of a president which created a political opening. I just never have been persuaded by the explanation of democratization where things evolve. I tend to believe that democracy is a matter of an opportunity occurring, and people acting politically and then seizing an opportunity when it occurs. I still don’t have a view of China evolving into a democracy. If democratization were to occur, it will occur because there will be a split at a high level of power leading to different groups trying to mobilize different support bases. Democratization is more likely to come out of a political crisis and political mobilization than out of any kind evolution. I just don’t see the political world like democratic evolution.

Zun Jinhao: How about regional sectors and the newly developing groups?

Friedman: Very important, all very important.

Zun Jinhao: But that is a modernization theory, or is it any different?

Friedman: I take the regional factor very seriously. If Singapore were democratized, which is not an unlikely thing, and if people in Malaysia continue to struggle for more democracy, and if Thailand’s democracy were able to stabilize, and if Indonesia’s democracy were to become institutionalized, and if Burma’s politics were to continue on in a democratic direction, if basically 東南亞 were a democratized region, it wouldn’t necessarily happen for Vietnam, which has the same regime power as China. I don’t see
it soon happening in Cambodia, I don’t see it soon happening in Laos. But nevertheless, I can imagine regional factors such as broad democratization in Southeast Asia, a prospering region, where China becomes experienced as the odd authoritarian nation out of the mainstream. If the only non-democracies around were North-Korea and Laos and places like that, it does not make for national pride inside of China for authoritarianism. I can imagine that would have an impact within the CCP leadership, and on patriotism. So I do believe that regional factors matter. Obviously the most important reason why East Europe democratized was because West Europe was a community which had policies for countries to become a member of the EU. There really is regional contagion. I do believe that regional things do matter.

Zun Jinhao: And the new group inside the CCP?

Friedman: The group that is rising in China now I do not see as a group which is going to be pro-democracy. I see people who see themselves as red heirs.

Zun Jinhao: You mention middle class might?

Friedman: I don’t see that. The middle class is dependent on the CCP and frightened of the poor. The poor believe that all people who are wealthy got their wealth through corruption and connections. Middle class, even though they totally believe that they got their wealth with hard work and smartness, are aware that the poor don’t share that point of view. They are very frightened of the poor. They see the party as saving them from the poor. So I don’t think there’s much for the theory of the evolution of China into a democracy because of the middle class. India is a democracy. It is a stable democracy with no strong middle class. And only now is the middle class growing inside of India. I’ve never been persuaded by the Lipset modernization theory. To me it’s a happy story, but not a persuasive political story. I’m very suspicious of happy stories in which democracy comes automatically because people are getting wealthy. That just doesn’t sound to me how the real world works. To me, democratic evolution is a story to make your children go to sleep with happy dreams. But it doesn’t describe how the real world looks. Democratization is the fruit of a political struggle in which human subjects engage. It is not the result of objective forces working invisibly behind people’s backs.

Zun Jinhao: So can we say in your view that in the short-term China will not be democratized?
Friedman: Yes.
Zun Jinhao: But in the long-run finally eventually China might be?
Friedman: Yes.
Low Voice: With Chinese characteristics?
Friedman: True of every place, America has American characteristics, England has English characteristics. There’s no model of democracy. Everybody’s democracy has to reflect their own history, their own culture, their own society, and their own previous political institutions. Just look at the Taiwan polity. It comes out of Taiwan society. For better or for worse, the same thing happens in America. America still suffers from a history in which the only way to get the slave states and the free states to agree on a constitution was to allow over representation of the South. Under the rules of Senate, urban states are underrepresented in America. Undemocratically underrepresented because in the political struggles of the 1780s it was to get that original democratic breakthrough. I’m not arguing against the deal. But there are long-term consequences of what people do politically during the breakthrough to democracy. It’s very important to the democratic situation. Democracy offers so much a better world than staying in the authoritarian order. Look at the Chilean democratic breakthrough. They made a deal in which the military was virtually allowed to be an independent power not limited by the democratic rules. And then twenty years later they began to change. They had made a deal which said to the military, we don’t care how many people you murdered and tortured, how much money you stole, you can have it all. Chileans don’t get the democratic breakthrough without those undemocratic concessions. So each place will of course be created in ways which will be true to their own reality. How could it not?
Low Voice: I don’t think…was sometimes in their hard work…a lot of times…sometimes it’s just…broke these things wherever they are made in the same kind of scenario, called in the … after this China will become a democratic state? (question very hard to hear: 01:47: 00)
Friedman: I just don’t see the CCP state democracy. If we had three drinks of Scotch, and if I could know that you would forget what I had said, I would say it’s far more likely that the Chinese political system will persist. But if it were to change, I think it would be far more likely to go in a hardline security state direction, a direction perhaps preferred by
the kind of people who are the supporters of Bo Xilai. I think this very much worries the
Hu Jintao, Xi Jinping people. They are not sure about the loyalty of the people in the
security apparatus. They all now having to declare their loyalty to the center. The center
is not believing any of these declarations of loyalty. There’s a politics I think going on in
China having to do with the military, in terms of which side the military or parts of the
military are on. It’s largely non-transparent. We can only guess at it. But I believe it’s
really going on. I think there will be leaks from the military and we’ll learn. But I think
that semi-fascist turn is far more likely than a democracy.
Zun Jinhao: Why regimes in the world must go towards democracy?
Friedman: Regimes don’t have to go towards democracy. We are entering an era which is
going to be very difficult for democracy. The era we are entering into resembles the post-
WWI era, in which fascism and Stalinism rose and democracies because they believed in
classical economics had no way to deal with the problems that made for the Great
Depression, were discredited such that fascism and Stalinism became seen as better
solutions for biggest problems. I think, because of the economic crisis, especially in
Europe, because Europe is in a much worse shape, that democracy will seem less
attractive to people all around the world. You know you can already see these judgments
growing. The near future may prove a very difficult time for democracy. I don’t see the
next era in terms of forces that will be favoring democracy. But, to answer your question,
the reason why the democratic contrast will come back is twofold. First, there are
democracies. You don’t have to invent the institutions. It’s not like the first time
democracy was invented. Today all know what it is. People can figure out what to do.
Second, authoritarian regimes steal human dignity. The authoritarian system really
humiliates people in most fundamental ways so that the desire for a free society will
always return. Democracy resonates with something in human nature which creates
human dignity. Before you had democracy, people can find dignity by leaving the power
realm. But it’s a fact, throughout human history, that authoritarian regimes steal dignity.
Humans become aware of it and do not like it. Now people have a political alternative. So
democracy will come back in time. But God alone knows what is going to happen to the
democratic project in the coming period. It looks very scary to me.
Huang: Ok…
E. Friedman 訪談紀錄 2012年0712-13 @ 台大社科第二會議室

Edward Friedman: UW Madison / Recordings: 20120712 (A) + (B), times provided of missing or unclear parts are from tape B.

Introduction

Zhang Dengji: 因為教授 石, 石之瑜, 他現在到德國. So I'm authorized to provide the opening remarks. Very simple. The reason I'm up to provide the opening remark is only because I'm a little bit senior than the young scholars and the doctors. But I'm less experienced in the oral history studies. So today's oral history study and interview will be coordinated and conducted by doctor Huang, fresh doctor, just from the university of Denver.

Friedman: 在丹佛大學是誰指導的?

Dr. Huang: Zhao Suisheng

Friedman: 阿，那好。

Dr. Huang: I know

Friedman: 丹佛大學什麼時候開始跟他有關係? 在北京他那個時候在社會科學院 … 81, 82年

Dr. Huang: Ok.

Zhang Dengji: Doctor Huang will introduce you how today's section will be conducted and will be organized.

Dr. Huang: So, ok, we are going to be recording everything that you will be saying. We sent you some sample questions, and we are going to start from the personal background. I'm going to ask the questions today, mainly, and tomorrow Chin-hao is going to ask you more profound questions in terms of your perspectives about China.

Friedman: Ok.

Dr. Huang: 那我們就開始了.
**Interview Starts**

Huang: Could you tell us about your family? Is there anyone in your family that has any connection or relation with China?

Friedman: No.

Huang: So how did you start to feel interested in China, if you can say, like in the earliest, the force that triggered your interest?

Friedman: So if I give you an honest answer… it's embarrassing… but I know you will understand, I can only give you a part of it. I know the honest answer because in January 1965 when I was in Taida living in Yanjiu sushe 111 hao fangjian it was a rainy cold night and the bed was four posts and a bad across and the military controlled things and the lights went out at 10 pm… and I was in pain and I said to myself “Where did you go wrong?”, “How did you make this big mistake that you are studying China? Tell yourself the truth”. So I actually know the truth from that night. But I'll tell you the first part just to show you how silly the rest is also. So I was in my junior year in college and I had a puppy love crush, that means it's all in my head, about a girl who was sitting in front of me. A popular girl, I never said a word to her. I never touched a finger of her hand, it was just a teenage boys crush. And she had a boyfriend, and he was going to do graduate school in American-China diplomatic relations at Harvard. And I said to myself “If I knew more about China she would prefer me to him. So she wasn't Chinese, he wasn't Chinese, it had nothing to do with anything about China. It's just a stupid teenage boys…

Huang: Kind of started by imagination.

Friedman: That's it. So I needed… so it was not that there was a politics or knowledge force, it's just… The second thing that happened is that I had rules in college which were that after noon, after 12 o'clock, that time belonged to me. I could read anything I want, I could do what I want, I only took classes, I'm an early morning person, early in the morning. And I needed one more class in comparative politics to fulfill Politics, my major. And the only class that was in the morning was Chinese politics, so I took the course in Chinese politics. I don't know if I learned anything about China except I could recognize on a map all the provinces. And then because the Russians put Sputnik up, the
United States government gave a lot of money for foreign language education. And it was very important for me to be independent of my parents, and not ask them for money.

Huang: So that's when you were in your second year of college?

Friedman: No, this…ah, yes, but I don't think I become conscious of it until after the thing with the woman and the comparative politics course. So that's when I become aware of this thing, which, indeed as you corrected, happened in '57-'58. And, so I became aware that if I studied Chinese language they would pay me enough money that I could be independent. And that's how I ended up in Harvard in the Master’s program of East Asian Studies. So it was not based on any knowledge I can assure you of anything. Not even an illusion.

Huang: So, you just said that your first class is called Chinese politics and you say you learned nothing except maybe that you recognized the provinces on a map. So, would you say there was nothing that kept triggering you to keep being interested in China? Because it must have been kind of boring when you learned nothing.

Friedman: So this is a good question. I thought a lot about this. I look at the university and I see colleagues who are very excited about studying rocks. I say to myself how can you be excited about studying rocks. And the conclusion I draw; it really doesn't matter what you study. It even doesn't matter what your work is. It matters what you bring to the work. So I don't think there was anything at all intrinsic about China, it's gotta be the questions that come out of my life that I will bring to it. And I think the major event which had an impact was the Hungarian revolution. Which is while I'm in college in 1956. And it made me think the thought about that a communist party dictatorship could democratize. And so, maybe, I can't remember where I ... it may not be until I get to graduate school that I learned about it. Cause in 1957-58, Mao launches this so-called Baihua Yundong (百花運動), the Hundred Flowers Movement, and so I think that raised in me the questions; first about why China wasn't democratic? Would China democratize? So I think almost before I know anything about China, I already have a set of questions. And I think these questions also came from my own American experience. I grow up during the McCarthy period. And I had friends whose parents were hurt by the McCarthy period. And so I think it made me value freedom and human rights because I saw that my own country had many flaws. And I was also very quickly in college
involved in the civil rights movement. So I was very well aware that democracies are not perfect places or places without problems, or places which are fully democratic. I don't think I had any of those illusions from... this is just my own growing up psyche. All of these things are in my head and in my heart long before I'm studying China or know anything about it. That's why I think it is not China itself, it's what you bring, or at least what I... all I brought was myself and my own life experience. So I think I am much more shaped by those things then I was by any knowledge about China. You also have to remember the fact that I entered graduate school in 1959, no one knows anything about renmingongheguo (人民共和國). John Fairbank is a specialist in Qingchao (清朝). Really just Qingchao Wenxue (清朝文學). And the first class I took in Harvard on Chinese politics, with professor Benjamin Schwartz, had no lectures on the People's Republic of China. It stopped in 1949. And then we had a book to read, written by a Canadian geologist who traveled to China. Well, I can assure you, zoumakanhua (走馬看花), he didn't see anything. So I don't think I learned anything from that. So I think that in terms of where I would eventually go, I was going back to writing a dissertation on the failure of the 1911 revolution. I wasn't at all, fascinated or interested by Zhonghua Renmin Gongheguo (中華人民共和國) or any of those kinds of questions. Because what was already in my head was much more interesting to me to ask, why did the 1911 revolution fail, than it was lots of other kinds of questions. I never think of myself as a China specialist. It's not a word...that's how people describe it. And it is true, I spent a lot of time there and probably there are very few people who have spent as much time in poor villages in China as I have, talking to poor villagers. But those are things which...that accidently developed over a long period of history and not as part of some kind of master plan that I had of questions I wanted to study or anything like that.

Huang: It is more like an opportunity that put you there?
Friedman: I think so, I think the economic opportunity. My father was illiterate.
Huang: Where did you grow up?
Friedman: In Brooklyn New York. So I didn't have a background in which… I didn't even know when I was in high school you had to take an exam to get into college. No one had told me this so … I just don't have that kind of a background in any sense at all.
Huang: And the first place that you study or you learn Chinese is in Taiwan?

Friedman: No. No. So when I made the commitment to go to Harvard in the Masters program I was aware suddenly that I knew absolutely nothing. And so I decided I should study Chinese. So I went to Yale in the summer. And Yale had a Chinese language summer program, I began to study Chinese language at Yale before my graduate school.

Huang: You had a teacher from China or Taiwan or an American who can speak fluent Chinese?

Friedman: So I don't know the answer to your question, but I assume without knowing...so that Yale had an air force language program which was created during World War II basically for sending airmen to Chongqing and Kunming... because of the American alliance at that time with 中華民國. And so I think that when World War II ended they tried carry it on as a program to teach Chinese to anybody who wanted to learn. And so my guess is that the teachers are probably Chinese who had ROC identifications. That will be my best guess.

Huang: Ok. Interesting. So you went to Yale, that's the first place that you learned Chinese. And then…

Friedman: I don't want to say that “I learned Chinese”. Because I know when I came to Taida and I walked into what was to be my room, my 同學 shouted out to me chiguo le mei? and I didn't understand a word, because in my 課本 it says 你好嗎, and there's no chiguo le mei. And I know the first time we went out to eat … the food came and my roommate said ziji lai 自己來 and I thought 自己…來…So did I learn Chinese? I learned how to be a 書蟲子 I mean I could read, but I don't think I actually could say any intelligent sentence in any conversation to anybody. I could read.

Huang: Is that the same scholarship or fellowship that ....[00:14:44.30] you coming to Taiwan to...?

Friedman: So I came to Taiwan I think on a Ford Foundation grand. I think that was the first year, but I stayed for three years. Most of my colleagues went home after one year. I think that was a real piece of good luck that I ended up staying three years in Taiwan rather than one. I think it made me much more comfortable, I mean I happened to
love being in Taiwan, very 舒服. I don't think they had that experience. I think I became much closer to my roommates after living with them for three years. You know.

Huang: So you lived in the dormitories…

Friedman: Half in the dormitories. Remember I was doing a dissertation on the 1911 revolution, using the Guomindang historical archives which were held outside of Taizhong. So I rented a small place in Taizhong and I used to come back and forth on the train.

Huang: So actually your first encountering of true Chinese culture is in Taiwan? Can you tell a little...

Friedman: I would never say that sentence that you just said. Cause I don't know what the true Chinese culture is, so I would never do that.

Huang: I think you're probably right, but how would you describe the differences that from your real experience in Taiwan… meaning there's many people that speak Chinese here and from your original expectation or even like a…

Friedman: So again it is hard to exaggerate how I have no expectations. I mean, I know, you have to understand how ignorant, how truly totally ignorant I am as I begin on this. When I came to Taiwan the only places that I had visited outside of the United States, remember we were from a poor family, were Canada and Cuba.

Huang: Cuba. Ok. I don’t remember that you can go to Cuba.

Friedman: Anyways. So, so, so…Taiwan is gonna be essentially the first place outside of the United States where I'm gonna live. So I have no expectations of anything. And I don't think in terms of your China question, I don’t experience people in terms of categories like Chinese or Taiwanese. Everybody was just a new person that I was meeting, and each person was an exciting new person, if they were smart. I like smart people. And, anyways, so I don't think I had any of these categories in my head believe it or not while I'm here. Cuba, so Castro takes power January 1st 1959 and I go to graduate school in September 1959. And, two of my friends, as it becomes clear which direction Castro is heading in, decide, I know we also learned that they were beginning to have close relations with China, that it would be a fun thing to go to Cuba to see. So three of us, one of whom you know, one of whom you should know, was Mark Selden. And another was a fellow named Richard Arnold Kraus, who wrote a great dissertation which was
published in Economic History comparing the London wheat market with the Qing wheat market showing how much more efficient the Qing wheat market was. He eventually left the field. Anyway, the three of us, we had no money, we saw an advertisement which said “go to Miami by driving our car for free”. So we drove to Miami. We took a bus to Key West. And at that time you could fly to Havana from Key West for ten dollars. So we went to Cuba. And we heard there was a Chinese trade delegation. So we, totally naïve, we thought we should go look up the Chinese trade delegation. I had never met anybody from China at that time. So this was probably August 1960. America would break relations around January 1961. So we go to the hotel where the Chinese trade delegation is, who knows if they were really a trade delegation, but I wouldn't have known to even ask that question back then. But where the so-called Chinese trade delegation is staying. We pick up the hotel phone and we ask for the Chinese trade delegation. A guy picks up the phone, I think I was on the phone, and I say to him in Chinese 我們是美國學生，是剛到古巴，我們有興趣跟你們中國人談話. So the guy says to me: “Why is an American in Cuba speaking Chinese seeking out the Chinese trade delegation asking questions”. He has to believe that I must be from the CIA, it would make much more sense than explaining what an ignorant person I am. The Chinese were somewhere from…they never spoke to us. That was my first experience with someone from the People's Republic.

Huang: Interesting. Well, so you spent three years in Taiwan. And you were living sometimes in Taizhong and most of the time in Taida I would say.

Friedman: And I traveled all around the island multiple times.

Huang: Did you get the chance to visit or to do interviews with any people that you ….kushou. [00:20:55.58]?

Friedman: Only the historians who worked on the 1911 revolution. And I was very fortunate, I think this was a big impact on my life. There was a historian at Taida, named Wu Hsianghsiang (Xiangxiang). Extremely right wing. His politics and my politics had absolutely nothing in common. He was very aware that our politics had absolutely nothing in common. But he was a wonderful mentor to me. He told me how to read Sun Yat-sen's coded telegrams which there's no way in the world I would have, sitting in an archive, be able to figure out to read. He was a great introducer to sources, giving me
lectures on different kinds of things. And I think he became my model for how to be an advisor. We had nothing politically in common but I think when I went home from Taiwan I had a consciousness that when students come from abroad they really really need help. And they can't survive without help. And it is your job to treat these students at least as well as Wu Xiangxiang treated me. And so I think that was the biggest influence he had on me. And sadly, when I published my first book, which is not my dissertation, I never published my dissertation. When I published my first book, about the Xinhai revolution, I was a very self-centred person and I wasn't even conscious of how much I appreciated or should have appreciated how much he had done for me. And I never even mentioned him anywhere in the book. And fortunately in 1991 I was invited to the 80th anniversary of Xinhai Geming. There was a celebration in Chicago and I was asked to do the talk. And by that time he was retired and living with his son outside of Chicago and he came for the talk. And I profusely thanked him and told him what an idiot I was and how he was my teacher and how I learned everything from him. And I did it publicly for everyone. It was one of the best things I’ve ever done. I don't think it made up for my being a crass stupid young person, but I was very fortunate to have that opportunity to say "Thank you". It was one of my better moments of my life.

