

The United States and China:
**MUTUAL PUBLIC
PERCEPTIONS**



Edited by
Douglas G. Spelman



The Wilson
Center



Woodrow Wilson
International
Center
for Scholars

*Kissinger Institute
on China and the
United States*

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PREFACE

Chinese and American images of each other are notoriously volatile. Many factors are at work. Widely different histories, contrasting cultures, dissimilar development experiences, and competing values all complicate the task of forming accurate impressions of the other. In recent times, the legacy of the Korean War and the infrequency of direct contact from 1949 to 1979 played a large role. While channels of communication have multiplied since then, this has not necessarily enhanced the accuracy of mutual impressions.

This volatility matters because mutual perceptions affect the way the two peoples deal with each other both officially and informally. To probe these various images, the channels through which they travel to the other side, and the specific issues which give rise to problematic mutual perceptions, the Kissinger Institute convened seventeen scholars and public figures from China and America in July, 2010. For each channel of communication -- the media, returned scholars and students, popular culture -- and for each problematic issue -- religion, law, individual vs. group interests -- we paired one presenter from each country. The result was an insightful collection of papers that spurred interesting and enlightening discussion. We hope that the reader agrees, and that these offerings will spur other exchanges and clearer, more nuanced images across this wide but still bridgeable national divide.

Our collaborator for this conference was the Center for United States-China Relations at Tsinghua University in Beijing. Special thanks go to the Center's Director, Dr. Sun Zhe, and his Deputy, Dr. Zhang Chuanjie, for their unfailing commitment to the project and extraordinary energy in gathering a remarkable group of Chinese participants. We also thank our American colleagues, who similarly added their considerable experience and wisdom on these sensitive and often controversial subjects. At our Institute, Michael Dalesio provided essential assistance on conference logistics and Anna Leith helped with initial editing of the papers. Finally, this publication would never have been completed without Sandy Pho's painstaking attention to every detail of final editing, formatting, organization, and design.

J. Stapleton Roy

Director

Kissinger Institute on China and the United States

**PART I:
GENERAL
PERCEPTIONS**

U.S. VIEWS OF CHINA: HISTORY, VALUES, AND POWER

Terry Lautz

Americans and Chinese share the same planet, but they use different roadmaps. Where Americans see democracy, Chinese see chaos. Where Americans see repression, Chinese see social order and stability. The United States criticizes environmental pollution and currency manipulation, but China gives priority to economic development and employment. From the very beginning, American perceptions of China have been divided between acceptance and rejection, admiration and contempt. These emotionally charged images loom large in the American cultural and political imagination, reflecting ambivalence and uncertainty about China and the Chinese.

We read each other's historical narratives with different suppositions. For example, Americans advocate freedom of religion and self-determination, while the People's Republic of China (PRC) opposes interference in internal affairs. Several American presidents, including Barack Obama, have met with the Dalai Lama. When Mr. Obama was preparing for his first trip to China in November 2009, a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman suggested the president should appreciate China's opposition to Tibetan independence because he is a black president who "understands the slavery abolition movement and Lincoln's major significance for that movement. Lincoln played an

Terry Lautz, a visiting professor at Syracuse University and former vice president of the Henry Luce Foundation, was recently a public policy scholar at the Woodrow Wilson Center. He is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations and has served as chairman of the Yale-China Association, chairman of the Lingnan Foundation, and secretary of the National Committee on U.S.-China Relations. He is currently writing a book on encounters between American missionaries and Chinese Communists.

incomparable role in protecting the national unity and territorial integrity of the United States.”¹ Most Americans thought the analogy was far-fetched.

American views of China, whether positive or negative, generally have been constructed on an assumption that American values and power are superior. During the early 20th century, Americans invested heavily in encouraging China to see the world through their eyes. Many Chinese leaders—a number of them trained in the United States or in Christian colleges in China—were receptive to liberal Western ideas about education, culture and society. Sun Yat-sen, the father of modern China, and his successor Chiang Kai-shek were Christians, as was Soong Mei-ling, Chiang’s influential wife. The notion that China sought to be just like the United States was especially nourished by several generations of American missionaries who had vested interests in creating ties that would bind the two cultures together.

Yet China remained a low priority for the U.S. government, even during World War II when the United States allied with China against Japan. Europe came first and island hopping across the Pacific proved a more efficient way to defeat the Japanese enemy. Despite impassioned pleas from advocates like the publisher Henry Luce in the pages of *Time* and *Life* magazines and the U.S. Congressman Walter Judd, there was no consensus on the need to rescue Chiang’s faltering Nationalist forces in the face of a Communist onslaught.

The equation changed quickly when Mao’s armies overwhelmed Chiang’s troops and established the new People’s Republic of China in late 1949. In the eyes of the Chinese Communist Party, the United States was the leader of an imperialist conspiracy to prevent China from securing its rightful sovereignty and power. The United States was branded as an archenemy due to its support for Chiang Kai-shek’s remnant army on Taiwan and its Cold War alliance with a vanquished Japan. For Americans, China was not just a potential danger after Mao traveled to Moscow to conclude an alliance with Stalin in 1950; China had become part of a global existential threat to America’s way of life. American views hardened further with Beijing’s decision to support the North Korean Communists in their war against United Nations forces, led by the United States. And when virtually all Westerners were expelled from China, Americans were confused and dismayed by the sudden turn of events. Years of sympathy and generosity toward the Chinese were rejected, and it was

painfully clear that China had abandoned the U.S. path to modernization. It seemed that Americans had not lost the actual China so much as a China they had imagined.

As the ideological lines between the United States and China were drawn, the new enemy was Communism, not China. In this view, the “real” Chinese were being coerced and controlled by Marxist radicals who were manipulated by the Russians. Dean Rusk, Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs in 1951, said in a speech, “The peace and security of China are being sacrificed to the ambitions of the Communist conspiracy. China has been driven by foreign masters into an adventure of foreign aggression which cuts across the most fundamental national interests of the Chinese people.... We do not recognize the authorities in Peiping for what they pretend to be. The Peiping regime may be a colonial Russian government—a Slavic Manchukuo on a larger scale. It is not the Government of China. It does not pass the first test. It is not Chinese....”² It was not coincidental that the only two hot wars during the Cold War were waged in Asia—on the Korean peninsula where American and Chinese troops battled to a standstill, and in Vietnam, which Americans saw as a proxy for China and the Soviet Union.

In some respects, the American relationship with China is like an unrequited love affair. During the first half of the 20th century, the United States courted China with considerable passion but ultimately was rejected. Not understanding the full force of Chinese nationalism, the United States had imagined a convergence of Chinese and American interests and values. Only when the geostrategic interests of the United States and PRC came together around joint opposition to the Soviet Union during the 1970s would it be possible to rekindle the stormy love affair between the two countries. Following the June 4, 1989 crackdown in China, the two sides split up again and U.S. policy was divided over trade and human rights. With the attacks on New York and Washington on September 11, 2001, another reconciliation came about. Today, China and the United States are somewhat like a bickering old couple—argumentative and resentful, but unable to live without each other.

In the early encounters with China, Americans made up stories about the Chinese. Amusing, often racist stereotypes were deemed acceptable given

the small numbers of Chinese in America, the modest amount of trade, and China's limited influence in the world. China's history and culture was a source of fascination, but a weak, disorganized China was treated with disdain.

Negative images derived from several sources. One influential strain of thinking came from 19th century missionary accounts where there was sometimes a short distance between righteousness and prejudice. For many Americans, widespread destitution and disease only proved that China was a benighted, heathen society in need of redemption. Cultural differences, miscommunication, mistrust, and resistance to the Western presence added to the frustrations of American emissaries. China's pretensions to superiority rang hollow in their ears.

Poor, uneducated Chinese workers who came to work gold mines and build railroads in the western United States offered another source of biased thinking. Chinatowns in San Francisco and New York generated a set of lurid images in the American press. These isolated bachelor societies were full of mystery and intrigue; there was gambling, prostitution, and kidnappings. Chinese smoked opium and supposedly ate rats. As the mines were exhausted and the railroads completed, Irish-American men and women competing for jobs in California felt threatened by the Chinese sojourners. The consequent anti-Chinese movement produced an Exclusion Act passed by the U.S. Congress in 1882, the only piece of U.S. immigration legislation ever to single out a single ethnic group. There would not be significant change until the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, which opened the door to a new stereotype of Chinese as "model minority."

Sometimes these images were color-coded. The "Yellow Peril," envisioned as a sinister alien force that would overwhelm the West, was alternately cast as a Chinese or Japanese threat. This notion was revived in the 1950s as a Red conspiracy, populated by uniformly dressed "blue ants" representing endless numbers of Chinese who had been brainwashed by their ruthless leaders. It was the familiar stereotype of Genghis Khan and the Mongolian hordes.

Hollywood films, of course, produced a great deal of fantasy about China, ranging from the diabolically evil Fu Manchu to the comically clever Charlie Chan. The movie industry and other popular media regularly exploited sexual

stereotypes of Chinese and other Asians. Oriental men represented a curious mix of appeal and repulsion, while Asian women were either seductive courtesans or fearsome dragon ladies. Over time, these sexual images became more complex and sophisticated, but the idea of dominant Western males and submissive Eastern females has a stubborn persistence. Concepts of sex and power, like the elemental forces of yin and yang, are closely connected.

On the more positive side, altruism has been a potent counterpoint to racism and violence in Sino-American relations. The impulse to do good—to instruct, remake, and save others—is a constant theme in America's foreign relations, with China as a highly visible object of this desire. As mentioned previously, missionaries, businessmen, and diplomats projected their own visions, viewing China as a surrogate for American aspirations. An impoverished, dysfunctional China, the victim of warlords, famine and revolution, was actively looking for change and Americans were willing to oblige through the gifts of democracy, science, capitalism, and Christianity. From an American perspective, this was not sinister or territorial; it was simply the right thing to do. As Harold Isaacs explained in his book *Scratches on Our Minds*, this is the image of China as supplicant and ward.³

All across China, Americans built schools and hospitals, and established organizations for job training and famine relief. Social reform efforts, which peaked in the 1930s, were welcomed and appreciated by many Chinese, but in the final reckoning Americans would always be tainted as outsiders. Even when leadership positions were turned over to Chinese counterparts, local institutions remained dependent on foreign funds. Ultimately, altruism could not be separated from paternalism. With the ejection of almost all Westerners from China by the early 1950s, the era of U.S. munificence in China was ended. Where Americans had seen humanitarianism, the Chinese saw cultural imperialism.

When official contact between China and the United States resumed during the 1970s, America's altruistic instinct was resurrected. In the euphoria of the reunion, the accomplishments of the Chinese revolution were heralded uncritically, and because of the ravages of the Cultural Revolution, China was looking to the West once again for help. American universities reached out to Chinese students and scholars who had suffered during the Cultural

Revolution, bringing them to the United States for advanced training. A new generation of idealistic Americans went to China to teach English and other subjects. Some of them were recruited by organizations like Oberlin Shansi and the Yale-China Association, both founded over 100 years ago, based on the principles of cooperation, respect, and mutual benefit.

More recently American families have lined up to adopt tens of thousands of Chinese orphans, more than from any other country in the world, almost all of them girls. American philanthropies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have supported Chinese counterparts tackling issues ranging from HIV-AIDS to the environment. Americans have also worked to encourage Western-style civil society in China, through organizations such as the Ford Foundation and the Asia Foundation.

The search for common ground between China and the West is another persistent theme that defines American views. What we now label as “cultural and educational exchange” is a movement that has roots in the 16th and 17th centuries when Catholic Jesuit missionaries came to the conclusion that Christian beliefs and Confucian philosophy were compatible. Both systems were based on concepts of moral goodness, self-improvement, and respect for fellow human beings.

Confucianism and Buddhism impressed 19th century American Protestants, some of whom became experts in Chinese history, philosophy, and religion. During the 20th century, Chinese theologians worked to achieve a synthesis between Western Christian and Chinese worldviews. Some contemporary American scholars, such as Theodore deBary and Tu Wei-ming, have sought out shared principles in the Chinese and Western approaches to human rights.

John Childs, an American with the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA) in Beijing in the 1920s, insisted that Western beliefs must be seen in a comparative light. “It is one thing to say that Christianity has its important contribution to make to the progress of the human race, and it is quite another thing to assert that the values which are found in Christianity are so unique and completely satisfying, that it possesses the obvious and inherent right to displace all other religions.” Childs went even further, calling not only for “integrating and synthesizing our respective values,” but also for “active co-operation in the discovery of new values which neither of us as yet possesses.”²⁴

Of course, this dream of a transcendental convergence of beliefs could not be realized, even though it was shared by a number of Westerners and Chinese. The Christian and Communist belief systems had the common goal of reforming China, but could not agree on how to accomplish this. One favored gradual individual change, while the other advocated radical national transformation.

As the Cold War emerged and the United States assumed the role of protector in non-communist Asia, a new approach to cooperation and convergence was discovered. Prompted by politics as well as changing ideas about race, American movies and popular literature embraced the idea of Asians as partners and neighbors. In this open, friendly, and inviting Asia—which included Chinese in Hong Kong and Taiwan—it was possible to build cultural bridges through the exchange of secular ideas and everyday experiences. The 1956 film *Sayonara*, a story about love affairs between American military men and Japanese women, dealt head-on with racism and prejudice. The musical and movie *Flower Drum Song*, set in San Francisco, told mainstream American audiences the story of generational change among Chinese Americans in San Francisco. The message was clear: the time had come for Americans to embrace Asians as individuals. In this view, these new, anti-communist allies were accessible, not alien, and racial intolerance no longer served American interests.⁵

In the 21st century, Americans benefit from a myriad of opportunities to learn about China—through research, education, news, museum exhibitions, cultural performances, trade, immigration, tourism, and sports. Increased interaction has produced delightful cultural hybrids at the intersections of food, dance, art, and music. A trend toward a more positive and integrated view of Asians and Asian Americans in the United States has increased. In 2009, according to a poll conducted by the Committee of 100, only 9 percent of those surveyed said they would be uncomfortable voting for an Asian American as president of the United States, as compared with 23 percent in 2001. In 2009, 11 percent said they would disapprove of a family member marrying an Asian American, as compared with 24 percent in 2001. A majority of 73 percent in 2009 believed that Chinese Americans have contributed much to the American culture.

History, values, and power have shaped the American response to China's ongoing social, economic, and political revolution. In the past, Americans have held a dual perception of China as a threat and a dependent, labels deeply rooted in American exceptionalism and assumptions about U.S. superiority. Confident about the pre-eminence of their economic and political system and their way of life, Americans have expressed themselves to the rest of the world through racist arrogance, colonial altruism, or a combination of the two.

American views are in flux yet again because China is challenging some basic beliefs about U.S. primacy. Weaknesses have been exposed in the wake of the global financial crisis. Is China's authoritarian capitalism more reliable than America's less regulated market driven approach? Western publications express anxiety about China's mounting strength, some of them serious (*China's Rise: Challenges and Opportunities*) and some of them sensational (*Showdown: Why China Wants War with the United States* or *When China Rules the World: The End of the Western World and the Birth of a New Global Order*). In the American media, China is often portrayed as a resource-gobbling goliath that fails to observe intellectual property rights, produces toys with lead, bullies its competitors, ignores human rights, and manipulates its currency. Trade wars and struggles for mineral resources seem inevitable.

At the same time, however, Americans view China with growing admiration and respect. President Obama articulated this perspective in his speech to Chinese students in Shanghai in 2009:

Today, we have a positive, constructive and comprehensive relationship that opens the door to partnership on the key global issues of our time—economic recovery and the development of clean energy; stopping the spread of nuclear weapons and the scourge of climate change; the promotion of peace and security in Asia and around the globe.... Our world is now fundamentally interconnected. The jobs we do, the prosperity we build, the environment we protect, the security that we seek—all of these things are shared. And given that interconnection, power in the 21st century is no longer a zero-sum game; one country's success need not come at the expense of another. And that is why the United States

insists we do not seek to contain China's rise. On the contrary, we welcome China as a strong and prosperous and successful member of the community of nations—a China that draws on the rights, strengths, and creativity of individual Chinese like you.⁶

Looking ahead, Americans will need to revisit and revise their images of China, realizing, just as President Obama said, that our interests are intertwined. Americans need to see that a good vs. evil, “either they are with us or against us” mentality is misleading. Hubris is not helpful. We need to look beyond immediate policy issues to understand the context for our respective core interests and values. What is the role of law and religion in our two societies? How do cultural assumptions influence our thinking about rights? Should primacy be given to the individual rights or collective responsibilities?

The uneven, emotional history between the United States and China cannot be changed, and it may prove impossible to reconcile our contrasting worldviews. Yet common ground can be identified, even if convergence is not a realistic option. Americans no longer have a choice of accepting or rejecting engagement with China. They do have the option of seeing China more clearly, with fewer illusions, based on a dispassionate assessment of past experience and future needs.

NOTES

1. Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Qin Gang, (press conference, November 10, 2009), reported by Reuters, November 12, 2009, <http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSTRE5AB1BF20091112>.
2. Dean Rusk, “American Friendship for the Peoples Republic of China” (speech, China Institute, New York, NY, May 18, 1951).
3. Harold Isaacs, *Scratches on Our Minds: American Views of China and India* (New York, NY: John Day Company, 1958).
4. John L. Childs, *The Life*, (1925), quoted in Yu Xing, *Baptized in the Fire of Revolution* (Bethlehem, PA: Lehigh University Press, 1996), pp. 72-73.
5. See Christina Klein, *Cold War Orientalism: Asia in the Middlebrow Imagination, 1945-1961* (University of California Press, 2003).
6. Barack Obama, “Town Hall Meeting with Future Chinese Leaders” (remarks, Museum of Science and Technology, Shanghai, China, November 16, 2009).

CHINESE CITIZENS' ATTITUDES TOWARD THE UNITED STATES FROM 2001-2009

Zhang Chuanjie

As the U.S.-China relationship grows into the most important bilateral relationship in the world, it is imperative to understand how the two countries' people perceive each other. Can public perceptions shape foreign policy attitudes? What factors shape these perceptions? Do public perceptions have any effect on a nation's foreign policies? This paper attempts to shed some light on these three questions, with particular focus on the Chinese side between 2001 and 2009. This is a suitable period for such studies for three reasons.

This period, especially after September 11 (9/11), witnessed improved U.S.-China relations in that bilateral cooperation was broadened and deepened to unprecedented levels. For example, according to the U.S. Census Bureau the annual trade volume increased from USD 116 billion in 2000 to USD 365.9 billion in 2009. As the relationship becomes closer, the Chinese are becoming more aware of America's presence in their everyday lives and consequently have developed much clearer attitudes about the United States. The probability of a non-attitude towards the United States among the Chinese public has diminished. As the president of a local survey company said, when they started to survey what kinds of views the Chinese public had of other countries in the mid-90s, 40 percent of the respondents had no opinion at all. This non-attitude phenomenon has fundamentally changed in the new century.

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Moreover, diplomatic tensions between the United States and China resulting from Tiananmen gradually died out in the new century. Although the decade (1990s) following Tiananmen saw a number of crises between the two countries, (such as the Yinhe incident in 1993, the 1995-1996 Taiwan Strait Crisis, the 1999 bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Yugoslavia and the Wen Ho Lee case in the same year), there were no full breaks in the bilateral relationship during this time. Consequently, Chinese public opinion toward the United States in the new century was not as volatile as it had been in the 1990s. This provides us with opportunities to observe possible trends in Chinese public perception of the United States and, more importantly, what factors may influence these perceptions without being confounded by abrupt political events or crises.

The third reason is more logistical in nature. Public opinion surveys on the public's foreign policy attitudes and their views of foreign countries increased in China after the year 2000. This resulted in a rise in availability of direct evidence and made study in this area more accessible. One caveat is that most of these surveys focused on city residents in large metropolitan areas such as Beijing and Shanghai, rather than canvassing a more randomized sample of citizens across the country. Nevertheless, the increase in such surveys is promising in that it points to the possibility of overcoming sampling problems and other logistical issues, therefore improving data quality.

In this paper, survey results that have been made public are used to explain Chinese citizens' attitudes toward the United States and their change over the years in the first decade of the 21st century.

HOW DO CHINESE CITIZENS VIEW THE UNITED STATES?

One characteristic of Chinese public perceptions is that most survey respondents regard the U.S.-China relationship as standing somewhere between friendship and enmity. This practical view, neither overly-optimistic nor overly-pessimistic, has been quite stable during the first decade of the 21st century. According to a 2001 survey by the Horizon Group, close to half

of the respondents considered the United States as both a competitor and a cooperator. Only a small fraction saw the United States either as a friend or an enemy. Eight years later, another survey conducted by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in 2009 showed a similar pattern, with the bulk of respondents regarding the United States as both a competitor and a cooperator, with a small proportion perceiving the United States at both extremes. Unlike the sometimes strong emotional images at the two extremes, the middle-of-the-road perception held by most Chinese citizens is more rational and closer to the reality of U.S.-China relations.

While the Chinese respondents' general perception of the United States was consistent during the period, their first impressions of the United States experienced some significant changes. First, the Chinese citizens' impressions of the United States became more diversified. When asked about their first impressions of the United States in 2001, the majority of the interviewees associated the United States with wealth and power, while insignificant proportions came up with other impressions. In a 2003 survey by the Horizon Group, three types of first impressions were mentioned by meaningfully large proportions of interviewees: "wealth and power," "war events," and "global political power." In a 2009 survey, four significant types of impressions popped up: "wealth and power," "arrogance," "democracy and freedom," and "world police."

Second, these first impressions became more politically related. For example, the two new categories of "arrogance" and "world police" in the 2009 survey may reflect the Chinese public's view of itself as a rising power and therefore its perception of the United States as not only a wealthy country with good products and scenic spots, but also as a predominant power on the world stage. In other words, this more politically-oriented feeling may arise from the Chinese citizens' own self-reflection regarding China's role in international affairs.

In terms of the Chinese public's affective perception, the Horizon Group conducted an annual survey of city residents asking whether they "liked" or "disliked" the United States. Specifically, one question that appeared in all surveys was whether a respondent "very much likes," "mostly likes," "mostly dislikes," or "very much dislikes" the United States in general. These four

categories are coded into numbers from one to four, with a higher number indicating warmer feelings. From the data, a weighted average is calculated, representing the public's general affective perception of the United States. The benchmark was 2.5, above which the public's general feelings are considered to be warm. From 2001 to 2005, the annual weighted averages were below the benchmark, demonstrating somewhat cold feelings toward the United States. This indicator passed the benchmark in a positive direction after 2005.

Many Chinese experts agree that the 9/11 attacks not only marked a turning point in American foreign policy in the post-Cold War era, but also a new stage of post-Cold War U.S.-China relations. The improved bilateral relationship was back on a stable track after 9/11, seeing fewer crises than those that had plagued the two countries in the 1990s. If this is indeed true, then the public opinion data implies that the improved perception of the United States among Chinese citizens only occurred years after the actual improvement of the bilateral relationship. The change of the public mood lagged behind and did not lead to political change.

DOES PUBLIC PERCEPTION MATTER IN FOREIGN POLICY ATTITUDES TOWARD THE UNITED STATES?

This question can be broken down into two smaller questions: 1) Are there any constraints on the public's foreign policy attitudes? 2) Whether perceptions of the United States, in the form of affective feeling, can predict their foreign policy attitudes toward the United States.

To answer the first question, we need to define the word "constraint." Attitudes are said to have some constraint if they are not totally unrelated to each other. The precise definitions of "static constraint" and "dynamic constraint" are given by Philip Converse.¹ There is a very pessimistic view that the public's attitudes are inconsistent or lacking constraint, to the extent that their attitudes are unreliable and meaningless. If that is the case, then studying the public's foreign policy attitudes will not produce any useful knowledge.

However, an empirical study of survey data collected in Beijing and Shanghai in 2006 shows that the Chinese citizens' foreign policy attitudes are not in an unpredictable state.² In fact, the Chinese citizens' responses to both security and trade questions fall into two distinct clusters. For example, hawks and doves provide contrasting answers to security questions; free-traders and trade protectionists have diverging thoughts on trade questions. This implies that people may use different abstract principles to guide their responses in different issue areas.

Given that Chinese citizens' attitudes are in a fairly orderly state, we can proceed to determine whether warm or cold feelings toward the United States had any effect on the citizens' foreign policy attitudes. The research results are again encouraging. On the whole, those who hold positive views of the United States tend to endorse more cooperative strategies toward America, regardless of one's trade or security beliefs. With all other conditions held equal, a respondent with a better image of the United States is more likely to regard American investments in China as mostly good, to favor sending Chinese troops abroad to fight international terrorism, and to oppose sending Chinese troops in the hypothetical scenario of a U.S. invasion of North Korea. Furthermore, those who have warmer feelings of the United States are also more likely to be positive about the future of U.S.-China relations.

If public opinion is an important predictor of one's foreign policy attitudes toward the United States, one also needs to know who in China has a positive image of the United States. There are a number of conventional theories. The wealthy may have a positive perception, for they have benefited more from China's opening-up policies and better economic relations with the West. Education is thought to play a role as well. For example, senior citizens are expected to view the United States in a negative way because they were educated during an era of bilateral hostility. On the other hand, highly educated persons have more exposure to Western thoughts and values, and may therefore hold more positive views of the United States. Surprisingly however, empirical analysis of the 2006 survey data does not lend any proof to these conventional views. None of the above demographic and socio-economic factors predicts who does or does not have a positive image of the United States.

The only variable that differentiates positive and negative perceptions is location; specifically whether a respondent is from Beijing or Shanghai. Shanghai residents are more likely to have positive feelings toward the United States as opposed to their fellow countrymen in Beijing. Considering the widely acknowledged social and cultural differences between the two cities, the finding is not that surprising. One possible explanation is that Shanghai residents may have benefited more from globalization, whereas Beijing is a more politically-centered city where people tend to be more conservative.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF PUBLIC OPINION IN CHINA'S FOREIGN POLICY?

To say that public perception matters in one's foreign policy attitudes still assumes a causal relationship between public opinion and foreign policy. Whether there is a causal link between public opinion and policy outcomes is the ultimate question that needs to be addressed in any study, either by itself or as part of a larger endeavor, of public opinion. Unlike in the United States, where public opinion plays a constraining role in policy-making through various political institutions, it is less clear how public opinion influences the policymaking process in China, especially its foreign policy.

However, there are signs that public opinion may be playing an increasingly larger role in influencing China's political life. For example, some government agencies have learned to respond quickly to blogs and other Internet comments. Last year, it was disclosed on the Internet that a local government official in the city of Nanjing had very expensive cigarettes and wore a luxury watch at a meeting, neither of which he should be able to afford with his income. The Internet message was apparently picked up by some high-level officials, and a corruption investigation was soon carried out. It was revealed that the local official took bribes and was later sentenced to 11 years in prison.

There are also examples of public opinion influencing foreign policy positions of the central government. In the past, foreign policymaking in China was thought to take a top-down approach. The central government made

decisions and tried to educate provincial or local officials to accept and enforce them. We have seen a different approach in recent years. Today, the central government will dispatch policy teams to provinces and local areas to observe the situation on the ground and gauge people's opinions before making decisions or taking any presumed position. Consequently, this information will form the basis for policy decisions. Especially in the economic sphere, where any decision might influence growth and development, the central government is more willing to hear and consider local interests in its policy decisions. For example, when China was facing pressure from the United States to revalue its currency, the central government carried out several "pressure tests" to study the effects of currency revaluation on private businesses in Guangdong Province, the manufacturing center of China. All of this implies that the government is allowing public opinion to play a larger role in the policymaking process in order to achieve more policy legitimacy, whether in its domestic political life or foreign policy.

As public opinion begins to play a more important role in government officials' decision making, there is potential for problems due to a lack of channels for informed and balanced views. This is especially the case with opinions found on the Internet which can be radical and, to some extent, excessively nationalistic. Whenever U.S.-China relations seem unstable, these opinions tend to be more pronounced and could easily draw the attention of policy makers. More often than not, the government works hard to soothe such opinions rather than be driven by them. Therefore, it is necessary to have more channels to gauge public opinion in a balanced way to avoid relying solely on unbalanced opinion.