Huang: So it seems to me that when you were in Taiwan you contact more historians would you say than political scientists?

Friedman: There are no political scientists. In that period, as we were saying on the way over, you could not study anything after May 4th. The Guomindang view was after May 4th, it was 共匪時代, that 五四 was an attack on Zhongguo Wenhua, and that therefore the studying of China ended with 五四. And after 五四 things like that were studied at party school or things like that. There certainly was nothing called political science. You would have Public Administration, but you certainly wouldn’t have political science which would ask you to have critical perspectives on comparative politics. So I worked with people who were called 近代歷史.

Huang: Ok. Is that similar in the US too? I mean, people...Can you talk something about your teachers in Harvard when you were in graduate school? Would you say that most people just do historical study and there's no thing called political science?
Friedman: So the best thing... I give you...I haven't read the question I've actually thought of these things so this is not off the top in my head I've been thinking about that I appreciate getting the questions. But two things happened at Harvard which I think were interesting for me. The first thing was, they assumed, correctly in my case, that I knew nothing about China. And so they forced me to begin by taking the undergraduate freshman class on a survey of East Asia. And then after that, you had to take history of a period and then study the literature, study the philosophy, and I began to...and so the first time I took the course on Chinese philosophy of Ben Schwartz, it ended in the Han dynasty cause there was so much to say. Even though the course was advertised as coming up to date. The late Han for him was pretty up to date anyway. After that it was journalism anyway. So I think that one of the things that happened even though I get called a political scientist, I think I had a much stronger identification with a historical cultural anthropological approach to thinking about China than most of my colleges who would become sophisticated methodologists in political science and I never had any interest in those kinds of things. So that was...the program had a, and as I said my course on Chinese government as they called it, had no lectures on the People's Republic anyway. So one was on one’s own in terms with this. We were not educated at Harvard in some sense about the People's Republic of China, it does not occur. And I quickly recognized that John Fairbank did not know anything about the People's Republic. He was a Qing Dynasty historian who had a very big heart and he wanted America-China cooperation and he basically would see things in whatever way would promote America-China cooperation. But I learned, it wasn't anti-him, I learned not to take it seriously. He was this guy who was committed to the academy, who wanted to build up China Studies, and who supported people who were able, and he didn't care about your politics. And it didn't much matter to me that he didn't know anything about the PRC. But other people get very upset that he made this error or was naive, but it doesn't bother me at all. It didn't shape who he was. So I didn't learn about China from people who were teaching China in some kind of a way, in terms of 中華人民共和國. And then I got involved with two faculty members in political science who really changed my life in terms of my intellectual orientation. Who made me become, I think for the first time, self-conscious about how I was thinking about the world. So you just have to accept up until this time.
how really naive and innocent I am. But the two who sort of made me ask serious and hard questions for the first time was first Barrington Moore. And he at that time was writing what became “Social Origins”. And we became very close. I write, co-write the introduction to the reissue of Social Origins. We became very close, he’s basically godfather to one of my children. We became very close and he asked me to read his, the chapters on Asia. And at Harvard I was interested because I studied China, India, Japan, they struck me as the three biggies that mattered most. And I simply took any course I could on China, Japan, India. Didn't care if they were political science courses. Any, any, I just didn't have that consciousness. And he handed me his three chapters, and I read them, and he told me he wanted my criticism and I realized that none of my teachers had ever asked these questions before. And I had nothing to say I was just bowled over by these questions. But what was really most interesting to me is that his approach assumed that there was a process of modernization, that everybody has to face it, and depending what kind of state you have and what kind of relations the land and the elite have with the state will shape the forces that are gonna make the outcome. And words like culture, or East and West, were not interesting to him. That Germany and Japan, for similar reasons go in a fascist direction. And I think that had a very big impact on, which I think I was already, if you think about my own tendencies already, to want to go in that kind of direction. Then as much as I loved, because I think the more you know about anything the more you know. I loved learning about Chinese particulars. But I didn't think of them as "Chinese" particularly. I thought of them as intelligent human beings thinking hard about serious kinds of issues. So it’s hard to exaggerate how, as much as I may be interested say in studying pre-Han philosophy, I'm not thinking about it as "Chinese". I'm thinking of it as wise people asking about order and justice and the relationship of the xiaojia 小家 and the dajia 大家 and, you know. I'm not thinking of it in that kind of, and so he really reinforced or for the first time gave me a language of analysis which I felt very at home about in terms of how I was, I think right up till today, think about the world. And up until that time, I have feelings or tendencies, I would not see them as, you know, formed into any coherent intellectual package. And the other teacher who had a great influence on me taught political philosophy; a woman named Judith Stiklar. And she is what is called...a tough-minded liberal. Tough- minded liberal means that she knew
that all states could do mean things to people. Even democratic states could do mean things to people. She knew that liberty was precious and it was even threatened by democratic states all the time. And she was not a person who had illusions about democracy. She knew that democracy was superior to dictatorship but she didn't think of democracy as some ideal form of government or some good society. But more as opportunities which you could do well with or do poorly with depending how things worked out in your society. And so I think by the time I left Harvard I was just deeply shaped not by my professors in the China Studies field, other than that they made me care about getting all the particulars straight and I found all the particulars fascinating, but by Moore and Stiklar.

Huang: Interesting. Did you need to write a thesis when you were in graduate school in the Master program? And what's your topic?

Friedman: So that's a wonderful question. My thesis was on the first ten years of the Communist Party's occupation of Tibet. And it wasn't bad, and Fairbank wanted to publish it. And, eh, I was ashamed of it. I had never spoke to a Tibetan. I had never been to Tibet. I couldn't read any of the original languages, I had used all sorts of second hand sources. I did my best to read them critically. But I think, this was the first time that I was gonna be a scholar. All that was in my head was all the things I did not know. And I think that in many ways that's what scholarship is about. You're always aware of what is still to find out. What, because of what you're learning, there are more and better questions in your head. So when I wrote this master's dissertation on, I think it was called the Han and the Tibetans 1949 to 1959, I was so conscious of what a horrible piece of scholarship it was in terms of what you should hope for from a piece of scholarship, that I was almost embarrassed. It was like Fairbank saying that to me it was published meant he had no standards. So I never published it. I was a very stupid person during those years. I really had lots of stupid views of the world. It was really a moronic decision not to simply say yes. But anyway I said no. But that is what I wrote on. That too probably had an impact on... I think I continued to take a deep interest in Tibetan things. I met the Dalai Lama a number of times, and as it turned out, when he fled China in '59, his teacher whom he left with eventually came to Madison where he taught Tibetan language and religion and I became chair of East Asian Studies so he became my employee. And so that also got me
an interest into his student the Dalai Lama. Strange kind of experience which says the Dalai Lama, his student, this is my boss. You know, a complex kind of thing. So I think I did maintain some, even till today, an interest in Tibetan things from stuff like that.

Huang: Do you remember what's the reason that made you feel you want to do some topic about Tibet at that time?

Friedman: So, no. I can guess. But it's only a guess. I really don't know the answer to the question at all. But I have two guesses. One is my deep involvement at that time in the Civil Rights Movement in the United States. I was just inherently interested in how majorities treat minorities and so it was not a strange thing to do. Again I think a lot of stuff does not come from any intrinsic interest on what was going on in China. It just comes from my life in the United States. I think that was the major reason. The second possibility is, having thought about this, is sometime when I was I think 12 years old, I may have heard, I have a vague memory of this, a reporter named Lowell Thomas who went to Tibet just as the Red Army was coming in and made some broadcasts from there. And I have a vague memory of hearing his broadcasts from Tibet. And while I have no memory of a single word, I do have a memory of the tone, and it was an ominous tone. As if something bad was about to happen. He was reporting that this bad thing was going to happen. But that's at a very vague level. I don't have any sharper memories.

Huang: Where there many people that were interested in Tibet when you started to write your thesis?

Friedman: No.

Huang: So how could you find it attractive?

Friedman: I really didn't have. Eh, so it's that...I don't believe even when I wrote my Ph.D. dissertation that my advisor Schwartz ever read it.

Huang: really?

Friedman: Yes. So I don't believe I ever had, in that sense, an advisor. Harvard at that time in terms of who was running the place. If you wanted to see Fairbank you signed up for five minutes. And you would walk into his office and he would always begin the same way. He took out a bar of chocolate and broke off a piece and say: "Here, have a piece of chocolate", and I would say "we don't have time". And Schwartz, if you went in to see him, he was a very serious intellectual historian and he was always
working on something interesting and whatever you talked about with him, it very quickly turned into what he was interested in, rather than what you were interested in. So I don't think I have, that's why I mention Wu Xiangxiang, I think Wu Xiangxiang had a much deeper influence on a lot of these...and another guy I think...what was his name...wrote a biography in Taiwan on Li Yuan-hong, who's name is not coming to me (Shen Yun-long). Who was not in Taida but in some other Taipei university. I think they were much more influential on how I thought about matters of Chinese political history than Fairbank or Schwartz or anybody else at Harvard other than the people I mentioned who didn't do China for a living. So I don't think I had Chinese mentors at Harvard at all.

Someone else present: So how about your classmates .... ? ([00:39:18.83] names, I guess, impossible to hear!)

Friedman: So, they're not really my classmates at that time. It was a thirteen person Master's program, which this fella Richard Kraus was one and he stayed a friend for a long time, he went into Chinese Economic history and we were very close and I talked a lot to him. And he took this long Economic History view so that reinforced all of these tendencies. When I went into the Ph.D. program the only serious person that did Chinese politics was a person named Roy Hofheinz Junior, who eventually wrote one book. He was the son of a multimillionaire from Houston, Texas, who gave his grandson the Barnum & Bailey Circus for a birth present. I mean he really had a lot of money. And so he was a very good friend and we talked a lot and he cared very much about how Mao came to power and he would talk a lot about that. And that probably had some influence on my thinking about topics such as peasant revolution. Which then getting involved with Moore would reinforce, cause Moore was also interested in the question of peasant revolution. But I think it's, although I discuss it with Hofheinz I think it's Moore's stuff which actually is influential and not the conversation with Hofheinz. Very alone at Harvard, very alone. To me graduate school in terms of studying was a very alone kind of act. It was not one based on my student colleagues who I learned from, very little of that.

Someone else present (male): So at that moment do you feel like you will be more a political scientist on China studies or a historian on China studies or a sociologist on China Studies?
Friedman: So what I was afraid of is that people would realize I wasn't a political scientist and that they would see I was a fraud and that I was a historian or some other kind of, or a social historian as Moore was. So I didn't have a self-identification with any of those kinds of terms other than as I said. This feeling is the same thing as when Fairbank asked me to publish the MA thesis. An awareness that I was a fraud, that I really didn't know. There was so much to learn, and I knew nothing. So when I was at Harvard for example because of that consciousness I became aware that I wanted to understand social theory. So I wanted to study political sociology. And Harvard didn't have a field of political sociology. So I went to the chair and asked if I could study political sociology. Fortunately Harvard is a wonderfully arrogant place and so if you're there everybody believes that anybody can do everything because why else would we have admitted you to Harvard. And so they said "sure go do it". And so that led me to take seminars with Moore, to study with a Talcott Parsons and with other people who did political sociology and allowed me to read European, it was all European, political sociology. And so it's all very much on creating, if you read it, I was very interested in those larger kind of questions and I think I began heading in that direction and it is not because I have, other than Moore and Siklar, some teacher in the China field that was pushing me in that direction in the slightest.

Huang: Would you, I know it must be a kind of hard question, but what would you say that is the first book you feel influential or first work by whom you feel influential on your...?

Friedman: On China?

Huang: Yeah about China. That you read when you were in graduate school.

Friedman: So I can tell you what comes into my head, but you know I do a lot of interviewing as part of my work and I know you should not trust people's answers to questions like that unless you have a corroborating source or a contemporary document. Because over time people tell themselves happy stories about themselves. So this may just be a happy story about myself, ok? And so I'm not...but...the book I remember most was Arthur Waley: Three Ways of Thoughts in Ancient China, which was a study of Confucianism, Daoism, and Legalism. And I think that...Who the hell was Arthur Wiley, he had never been to China either, he was a wonderful translator, he was an imaginative
thinker, he was trying to plum meaning from the text. He, as best I can tell, never read, he wouldn't know that the first line in the Lunyu 論語 where you say about good friends coming from afar has the word "also" in it. And there's a whole scholarship on why the word "also" is in there. Cause it suggests that something is better. And then, you know, there's endless books written on what this other thing was....well he didn't do that kind of philological scholarship so...Schwartz did that kind of stuff. So, it's hard to know how the things got together but I think that it's so beautifully written. His command of language, it was very seductive. It may, caring about those kinds of larger questions about human life I think made one feel it is worth exploring how people in those traditions think hard about those kinds of issues. I don't think I thought about it again as Chinese. I think that my view would have been that if I would have been doing India and I was studying schools of Buddhism from the ancient time, I could have been attracted the exact same way with schools of Buddhism and so on. My view, I don't know, very much is that there really is a human species, there is a human conversation, we all have to deal with the problems of life and death, and the small society and the big and all these kind of things. It is correct to have a human conversation and to appreciate the wisdom of all the different traditions of the world. Not to privilege one over another and to think that this is a human conversation. So I think Waley may have contributed to that simply by the eloquence in which he put forth these kinds of things without saying a single thing about whether any of it was accurate in the slightest.

Huang: But it still made you feel it is interesting...
Friedman: It legitimated. That's right, I think so.
Huang: Who is your first friend that was a native speaker of Chinese?
Friedman: Wow.
Huang: I know this is hard a bit.
Friedman: So, I actually might, my answer to this question is gonna be the opposite to your question well I think about a friend who was the first native speaker of Chinese. So when I came up to Harvard the first fall after being at Yale, and at Yale they only teach you to speak, so I couldn't write a single character I couldn't read a single character. So I had to begin with introduction to Chinese language. And the teacher was a woman named Bian, who's father invented the way of writing Chinese so you could write it with
alphabet without using tones. I don't know if you have ever seen it. So if you wrote 媽 you could write "ma", if you wanted to say ma2, you could write "mma", if you wanted to say ma3, you could write "maa", and if you wanted to say ma4, you could say "mha". Ok? So you could alphabetize with the tones in the alphabet, it's very clever. And she wore a Qipao 旗袍 to class each day, very, not a revealing Qipao, but just a down Qipao, and she was really old-school, in a, it wasn't clear she was happy being in the United States of America. And there was one kid in the class who I believe his name was Sherman Wu. And Sherman Wu, so my father is illiterate, ok, and my father doesn't understand what I'm doing for a living. But Sherman Wu was fifth generation college educated in the United States and so we come to say "你是內國人" and he says "我是美國人" and she's "不是, 你是中國人", "不是, 我是美國人", "不是, 你是中國人". 不是, and he's more American than I am, you know, my grandpa couldn't speak a word of English. He came to the United States, this guy has been here for five generations. He speaks perfect Harvard English and so on. I have a very thick New York accent, but, you know, who's American here. 不是! He never came back to the class. I've often wondered if he ever learned Chinese. So my first friend, who spoke, was a native speaker...

Huang: Not a lot a lot of Chinese, I mean, native Chinese speakers in Harvard when you were in graduate school?

Friedman: Friend, I think the first friends were my roommates at 台大 Taida, who are still my friends. I think those will be the first... And of course they are both both 本省人. And I had a problem setting to speak Chinese when something happy or serious occurred. There is always a “D/Taiwan wei”. And I would beg them not to: "wo ti a bo, wo bei a gong Taiwan wei" ("I can’t understand you, I don’t speak Taiwanese” in Taiwanese). So I tried to, I learned some Taiwanese from having to survive and went to New Year’s; I spent New Year’s in each of their families’ homes. That was a wonderful experience because one came from a landlord family whose land was confiscated during the very great land reform and the grandpa kept a lychee orchard, and only that rather than anything else he loved. He was a very Qing scholar kind of a person who loved to walk when the Lychee were just coming out, reading Tang Dynasty poetry in the Lychee orchard. And they allowed me to stay at their home at the time, walked in the orchid and
we pulled the lychees off the... He eventually went to Princeton and got a Ph.D. in biology and eventually worked for a multinational in Canada. The second roommate came from, he still has, now he's retired, he taught at Taida. They were all engineers. The Guomindang view was that engineers didn't care about politics so I couldn't corrupt them. Of course they all had 台灣民族認同. They all knew about 228 and they all taught me about these kinds of things. At that time the Taida mainland families had never heard about 228. Parents protect their children. By the way, true all over the world. There's nothing peculiarly Chinese about this. But anyway, and the third roommate, who I am closest to, came from the poorest family. The father was a butcher, literally a butcher, butchered animals. And they lived in an illegal wooden shack. And they stole electricity from a power line. And I lived exactly a week in each home during the three New Year’s I was here. There was one shirt and the father and the two brothers took turns, each wore it one day. He eventually became vice-minister of 水利部. Ehm, and he married the girl who lived in the next illegal shack. And we remain very close. So I think they were my, we went out, they used to take me out to fortune tellers. There's no part of my body which has not been read by some fortune teller in Taiwan. And they always wanted me to have my fortune read. By the way the fortune tellers were all wrong. And the older you get the more wrong they become. Their ability to guess the, closer, the more time goes by the more wrong. But anyway why I became interested and why they kept trying? They wanted to know of course...this is the pragmatism of Chinese religion...They wanted to know which fortune tellers gave you good fortunes. They were only gonna go back to fortune tellers that gave good fortune. And they wanted to know for which one. I was the experimental guinea-pig to find out which fortune tellers...So we spent lots of time together and I think those are my first friends. I can remember to this day conversations and experiences with them, which would deeply shape my consciousness. So while we were there, there's an election for major of Taipei, and someone named Henry Kao wins them, and he's 黨外, so he's not 國民黨, and they were very happy. And so I asked them why they were happy and they say the obvious reason. And I said "that's stupid". I said: "You may not have noticed, this is a 國民黨 dictatorship, and the Guomindang is not gonna reward Taipei under Henry Kao. And if you care about life in Taipei, you should vote for a Guomindang person who will have access to money, who will do better for the
people of Taipei. And I said “give me one reason therefore to vote for someone who isn't Guomindang”, and they all shouted at me: "because he isn't Guomindang!!" So I think they were my first real friends.

Huang: So it sounds like you are closer to people that are outside of the mainstream, not the mainstream, I mean outside of the ruling party.

Friedman: So that definitely is intriguing too. So yes and no. Yes, I'll take it as simply as a yes. That's true. Yes, that's actually true. Obviously, I worked in the Guomindang historical archives and all those people, and people like Wu Xiangxiang, are all total very rightwing Guomindang loyalists. So, at sort of the academic level, which I'm working at, they all are supporters of the system. But they are not my friends. They are just people who I work with in various kinds of ways.

Huang: So how would you evaluate that experience of, you know, of being friends with people who are... I don't think in Taiwan here we will use the right and left wing. I'd just say people are more supportive towards independence.