CONCLUSION

By looking at survey data taken between 2001 and 2009, we explored both the continuities and changes in how the Chinese public perceives the United States. What did not change during the period was the Chinese citizens' practical view of the United States as neither friend nor enemy. What did change is the public's affective perception of the United States, which moved

towards an overall positive image after 2005. However, this positive change in public opinion seemed to lag behind improvements in bilateral relations.

The study of a 2006 survey conducted in Beijing and Shanghai shows that Chinese citizens' foreign policy attitudes can be organized into distinct issue areas. Affective perception of the United States was a predictor of Chinese citizens' specific foreign policy attitudes toward the United States as well. Interestingly but not in a counter-intuitive sense, Shanghai residents have a more favorable image of the United States than do Beijing residents.

Unfortunately, understanding the status and structure of Chinese public perceptions of the United States still does not tell whether public opinion plays any role in Chinese foreign policy. While we have observed some positive signs that the Chinese government is beginning to take public opinion into consideration more, it needs to identify more channels through which to gauge public opinion so that more balanced views can be reflected in the final policy outcomes.

NOTES

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**PART II:
SOURCES OF
PERCEPTIONS**

THE CHINA PARADOX AND AMERICAN MISPERCEPTIONS

Li Cheng

China's journey into the 21st century is a paradox of hope and fear. A triumphal mood has begun to take hold in the People's Republic of China (PRC) over the past decade. A series of historic events—China's accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO), Beijing's successful hosting of the Olympics, Shanghai's reemergence as a cosmopolitan center as evident in the recently held World Expo, the dynamic infrastructure development in both coastal and inland regions, the launch of the country's first manned space program, and the country's ever-growing economic power—have understandably instilled feelings of pride and optimism in the Chinese people.¹

At the same time, China's progress and promise have been accompanied by increasingly serious problems and pitfalls. Enormous economic disparities are arguably the most daunting problem China faces. In addition, rampant official corruption, a high unemployment rate, environmental degradation, resource scarcity, frequent public health crises and recurrent industrial accidents, growing rural discontent and urban worker strikes, inflation and skyrocketing high prices for housing in major cities, worsening ethnic tensions in Tibet and Xinjiang, the absence of an overriding system of beliefs or values, harsh media censorship and brutal crackdowns on political dissidents and religious activists all seem to suggest that the Chinese regime is sitting atop a simmering volcano of mass social unrest ready to explode.

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Not surprisingly, these paradoxical developments have often led students of China to reach starkly contrasting assessments of the country's future trajectory and the abilities and intentions of its leadership. How can we reconcile the widely divergent phenomena mentioned above and reach a more accurate and balanced understanding of present-day China? How have U.S. perceptions of China changed in recent years and what factors tend to shape our perceptions of this rapidly changing country? What wisdom can we gain—and what lessons can we learn—from recent work in the field of China studies?

To a large extent, students of China must acquire the intellectual ability to live with complexity, tolerate ambiguity, and expect uncertainty. However, the immense complexity of our subject is no excuse for failing to use good judgment and to present well-grounded predictions. Rigorous, insightful assessments are particularly valuable today, when China has more influence on the world economy and regional security than perhaps at any other time in modern history. Misperceptions of China's socioeconomic conditions or misleading assessments of the quality and intentions of its leaders risk rendering our policies toward China ineffective.

This essay examines some of the prevailing U.S. perceptions of China over the past decade (2001–2010) with a focus on Chinese political and socioeconomic issues. This brief article, of course, does not aspire to present the “state-of-the-field,” nor is it based on comprehensive and quantitative research.² Rather, it aims to provide a critical assessment of the problems and challenges in the way the United States perceives China's political and socioeconomic developments as well as its future trajectory. In seeking to improve the quality of China watching in the United States in the coming years, this essay makes a concerted effort to explicate the field's deficiencies, such as prevalent misperceptions, blind spots, topical obsessions or inadequacies, and methodological missteps, rather than showcase the field's accomplishments.

BETTER ACCESS, IMPROVED ANALYSIS?

In the first few decades of the establishment of the PRC, American China watchers had to make due with minimal access to primary source information

and sources. The late Ellis Joffe, a prominent scholar of Chinese military affairs, once jokingly referred to his research on the People's Liberation Army (PLA) as an exercise in "seeking truth from unavailable facts."³ This has changed profoundly over the past decade. Today, many open sources of information are available online, even for the relatively sensitive subject of Chinese military affairs. For example, several dozen unofficial Chinese websites focus on military affairs. They provide extensive information about the biographical backgrounds of officers in the PLA, China's military strategies, the objectives of China's naval development in the new century, and the PRC's newly-obtained weapons.⁴

Three important developments—namely, rapid changes in telecommunications and the Internet, the availability of new open sources in the PRC, and unprecedented dynamic Sino–U.S. scholarly exchanges—have greatly altered the American scholarly approach to Chinese politics since the beginning of the new century. Fascinating developments in telecommunications, particularly the sudden arrival and meteoric growth of the Internet, have allowed Chinese sources (both official and non-official) to be more quickly and conveniently accessed, as well as more comprehensive. The ability to obtain information, including both hard data and individuals' opinions, has increased exponentially since the inception of the Internet. Given the availability of information on sensitive issues such as Chinese military affairs, it is fair to assume that crucial information on other topics is also readily accessible online.

The information explosion that has resulted from the rapid growth of the Internet has, in a sense, created an "oversupply" of information—a new challenge for those who study China. Quite often, Western researchers of Chinese politics have found that they are "drowning in information but starved for knowledge."⁵ Having access to more information or more data does not necessarily translate into better scholarship or more insightful analysis. Currently, with perhaps a very small number of exceptions, the American scholars who study China have not produced groundbreaking work using Internet sources in any systematic or comprehensive way.

Since 2001, when former PRC President Yang Shangkun published his diary, China has witnessed the publication of a wave of memoirs, diaries, and autobiographies of senior leaders in the country, especially of those who

had recently retired.⁶ Jiang Zemin, Li Peng, Zhu Rongji, Li Ruihuan, Zhang Zhen, and Qian Qichen all published their memoirs and/or diaries. In fact, these biographical writings have not only been confined to retired leaders. The biographies of Hu Jintao and Wen Jiabao, which were written by two senior Chinese journalists and published in Hong Kong and Taiwan, are also available in bookstores across the Mainland.⁷ In addition, the popular Chinese newspaper *Nanfang Zhoumo* (Southern Weekly) often publishes long profiles and interviews with rising stars in the provincial and ministerial leadership.⁸ Meanwhile, prominent public intellectuals such as Wang Jisi, Wu Jinglian, Yu Keping, Hu Angang, Sun Liping, Cai Fang, Fang Ning, Xu Xianming, Wang Yizhou, and Li Peilin have been invited to brief decision-makers and/or give lectures at Politburo meetings.

American research institutions and scholars have been increasingly engaged in institution-building and social science research in China during the past decade, which has included an unprecedented number of scholars and students studying and/or visiting China. They have participated in a wide variety of collaborative projects, many of which had never been permitted in the PRC or had been suspended due to the 1989 Tiananmen incident. For example, Yale University's China Law Center, established in 1999, "is making tremendous strides in the areas of administrative law, regulation, and legal education in the PRC," according to Yale President Richard C. Levin.⁹ At the same time, the Yale China Law Center is also an excellent venue in which to study China's economic, political, social and legal changes and to train the new generation of American China specialists.

Another example is the survey research collaboration between Beijing University and the University of Michigan. This joint research project provides access to a sample of 10,000 Chinese families in Henan and Liaoning provinces, allowing scholars to examine various aspects of their social, economic, educational, and healthcare conditions. This longitudinal research project studying these two provinces will be updated every two years.¹⁰ All of these new instances of collaboration help to facilitate intellectual and political discourse, expand the sources of information available to, and broaden the analytical perspectives of, American China watchers. Yet, tighter political controls on the part of the Chinese government, such as in the case of Xu

Zhiyong and his work at the Open Constitution Initiative supported by the Yale China Law Center, remain serious constraining factors that risk severely damaging international academic collaboration and China's image in the world.

Unfortunately, these aforementioned developments do not always lead to a more insightful and more accurate understanding of Chinese politics. Generally speaking, the field of Chinese political studies in the United States is still inadequate both in the depth and breadth of its coverage. One may reasonably argue that the field has not yet taken advantage of—in any substantial or systematic way—several new developments that facilitate research in the field, such as the Internet revolution, the availability of new and open sources in China, and the multi-dimensional collaboration between American scholars in China studies and their counterparts in the PRC. Instead, many analysts have unfortunately gravitated to one of two extremes. Some remain burdened by stale perceptions, vulnerable to rumors, and are obsessed with investigating information obtained from unverified “secret documents” in China. Meanwhile, other American scholars and prominent observers have become so impressed by the “achievements” of the Chinese leadership that they have lost their critical lens and sometimes overlook the fundamental deficiencies and flaws of China's contemporary political system.

FALSE PREDICTIONS AND WRONG LESSONS

American studies of contemporary China have not been without rather glaring false predictions and blind spots. For example, even the most optimistic analysts did not foresee the sheer rapidity and sustainability of China's economic growth over the past three decades. It is also interesting to note that with only a couple of exceptions, no scholarly attention was dedicated to China's oil supply and energy issues prior to 2001, despite the fact that China began importing oil in 1994 and its increasing need for energy security was already a foregone conclusion. A majority of “mainstream” China experts, including Washington-based strategic thinkers, seemed to pay little attention to this profoundly important and multi-dimensional issue throughout the

1990s. It appears the China studies community in the United States has only recently realized the importance of the huge demand for oil in this rapidly industrializing country and its implications for domestic and foreign policy.

Despite improved access and other positive developments for American China scholars, poorly-considered predictions and assessments have still plagued the field over the past decade. As the new century began, a large number of China analysts and experts held a very pessimistic view of the fate of the Chinese regime. For example, three major events—China’s accession to the WTO in 2001, the Chinese leadership succession in the 16th National Party Congress in 2002, and the SARS epidemic in 2003—were all seen as formidable triggering factors. Many China analysts predicted at the time that any one of them would lead to chaos or even the collapse of the regime. Gordon Chang’s 2001 book, *The Coming Collapse of China*, was one of the most frequently cited monographs on China in the first half of the decade.¹¹

Western analysts’ inaccurate or false predictions in all three of these cases can help to highlight the deficiencies and inadequacies of the field of China studies. There are multiple causes for these inaccurate predictions. A common problem in American studies of Chinese elite politics, for example, is that researchers tend to use unverified sources, conventional approaches, and old analytical frameworks to analyze a rapidly changing country. Rumors, speculations, and myths, rather than verifiable facts and data, have remained the main sources in many U.S. analyses of Chinese politics.

Toward the end of the decade, a large number of China analysts seem to have gone to the other extreme. They began to perceive the Chinese political system as being “resilient.” The logic holds that Chinese leaders seem to have found a sustainable way to maintain their rule over this emerging economic powerhouse. Meanwhile, a large number of China watchers in the United States seem to be fixated on growing Chinese confidence and arrogance, and tend to overlook the vulnerability of the authoritarian one-party system, the serious difficulties it faces, and even the possibility of a failure to broker deals between competing factions in the next leadership transition.

One of the central arguments of the “authoritarian resilience” thesis is that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has relied on economic development and material incentives for the Chinese people to prevent sociopolitical

challenges. New socioeconomic forces, especially entrepreneurs and the emerging middle class, are understood as political allies of the CCP regime. But this perception should be subject to greater debate. Just as yesterday's political target could be today's political ally, so too could today's political ally become tomorrow's political rabble-rouser. Recent studies conducted in China have found that the Chinese middle class tends to be more cynical about the policy promises made by the authorities, more demanding about policy implementation, and more sensitive with regard to corruption among officials than other social groups.¹² If middle class Chinese begin to feel that their voices are being suppressed, that their access to information is unjustly being blocked, and/or that their space for social action is unduly confined, a political uprising of sorts may take place.¹³

The Chinese middle class's grievances over government policy have become increasingly evident in recent years. The increasing unemployment rate among recent college graduates (who usually come from middle-class families and are presumed to be members of China's future middle class) should send an alarming signal to the Chinese government. In a recent forum on China's response to the global financial crisis held by the Academy of Chinese Reform and Development in Beijing, Chinese scholars argued that the government should pay much greater attention to the needs and concerns of the middle class—otherwise, they argued, the “sensitive” Chinese middle class will become the “angry” middle class.¹⁴

On the upcoming leadership succession to take place at the 18th Party Congress scheduled for the fall of 2012, some prominent China watchers seem to be overly optimistic about the likelihood of a peaceful, orderly, and institutionalized transition. The most notable recent example is a book published by Robert Lawrence Kuhn, a businessman-turned biographer of the PRC's senior leaders. Through extensive interviews with many rising stars of the so-called fifth-generation of PRC leaders, Kuhn offered nothing but praise for their talents, wisdom, and vision.¹⁵ The book presents an unambiguous assessment that Xi Jinping's and Li Keqing's succession to the positions currently held by Hu Jintao and Wen Jiabao is very much a done-deal; and that as a team, the fifth-generation of leaders will take over power smoothly from the fourth generation in 2012, similar to the transition at the 16th Party Congress in

2002 when the Hu–Wen fourth–generation succeeded the third–generation leaders Jiang Zemin and Zhu Rongji.

The fifth–generation leaders, indeed, can collectively boast remarkable life experiences. Their formative experiences during the Cultural Revolution, especially the fact that many of them worked as farmers for several years, forced these future leaders to cultivate valuable traits such as endurance, adaptability, and humility. Their exposure to Western ideas and values in their college years in the late 70s and early 80s, one of the most liberal periods of university education in contemporary China, made their worldviews differ from the preceding generations of PRC leaders. Their shared leadership experiences in running provinces and cities in the course of the country’s rapid economic development in the 1990s appears to have prepared them well, as they are now on the cusp of reaching the pinnacle of power.

The optimistic view espoused by Kuhn completely missed the weaknesses of the fifth–generation leaders, especially some of its top contenders. Xi and Li will need to overcome many daunting obstacles in order to consolidate their power in the years ahead. They are much weaker in a variety of ways than Hu and Wen were when the two were in line to succeed Jiang and Zhu in 2002. At that time, among the fourth–generation leaders, Hu Jintao was the only one who had served as a provincial party secretary in two provinces. He had also been on the Politburo Standing Committee for ten years. Hu was very well known for his political savvy, strong networking based on the Chinese Communist Youth League (CCYL), and uncontroversial rhetorical ability.

Xi Jinping, in contrast, does not stand out in the same way among his competitors within the fifth generation. In fact, among the 344 full and alternate members of the 15th Central Committee in 1997, Xi received the fewest votes.¹⁶ The fact that he served only eight months as Party Secretary of Shanghai before being promoted to the Politburo Standing Committee made his rise widely seen as helicopter–like and slightly befuddling. Up until now, Xi has failed to form his own political network of peers and members of lower echelons of the Chinese leadership. Most importantly, as with other prominent figures in the fifth generation, Xi’s capacity and leadership skills have yet to be tested.

Some of Xi's public remarks have been highly controversial. For example, Xi said the following during his visit to Mexico in 2009, "It seems there are some foreigners who've stuffed their bellies and don't have anything else to do but point fingers. First, China does not export revolution. Second, we're not exporting hunger or poverty. And third, we aren't making trouble for you. What else is there to say?" These rather impolitic comments accusing American politicians of "interfering in China's domestic affairs" were characterized even by many Chinese bloggers as "undiplomatic" and "non-statesmanlike."¹⁷

In the case of Li Keqiang, who is expected to succeed Wen Jiabao as Premier, there are fears that he has neither Premier Zhu Rongji's political guts nor Wen Jiabao's charisma and human touch. Zhu and Wen were already known for their leadership talents and administrative achievements when they were vice premiers or even earlier in their careers. Wen Jiabao worked as a chief of staff for three secretary generals of the CCP, two of whom were purged, and yet he managed not only to survive, but also to rise rapidly. It is also interesting to note that Wen had gained broad administrative experience before becoming premier—coordinating power transitions, commanding the anti-flood campaign in 1998, supervising the nation's agricultural affairs, and overseeing financial and banking reform. Wen's talent as a superb administrator and his role as a coalition-builder explain his legendary survival and success. In particular, Premier Wen has been known, both at home and abroad, for his remarkably quick response during natural disasters and other crises. For instance, for each and every major earthquake that has hit China over the past decade (including the periods when he was vice premier or a member of the Secretariat), Wen always arrived at the disaster area promptly.

In contrast, Li has become known for his slow reaction to crises, including the Sichuan earthquake in 2008 and the Yushu earthquake early this year. One may argue that as a rising star, he needs to be cautious and avoid too much publicity, but this was certainly not the case for other leaders such as Zhu Rongji and Wen Jiabao when they served as vice premiers, and Wang Qishan when he was a provincial-level leader.

Li Keqiang, of course, has his strengths. His humble family background, low-profile personality, legal education, familiarity with economic issues, reputation for loyalty, strong political network (the CCYL), and especially

his provincial leadership experience, may prepare him well for the job. But it will be difficult for him to claim any major achievements as a provincial chief or vice premier. During his tenure as vice premier, he has been responsible for the structural reform of the major ministries and commissions (*dabuwei gaige*), but this project seems to have gone nowhere, in sharp contrast with Zhu Rongji's restructuring of the Chinese bureaucracy, which resulted in substantial personnel changes and significantly increased efficiency of the central government.

Also of concern is that, in the eyes of the Chinese public, Li may appear too "soft," even softer than Premier Wen Jiabao. It has been widely noted that the State Council has become less effective in controlling China's provinces, major cities, and even key state-owned-enterprises when it comes to economic policies. A recently-circulated barb, which suggests that "the premier cannot control a general manager" (*zongli guanbuliao zongjingli*), reflects this serious problem of the central government's administrative capacity.¹⁸ Having a new premier with such a soft image would not fit well with the need for a more efficient and effective central government to coordinate all of its various policy initiatives.¹⁹

A factor that makes the upcoming Chinese leadership succession even more uncertain is that other rising stars in the fifth generation, most noticeably Chongqing Party Secretary Bo Xilai and Guangdong Party Secretary Wang Yang, have launched unremitting self-promotion campaigns that have garnered great publicity in the country.²⁰ Their unconventional and bold efforts to tap public opinion to seek political advancement may change the dynamics in which future leaders jockey for power. The daunting socio-economic and political challenges that face the fifth-generation leaders will likely spur other leaders to reach out to the public for support. The growing power and influence of the military elites may also complicate the political succession. The country may soon witness an even more dynamic and perhaps even more factionalized phase in its arduous political transformation.

FINAL THOUGHTS

The field of American studies of Chinese politics must avoid hewing to conventional, old–fashion perceptions of this rapidly–changing country, taking special care to steer clear of dogmatic cynicism on the one hand, and ill–grounded optimism or wishful thinking on the other. We need to be fully aware of the new institutional norms and rapidly changing rules of the game in Chinese elite politics. But at the same time, we cannot allow ourselves to be led astray by superficial phenomena or official propaganda in China. Unless and until we honestly recognize and work to fix the major deficiencies of our field and the enduring misperceptions in our analysis, we will not be able to propose wise and effective U.S. policies toward China.

NOTES

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THE UNITED STATES IN CHINESE STUDENTS' EYES

Jiang Changjian, Shen Min, Ju Hong

Compared to domestic policies, foreign policies are relatively more centralized in that a rather small elite group in the state will make most of the decisions. However, in some situations public opinion will have an obvious impact on foreign affairs. It could change the government's diplomatic agenda, accelerate or even hinder the implementation of a foreign policy. For instance, in a hostage crisis, public concern for the safety of hostages may force the government to accelerate its efforts and give top priority to rescuing the hostages.

The Sino-U.S. relationship is among the top priorities of each country's foreign relations. The two country's interests are highly correlated with each other in a great many areas; and the public on both sides have attached great importance to this relationship. Therefore, public opinion is a key factor in each country's policy toward the other and deserves special attention.

In the United States, the relationship between the government, media, and public opinion is rather complicated. Although the American government is comparatively independent in making policies related to China, public opinion can still easily affect the whole process. Since public opinion is sometimes subject to political manipulation, U.S. policy toward China tends to fluctuate over time. In contrast, Chinese public opinion is generally more stable. When it comes to issues involving China's core interests, such as national sovereignty and territorial integrity, public opinion has played a

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positive role supporting the government. When examining mutual public perceptions between the United States and China, the younger generation—most of whom are students who definitely will be the mainstream of public opinion in the future—are players that must not be ignored.

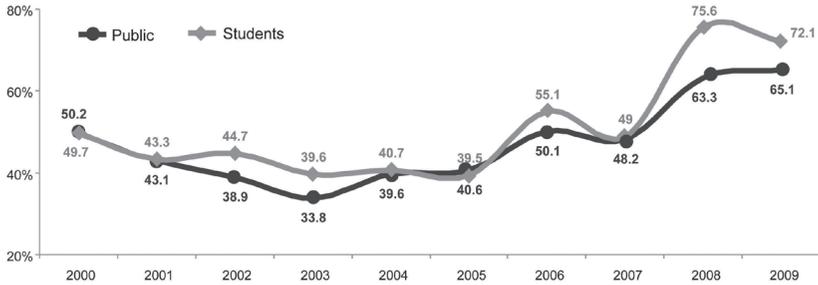
Based on several public surveys conducted in China, this paper will focus on how Chinese students view the United States. The term “student” refers to any current high school, college or university person who is eighteen years of age or older, most of whom live in urban areas. This group, since it is receiving higher education, has more exposure to Western cultures, especially American culture. Furthermore, these students are still forming their values and world-views, which may easily be shaped or affected by external changes. Though younger students are still standing on the edge of politics and international affairs, they are gradually starting to express their views, and will undoubtedly become major players in shaping public opinion soon.

This paper attempts to draw a broad map of how Chinese students view America, how the younger generation in China evaluates the relationship between the two countries both at its current stage and in the near future, and the opportunities that still could be grasped in this relationship. Other groups, such as opinion leaders and general residents, are also analyzed in this study. They represent the Chinese “public,” whose opinions are not the same as those of the students. Their points of views will be used as benchmarks, thus helping to better position the students’ attitudes.

MORE POSITIVE IMAGE OF THE UNITED STATES IN CHINESE STUDENTS’ EYES

Generally, the image of the United States among Chinese students has become more positive in recent years. Specifically, the favorability ratings of the United States had been rising since 2005. America’s image went through a relatively difficult period during the Bush administration’s first term, with favorability ratings dropping as low as 39.6 percent in 2003. U.S. actions seem to account for this downturn. One is the U.S. invasion of Iraq, which elicited criticism from China and the greater international community. Another is U.S.

Figure 01: U.S. Favorability in China Among the General Public and Students



Source: *The Horizon Research Consultancy Group, The World in the Chinese Eyes, 2000-2009.*¹

Note: The figure represents the proportion of respondents with strong and somewhat favorable attitudes towards the United States.

policy with regard to the Taiwan issue. Specifically, following Chen Shuibian’s adoption of an independent policy for Taiwan, the U.S. government reiterated its “strategic ambiguity policy,” and this evoked furious anger among China’s younger generation.

During the later years of the Bush administration, the Sino-U.S. relationship was relatively stable. Bush’s support for the Beijing Olympics, and his positive affirmation of China’s role in the international economic arena left a favorable impression among the Chinese public.

Normally, favorability ratings are lowest during the early stages of a new American president’s administration. In order to fulfill promises made to different interest groups, a newly elected Republican president would bring up national security or defense issues with China in order to satisfy the military industry or general right-wing groups. On the other hand, a Democratic president would raise trade issues for labor unions or small-sized enterprises.²

However, the beginning of the Obama administration was different. Between 2008 and 2009, Chinese youth began to show a higher favorability rating of the United States with the figure peaking in 2008 at 75.6 percent. There are many reasons for this. First, during this period, no political incidents that could strain the bilateral relationship happened; this is especially the

Figure O2: Rankings of "Most Friendly" Countries, According to Urban Chinese Residents

| | 2000 | | 2001 | | 2002 | | 2003 | | 2004 | | 2005 | | 2006 | | 2007 | | 2008 | | 2009 | | | |
|-------------|------|-----|------|-----|------|-----|------|-----|------|-----|------|-----|------|-----|------|-----|------|-----|------|-----|-----|-----|
| | P | S | P | S | P | S | P | S | P | S | P | S | P | S | P | S | P | S | P | S | | |
| Russia | 1 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | |
| USA | 6 | 8 | 9 | 9 | 8 | >10 | 9 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 6 | >10 | 6 | 3 | 6 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | |
| North Korea | 3 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 5 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 6 |
| South Korea | 8 | 5 | 6 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 5 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 5 | 6 | 6 | 7 | 7 |
| Singapore | 2 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 5 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 3 | 7 | 5 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| Australia | 5 | 7 | 4 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 7 | 5 | 6 | 5 | 7 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| France | 7 | 9 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 6 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 7 | 5 | 7 | 6 | >10 | >10 | 10 | >10 | >10 | >10 |
| German | 9 | 6 | 8 | 10 | 9 | 9 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 9 | 8 | 6 | 8 | >10 | 9 | 10 | 8 | >10 | 9 | 9 | 9 | 9 |
| Pakistan | 4 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 9 | 10 | >10 | 8 | >10 | 7 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 8 | 8 |
| India | >10 | >10 | 10 | 8 | >10 | 10 | 10 | 9 | 9 | 8 | 9 | 8 | >10 | 7 | >10 | >10 | >10 | >10 | >10 | >10 | >10 | 10 |
| Japan | 10 | >10 | >10 | >10 | >10 | >10 | >10 | >10 | >10 | >10 | >10 | >10 | >10 | >10 | 10 | >10 | 10 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 5 | 5 |

Source: The Horizon Consultancy Group, *The World in Chinese Eyes, 1999-2009*.

Note: P indicates rankings made by the public; S indicates rankings made by students.

case because Cross-Strait relations were stable. Second, the U.S. did not exert further political pressure on China concerning human rights issues resulting from the Tibet and Xinjiang incidents. Lastly, the election of President Barack Obama in the United States was viewed positively by China's youth. For the most part, the president is the best representative of a nation's image. As the first black president in U.S. history, Obama represents both the open-minded spirit of the United States as well as the "real American dream," which was welcomed by other countries. Furthermore, President Obama's multilateral foreign policies, his aspirations for "change," and public image as a grass-roots oriented, youthful, energetic, and even fashionable leader were also received positively among young students in China. Similarly, Chinese students in 2006 regarded the United States as one of the friendliest countries in the world; in 2009, the United States rose to second place behind Russia, which has held the top spot for several years.

In the area of economics, although the United States does not have the most welcoming image, it is the biggest economic player and the most influential country in this area. Consequently, the United States has been considered the most important country to China's economic development for the past ten years. During these years, China has experienced rapid economic development, and the Sino-U.S. economic relationship has grown closer.

Though the United States is still only China's second biggest trade partner, behind the European Union (EU), the Chinese public recognizes the importance of Sino-U.S. trade for China's economic development. Closer economic ties between the two countries facilitate the stabilization of the bilateral relationship as well as the deepening of mutual understanding between the two publics. In a sense, the economic partnership and resulting positive public perceptions are solid foundations for a steadily developing Sino-U.S. relationship in the long run.

In the area of security, the United States remains an important security partner for China. This positive perception is gradually increasing in both the general public and among young students.

In 2009, young students even considered the United States as having almost the same importance as Russia, China's closest security partner.