Friedman: I would never have used that word back then. I think this notion of when Taiwan 民族認同 goes to a point of 獨立返中 and things like that. At any popular level it's much later then the rewriting of history suggests. I think it doesn't really hit until two events. I think the first one is Kissinger showing up in Beijing and people on Taiwan beginning to get scared that the Guomindang can't protect them. And that will lead to the roots movement on Taiwan, and people begin to think about who they are. I think that's the first serious event in time. Cause people's ideology when I was in school here is very confused. They all actually do believe in attacking the mainland. And they all think of service on Jinmen and Mazu as right. And they all hate the Communists and the 中国話 has a great impact on it, they may hate the fact that you can get hit for speaking 閩南話 Minnanhua or 台語 Taiyu or whatever one would call it, but it doesn't mean that there wasn’t a tremendous impact on the socialization. So they're very confused as to identity. In the dorms, even though they're run by the military, every dorm room has somebody with a short-wave radio which at midnight would turn on mainland radio and none of them were pro-communist. Why did they turn on...none of them! I mean the notion because they listened to mainland radio they had some sympathy would be an insane view. They were young men who were looking to rebel against authority and show that
they were men who were growing up to be independent people and hated being suppressed in the self and it was just an assertion of self. So I think that their, that identity is a very confused thing until, first that Kissinger going to China which begins a rethinking of these and then the Kaohsiung Incident, and what happens to the Kaohsiung prisoners at that time. And I think that's when things begin to change in terms of identity here in...So I think myself, it's a pretty late development. And because it begins so late, actually the mainstream of what people talk about 台獨, the mainstream actually was democratization. And, some people thought that democratization was a clever way to be 台獨. But Willy-Nilly, they really were democrats. And that was, that became much more important. And I think it facilitated the kind of rough conciliation you could eventually, well, you still have problems obviously, but nonetheless, the lateness of and how it developed I see it a little bit different than how it is usually explained on Taiwan, at least as I experienced people.

Huang: So did you encounter a lot of people that asked you about why the United States changed their position?

Friedman: So I live in Taizhong in a neighborhood which is all Guomindang military. And my landlady is from a Guomindang military family. And they already had a, what I would call Guomindang military consciousness, long before these events. Their experience is that the only reason why the Guomindang lost is the Americans stabbed them in the back and that Truman was influenced by secret Communists. So people like that already had such idiot views of the United States or United States policy, that they didn't need any new events to shape their...and then you know by the 80's, I'm working for the congress for Solarz which gets very involved with Taiwan things. And I hold the first hearings on human rights in Taiwan. So I do get to meet people like Wang Shang who really reflected these kinds of...He didn't need any of these events either for giving him his... His consciousness comes out of the whole, eh, CC clique, the extreme right-wing clique of the Guomindang, secret police, which did monstrous things in China and brought them to the Taiwanese people. Their views would not come from their experience in Taiwan. To them Taiwan was not a real place. I was walking once, had many of these experiences, down some Taipei street I can't remember where, and we simply pass a yard in which beautiful flowers are growing. And I say, because I'm a very
eloquent person, I say: "What a beautiful flower!" And the guy says: "Beautiful flower, beautiful flower, there are no beautiful flowers on Taiwan! If you wanna see beautiful flowers, go to the mainland of China. On the mainland of China there are beautiful flowers." So, from those professionals I had those kinds of events happen. We didn't argue when people said stupid things like that, but, yeah, we had these kinds of experiences. So, I think, a lot of things in... my education in terms of many things comes from my time in Taiwan. I think that I began to quickly assume that China was like Taiwan, because I knew that the 国民黨 Guomindang and the 共產黨 Gongchandang both were informed by Leninist Party organization and so...I think this is one of the many things that saved my academic career; that I never had illusions about Mao, because I had an experience on Taiwan and my assumption was that the Gongchandang was like the Guomindang. And I didn't like the Guomindang in that period, so why should I like the Gongchandang? So I would say I got much more educated, in terms of how my mind was working at that time, in this comparative kind of way. I'm being educated more in my thinking about China. I think especially meeting these right wing Guomindang people in all parts of my life than I ever was educated at Harvard. So these were my teachers, in basic kinds of ways.

Huang: Do you think you need a break?
Friedman: No.
Huang: Ok, great.
Friedman: If you do, we can.
Huang: No, we don't need a break. So eh, you always wanted to do the Ph.D. topic that you choose to do?
Friedman: No. So this goes back to the Hungarian Revolution. So, as I said, the question which merely came to my mind was that Communist Party states could democratize and wouldn't that be nice? And so somewhere along the way when I get to Harvard, I can't remember when, I learn about the Hundred Flowers Movement. And I begin to read the speeches of Lin Xiling who I eventually got to know, and other people who were the big critics of the Party at the various universities at that time who were speaking in favor of democracy. And so I think my first absolute ignorant thought, remember I knew nothing about China, I had not even heard a lecture on the People's
Republic of China at this time. So my first naive thought, you really have to accept how naive I am, was that I'm gonna be studying how China was going to be the first Communist country that's gonna democratize. And the Hundred Flowers movement is gonna be the harbinger of what's going to occur in China. So I think in the back of my head that was my thought about where my Ph.D. began. Then I read and learned things about China and that naïve thinking had to end rather quickly. So that all went away. But I think that...so at my college, during the Hungarian Revolution, there were tremendous debates. We had, at the campus, a guy named Herbert Marcuse, who opposed the Hungarian Revolution. That was also another thing that changed my life, I couldn't believe it. And he argued that it was all a CIA plot tied to the reactionary Catholic Church to restore the old order and it had nothing to do with democracy and that from a long historical view we should understand the Communist movement as a progressive force. And I couldn't...and that was...I could not believe these words. I mean they just were astounding to me that anybody could think this way. So by the time I left college my senior thesis was on anarchism, on Peter Kropotkin and his school. And they are all anti-Marxists. And so I read all that stuff and so whatever else I was by the time I left college, I was anti-Marxist in a very...Marxist thinking could lead you to make apologies for the suppression of the Hungarian Revolution and this is not any direction that I was interested...So my particularly intellectual trajectory comes out of how events in the world are being experienced in my local situation in the United States of America. And I think I just bring that to the questions I ask about China. They are not informed as I said about any knowledge of the People's Republic.

Huang: Why would you say that... how should I put the question...

Someone else: We have adjusted the temperature... a little bit windy and cold.

Friedman: Whatever.

Someone else: I'm wondering what the conclusion of your thesis on Tibet was?

Friedman: That eh, the Communist Government in China did horrible things in Tibet. I don't think there was anything deeper...it's called the Han and Tibetans...I think there was...now that you ask. But again, I wouldn't, unless I went back to read it, which I have no interest in doing, but Moore taught me that when you write something it will never be perfect and at a certain point you just say this is the best I can do at this point, I let it go
and it is for other people to tear it apart and improve on and you shouldn't worry about that and you move on to whatever next interests you. So I don't go back. But I think it came out of my experience as I said before. I thought of it in terms of race issues in the United States and I think I was... and my thinking has not changed on this from those days as a graduate student, that the communist party of China was a very Han racist party and that was very deep in the party...I am not shocked as some people are in the supposed turn into this Han-racist direction which we're seeing it...my own view was, from my Master's research, that this was deep in the party from very early on. That they hated the way they were treated on the Long-March in Tibetan areas and they were full of vengeance towards the Tibetans. And they identified with the slogan of the 辛亥革命 Xinhai Geming which was eh, "興漢，興漢 Xinghan, Xinghan", and "反滿興漢 Fanman Xinghan". And I think I saw them as very much the heir of that kind of thinking. Very very deep... I think that only became more so over time. So I think that that was the second thing. I think I took seriously the party as having a racist, or racial, or racialized, in China they prefer to say Cultural, which I would never let them do, but I would give them racialized if they want, rather than racist, but a racialized identity.

Another person (hard to hear who): Where did you get the sources for writing your thesis? And also, my question comes from the, the fact is during the first 10 years of the Communist party rule in Tibet, I don't think, either way, the image of many people, not many people could prepare such abundant knowledge of what really happened.

Friedman: I read everything written by Tibetan exiles, there are endless Tibetan exile journalism sources coming out of India especially. Harvard is a great place; the library will get you anything. So I read those things, the CIA was very interested in China. They translated anything and everything that was being written about Tibet, there were missionary groups that had been involved in North India, Southern Tibet, who especially with the Khomba people in Eastern Tibet, East South Central, and they were very involved with the people who fled. They were involved with the rebellion which began inside of Sichuan and Yunnan among the Khomba. People who resisted the collectivization because they didn't wanna stop being nomads. And the party insisted they had to surrender their weapons when they joined the collectives. And they saw that as endangering their lives. So the rebellion began there. And these missionary types were
very deeply involved and they wrote lots of stuff and they had very good information. So there were three sets of sources and I think I pretty much exhausted everything that you had. And I also remember strangely, there is a strain of Japanese Samurai Buddhism which goes through Mongolia and is interested in Lama Buddhism. And, you know there's some crazy Japanese thinking that Chengis Khan was really a lost Samurai warrior. And so there were certain Buddhist types in Japan who had a deep interest in Tibet and I remember there were some sources which came out of these Japanese Buddhist kinds. So they weren't as I said the sources you would want. But there were plenty of stuff.

Someone else: Do you also feel interested about Xinjiang?

Friedman: So I didn't at that time. Remember I'm a total ignoramus. At that time I know nothing in general about, say, the history of what's gonna happen in Inner Mongolia as you have a Han immigration. I would not have a consciousness of Manchu and Manchus disappearing in what had been Manchuria. I don't think at that time I have any knowledge. I certainly wouldn't have had a knowledge of hill-people in Guangxi, Yunnan at that time. You know these are things which I will eventually learn but if you go back to that period you have to start up with that unfortunately yeah, there is nothing. I can't think those thoughts at that time.

Huang: When you were in Graduate School, if I remember correctly, that should be the time that there were several great debates in both political science, in terms of methodology, and in IR, how would you evaluate the influence on your development of knowledge and intellectual?

Friedman: So I'm not only, I was more, so this is the behaviorist tendency which comes up at that time. So beyond paying no attention to it, I came really to despise it, even though I knew nothing about it, and I did so because of Talcott Parson's course. So I took Talcott Parson's, I took every course they had on political sociology. And one of them was Talcott Parson's course. And obviously he taught the course from a Parsonian point of view, which I really, well first, Moore hated it, and Moore had written an essay against it, so I'm probably prejudiced from Moore even before I walk into it. And then at that point in my life, I'm very critical of American foreign policy. The way I would say it today I'm critical of foreign policy probably of all states. But America was my state so it was, I mean I think states are monsters, I think I am really influenced by the anarchist
stuff, I'm not an anarchist, I worked for the US government after all. But I think, and the tough-minded realism of Judith Shklar which taught me not to love any of these kind of things, so I liked at that time the early writings of C. Wright Mills. This is before he goes to Cuba and I think goes crazy. Goes he's gonna fall in love with Cuba and I will think about Cuba, probably influenced by Moore, as a dictatorship, and I don't like dictatorships, and so I read his stuff about what a wonderful place it is and I just think it's crazy. Also, I knew Hungary had been a Communist dictatorship, and I totally identified with the Hungarian rebellion. So when Mills goes off in that direction Mills loses me and I'm not much interested anymore. But his early stuff is critical of the United States. And I'm critical of the United States, so I would never apologize for any dictatorship let alone a Leninist Party dictatorship, but I am very critical for the reasons I have already mentioned, Civil Rights. And I loved Mills critical writing about the United States and I loved doing political sociology. Mills saw himself in his early years as a Webarian, and he did translations of a book with someone named Hans Gerth and I read their introduction to Weber. Anyway, Parsons hated Mills. And I remember in a class one day we had been assigned for the class Mills book The Power Elite. Which says, if I remember it right, there is a military elite, there is a business elite, and there is some other elite, I can't remember. And basically America's moment today, the reason why McCarthyism and repression and less democracy, it's cause these elites are now having common interest, and so there is a power elite. And Parson is explaining to the class that this is all nonsense and America is a true democracy and doesn't have any problems. And some sweet undergraduate in the class raises his hand, and he's very, when you address the professor you stood up and, and when you would address him you said "Professor Parsons" and you would ask your question very politely. And, this, Parsons wouldn't let the kid sit down and he went after him for about ten minutes for being naive and a Commy dupe and all sort of other kinds of things. So Parsons really turned me off, it had a big impact on my teaching. I promised at that time that I would never embarrass a student in a class, that I would always find a way to ignore anybody's politics in the classroom. That I would never teach from a political perspective. He had a big negative impact; Parsons was a negative example to me. So, I was more than uninterested in the behaviorist turn which had a lot to do with Parsons. I really despised it. It just struck me
as immoral. And so I paid no attention to it at all. Other than I of course was forced to read books like *The American Voter*. But I would always try to think about them critically. Say things like "how could you think about politics the same way you would think about selling soap to a consumer?" It has to be something particular to the political experience that was interesting, this is what political sociologists do. We explain why the political realm is a special realm, cause you need legitimacy. So I really really was anti- in some deep kind of way, all those behavioralist tendencies.

Huang: You didn't follow your first thought about the topic of your dissertation when you were writing your Ph.D. program and what changed your idea?

Friedman: Well I became aware at first that the Hundred Flowers Movement was crushed and that there was a horrible anti-rightist movement. That now dictatorship was deeply entrenched. I think I was impressed by Weber in terms of how I came to think about Communist States. By Weber, and I began to, because from Moore I get this comparative perspective and I can't go to China. I began to read East-European dissidents writing about the system. Kornal, Bruz, people like that. And I began to assume that what they would say about the system was also true about China. And so I came to believe that, adding Weber to that, that there is a revolutionary generation which has great charismatic legitimacy. And that I also believed that from Weber that it is very difficult if not impossible to routinize charismatic legitimacy, and that after the great first leader would go, China would become, would face different kinds of problems. It would not be able to simply continue what Mao did. I do this, I come to these conclusions again knowing nothing about China if you will, but anyway given those assumptions I did have no expectations during the Mao era that the dictatorial system was gonna democratize inside of China. So I began to have to re-focus. So I never lost my interest. My question remained one about democratization or failed democratization in China and what to think about the 1911 revolution. So the tendencies and questions that were inside of me, I think persisted. And a little bit of knowledge about China just took me away from the naiveté. Again I have no desire to understate how all of these early thoughts were based on no knowledge of China at all. But by the time I'm thinking about a dissertation topic and I know about the anti-rightist movement and the disasters of the Great Leap I obviously do not have any of those naïve thoughts about Mao’s China democratizing anymore.
Huang: When was your first time to be in China then?

Friedman: So since we're in Taiwan I know you do not mean Taiwan or Hong Kong. You do mean the People's Republic of China. So May 1978. In March 1978 the government leadership committed itself to having to send... they are aware of how backward they are, and they know they have to send students and scholars abroad because they wanna catch up. And they...eh...they realize that if they are going to send people out, they are going to have to accept people in; it has to be reciprocal. And they had never before accepted people to do social science research. So they wanted to experiment. Could they control foreign social scientists from learning anything? And so I was part of a group of people... There was a group of people, Paul Pickowicz, Kay Johnson and Mark Selden, who had gone to China in I think 1971 or '72 with the CCAF and who tried to go back to do research through the Friendship Association and who were in touch with the Friendship Association year after year, saying we would like to come do research to see how socialism worked in the Chinese countryside. And so they decided to invite the three of them to come to China for two months and they could go do research in the Chinese countryside. By that time, so this is 1978, I teach, I work on Peasant Revolution. Kay Johnson had been my student; Paul Pickowicz was her husband at that time. So I know them from that. Mark Selden and I went to high school together, so I know him forever. And so since I was teaching courses in comparative peasant revolution, actually with Jim Scott at the time, they thought I would be a good person to have on the trip. So actually I had not been invited. But they asked if I could be included. And so the four of us were the first group of scholars invited to go do research in China. And so that was a fun experience. So they said to me, the other three, where should we ask to go. So, I said, (A) We do not want to rely on politicized memories of the bad old days. We wanna go a place where social scientists had studied before 1949 so there was a historical record, such as Ding Xian. So we wanted to go to a place which spoke 比較標準的普通話 because otherwise we couldn't understand anything. Obviously, we knew enough about poor semi-literate people in the countryside to know if you went out of the 河北平原 you were in trouble. We wanted to go to a place which was not an early base area because they would have special ties to the party, and a number of other things. And so I mapped out a number of places and we asked to go there. Now as we eventually
learned, the party also had its criteria. They wanted us to go to a place which they knew
was loyal to the party and would tell us the story the “proper” way. And nobody in the
Friendship Association knew a place which met our criteria and their criteria. So they
approached Chen Yonggui (陳永貴), and Chen Yonggui had a friend in Geng
Changsuo who was from a village called 五公鎮 Wugong, Wugong was in 饒陽縣
Raoyang Xian, and Raoyang Xian before ‘49 was the South Eastern most county in 定縣
地處 Dingxian dichu. So they decided to send us to Wugong, because it met their criteria.
And supposedly met ours. But it really met theirs. They are in charge. And so the four of
us went off, all critically independent people. And we all worked sixteen hour days and
we took not a moment off. And we interviewed as many different people as possible, and
we eventually even had four hours with Chen Yonggui, in which he totally told us no
truths about any of the things I just told to you.

Zhang Dengji: You mean in Beijing?
Friedman: In Beijing, yeah, we spent four hours in Beijing.
Zhang Dengji: vice-premier Chen Yonggui?
Friedman: Yes he was vice-premier, we saw him in the 人民大會堂 and we spent
four hours with him. And, we gathered all this material and we thought “oh how fantastic
we are gonna write this great book telling the real story about village China”. Then we
divided up tasks, and Mark and I went to Japan, and Paul and Kay went to Hong Kong,
and Paul’s and Kay’s task was to go to a place that was called Union Research Institute,
which clipped from Chinese journals and had them arranged chronologically by counties.
And they made copies of the Raoyang Xian, stuff at Union Research Institute from
October first 1949, from the founding of…建國以來 as they would say today in China.
And so I read these clippings, and of course I learned more from the clippings than all
four of us had learned in the village. And the main thing we learned was that the story
they’d told us was a story that they had invented to continue being a model village in the
Cultural Revolution. And there was nothing that they told us, basically, that we couldn't
have read in the clippings. But we learned many things from the clippings that we didn't
learn from the trip. Which was that each time the party line changed, they reinvented the
history of the village. Because the village history always had to be in harmony with
whatever the dominant line was. So, we obviously did not have a book. Cause 95% of what we thought we had learned was garbage. But we had learned a lot about doing research in China, what you can learn from interviews in China, and we made two commitments. One is we would get every document we could get from every source. We plundered every library we could find and went through it. And then by accident the US government asked me to go to China with a group they called "up and coming leaders" to see China in November-December '78. And I said to the US government: "How would they like to go back to this village which I had just done two months of research in?" Oh great, they had never been to the Chinese countryside. So we went to the village for two days. Now I have all this knowledge from having done this research, and I know the different stories that they told at different times, which makes you ask questions about what the reality is. And I know that they told me a story which is invented at a certain moment in history. So I learned more in those two days in the village, cause I now had stuff in my head, it was not empty. And so we made a commitment that we would be going back. And we created and thought through ways you could learn things despite the party. And eventually we would go back about 32 times and that led to the book "Chinese Village, Socialist State". But if you wanna, you know, I can remember the shock when reading the Union Research file clippings from Raoyang Xian, by the way Yaoyang Xian in the local dialect, Raoyang Xian's archives and becoming conscious and saying to myself: "Well, how naïve could you be? I thought you had learned all that? Did you forget everything you thought you knew about how this state works?" And then the next thing I realize, is your eyes are useless and Fei Xiaotong had told us one important thing. I asked him, when he came to Wisconsin to visit, I asked him: "You know, you wrote about this place Kai Xiangong, and the last writing you did about it was during the Hundred Flowers Period, and it was supposed to be published in the journal called Xin Guancha 新觀察, and it was never published, in fact it got him branded a Youpai 右派 and I said: "Why, what did you see when you went there in early '57?". And he said: "I could see the invisible. What you have to see is the invisible". "What do you mean by seeing the invisible?" "Well I have been there throughout the 30's, I had been there in the 40's, and therefore I could see what wasn't there. If you looked out after collectivization you saw green fields everywhere and they would tell you a story that everything was
flourishing. And what did you know to contradict that? But I knew that this place was based on economic crops and selling silk. And all of the trade was gone. You couldn't see what wasn't there anymore. But I knew it wasn't there anymore because I knew the history of the place. And unless you see the invisible, you can't see with your eyes, because you don't know what you're looking at." So that also had a very deep impact on...in terms of my own...why you had to learn the history, the long history. And I was very naïve and innocent to arrive in a place and think: "Well I'm critical and independent so I can see the truth". Well, really, how silly can you be. So those experiences I think really changed our, my whole trajectory and how I got involved in beginning to study China. I never expected after all that I would have this opportunity that I would be able to go 32 times back to the same village, without boring you with all the techniques we developed to get more of the truth. I certainly learned to do it better.

Huang: So let's go back to your Ph.D. when you were doing your Ph.D.

Someone else: Can I interrupt with a small question? So I can see that your first field study was conducted in 1978, right? So the main language you was using during that year was in Chinese. Dialogue with the students or local people.

Friedman: Except with elder people who had no education. I couldn't understand a word they said. But anybody who had gone to school since the founding of the People's Republic, yeah. But older people with no education, no, I needed a high school graduate to sit next to me and repeat everything in 標準普通話 so I could understand.

The same other: Including the dialogue between you and the vice-premier Chen Yonggui.

Friedman: No, that was fine. He didn't have any education, but he was long enough involved in national party things that he spoke enough Mandarin… and also there is an old coal-mining route from Shanxi where he was into the Handan area of Southern Hebei where he worked. There are similarities in the dialect. By that time we had been two months in the village and so hearing people talk, I think I had enough of a feel, and his mandarin was close enough to standard enough that he was basically fine. Although of course as a senior ministry person I believe he had a translator. Translators are very useful because they give you the time to think about your answers. So I think he...even though I believe I understood everything he said, I think he had a translator.
The same other: So before the tour your main experiences about to so-called Chinese scene had taken place in Taiwan, so reasonably this was a turning point, can I say that?

Friedman: Ah, it was a turning point in terms of research. But there was a previous turning point. What did I do between the dissertation and 1978? I go to Wisconsin in ‘67; I don't go to China until ’78. So I head in two different directions. One is I said I became interested in the general comparative topic of peasant revolution of which I was seeing China as but one mistake. So that was one direction I went, cause I knew I wasn’t' getting...so I did do reading on Yellow Turbans and White Lotuses and all those kinds of things as part of that. And the other one was Chinese foreign policy. So while I was on Taiwan the...this really changed my whole life...is my first year of research on my dissertation topic did not work out. My first question was "Why did the so-called third-force in China fail. And so I think I began reading about people like Deng Yanda and... in the twenties, and I became aware that the third force was really weak and the loss of democratic opening occurred earlier. And I was grounded. I read a daily newspaper eventually from 1898 to 1927. I'd read at least one Chinese language newspaper for everyday and through that research I became aware. So I ended with a question on the 1911 revolution. But I hadn't done enough work to go home and write up a dissertation. So I asked to have my grant renewed. And they said "No. We gave you a grant to do this; you failed. And so we're not renewing you. Why should we give money to someone who failed?" So I had to find a way to fund myself. So I'm in Taizhong, and the US government has a Foreign Service language school in Taizhong. And they hired me to teach China Watching. And that began a whole turnabout where I got involved with the US government. As a person who was very critical of the US government, who had a few anarchist tendencies. Previously it would have been inconceivable that I would get involved with the US government. But I suddenly taught all these people who were working for the US government. And so I became very interested in China-American relations, China-Taiwan relations. I began to become a specialist in Chinese foreign policy and I got involved with the US government. I wrote a paper for Henry Kissinger's National Security Council in terms of normalization relations with China and how the US should treat Taiwan. So I become very involved and I still do various kinds of consulting
for the US government and I worked for the foreign affairs committee eventually in the eighties. So my Taiwan experience, because of, in essence, my failure in my first year made me stay an extra two years. I had to earn money to fund myself which meant the research took longer. I had to work. And that was fantastic because I think it made it possible for me to survive in Chinese. I mean, by the end I dreamt in Chinese. And so my life, I think the real change really comes out of the Taiwan, in just about every way. The Taiwan experience included me turning in the direction of working for the US government. So by the time I go back to the United States and take a job at Wisconsin in many ways I am a very different person. And then, simply being in Taiwan in '64, '65, '66 was a very lucky kind of thing. Because this is the period in which the anti-Vietnam war movement was exploding in the United States. I think if I had stayed in the United States, given my critical views of the US government at that time, I probably would have been drawn to very radical tendencies in the United States. But because I'm stuck on Taiwan I don't get involved in this and I have this Taiwan experience reinforces (A) my concerns for democracy, and (B) ignites my interest in working for the US government. So when I go back to the States, I am in a sense, by good fortune of timing and location, a survivor, and so the experience on Taiwan really is...I mean I just think I would have had a very different future if I hadn't spent the three years on Taiwan with these experiences on Taiwan.

Huang: Yeah, one of my professors he got his degree from Harvard and I think he was involved in many of the movements at that time.

Friedman: So I think I was saved from being involved in those kinds of ways because of this Taiwan experience. There's no doubt in my mind that. So I don't wanna stress '78, I really wanna insist that much more the three years on Taiwan are a very shaping experience for me in all sorts of directions. That '78 is a much more natural evolution from tendencies which really already had been pretty deeply grounded in me.

Huang: When did you started to have your ideas about human rights, the research on human rights?

Friedman: I don't know. I'm involved in the Civil Rights movement very actively. That's by the late fifties. My first Ph.D. student was someone named Tian Hung-mao, then was a teacher of mine if you will about Taiwan politics. I think I became,
probably through him, very conscious about what the Guomindang secret police did in the United States of America. I did not like their activities on American college campuses. And eventually they murdered Cheng Wen-cheng, while I worked at the Foreign Affairs Committee. So I think it's probably in late 60's early 70's that I begin to have a human rights consciousness. But oddly, first shaped by thinking about the Guomindang military dictatorship and then, given the comparative perspective, of course, realizing that the same thing is true about the entire Leninist world, and then I would read things, Sakharov, I would read Sakharov and be reinforced since he was very Human Rights oriented. Very much reinforced in those kinds of directions. Those themes, and Mao’s policies had a big influence on it, about that late 1960's 1970's.

Huang: So when you were writing your dissertation you didn't really consciously put the idea of human rights into your research?

Friedman: No. I don't think the word human rights appears in the dissertation. I'm reading materials from the Xinhai Geming period. So I'm aware of the categories being used by the people of that time. A lot of the people who were especially active in the most progressive wing of the 中國革同盟會 are people who come out of a Christian background. They very much saw Confucianism as an apologia for patriarchy and authoritarianism and therefore they had a stronger magnet to gender equality. That’s the thing that got them in trouble, that made them seem alien inside of China. So they were very much concerned with gender equality, and they were committed to democracy, and science and progress and I think that human rights as a category is a way of thinking of what they did at the time. The human rights movement really comes out of, historically, people who once supported the Bolshevik revolution, and who then became conscious of what a monstrous disaster it was becoming. They needed a language to criticize it. And you couldn't criticize it with the standard left-right language because they coopted the term “left”. And so they needed another language, another discourse for describing the inhumanities of the Bolsheviks. And, that is, as you will find, as actually, where the human rights movement as a self-conscious movement comes from. Previously there were the movements for all about a a particular topic such as “ending slavery”. You could think of that as a human right, but you didn't have a vision of a human rights movement. You were simply ending slavery. Or the Geneva Convention, which is about prisoner
rights, the mistreatment of prisoners. And you could begin to have a link between those two movements. But it doesn't all come together - I used to teach a course on human rights, it's the only reason I know this - it doesn't all come together until the Bolsheviks take power and start the Gulag and secret police and all the things we know that they did. And so it’s, that's when it appears. You begin to get a serious human rights movement. So I don't think there was one in the Xinhai Geming period.

Huang: So I was asking about, when you analyzed the topic, did you do that consciously?

Friedman: I don't think so... no absolutely not! No I was trying to be true...one of the things I thought I learned from the political sociology course is Verstehen. Your goal is to try to comprehend how the people who experienced it experienced it. And your job was not to impose your categories on them; your job was to explain where their categories came from. So I don't think I would ever do that.

Huang: Your work made you very different from your colleagues I guess?

Friedman: I guess! I'm simply lucky, I mean in terms of being critical of the US Government and anti-Marxist. I was a very lonely person, academically. Very lonely. Didn't fit in to the various schools that existed. I still don't.

Huang: Interesting. So...

Friedman: So, this is also true about your teacher.

Someone else: But I think the Weberian school was quite influential during those years, maybe?

Friedman: I don't know whether it was influential, but for me it was. Because C.W. Mills took it seriously, Barrington Moore took it seriously, and so I took it seriously. So seriously that when I went to Wisconsin to teach, and they had told me to teach the course on introduction to politics, the first thing I assigned was Weber's writings. Of course the students all hated it and hated me for the rest of the course. I knew nothing about teaching. I knew nothing about how you first have to make them care about the topic before you do something like assign Weber. And if you don't know, Moore is very anti-Marxist. Moore is a very conservative man, was a very conservative man, no longer with us sadly. And he never understood why people thought that because he used the word "class" that made him a Marxist. As if Weber didn't use the word "class". Weber
uses the word class too. And he would say: What would make you a Marxist is you would believe the result of the contradictions of capitalism lead unto socialism. But if you read Moore, he talked about modernization. He didn't talk about some socialist solution and he couldn't understand how anybody could not see this and would write about him because he talked about class and revolution that somehow he was a Marxist. And you still see people who don't understand, who write about Moore and have no idea how these influences work.

Other person: Do you need a cup of coffee?

Friedman: I can't drink coffee. Not allowed. Tea is my strongest.

Huang: How would you evaluate the social background when you were first entering the job-market?

Friedman: What do you mean?

Huang: I mean, we all know that time is kind of like the beginning for the preparation time before the US started the contact with China? And how do you evaluate yourself ... I mean of course now you will have different ideas but at the time you must have some like eh...some expectation about yourself can contribute to...?

Friedman: So we're talking about 1967. Nixon, Kissinger have not been to China. The level of knowledge of Chinese is so primitive you almost can't believe how little is actually known about China in the United States. My own view at the time was it couldn't be worse than the Guomindang said it was and it couldn't be better than the CCP said it was. And as it turned out it was worse than the Guomindang said it was. No one knew how bad it was. So I did not have an image that I understood what went on in China. I tried hard not to write anything about the People's Republic of China. Before going to China in 1978, I only wrote one article about the People's Republic of China. Ehm...two. Both of which I ...wish I had certain sentences back. But mostly they're ok. But in each of them there's one sentence which spoiled the work, what I'd love to have back. Anyway I come to Wisconsin and they tell me I am supposed to teach a course on Chinese politics. I mean I don't know anything about Chinese politics. My assumption’s were what I said to you, Mao had charisma, and the system looks pretty much like other Leninist societies. Beyond that I don't think I thought I knew very much about China. And what was there to read that told you anything real? Who had access during that time? It was people who
were welcome to visit to tell you what a wonderful place it was and how Mao was great; Han Suyin, Edgar Snow, Felix Green, I mean that's what there is. And the academic stuff, that was written by...what they themselves thought of as the first generation of behavioral social scientists. They basically applied a bureaucratic interest model. Therefore ministries had interests and you had to do this for the economy. They had no real feel for what we all know the realities of China were. And the only book that tried to go into Mao's ideology as a way of understanding was Franz Schurmann's book *Ideology and Organization*. So these are the things that were available. And I didn't believe anything, for the reason I just said. Now I'm suddenly supposed to teach a course on Chinese politics. And I know that I don't know what the truth is about. So I used to teach the course as "four approaches to Chinese politics". I would give them was social science bureaucratic interest view, the people who were saying that Maoism didn't work, a view which stressed that the cultural was the decisive thing, that there was actually a Lin Biao military coup, and I can't remember the fourth. And my own, which I didn't introduce as mine, because I was so uncertain; people who would write from a critical perspective on Leninism. People who came out of, essentially East European. The way I did it was I assigned the speeches of people from the Hundred Flowers Movement who made the democratic critique of the Leninist system. I think MacFarquhar had a book of translations of such things. So I've used that to introduce the Leninist system. And that's how I taught China, four approaches to Chinese politics. Most of my writings before 1978 are either on foreign policy, which I got ever more involved in, or on thinking about revolution and peasant revolution in general, which doesn't have an overwhelming China focus. It's a more general thing. So I think, until I go in '78, I don't think that I ever thought that I knew anything about how the People's Republic worked.

Huang: So you didn't, well I guess you didn't expect yourself to become what people call like a China expert?

Friedman: Yes, that's absolutely correct. I find these categories very funny. In fact I find them insulting. I think every time someone calls me a 中国通 they are really saying you are an ignoramus who doesn't understand anything. That's truly the way that I hear the term...and that's the way I experience the term. And if I go back to my first time to China in '78, one of the things I made sure we did was to visit the neighboring villages.
We didn't know we were in a model village. But I wanted to go to the neighboring villages, because I believe in the comparative method. And, one of the things you very quickly became conscious of is that the histories of the villages were very different. It mattered when you had a link with the party, when you had a link with the Eighth Route Army, how movements in each village made class enemies. How many class enemies? How much local leaders chose to have broad alliances or really violently attacked enemies? And you could see very quickly, at a local level, how different these places could be depending on the choices they made or what their own lineage relations were. And so I knew enough because of my study of peasant revolution. I had categories in my head, like lineage. And thinking about how the external and the internal linked up and wondering how the family ties would continue to work, and how they would relate to secret society traditions or temple traditions and so on. So when I go into China, the categories that are in my head are not the standard categories of behaviorist thinking about Chinese politics in bureaucratic interest kinds of ways. It's just that's who I am. The people who did Chinese politics were always interested in elite kind of things. And I think I, because I'm coming out of the peasant revolution stuff, am very much more interested in the diversity at the local level, which eventually I will think about how it then links up to the top, how does the party work and state-society relations and things like that. But when I begin I think I'm only trying to get straight. What makes for this diversity at the local level? So yeah, I'm thinking about China, even from the first visit, very very differently than almost all my colleagues.

Other person: So in 1987 (should say: 1978) during your first year studying in China, did you encounter any problem that made you want to go back or interrupt you?

Friedman: Any physical factor? Political! No in 1978, I think the only category is that...they thought that Pickowicz, Johnson and Selden were safe. And I do believe they vetted me, but I think the only thing they really knew about me at that time was my book *Backward Toward Revolution*¹, which, by the way, eventually is a very popular book because what it argues is that in essence the reason why there would be welcoming of Mao’s approach to winning power is because tendencies were already appearing during

¹ Now being translated for publication by People’s Publishing House in Beijing
the Guomindang movements which were pushing progressives in that direction. Mao’s approach was in harmony with certain forces dwelling inside of China. So once reform begins after Mao dies, the CCP are not so frightened of tendencies of Chineseness. In 1978, I don't think I looked very threatening to them either.

Other person: Two other questions. I’m wondering when you are staying in Taiwan do you have any contact with those people who defected or deserted from the communist party and fled to the KMT after ‘49, because during those years Taiwan was both a state with most China experts deserted from the Mainland China, and the most of the intellectuals they had experience with the communist party and they taught courses in Taiwan and many American agents or scholars they came to Taiwan to learn some things from these experienced people, who once served with the Communist party.

Friedman: No I don’t.

Other person: Because we graduated from National Chengchi University and we once had some this kind of expert who served with the IIR, Institute of International Relations.

Friedman: Right. When I go back home from Taiwan in 1967 and start writing, those people will really hate me. They have a view of a communist world conspiracy. And as I said, I had a different view, one that was similar to what Fairbank and Schwartz taught at Harvard. Here I am in harmony with my teachers about how the Chinese revolution was a "Chinese" revolution and it was part of Chinese Nationalism and that Sino-Soviet alliance would have a short life because of the power of Chinese nationalism. They had a big stake, your friends at the 國際關係研究所, they had a big stake in saying that the Sino-Soviet split was not real, that it was a fake to fool us to lower our guard. And of course I thought they were as wrong as wrong could be. So those people who saw China as a part of a Moscow-orchestrated global enterprise, although I didn't know them well personally, they certainly thought of me as a bad person in the 1970's.

Other person: But maybe they did a good job at anticipating the live up between Mao faction and Lin Biao faction.

Friedman: The thing which I believe that they knew better than anybody else was family factional ties. They had a level of knowledge that was way beyond anybody in America. I think this is true today. Chinese people who grow up in a Chinese kind of
culture will immediately become more conscious of 親戚關係 and how it influences things in ways that Americans cannot see. So if I go to the PRC, people will know son-in-law relations. Even though there’s a change in name, they know to share gossip because everyone wants to know these things. And Americans don't do that kind of things. So I think there is no change in that. It is still true, knowledge of Chinese coming from China, is much more on that kind of a networked topic, even today, then an America is going to have. So I think that's absolutely true.

Huang: So who was your host when you were in Taiwan?

Friedman: I didn't have a host. I come as a student at the Stanford Center and I stayed on doing my dissertation research.

Huang: Ok, interesting. So, except there is a historian, he is like that too, doing an interview with, you know, some political...no...

Friedman: Nope.

Someone else: You didn't see any influential figures in Taiwan during your stay in Taiwan in the early years? But you saw Vice-premier Chen Yonggui in China, so very amazing!

Friedman: Actually...later in the seventies, I did know a law student at Harvard named Ma Yingjuiu. But he was really just a student at the time, I didn't know him as a famous person. He was just a student. I thought he was a nice person. So we knew each other. So I don't think in that sense the word, I think the first famous person I meet that way is gonna be when I'm working for Kissinger, and I meet Nixon too, so that's around '69-'70, I think before I have ever met any of those kinds of people.

Someone else: So in late seventies I think you were well equipped with the analytical framework of political sociology and you still continued to be influenced by this kind of analytical framework.

Friedman: Still am. Yeah, I think that is true. So not a good political scientist.

Someone else: Not a so-called mainstream.

Friedman: Absolutely not, that's correct.

Huang: It's interesting you know, it's actually at the beginning of this year I did an interview with Michael Lackner in Erlangen, Germany, and I think in Europe more
people that are doing studies, they are more like adopting...and I think they are adopting a very different perspective than what I know and what I learned in the States.

Friedman: Absolutely true. I think my approach is more out of European ways of thinking about it than they were American ways, so...