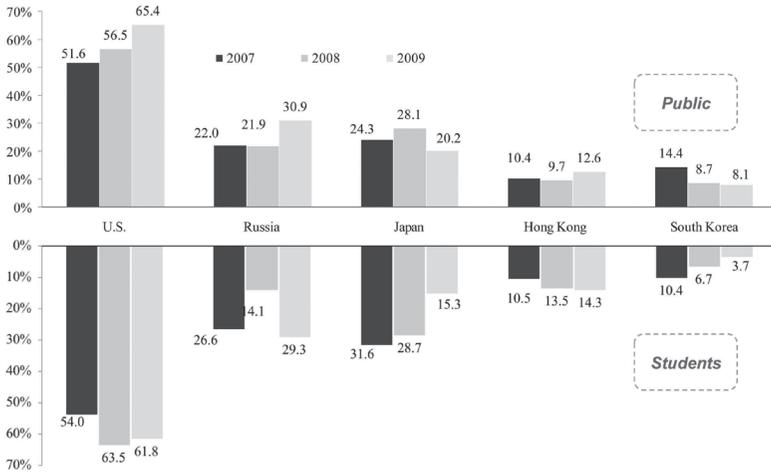
Figure 03: Rankings of Countries which are Economically Important to China

| | 2000 | | 2001 | | 2002 | | 2003 | | 2004 | | 2005 | | 2006 | | 2007 | | 2008 | | 2009 | |
|-------------|------|-----|------|-----|------|-----|------|-----|------|-----|------|-----|------|-----|------|-----|------|-----|------|-----|
| | P | S | P | S | P | S | P | S | P | S | P | S | P | S | P | S | P | S | P | S |
| USA | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Russia | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| Japan | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| South Korea | 6 | 9 | 7 | 5 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 6 | 4 | >10 |
| Australia | 9 | 8 | 9 | 9 | 9 | 9 | 10 | >10 | 9 | 10 | 8 | 9 | 8 | 9 | 8 | 9 | 9 | 5 | 5 | 4 |
| UK | 5 | 5 | 6 | 4 | 5 | 3 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 5 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 5 | 8 | 9 | 6 | 4 | 8 | 6 |
| Singapore | 7 | 7 | 5 | 7 | 7 | 8 | 7 | >10 | 8 | 8 | 9 | 8 | 6 | >10 | 10 | 4 | 8 | >10 | 7 | 8 |
| France | 8 | 6 | 8 | 6 | 8 | 7 | 9 | 7 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 9 | 6 | 5 | 10 | 7 | 7 | 10 | >10 |
| German | 4 | 4 | 4 | 8 | 6 | 5 | 6 | 8 | 5 | 7 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 7 | 6 | 7 | 5 | 9 | 6 | 10 |
| Italy | >10 | >10 | >10 | >10 | >10 | >10 | >10 | >10 | >10 | >10 | >10 | >10 | >10 | >10 | >10 | >10 | >10 | >10 | >10 | 9 |
| North Korea | 10 | 10 | 10 | >10 | 10 | >10 | 8 | 5 | 10 | 9 | 10 | >10 | 10 | 10 | 7 | >10 | 10 | >10 | 9 | >10 |
| India | >10 | >10 | >10 | 10 | >10 | 10 | >10 | 10 | >10 | >10 | >10 | >10 | >10 | >10 | >10 | 6 | >10 | >10 | >10 | 5 |

Source: The Horizon Consultancy Group, *The World in Chinese Eyes, 1999-2009*.

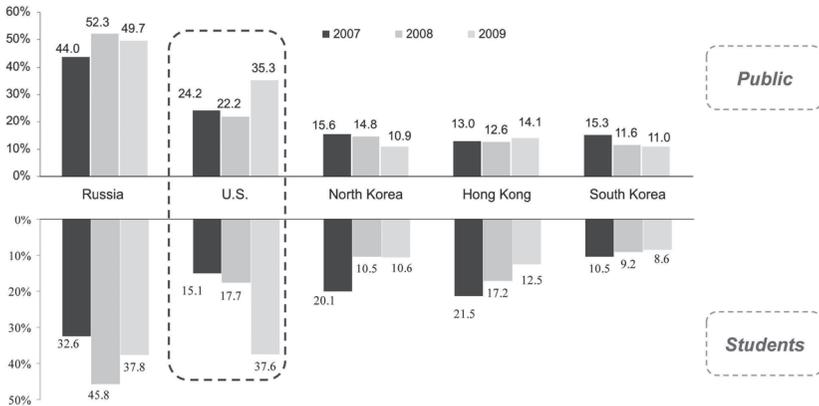
Note: P indicates rankings made by the public; S indicates rankings made by students.

Figure 04: Countries or Districts that are Most Important to China Economically



Source: *The Horizon Consultancy Group, The World in Chinese Eyes, 2007-2009.*

Figure 05: China's Closest Security Partners



Source: *The Horizon Consultancy Group, The World in Chinese Eyes, 2007-2009.*

Figure O6: Rankings of China's Security Partners over the Next 5 to 10 Years (Top 10)

| | 2005 | | 2006 | | 2007 | | 2008 | | 2009 | |
|-------------|------|-----|------|-----|------|-----|------|-----|------|-----|
| | P | S | P | S | P | S | P | S | P | S |
| Russia | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| USA | 5 | 7 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| South Korea | 3 | 3 | 4 | 2 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 3 | 8 |
| North Korea | 2 | 2 | 3 | 5 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 6 |
| Singapore | 6 | 6 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 4 | 6 | >10 | 5 | 3 |
| Japan | >10 | >10 | 9 | >10 | 5 | 6 | 5 | 6 | 6 | 5 |
| France | 4 | 5 | 8 | 7 | 8 | 7 | 10 | >10 | >10 | >10 |
| Australia | 10 | 10 | 6 | 3 | 6 | 10 | 9 | 7 | 7 | 4 |
| Pakistan | 7 | 4 | >10 | >10 | 10 | >10 | 8 | 10 | 9 | 7 |
| German | 8 | 9 | 7 | >10 | 9 | 4 | 7 | 3 | 10 | >10 |
| Canada | >10 | >10 | 10 | 10 | >10 | 9 | >10 | 9 | >10 | >10 |
| UK | >10 | >10 | >10 | 8 | >10 | 8 | >10 | 8 | 8 | >10 |

Source: The Horizon Consultancy Group, 1999-2009.

Note: P indicates rankings made by the public; S indicates rankings made by students.

A STABLE AND IMPORTANT RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CHINA AND THE UNITED STATES IN STUDENTS' EYES

Corresponding with the Chinese youth's positive perception of the United States, most opinion leaders, general residents, and students believe the Sino-U.S. relationship is stable and fairly good. They also believe that having good relations with the United States is quite important for China. These views are based on an awareness of their tumultuous past relationship, and the recognition of common ground for future development between them.

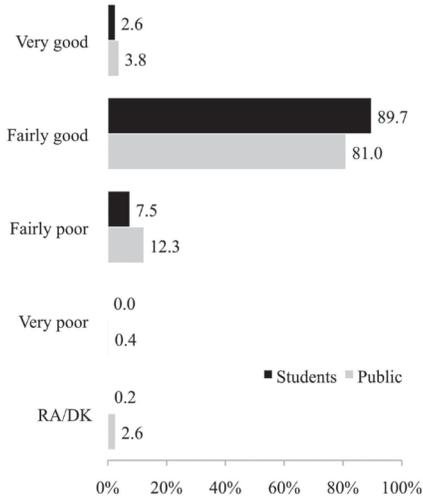
An analysis of the Chinese people's assesment of how the Chinese and U.S. governments handle the Sino-U.S. relationship shows that the Chinese are more satisfied with their own government's actions. Chinese policies toward the United States are viewed as stable, long-term, and strategic; while U.S. policies are not as stable and are more easily influenced by the domestic political atmosphere. For example, during U.S. presidential elections, China becomes a largely political topic, which may have a direct impact on U.S. policies towards China. This may also explain why a newly-elected president will readjust his China policies in the early stages of his administration, thus resulting in some fluctuation in the bilateral relationship.

Also coinciding with the viewpoint that current Sino-U.S. relations are stable, most Chinese students predicted that in five to ten years, the relationship would either be one of cooperation, or of cooperation mixed with tension. The many connections between the two countries would not easily allow for either an intimate partnership, severe tension or military confrontation to occur.

These student perceptions seem to be based on the impression that some areas the two countries could cooperate on, including trade, energy, and the environment, may serve as common grounds for further cooperation in the future.

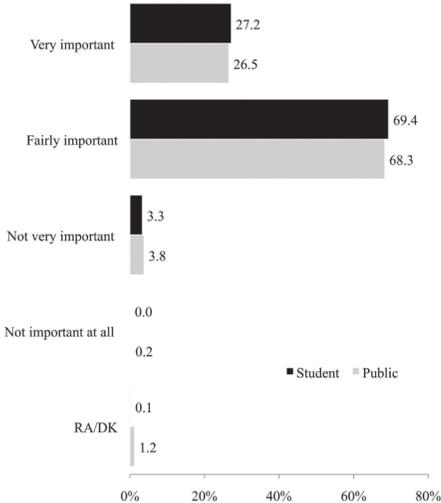
Moreover, though disagreements exist, Chinese students believe the United States and China share the same points of view about a series of international issues, such as cracking down on international crime, drug smuggling, and the reduction of environmental pollution.

Figure 07: The Sino-U.S. Relationship in the Chinese Public's Eyes



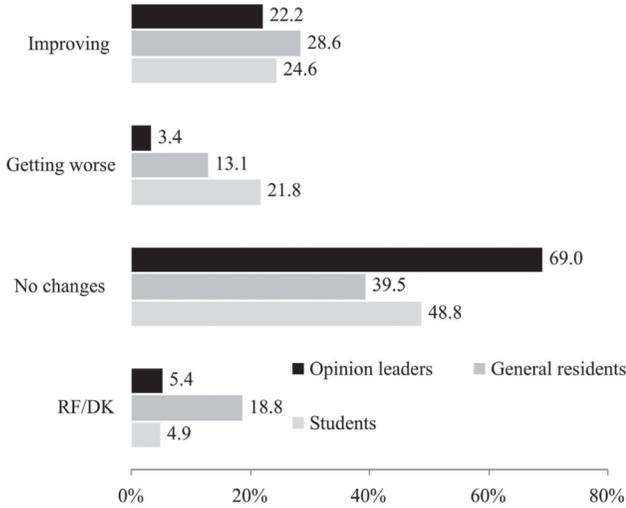
Source: The Horizon Consultancy Group, *The World in Chinese Eyes*, 2009.

Figure 08: Chinese Public Opinion on How Important it is for China to have Good Relations with the United States



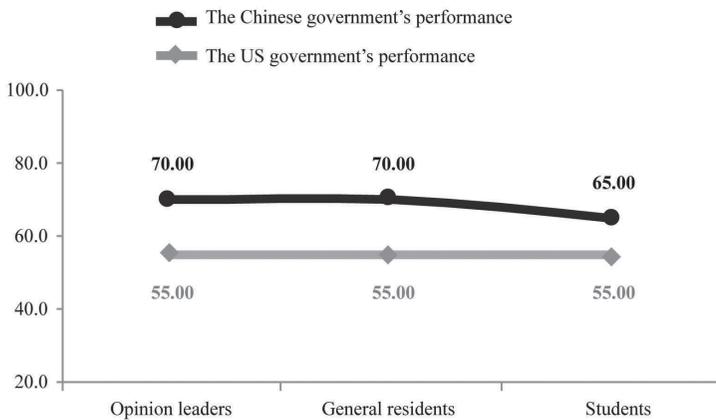
Source: The Horizon Consultancy Group, *The World in Chinese Eyes*, 2009.

Figure 09: An Assessment of Sino-U.S. Relations by Opinion Leaders, General Residents, and Students



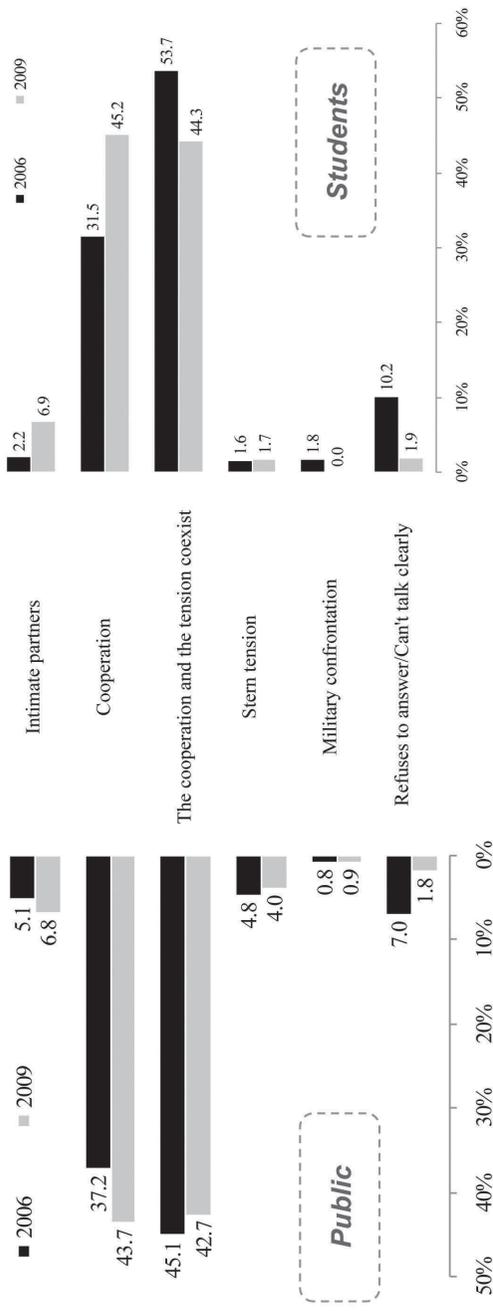
Source: The Horizon Consultancy Group, *The United States in Chinese Eyes, 2007*.³

Figure 10: Assessment of the Chinese and U.S. Governments in Handling Sino-U.S. Relations



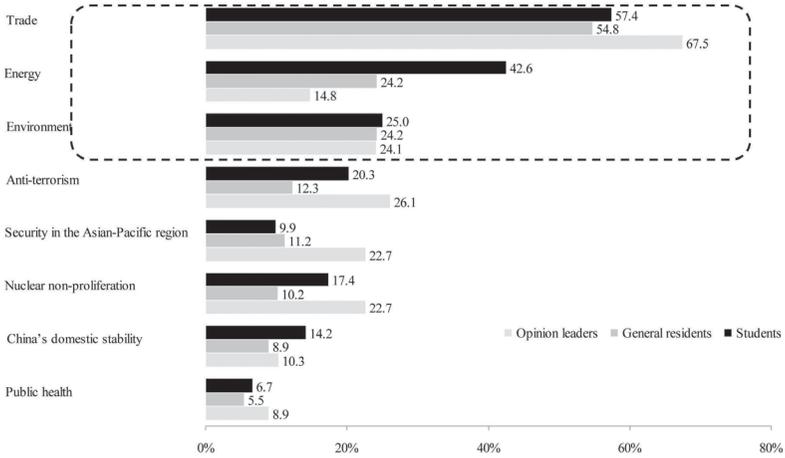
Source: The Horizon Consultancy Group, *The United States in Chinese Eyes, 2007*.

Figure 11: The Chinese Public's Projected Trends of Sino-U.S. Relations in 5 to 10 Years



Source: The Horizon Consultancy Group. *The World in Chinese Eyes, 2006 and 2009.*

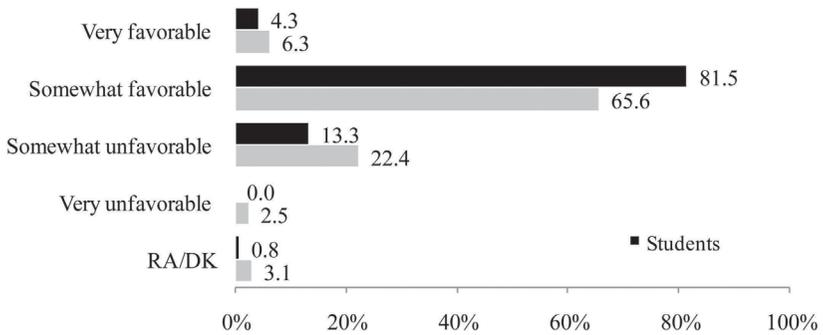
Figure 12: Areas which China and the United States Share the most Common Ground



Source: The Horizon Consultancy Group, *The United States in Chinese Eyes, 2007*.

Note: This is a two-choice question, with the sum of options exceeding 100 percent.

Figure 13: General Opinions of American People



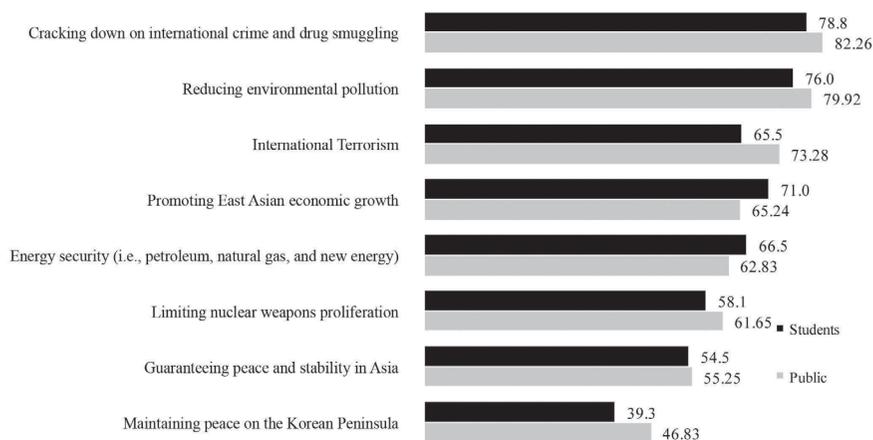
Source: The Horizon Consultancy Group, *The United States in Chinese Eyes, 2009*.

In general, American people and culture impressed most Chinese students. The younger generation was mostly in favor of American people, music, television, films, and even American democracy.

Furthermore, the Chinese student's lifestyle is becoming more "Americanized," in the sense of celebrating American festivals, enjoying American fast food and watching American films. Intensive cultural exchanges help Chinese students develop a better and deeper understanding of the United States, while also leaving an impression of a more closely linked and mutually influencing Sino-U.S. relationship.

It is interesting to note that, compared with other groups, the younger generation's acceptance of the United States is much higher. This is mostly due to American culture's popularity among the youth in China, and the larger exposure to the United States during university education.

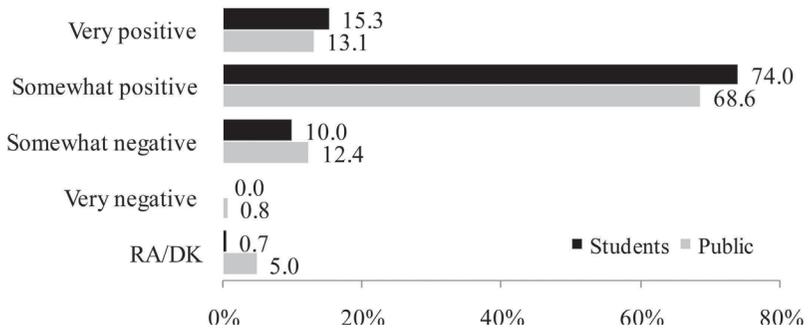
Figure 14: The Proximity of Chinese and American views on International Issues, according to the General Public and Students



Source: *The Horizon Consultancy Group, The World in the Chinese Eyes, 2006.*⁴

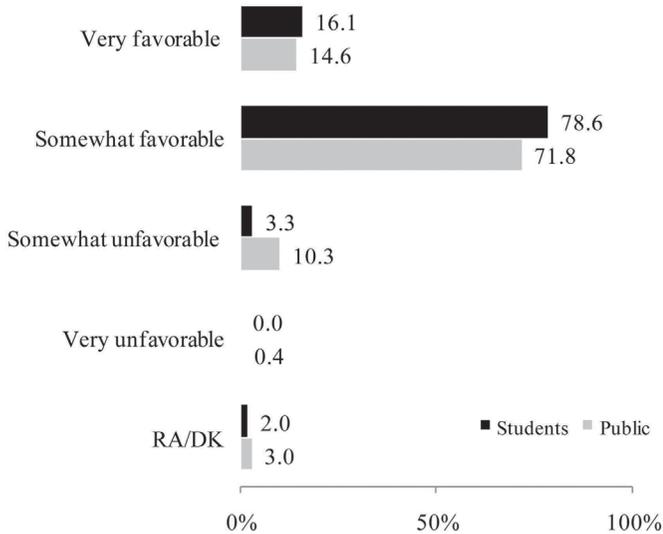
Note: Calculated by using a 4-point scale in which a score of "4" meant views are completely consistent, whereas a score of "1" meant completely inconsistent.

Figure 15: Opinion of American Democracy



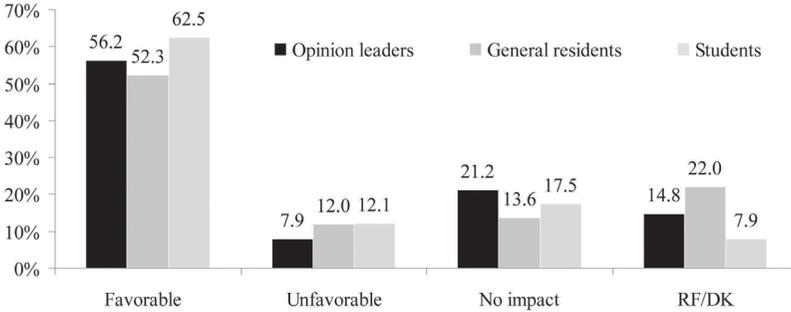
Source: *The Horizon Consultancy Group, The United States in Chinese Eyes, 2009.*

Figure 16: Opinion of American Culture (e.g., Music, Television, and Films)



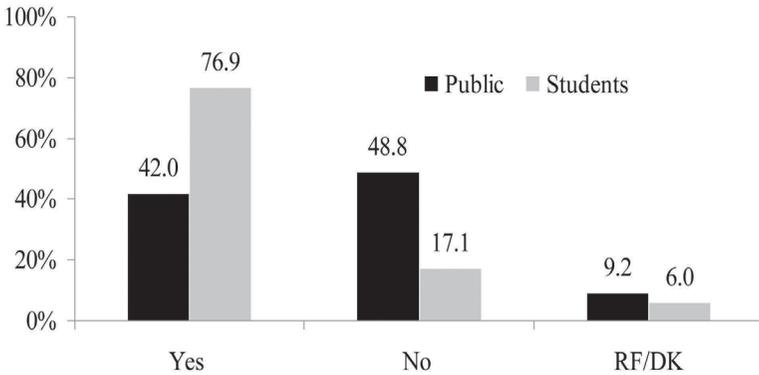
Source: *The Horizon Consultancy Group, The United States in Chinese Eyes, 2009.*

Figure 17: Assessment of American Cultures' Influence in China



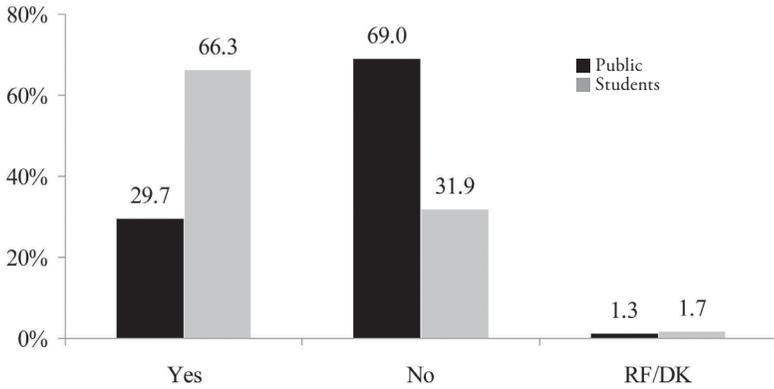
Source: *The Horizon Consultancy Group, The United States in Chinese Eyes, 2007.*

Figure 18: Do you like American Fast Food?



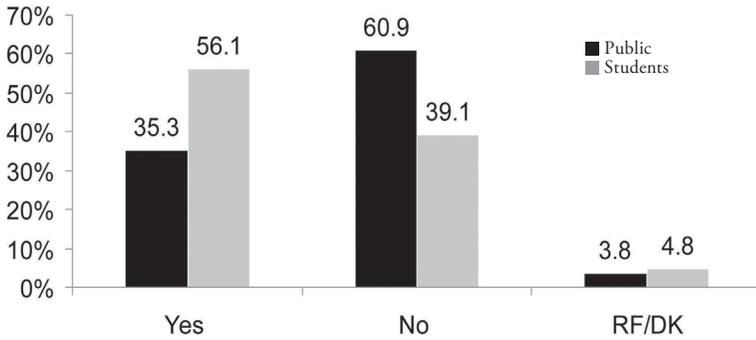
Source: *The Horizon Consultancy Group, The United States in Chinese Eyes, 2007.*

Figure 19: Do You Usually Celebrate American Holidays and Festivals?



Source: The Horizon Consultancy Group, *The United States in Chinese Eyes, 2007*.

Figure 20: Have you Watched an American Film in the last Month?



Source: The Horizon Consultancy Group, *The United States in Chinese Eyes, 2007*.

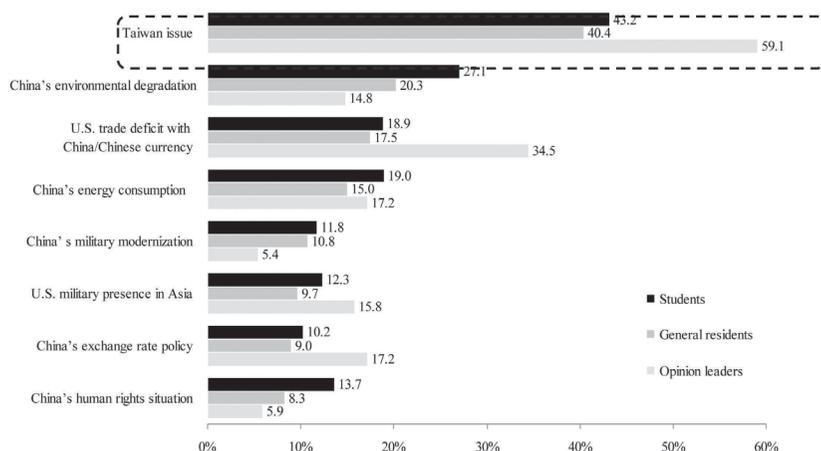
SOME CONCERNS ABOUT THE FUTURE OF THE RELATIONSHIP

With regard to Sino-U.S. relations in the future, many considerations influence the broad outlook.

The following figures show that although students have a relatively positive view of current Sino-U.S. relations, there are still issues that really concern them. Issues such as China's environmental degradation, the U.S. deficit being blamed on China's currency valuation, China's energy consumption, and the Taiwan issue being the biggest concerns for most of them.

For one thing, the Taiwan issue is one of China's core strategic interests and has always been at the center of Sino-U.S. bilateral relations. The other issues of concern are mostly the effects of China's development, as the boom in China has brought about problems that may have a great impact on itself, as well as on other international players.

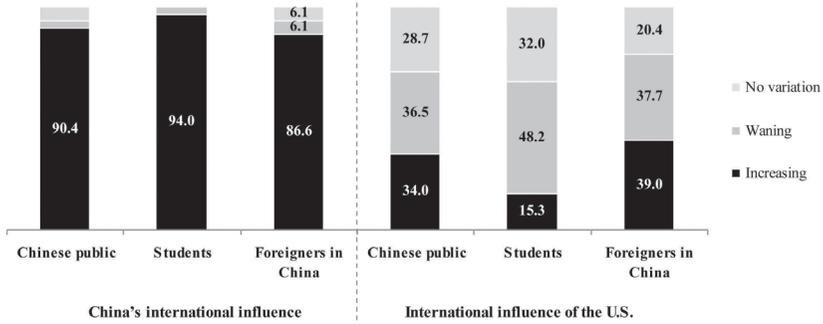
Figure 21: Most Concerning Issues in the Sino-U.S. Relationship



Source: The Horizon Consultancy Group, *The United States in Chinese Eyes*, 2009.