Huang: Yeah, the Europeans, at least from people I met there when I was doing an exchange program for half a year, and I think they say, there’s something about what they couldn't really feel satisfied is about methodology. Because you know, using a historical approach, there's no clear way to analyze, well, that's their view, you can't stand at a specific position to provide a more profound or, you know, stuff like an abstract…

Friedman: Well, you know there are endless schools that are historical today too. And so those people will kill each other also. It's hard to exaggerate how alone I was in my peculiar way of getting into the field and my own trajectory. It didn't make me part of the various camps along the way. I just think that's been true forever. So I tend to have particular friends rather than camps. There are people whom I like, whose work I respect, I'm a great intellectual snob that way. I really really admire people whose work I learned from, I have the greatest respect for, want to know those kinds of people and read their work. I don't think it matters much to me whether they are left, right or center. I thought of myself as a person on the left, but most on the left don't think of me that way, but that is my self-identification. Back when I was active in Committee of Concerned Asian Scholars some people who thought of themselves as the left thought of me as fascist, which is perfectly ok with me because I didn't like their polities either. So it was ok. But I do self-identify as a person of the left since I do care about empowering people. I don't think of that as socialism. So I did come out of an anti-authoritarian condition. So those identities make me think of my civil-rights activism and then human-rights activism. So it's not the old right-left tradition, which I find very crude, I would identify myself with people who are human rights activists, or people who cared about civil rights or any kind of what I would think of social justice movement on the left and I would think of myself as a part of that left. But nothing would put me in a Marxist or an anti-Capitalist kind of camp. Those words have no meaning to me basically, cause I have no idea what socialism is.
Someone else: How about during that time the so-called US re-stabilism [02:09:16.91]? In the CCAS they are attacking that US is influencing China or containing China?

Friedman: Ya, so that's never me. And I don't like those people, those people don't like me.

Same guy: But you belong to that organization?

Friedman: Well, yeah, we can get back to the organization. I'm very critical of American foreign policy as I said. I think American foreign policy does a lot of right things, a lot of stupid things, a lot of bad things. I would definitely wanna be critical of that. If you go back, I will give you an example from my own life. So I had this one in Cuba. And I thought American policy towards Cuba was stupid. I couldn't see anything good that was gonna come out of the policy of trying to isolate Cuba. So I was very critical of American foreign policy to Cuba. So there was a group, while I was a graduate student at Harvard, called Fair Play for Cuba. And I would never join. They weren't interested in fair play for Cuba. They were interested in making apologies for the Cuban government. But I would be in favor of changing American foreign policy to Cuba. So during the Vietnam War, which is when you have this anti-imperialism tendency, I thought the American involvement in Vietnam was counter-productive. I thought the only debate was whether America should leave by plane or by boat. But I would see it in terms of making bad foreign policy decisions. And I wouldn't think of it in terms of the category of imperialism. And so there's an overlap in CCAS in the sense that we would all be opposed to American policy in Vietnam, or we would be all be in favor of normalizing China-US relations, and that could make for the organization. But as soon as you ask questions about where you were coming from politically, than yeah, many of these people were not my friends or allies at all. And I wasn't theirs and they were conscious of myself as a bad person. And some of them, I really had really nasty arguments with these people all the time. Eventually I distanced myself from the organization because at a certain point I couldn’t take it anymore. And also the Vietnam War had come to an end, and Nixon had gone to China. So who worries about these kinds of issues anymore?

Huang: Did you have a research agenda after you finish your dissertation?
Friedman: I've never had a research agenda. I still don't have a research agenda. This has all been a matter of, to me, luck. Why do I start doing that rural research? It was just luck. These other three people get invited. I happen to have these personal relations with them. I happen to have been someone who had been studying comparative peasant politics for a long time. So that gets me involved. I didn't have a research agenda in terms of Chinese foreign policy; it just began to happen in terms of what was going on. And I do not see myself as someone who has been in control of his own destiny as a scholar. Except in one way, which is rather obvious; I have had this very deep identification and concern for and faith in democracy. And so even in writing about revolution, I would become more interested in democratic revolution. So I think rather than having a research agenda, once I'm getting involved with a topic, I really was gonna do it. So we ended up on doing two books on the village and it took me from 1978 to 2003 working on it, that's 25 years of my life. But it wasn't a research agenda. It was something that I got involved with. And the same thing was true about foreign policy issues. Or as I've been involved in the last two and a half years, again, totally by accident, with editing and getting published, a book by Yang Jisheng 楊繼繩 who wrote a two volume study of the Great Leap and Famine called 墓碑, Tombstone, published in Hong Kong. And I got introduced to him in Beijing three years ago. And he said he wanted to see the book translated into English. And I said to him: "You can't translate 1100 Chinese pages into English and get it published. There is no money and no publisher will do it. It has to be edited and condensed". And so he told me I should go do that. And so I got that translated, and it will be published on October 1st, I think, 31. Edited and condensed by me and that took two and a half years of my life². I ran into Yang, I cared about this topic. I thought he was a very good person who had taking tremendous risks to get this information. And it was a project worth doing. So I gave two and a half years of my life to that project. But I don't think I have ever had a research agenda. So with that project over, people say to me your question. I don't know the answer to that. I don't know for sure what I do. When real world things come up that interest me, I get involved. I think it still goes back to who the

² Tombstone, FSG, 2012
person I was and what it is that therefore appeals to who I am and what kinds of things I care about.

Huang: Ok, so now tell me your personal feeling when you first arrived in China, you know, just a, not so related to your research but to your feelings, you know you lived in China for a year and you got a chance to see the real China.

Friedman: So this will be sort of Freudian and I'll answer this in terms of what memories I still have of the first...the first memory I have is I'm on a China air flight from Tokyo to Beijing and the stewardess is announcing that we are about to land in Beijing. And she goes, I can't remember the words, but she's wishing me a happy socialist future, and she is really not caring about whether my seatbelt is on. And then we land in Beijing and we go to baggage to get our luggage and they are throwing the bags down and there's nobody who gives a hoot of 為人民服務, they’re just throwing the bags, and it's so obvious there isn’t any revolutionary or socialist consciousness as you watch these alienated workers throwing the bags down. And then, we stay at the 北京飯店 on 長安街 and we're driven to it and there's no cars on the streets. There's no taxis on the streets. And I don't think I had in my head a vision, because you see, and in fact you still see published, things that show supposedly under Mao that growth was 5-6 percent a year. But of course it's wasted growth. Its producing things which have no use to real human beings. Make steel and planes. I have a vision of this empty space. Beijing is just looking like that, empty space, I think I'm not ready. This is long before I get to the poor countryside. There are no tall buildings. It is just looking backwards to me. And remember I don't think of myself as a student of the People's Republic. So I don't have many categories in my head that I believe in. So all of these things are striking to me. And then we get put up at the Beijing hotel. And the thing you can see there are minders on every floor. And I know it is a secret police state. But I don't have a personal experience of how much it is a secret police state with minders on every floor. And of course we're going to have minders wherever we go. I would be unaware for a number of years of how intense the minding was. So, for example, I used to look for experiences which were spontaneous. And at first very naive. So I go into the barbershop. But the person who would walk in after me, who I wouldn't recognize, all the local people knew worked for the 公安, but I don't know he works for the 公安. They all, you know, they all,
you know 我分不清楚. But they 分得 very 清楚. So there's a difference. So even though
I'm having this experience in that first trip, it's really still superficial, I don't have a
feeling yet for how intense the repressive order is is. The next experience I have is that
there's a caste system. I think probably in reading about the Cultural Revolution, I read
Yu Leke’s famous essay on the 血統論[02:20:46.34]. Yeah. In fact I have this picture of
him on my wall, in my office, I have read that. So it may have been in the back of my
head. I don't have it explicitly in my head. But, you know, having read it, it may have
been in my head. But very quickly, it's an empty place with no cars, and we have four
cars to take us to the village. And, why do we need four cars to take us to the village?
Well, one of the reasons was in case one of the cars broke down. We actually lived in
people's homes in the village on that first trip. If you go back thirty-two times you
eventually learn all of these kinds of things because eventually you know people come up
and tell you all of these kind of stories. But on the first trip you don't see any of these
things. Why you need there four cars? Because the deal that they've made with the local
people is that essentially if they put us up, we're all in different homes, if they put us up,
they will be rewarded by New Year’s food. And they feed us New Year’s food, which we
don't know is New Year’s food. They say it is 家鄉菜. So no one is telling us truths this
first time. Eventually you find out these things from going back. And then you hear
hilarious things about how the real world works. So they would tell, so all this food is
carried in the fourth car, so the fourth car essentially is the food.

Huang: And you didn't know?

Friedman: No! No and they tell us it is in case one of the cars breaks down, you
know. And, then, it's hard to exaggerate these things. Your eyes are useless. The people
whispering lies in to your ears mislead you. You need friends who whisper truth into your
ears so you know. Over time you can develop friends who will do that. But at first you
don't have any such people to whisper to you about what's really going on in the village.
So, when we get to the village for example, there's a Ping-Pong table in the village guest
area, where they want us to do all the interviews. We want to do interviews in homes.
They want us to do the interviews in the 招待所. And the Ping-Pong table was brought in
special for us. They installed a shower special for us, eventually to go back many many
times. The Ping-Pong table disappeared, the shower disappeared, and it was just like Fei
Xiaotong said, you can see the invisible. You keep coming back. And that's how you learn by beginning to see the invisible. It is hard to exaggerate how easy it is to fool a short-term visitor. How the system is set up. I just get blown away, even today, people make one visit to China and then they tell you that what the truth is about China. And I just can't understand how anyone can be taken seriously from these kinds of trips. So one of these things we very quickly learned is that the policies of the cultural revolution really came to an end in 1969, when Mao disperses the red guards and youths are sent to the countryside. And by ’69-70, this gets back to the Lin Biao affair, Zhou Enlai and the modernizers are beginning to come back and there's a conference held called the 北方農業會議 in August September 1970 in which they begin to make reforms in agricultural policy. And one of these things, even on that first visit, that interests us is that the modernization forces that could not just come to power during Mao’s days but they were already at work before. And so we asked people, at least I asked people wherever I went, what do they know about the North-China Agricultural Conference. And almost everybody we met said they never heard of it. But one of the things that I learned from reading books on people who did research in villages is you just keep asking the same questions and eventually people will start to respond. You just don't get discouraged. So I kept asking these same questions. So one day, I ask for the three millionth time to a guy named Zhang Chaoke, who was in charge of rural policy in the village, who was very smart. And I asked him if he ever heard about the North-China Agricultural Conference. And our translator, who was really a minder, says she's not gonna translate the question. I said, why not? She says this to us in English. She's not gonna translate the question. So why not? You asked them a million times. No one ever heard of it. Then ask the question. Why ask the question? He's only a peasant? And 农人 as you know is a curse word, in most societies, not just in China. And I mean it really is a lower-class status, it's a different blood. And I said: "Ask it". And she started crying. And my colleagues blamed me and told me I shouldn't do it.

Someone: So you think it was a female young translator?
Huang: Zhang?
Friedman: Oh, I don't remember. That's Zhang, it's definitely that Zhang, yeah.
Huang: Zhang Chaoke.
Friedman: Chaoke, I don't remember what the Chaoke was. If you read the Chinese version of the book it's all in there. Too long ago. But he's dead, he died of cirrhosis of the liver. But anyway, so I said I was gonna ask the question. So I asked him. Had he ever heard of it, ...had he ever heard of it? He was a delegate to it! And then he told me what happened. He became a great source. But that experience of the translator from Beijing say, he is only a peasant, what would he know? This thing, becoming conscious of the caste society, those were parts of this experience of this first trip. So I remember those kinds of moments, you know, where something happened. I remember we went intentionally to one model village. Which I think was Wang Guofang’s. Not far from this village but in another county, and he had on a huge gold watch.

Zhang Dengji: In which province?

Friedman: In Hebei. I think in Anping Xian. And he had on a gold watch which is about this big. And he is a famous poor peasant hero. But looking at that gold watch, which is this big. And I say to him: so tell me about 三同! 三同 means you eat with poor peasants, you work with poor peasants, you live with poor peasants. So I said to him, what do you do with your watch while you work with the peasants? And again our minder really didn't like that kind of question. So there was always this complicatedness of what you could and couldn't ask as you become sensitive to your desire to learn things and their desire to tell the party line stories. So one learned to ask questions indirectly. As soon it was clear that it was a political category everybody's sensitivities went up. So if you said to a person: What happened to you in the Great Leap Forward? What happened to you in the Cultural Revolution? Oh nothing bad happened. Bad things always happened elsewhere, we were always in a united place and blabla...So you stopped asking and you would say to the person: When did you get married? When was your first child born? And you wait until you hear an event occur that crisscrossed with some event. And then you can ask a family question. So, given what was going on, how were you able to celebrate a wedding? When these practices are all being criticized what do you do for your own wedding? And the person could describe the wedding and what they did. So you find concrete ways out of the personal life to get out at the political things. And so what do I remember; I remember mainly out of the first trip learning how to become a researcher in a country which had this kind of political system, cause there were lots of
ways you couldn't ask questions and yet you wanted to find ways to learn what you wanted to learn. So that's basically my major learning experience from that first trip. I learned how to become a...I think I became a very good researcher in those kinds of places in which I wouldn't upset people and I wouldn't raise political issues of people and still could learn a lot. And I certainly didn't have that my first day when I sat down to interview when I would say: So tell me what happened in the Great Leap Forward? As if someone is gonna tell you what actually happened in the Great Leap Forward. When you come out of a democratic society, you don’t feel how people have to survive in these systems. And I think my three years of living in Taiwan in the 1960’s made me a little bit more sensitive than most of my colleagues who never had lived in an authoritarian system. So once again I think that the time in Taiwan was really the major experience that would shape even my ability to do things like this. I was more sensitive to Chinese authoritarian realities because of the experience on Taiwan.

Someone: But Taiwan was not so tightly controlled in comparison with Communist China?

Friedman: So, that is an interesting question. And I'm still not sure I know the answer to that question. I don't wanna make that statement. What you're saying could be true but I'm not sure yet that it's true. There is no doubt that by the end of the 70's, the beginning of the 80's, all sorts of changes begin inside of Taiwan society. But if you go back to the 60s, 白色恐怖, inside of Taiwan, I'm not sure whether I want to make or not make that statement as a general kind of statement. But surely it is true by the time we're getting to the end of the 70s. I remember going to the Taida library around 1965. You know, if you're an academic and you're going to the library you always sit in the exact same seat. The exact same person sits down next to you. And the exact same person sits across from you. Because we all just do those kinds of things. And so day after day I would go to the 台大圖書館 and I would always stay in the same seat and eventually you do get to know each other. I'm going to the bathroom, will you watch my stuff? and blablabla. So what's your name? So one day Wang isn't there; it's not a big deal. But the next day Wang wasn't there. And so I say to the other two people: Where's Wang? And they say, who? He had been picked up by the security forces. And they knew and I didn't know. And I'm sure that people at the university who were into gossip networks knew
that I was an outsider. I didn't know. So the respond: "誰啊?" And you begin to become conscious. Take a person in the 60s like Li Ao. So who was Li Ao in the sixties? Li Ao in the sixties is the son of a family, if my vague memory is accurate, where the father was a martyr. He was a university president, but was killed by the Japanese. Then there it is, this guy from Ziyou Zhengwo, Lei Zhen. Li Ao becomes close to Lei Zhen. And Lei Zhen is also a 大陸人. And here it's much easier for mainlanders who have long Guomindang history, especially tied to the Guomindang right, to begin to do those kinds of things, working for democracy. And so if you have a politically correct history, there was more space for you. But if you walk into China, depending on what period, very similar things would exist. If you have an old history of being not for Mao, Mao could destroy anybody on a personal whim. But in terms of how most people in the party act today, it still works not so different from the way the Guomindang worked in in the 1970’s. So, sure, under the period of Mao, cause he has this ability to mobilize and he was charismatic, you could do mass level monstrous things that obviously you could not do on Taiwan. So that part is true. As an institutional structure, clearly more horrible things on a massive scale happened in China than will happen under the Guomindang. But at an institutional level, I'm not sure how much difference there was. The charismatic ability of Mao, Chiang Kai-shek does not have on Taiwan. I mean, if Chiang Kai-shek gave a speech, I heard him give him three speeches. The only sentence that is understandable is 中華共和國萬歲. And other than that sentence, no other sentence is comprehensible to almost anybody who isn't from Zhejiang.

Someone else: Mao is much more charismatic now.

Friedman: Absolutely. Absolutely. So it's different from easily comparative political sociological institutional kinds of things.

Someone else: Have you ever been to the Soviet Union before it collapsed?

Friedman: Just before, yeah. I was actually there before rural reform had happened.

Zhang Dengji: Could you make any comparison between the situation of the Soviet Union and the People's Republic?

Friedman: So I think that's a correct question to ask. But I'm there at the period in which it’s really going to soon disintegrate. So it’s an unreal moment from that point of view. It’s a period in which people who had been silent are beginning to speak up. So I
don't have the real experience of the Soviet Union. I'm meeting all sorts of critical voices at that time. So no I did not have a real experience.

Zhang Dengji: And you can speak Mandarin but you cannot speak Russian.

Friedman: I cannot. The people I spoke with talked in English.

Zhang Dengji: So when was the first time you visited the Soviet Union?

Friedman: Well, I passed through in '70 but I don't have a stay until '91. But I visit East Germany in '81. So that was my first experience when it was East Germany in 1981.

Zhang Dengji: And it's the first experience for you to visit the Eastern Europe that had the Warsaw Pact. Much more advanced and modernized than China. So maybe you can...

Friedman: Right

Zhang Dengji: ...you can feel totally different...

Friedman: No. I have so much in my head the category of Leninist dictatorships that I don't have that feeling. I have the institutional feeling of sameness. I do not have the feeling of differentness. Not the categories in my head. Maybe I should have. I did not have an experience of East Germany being more developed. I'm working for the US government at the time, I have an experience of the same political system. That's what I experienced. And probably I'm blinded. No, cause I think your observations are correct observations but I don't think it is part of my consciousness as I am in East Germany in 81.

Someone else: Why do they sell this modernity?

Friedman: Why is Leninism?

Someone else: Yes, why does Leninism sell this modernity to you?

Friedman: It's the rise of Germany which actually is the important rise in Europe. Meiji Japan is basically gonna copy Bismarck's Germany. And what people in Europe will be conscious of in the second half in the 19th century, is how fast Germany is rising and is catching up and surpassing England. And everybody wants to catch up fast. So people actually do not ask the question of, because they wanna catch up, of how did England rise, they ask how did Germany catch up? So Lenin asked this question too. And the system that Lenin put in place in terms of how to modernize the economy, is very statist, because he is very deeply influenced by Tsarist ways of doing things. His is a very
statist form of the German model. Ken Jowett once wrote: Lenin put in place the world's best version of late 19th century German steel model. But economies keep on changing, and there's no mechanism for change in a Leninist command economy, because what is their goal? It's to defeat capitalism and built socialism. Socialism is a solution. So we today think, correctly, of an economy as something which continually evolves as technology changes and knowledge changes and lead market sectors change. But they thought, Leninism is solving the crisis of capitalism. So they were entrenching a solution. So they put in place a rigid system which will not easily change. They put in place a system which is not gonna easily move as the world economy changes. So at the beginning it actually, when you're closer in time to late 19th century, you get benefits from it. But as the world economy keeps changing, you go to micro-electronics and mass-consumer technologies and...the system falls ever further behind. And the only thing it could do was put on more more more inputs. But it has no way of going up the ladder of knowledge and technology and things like that. So this putting in place the late 19th century German steel model, eventually is building, entrenching, a system which has no mechanism for continuous upgrading. China, I think, lucked out, because Mao doesn't fully put it in place, until '55-'56, and he dies in '76. So the reformist, Deng, comes to power in August '77. The bad system, economically, has only been in place a little over 20 years, less than one generation. You still have alive the people who knew how a market worked. For Gorbachev, he doesn't begin to reform until '88, and War Communism began in 1918, two full generations ago. The Russians have destroyed the human capital that knew how any of this worked. China is just lucky in terms of how short their Leninist command economy experience is and the Soviet Union is very unfortunate in how long their experience was. China is also very fortunate that it is in East Asia. So when they began reforms, Deng could plug in to and learn from neighbors, who were all rapidly modernizing places. The Soviet Union had no such place. Especially after East Germany becomes part of Germany. Because then West Germans focus on raising East Germany, I think if that didn't happen, they may have invested in Russia. But their focus was East Germany. So the situations are very different. I think thinking about things in terms of these comparative Leninist categories and taking regions seriously is illuminating. Regions, East Asia, these are serious categories. I think East Asia has had a
particular history, even before you have all this recent culture flowing throughout from Korea which we're all aware of. There early is a region. You can talk about a region, but you can talk about it in ordinary historical experiences without inventing, as some people would want it, and claim that they are all Confucian, a category which doesn't do anything to explain the region to me. My latter reason is of course they are all Buddhist, at the popular level. It's much more Buddhist. Confucian in basic ways is much more elite consciousness. So I'm not much impressed by the ways of explaining these things in cultural levels. But I think you take the region very very seriously. Regions are a serious category.

Huang: Where did you first meet a local trained Chinese intellectual?
Friedman: In China?
Huang: Yeah.
Friedman: Eh, 1980, Su Shaozhi.
Huang: Under what kind of occasion?
Friedman: I put together a delegation to understand the role of Marxism. This gave us an excuse to go interview people who we wanted to interview. So the category for doing it was the role of Marxism in the Chinese revolution. And so we had a delegation with Stuart Schram and Tang Tsou and Jerome Chan, and I don't remember who else. But there were Angus Mc. Donald, Maurice Meisner, Ross Terrill. As part of that, we began to meet Chinese intellectuals. Su Shaozhi was head of the Marx-Lenin institute at that time. And so for reasons which I don't know how you explain, we hit it off. It was some chemistry. And eventually he would live in my home. He introduced me to Yu Guangyuan, I met Li Shengzhi, we met Wang Ruoshui, we met Lin Rui. So 1980...I also began to meet with graduate students at the 社會科學院 like Zhao Suisheng. I think that's really the beginning of serious meetings with Chinese intellectuals of the old generation, that trip of 1980.

Someone else: You mention 1980, how's your trip in China for Mao Zedong studies?
Friedman: Ehm, what was interesting about that trip? We of course went to Mao's hometown. And I think it was Stuart Schram, who was aware from his study of Mao, of what were on the walls of his home. And he remembered that Mao’s mother, who was a very Buddhist person, had certain things on the walls which were not there. And as we
would eventually find out, they were all taken down during the Cultural Revolution, so Mao's family should seem a good Red family. As for the village, the storyline always had to change so that the orthodox were always orthodox. So Schram noticed things which were wrong. And it was clear that the local specialists didn't know that these things were wrong. And that was a very interesting experience and a very sad experience. It made me super conscious about how authoritarianism makes people stupid and destroys their dignity. Because the guide was a guy who was essentially the local archivist who should know everything. But he loses his dignity in front of the foreigner, because the foreigner knows something which he doesn't know, which is very humiliating. And you can see what democracy does. Most people claim democracy is a place where the people rule. Give me a break. Show me a place like that. But democracy does create this very different dignity. You're not having such humiliating experiences where you're forced to be stupid or show you're stupid in order to survive. Democracy really enhances human dignity in some basic kind of way.

Someone else: It changed your view on Mao Zedong or 1981 resolution on Mao?

Friedman: No I don't think I took things like that seriously. I didn’t have a very positive view of Mao at all. But my view wasn’t negative enough. As bad as I might have thought it was, it was far worse than I had thought. What begins to change my views is conversations with people like Wang Ruoshui or Mao’s former secretary, Li Shengzhi. So these people begin to tell me. Also Hu Hua, who was the head of the party archives I get to know him at the party archives on this 1980 trip and then he's invited to a conference at Harvard. And I told him I would translate for him at the conference, which I did. So you create a human bond. These people would begin to tell me stories which gave me an impression of a sadistic, vengeful, Mao Zedong, which has nothing to do with having carried out a wrong policy which had bad consequences. I think those people gave me a view in which Mao Zedong was a monster. Which is not a popular view in the American academy even till today. The dominant view is that he didn't intend it to be so bad. He meant good but bad things happened. But my view, coming from my conversations with senior Chinese intellectuals is that he was a monster. He was a really bad human being. Whether its power that corrupts and that's what did it to him or whatever. So I think these Chinese intellectuals did have a very deep impact on how I
think, even today, about Mao. That is not a popular view even till today in the American academy. I think that maybe that was one of the reasons why I was happy to get involved in the translation Yang Jisheng 墓碑, cause, he was part of knowing a lot of these Mao stories. I think I'm very happy to be part of the book.

Someone else: Do you feel be conquered when you hear Mao stories? Things you once treated as a revolutionary?

Friedman: No. I published an article pretty early called “Was Mao Zedong a revolutionary?” In which, since I did have this category of peasant revolution, I'd say he was a revolutionary of the old school, like in peasant revolutions. It's a person who's gonna overthrow the old order and create an illusion of a new start, which I think he does. But there's no institutional way which will come out of it to improve life for people. So I'm willing to say, he was a peasant revolutionary of the old school. He is a much more 太平天國, Yellow Turbans, Red Mustaches, White Lotus. So I don't mind putting Mao into those kinds of categories as long as we understand what we mean by “revolution”. Different people understand it very very differently. These are problems of discourses and how easy it is to be misunderstood because we bring different traditions of intellectual thinking to these discourses. So I can still call him a revolutionary but only in that sense of someone who will repeat a bloody cycle.

**Interview ends.** Some talking afterwards, 明天見
C_2

Zun Jinhao: Maybe we can begin from …some politics, the CCAS, do you still have something you want to share about that organization?

Friedman: The best way to understand CCAS is to have a historical perspective on China studies in the United States, something you’re interested in. The major Asian Studies journal at the end of World War II was called Pacific Affairs. When McCarthyism occurred in the United States, that journal was seen as having accepted secret documents from people in the American government. It published these things. That fact was treated as proof that the Kuomintang lost because of Communist spies and agents in the US government. That journal fled the United States. It went to Canada. The scholarly organization behind it was destroyed. The profession had to be rebuilt. It was rebuilt by creating an organization called the Association of Asian Studies. It was totally afraid of being seen as political in any way. When the movement against US involvement in the Vietnam War happened and the Civil Rights movement occurred, many young scholars wanted AAS to be part of these efforts. They saw good changes occurring in the United States. Yet their scholarly organization, because it was scarred by the experience of what happened to Pacific Affairs, was a-political. Its leaders saw all the young scholars as danger to the profession. Because of the McCarthy era, for example, Fairbank was essentially barred from government offices in DC. He was a major organizer of the effort to defend Owen Lattimore against unfairly treatment. Lattimore had been an advisor to Chiang Kai-shek. He was presented as having been a communist agent, which is totally untrue. Owen Lattimore could not have been part of any organized activity. He was a totally individual maverick. But Fairbank was barred. With the anti-war movement growing, there was a feeling among scholars that the profession should not act based on a fear of McCarthyism. It should change in two ways: First, it should become much more of a community of scholars. It should be much more participatory. It should not have
such a hierarchy. Second, the younger scholars wanted to argue that this policy of intervention in Vietnam had to come out of ignorance, that people should understand enough Asian history to know Vietnam would not wish to be a puppet and tool of China. Scholars should be speaking out on this because the basic view in America was that the Vietnamese were tools for the Chinese. Therefore, in opposing Vietnam, Americans were opposing Chinese expansion by proxy. The senior people in the field wanted neither of these two things. So the Committee of Concerned Asian Scholars was created in response to that situation. It arises out of a particular American context. It unites all sorts of different kinds of people. Some come out of peace movements, many with ties to Quakers and Quaker organizations. CCAS also comes out of people who are committed to social justice, coming out of the Civil Rights Movement people, who wanted a change in inclusiveness in the academies, in the society. Then it also had people coming out of a red-background family, people who came out of families with left politics, perhaps silenced as a result of McCarthyism, and now willing to speak up. The organization essentially consisted of those three groups, allied around opposition to the US military intervention in Vietnam, in favor of the normalization of relations with China, and promoting changing the conditions in the academy. I was in Taiwan during the period when CCAS was beginning. So I was not tied to any one of the groups. Therefore I was able to act as a facilitator of making a common statement of purpose of all groups. I was never part of any of the three groups. But I think I most identified with the second group. The differences within the group very quickly became clear. The first group really cared about ending the War in Vietnam. The second group really cared about changing the academy. The third group was really pro-Mao and had a so-called socialist agenda. Over time, the United States would pull out of Vietnam; Nixon would normalize relations with China. Therefore, the things that held these different kinds of people together disappeared. The third group gets what’s left of CCAS. It becomes the organization. These scholars see themselves as having an anti-colonial politics, and exposing America as a capitalist imperialist country. That was not my view of the world. I was against bad American foreign policy, such as military intervention in Vietnam, or not having normal relations with China. But I surely didn’t understand America as destroying the world. So CCAS changes over time. Me and the people who came out of the other groups essentially
pulled away from it. With the new situation, it has been very hard for the organization to attract new young scholars. Basically that is what happened with the Committee of Concerned Asian Scholars. It was a coalition. Eventually the so-called Red group, because they had the truth, don’t want to be held back by people such as me who don’t understand how the world works. And eventually I pulled out of the organization.

Huang: So how would you evaluate the influence of the CCAS on the China studies field?
Friedman: It didn’t do anything to the academy. The part that I most cared about clearly didn’t succeed at all. The Quaker peace group, that kind of peace politics, continues to exist in the United States. There’s nothing special about CCAS in that. Unfortunately, the people who were most committed to that third group didn’t get established in major places in the academy. Some would leave the academy and go into different lives. Some were penalized, discriminated against. They are seen as dangerous. People in the academy, because I was in CCAS, would worry that I was going to throw a bomb tomorrow or something like that. Over time, CCAS had ever less impact. It had a short period of flourishing. If it had any impact, I think it made people more conscious that they should look at the history of other places in terms of those place’s own categories and be more careful about imposing categories from their own society and assuming that these are the universal categories which explain everywhere. That aspect led to better scholarship, teaching scholars to look much more inside a society rather than having a notion of you see everything from a universal tendency of westernization understood as what modernization is. That scholarly influence is the best impact that CCAS had.

Huang: That sounds quite good.
Friedman: Well that part was good.

Huang: If you can, a kind of hard question, if you can like assess different stages of your intellectual history, how would you do that?
Friedman: We already discussed the changes that occurred to me when I was here in Taiwan as a student. Let’s begin after that. From ‘67 to ‘78 when I’m not going to China. I don’t think I know much about contemporary China. I’m working on peasant revolutions. For example I actually did a piece on the peasant revolution in 1525 in Germany. And then I’m also heading in a foreign policy direction. That’s one period. The second period is when I begin to do rural research inside of China. That in many ways
eats my life up, except that I continue to be involved with the US government. I still enjoy doing that. I love being a useful citizen. It is ok to be a useful citizen. So I have kept doing that. Not only foreign affairs but I actually worked in the office of the secretary of defense in 1993-4. And then these two village books are done and I got involved in the sustainable development project. I begin to think and begin to write on democratization and how it is related to revolution. I think that’s it.

Huang: So you mean that when in 1978 you got a chance to go to China, and we can actually just say that you kept following a similar path, don’t you think so?

Friedman: I was learning about how the state affected rural policy and how it impacted daily lives. It was an experience like peeling the layers of an onion. There were always more layers. I don’t think we got to the core or the bottom. But we were pulling back layers and we were getting closer. That was an exciting experience. Those books were written and rewritten many many times because we were learning more and more. But at a certain point, you have to say that I know that there are more layers that I need to peel back, but I can’t do the same project forever. So you bring it to an end. The first one comes out in 1991, and the second one in 2004 or so. The first one gets translated into Chinese and reviewed in Chinese. The second one had an interesting history. It covers the period from the Great Leap to the year 2000. We thought we wrote very very carefully. Never writing anything that could get anybody in trouble and never claiming a leader was a bad person. We let the voices of local people tell their truths. So the people who translated and published volume 1 wanted to translate volume 2 too. But the military virtually vetoed it. We had learned and detailed was the military’s involvement in rural politics, the 27th in Shijiazhuang, and the 38th Army in Baoding. We learned a lot from talking to people about how these two armies were involved in local things. Nobody ever questioned the truth about what we wrote. We were very careful about not writing down things we merely think are true. We always sought a confirming source. We had a long list of things we thought were true but that we couldn’t confirm. They are not in the book. One villager pointed out that we had her grandfather’s occupation wrong. But putting aside that one error about the grandfather, which I don’t think is a disaster, no one ever questioned the facts in the book. We were very careful. But the social science academy people in Beijing were told that the military does not want things published which show
the military engaged in factional politics, ordinary politics, cultural revolution mayhem. So the Academy, even though they had fully translated, and lent money to translate the book -- and it was their money for translating the volume -- they were not going to publish the Chinese version. So we have this interesting experience in which they translated the second volume, but then couldn’t publish. It was very embarrassing to them. And it was very disappointing to us. We really would have liked to have it translated into Chinese. We had many experiences with the first volume when we went to universities and discussed the book and learned things from Chinese scholars who wanted to share their knowledge with us. I’m always a student who is hungry to learn more. So I felt very cheated by that event not being able to repeat with the second volume. Also it was sad to see people who had supported the project suffer the indignity of living in an authoritarian country where they were made to look bad and cowardly. It was a very sad experience.

Huang: Yeah but I think many scholars would totally agree and maybe probably share similar experiences like yours. We haven’t really talked a lot about how you experienced the US department of defense.

Friedman: That’s a very brief experience. It had nothing to do with China. When the Cold War ended it becomes obvious to any serious observer that there’s gonna be more military interventions by the United States because there would be no balancing force from the Soviet Union anymore. So the Defense Department was interested, if this was going to happen and one assumed that it was, in whether there were possibilities of installing democracy. What should be the roles of the military? I was part of a group trying to figure out, and write papers for military units that might get involved, in what eventually became known as peace keeping operations. These indeed eventually occurred all over the world. It was really a foreseeable event. The military hated what we were doing. The military, to the military, a fighting force. The military does not do nation-building and so as soon as the secretary of defense for whom I was working, a gentleman named Les Aspen, who was from Wisconsin, pure coincidence, was removed from office we were replaced by whoever became the next Secretary of Defense. We heard they shredded everything that we did. The military so hated it. So there was no consequence other than I think America was less prepared. And it wasn’t the last time that happened. When Bush ordered US troops into Iraq in 2003, the State Department had done similar
kinds of things in preparation for a transitional occupation. The Defense Department refused to even read the papers. Real world governments work in terms of stupidities, bureaucratic conflicts, struggling for positions. The result was Iraq in 2003, with chaos and looting and arms moving all over the place leading to what Iraq became. The failure of our project, or the destruction of our project, and of the State Department’s which tried to repeat it later on, is part of the sadness of some events that would later occur. So nothing positive came out of what I did at Defense.

Huang: So you only worked there for a short period?

Friedman: Two years, ‘93-’94, very part time.

Huang: At the same time you were still working at Wisconsin as a tenured professor? How did you take care of these kinds of work? Doing research and then while working in the government, I mean, there has to be any, like a conflict in your writing?

Friedman: From the time I was in Taiwan and began to get involved with the US Government, as a person who taught foreign policy, Chinese foreign policy, I was always interested in American policy. Learning about real world things from experiences made me much more sensitive to and able to do better work on the foreign policy course I teach. I am very much focused on the domestic political causes of foreign policy. These experiences hopefully allowed me to do better academic work.

Huang: I think that this sounds very interesting to me, because it seems to me you started to have a kind of connection and serve in the government since you were very young. I don’t know a lot, but I don’t really see a lot of scholars, especially doing research on China, who have a similar interest like you.

Friedman: People in the States say that this experience of academics in the China field going in and out of government was a generational thing. Political science scholars are now trained to be methodologically sophisticated people. The generation that I am part of was a much more broadly educated and had a much larger perspective. We expected to deal with these kinds of questions. The profession has moved in a direction where this will not be natural. Mike Oksenberg, Kenneth Lieberthal, Susan Shirk, Ezra Vogel, a long list of people who came out of the academy and who did work on China got involved in doing government work. Most recently Thom Christenson from Princeton. But as the general view is it was generational.
Huang: If I ask you to define your own position in the field of China studies, in the academia, how would you define yourself? What is the thing you think that you brought to the field? And what would be the most possible, of course we don’t do a prediction, but what would people define you in your own…?

Friedman: You’d have to ask other people. I remember the AAS view that anybody involved in the Committee of Concerned Asian Scholars was gonna to destroy the field by creating a governmental backlash as occurred during the McCarthy period. Some powerful people in the discipline imagined CCASers as dangerous people who did not want to allow to train the next generation of graduate students. They made sure CCASers were not on funding committees either. I think there was a group which had control of funding and conferences and intentionally kept what they saw as dangerous people out of doing those kinds of things. Probably that impacted me. But nothing bad happened to me. But similar scholars get excluded from many of these kinds of activities. That does have an impact. There were people who thought of me as dangerous or crazy. Almost none of them would actually have known me as an individual. But that’s neither here nor there. When I look back, I think I am part of three tendencies, of larger forces. One, I am part of a group which wanted to get scholars to not think about America in Asia in terms of unquestioned Cold War categories but to open up to thinking about the perspectives of other people and rethinking our basic views of how to understand any event from the Korean War on in terms of larger forces. I co-authored a book called *America’s Asia*. We challenged Cold War categories. Second, I am very much part of scholarship involved with living in China at a grass-root level, and becoming aware of these grass-root things inside of China, not being satisfied with general categories, modernization theory or something like that. I’d like to think that the ethnographic work we did is part of us getting into the real world of how Chinese society and politics actually work. I’d like to think of that as increasingly successful in changing how the profession is understood. Third, I think I had a role in rethinking how to conceptualize national identity, and beginning to think about national identities, that is, to imagine different forces in China, to accept the constructivist turn in social sciences in which one should understand that people created the categories and narratives of nationalism. The official CCP stories on the Opium War in China, there is absolutely no truth to them at all. There is almost not a
single sentence in the official Opium War story in China which has any relationship to reality. The British did not turn the Chinese into opium addicts. Their Emperor first banned opium smoking because it was a danger back in the 1720’s, long before the British were around. The Opium War nationalist narrative is a totally created story which served Mao’s political purposes. Rethinking identity issues and imagining what political purposes were served, and not just buying into the myths which are coming out of China, is a large conceptual change. I would like to think I contributed to that. Right now there are fine scholars like Chris Hughes and William Callahan in England who do very good work on these kinds of issues. I’d like to think I had something to do with that. I also think about the areas in which I never put things together to make the contributions I should have made, unfinished business. I have long been rethinking the category of revolution, especially the category of democratic revolution. I’ve written a few things on that topic. Did I get distracted by government work? I don’t like to think of it that way. I think I am enriched by government work. But I do feel I was a failure in not doing the kinds of things which I should have done in bringing revolution and democracy together and doing serious publishing on it. An article here and an article there, but nothing of any lasting value. I think that’s where I would feel a disappointment, what I didn’t do.

Huang: You only have 24 hours every day.