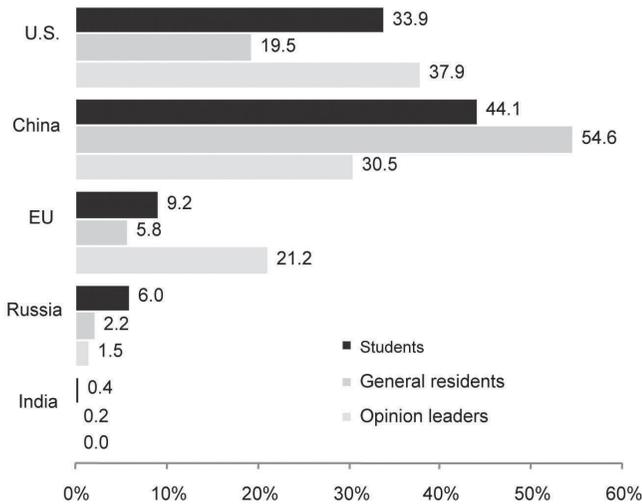
Note: This is a two-choice question, with the sum of the options exceeding 100 percent.

Figure 22: Views of the Chinese Public and Foreigners on China's and the United States' International Influence in the past 10 Years



Source: The Horizon Consultancy Group, *China's National Status in the Eyes of the Chinese Public and Foreigners, Provided by the Present Survey, 2010*.⁵

Figure 23: The World's Leading Superpower



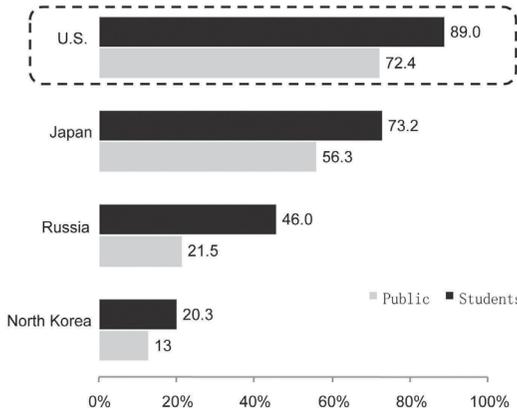
Source: The Horizon Consultancy Group, *The United States in Chinese Eyes, 2007*.

Figure 24: Views of the Chinese Public and Foreigners on which Countries are the Leading Forces in the World at Present and After 10 Years

| | At present | | | | | | After 10 years | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---------|----------------------------|----------------------------|---|----------------------------|----------------------------|-------|----------------------------|----------------------------|---|----------------------------|----------------------------|-------|----------------------------|----------------------------|---|----------------------------|----------------------------|-------|
| | Students | | | Chinese public | | | Foreigners in China | | | Students | | | Chinese public | | | Foreigners in China | | |
| | Reference in the 1st place | Reference in the 2nd place | | Reference in the 1st place | Reference in the 2nd place | | Reference in the 1st place | Reference in the 2nd place | | Reference in the 1st place | Reference in the 2nd place | | Reference in the 1st place | Reference in the 2nd place | | Reference in the 1st place | Reference in the 2nd place | |
| America | 1 | 50.9% | 1 | 36.5% | 1 | 47.9% | 1 | 33.1% | 1 | 77.3% | 2 | 26.2% | 2 | 30.6% | 2 | 36.1% | 1 | 43.1% |
| China | 2 | 34.4% | 3 | 19.3% | 2 | 37.3% | 2 | 22.6% | 2 | 13.1% | 3 | 12.5% | 1 | 52.0% | 1 | 51% | 2 | 32.9% |
| Russia | 4 | 4.9% | 4 | 18.6% | 4 | 5.6% | 3 | 22.2% | 4 | 2.2% | 4 | 11.6% | 3 | 6.7% | 4 | 3.6% | 4 | 4.8% |
| EU | 3 | 8.0% | 2 | 21.1% | 3 | 6.1% | 4 | 13.1% | 3 | 4.5% | 1 | 35% | 4 | 5.7% | 3 | 6.3% | 3 | 10.2% |
| Japan | 5 | 1.8 | 5 | 4.5% | 5 | 2.1% | 5 | 7.2% | 5 | 1.3% | 5 | 10.6% | 5 | 1.8% | 5 | 2.1% | 5 | 4.2% |

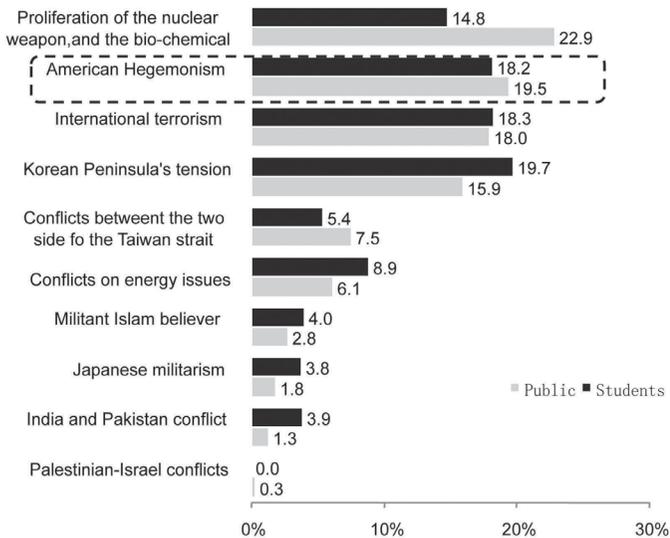
Source: *The Horizon Consultancy Group, The United States in Chinese Eyes, 2009.*

Figure 25: Countries that will Become a Threat to China's Interests in the Future



Source: *The Horizon Consultancy Group, The World in Chinese Eyes, 2009.*

Figure 26: In the next Five Years, which Event will Become the Biggest Threat to World Peace?



Source: *The Horizon Consultancy Group, The World in Chinese Eyes, 2009.*

Chinese students believe that the United States is still a superpower. However, after years of rocketing development, China is gradually becoming the world's other leading superpower. Students have noticed the changes in China due to its economic development, as well as its increasing international influence in the past ten years. All groups of the survey, notably 94 percent of the students, believed that China's international influence was increasing. Moreover, a large portion of students considered U.S. influence in the world as either having no variation or even waning.

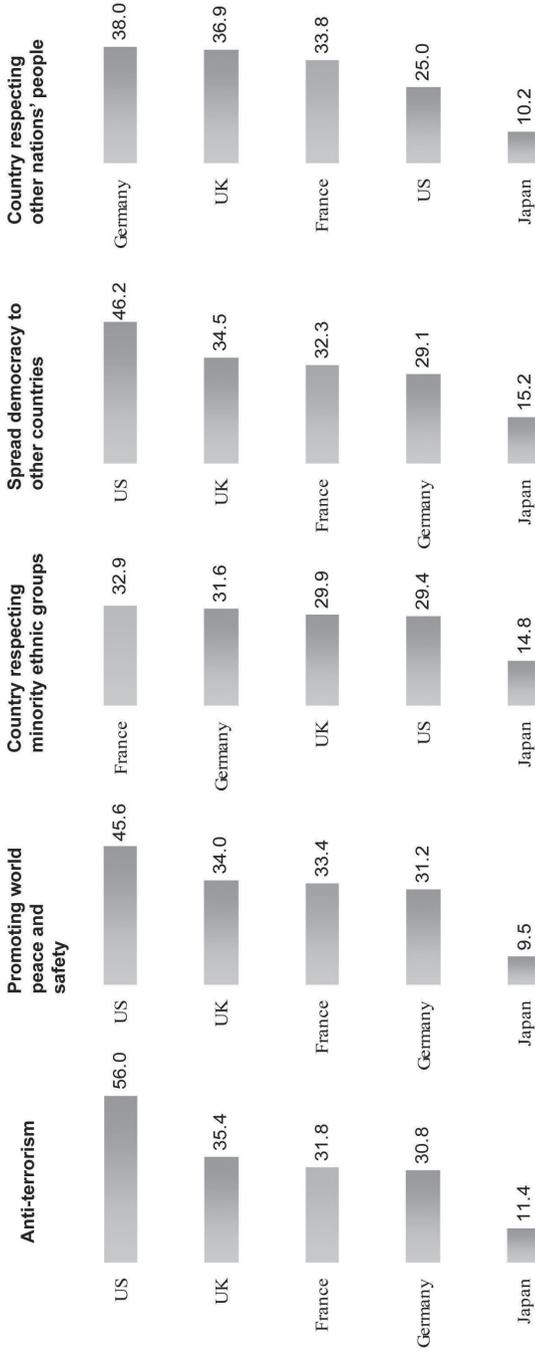
On the basis of China's capabilities and potential, nearly half of China's younger generation showed great confidence in China's future. China will play an increasingly important role and even assume a leading position in the world within ten years.

But consistent with Chinese government statements, young students who are expecting China to become a really strong country, also expressed the view that if China were to one day become the most powerful country in the world, it would not be a hegemony. This moderate assessment of China's future international position is largely influenced by the government's long-standing foreign policies, as well as the will to pursue harmony, which is deeply rooted in traditional Chinese culture.

Furthermore, again looking at the future, Chinese students also pointed out their dissatisfaction with the U.S. role in the world. As the only superpower, it is hard to deny America's political and economic importance at present and in the near future. No matter how rapidly China develops, the United States will still have great influence in many areas. Students see American hegemonism, along with international terrorism and tensions on the Korean Peninsula, as the biggest threats to world peace. Over 89 percent of students view the United States as the country posing the greatest potential threat to China in the future.

The following figures further illustrate Chinese students' concerns. Half of the Chinese students surveyed believed that the United States has put great energy into anti-terrorism and promoting world peace and safety, which is supposedly welcomed all over the world. However, only 29.4 percent of them viewed the United States as a country respecting minority ethnic groups, and even less believed it respected people in other nations.

Figure 26: Chinese Youth's Evaluation of the Main Players' Performance in World Affairs



Source: The Horizon Consultancy Group. *The European Union and France in the Eyes of Chinese Urban Youth, 2008.*

Note: As it is a multiple-choice question, the sum of the options' percentages exceeds 100 percent.

Note 2: The United States has made great efforts to strengthen its "soft power" through many channels. The increase in its favorability rating mentioned above is one of the outcomes welcomed by the United States. However, for most countries in the world, including China, the United States has not shown enough respect to others when dealing with both domestic and international issues, and insists on its own interests even at the expense of hurting others. Events such as the invasion of Iraq, the scandals of maltreatment of prisoners, and the interference in other countries' internal affairs badly damaged America's international credibility and respectability.

OPPORTUNITIES THAT SHOULD BE GRASPED

This research shows that Chinese students' attitudes toward the United States are quite complicated. Many have gradually established a positive opinion of the United States in a general sense, and have great confidence in the Sino-U.S. bilateral relationship, while at the same time having huge concerns that the United States will pose a worrisome threat in the future.

At the same time, some Americans and people from Western countries also regard a rising China as a threat. Nevertheless, they still recognize the necessity of partnership-based cooperation on international security issues with countries such as China. During this time of globalization, there are many non-traditional security issues which require broad international cooperation. No single country can effectively solve these issues by itself.

In a broad sense, the United States is very popular among Chinese youth, such as in the areas of agriculture, financial markets, and transportation. Compared with other developed countries, the United States has the advantage in both daily-use and high-tech industries, as well as in its innovative spirit and advanced technologies. It is also the most popular holiday destination for Chinese urban youth.

Boosting cultural exchanges, strengthening economic interdependence, and nurturing shared values, areas noted in the educated students' opinions, will serve as foundations of the bilateral relationship in the future. Young students, not shy about voicing their opinions, can also directly affect foreign policy-making, and thus Sino-U.S. relations.

The future of the Sino-U.S. relationship will be determined by the young generation. How to win their attention, interest, favorability and also trust and respect, should be a basic, essential and serious topic for both countries to explore further.

NOTES

1. “The world in the Chinese eyes,” was a continuous research survey conducted by Horizon Research Consultancy Group, a professional consulting firm in China. Questionnaire surveys were given to residents aged eighteen years and older in the Chinese cities of Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Wuhan, Chengdu, Shenyang, Xi’an, Dalian, Xiamen, and Jinan. A multi-stage random sampling method was used to come up with a controlled sample size of 3,000 participants.

2. According to Chinese scholar, Lin Hongyu’s empirical study, during each U.S. presidential election cycle, U.S. policy towards China will be affected, mainly by the cross-Strait issue, human rights, etc. This has always led to negative fluctuations in Sino-U.S. relations. See Lin Hongyu, *Study on the U.S. Presidential Election Politics: 1952-2004* (Tianjin Renmin Publisher, 2006); Shen Xuhui, a visiting scholar with the Brookings Institute pointed out that this mysterious cycle happened basically due to U.S. domestic politics. Available from http://www.brookings.edu/opinions/2010/0415_hu_obama_meeting_shen.aspx?sc_lang=zh-CN.

3. Questionnaire surveys were given to residents aged eighteen years and older in the big Chinese cities of Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Wuhan, Changsha, Xi’an, Chengdu, as well as small cities. Residents living in the countryside of Shaoxin, Zhuji in Zhejiang Province, Fuzhou, Changle in Fujian Province, Jinzhou, Dengta in Liaoning Province, Shijiazhuang, Xinji in Hebei Province, Yueyang, Linxiang in Hunan Province, Pengzhou in Sichuan Province, Xianyang, Xingpin in Shaanxi Province were also surveyed. A multi-stage random sampling method was used to come up with a controlled sample size of 4104 participants.

4. Questionnaire surveys were given to residents aged eighteen years and older in the Chinese cities of Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Wuhan, Changsha, Xi’an, Chengdu, and Harbin. A multi-stage random sampling method was used to come up with a controlled sample size of 1,419 participants.

5. This survey result is the co-production of China Development Research Foundation (CDRF) and Horizon Research Consultancy Group, which included two groups of interviewees sampled in different ways. Chinese Public: The survey was conducted on the spot between January 23 and 31, 2010 through a multi-phase random sampling method. The respondents consisted of 1,754 interviewees aged 18-65 from the urban communities of seven cities including Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Wuhan, Chengdu, Harbin, and Xi’an, which was remarkably representative of the general public. Foreigners in China: The survey was conducted on the spot between January 23 and February 3, 2010 through intercept interviews with a sample of 313 foreigners in China aged above eighteen years, from seven cities including Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Wuhan, Chengdu, Harbin, and Xi’an. The sample was constructed using the system sampling method at the fixed interval from foreigners passing across the specified place and within close proximity to the interviewers.

THE UNITED STATES AND CHINA: MUTUAL PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS

James Fallows

The Western media's perceptions of China, particularly those of the U.S. media, present a paradox that warrants explanation. The three elements of the paradox are as follows:

First, the people now explaining China to readers, listeners, and viewers of the U.S. media are, as a group, first rate. Across a range of measures that indicate the quality of a reportorial corps—basic journalistic skills, language preparation, overall sophistication, and intellectual and emotional understanding of the host country—the average talent level of the people now on duty in China is probably higher than the average of any place else. This comparison includes Washington, D.C., New York, Paris, and other cities across the globe. One important area in which these media personnel excel is the sense of sympathy and fellow feeling with the country in which they are reporting. Thus, the first element of the paradox is that the Western media has an extremely qualified group of people reporting on China.

The second element of this paradox is one that I have discovered after spending three of the last four years living in China. This element is the difficulty of understanding the feel, trends, and nuances of China from reading the output of these same excellent media personnel. I argue that a very talented group of people on the ground in China is, for some reason, transmitting an

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impression of China that does not present a full picture of the country to outside audiences.

There is a third and final element to this paradox. Many people in China would explain this imperfect output by assuming that the Western media collectively have some biased, nationalistic desire to hold China down, and that this in turn creates a predisposition against rendering a fully nuanced picture of China. But to me, as someone who has spent his working life in the Western media, this assumption just does not ring true. The paradoxical element, then, is that the easiest explanation for a flawed rendering of China is in fact too easy to be realistic.

For the purposes of this discussion, I assert that these three assumptions are true: that the foreign press in China is an excellent group of people; that a partial view of China nonetheless comes through their work; and that this partial view is not the result of bias. The challenge therefore is to unravel the paradox and provide a solution.

Let me say a little more about the problem to be explained. I differ from many people inside China in asserting that the phenomenon to be interpreted is not some sort of excessive anti-Chinese bias or tone in the U.S. media or in U.S. public life. Indeed, whenever I hear words of caution from people in the media or public affairs about what they fear to be an anti-Chinese tone in U.S. politics, I try to remind them of the role that China actually plays in U.S. public discourse. For example, in the presidential campaign debates of 2008, there was only one significant mention of China. Each of the candidates said they thought the economic imbalance between the two countries was unsustainable in terms of debt.

In President Obama's 2010 State of the Union speech, the only mention of China was an assertion that if China can aggressively develop renewable energy sources, the United States should rise to the challenge and do the same. The congressional elections happening around the country this fall will be bitterly contested, but I predict that in barely any of the 435 congressional races will China rank among the top five campaign issues. (Post-election update: The "Chinese threat" did become a notable theme in several campaign ads, notably one sponsored by a group worried about the U.S. budget deficit and that showed a mythical "Chinese professor" gloating

in 2030 about America's debt-induced downfall. But neither in the ads nor in the congressional campaigns was there much discussion of specific changes in U.S. policy toward China, or demands for shifts in China's own behavior. As has been the case in many past invocations of a foreign "challenge," from Sputnik in the 1950s through the Japanese economic boom of the 1980s, the ads really reflected concerns about America's strength and were intended to evoke changes in American behavior.) For now, China is not really a part of the U.S. national debate as a political phenomenon. That is not healthy—I think Americans should be actively discussing their interactions with China. The only positive aspect is that it undercuts fears frequently expressed in the Chinese media that the United States is broadly adopting an anti-Chinese tone.

Rather than involving "hostility," I would define the problem in U.S.-China coverage in a different way. A measure of the press's adequacy in rendering a certain topic is whether actually being in a country—living there, spending time there day by day, getting to know a range of people—seems and feels different from having read about it. The greater the gap between direct experience and knowledge gained through reading or hearing reports, the greater the indicated failure of press in conveying a fully representative picture of the place. A certain amount of difference is inevitable with even the best reportage, from any society, at any time. But I think there is a particularly large gap between reports and reality in the case of China. The feeling of *being there*, amid the contradictory realities of the place, is vastly more complicated than one gets in the press.

A few main factors stand out as realities of today's China which resident foreigners take for granted but that daily press coverage rarely conveys. The first reality is the simple diversity, scale, chaos, and variety of China. Many people within China recognize that it often seems less a "country" than it is a continent or a loose assemblage of provinces. People who read the U.S. press coverage may have a harder time understanding how varied the country can be in terms of economic levels, interests, policies, regional tensions, geographic and environmental conditions, and countless other factors.

A second element which is evident inside China but less so via the press is the extent and urgency of China's own problems. The many obstacles that the

Chinese leadership and public still have to confront include environmental challenges, the nature of the university system, the evolution of politics, and a range of other issues. The perception that tends to come across in the U.S. media is either that everything is working well for China, or that China is about to fall apart. The fact that is taken for granted on-scene in China is that both of those things are simultaneously true, in different ways. A related element which is evident in daily Chinese life but harder to convey is that almost every trend is matched by a countertrend. “China’s Silver Lining,” my June 2008 *Atlantic Magazine* article about the environmental predicament in China, quotes a government white paper saying that the “environmental situation in China is grave, but with some positive development.” Both of those things are true—it *is* a grave situation and there are positive developments. Conveying that tension is essential, as it is an important part of reality in China, but it is also extremely difficult to do.

Other factors fall into this category of unreported realities. Those living in China recognize the unevenness of political control within the country. There are certain regions, certain subjects, certain kinds of activity that are tightly controlled. There are many other aspects of Chinese life that seem to be completely uncontrolled, and would benefit from some type of control—traffic, for instance. The range of different levels of control across various aspects of life is hard to convey in a lot of reports. Another illustration: residents in China recognize a distinction between *liberty* and *democracy*. Among many Chinese people there is only a small demand for immediate increases in democracy, but a very significant demand for increases in personal liberty, freedom of choice, and freedom of discussion. That is a distinction that rarely comes through in the U.S. press. Finally, completing the list of things that are obvious on scene and hard to convey is public “feeling.” This factor includes a whole constellation of emotions: national pride, national success, fellow feeling for the rest of the world, and defensiveness about other countries. These feelings comprise a mixture of confidence and insecurity that characterizes any great nation, but is particularly true of China at the moment. This mixture is hard to infer from reports about either Chinese “arrogance” or Chinese resistance to foreign powers. Thus, there is a huge reality of China that a first-rate press corps has a hard time conveying to the readership.

The first possible explanation for this gap in coverage would be, again, simply that reporters are “biased.” Some people claim that these reporters do not like seeing all the complexities of China and therefore decide willfully to present an overly simple view to audiences. I argue that this is untrue. There are countries in the world where the foreign press corps is unhappy, and that discomfort comes through in their coverage. That is not, overall, the case in China. On average, foreign reporters like Chinese people, like China, like the experience, and like the adventure. However, there is one subset of reporters who present a special case. I respect the people who are *New York Times* reporters in China, but I am glad that I am not one of them. *New York Times* reporters in China are viewed by many Chinese officials as extensions of the official U.S. presence in their country, so dealing with them is a branch of diplomacy. Therefore the Chinese government, foolishly in my view, tends to hassle them more than any other Western reporters. The result is that the people with the biggest megaphone have the hardest time in China. To me this illustrates the Chinese central government’s larger lack of sophistication in “telling its story” to the outside world. Or, to put it less judgmentally, its far greater attention to the domestic audience, inside China, than to whatever the outside world might think or like. But apart from the *Times* and its particular challenge, most others in the foreign press in general do not face these difficulties.

Bias of editors back in U.S. offices is a factor here, but not in a specifically anti-Chinese way. Editors are “biased” in their inescapable need to simplify the news—if all events were presented in full complexity, newspapers would be infinitely long. No condensation of events can be perfectly “fair,” and there is inevitable pressure, on any topic, to make accounts unnaturally dramatic and unnaturally stark. The well-known shifts in the news business structure intensify these pressures. As the number of foreign correspondents decreases in most news organizations, a more limited range of information comes across.

These explanations are all important to note, but I argue that the real reason for the barriers in perceptions to the press is simply that the nature of reality in China today is so huge, contradictory, fast changing, and diverse that by definition it is going to be distorted through any lens of the press—no matter how skillful the reporters, wise their editors, or patient their readers

and viewers. Therefore, the only way to convey this complexity is to augment the press reports in other ways.

The United States has similar complexity, but there are lots of ways for people around the world to learn about the United States. They see movies, read books, watch television, and come here as tourists. They receive a wide range of signals. That is not true for westerners learning about China, and it should become true. The solution to flawed U.S. perceptions of China is more information, from a wider variety of sources. One of the strengths of the modern media environment concerning China is that many channels besides just newspapers and broadcast stations provide information useful in understanding China. The United States is experiencing a kind of golden age for nonfiction books about China by non-Chinese observers. Each author provides his or her angle on the Chinese reality, and taken in total these books present a useful view of the country. Radio is also providing valuable perspective. Foreigners in China create new blogs every day, which adds to the information available.

Ultimately, the only solution to the media distortion that creates these misperceptions of China is opening every new channel of communication possible. The idea that human connections make a profound difference may be hackneyed, but in this case, those connections are extremely important. People around the world have a relatively accurate view of the United States, because they receive information about the United States in so many ways. That is the goal for knowing about China. Having more people travel there will generate more voices, so that the chaotic reality of minute-by-minute changes in China is matched more to what we see in the press.

WHO ARE THEY, AND WHO ARE WE? THE IMAGE OF THE UNITED STATES IN CHINESE POPULAR CULTURE

Zhou Qingan

To talk about the U.S. image in the popular culture of China is actually to examine the world view evident in Chinese mass culture, which is an ambitious topic. Three types of foreigners often show up in Chinese popular culture: Japanese, Soviet Red Army soldiers, and Americans. The former two have clear images in China, while the American image is a rather complicated topic. The American image in Chinese popular culture is mercurial and diversified, and therefore hard to characterize accurately.

Image is a reflection of ourselves. When we construct an image of an “other,” it reflects the identification of ourselves subconsciously. It is like looking at ourselves in the mirror, as the famous social psychologist Charles Cooley’s “looking glass self theory” says. Therefore, when we talk about the U.S. image in Chinese mass culture, we are also talking about the Chinese image of themselves.

Just as Samuel Huntington asked “Who are we?” in his book, Chinese face the same situation. Chinese understanding of themselves during the modernization period is also a basis for China’s perception of the outside world.

Meanwhile, when talking about mass culture in China, we face complicated problems. Chinese popular culture takes many different forms, ranging

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from fiction and non-fiction literature, movies, TV series, to the Internet, etc. The sources of Chinese popular culture are diverse as well. It is not only influenced by the indigenous culture, but also by outside cultures. Furthermore, during the reform and opening-up period, outside cultures have had even more influence in shaping the cultural mentality of the Chinese people. Lastly, there are two different aspects to Chinese popular culture, one official and the other from “the grassroots.” Each displays different American people and aspects of American society. This requires further exploration.

Thus influenced by complicated factors, we find it hard to find a simple way to describe the U.S. image in the popular culture of China. Moreover, we can find different perspectives on America’s image in different periods of modern China. Beginning from the early 1900s, images of the American government and people began to appear in Chinese popular culture. We can also read the description of Americans in Chinese historical records at this time. As Mr. Zhao Qizheng, the former director of the Information Office of the State Council said in 2002, the Chinese characters used for the United States mean “beautiful country.” Intellectually this may or may not be true, but in popular culture the name helps form and expresses the image people have of a totally strange and different country.

THE EVOLVING CHINESE POPULAR IMAGE OF THE UNITED STATES: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The image of the United States in Chinese popular culture has evolved in recent years, influenced by many variables.

1. The U.S. image is closely connected to the state of Sino-U.S. relations. In the twenty years following the Korean War, the American people and the U.S. government were portrayed negatively in China. Specifically, the United States was seen as an “invader” because they not only intervened in China’s internal affairs, but they also sided with the Kuomintang (KMT) government during China’s civil war. Some liberal Chinese leaders criticize this view, saying that it was created in an isolated political context. However, because

communication channels were limited at the time, and complicated by language barriers, ordinary Chinese had little opportunity to know and better understand the United States.

2. From the beginning of increased Sino-U.S. contact in the early 1970s to the announcement of reform and opening-up in 1978, China's popular culture experienced a general shift. However, in the few mass culture works, the U.S. image rarely appeared.

3. From the advent of reform and opening-up to the early 1990s, Chinese curiosity toward the outside world increased and popular culture enjoyed a flourishing boom period. During this time, the U.S. image changed tremendously; in short, it greatly improved. The first favorable American image on the Chinese mainland came from the 1980 movie, *An American Pilot*, which was shot just after the establishment of Sino-U.S. diplomatic relations. The film tells the story of an American pilot who came to China in 1944 as an ally, and was shot down but saved by the Chinese people. However, the overall shift was small compared with the surge of Japanese-friendly movies at the same time.

4. Following the end of the Cold War, the U.S. image in China's mass culture became increasingly complicated, displaying both positive and negative images just as one coin has two sides. On one side, mass culture displayed a strong, advanced America with hi-technical capabilities; on the other side, it portrayed an arrogant country with erratic international relationships and many domestic social problems. The U.S. image in the eyes of the Chinese during this period was contradictory.