Friedman: I think you have 25! I don’t sleep very much, I only sleep five hours a night. I always have slept five hours and in fact my nickname in the village was 老五點, because I was always up by five and in the field. So I don’t need very much sleep, for whatever reason I have a fit body. Mosquitos don’t bite me, I don’t get sick. I never missed a day of school, I don’t know how to explain all these things. But I only sleep five hours a night.

Huang: And you eat little?

Friedman: I do work a lot. Intellectual concentration takes a lot of energy. I used to be able to go back to work after dinner and work till midnight. There is no way I can do that anymore. That person is gone. So I am very conscious of things which I may never do. I’m a very simple person, very easy to please. I get pleasure out of life. People are asking, what are you going to do now you are retired? And I can’t even figure out what the question means.
Huang: Are you really retired?

Friedman: I am retired. I teach but I’m retired. I’m professor emeritus. I have a consciousness that I should have done much more. But I don’t think I will. I get pleasure for example of replaying a game of chess done by the masters or teaching my grandson how to play chess, or doing a crossword puzzle, or reading a novel, or taking a walk in the park. I am a very simple person. Swimming to me is a fantastically delicious thing to be able to do. I would easily have a lot of fun and pleasure without having to answer the question of what I’m going to do when I’m retired.

Huang: Well I think it is because you really have so much wisdom about life. I see you have such an extraordinary life, more than many people I guess.

Friedman: I feel very fortunate. I feel very lucky. I didn’t deserve it and I didn’t do anything to deserve it. I ran into good luck. I’m very grateful for it.

Huang: Oh I don’t really think…

Friedman: But we’ll move on from that topic, ok?

Low voice: …(inaudible 33:35)

Friedman: Right now or throughout?

Low voice: Throughout.

Friedman: UW, Madison is a public university. Everybody in my department should teach what is called a service course. That means a large lecture course. I began by teaching Introduction to Politics. Then, to comparative politics, which could have over 500 students. I came to hate teaching that, because students really want you to be an entertainer. I couldn’t really teach well to 500 plus students. I created a course on Challenges of Democratization. I created a course on The Politics of Revolution. I taught both undergraduate and graduate students. The category revolution is disappearing in social sciences. Now it’s just social movement literature. Today you study revolution as a part of a social movements literature, which I think destroys any serious way of thinking about the category revolution, which is unfortunate. I taught Chinese politics, but when we hired a second China specialist, Professor Melanie Manion, she took that class, because she doesn’t do foreign policy, I sorts do foreign policy. I created a course on international political economy, which is one of the most fun courses that I teach. When I was a graduate student, I took courses in international economics, I can’t remember why I
did it. But they made me very much at ease with international political economy literature. I teach what I think is a really good and interesting course on political economy. The two courses I’ve kept alive, teaching one course a semester, are the two courses I like,--- Chinese foreign policy and international political economy. The most fun change is in the Chinese foreign policy course. A very large percentage of the students in the course now are from Asia, the majority from China. What happens, is that your students get into your head. When you become conscious of these students from elsewhere, you find yourself changing how you reflect on reality and how you say things because they now are part of the discourse. What scares me is I become conscious despite all my best efforts, that, if these international students were not there, there are more parochial things I might be saying. The Asian students have a deep impact on me. There are so many good reasons for having international students at your university. This, to me is one of them. They get inside of your head and force you, since you don’t want to seem like a prejudiced fool, to rethink how you understand many things. That’s a really good change. Recently, in my course on Chinese foreign policy, of the two best students in the class, one was from China and one from India. They were both superior to the American students. It was almost embarrassing. But they really were the best students. Of course, the two of them saw the world very very differently. They would get into arguments in the class. While I tend to be very critical of the authoritarian Chinese government and friendlier towards the democratic Indian government, the Chinese woman was so much smarter and more open than the guy from India that I would always be on her side. These experiences occur because of the changing world. If I’m all alone with American students, I’m not compelled to rethink. I believe in a verstehen approach of not making judgments from the outside, of trying to understand what is going on with the people in China making policy. Then, you let your students make their own value judgments. You don’t impose your own value judgments. Some say professors are supposed to profess. But I think what an instructor is supposed to profess is that you are engaged in a quest for truth. You are not supposed to profess that you know the truth. At least, I don’t do that. The changes in the UW student body, the greater internationalization of our student body, has been a great contribution to my rethinking policy-making in China. I just love having international
students in the class. But I still would like to see some better performing American students. That wouldn’t upset me.

Huang: (question inaudible 39: 40)

Friedman: I became sensitized to the Chinese perspective a lot earlier. The dean of diplomatic studies at Tsinghua University, Xue Mouhong, still alive, had worked for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in China. He might have been ambassador to Kenya. I came to know him in China. He came for a semester to Wisconsin. He audited my Chinese Foreign Policy class. I wanted him to speak up in the class, but he refused to do so. I then told him I didn’t want him to come to the class if he didn’t contribute to the class. We made a compromised deal. After each class he would come to my office and tell me what he thought I did wrong. He gave me my first experience of how unconsciously I am so very parochial. The major thing he taught me was that I was always making an error by not taking seriously what was going on in politics in China. I was too much a rational actor, national interest person. I didn’t see how much leaders needed policies which supported their domestic political power. I learned I don’t know enough about Chinese domestic politics. He taught me that if I really want to do Chinese foreign policy in a knowledgeable way, I really would have to spent more time on getting inside of what is going on at the highest levels of politics in China. Day after day he would tell me, you missed that, you didn’t know that. He made me conscious of how unconsciously I was a parochial American. I was, to do Chinese foreign policy without putting more time into getting inside of Chinese politics was misleading. He would tell me that every day.

Huang: (question inaudible 42: 23)

Friedman: Only for the purpose of foreign policy things. I don’t think of myself as a person who does domestic Chinese elite politics in any kind of serious way. But I am very interested. Let me give you an example from an article I once wrote. If I would look at it today, I would say it has precisely the error that he pointed out. I have an article in *America’s Asia* on China’s intervention in the Korean War, framed in terms of how Chinese are experiencing their national interest. But from my conversations with people, with Yang Kuisong and others, I find people who do Chinese foreign policy these days in China, who are all aware of these kinds of things. I really believe that Mao saw getting involved in the Korean War as a way of mobilizing support for his politics. He was a very
War-Communism-identified person. He wanted to destroy any legitimacy of the United States in China which might support liberal points of view. I was just stupid to not have asked questions about Mao and his political priorities which served his narrowest interests. To ignore what Mao was fighting for in domestic politics in China, to not assume it had a large impact on him making foreign policy decisions is foolish. National interest, rational actor framings in IR are almost always a fallback position when you don’t know domestic politics. I was guilty of applying this ordinary IR ploy, I learned this a little late in life. But I think it is an important piece of learning. I’ll tell you a story of the Iraq War that way, I was once teaching at the Maxwell Airbase, the Air War College. It educates the able air force colonels and one stars who move into intelligence jobs, or embassies, or staff jobs. They get an international relations education. I like doing that kind of education. After you teach a number of classes, people begin to have friendly thoughts about you. They are learning and they like learning. So they are happy about their teacher. We go out drinking. This is two months before Bush sends American troops into Iraq. I still have the same critical view of American foreign policy that I had from the beginning. I’m very much against the intervention in Iraq, which one can see was coming. So I say to these colonels and one stars: “why do you think it is happening?” They begin to say sentences to me, which, I could not have invented or imagined. They say, well the first thing you have to understand is that Saddam’s military has been destroyed. He is a threat to no one. The USG has been saying since 1991, the Gulf War in Kuwait, that the US has a no-fly zone over Iraq. Everybody knows, well I don’t know, with everybody, they mean everyone who’s a colonel or one star in the Air Force, that’s just a cover. What the US has really been doing is destroying Saddam’s military. Its units can’t communicate with each other. There’s no threat. The US military will go in and walk to Baghdad. It will meet no organized opposition. I’ve never heard these sentences before. They are very angry at Bush. They have destroyed Saddam’s military without losing a single life. They wanna be applauded and congratulated that they have achieved this. Instead, there’s this notion that Saddam is a great big threat, which is like saying that they didn’t achieve anything. They are really angry. So why do you think President Bush is doing this, I ask? He must have the information that you are giving to me. There’s no way this information doesn’t go up the chain of command. And they say, 43, 41. 43, 41. I
had no idea what that meant. They explained George H. W. Bush was the 41st president of the United States. In their view, his quest to defeat Saddam has nothing to do with American national interest. It has totally to do with the son showing himself superior to the father. The father didn’t go all the way to Baghdad: doing so is how the son would show himself superior to his father. Also it’s vengeance because Saddam had tried to assassinate his father, the elder Bush. Personally, I think the war has a lot to do with oil. But they are not into those categories. They experience US foreign policy just as my Chinese friend Xue Mouhong was describing China. If you don’t walk into these personal things of leaders or know how power is working in the capital, you are a very naïve person. I hear from these Air Force guys the same thing about America that I heard from Xue Mouhong about China. This intrigues me in terms of how one should teach international relations and how one should think about foreign policy. I then say to these Air Force guys my most naïve sentences. It is always important to say naïve things. If you say naïve things, people will then correct your naiveté and you learn. If you are always trying to protect yourself, and seem sophisticated, you are actually a very stupid person, someone who is not going to learn from other people. So I say, why don’t some of you guys stand up and say out loud what you just said to me? Why don’t you publish opinioned pieces in the newspaper? They respond, no Sir, commander in chief. Civilians are supposed to be in control. It is so effective, this American notion of how its democracy works. Civilians run the military. You just don’t challenge legitimate decision-makers. Perhaps some generals in the air force at some level made an argument inside the government against the war. But to my students at Maxwell, I was telling them to stop being Americans and to corrupt the system. Their experience of being in the military is you don’t do that. Bush is the commander in chief. We follow orders from the commander. Didn’t you know, civilian control? Where have you been in this country? I have enriched experience of life from putting myself in those positions where I meet knowledgeable people and allow them to educate me. That’s why I still try to do these kinds of things. I wish it were more widespread. Isn’t it interesting that both in China and America, whatever their political system, in many ways states act similarly in terms of the importance of domestic politics. It’s a basic point made in a two-level game realist international relations approach. Most Americans believe that the US is different because
it’s a democracy. Internally that’s the case. But in foreign policy, I’m very suspicious, even cynical about claims for democratic exceptionalism.

Low Voice: Some of the stories from Iraq of various situations support China’s, every good thing from the West, including just war, fighting crime, human rights, all these things, all are because of interest, individual interest, national interest…

Friedman: I do believe nations have interests. For the Chinese Communist Party, the primary interest is always the same, the interest is to further entrench the power of the Chinese Communist Party. What’s going on in a democracy has nothing to do with that. But did war in Iraq actually serve an American interest if it has truly to do with 41 and 43? At least the oil explanation is an interest explanation. You may not like it, but I can understand it as an interest explanation. To take our friends in China, how did they understand America’s intervention with NATO against Milosevic in Serbia? The PRC supplied weapons to him. In their view the NATO intervention part of the American policy to subvert the Chinese Communist Party. This is an insane explanation. If Europe allows ethnic cleansing in Europe, then everything that Europe has achieved since WWII will be destroyed. Ethnic cleansing is something Europeans think of in terms of the Nazis. Its return to Europe, is something Europeans can’t allow. The Germans believe this deeply, but they find that they cannot do anything to stop the ethnic cleansing because they don’t have the military capacity. So they have to turn to NATO and the United States. Clinton doesn’t even wanna get involved. The last thing he needs is American lives being lost in Central Europe. So what is the compromise? The United States gets involved in the conflict in Serbia, with very high bombing so no American lives get lost. The US comes through for its allies in Europe and yet in domestic politics in the United States nothing bad happens. Sacrificing American lives for these European purposes would upset the American people. But no Chinese will explain the US interest in that kind of way. The CCP leadership is so self-defined by their own categories of victimization and being threatened. Interest is a basic category, but as Xue Mouhong would tell me, you have to be open to how politics define interest in some horribly narrow kinds of ways. People care about enhancing their own power, their faction, their kin, their institution. Then they have to sell the policy. So it has to be presented as national interest in some way. But whether it actually is national interest is a separate
mater. Look at Bush in terms of the Iraq intervention. He seeks a cover story,-- rights, weapons of mass destruction, democratization. But why should we believe any of those? The proclaimed interest is a cover story, myths. They’re constructed. They can be very effective. I was still teaching Comparative Politics when the Iraq intervention occurs, I asked the students, how many Iraqi’s were involved in the attacks of 9-11? As you all know, the answer is zero. Fifteen Saudi Arabians and four Yemenis. No Iraqi’s. Saddam Hussein was against Bin Laden. Saddam’s was a basically secular regime. Bush, while selling the war, never said Iraqi’s were involved at all. He alluded to it. He implied it. There’s no sentence in which he actually says it. He just lets you think it. He just refers to a continuing war against terrorism and asks Americans to remember what happened to the victims of 9-11. Among the 500 or so students in the class, when asked how many Iraqis participated in 9-11, almost no one in the class said zero. The consensus was in the middle, half. So I see the effectiveness of state propaganda in the USA. And then I look at China, where it is basically a single voice all the time selling whatever the state defines as patriotic, and I get terrified. In the United States, there were competing public voices. They don’t have that in China. I am very impressed by the power of states to create and mobilize public opinion. I don’t think any leader in China is worried about Taiwan, or is anti-Taiwan. The emotion that is most easily mobilizable is hate for Japan rooted in a Chinese experience of the war and stories being told since in the family. But look at what the PRC state created recently. Hate for South Korea. In six months, the CCP mobilized anti-Korean sentiments in China. That’s very scary.

Huang: So how would you, I know you don’t like to do any prediction, but how would you evaluate what you’ve seen in the development of foreign policy toward China within one …?

Friedman: I’m not going to predict. But change has occurred. Americans are more focused on the economy since the crash of 2008. You’re gonna see an increasing number of forces in American politics saying, we can’t allow China’s cheating to hurt us anymore. We’re gonna have to retaliate. You can see Obama administration filing more suits against such cheating at the WTO. You saw the Romney platform which branded China a currency manipulator, which means that the US would be allowed to put tariffs on all Chinese import equal to the amount that it found China cheating on subsidizing Chinese
exports. Those forces are growing, in Europe, too. The Chinese economy is gonna slow down. The Chinese government is going to be worried about jobs. You could have a large drop in property or real estate prices. Middle class people who put lots of money into the stock market could begin to lose. There’s no way in the world that the CCP is going to compromise with the United States on issues which could stop the rise of economic superpower China. The greatest danger out there is what I call the game of chicken. It is a game in which two cars head at full speed at each other. One of them has to turn out of the way. Otherwise they crash and both die. I can see forces growing which will put China and the United States in a game of chicken. The question is, what if the domestic politics work so that neither would decide to turn aside? Domestic politics is decisive. The consequence of these domestic politics may be scarier than war emerging from a clash in the South Sea.

Huang: So how would you say about the term that has been discussed academically about China rising peacefully?

Friedman: That’s a silly term. First of all Chinese don’t believe in it. It’s criticized inside of China. If you read the literature on 和平崛起, it doesn’t mean rising, it means emerging, 崛起 like a chicken coming out of an egg. It’s intriguing try to live in the two languages, the English and the Chinese. Talk to Chinese. When you say 崛起 it’s a very fragile kind of, 崛起, not a real rise 起来. In China, “emerging fragilely” plays into this notion of we Chinese are potentially a victim of foreign powers. But when the Chinese analyst Zheng, known for popularizing “peaceful rise,” he had to accept three limits. It couldn’t include Taiwan, because Taiwan supposedly was a part of China. If the PRC sent troops into Taiwan, that wasn’t war. It was simply protecting China’s territory. Second, “peaceful rise” couldn’t refer to any Chinese territorial claim, like the South Sea. War there was just protecting Chinese territory. That’s supposedly not war. Thirdly, “peaceful rise” cannot refer to any territories which would have been involved with energy issues, because if China cannot protect its energy life lines, it cannot keep its economy growing. China is ever more dependent on imported oil. As a percentage, it’s more dependent already on imported oil than the United States. There is a difference between how “peaceful rise” is understood in China, and how the slogan gets propagandized to the outside world. In China the terms has been redefined so that it has
no content. It doesn’t refer to Taiwan. It doesn’t include territory claimed by the PRC. It
doesn’t mean territory involving energy, because that’s China’s national lifeline.
Leninism is pervaded by propagandistic terminology. The CCP will say, in China, the
people rule. The PRC is the real democracy. It’s actually an unaccountable dictatorship
with a single party that has a monopoly in power. How can the CCP regime claim it’s a
democracy? Because, in Leninist ideology, the party represents the real interest of the
people. Within Leninist categories, you have to take your time to un-pack them. Many
people read these propagandistic slogans, and they think that they mean what they seem
to mean to people who live in a society that has open political conversations of give and
take. Peaceful rise should mean peaceful rise. But, to Leninism, it doesn’t. There is no
peaceful rise. It’s not a concept which can be invoked against Chinese military, stopping
the Vietnamese from interfering with China’s claims to territory which have energy
resources which China needs for its growth. There’s nothing in the concept peaceful rise
to get in the way of Chinese military action. Of course, Chinese writings on foreign
policy, contain much real content. But you have to take time to deconstruct Leninist
phraseology. If you don’t take the time to understand the propaganda content, all you
have are misleading slogans.

Huang: I agree. I think the writing is actually, well for me it is actually better
because it speaks of a lot of debate, different because they are scholars.

Low voice: …擴張是理所當然要的…

Another Low Voice: …hegemonic in foreign policy. So how do you reckon the
criticism along the way on China’s expansionism effort? Does China portray themselves
as a new kind of commodity or?

Friedman: On this one I’m actually on China’s side. I never found useful the
category neo-colonialism. If I didn’t find it useful when it was applied to the United
States, it would be hypocritical to me to say I wanna apply neo-colonialism to China. But
of course the CCP has applied it to the United States. So, from a CCP perspective, there
is no doubt that China’s activities in Africa are neo-colonial. Neo-colonial meant that one
side, the so-called colonialist, buys primary products and raw materials and sells finished
products. Therefore it is supposedly a big winner, and supposedly replicates colonial
relations. What’s actually at stake is what a primary product exporter does with the
money made from selling raw material. If you invest the money you make in selling your raw material in education, infrastructure, and upgrading your economy, then a country is taking advantage of the opportunity it had from raw material export earnings. If a country doesn’t do that, and stays locked in to exporting the raw material, why blame the country that’s buying the raw material? Therefore, it is very unhelpful to think about Chinese foreign policy in Africa as being neo-colonial. I would have said the same thing when Cuba and Castro said that it had a neocolonial relationship with the United States cause it sold sugar and bought manufactured goods. The question is what you did with the sugar money. If a country didn’t upgrade it comparative competitiveness, it had really itself to blame. It’s about the same thing for China and Africa as America and Cuba.

Huang: How would you evaluate the new generation of scholars that are doing China Studies in the United States? You know that there has been a different generation, a different way of being educated from your generation, so how would you see those people?

Friedman: Well I’m not sure if I know enough young scholars to say something intelligent. The ones who I have met and gotten to know are very smart, very able. They do very good work. They have established good working relations with people in China. What I don’t like, as we talked about before, is that the work is a little bit too narrow. But they are very well trained and do very good work.

Huang: You know my own perspective is I can see the, of course they are the older generation than me, like you adopt more like a historical approach, but people like Iain Johnston, that he’s more adopting the IR approach, and we call it constructivism, and like Allen Carson, he does this as well, like we have the We Calm (? 01: 08: 59) you know who’s doing the topic on China rising and have a very positive prediction…

Friedman: Let’s just take these three who are all very interesting. Let’s just start with David Kang, I think he is totally wrong. His basic prediction was that it was inconceivable, since China was, as everybody supposedly knows, a beneficent country, that there would ever be an attempt to balance against China in Asia. One can say as a matter of fact what Kang wrote has been discredited by events. I take that as a fact.