CHANNELS THROUGH WHICH IMAGES OF THE UNITED STATES COME

The American image in China's popular culture is displayed through the following channels:

Hollywood movies offer a direct U.S. image to the Chinese people. In recent years, the China Film Group Corporation has introduced about twenty Hollywood movies per year in theaters, and in addition many American films are available to Chinese through the Internet. The movies present a fairly complete picture of American society, thus allowing Chinese people a better understanding of the American political system, economic development, culture and social values. The American movies which surged into China after the reform and opening-up policy began constituted by far the largest proportion of overseas movies. Along with various TV series, they provided a lot of material from which to get to know the United States, and they influenced perceptions of the United States in accurate and inaccurate ways. *The Godfather* may leave Chinese audiences with an impression of rampant underworld activities in American society; cowboy films or movies starring Arnold Schwarzenegger could give Chinese people an impression of individual heroism; *Forrest Gump* gives Chinese people a better understanding of the complicated relationship between an ordinary American citizen and U.S. modern history; and movies like *2012*, *Independence Day*, and the *Transformers* series imparts to Chinese people an image of America that is always the savior of the world when crises strike. The image of the United States as "mission leader" and "global leader" is similar to U.S. behavior in the international community in the real world, and is intertwined with Chinese people's understanding of American foreign policy.

A second channel for images of the United States are American TV series. U.S. television shows such as *24* and *Friends* have a direct impact upon Chinese people. The introduction of American TV series started from the television sitcom *Growing Pains*, which changed the perception of America among China's young generation. Today, the young generation watches American TV shows via the Internet, as they are broadcast simultaneously by the U.S. cable networks. Examples include *Lost*, *Grey's Anatomy*, etc., some of which are even aired on the American TV Series Channel of

CCTV. U.S. TV series help audiences form a more realistic image than movies, as television depicts more “everyday” events and thus offers more reliable insight into American society, whereas movies mostly focus on conflict and drama.

Another aspect of U.S. popular culture worth looking into is the animation industry. Since the mid-1980s, China imported *Mickey Mouse*, *Donald Duck*, *Tom & Jerry*, and Disneyland onto its shores. The children who watched these 1980s cartoons are now in their 30s, and their first impression of the United States came from these very cartoons. The animation industry has the ability to create images in a soft way, which could construct a vivid U.S. image among the Chinese youth.

Chinese movies and TV shows are another important and direct factor in forming the U.S. image in China. In China’s popular culture, descriptions of the United States are rarely just about America; most of the movies tell stories which involve things that happen between China and the United States, or stories of Chinese people who live in the United States. These movies reflect the U.S. image in three dimensions. First, many movies and TV series tell stories of Chinese people’s experience in America, one example of which is the TV series *Beijingers in New York*, starring the famous Chinese actor Jiang Wen. Second, works reflect the complicated cultural clashes between the two countries; one good example of this kind is *The Treatment*, which chronicles American misunderstanding of traditional Chinese medicine. Third, works focus on the cooperation between China and the United States, mainly featuring stories taking place after World War II, such as *Lover’s Grief over the Yellow River*, about a downed American pilot in China, which provide the Chinese audience with lively material to learn about American society. In these movies and TV series, Americans are mostly described in favorable rather than negative ways. Take the movie *Wong Fei-hong* (a Chinese folk hero, skilled in medicine and martial arts) jointly shot in the mainland and Hong Kong for example. The movie series tried to provoke nationalism and national pride, and it involved many countries. But Americans were described in a positive way, while the Japanese image was almost always negative.

Moreover, direct descriptions have begun to emerge in China’s literatures in recent years, which portray varied images of the United States. Early in 1989, the author Lian Xingqian published a book entitled *The Loveable*

Americans. After the establishment of Sino-U.S. diplomatic relations, exchange programs increased sharply. Scholars, writers, journalists, and overseas students produced many works about America. Examples include *A Snapshot of America* by Fei Hsiao-tung, *American Impression* by Xu Zhongyu, *A Wander into the U.S.* by Wang Yijie, *America is A Myth* by Feng Jicai, *The American Kaleidoscope* by Wang Zoumin, among many others. Similarly, some Chinese-Americans wrote stories and books based on their own experiences, such as *Chinese Women in Manhattan* by Zhou Li, *Tell You a True America* by Chen Yanni, *Being A Lawyer in America* by Zhang Xiaow and Li Xiaozhong. There were also some more serious works, but not purely academic, such as *The U.S. Perception Among Chinese People: An Historical Examination*.

THE COMPLEXITY OF IMAGES OF THE UNITED STATES IN CHINA'S POPULAR CULTURE

As noted above, the image of the United States in China's popular culture is related to China's self-image, which is also continuously evolving.

Negative Images and Growing National Pride

The national pride of the Chinese people rose to an unprecedented level after the country won its independence in 1949. This pride is best elicited by struggles to overcome the negative legacy of history. In many historical movies, individual heroism is the vehicle to spark national pride.

Here are some examples: *Wong Fei-hong*, a movie directed by Xu Ke, shows how the American slave traders' evil deeds of selling Chinese people as slaves ultimately ends in failure. *The Way of the Dragon*, starring Bruce Lee, features an arrogant American warrior, who has always thrown his weight around, but finally falls under the fists and feet of a Chinese person (Lee). Americans like the soldier of fortune in the movie *Project Eagle* (which starred Jackie Chan), along with the nefarious American bandits in movies like *Wheels on Meals*, *Rumble in the Bronx*, and *Who Am I*, all wind up in failure. The miserable outcomes for these Americans make Chinese audiences feel elated and proud.

Conflicted Images and the Anxiety and Perplexity Caused by China's Rise

Since the reform and opening-up period began, Chinese people have gradually realized that as China rises contention with the outside world is not necessarily a zero-sum game, and that there is no right or wrong, simply differences, between cultures. Depictions of the clash and integration of different cultures actually prepares the country psychologically for rising. In the two decades following the start of the reform and opening-up period many cultural works demonstrated this psychological preparation.

In movies which portray the clash of cultures between China and the United States, the Americans are often symbols of particular cultural phenomena. In the elegant and understated scenes of the movie *The Wedding Banquet*, we could feel the impact on Chinese parents of their being confronted with their homosexual son, Gao Wei, and his gay boyfriend Simon, an American. In order to please his father, Gao Wei purchases new, Chinese-style furniture, while Simon tries to become accustomed to Chinese dishes. When visiting Gao Wei, the father gives Simon a gift, which according to Chinese tradition, is intended for a daughter-in-law. Needless to say he did this unwillingly. Another movie, *The Treatment*, demonstrates the difference between Chinese and American medical cultures. Drawing its principles from Chinese philosophy, Chinese medicine is romantic and legendary, while American medicine is empirical, based on the precise sciences of chemistry and biology. The movie *Pushing Hands* also demonstrates cultural differences. In the film, the Chinese father-in-law gives a traditional Chinese massage to his American daughter-in-law, which distresses her and even upsets his grandson; in the end, he could do nothing but sigh.

Friendly and Cooperative Images & Confidence with Clear Self-Identification

It is fair to say that from the late 1990s on through to the 21st century, China has gradually found its voice in its communication with the outside world. Dialogue with the outside world has become more frequent, and is conducted

on a more equal basis, a development which affects the U.S. image in Chinese popular culture. During this period, interactions between Americans and Chinese tend to be portrayed as friendly, cooperative, and mutually-beneficial.

A recent film comedy, *Big Shot's Funeral*, tells the story of an American film director, Tyler, who chooses an ancient and historic Chinese location, but proceeds with American-style ways of thinking and American values to shoot the film. However, he is fired from his director's job, and his health begins to fail. But before he falls into a coma, he tells a Chinese employee, You You, to plan a Chinese-style funeral for him. Thus You You, a Chinese, switches places with Tyler and becomes the real director of the comedy. Surprisingly, Tyler appreciates You You's hilarious arrangements.

China's popular culture is still evolving. The U.S. images mentioned above co-exist in China's mass culture at present, with their own distinguishing characteristics. But friendly and cooperative images are an indication of China's greater self-confidence and a growing pride in its enhanced status in the current world order.

WHY THE IMAGE OF THE UNITED STATES IS IMPORTANT

It seems that many studies focus on the image of China in American popular culture, while relatively little attention is given to the image of the United States in China's popular culture. In fact, this disparity overlooks the fact that image-building is actually a two-way construction process.

The U.S. image in China's popular culture is closely intertwined with the Sino-U.S. relationship. But this image of the United States usually remains fairly constant and often lags behind the changes of the Sino-U.S. relationship. For example, in the 1990s, Sino-U.S. relations experienced three different stages. The first stage began with the Tiananmen Square incident in 1989; the second stage was after the Taiwan Strait Crisis in 1995; and the third stage spans the U.S. bombing of China's embassy in Yugoslav in 1999 to the plane crash over the South China Sea in 2001. During these three different stages however, the U.S. image in China's popular culture did not exhibit fundamental changes.

In Chinese popular culture, the United States generally represents the most advanced country in the world. Therefore, in the context of China's rise, as the attitude China holds towards advanced countries moves from one of ideological hostility to one of cooperation between equals, the image of the United States improves. China's development is unique in that it is not a repeat of colonization, but pursuit of a win-win situation. Again, the changes in America's image in China are closely tied to Chinese perceptions of the world and its place in it.

The attention paid to the United States in China's popular culture is actually a reflection of China's own image of itself. In China's popular culture, almost every image of the "other" is based on its self-image. Early images of the United States usually appeared in works with historical or war backgrounds, showing how China was "decolonized" during its early modernization, while the current popular positive/negative images of the United States reflect China's changing awareness of its rights and identity.

The image of the United States in China's culture illustrates the different views on outside cultures between China's elites and grassroots groups. After the founding of the PRC in 1949, a common and consistent perception of the United States lasted for a long time among Chinese people, which means binary opposition in China's popular culture. However, after the period of reform and opening-up, the U.S. image in China's popular culture began to vary and became more complicated. If we look into the channels by which Chinese people get to know the United States, we will find that people in different age groups use completely different channels, which is one reason images vary.

China's popular culture continuously rechecks and reexamines its own cultural image. Image is a constructed concept. In Chinese popular culture, Chinese construct the image of the United States and in a way construct an image of the Sino-U.S. relationship as well, which opens up an opportunity for Chinese to reexamine their image of themselves. Therefore, image-building is a mutually interactive process involving self and the "other."

To study the U.S. image in Chinese popular culture is like a journey to examine ourselves as well; it helps us Chinese better understand the outside world, and our own role in it. Research is very limited in this area, making further exploration essential.

A RISE WITHOUT SHINE: THE GLOBAL WEAKNESS OF CHINESE CULTURE

渠成水不到

Robert Daly

Adversary (blinded): *"He's too awesome!"*

Waitress (batting her eyes): *"And attractive!"*

Proprietor: *"How can we repay you?"*

Po: *"There is no charge for awesomeness...or attractiveness."*

~**Kungfu Panda (2008), in his dreams**

To discuss *culture* is to slog through a heavily mined swamp. We get bogged down after a few steps in the insoluble problem of definitions. Hegel thought that culture was "the spirit of the people," which gets us nowhere. T.S. Eliot dared only call his book-length treatment of the subject "*Notes Towards the Definition of Culture*" (emphasis mine). It is well

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to ask for definitions, but the request leaves us flailing hip-deep in the mire, saying nothing. The swamp of cultural analysis is also a minefield because, while ideas about culture are idiosyncratic and frequently incoherent, they are nevertheless fiercely defended. This is especially so when we discuss the cultures of China and the United States in comparison. Many of us are ready to explode—to take off a leg, or at least a toe—if our culture is insulted, even if we cannot say what our culture is.

The task is simplified by the question at hand: *How does the popular culture of the People's Republic of China (PRC) influence American perceptions of that country?* *Popular culture* is here understood narrowly as referring to contemporary novels, movies, fashion, music, games (digital and athletic), design, the visual and performing arts, television, and so on. The term also comprises Chinese traditional culture² as it is commonly experienced in China and the United States. Chinese literature, painting, and poetry were not popular in their origins; they were the creation and province of elites. But they trickled down, as elite culture always does. They have been vulgarized. This is not a criticism of Chinese tradition, any more than it is an attack on Van Gogh to observe that many people know his work only through *Starry Night* refrigerator magnets. Regardless of its past glories and its capacity to inform the present, traditional culture lives in China today primarily as a cherished, but stagnant,³ fragmented, and fetishized element of *popular* culture. It is in this form that most Americans know it, if they know it at all.

The short answer to the question is that the popular culture of the PRC holds scant attraction for Americans and therefore has little influence on American perceptions of China.

This may seem like a discourteous assessment, but let us quickly survey the field. No Chinese television program has yet made a mark in the United States.⁴ Chinese film had an American art house following in the late 80s and early 90s, thanks to the work of directors Zhang Yimou, Chen Kaige, and Tian Zhuangzhuang,⁵ but none of their movies have found an American audience since Zhang's "Hero" (2002). Even at the height of their popularity in the United States, Chinese movies did little to shape American opinions of China. Much of the American interest in these films was due to the excitement of discovering that directors, actors, and cinematographers in China enjoyed

any creative scope to reflect, for example, on the upheavals of modern Chinese history or the status of women. American reviews of these works focused on the political aspects of production, censorship, and distribution, rather than treating the films as entertainment or as reflections on the human condition. American critics, clearly at a loss as to what these visually stunning, but slow and self-serious films were *about*, would summarize the historical background of the story, note once again that the actress Gong Li was “luminous,” and leave it at that. But the vogue for Chinese film did not last, and no Chinese movie seemed to influence American views of China as deeply as news reports that a director’s work had been banned,⁶ that censors had refused permission for a movie to be shown at an international festival,⁷ or that a director had been forbidden to make films at all.⁸ The politics of filmmaking in the PRC still trumps the entertainment value of Chinese film in shaping American views of China.⁹

The Chinese popular music industry rivals that of the United States in scale. Cantopop, Mandopop, rock, hip-hop, folk-pop fusion, and Maoist ballads that pack the nostalgic punch of American Doo-wop classics fill the airwaves, are belted out in karaoke bars, and are downloaded as ringtones. My Chinese friends and relatives love their music more ardently, and sing it far better, than do my American friends. But no Chinese melody has yet made it to the American radio or been covered by an American musician.¹⁰ Americans admire the technical mastery of Lang Lang and other Chinese musicians who perform in the States, but their concerts have done little to spur American interest in Chinese music. Chinese dramatic and musical theater are likewise without voice or influence in the United States. Peking and Kunqu Opera troupes tour the United States, but their audiences are small. The Freer Gallery’s Meyer Auditorium is a typical venue for these performances, many of which are subsidized by the Chinese government as part of its growing cultural diplomacy program. This is fitting, as classical opera is a museum art in China, kept alive for a shrinking number of connoisseurs and a growing number of tourists, largely as a matter of cultural pride. It is not a vibrant contemporary form.

The impact of Chinese literature on American readers is similarly slight. Memoirs by victims of political violence still find an audience, continuing the

tradition of *Life and Death in Shanghai* and *Wild Swans*, but few Americans, even readers who seek out translations of world literature, can name a contemporary Chinese fiction writer who resides in China. Gao Xingjian won the Nobel Prize for his widely unread *Soul Mountain* and Ha Jin won a PEN Faulkner Award for *Waiting*, but Gao lives in Paris (he emigrated in 1987) and Ha, who writes in English, has resided in the United States since 1986. Their well-known exile and the Chinese cultural bureaucracy's hostility toward Gao¹¹ undoubtedly have a stronger impact on American perceptions of literary China than do the works of either writer. Recent Chinese best-sellers like Jiang Rong's *Wolf Totem*, Yu Hua's *Brothers*, and Wei Hui's *Shanghai Baby*, have been published in English, but made an impression only on China watchers who read these books to understand their popularity in China rather than for literary pleasure. Most of the limited American interest in these books, like the limited American interest in Chinese film and music, belongs to the realms of Sinology or Cultural Anthropology, rather than to cultural connoisseurship *per se*.¹²

Contemporary Chinese narrative arts (films, teleplays, novels, drama, lyrics, and librettos) have a nearly indiscernible cultural presence in the United States. The visual arts fare somewhat better. Chinese paintings fetch high prices in New York's top galleries. Chinese aesthetics continue to influence American fashion, furniture, packaging, and garden design, much as they did during the Chinoiserie vogue of the 17th and 18th centuries. As in that earlier period, Chinese aesthetic influence often comes to the United States indirectly and in an altered form from Europe and Japan. It is largely limited to the realm of decoration, however; it has little impact on American thought. Most of this aesthetic influence, furthermore—the mandarin collars and *qipao* hemlines on New York runways, the Chinese character tattooed on Allen Iverson's neck—derives from Chinese traditional culture rather than from anything created after 1949.

To put it starkly, there is nothing new in Chinese culture from which Americans draw inspiration or which shapes American views of China. Americans are, of course, deeply in China's cultural debt, though they may not realize it. From the design of the fences and pathways at Monticello, to the State Bird of South Dakota, to the poetry of Pound, Cummings, and

Williams, to the paintings celebrated in the Freer Gallery, to the design of the civil service, to the fireworks displays on the 4th of July, to the peaches of Georgia, to the explosion of interest in Chinese-language studies, to P.F. Chang's China Bistro and Panda Express, China is part of our cultural DNA. But despite its successes in manufacturing education, and power projection, China is in the midst of a "Rise Without Shine"—an increase in standards of living, and commercial and political competitiveness that is unaccompanied by the cultural flowering that should be expected from a nation whose historical cultural attainments are unsurpassed. The weakness of contemporary Chinese culture is lamented not only by foreign observers, but by China's own cultural critics. What are the reasons for this failure?

One answer commonly offered by Chinese analysts is that their contemporary culture has no presence in the United States because Americans are not receptive to it. Americans are said to disdain or ignore works from China and other nations because we are too self-regarding, disinterested, or hostile to look beyond our own borders for inspiration. To be sure, the American appetite for foreign entertainment and ideas cannot compare to that of China. China's cultural openness is one of her great strengths and we would do well to emulate it. But I reject the notion that Chinese popular culture fails to gain traction in America primarily because Americans ignore China. On the contrary, the American fascination with China is strong and growing.

Evidence of an American obsession with China is easy to find. As early as 1990, in his forward to Perry Link's "Evening Chats in Beijing," Liu Binyan wrote, "I wonder if any country in the world publishes more books about China than does the United States. At its peak, I am told, the American output of China books reached an average of one per day." Earlier this month, David Pillings, Beijing Bureau Chief of the *Financial Times*, began his review of China books by noting that "books about China are coming off the printing presses faster than Guangdong factories can churn out iPads. If the world was mesmerized by China's rise before the global financial crisis, then that fascination is all the more intense following the dislocations that have cascaded across the Western world."¹³ A quick glance at the China section of any Barnes & Noble confirms the American interest not only in Chinese history, economic policy, and current events, but in Chinese culture

as well. Books on Fengshui, Tai-Qi, Chinese Medicine, and *The Art of War*⁴⁴ abound. The number of magazine articles, newspaper stories, and web sites dedicated to things Chinese, the rush to build Confucius Institutes and China gardens, and, most importantly, the rising enrollments in Chinese language and culture courses¹⁵ among American students of all ages demonstrate the falsity of the now hackneyed claim that Americans do not care about or “do not understand” China.

Americans do care. Chinese motifs and narratives pervade American popular culture. But most interpretations of Chinese themes are provided by American, not Chinese, artists. In children’s television we have *Sagwa*, *The Chinese Siamese Cat* (PBS) and *Ni Hao, Kai-lan* (Nickelodeon), both of which present a positive view of China and are self-consciously infused with “Chinese values.” American children’s books on China have always been popular, from Kurt Weise’s illustrated versions of *The Story About Ping* (1933) and *The Five Chinese Brothers* (1938), to Meindert DeJong and Maurice Sendak’s Newbery Award-winning *The House of Sixty Fathers* (1956), to Arlene Mosel and Blair Lent’s *Tikki Tikki Tembo* (1968), to Ed Young’s contemporary Caldecott Medal-winning renditions of Chinese folk tales. For teenagers, there are episodes of *The Simpsons* (“Goo Goo Gai Pan,” 2005) and *South Park* (“Conjoined Fetus Lady,” 1998 and “The China Problem,” 2008) that focus on China in irreverent but (mostly) affectionate ways. The 2010 remake of *The Karate Kid*, a co-production filmed on location, pays an admiring tribute to Beijing. *Seinfeld* fans got a regular diet of Chinese characters, including a takeout delivery man who hawked baldness cures (“The Tape,” 1991), a maître d’ who wouldn’t seat guests (“The Chinese Restaurant,” 1991), and an American woman who pretended to be Chinese for the mystique and sexual allure that “Chineseness” was assumed to confer (“The Chinese Woman,” 1994). Major American operas (*Nixon in China*, 1987), plays (*M. Butterfly*, 1988), superheroes (Marvel Comics’ *Jubilee*, introduced with fireworks powers in the 1990s), rock bands (Guns n’ Roses *Chinese Democracy*, 2008), museum exhibits (The Maryland Science Center’s *Chinasaurus*, 2008; and The National Geographic Society’s *Terra Cotta Warriors*, 2010, to name but two), have all drawn on Chinese history and Chinese tropes. In 2009, the *Washington*

Post's prestigious marshmallow peeps diorama competition featured three China-themed winners.¹⁶

China is clearly on America's mind. It is worth noting, particularly to cultural commissars in Beijing, that in the absence of Chinese representations of China in American popular culture, American artists and entertainers are presenting China in a positive light, even if their depictions are also critical, ironic, formulaic, or silly.

Americans welcome *American* pop cultural depictions of China, but have no interest in Chinese popular culture itself. Do the language barrier, political hostility, or an inability to appreciate foreign styles and viewpoints account for this? No. Americans are not deterred by foreign origins or unpleasant politics when they find something they like. American receptivity to Japanese culture, even when anti-Japanese sentiment is high, makes this clear. There have been a smattering of American films that demonize Japan, like 1989's *Black Rain*,¹⁷ but fear of a Japanese rise and American fall did not prevent Americans from enjoying and imitating the films of Kurosawa and Miyazaki, or from praising the novels of Tanizaki, Endo, Murakami, and other writers. Nintendo (Pokemon & Mario Brothers), Bakugan, and anime are now a more formative part of American childhood than *Peanuts* or baseball. Examples of direct cultural influence from Japan and other nations are plentiful. Americans may not watch subtitled television programs, but they are not thoroughgoing cultural xenophobes. We cannot ascribe American disinterest in Chinese popular culture to disinterest in China, for interest is high; nor to American cultural xenophobia, which is real, but not dominant. The Chinese title of this paper, 渠成水不到, reverses the Chinese phrase 水到渠成 to suggest that the fault may lie with Chinese popular culture itself. 水到渠成 (*when water comes a channel appears*) means that when flood waters cross a plain, they will find a channel to flow through even where no channel can at first be seen. By extension, the phrase means that success will come when conditions are ripe. In the case of Chinese cultural transmission to the United States, however, the channels are clearly delineated—America is ready—but no water flows. No cultural nourishment from China reaches us. Again, what explains this failure? What makes Chinese popular culture ill suited to American tastes?

China's top blogger, Han Han, answered the question in his May 20, 2010 speech at Xiamen University, "Why China Cannot Be a Cultural Power."¹⁸ The answer is *ensorship*. The point may seem too obvious to make. It must be made nonetheless, for there has been a lot of loose talk on both sides of the Pacific about China's growing "soft power" which glosses over the inevitable loss of competitiveness, attractiveness, or quality that censored art faces in a free cultural environment.¹⁹ Censorship takes its greatest toll on the narrative arts—novels tend to be more declarative and direct than paintings—which is why China's purely visual arts have enjoyed more rapid development than literature, theater, and film. But it is narrative art—stories driven by conflict, including political and social conflict, and characters who are psychologically complex, flawed, and often at odds with the value system of the majority—that capture our attention and do the most to shape our perceptions.²⁰

It is in this regard that censorship—and China's acclimatization to censorship—prevents Chinese pop culture from attracting and influencing American audiences.²¹ Americans will respond to fictional characters and songwriters whose psychologies and circumstances differ from their own, but not to those who are constrained by political forces external to the novel or song itself. They will search for coded protest in such work. If they cannot find it, they will dismiss the work as sincere but fatally hobbled, or as propaganda. In an attempt to skirt this problem, Chinese cultural diplomacy focuses on spectacle, decoration,²² the politically safe past, or vague discussion of values. But song and dance troupes, acrobats, photo exhibits, and lectures on Confucianism cannot compensate for the absence of free Chinese artists and entertainers, even when the expertise of the contortionists or Confucianists is unassailable.

This is not simply an American critique of Chinese cultural policy; many Chinese are aware of the issue, as their reactions to the 2008 American movie *Kungfu Panda* made clear. DreamWorks' comedy quickly became the highest grossing animated film in Chinese history. Although one Chinese artist tried to sue DreamWorks for its depiction of China's national symbol as a bumbler raised by a goose, his objections were scorned or ignored by most Chinese viewers. A debate broke out among Chinese bloggers about why a terrific film built on Chinese motifs and values was made in the United States and not in China. The consensus was that cultural bureaucrats would have

drained all life from the Panda in an effort to make him a worthy representative of the Chinese nation. As one Chinese film executive put it, “all the censors can think about is how to teach children... And they don’t seem to understand that edgy, hip entertainment can actually result in some pretty effective teaching.”²³ The cost of Beijing’s insistence on perfect protagonists and execrable villains is a popular culture and, most regrettably, a children’s culture, peopled by insipid, predictable characters.²⁴ It is the problem that F. Scott Fitzgerald warned of in *The Rich Boy*: “Begin with an individual, and before you know it you find that you have created a type; begin with a type, and you find that you have created—nothing.” ‘Nothing’ does not have a big following in the United States.

It might be argued that it is unfair to describe Chinese popular culture as weak on the international scene, because the forms of global pop culture, like the terms of international trade, are set by the West and favor its products. This would explain the derivative nature of most Chinese pop. It is true that China’s charms are best experienced not in theaters or on television or computer screens, but on side streets and in parks, parlors, and the studios and garrets of artists who do not care about the popularity of their work. The argument also offers the exciting prospect that China may introduce the world to *new* cultural forms, as it has before.²⁵

But this approach ignores the fact that the PRC’s vast output of movies, pop ballads, and game shows is wholly voluntary. It also asks that we overlook China’s “popular” literary and artistic accomplishments prior to 1949, Japan’s dominance of many forms of global popular culture, and the appetite of the Chinese for popular entertainment from South Korea, Japan, the United States, and China itself.

Global cultural weakness of the sort described in this essay is a price that Beijing seems willing to pay for what it calls *stability*. The price is high, even from Beijing’s point of view. In the absence of creative voices from China that could make Americans more sympathetic to China’s challenges, Americans base their perceptions of China on (1) American academic and cultural depictions of China, which are critical, but rarely hostile; (2) interactions with Chinese in America, which are usually positive; and, most notably, (3) news reports on China, which are mixed, as are the facts on the ground in China. In other words, Chinese popular culture’s failure to engage Americans yields

the field to U.S. commentators and to the media. This does not serve China's interests. Nor does it serve those of the United States, as Chinese censorship deprives us of the creative energies of one-fifth of humanity.

This is not a call for greater output of entertainment with "Chinese characteristics," whatever those may be. It is a lament that Americans are not enriched by contemporary art and entertainment that originates in China and is *good*.²⁶ A literary or cinematic masterpiece might occasionally emerge from China even under current political conditions, and China will continue to produce superb cultural ambassadors like Lang Lang, Yao Ming, and the figure skaters Shen Xue and Zhao Hongbao. But no positive cultural impression that they create will overcome American's political awareness that China is not free, even if Chinese enjoy greater freedom than most Americans realize.

NOTES

1. Prepared for *The U.S. and China: Mutual Public Perceptions*, a July 19-20, 2010 conference co-sponsored by the Kissinger Institute on China and the United States and the Tsinghua University Center for U.S.-China Relations.

2. By which I mean primarily China's high culture. No slight is intended to China's magnificent folk cultures, which still thrive in some Chinese villages.

3. As opposed to dynamic and living. I do not mean to imply that China's pre-modern philosophy and cultural practices could not be reinvigorated to become a source of moral guidance and aesthetic enjoyment in China and beyond. They could be, but prospects for a renaissance are dim at this writing.

4. And there are many of them. There are over 3,000 television stations in China, most of which produce original programs.