Tape shut off 1:10:03
C_1/C_3: Continuation of C_2

Friedman: Iain is extremely well connected in the Chinese academic foreign policy establishment. He is probably better connected to it than any American in the academy who works on IR. He is an extraordinarily well-informed person.

Huang: He is better connected, it means that he has a network or?

Friedman: He has friends all over the Chinese international relations establishment. Much much better than me. You have to take seriously what he writes. He’s just a tremendously well-informed person. He also wrote a very interesting first book, which I think of as very unfair to China.

Huang: Which one?

Friedman: The one on the Ming, *Cultural Realism*. I think it is unfair to China because all empires act in an offensive realist way, not just Ming China. In an era of empires in which there are no national boundaries, polities expand as far as they can. While it is true that the popular Chinese myth about how China was always peaceful is absolute nonsense, it’s also untrue that China uniquely had a war-prone parabellum culture, as Johnston claims. Find me an empire that didn’t have a parabellum culture. Russia, America, Britain, Thailand, Birma, Cambodia, Japan. Parabellum tendencies are not rooted in a peculiarly war-prone Chinese culture. The two, Kang and Johnston interpret the data on post-Mao Chinese foreign policy in an unrealistic optimistic way. They don’t take sufficiently into consideration nasty elements of reality such as the domestic politics or nationalistic nastiness, or the amoral tendencies of powerful states. I don’t see Chinese politics in this era or any era as being worse than anybody else. I expect the same nasty things to come out of China as a rising power, especially one which is adopting a variety of capitalism which requires repression of consumption to facilitate industrial exports. It creates a need for a lot of state power and nationalistic mobilization. It is a very worrisome. It was worrisome when Bismarck’s successors first did it. It was worrisome when the Meiji subsequently did it. It has worrisome potentials inside of China. I am not arguing that history must repeat itself. China faces Chinese
provides. It doesn’t want to screw up its export markets. It doesn’t want to create out-of-control situations which might unleash domestic forces that could threaten the party’s monopoly of power. It doesn’t want to do things which make it more likely that its neighbors will invite in the American military. But, when you add on domestic CCP politics and the nature of the CCP state and the consequences of the constructed national identity that facilitates chauvinist mobilization, avoiding the negatives becomes more complex. The optimists ignore these kinds of things. They ignore the interplay of the politics which will ultimately determine what China does. I’m not predicting. But I see the future as a much more open and dangerous situation than do the optimistic analysts who are betting on certain forces necessarily winning out and producing happy outcomes. States are not loveable. States are not trustworthy and should not be romanticized. I believe vigilance against nasty state behavior, I didn’t say authoritarian states. Vigilance against all states is always correct. Hence, the way the optimists talk about deep forces leading on to happy outcomes ignores how the real world of foreign policy making actually occurs. I would love the optimists to be correct. But I don’t believe international politics is a realm comprehended by optimists who invariably predict happy outcomes.

Huang: I think that those in terms of, you know, in the way that wield out the …vality (5: 38) into the research, you know, it’s so easy to, especially scholars that apply a different strategy, it just leads them to a different perspective, so yeah…but of course they just represent…

Friedman: Let’s stick with Iain. He’s the most knowledgeable of the three. Let’s pick on the analyst who really is a formidable scholarly and intellectual force. Why does he take an English school constructivist approach in his latest book to talk about China being socialized to global norms as the dominant tendency? It could just be that he finds this approach best explains things in the world. Or it could be that that approach allows him to present material in a way where happy predictions about China come true. For all analysts, me too, it’s dangerous too not be conscious of your own wishes and hopes as you describe international politics. I think he has a great hope that these things will turn out well. He is looking for reasons to support his hope. I hope he’s correct. Why should one want bad things to occur? I might be criticized for looking for theories which show much nastier things at work. That’s a fair point. It’d be good to see serious intellectual
debates on presuppositions and their consequences. In the profession, however, there really are no places where you find respectful, factual, theoretical debates on “meta” issues. Scholars write short reviews. But it’s a very lonely profession without much respectful give and take. Perhaps when a scholar is ready to retire, there will be a panel on his work at some conference. But it would be nice to have honest and real debates as a normal part of the knowledge business. It almost never happens. It would be a great thing if you could have panels at conferences, not where the panelist says so-and-so is a great guy, but where we could have challenging debates in which people are forced to muster evidence. It just doesn’t happen in the academy. The academy is too respectful of authority. It’s not enough engaged in debating the issues and methodologies that are at stake. I really disagree with Iain’s conclusions, but I am totally respectful. He’s a really knowledgeable and fantastically able analyst whom analysts should read and think his arguments. It’s perfectly OK to disagree with anybody. But I would like to see places where you could do that without calling names. In the academy, scholars go off into the library and do their work and it gets published and then other people go back into their library—or the field- and do their work and it gets published. Where is serious intellectual conversation? To go back to where we began, I think one of the things the Committee of Concerned Asian Scholars in its original bulletin hoped for was that it would create more of those kinds of conversations. It was very unfortunate that the journal got taken over by one ideological perspective and it was not a more open forum. The only English language journal in the China field that does it is China Review International. CRI does long review essays. It’s published by the University of Hawaii Press. They sometimes have very serious conversations. It would be nice to have more places where that could occur normally. I think it would be very healthy for the profession.

Zun Jinhao: … join the debate in China proper? (11: 30) Mao Zedong?
Friedman: What Mao does?
Zun Jinhao: promised.
Friedman: I made a mistake. At that time, I had not yet been to China. I was not writing on domestic China. I got persuaded to write something about Mao after his death. It felt like an honor. I stupidly said yes. It might be the worst thing I ever wrote. I had to
write on something I really wasn’t prepared to write on. It was a mistake. I am not proud of it.

Zun Jinha: Because of (12: 43)…mention about China?

Friedman: I had to write in a hurry. The piece is not very thoughtful. It would be OK with me if the chapter would be shredded and everybody forgot about it. It’s not how one should do intellectual work.

Zun Jinha: So your idea about of revolution is never the same which those CCAS members, and your idea of revolution is never the same as those who come from the left?

Friedman: Depending on how you define the left. To me, the single most important revolution that ever occurred was the revolution in Haiti. It brought an end to the slave system in Haiti, and led the beginning to the end of slavery in the whole world. I think that was the single most important revolution that ever occurred in the history of the human species. Recently there is a growing literature on the Haiti revolution at a time when very little good is being written on revolution in general. But there is on the Haiti revolution. Yet, in all the classic comparative studies of revolution, Haiti doesn’t even get mentioned. So I do find most of the literature on revolution illuminating. Second, how does a student of revolution handle the fact that there have been throughout human history rebellions which overthrew regimes and people tried to establish more just orders afterwards, and ended up, as with Stalinist-Leninism, not making life better for the powerless. In studying revolution, I want to understand what those people thought they were fighting for. Across every culture, across every religion, revolutionaries had similar views of what the good society was. They wanted less inequality; they wanted less arbitrary power; they wanted more space to pursue their religion and family in their own way; they wanted more dignity and social justice. They didn’t know what institutions to build, but they knew what they were fighting for. Whether it’s the Mahdi in the Sudan in the 19th century, or the Red Eyebrows in China. If I were studying revolution, I would not just look at supposedly modern revolutions. I would look at these struggles for justice all over the world throughout human history to learn about how human beings conceive of a good and just society. This approach makes me different. Most of the standard studies of revolution are mesmerized by the Jacobin moment in the French revolution. That is treated as the real revolution. But out of the failed Jacobin project will come the
Bolshevik thrust. It’s a worsening of the worst Jacobin tendencies which gets embraced and promoted by Lenin. Lenin’s group actually imagined themselves as repeating what the Jacobin’s did only doing it correctly so they never would be thrown out of power. That project led to disasters all around the world. Do you consider that disaster as revolution? The French don’t know anymore what to do with their French revolution. They are very conscious of what the Jacobin tendency led to. There are no public statues of Robespierre anywhere in France. The only place that had a public statue of Robespierre is Russia. So what do you do if a project turns out to be monstrous? So I come to the study of revolution wanting to learn something from all of those so-called premodern tendencies. I want to learn where the Jacobin tendency went wrong. I want to understand why the Haitian revolution, whose economic destruction was a disaster for Haiti (Haiti still hasn’t recovered from the Haitian revolution), was a disaster. That leads me to the question of how an analyst should think about revolution and democracy. How do you relate revolution and democracy? Democracy is not the good society. It’s not justice incarnate. It’s simply an opportunity to peacefully grapple with basic problems. That’s all it is. A people can screw up that opportunity. Democracies are replete with negative forces in countries all over the world, here (Taiwan), my country (US), wherever you choose to look. How do you begin to think about such painful realities? This is where I begin to think about revolution. I do it very differently than the standard approaches towards revolution. I’ve long taught a course on revolution. Whether I’ll ever write the ideas and analyses up is yet to be seen. But getting revolution right is something I care very much about. In theory I have a book to be written called “Rethinking Revolution” in which I would like to do the four things I just outlined for you. But if I’ll ever do that, I don’t know.

Zun Jinhao: It seems you made up a list of violent revolutions, especially came from Leninism?

Friedman: You are raising a very tricky topic. Violent revolutions occur all the time. It is important to remember there are also largely peaceful revolutions. Many transitions to democracy have occurred peacefully, Eastern Europe just being one instance. Taiwan is another. I want to think about transitions to democracy as a kind of revolution. But we know that violence occurs all the time. It occurs because the forces of the old order refuse
to compromise. The Aung San Suu Kyi people in Burma made an offer to the military dictatorship in which they promised that nobody would be tried for what they did in power. They could keep their illegal fortunes. They would be allowed to retire with their corrupt wealth. The military at first said no. Political science teaches us that those are the deals democrats are supposed to offer to win a peace pact that allows for a non-violent transition to democracy. But what happens when authoritarian regimes reject those offers? The American Revolution was a violent revolution. The English Revolution was a violent revolution. Violent revolutions – the American Civil War to end slavery - occur within democracy too. Barrington Moore had an answer to your question on the role of violence. Moore’s answer was that to destroy the forces of the old order, violence is required everywhere in the world. Moore’s value neutral social science view was you didn’t have to judge violence from an ethical perspective. To Moore, it was a given that violence would be necessary to destroy the old system. But then Moore saw a problem, which I have written an article about in a festschrift volume for Moore co-edited by Theda Skocpol. Moore’s problem was India. India had a peaceful transition to democracy. Yet, over a million people died in ethnic conflict in establishing the neo-states of India and Pakistan. Moore’s view was that since there wasn’t violence to destroy the old landed elites, India’s democracy would not hold. To modernize, India would take either a fascist or communist path. But this isn’t what has happened. One of the beautiful things about the work of Moore and of all scholars who do good work is they leave you hypotheses. Therefore one can ask the question, “why was Moore wrong?” You don’t criticize him for being wrong. You learn from him how to think better about these key questions. As with David Kang’s erroneous claim that Asia would not balance against China, you should say something like, “Why was he wrong?” “What did he miss about how the world works?” We should have a serious conversation. It’s not a matter of “I’m smarter than you”. Let’s try to understand the world by understanding why serious people get things wrong about the world. Error should not be seen as a crime. We all make mistakes. You don’t have to defend your mistakes. As Shakespeare says “To err is human”. The issue of violence allows us to think about important questions. Many parents in Beijing in 1989 went to Tiananmen Square and asked their children to leave. I’ve met parents that said to their child: “You are premature; you can’t do this to the older CCP generation.
There is no way that they will respond by anything other than violently defending their power. This will make things worse. You will bring more oppressive people to power. You are not thinking usefully about how Chinese politics works. You are driven by your passions and hopes and ideals. But what you are doing is going to be counterproductive.” Those parents, and there were many many of those parents, especially in Beijing, they were correct in their understanding of the situation. But it is also true that you do not know in advance of trying what the outcome will be. You just do not know.

Politics is a contingent arena. I think of this in terms of the United States. In 1959 three teenage black youth sat down at a lunch counter at Woolworth. They were told to leave because the counter served white’s only. The protesters said no. Were they stubborn idiots who were inviting a beating up by the police? Could they know they were unleashing a Civil Rights Movement that transformed America? I will bet that before Woolworth there were hundreds of stubborn kids or adults who did similar things and ended up tortured, murdered, lynched, jailed. Their heroic struggles didn’t lead to anything. But this time it did. Why? One of the things which I think is correct in the literature on revolution is the notion that there are revolutionary situations. It is very difficult to identify in advance however what makes a revolutionary situation. In 1959, the situation was ripe. In 1989 in China, the situation was not ripe. But that’s retrospective genius. We know that parents went to the square and analyzed things accurately to their kids. But how blame the people of 1989 for hoping as did the people of 1959? It isn’t that I have answers. But these are good questions to try to clarify. Scholars should think about these big questions. I would love the fact that you ask big questions. I’m upset about a political science field which becomes incapable of asking big questions. Political science should tell us something about human possibility. It shouldn’t be mesmerized by what can be measured. I really couldn’t care less about most of those kinds of things. So I’d love to see the profession going more in the direction that we’ve discussed. But it’s not about to happen.

Low voice: If you think CCP ....(27: 55) the economic growth is going down…

Friedman: I think the CCP fears that it can lose legitimacy. This perceptual reality really is playing into elite politics. But I don’t want to say that an economic crash would be a crisis to legitimacy. As someone who teaches international political economy, a
property bubble is not a bubble until it bursts. Until they burst they are good investments, with which people make money. Analysts will turn out to seem right when the bubbles burst, but it’s wrong to say they had it right. One can’t know in advance that the economy can’t make a soft landing. Government policies could “gradually avoid a crisis.” That’s what the Chinese government wants to do. Still, I do think that within the ruling elite in China ever more people have this fear that they are facing a crisis. And they are terrified. In China people tend to say, if they hear the story about Bo Xilai’s family wealth, everybody does it. By the way certain people say the same thing about Taiwan and the United States. My father used to say: “They should pay them all three times their salary, and if anybody does anything corrupt, they should be shot in the public square”. I think at a popular level that kind of thinking is much more pervasive then it is among intellectuals. Regular people have those angers, in all countries.

Low voice: In order to solve this kind of crisis problems, do you think for the political reform or with democratization or?

Friedman: Democratization is not on the CCP agenda. But yes, of course the CCP leaders want political reform. They think they are promoting political reform. They think they are trying to find ways so that China will not experience so many violent incidents. There will not be as many people who are supposed to receive pensions who don’t get their pensions. The CCP central leaders are trying to find ways in which there will not be as many corrupt rip-offs on land deals. They are sincere. They don’t want these bad things to occur. They look at the single party regime in Singapore, which they see as efficient and non-corrupt, and they say to themselves, “we should be able to do it too”. But whether the CCP can do it, transiting out of a Leninist system with a large, poor, rural population as did a small city-state of Singapore which never had Leninist institutions is not obvious to me. I think they are sincere. But what does it mean to be sincere? Again to go back to my father. He would always describe such people as saying “In my heart I believe”. Whether they actually reform their behavior is a separate matter. There are many ways of saying sincere in Chinese. Each has different implications, whether you really mean it, whether you are honest about it, whether you’re really going to work to bring about the result. The question is, will the CCP act in terms of their proclaimed belief? Take the recent events in Wukan. Observers were looking to see what
would happen to the corrupt deals. As best as I can tell, the answer is nothing. Therefore, they are not sincere. If you were in the party, did you see any bad consequence come to your fellow party members? No. Is that sincere? Even though in their heart they may be 老老實實的. Some people think that the greatest mistake that the pro-democracy demonstrators made in 1989 was that one of their demands was that the wealth of ruling families be made public. That was a threat to all of them. That allowed them to unite. The democracy movement members, nation-wide, were idealistic. But they didn’t have a political strategy. They didn’t think about their situation in terms of how do I negotiate with the other side. You can see it in the pictures of Wuer Kaixi sitting with Li Peng and making demands of Li Peng. Their meeting was not politically thought through at that strategic level. There are so many reasons why the extraordinary 1989 democracy movement ends a disaster. It was over determined that the outcome was the outcome that it turned out to be. But one is that the movement’s inexperienced leadership was not thinking sufficiently politically. They simply saw themselves as on the side of justice.

Zun Jinhao: I think, once you mentioned the Southern national identity, this can change the whole society, but now the Chinese government, the citizens are very strong, they can adapt, observe, those cultures, and use this for their own purpose, such for own ends, so what it the Chinese government culture?

Friedman: The works done by Andy Nathan and others which tries to understand why the regime has been so adaptive and resilient to steady the mechanism the regime puts in place to try to learn why angry Chinese are angry is important. One of the things the CCP leaders do that does not get enough attention, is inviting in critics, and having very private conversations, asking, for example, what makes for all these problems in the countryside? Nothing gets published. But the CCP leaders actually want to hear this information for self-serving reasons. So it really is an interesting ruling elite. One should want to understand how they are surviving and how they intent to keep on surviving. I may turn out to be wrong since no one can know the future, but I expect the regime to persist in power. They are very clever. They also have a monopoly of coercion in force and propaganda. If China also enjoys a strong economy, the CCP leadership seems invulnerable.
Zun Jinhao: Well you know, maybe Hongkongnese or Taiwanese or singers go to China and sing their popular songs, it may influence those young men or women, but still the regime will not be moved, they can use those singers for their own purposes.

Friedman: Yes.

Zun Jinhao: Can internet offer a new kind of conversation that can change the CCP?

Friedman: We all know that the regime is very worried about social media. We all know that social media has become part of people’s lives. It has the young socialize. Young people do not think of this as a politics. They do not even think when social media reveals horror stories. They think that this is part of social sharing so the society improves. Young people in China see themselves as so patriotic and not interested in politically challenging anything that I think they are quite innocent about how what they do can seem very political and dangerous to the people in power. There has been so much activism social media precisely because young people don’t think of it as political. They just think of it as this is how I live my life. To an old man like me who doesn’t live his life that way, who is shocked by how many hours I spent reading those kinds of things and thinking that I waste my life doing it, I can’t fully understand how young people are so used to do it. Go to a construction project in China. You see migrant laborers working in horrible conditions. Yet, every few minutes, someone is pulling out a cellphone. They want to know about. They don’t want to be fools. Social media is more part of Chinese life than it is of American life. This new information age is much more pervasive in Asia then it is in Europe or America. It intrigues me why that should be. I think it’s less in Japan. But it is pervasive in Korea, Hong Kong, Taiwan, China. It is just part of being a person. You live with your thumbs. I can’t do that with my thumbs. Consequently, Chinese people have been much more courageous in bringing information out, which does have political consequences. The regime is worried trying to repress and contain it. I don’t know where it will lead. Mao was very successful in isolating and atomizing people. You were all alone with the party-state apparatus. But now so many people share information with IT. They do not feel alone. They can read on any day people posting things which say similar things as they believe. This is very empowering. What the consequences will be. As Mao said in November 1957 in Moscow: “the future is with the young people. That’s just how it is.”
Zun Jinhao: Do you think those communist officials keep up with the postmodernism?

Friedman: CCP leaders certainly want to give the impression that they keep up with the conversations in social media. I can’t believe that they actually do. Perhaps they have a staff person who tries to do that and reports to them? The notion that leaders are blogging all the time is silly.

Huang: Ok. I think it’s time to close off the section, we are late five minutes.

Friedman: So I apologize to wasting all of your valuable time…

Huang: No…(tape cut off)

End of interview