5. Martin Scorsese called Tian's *The Horse Thief* (1986) the greatest film of the 1990s (the film was not released in the United States until the 1990s), but few Americans saw it.

6. Zhang's *Ju Dou* (1989), named Best Film at the Chicago Film Festival, was banned in China until 1992, as was his *Raise the Red Lantern* (1981).

7. Zhang's Shanghai Triad (1995) was pulled from the New York Film Festival by the Chinese Government when it was announced that *The Gate of Heavenly Peace*, a documentary about the Tiananmen Square Massacre, would be screened.

8. In 2000, the Chinese Government banned actor/director Jiang Wen from filmmaking after he took his *Devils on the Doorstep* to the Venice Film Festival without approval from China's Film Bureau.

9. Nevertheless, excellent films by China's sixth generation of directors, most notably Jia Zhangke, Wang Xiaoshuai, and Zhang Yuan, have been made and shown in China and the United States with little interference from the Chinese government. The dark and often obscure work of these directors has not won large audiences in China or the United States, however.

10. As did Kyu Sakamoto's *Sukiyaki*, which topped the Billboard Top 100 in June, 1963. In that position, it was preceded by Leslie Gore's *It's My Party* and succeeded by *Easier Said Than Done*, by the Essexes. A *Sukiyaki* cover by *A Taste of Honey*, with English lyrics, was Billboard's top soul single in May, 1981.

11. His works were banned in China after the 1989 publication of his play, *Fugitives*.

12. Needless to say, I haven't read every novel published in China over the past 25 years. What I have done regularly since 1986 is ask Chinese friends who are professors of English and Chinese literature whether anything has been published that is worthy of attention as great literature rather than as an interesting example of what can be published or what is enjoyed in China. The answer remains a regretful "Not yet."

13. David Pilling, "The Chinese Way; More than ever, we must understand a country that is the only serious challenger to the U.S. for superpower status," *Financial Times*, July 3, 2010.

14. I stopped counting *Art of War* books on Amazon.com at 35. These included volumes on the *Art of War* for writers, women, and investors.

15. See for example, Michael Lollar, "French not 'fini', but Chinese challenging its place in language classrooms," *The Commercial Appeal*, June 11, 2010, <http://www.commercialappeal.com/news/2010/jun/11/french-not-fini>, on the rise of Chinese in Tennessee public schools.

16. *Peepa Cotta Warriors: Guardians of China's First EmPeep or, Chinese Olympeep Women Gymnasts Win the Gold, and Goodbye Year of the Rat; Hello Year of the Peoples*, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/gallery/2009/04/10/GA2009041001969.html>.

17. There has been little demonization of China in American pop culture to date. Watch for the remake of the Cold War schlock film *Red Dawn*, this time with China invading and occupying the United States.

18. Annie Lee, "Han Han's speech in Xiamen University: Why China cannot be a cultural power," *China Hush*, May 20, 2010, <http://www.chinahush.com/2010/05/20/han-hans-speech-in-xiamen-university-why-china-cannot-be-a-cultural-power/>.

19. The same problem dampens the prospects of China's worldwide media initiatives and plans for a 24-hour English-language news channel.

20. This is true in China as well as in the United States, where the most beloved characters, both Chinese (The Monkey King, San Mao the 1930s Shanghai street urchin, and San Mao the Taiwanese bohemian writer) and American (Scarlett O'Hara, Maria Von Trapp, Jake Sully of *Avatar* fame), are naughty individualists who buck the system.

21. There are other factors beside censorship—China’s predominant consumer culture, an educational system that stomps out the creative impulse, a lack of leisure, a paucity of subcultures—but censorship is the primary culprit.

22. Including video travelogues of Chinese scenery and display of minority costumes and customs.

23. Mark Magnier, “China’s Imported Panda,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 28, 2008, <http://articles.latimes.com/2008/jul/28/entertainment/et-panda28>.

24. See China’s most famous State-sponsored cartoon characters—Blue Cat, Pleasant Sheep, and the Fuwa of Beijing Olympics fame.

25. See Simon Leys, “One More Art,” *The New York Review of Books*, April 18, 1996, which opens with the sentence: *The discovery of a new major art should have more momentous implications for mankind than the exploration of an unknown continent or the sighting of a new planet*, <http://www.newyorkreviewofbooks.com/articles/archives/1996/apr/18/one-more-art/>.

26. Geremie Barmé is right in insisting that what matters is not Chinese culture, but a cultured China.

**PART III:
UNDERLYING
CONCEPTUAL
DIFFERENCES**

THE UNITED STATES (“THE WEST”) AND CHINA: DIFFERING CONCEPTIONS OF THE ROLE OF LAW AND THE RULE OF LAW

Jerome A. Cohen

Diversity of Views Exists within China, but the “Dictatorship of the Proletariat” thus far Prevails

The first question to ask in addressing this important and elusive topic is: whose conceptions should be taken into account? Even in China, despite repression of all expression objectionable to the Communist Party leadership, there remains a range of ideas about the role of law and the rule of law. Academic circles continue to debate relevant issues, although the parameters are narrower since the 17th Party Congress launched a renewed Party attack on legal professionalism. On the Internet and in some print publications, courageous public intellectuals still occasionally risk imprisonment by endorsing the principle of placing government (and Party) under law, even though they know their views will soon be suppressed. Ordinary citizens, especially those who have not reaped the full benefits of China’s impressive economic development, increasingly demand that courts offer remedies for

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a host of grievances that no other institutional outlets satisfactorily address. Many of the country's lawyers strive to operate in ways that would be familiar to Western counterparts.

Obviously, the Party leadership's conception of law is what really counts. The Marxist-Leninist "dictatorship of the proletariat" that Mao Zedong and colleagues imported and embellished during the 1950s still prevails in the service of the Party's new mantra of "harmony" and "stability." In this view, law is the instrument of the ruling class for controlling the rest of society. After the Sino-Soviet split and the Cultural Revolution, in 1978 Deng Xiaoping revived the Soviet legal line as part of the "Open Policy" designed to end the chaos of class struggle and promote economic progress; Deng also completed the process of Sinocizing, which began much earlier. The Party's updated legal goal came to be known as a "socialist rule of law with Chinese characteristics." China then began to establish a legal system more sophisticated than the Soviet Union's. The government invested heavily in legislation, legal institutions, legal education and specialized personnel, and created legal elites with a vested interest in pursuing their professions with a degree of integrity.

There are now perhaps 200,000 judges, 170,000 prosecutors, 165,000 lawyers plus other legal specialists. They are not only in the Ministry of Justice and its sub-agencies but also in every government department—national, provincial and local—including the people's congresses and state-owned enterprises, not to mention many private companies. Even the Ministry of Public Security, the Ministry of State Security and their nationwide police bureaus have legal experts. Moreover, thousands of law professors who staff the country's now more than seven hundred law schools and departments, through their teaching and writing explicitly or implicitly, introduce Western ideas of law, alongside obligatory courses on Party doctrine and history, to hundreds of thousands of students. Their publications, law reform activities and media interviews also influence the attitudes of legal officials and the public. Many law professors, although they have to act carefully and often subtly, are among China's most vigorous proponents of erecting an autonomous legal system that might function outside the Party's direct control.

Even the Party itself is ambivalent about the role of law. It recognizes the need to respond to increasing popular demands for social justice and for

fairness in the administration of criminal justice. Indeed, it has done much to inspire “rights consciousness” among the masses through propaganda about the rule of law, including ballyhooed constitutional amendments calling for the protection of human rights and property rights. New legislation has introduced people to many new rights, in fields as diverse as taxation, employment discrimination, and family planning. New procedural laws hold out the promise of being able, at least to a limited extent, to vindicate those rights before administrative agencies and the courts. Aspects of the Anglo-American adversarial litigation system have even been enacted into law; officially-sponsored popular education campaigns, mass media and the Internet, radio and television entertainment, and various forms of international cooperation all help to spread ideas about rights, institutions, and procedures that Americans would find familiar.

In an effort to boost its own legitimacy in the eyes of its 75 million members, the Party has even promulgated internal rules that promise the basic protections of judicial due process in its disciplinary proceedings. For example, according to the rules, before someone can be deprived of his Party membership, he should be informed of the specific charges against him, given a hearing to challenge the charges, allowed to choose an advisor to help with his defense, provided with a reasoned decision in writing, and afforded an opportunity to appeal.

On the other hand, the Party refuses to abandon “the dictatorship of the proletariat” and permit the judicial system to function with any meaningful autonomy. Since the 17th Party Congress, both its doctrine and its appointments to legal offices have demonstrated renewed insistence on law under the Party/state rather than the Party/state under the law. Hu Jintao’s second term has demonstrated not more but less relaxation of Party controls. This has been expressed in the doctrine of “the Three Supremes” according to which all political-legal officials, including judges, must consider first the interests of the Party, second the interests of the people and third—a widely-recognized poor third—the Constitution and the law. Moreover, the appointments of career police/ Party administrators to head both the current court system and the Ministry of Justice symbolize similar appointments of conventional Party members to many less visible legal offices.

Not surprisingly, legal practice reflects this renewed "mass line" ideology that downplays professional considerations and emphasizes Party control and repression. There are daily reports of political prosecutions and convictions for an extraordinary range of offenses. Outsiders see only the tip of the iceberg. Although Chinese authorities maintain that there are no prosecutions for political conduct, only for violations of the criminal law, the law is so broadly phrased that convictions for crimes such as "endangering state security" and "sending abroad state secrets or intelligence" are easily managed. This is especially true when defense lawyers are usually prohibited from carrying on their own investigations, fully communicating with detained defendants, seeing the complete prosecutor/police file prior to trial, calling witnesses to court, and engaging in cross-examination. Vigorous defense lawyers are sometimes barred from the trial or even the practice of law, and many have been prosecuted, for example, for supposedly urging their clients to falsely claim that their confessions were coerced. Some unfrocked lawyers are illegally confined to their homes even after serving a prison sentence. China's now most famous ex-lawyer, Gao Zhisheng, has twice been "disappeared" following torture and imprisonment and continues to be held in an undisclosed location without any legal authority.

As the mistreatment of lawyers suggests, abuses are not confined to the formal criminal justice system. The police alone can consign anyone for up to three years of "re-education through labor" as well as a variety of shorter-term detentions. Petitioners unable to obtain access to or remedies from the courts are often confined by local and provincial officials in unauthorized "black jails," even in Beijing. Persistent petitioners sometimes find themselves involuntarily detained in mental hospitals. Despite all the formal legal progress China has made since 1978, the practice of criminal justice is, sadly, not very different from that portrayed in my 1968 book about the criminal process during the PRC's first fourteen years.¹

This criminal process reality is the major reason why American and other foreign perceptions of contemporary Chinese justice are so negative. Although certain other aspects of today's legal system, such as the resolution of ordinary interpersonal disputes both in and out of court, appear to be functioning more satisfactorily, they too are not immune to Party or government interference.

Nor are they immune to the distortions created by widespread corruption of legal institutions and the ubiquitous impact of “guanxi,” the network of personal relations based on family, friendship, business, and other ties that may be the most enduring enemy of the rule of law.

Is there a conceptual basis for this situation beyond the Party’s adaptation of the “dictatorship of the proletariat” to Chinese soil? Here one might consider the contemporary impact of China’s legal tradition, in particular the impact of the judicial process of China’s last imperial dynasty, the Qing or Manchu, and its imperial predecessors. In reading the long essay published in February 2010 by Zhou Yongkang,² member of the all-powerful, nine-person Party Politburo Standing Committee and head of the Central Party Political-Legal Committee that presides over the official legal system, I was struck by a major similarity between the contemporary criminal process that he exhorts police, prosecutors, and judges to strengthen and the administration of justice in a Qing era county magistrate’s “yamen.” Zhou, like those he presumably nominated to head the Supreme People’s Court and the Ministry of Justice, has had no legal training or experience, but did serve as Minister of Public Security and, earlier, as a provincial governor before moving up to the Politburo.

Although Zhou repeatedly invokes the importance of promoting fairness and integrity in law enforcement by improving the ability, quality, and credibility of political-legal cadres, by not encroaching on the legal rights of the masses and by allowing public supervision of justice through increasing openness, he says not a word about the existence of defense counsel. An uninformed reader might well conclude from this lengthy document, first delivered as a speech to the National Political-Legal Telephone and Television Conference on December 18, 2009, that, like the imperial criminal process, China today has a system without lawyers to protect the legal rights of its people. Is this an implicit, albeit unconscious, continuation of a traditional Chinese belief that an accused should tremble before the magistrate—the emperor’s agent—rather than defend himself against the state’s accusation?

DIVERSITY OF VIEWS WITHIN THE UNITED STATES AND “THE WEST” BUT COMMON CORE BELIEFS ABOUT THE RULE OF LAW

As debate over the appointment of every federal Supreme Court justice reminds us, among Americans, including our highest officials, there are also differing conceptions of the role of law. Chinese scholars have long recognized this as well as significant variations among many of the major countries of “the West” in this respect. Although “Western” legal systems vary widely, they are usually grouped under two rubrics: the “Anglo-American” and the “Continental European.” Yet even the principal countries within each rubric differ in important respects, and views within each country are gradually changing in response to changing national circumstances.

The German legal system, by the end of the 19th century, became the classic Continental European model and influenced Meiji Japan and then Republican China as well as many other nations. Nevertheless, it has itself undergone enormous transformations as a result of radical political developments. Hitler’s Nazi regime turned it into a totalitarian tool. Since Germany’s defeat in World War II, the return to democracy has been accompanied by significant reforms of the Anglo-American type in the area of criminal justice that have narrowed the gap between the two major systems. The judgments of the European Court of Human Rights have had a huge impact on both the United Kingdom and the continent. Adherence to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and other international documents has promoted the homogenization of conceptions of the rule of law and human rights beyond the European Community, just as the WTO and other organizations have promoted the globalization of trade and investment law.

Today, in this context, “the West” is no longer a geographic construct. For example, the judicial systems of Asian jurisdictions such as Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and India have become “Western” in character because they share a common core of beliefs with the United States and most other geographically Western countries—certainly not Cuba and probably not Russia—about the rule of law.

Although the rule of law has been defined in many ways, it seems safe to say that it clearly means government under law and protection of the individual against arbitrary actions of the state. Generally speaking, a rule-of-law state includes the following characteristics:

- Government under a constitution that allocates power among official agencies and enshrines basic rights;
- The constitution must be enforceable against government officials and agencies as well as private entities and persons;
- When the government seeks to punish someone by depriving him of his personal liberty, it must observe the following principles:
 - ◆ The individual's alleged violation of law must have been reasonably clearly proscribed in advance by valid legislation;
 - ◆ Police, prosecutors, judges and other officials must operate in accordance with prescribed rules of procedure that provide the accused with a fair opportunity to defend himself before an honest, competent, impartial, and politically independent court and with the assistance of able, unrestricted defense counsel;
 - ◆ In order to enforce a ban against torture and compulsory self-incrimination, courts are not permitted to consider coerced confessions or statements, witnesses are required to appear at trial if requested by the defense and to be subject to cross-examination, and in evaluating the evidence, courts must apply the presumption of innocence;

- ◆ Trials should be generally and genuinely open to the public and to media that are free to report and criticize their conduct;

- There should be no alternative punishment systems for depriving individuals of their liberty that avoid the protections offered by the criminal process encapsulated above.

These, of course, are minimum attributes of a rule-of-law system, and not every respected country might endorse every detail. Moreover, many would argue that there should also be some form of popular participation in the trial of serious criminal cases, such as some kind of jury, but this is a very controversial topic. Some might also emphasize the desirability of popular participation in the legislature that enacts and amends the law.

APPRAISAL AND PROSPECTS

In practice, the Chinese legal system, as we have seen, is far from implementing the minimum rule of law standards shared by "the West." The country has an impressive Constitution, but that document itself authorizes the subordination of government not to the rule of law but to that of the Party. Moreover, attempts to enforce some of the guarantees prescribed in the Constitution, whether through the constitutionally-authorized channel of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress or through the unauthorized channel of judicial review, have thus far met formal failure. They have, however, occasionally stimulated correction of the abuses that prompted the constitutional challenge.

To be sure, no Western government fully lives up to its minimum standards for the rule of law. Ironically, my own experience suggests that many Chinese, in and out of government, may idealize the actual operation of the American justice system. The worst kind of comparative law scholarship compares our theory with other countries' practices. If we compare apples with apples, we have to acknowledge that, with respect to criminal justice, in the United

States, as well as other Western countries there are daily abuses arising, for example, from police brutality, prosecutorial bias against minorities or poor people, defense lawyers' incompetence or judicial or jury error. The process of electing not only prosecutors but also judges in many American states even raises questions about judicial impartiality and independence, and I say all this as a former federal prosecutor.

Yet, when the criminal process malfunctions, there are crucial differences between the U.S. system and China's. We have relatively transparent government. Our relatively free and competitive media regularly ferret-out, report, and condemn official transgressions of law and of individual or corporate rights. Because of our democratic political process, public exposure of such transgressions immediately generates pressures for remedial justice and reform.

If China increases the transparency of its government, allows more than occasional investigative reporting, and relaxes its present tight controls over the Internet, we can expect correspondingly increased support for improving its rule of law in practice. Similarly, if legal education, research, publication and international cooperation in China can free themselves from recently-reimposed Party constraints, that too will have a favorable long-term impact. Although the country lacks a democratic political process, its leaders tend to be responsive to widespread popular currents, if only belatedly and superficially.

What are the prospects for China's progress toward the rule of law? The current political climate is very conservative; indeed it might be characterized as reactionary regarding criminal justice. Moreover, it is marked by a rising tide of nationalism that does not welcome foreign legal standards or human rights criticism. Yet the struggle to shape the country's theory and practice of the rule of law quietly continues. Many members of legal elites that did not exist thirty years ago are quietly resisting the backward trend and occasionally have something to show for their patient efforts.

In recent years some improvements have been made in the procedures applicable to the review of death penalty sentences, for example. This has reportedly reduced the number of executions, but no concrete statistics are offered, and the number of executions each year is still so staggering that an embarrassed Party keeps that figure a closely-guarded state secret. Recently-promulgated rules seek to effectuate judicial exclusion from trial of evidence

obtained through torture, and the attempt by reformers to reduce the number of crimes for which the death penalty may be meted out—currently an astounding 68—may soon be successful.

Yet broader progress seems unlikely at least until after the 18th Party Congress and the installation of new Party leadership. By that time, rising internal social, economic, and political pressures for a meaningful rule of law, the Party's desire to cultivate a reputation abroad for "soft power" as well as military and economic prowess, and the needs of increasingly complex international cooperation may persuade a younger, more politically-sophisticated, and confident Politburo to begin to tolerate some autonomy in the legal system. The cost to the Party of such institutional reforms would be loss of a certain measure of control and political predictability. But, if the experiences of Taiwan and South Korea in moving away from dictatorship are any guide, the benefits of these reforms, in terms of enhanced domestic stability and harmony and greater foreign respect and credibility, should outweigh the cost, even in the eyes of enlightened next-generation leaders, not to mention the public. We should recall that, in the period before the Tiananmen tragedy forced him to leave office in 1989, the late Prime Minister Zhao Ziyang was seriously considering a proposal to cease Party interference in the judicial handling of individual cases. It would be an uphill struggle to implement such a proposal, but the possibility is not necessarily far-fetched.

A powerful additional stimulus may come from the desire to make further progress in the critical reconciliation process that has begun with Taiwan. Now that expanded economic cooperation has been launched, attention will inevitably shift toward possible political cooperation. That, however, is sure to confront the fears that many Taiwanese harbor concerning China's legal system. The Taiwanese have demonstrated during the past generation that, despite formidable political obstacles, heirs to China's authoritarian traditions need not be the prisoners of their history and are capable of establishing democracy and the rule of law. Most appear wary of close cross-Strait political cooperation, at least until that distant day when the mainland may boast similar accomplishments. This concern is shared by many members of the island's currently dominant Kuomintang (KMT) as well as by the Democratic Progressive Party and other KMT opponents. As C.V. Chen, a leading Taiwan

lawyer, prominent KMT advisor, and expert on mainland affairs, recently emphasized: “the rule of law is the essential foundation of enduring stability and peace in the cross-Strait relationship.”

One litmus test for determining whether China is likely to transform “the socialist rule of law with Chinese characteristics” into a legal system that can command greater internal and external credibility will be whether the Chinese government ratifies the ICCPR, which Taiwan enacted into its own domestic legislation earlier this year. China signed the ICCPR in 1998. Even though it did ratify the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in 2001, it has understandably hesitated before finally ratifying the ICCPR. That would commit the government to changes that would have a more profound impact on China than even its participation in the WTO has had, and these changes would be political, not economic. They would require the granting of all the freedoms of expression endorsed in China’s Constitution but denied in practice as well as compliance with the minimum standards of criminal justice shared by “the West.”

Such a momentous transformation is unlikely to occur without far-sighted and strong new Party leadership. What are the prospects that such leadership might appear and, building on the existing legal elites, seek to mobilize the country toward significant law reform? Given the nature of the communist system, where it is impossible to know a leader’s true views until he attains the pinnacle of power, if then, it is difficult to answer this question. Who could have predicted before the 1956 Soviet Party Congress that Khrushchev, formerly a Stalinist henchman, would introduce de-Stalinization? Even though Gorbachev was a law school graduate, no one suspected what he would do once at the top of the greasy pole. And in the economic sphere in China, one might have said the same thing about Deng Xiaoping prior to 1978.

Much will depend on evolving internal and external conditions. Yet I agree with those who foresee that the huge challenges confronting China’s next generation leaders when they are installed two years from now “will include securing legitimacy among an increasingly restless Chinese public, and outlining a vision for China that can have appeal both domestically and in the rest of the world.”³ The rule of law and human rights may help to meet this need, if not in 2012, then perhaps a decade later.

In the meantime, is there anything that the United States can do to move China toward a genuine rule of law? In addition to expanding the already widespread law reform cooperation that it and many other countries and international organizations maintain with the People's Republic, the best thing that we can do is to improve practice of the rule of law in our own society, since China and the rest of the world closely scrutinize our situation. As the struggle continues in Washington and elsewhere in the United States to vindicate the promises of our own Constitution and our international obligations, we should be mindful that our example will continue to also have an impact on China's more basic struggle and that of other states. Today, no country can pursue a policy of "Do as I say, not as I do."

NOTES

1. Jerome Alan Cohen, *The Criminal Process in the People's Republic of China, 1949-63*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968).
2. 周永康 [Zhou Yongkang], "深入推进社会矛盾化解、社会管理创新、公正廉洁执法,为经济社会又好又快发展提供更加有力的法治保障 [Deeply Promote Conflict Resolution in Society, Creativity in Managing Society and Fairness and Integrity in Law Enforcement in order to Better and Faster Develop the Economy and Society and Provide Stronger Safeguards for the Rule of Law]," 求是 [*Qiushi Magazine*], no. 4 (2010): 3-6.
3. Kerry Brown and Su-hsing Loh, "China's New Elite: 2012 and Beyond," *Open Democracy*, August 16, 2010, <http://www.opendemocracy.net/kerry-brown-loh-si-hsing/china%E2%80%99s-next-elite-2012-and-beyond>.

DIFFERENT U.S.-CHINA CONCEPTIONS OF THE ROLE OF LAW: CHINESE VIEWS

Wang Zhenmin

CHINA AND THE UNITED STATES—SOME BASIC FACTS

As we approach this topic, we need to keep in mind some basic facts about the United States and China. First, the United States and China have almost identical land areas, but two-thirds of U.S. land is fit for human habitation, whereas a lot of China's land is not. The sizes of our respective populations are quite different: 300 million and 1.3 billion, respectively. In China, when we make laws, we have to consider the needs of 1.3 billion people, whereas in the United States, laws only need apply to 300 million people. It is unprecedented in human history that the laws of a country need to apply to 1.3 billion people.

Second, the United States has 221 years of history starting from 1789, while China has over five thousand years of history. According to historians, during the five thousand years of its civilization, China experienced 6,539 wars; only in the three decades following 1979 have the Chinese people begun to enjoy peace. The United States only experienced two wars on U.S. soil: the War of Independence and the Civil War. The Chinese saying *da jiang shan* (打江山) means that the nation was built by wars. In contrast, from the very beginning,

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the United States was built through negotiation, by a Constitution, without which there would be no United States. However, China could maintain its existence without law for many years. Further, China has more than ten neighbors, quite a number of whom have land and historical disputes with China. The United States has only three neighboring countries, all of which are friendly with the United States. Given such fundamental differences in history and neighbors, it should be expected that the two countries have different views on many issues.

THE TRADITIONAL CHINESE CONCEPT OF LAW

Law is not something new to the Chinese people. Every dynasty in China made voluminous laws. However, to the Chinese people the traditional concept of the law was equal to punishment and only referred to criminal law. Rule of law in China was traditionally the rule of punishment and criminal law, which was the rule of man, namely, the rule of the emperor and senior persons. For example, if two families had a dispute in a village, instead of going to court they would go to a senior person for mediation, and would follow what the seniors said. Under Marxism, law is viewed very similarly to the concept of law in traditional Chinese culture. That is, law is seen as an instrument, or weapon, of the ruling class to govern society.

In a student survey conducted in the 1980s, when students were asked what associations they had with the term “law,” most students came up with concepts such as “jail,” “death penalty,” “police,” “army,” and “criminal tribunal,” as opposed to “civil rights” or “supervision of the government.” Such student answers were very typical of the 1980s. During this time in China there was no independence of law; law was part of politics. Policy was more important than law and law was only one means to enforce policy. For example, courts were part of government agencies (the executive branch); law schools were combined with political science departments in universities; books on law were put in the military section of bookstores. Lawyers were part of government staff up until 1996, at which time the legal service was privatized and lawyers were declared independent attorneys.

CONCEPTUAL CHANGES SINCE 1979

Since 1979, China has launched legal modernization programs aimed at preventing the Cultural Revolution from recurring, as well as facilitating economic and social development. In the early 1980s, there was a nationwide debate among China's academics over whether to adopt the rule of man, or the rule of law. Most intellectuals, particularly those in the legal community, advocated rule of law as the one and only choice for China.

Also during this time, China has granted its citizens more political rights. For example: direct elections were introduced for people's congresses at and below the county level; citizens were given the right to criticize the government; and citizens began to enjoy more social and economic freedoms. These political liberalizations were introduced to serve two purposes: to give people more political, economic, and social rights and to provide legal protection to social and economic development. In 1982, the Constitution was re-written.

Since 1979, the general public's understanding of law has been changing. Today, when students are asked the same question, "what do you think of once law is mentioned," student answers are very different from thirty years ago. Students of this generation associate law with ideas such as "protection of civil rights," "dispute resolution," and "equity and justice." This reflects the progress in the attitudes of the Chinese public toward law and the role of law. There have been the following conceptual changes in China's view of the rule of law.

First, China has recognized that law is an effective means to promote economic development. Specifically, that it is essential to an industrial society and market economy. China's transformation from an agrarian to industrial society, and from a planned to market economy requires the shift of its social-legal structure from one based on the rule of man to one based on the rule of law. This understanding of law is different from traditional Chinese legal thinking, in which law was regarded as an instrument for rulers to govern the ruled.

Second, China has recognized the importance of establishing a government of law, not of man. In the past, it was politically incorrect and risky to discuss the concept of the "rule of law." In 1999, the rule of law was incorporated into the Constitution, replacing "rule by law" with "rule of law." Furthermore, on

March 22, 2004, the State Council issued a detailed implementation program entitled “Guidelines for Comprehensively Implementing the Rule of Law Initiative in Administrative Affairs.” It is not something unusual to apply laws to the general public; what is noteworthy is the application of the law to limit government powers and to control the activities of government and its officials. In this regard, China has made remarkable progress. Some examples:

- Government and leadership transitions must follow the Constitution and the law. This has been true since 1979, and especially since the 1990s. This is a remarkable achievement in light of leadership changes in China’s five-thousand-year history, which were almost invariably chaotic.
- Powers and responsibilities for government institutions are clearly defined by law. For example, In Hunan province, every government agency is required to specify its powers as provided by the law. After confirmation by the government, this report must be publicized in newspapers. The mayor of a city was surprised when he was told by his lawyers that as mayor he only had ninety-three powers and functions according to law; he thought he was the “king of the kingdom” and could do anything.
- If the government does something wrong or illegal, citizens are entitled to bring the government to court, and receive government compensation. This has become a common understanding among Chinese citizens.
- The government’s licensing powers, among other activities, have been strictly limited with the promulgation of the Administrative Licensing Law.

Third, Law assumes the existence of freedoms and rights. Under the 2004 constitutional amendments, China for the first time has recognized human rights as a legal term. Moreover, private property rights—previously regarded as a capitalist concept—are protected by the Constitution and law.

Fourth, China has recognized that an independent, fair and efficient judicial system is essential to rule of law. While judicial independence in China is less than satisfactory, the principle of judicial independence is clearly recognized in the Chinese Constitution. Specifically, Article 126 provides that the people's courts shall, in accordance with the law, exercise judicial power independently and are not subject to interference by administrative organs, public organizations or individuals.

Fifth, who shall make the laws? In the past, the Chinese public erroneously thought the law originated from the government. The new realization that law should originate not from the government (i.e., the executive branch) but rather from the people's congresses clearly illustrates the combination of the rule of law and democracy. If a government regulation contravenes the principles of law, people may challenge the legality and/or the constitutionality of government regulations. With the passing in 2000 of the Law on Legislation, government's rule-making activities are also subject to constitutional review and judicial supervision. In the Sun Zhigang case (2003), Mr. Sun was detained in Guangzhou City (and was later beaten to death) because he did not carry the three cards (personal identification card, residential card, and worker's card) required by an executive regulation. The regulation was later found to be unconstitutional and abolished.

WHAT WE ARE DOING: EXPERIMENTS IN CHINA

First, the development of the rule of law in China since 1979 can be divided into three stages. The first stage was from 1979 to the mid 1980s, during which time the goal was to restore legal order, and criminal law played an important role. The second stage was from the mid 1980s to the 1990s when economic, civil, and business law was the focus. The third stage started from 2000, in which we have emphasized public law (e.g., constitutional and administrative law) to regulate the actions of government. The objective is to establish a new socialist legal system by 2010 and to build a strong judiciary. Because of the effort made over the past three decades, China's new legal

system has been formally established. This means that China has made a large number of laws, but does not mean that its judiciary is satisfactory.

Second, the incorporation in the Constitution of the “Three Represents” has had a profound impact. According to the original content of the Chinese Constitution, before 1988 it was a crime to run private businesses. In 1988, China’s first constitutional amendment decriminalized private businesses and ushered in an era of rapid development of private businesses. Since 1988 when the first constitutional amendment gave the green light to the private economy, the private sector has achieved substantial development. In many coastal provinces, the private sector already dominates the local economy. The public economy has become smaller and smaller, with the central government now only controlling approximately 150 companies.

According to the Constitution however, China is a country for workers and farmers, not for those in the private sector. The Chinese government constitutionally did not represent non-public sectors. The “Three Represents” mean that the Party and State (Government) must always represent the development trend of China’s advanced productive forces; the orientation of China’s advanced culture; and the fundamental interests of the overwhelming majority of the Chinese people. This means the Chinese Communist Party and the Government shall also represent the private sector. According to this amendment, China is not only a country for workers and farmers, but also a country for the new private sector. This is a guiding ideology that the Chinese Communist Party and the Chinese government will follow for a long time to come. The Property Rights Law was adopted in 2007, and the Labor Contract Law was passed in 2007, representing a balance that China is striking between representing the interests of the new non-public sectors and representing workers and farmers.

Third, China’s March 14, 2004 constitutional amendment revised “... along the road of building socialism with Chinese characteristics...” to “... along the road of Chinese-style socialism...” This change means that socialism in China is made in China, not imported from any other country or copied from textbooks. The development model in China is Chinese in nature, neither capitalist nor traditional socialist. History proved that both capitalist and traditional socialist models have their merits and demerits. China recognizes the value of both systems. However China’s development shall be based

on Chinese circumstances and the current world situation. China will not transplant economic systems from other countries. A different version of the rule of law and democracy is possible for the world, and China is trying to explore another development model and another version of the rule of law and democracy.

A fundamental question is whether China should completely Westernize as it attempts its ultimate goal of development. Modernization does not mean either Westernization or Americanization. American-style capitalism and Chinese-style socialism do share common ground, but have different views and approaches. While “One World, One Dream” was the theme of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, “One World, Multiple Systems” should be the theme of the human pursuit of the rule of law and democracy.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, China’s goal is to establish a government that is law-abiding, democratic, honest (corruption-free), efficient, and green. China is determined to enhance the rule of law and strengthen human rights protection.

The United States has had a tremendously successful experience in exercising the rule of law. However, we should also recognize the limitations of the U.S. rule of law model. China and the United States, two of the world’s great cultures, should take the lead and work together to create a better rule of law for humankind in the 21st century. Although we may disagree on many issues, we are in the same boat and we have no choice but to make joint efforts to sustain a better tomorrow for future generations.

RELIGION IN CURRENT SINO-U.S. RELATIONS

Xu Yihua

No one symbolizes the importance of religion to Sino-U.S. relations better than the late John Leighton Stuart, the former president of America-supported Yenching University who later became U.S. Ambassador to China. Dr. Stuart died in the United States in 1962, and in his will expressed his desire to be buried with his wife in the old campus of Yenching, now part of Beijing University. Executing the terms of his will, however, had been blocked until 2009, when his remains were returned to Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province, to be buried with his missionary parents, but not with his wife in Beijing. This and similar stories are quite symbolic, indicating the fact that religion still serves as a kind of barometer of Sino-U.S. relations, which are now close enough to allow Dr. Stuart to be reunited posthumously with his parents in Hangzhou, but still far enough apart to frustrate his wish to be buried together with his wife in Beijing.

This paper is divided into three parts. The first part describes post-missionary Sino-U.S. religious interaction; the second part examines closely some aspects of this interaction; and the third part evaluates the importance of the religion factor in current U.S. policy towards China.

POST-MISSIONARY SINO-U.S. RELIGIOUS INTERACTION

The Christian missionary movement is one of the most important chapters in the chronicle of Sino-U.S. relations. For a long period of time, American

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missionaries served as a spiritual vinculum or a cultural bridge between China and the United States. American missionary societies spent a huge sum of money and a great deal of energy and, as well as, suffered great human sacrifices in the founding of numerous educational, medical, and philanthropic institutions in China. Also, they helped build up a reservoir of good will in Chinese society toward the United States and American people. But the forced withdrawal of Western missionaries from the Chinese mainland around 1950 cast a long shadow over Sino-U.S. relations, and has made religion a constant and emotional factor between the two countries ever since.

Against this background, religious interaction between the two countries at the present time takes various forms. It is neither confined to Christian missionaries nor focuses on evangelism, even though foreign missionaries have already come back to China. Current religious interaction between China and the United States has become more diversified and pluralized than at any time in the past.

Some features characterizing the religious interaction between China and the United States in the so-called post-missionary era are as follows: first, because of the Chinese government's regulations forbidding foreign missions in China, foreign missionaries are no longer the major actors in this exchange. Hence sending missionaries to China is no longer the only or chief means of evangelism for American missionary societies as it was in pre-1949 China.

Second, also different from the missionary period, the post-missionary period of Sino-U.S. religious interaction involves both the private sector, such as faith-based /faith-related NGOs and universities, and government activities such as cooperation in the campaign against religious terrorism, intergovernmental religious dialogue on religious freedom, etc. Like the previous missionary movement, the intergovernmental interaction in the field of religion is able to both promote and set back the bilateral relations between the two countries.

Third, China is a country with rich religious resources and traditions, but it is also a relatively weak country in terms of its "religious products" and religious exchange or "trade" with the outside world. Even though China is not a passive recipient but an active participant in current Sino-Western religious exchange—witness, for instance, the fact that it is one of the leading Bible exporting countries in the world with an annual production of 12 million copies of the Bible, with some 8 million of them being exported to more than

fifty countries around the world—still, Sino-U.S. religious exchange is quite unbalanced in favor of the United States. While the United States suffers a large trade deficit with China, China in turn has run quite a significant deficit with the United States in this religious exchange.

Fourth, one of the most significant consequences of the post-missionary Sino-U.S. religious interaction is that American religious ideas and practices, such as the separation of church and state, have become, to a certain degree, a frame of reference for the general public, intellectuals as well as the government officials, in China. This will have a long-term impact on Sino-U.S. relations in the 21st century.

SOME AREAS OF SINO-U.S. RELIGIOUS INTERACTION

One of the most prominent areas of this interaction is religious publication. In addition to the translation and publication of books on the academic study of religion, a large number of U.S. books on religious subjects ranging from Billy Graham's *The Secret of Happiness* to Alice Grey's *Stories for the Heart* have been published in China. American biographies and autobiographies, like Dale Buss's *Family Man: The Biography of Dr. James Dobson* and Jim Bakker's *I was Wrong*, have also been translated and published in China by government publishing houses. Actually Dr. James Dobson is a popular American author in China and at least five of his books in Chinese on so-called family matters can be found in local bookstores. The Rev. Rich Warren's *The Purpose Driven Life* has three Chinese versions and one bilingual version in China, and the version by Shanghai's SDX Joint Publishing Company, one of the most well-known government publishing houses in China, has already sold more than 250,000 copies. The first two volumes of the *Left-behind Series* by Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins have also been translated and printed in huge numbers. These books are usually categorized as inspirational readings and therefore can get around government censorship.

Another related area worth examining is religious studies, especially religious studies at the university level or setting in China. This is one of the shining spots in Sino-U.S. religious exchange. It is not an exaggeration to

say that most of the research and teaching programs on religion in Chinese universities and research institutions have been assisted by American institutions and scholars, especially when these programs were being set up. A large percentage of the seminars, workshops, summer programs and conferences on religion and religious studies conducted by Chinese institutions in recent years have also benefited from the participation of American scholars or have been financially supported by American foundations. This exchange has effectively formed an institutional network through which Western theories and methodologies of religious studies are being brought to China. Nowadays a key government university in China may offer more courses on religion and enroll more graduate students engaging in the study of religion than a comprehensive university in the United States.

One type of Western religious group active in China is the faith-based NGO (FNGO). Unlike missionaries, FNGOs are allowed to work in China even in the field of religion. The U.S.-based East Gates International and two other FNGOs, for instance, have distributed more than 6 million copies of China-published Bibles on the Chinese mainland in the last twenty years. East Gates International has also built more than 300 Christian libraries all over the country. Large-scale American FNGOs, such as World Vision, Adventist Development Relief Agency, American Friends Service Committee, Habitat for Humanity, and Heifer Project International, either have offices in Beijing or extensive programs in China's interior. Even though we do not have the exact number, it is safe to say that there are at least hundreds if not thousands of Western FNGOs operating in China, and most of them are based in the United States. American NGOs, like the Kansas City-based Heart to Heart International and Franklin Graham's Samaritan's Purse, were among the first foreign groups to join the earthquake rescue mission in Sichuan in 2008. Now FNGOs have replaced missionary societies and constitute the largest institutional presence of American religion in China. Another strong presence of American religion in China is the American expatriate communities in various cities; some of these communities have their own places of worship, preachers, and even mission programs.

Missionaries, including American missionaries, have also returned to China, mainly in the form of short-term missionaries. China has the largest non-Christian population and therefore is a focal point of the missionary

campaign to evangelize billions of “unreached people” in the so-called 10/40 Window area. Each summer there are hundreds of Christian fellowships or summer camps organized by the Eastern as well as Western missionaries in different places in China. For various reasons, China has not been a major destination for American missionaries yet, but religious publications, websites, tourism, English teaching programs, and other means of communication and exchange have provided American churches and missionary societies with alternative ways of evangelism in China.

It is interesting to note that polling about religion has become a new area for Sino-U.S. cooperation at the grassroots level in recent years. In China, there are several notable polls and surveys on religion. One of them, conducted by Shanghai’s East China Normal University in 2007, found that 31.4 percent of Chinese aged 16 and above, or about 300 million people, are religious, and among them, 40 million are Christians. The most comprehensive “in-house questionnaire survey on Christianity in China” just reported by a research group from the Institute of World Religions at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences has also found an increase in the number of Christians, though their number was smaller—23.05 million. On the U.S. side, there are also numerous surveys on China’s religion, especially Christianity, and the number of Christians, according to these surveys, varies from some 40 million to 130 million. These U.S. surveys of Chinese religion are often conducted with the help of Chinese pollsters, like the Pew Global Attitudes Survey Projects of 2005 and 2006, the Committee of 100 Survey of 2007, and Baylor University Survey of 2009. They all purchased their data from the Horizon Research Consultancy Group, a Chinese polling institution. This Chinese religion survey fervor started by American institutions has the effect of repudiating the previous low government figures and putting pressure on the Chinese government to conduct its own surveys, and to pay more attention to the religious resurgence around the country. The empirical and quantitative research inherent in the surveys will also have a long-term effect on the academic study of religion in the country.

Even though Sino-U.S. religious encounters are not confined to government-to-government exchanges, official exchanges are still a crucial factor influencing bilateral relations. The campaign against religious terrorism is an area for Sino-U.S. cooperation as well as conflict. Both China and the United

States have been afflicted by religious terrorism. But it is the United States, not China that is the biggest victim of religious terrorism or extremism. Religious terrorism is regarded by the United States as one of the biggest threats to its national security, but China is the country which is most unlikely to do any harm to the United States in that regard. Actually the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the United States reduced tensions between the two countries and made China an ally or at least a strange bed-fellow in the U.S.-led campaign against international terrorism. On the other hand, the Chinese government has recognized and appreciated the fact that the U.S. government designated some Chinese organizations, including the Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement, as terrorist organizations and attacked Eastern Turkistan cells in Pakistan, even though Beijing sometimes criticized the double-standard employed by the U.S. government in treating China-defined religious terrorists in its custody. In short, attitudes towards international terrorism is a defining line separating friends and enemies drawn by the U.S. government in the post “9/11” era and anti-religious terrorism has become an important strategic consideration, at least for the time being, in Sino-U.S. relations, more important than other religious issues.

Among these issues, religious freedom is definitely the most sensitive and challenging. It has been on the agenda of China-U.S. summits, especially during the previous Bush administration, and the China factor was quite prominent in the legislative process which led to the International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA) in 1998. China has been designated by both the Office of International Religious Freedom of the State Department and the Committee of International Religious Freedom as an “egregious” violator of religious freedom or one of the “countries of particular concern” (CPC, which could also mean, coincidentally, the Communist Party of China) in their annual reports on international religious freedom required by IRFA. The focal points of Sino-U.S. religious disputes or American concern over the issues of religion in China are Catholic underground movements, Protestant home churches, Tibetan Buddhism, and the Falun Gong cult.

Actually there are different understandings in the United States of the issue of China’s religious freedom or religious discrimination. Formerly most American institutions from Freedom House to the Voice of the Martyrs condemned China as one of the least free or worst countries in terms of religious

freedom in the world. Last year, the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life issued a new study entitled *Global Restrictions on Religion* which examined the situation in 198 countries and regions in the period from 2006 to 2008. Basically the study divides the restrictions on religion into two levels, governmental and social, and the various degrees of restriction are also classified by the study as low, moderate, high, and very high. According to the study, social hostility towards religion is moderate in China, even though the governmental restrictions are quite high. Therefore the highest overall level of restriction is not found in China, but in countries like Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, India, Egypt, Indonesia, and Iran when both measures are taken into account.

The study also admitted that it examined only the restrictions on religion, and did not include “the amount of religious dynamism, diversity and expression in each country.” If we take these overlooked elements into consideration, the religious situation in China could appear even more tolerant or less repressive. Actually it would be very hard to find another example of high or stiff governmental restrictions on religious practices coexisting with low social restrictions or hostilities elsewhere in the world. There are many reasons for the relative openness of and few restrictions on religious practices in China, but important among them is the government is opening up the “private sector” for all kinds of activities, including religious ones. It therefore can take credit for this relative openness of religious affairs. Actually, in view of the current social acceptance of religion in China, some Chinese scholars argue that the image of religion in China has already been transformed from the “opiate of the people” to a form of social capital. However, bridging the gap between the restrictive official policy toward religion and the relative high degree of social tolerance remains a herculean task for the Chinese government.

Of course, the government’s policy towards religion has been applied differently from locality to locality and also from religion to religion in China. Various folk religions, for instance, do not face the same kind of strict governmental control as Tibetan Buddhism does. On the other hand, as a special version of theocracy, the Tibetan exile government’s model of church and state is further from the American model than it is to the Chinese model which recognizes, at least in principle, the separation of church and state. It is doubtful that this Tibetan model of church and state could have survived

even in the United States. And it is also doubtful that true freedom of religion could be bred by this model of church and state.

RELIGIOUS FACTORS IN CURRENT U.S. POLICY TOWARDS CHINA

The influence of religion on American foreign policy has always been circumscribed by a variety of factors, such as the tradition of the separation of church and state, the realist tradition of American diplomacy, the Republican pro-business emphasis and the history of internal frictions among religious groups. Nonetheless, concern over international religious freedom in recent times has become a key element of U.S. global politics, constituting an important force balancing the business interests and strategic considerations that dominate American foreign policy.

With regard to American policy toward China, bipartisan consensus has emerged on several issues. One might be called “the values consensus,” that is, to promote religious freedom in China. Also, the Democrats’ “embracing religion” and their victories in the 2006 and 2008 elections strengthened what I would call “the trade protectionism–religious human rights complex” in Congress. This is partly because religious freedom is a win-win issue for both parties, and because criticism of China’s religious record will continue no matter which party is in power, even though economic and trade issues become more prominent in the time of economic recession or crisis. Concerns over international religious freedom appear to have become a new foreign policy consensus in the United States since the collapse of the bipartisan consensus on foreign policy during the time of the Vietnam War.

A “countervailing” bipartisan consensus might be called “the China consensus,” based on both U.S. national interest and China’s current international status. That is, agreement that the U.S.-China relationship is one of the most important bilateral relationships of the United States, agreement evident in the many efforts to institutionalize bilateral ties by this and previous administrations. The economic interdependence between the two countries has already reached the level of MAD (mutually assured destruction or mutually assured development) and it is hard to ignore the common interests of the

two countries in other areas such as preventing nuclear proliferation, promoting regional security and advancing environmental protection. In normal circumstances, this China consensus tends to restrain the values consensus, and makes the issue of religious freedom a less significant factor in bilateral relations. But it is still possible for religious groups in the United States to change the status quo of current Sino-American relations, to tip the balance so to speak, and have a substantial impact on certain aspects of U.S. policy toward China by resorting to values generally accepted by Americans and forming a broad political coalition on religious freedom.

Despite the huge differences in their respective positions, there still exist quite a few commonalities between the Chinese and American governments in their views toward religion and in their ways to handle religion in domestic and foreign policy.

For instance, both sides regard religion as a factor vital to their national interests and security. This is true despite that fact that there are great differences between China and the United States in treating religion as a national security issue. Whereas religion has been defined as a non-traditional security issue in the United States since 9/11, the Chinese government has always regarded religion as a security issue ever since its founding some sixty years ago. As I argue elsewhere, the issues of national security and united front are two major CPC considerations in making its policy toward religion. Also, whereas religion as a security issue has become “harder” in the United States, now treated as a “homeland security” issue, religion as a security issue has become “softer” in China, being increasingly viewed as an ideological rather than a geopolitical threat to the regime.

Secondly, both countries believe in the existence of a “hierarchy of human rights,” though the United States gives priority to religious freedom, which some call “the first liberty,” whereas China has traditionally regarded religious freedom as a much less important issue in its human rights agenda. But now the gap is narrowing since the Chinese government is becoming more aware of the importance of religion as a human rights issue and also the importance of religious freedom to its international image.

Thirdly, both countries regard their models of social development and church-state relations as exceptional. However, American exceptionalism is more judgmental and often expressed in the form of universalism, and

the American standard of human rights and religious freedom—often interpreted as the international standard—is often used to evaluate and criticize the religious situation in other countries; whereas Chinese exceptionalism is more defensive and is commonly embodied in its non-cooperative or even isolationist policy resisting the so-called Western interference in its domestic affairs, especially in the area of religion.

Finally, the foreign policy establishments of both countries are followers of what could be termed “diplomatic materialism,” or suffer from “religion avoidance syndrome,” to employ the term used by Mr. Thomas Farr, Former Director of the Office of International Religious Freedom, to describe the U.S. foreign policy establishment. As he and others of similar view maintain, promoting religious freedom as a foreign policy issue is ghettoized or departmentalized in the State Department, and is far from the mainstream of American foreign policy. In China, the importance that the government attaches to religion has never matched its rhetoric—statements such as “there is nothing trivial in religious affairs”—and it is well-known that the administrative organs handling religious affairs of both local and central governments are poorly staffed, usually taking a back seat and keeping a low profile in Chinese officialdom. In fact, as China’s national interests have become more numerous and pragmatic, the status of religion has been decreasing in the country’s strategic and foreign policy considerations. For instance, no one would argue today that the issue of religion, which used to be regarded as matter of paramount importance in the years when ideology was supreme, should override the issues of Chinese currency appreciation or the increasing price of iron ore from Australia. It does seem that both countries need to address the issue of “religion gap” or “religion deficit” if they want to take religion seriously as a bilateral issue.

DIFFERING VIEWS OF RELIGION IN THE UNITED STATES AND CHINA

Richard Madsen

Unlike liberal democracies, which generally accord their citizens the right to complete freedom of religious belief and practice, the Chinese government asserts the need to control religion so as to preserve social harmony and economic modernization. The government has a bureau officially in charge of religious affairs—the State Administration for Religious Affairs (SARA). The state claims the prerogative of determining what counts as true and false religion, and uses the power of the police to try to wipe out “false” religion (AKA “evil cults” or “feudal superstition”). The state also chooses the leaders of approved religions and monitors many of the activities of the religions themselves.

Yet, on the surface the Chinese government shares a fundamental assumption with most liberal democracies, including the United States—the assumption that secularity is inseparable from modernity. The constitutions of liberal democracies like the United States are based on the political philosophies of the Western Enlightenment (in America, especially the theories of John Locke), which hold that religious belief should be relegated to private life, to a realm of personal freedom protected by a religiously neutral state.

Chinese official policy toward religion is also based on the secularization assumption, in this case derived from Marxism. As with all government policy in China, the policy toward religion is set by the Communist Party. The

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framework for religious policy comes from “Document 19,” promulgated by the Communist Party Central Committee in 1982 and titled “The Basic Viewpoint on the Religious Question during our Country’s Socialist Period.”¹ Like liberal democracies, Document 19 relegates religious belief to private life. The “crux of the policy of freedom of religious belief is to make the question of religious belief a private matter, one of individual free choice for citizens.”²

A major difference between China and the United States, however, is on the question of the neutrality of the state toward religion. In the United States, the government can not give any direct material support to religious belief and it can not use its power to favor one religious community over another. The religious neutrality extends to the question of whether religion has any future in the modern world. For example, in the United States, over 80 percent of the people say they believe in God.³ But elite social scientists are disproportionately represented among the 10 percent who do not. Until recently, most mainstream elite social theorists did indeed think that religion had no future in the modern world. For example, on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the *American Political Science Review*—the leading journal in American political science—a content analysis of articles published in the last century was done. It found that only four articles in a hundred years had treated religion as an independent variable.⁴

But the American government cannot take any official position on one side or the other of the religious question. Indeed, it gives a lot of informal, moral support to religious communities. To get elected, politicians must profess profound respect for all religions (most are sincere about this) and encourage religious leaders to send officials their views and to provide public guidance on moral issues.

Unlike liberal democracies, which are officially neutral about the truth claims of religions, the Chinese Communist Party’s Document 19 declares that religion is false and makes government an activist agent of a modernizing project that would eventually eliminate religion entirely. “[W]e Communists are atheists and must unremittingly propagate atheism.”⁵ In contrast to the “leftist” policies of the Cultural Revolution, which had forcefully tried to obliterate religion from public life, this document, a product of the early reform program of Deng Xiaoping, mandates patience. Scientific

education, rather than political coercion, should be the main method of propagating atheism.

All of these policies are based on assumptions that are widely shared among elite social scientists, if not the general public, in liberal democracies. Most elite social scientists until fairly recently would probably have agreed with Document 19 that religion is an historical phenomenon with its “own cycle of emergence, development, and demise,”⁶ a demise that will inevitably come with modernization. (The special characteristic of the Chinese version of the theory, of course, is its notion that religion in the early modern period is an opiate to relieve the misery of class oppression.) But religion will not die out quickly because of cultural lag: “the people’s consciousness lags behind social realities, old thinking and habits cannot be thoroughly wiped out in a short period.”⁷

But both the liberal democratic and the Chinese Communist approaches toward religion are facing challenges these days, in part because their shared assumptions about the inevitable march of secularization seem to be wrong. Facing the facts of an increasingly vigorous engagement of religions with public life all over the world, many Western social theorists (even confirmed agnostics like Jürgen Habermas) are now searching for “post-secular” social theories.⁸ Although there would be great disagreement over the content of such theories, they would all note that the rise and demise of religions does not follow a linear pattern. They would note that religion not only persists but continues to evolve dynamically in modernized societies. They would indeed recognize that there are “multiple modernities,” defined by different interactions between religious belief and practice and between modern political and economic development.⁹ They would recognize that religion cannot usually be confined to private life, but that—for better or worse—it is an active part of public life.¹⁰ Finally, they would be suspicious of definitions that conceive of religion in overly narrow, ethnocentric terms based on Western historical experience.¹¹

In liberal democracies like the United States, the consequences of dynamically evolving, publicly assertive religious beliefs are often intractable “culture wars” over the content of public education and over limitations on rights to abortion, same sex marriage, and physician assisted suicide. Moreover,

there are unresolved dilemmas about how to handle the connection between some forms of religious extremism (Christian, Jewish, Hindu, and Buddhist, as well as Islamic) and political violence. In Western liberal democracies, however, there is at least space for lively, if sometimes acrimonious and painful, public debates about how to accommodate religion in the public sphere, and these debates provide resources for dealing with difficult religious and political issues.

In China, the secularist assumptions that underpin official religious policy are likewise proving unworkable. The policies flowing from Document 19 are a failure, on their own terms. The policy aims to constrain the growth of religion, to confine it to the private sphere, and to keep it from affecting politics and ethnic relations. Yet, despite all efforts to control its growth, religion has grown rapidly and overwhelmed China's systems for surveillance and control. Document 19 concludes, "Party members must have a sober-minded recognition of the protracted nature of the religious question under Socialist conditions....Those who expect to rely on administrative decrees or other coercive measures to wipe out religious thinking and practices with one blow are even further from the basic viewpoint that Marxism takes toward the religious question. They are entirely wrong and will do no small harm." But the inability to facilitate the spread of secularism by patient education has led to a resort to clumsy coercive methods which have actually intensified religiously inspired conflict with the state. Moreover, the attempt to disconnect religion from ethnic conflict has only added religious zeal to ethnic struggle. The failure is obvious enough that the leadership of the Communist Party has begun to recognize it, and some within the government are searching for a new approach to religious policy. But constraints on debate about sensitive religious matters make it difficult for the Party and the state to move beyond the old policy, with its untenable assumptions; when they do move, it is not in a liberal direction.

Like all "sensitive" issues, discussions about religious policy in China are not carried out in public forums, but rather in closed door meetings that bring together some academic experts and political leaders. In the discussions that I have witnessed, leading Chinese experts agree that the Document 19 theoretical framework is unworkable. Whether top Party leaders will openly admit

this, at least in the near future, is questionable, because the Party needs to maintain an air of infallibility. But admitted or not, the Party's basic strategy seems to be evolving along the lines suggested by leading experts, such as Zhuo Xinping, the director of the Institute of World Religions at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, in a paper on "The Situation of Chinese Religion and its Direction of Development."¹²

The paper begins with a long introduction on the place of religion in Chinese history and state-religion relations under the emperors. It includes a discussion of Marxist theory, especially the scholarly debate in the 1990s about the meaning of Marx's famous statement that "religion is an opiate of the people." But the main point about this debate was that Marxism is now being treated as social science, not sacred dogma, and is therefore subject to scientific canons of empirical verification and theoretical interpretation. In this context the precedents set by Chinese emperors thus become a more fundamental normative basis for religious policy than Marxian theory.

What is gradually emerging from all this debate is a somewhat more coherent policy that is more accepting of many of the different forms of Chinese religiosity and more flexible in regulating them than the Document 19 policies would have been. But it is by no means a liberal democratic policy. It is a 'back to the future' policy—a modern throwback to the viewpoint of the Ming-Qing Chinese emperors.

In Ming-Qing China, the Emperor was the Son of Heaven. His primary responsibility was to mediate between Heaven (considered a deity) and Earth. The legitimacy of his authority was predicated on this sacral role, which of course depended on a Mandate of Heaven that could be lost through imperial malfeasance. The emperor fulfilled his role by carrying out important rituals to Heaven in the capital and elsewhere to secure the blessings of Heaven on his subjects. The emperor combined the Western roles of king and pope.

As part of his role, the emperor distinguished between *zhengjiao*, "true teaching," and *xiejiao*, "deviant teaching"—and since "teaching" in China was closely amalgamated with ritual and myth, this was a distinction, to use modern Western language, between orthodoxy and heterodoxy.

Although the elites who were the chief advisors to the emperor were schooled in a Confucian tradition that was skeptical about most forms of

popular religious practice, the emperors did not usually try to suppress and indeed even encouraged village cults, which usually drew on a hybrid mix of Daoist, Buddhist, and Confucian traditions. Such rituals and myths were orthodox “true teachings” if they solidified the proper hierarchical relations within families, helped build strong communities rooted in local agriculture, and thus bolstered social stability under imperial rule. As for large scale Buddhist and Daoist monasteries, the emperors held them in place through imperial patronage, which helped such institutions to thrive while ensuring that their leaders were loyal to the emperor.

However, sectarian organizations that gathered people together from many different communities, contravened gender distinctions by allowing men and women to worship together as equals, preached an imminent end to the present era, and sometimes became the organizational basis for rebellion—such organizations might be labeled heterodox (or in the English translation of the term *xiejiao* that is officially preferred today, “evil cults”)¹³ and persecuted strongly.

Such precedents point to a policy in which the state tolerates a wide range of religious practices, now under the rubric of a respect for “cultural pluralism.” In line with official government pronouncements, scholars like Zhuo Xinping insist that the cornerstone of religious policy is the constitutional guarantee of religious freedom. But this is a different kind of freedom from that of the Western liberal tradition. In some ways, as Zhuo Xinping and many other Chinese scholars note, the Chinese policy of religious freedom gives more support to religion than countries like the United States, which insist on a strict liberal separation between church and state.¹⁴ Under that liberal principle of separation, the government is forbidden from giving any direct economic support to churches. But in China, the government actually pays to build churches and pays the salaries of religious functionaries—at least those belonging to the officially accepted Patriotic Associations.

This government patronage is indeed in line with the imperial state’s patronage of temples. This is not a liberal toleration, based on an inalienable right to freedom of religious association. It is a modern manifestation of the old imperial principle that the state is the master, religion the follower. The state reserves the prerogative of determining which kind of practice is an

orthodox “true religion” and which kind a heterodox “evil cult.” (In 2008 the Propaganda Department published a video making just this kind of distinction.)¹⁵ The distinction is mainly based on the practical implications of the religion: whether or not it contributes to a “harmonious society” under the direction of the Party-State. To be fully legitimate, religions need to contribute actively to building the harmonious society. If they are not contributing actively, the state needs to take responsibility to guide them so that they do fulfill their obligations. If they will not accept guidance, the state needs to crush them.

In its new incarnation, the supposedly secular Chinese state assumes a holy aura. It now presents itself as the carrier of a sacred national destiny. It carries out spectacular public rituals like the opening ceremonies of the Beijing Olympics—ceremonies that powerfully evoke the glorious cultural heritage of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism but give no mention at all of Mao Zedong or even of socialism.

This can lead to new patterns of religious tolerance and repression. In the past, local village temple worship was labeled “feudal superstition” and suppressed in the name of Marxist modernization. In the emerging new policy, local temple worship and popular religious festivals are now being relabeled as “non-material cultural heritage.”¹⁶ Under this new definition, they are even to be encouraged (although educated elites are skeptical about their truth content), as long as they keep villagers happy and perhaps draw in some tourism. Like the imperial government of old, the Communist Ruling Party is partial to polytheism—to a multitude of local cults that keep rural society divided and incapable of mass action. Christian communities are more problematic, because they are a foreign religion, not part of the Chinese cultural heritage. But as long as they thoroughly indigenize—which in practice means that they accept the principle that the government is the master, religion the follower—they can be accepted. Even Christian communities that organize as house churches at the local level outside of the framework of the Three Self Movement might be tolerated as long as their primary function seems to be to help sustain strong families and hard work and they do not challenge the police forces of the harmonious society. The encouragement of local folk religion seems to have slowed down the recent growth of evangelical

Christianity in the countryside. The Christian God then becomes one part of a pantheon of local gods, which keep the rural population divided.

The evolving new policies may lead to a growing toleration and even encouragement of a wide variety of religious practices, even of multiple forms of Christianity. These are practical outcomes that would be welcomed by many Americans. But the logic behind this toleration will be different from that which most Americans adhere to. Embedded in the Constitution and other documents at the core of American culture is the notion that the state should be politically secular, it should be neutral toward religion, even as the state's leaders give moral encouragement to the practices of religion among private citizens as a vital part of a free civil society. But the Chinese state seems to be becoming politically religious. It supports "orthodox" religions—even more generously than in the past—while suppressing "heterodox" ones, and it claims the right to distinguish between the orthodox and the heterodox.

This leads to episodes like the suppression of Falungong—an example of a kind of religious persecution whose logic is difficult for most Americans to understand. Even though most Americans would not agree with the teachings of Falungong—and those who are devoted Christians or Jews might even think that Falungong is a false religion—they could not understand the basis for the state's pronouncement that Falungong was an "evil cult" rather than a true religion. They would think that the state should refrain from making such determinations. Even if they have no personal sympathy toward Falungong, and even if they personally think that Falungong is untrue, they would not see why it should be persecuted as long as it carried out basically peaceful activities.

Another area where the evolving policy in China differs from the logic of liberal culture in America is in the status of "axial religions"—those religious movements (mostly stemming from the "Axial Age" of the first millennium BCE) that worshipped a world transcending God or affirmed universal principles that transcended the boundaries of any particular empire and could be invoked to call any particular earthly ruler to account.¹⁷ Most of the main religious traditions in America see themselves as part of this axial tradition—they worship a transcendent God who stands above any earthly ruler. Most of the time, most Christians and Jews in America fuse their religious beliefs

with a sense of American patriotism. But sometimes, the axial principle can encourage them to criticize their culture and to denounce their government for failing to live up to what they see as God's will. Americans criticize their culture and government for many different reasons, but religious convictions add passion (and often, a sense of self-righteousness) to these criticisms. However, the state's religious neutrality means that it can not punish citizens for offering criticisms based on their religious beliefs.

As I see it, the emerging Chinese policy sees religion as part of (Han) Chinese cultural heritage and has a difficult time accepting a faith that would criticize that culture on the basis of a transcendent principle. It also sees the state as the sacred embodiment of this cultural heritage, the final arbiter of what is good and bad within it, and it would have a hard time tolerating any religion that claims in principle that it should be able to criticize the state—even if for the time being the believers in that religion are peacefully cooperating with the political authorities. Thus, Christianity will probably always be subjected to more government suspicion than (Han) Chinese Buddhism and Daoism, which do not have the same culturally transcendent principles as Christianity—or Islam.

America, like China, is facing challenges in accommodating the dynamic evolution of religion in a post-secular age. We can sympathize with each other over the difficulties of confronting these challenges. On both sides of the Pacific, intellectuals especially need to rethink their assumptions about good governance in face of the realities of a post-secular age. But the ways of dealing with these challenges in America and China are different, and this will continue to be a source of irritation in U.S.-China relations.

NOTES

1. Translated in Donald E. MacInnis, *Religion in China Today: Policy and Practice* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1989), 8-26. In the 25 years since its promulgation, other regulations on religion have been added, but these are all within the framework of Document 19.

2. Ibid.
3. Robert D. Putnam and David E. Campbell, *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2010), 7.
4. Kenneth D. Wald and Clyde Wilcox, "Getting Religion: Has Political Science Discovered the Faith Factor?" *American Political Science Review* 100, no. 4 (November 2006): 523-529.
5. See Donald E. MacInnis, *Religion in China Today*.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. See Jurgen Habermas, *Rationality and Religion: Essays on Reason, God, and Modernity* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002); also, Craig Calhoun, Mark Juergensmeyer, and Jonathan VanAntwerpen, eds., introduction to *Rethinking Secularism* (New York: Oxford University Press, forthcoming).
9. Shmeul Eisenstadt, ed. *Multiple Modernities* (New York: Transaction Publishers, 2002).
10. Jose Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).
11. Mayfair Mei-Hui Yang, ed., *Chinese Religiousities: Afflictions of Modernity and State Formation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008).
12. Paper presented at a conference on Religion and Social Development at Fudan University, Shanghai, July, 2009.
13. The term *xiejiao* has usually been translated in the English language scholarly historical literature as "heterodoxy." The phenomenon does not necessarily conform to the definition of a "cult" in a modern sociological sense. But official Chinese translations translate *xiejiao* as "evil cult," probably to give the term a sinister connection that would help justify its crackdown on such activities.
14. Zhuo Xinping, *Quanqiu huade zongjiao yu Dangdai Zhongguo* [Global Religions and Contemporary China], (Beijing: Shehuikexue wenxian chubanshe, 2008), 30.
15. This was available on Chinese official websites in the fall of 2008.
16. Based on my own fieldwork in Hebei Province in 2008.
17. Karl Jaspers, *The Origin and Goal of History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953).

INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS AND GROUP INTERESTS: INFLUENCE ON CHINESE DEMOCRACY

Liu Jianfei

Individual rights and group interests, as two contradictory concerns, exist in any kind of society. It is an important function of government to deal with the two properly. Due to differences in history, culture, and social systems, the Chinese way of handling the relationship between individual rights and group interests is quite different from that of the West, especially the United States. China's conception of individual rights and group interests, to a large extent, influences democracy development and the choice of democratic model.

GROUP RIGHTS ARE SUPERIOR TO INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS

China endured feudalist society for thousands of years. At that time, the power of the sovereign was superior to that of the individual. "All lands belong to the king. All people are the king's men."¹ "(When) the monarch demands the subject die, the subject can not but die." Such statements draw a vivid picture of the lack of "individual rights" in Chinese feudalist society.

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The theory of Confucianism, as the mainstream political culture in feudal China, places more importance on group interests than on individual rights. From the viewpoint of Confucius, it is *yi* (justice, righteousness) which mandates that the individual must be subject to the collective. The crucial criteria to differentiate the gentlemen and the flunky are *yi* and *li* (interest, benefits); that is, “The gentleman strives for *yi* while the flunky strives for *li*.”²

In modern times, with the introduction of Western liberalism, the concept of respecting individual rights began to emerge in China. At the same time, Marxism from the West also recognized individual rights. However, while liberalism puts high importance on individual rights, Marxism emphasized the unity of opposites, in this case, between individual rights and group interests.

In Marxism, the relationship between individual rights and group interests has two aspects:

First, individual rights and group interests are antagonistic to each other. Individual rights are based on individual interests (i.e., personal or private interests), which are quite different in nature from that of group interests (i.e., public or collective interests). There exists antinomy and contradiction between them. The expansion of individual interests is bound to damage group interests, and vice versa. The contradiction between individual rights and group interests means that the two are mutually restrictive. Karl Marx asserted that the restrictions public interests place on individual rights are not a denial of individual interests and rights, but a way to avoid reinterpreting society as something abstract that contradicts the individual.³ This is Marx’s concept of the way that public interests restrict individual rights. Similarly, individual rights restrict public interests too. Public or group interests that neglect individual rights can not last long.

Second, there exists a unity between individual rights and group interests. On the one hand, so-called group interests, also known as common or public interests, are an assemblage of the individual interests inside the collectivity and therefore an embodiment of the majority interests. Without individual interests, group interests will become a log without roots or a spring without a source; these group interests will eventually become the interests of the leaders of the collective, which is the same as oligarchy. Such was the case in feudalist

China. At that time, in most situations, so-called national interests were not the interests of the people, but the interests of the emperor or the dynasty.

If the reasonable interest can not be maintained, the collective may not be able to exist any longer or develop effectively. As a result, individual interests and rights can not be satisfied. For example, if a nation is invaded by another country, and its citizens only care to protect their own lives, refusing to resist the aggressor, then the nation will perish and the people of the state will become slaves of a foreign conqueror. In such a situation, their former individual rights and interests can not be safeguarded any more.

The relationship between group interests and individual rights is often depicted as that of a river and a streamlet by the Chinese. "If there is no water in the river, the streamlet will run dry; and if there is no water in the streamlet, the river will run dry too." The unity of individual rights and group interests determines that the two are mutually-dependent. As Karl Marx put it, "Common interests are the exchange of personal interests; and general interest is the generality of every kind of personal interest;" "Common interests only exist when bi-party or multi-party interests have been independently established."⁴ Whether a nation, society, or party, the development of such organizations depends on the existence and development of individual members; without individual rights and interests, the existence and development of these organizations can not be sustainable and vice versa.

The Communist Party of China (CPC) espouses Marxism and emphasizes the unity of opposites between individual rights and group interests. The focus however, has been different in different periods of time. For example, China has put more emphasis on group interests during the period of planned economy. As far as individual rights are concerned, rights of existence and some political rights have been given prominence; although the right of property has been relatively neglected or excluded. Since adopting the policy of reform and opening up to the outside, China has gradually attached importance to the protection of every aspect of individual rights. During the thirty years from 1979 to 2009, the National People's Congress (NPC) passed more than one hundred bills to protect individual rights. However, the protection of individual rights is limited to such circumstances in which it does not impair public interests in China.

The Constitution of the PRC has stipulated the fundamental rights that a Chinese citizen is entitled to as follows:

- All citizens of the People's Republic of China who have reached the age of 18 have the right to vote and stand for election;
- Citizens enjoy freedom of speech, of the press, of assembly, of association, of procession and of demonstration;
- Citizens enjoy freedom of religious belief;
- Freedom of the person of citizens is inviolable;
- The personal dignity of citizens is inviolable;
- The residences of citizens are inviolable;
- Freedom and privacy of correspondence of citizens are protected by law;
- Citizens have the right to criticize and make suggestions regarding any state organ or functionary;
- Citizens have the right as well as the duty to work. Working people have the right to rest;
- Citizens have the right to material assistance from the state and society when they are old, ill or disabled;
- The state develops social insurance, social relief, and medical and health services that are required for citizens to enjoy this right;
- Citizens have the duty as well as the right to receive education;
- Citizens have the freedom to engage in scientific research, literary and artistic creation, and other cultural pursuits.

At the same time however, the Constitution of the PRC also stipulates that citizens, in exercising their freedoms and rights, may not infringe upon the interests of the state, of society or of the collective, or upon the lawful freedoms

and rights of other citizens. It is the duty of citizens to safeguard the unity of the country and the unity of all its nationalities. Citizens must abide by the Constitution and the law, keep state secrets, protect public property, observe working discipline and public order, and respect social ethics. It is the duty of citizens to safeguard the security, honor and interests of the motherland; they must not commit acts detrimental to the security, honor, and interests of the motherland. It is the sacred duty of every citizen to defend the motherland and resist aggression. It is the honorable duty of citizens to perform military service and join the militia in accordance with the law. It is the duty of citizens to pay taxes in accordance with the law.⁵ In China, collectivism as a value is usually praised, advocated, and encouraged; individualism however, as a value of Western bourgeoisie, is often deprecated. The spirit of Lei Feng, highly glorified by the authorities, has an important connotation of collectivism.

To sum up, China puts more importance on group interests when considering both individual rights and group interests. Chinese thought emphasizes that group interests are superior to individual rights, while stressing that the relationship of the two contains elements of unison, antinomy, and mutual-dependence. Though Western countries like the United States also emphasize group interests and acknowledge that individual rights should not do damage to group interests, they pay attention to group interests to a lesser extent than China does.

DEMOCRACY IS A SYSTEM THAT COORDINATES THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS AND GROUP INTERESTS

The original purpose of democracy is to protect individual rights. Under a despotic system, during certain periods of time, such as the rule of an enlightened emperor, individual rights can be respected, but that is not the norm. In feudalist China, enlightened emperors were few. While in the West, during the Middle Ages, individual rights could not be protected under religious authority, even the right to conduct scientific research. Western democracy

was established and developed in the direction of humanism, whose aim is to protect individual rights and freedoms.

The Declaration of Independence of the United States describes the aim of democracy insightfully:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.—That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed—That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.⁶

Here the meaning of “Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed” is democracy, and the aim of democracy is “to safeguard the unalienable rights of the people.”

However, no society can endow the individual with absolute freedom and boundless rights. Absolute freedom and boundless individual rights are certain to lead to anarchy. The administration of a society needs a national government, lower levels of government, and all kinds of social organizations. Hence, the contradiction between group interests and individual rights arises in the process of governing. It is natural that most countries and societies put much more emphasis on group interests than on individual rights before the advent of modern democratic systems. The democracy of ancient Greece and Rome, which was only applicable to a minority, was a special case.

The appearance of the modern democratic system provided an automatic guarantee for individual rights. However, the relationship between individual rights and group interests is not harmonious in most countries and regions that practice democracy, which leads to low government capability, political turbulence, social chaos, slow development, and finally damaged majority interests and rights. Therefore, it can be said that not all democracies can

really maintain individual rights; only those excellent democracies which produce effective government and social order can protect individual rights. A good democratic system is sure to properly address the relationship between individual rights and group interests. The United States Constitution clearly outlines in its principles not only the preservation of group interests but also of individual rights, and works to harmonize the relationship between the two.

We the People of the United States, in order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.⁷

The preservation of group interests—“to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, and insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare”—is mentioned first, while individual rights—“to secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity”—is mentioned second.

DEMOCRACY WITH CHINESE CHARACTERISTICS IS PERFECTLY SUITED TO THE STATUS QUO OF CHINA

The benchmark for measuring the quality of a democracy is to determine whether it can harmonize the relationship between group interests and individual rights. The particular democratic model is less important. That is to say, democracy in essence is more important than democracy in form or procedure. For a country, what model of democracy is chosen and how it develops is determined by actual domestic conditions. Democracy that does not suit the conditions of a state can not deal with the relationship between individual rights and group interests appropriately.

The revolutionary process in China resulted in the CPC being the only governing party, which is one of the country's most important features. China

has a large population, great differences in peoples and regions, and a relatively low degree of economic and cultural development. Such domestic conditions demand a powerful government and ruling party. Collectivist political culture is another important domestic factor in China; people in China consider group interests to be superior to individual rights. That is again an important domestic feature of China.

The above-mentioned basic conditions determine that the democracy of China is completely different from those characterized by multi-party competition in the West. The fact that China has not adopted the democracy of the West does not mean that there is not democracy in China, and it does not mean that the CPC does not push itself to develop democracy. Whether theoretically or practically, the CPC is the political force that promotes the development of democracy in China. Whether democracy in essence or in form, great progress has been made in China.

In theory, the Communist Party of China takes Marxism, Leninism, Maoism and Deng Xiaoping theory as guiding principles. The CPC's theory of democracy belongs to the Marxist system. In essence, Marxism advocates democracy, and compared with feudal dictatorship, represents progress. Over a long period, owing to the appearance of many problems in the practice of democracy in such countries as the Soviet Union, Marxism and the political system of the Soviet Union are considered by the West to be the opposites of democratic theory and system.

The CPC has held high the flag of democracy since the day of its birth. At the Second National Party Congress in 1922 the CPC set its revolutionary aims "to unite Chinese territory proper, with the three provinces in the north-east included, as a real democratic republic," and to ensure that "Mongolia, Tibet and Xinjiang exercise autonomy as democratic autonomous states." In the period of Yan'an (1935-1949), the CPC called its border area administration a democratic government; the democratic nature of the border area run by the CPC was publicly recognized by men of insight both domestically and abroad. Before the victory in the anti-Japanese war, at the historical 7th National Party Congress of the CPC, Mao Zedong pointed out that "democracy is the main tide of the world and anti-democracy is only a countercurrent." During the period of democratic revolution, the CPC practiced democracy

not only in social management but also in inner party life. Since the foundation of the PRC, the CPC defined the nation as a democracy with a people's dictatorship. As far as democracy is concerned, the CPC completely inherited the thought of Marx and Lenin.

One concrete practice of democracy, the general election, was performed for the first time in Chinese history in 1953 shortly after the founding of the new China. The masses exercised the right to be the master of their own destiny by way of voting for their own representatives, and peoples' congresses at different levels were held from bottom to top. After the reform and opening up policy was adopted in 1978, with the development of society and the economy, the CPC put "making China a prosperous, democratic, civilized modern socialist country" into the Party Constitution. Of course, it is undeniable that the CPC's path to democracy has not been as smooth as expected, especially during the so-called "great democracy" in the Cultural Revolution. The result was that the "great democracy" not only destroyed the stability of society and politics and impeded development of the economy, but also led to the appearance of a personality cult.

Democratic progress in China over the past 60 years cannot be denied, whether in terms of economic democracy and social democracy, as the basis of political democracy, or in terms of political democracy proper. A market economy is not only the most important symbol of economic democracy, but also the significant basis of political democracy. China has basically established a socialist market economy in nearly 30 years of reform and opening up to the outside. With the formation of a socialist market economy, social democracy has developed extensively. The existence of non-governmental organizations (civic organizations) is an important expression of social democracy. Many research institutes, media groups and associations which are not attached to any governmental organs and enterprises have sprung up since reform and opening up to the outside.

In terms of political democracy, China has actively conducted many experiments according to its domestic situation over the past several decades, and many achievements have been obtained. Political democracy in China can be classified into three parts: constitutional democracy, grass roots democracy, and inner-party democracy.

Constitutional democracy refers to the democratic system of national power stipulated within the framework of the Constitution. In China, constitutional democracy is mainly embodied in the system of the peoples' congresses. The peoples' congresses are divided into five levels: the national, provincial, city, county, and township levels. Of these, the representatives at the county and township levels are directly elected by the citizens. At those two levels, people with suffrage comprise over 99 percent of the electorate 18 years or older, with the proportion that actually vote at about 90 percent. The peoples' congresses have four main functions: legislation, supervision, personnel appointment and removal, and substantive decision-making. China pays careful attention to legislative democracy in the process of lawmaking. Drafts of almost every act go through the process of soliciting expert opinion in symposiums, large-scale general meetings, and other formats.

Problems certainly exist in the construction of the peoples' congresses. The most prominent of these problems is that the representatives can not function well when the congresses are not in session; except for the annual congress meeting, the representatives can not find effective channels to perform their rights as representatives. Targeting this drawback, some tentative reforms have been undertaken in certain regions. An example of one such reform is the system of "home for representatives" exercised by Hangzhou City in Zhejiang Province. The "home for representatives" refers to establishing a fixed center for representatives so that they can meet the electorate regularly when people's congresses are not in session to listen to their ideas and advice. This reform brought clear benefits in Hangzhou City.

Grass-roots democracy refers to setting up autonomous organizations in the countryside, city neighborhoods, and enterprises. These organizations mainly include villagers' committees in the countryside, neighborhood committees in the city and employee congresses in enterprises. It is stipulated by the Constitution that such organizations do not represent one level in the formal power structure, but rather are autonomous organizations. Grass-roots democracy consists of four parts: democratic elections, democratic decision-making, democratic management, and democratic supervision; the fundamental part is the democratic elections. Evidence shows that villagers are enthusiastic about voting. The voting rate of the Qianxinan Buyi minority

autonomous prefecture of Guizhou province reached 89 percent in the 2005 election, and successful elections were carried out in 99 percent of the villages. Compared with before, the qualities of the elected members of the committee are higher. In the developed coastal areas, some business men and workers doing business in other places will return home to vote when it is time for the election. In addition, innovative practices in democratic management and supervision are employed in some villages, such as the Democratic Supervision Committee of Dazhai village of Xiyang county in Shanxi province. Before the reform and opening up period, this village was an example for other villages in the whole country.

The party system of China and the governing practices of the CPC reveal the special significance of inner-party democratic development in the CPC. Multi-party cooperation and political consultancy under the leadership of the CPC form the basic political system in contemporary China. Over a sixty-year reign, the CPC has developed a series of democratic administration theories of its own and built up the system of democratic management. The party is now actively probing new methods of democratic governance. In addition to reforming and improving the system of leadership and of working style, the most important channel for the CPC to promote its democratic governance concept is to develop inner-party democracy, which mainly includes the following: establishing and perfecting the system to maintain the democratic rights of party members, strengthening the system of the party congresses, stressing the role of the plenary meeting of party committees, reforming and improving the system of inner-party elections, and setting up and improving the system of inner-party supervision. Of these factors, the one that attracts the most attention is the strengthening and improvement of the party congresses. The CPC has established the system of party congresses at all levels of party organization above the county level, and party congresses are held every five years. The Party Constitution stipulates that the party congress at each level and the committee generated by it are the leading organs of the party at each level. When the congress is in session, the party congress fulfills the leading function; when it is not in session, the party committee acts as the leading organ. In practice, representatives of party congresses from all levels can only play their role when the party congress is in session; there is no

relevant mechanism to let the representatives function well when the congress is not in session. From the end of the 1980s, the CPC has experimented with the system of standing party congresses in twelve cities, counties and districts of five provinces, and it has achieved evident success. The achievements gained by the Jiaojiang district of Taizhou city in Zhejiang province are of typical significance. In November 2002, the CPC put “expanding the experimental reform of standing party congresses at the city and county level and exploring actively the approaches and forms for the party congress to play its role when not in session” in the political report of the 16th National Party Congress. After the 16th National Party Congress, this reform was expanded to the entire country.

In addition to the reform of constitutional democracy, grass-roots democracy, and inner-party democracy, some new democratic forms are being created in certain regions. One of these forms is the “democratic talkfest (talk sincerely)” in Wenling city of Zhejiang province. The “democratic talkfest” is regularly held in each town and the participants are representatives from the local peoples’ congress, the CPPCC (multi-party political consultative organization), party affairs, administrative departments and villager’s committees, etc. These representatives communicate and consult on certain issues. The “democracy talkfest” is not only a place to express, collect and integrate public opinions, but a necessary procedure to make important decisions.

Although democracy construction in China has made some progress, several unsettled problems still exist. Democracy construction in China is a tremendously difficult task, as Chinese democracy is a brand new form which has no ready-made experience to use for reference. In addition, Chinese society must be kept stable during the process of promoting democracy construction.

History shows that democratic development in China must proceed gradually and that reform should progress from top to bottom. There are always two opinions in international society on the best method of democratic development. One method is to realize constitutional democracy first, and then to promote economic growth within such a democratic framework. The other method involves giving priority to economic growth so as to create a basis for constitutional democracy and finally establishing constitutional democracy when those conditions are met. In the author’s view, China has taken a third road. This third method includes, on the one hand, taking economic

development as a priority so as to build a solid basis for political democracy, while on the other hand, promoting political democracy in a steady way.

The conditions which must be met for the realization of constitutional democracy are mainly economic, cultural, and societal. Of these conditions, some have been basically realized in China, but others are still very weak. The first set of conditions are economic. On the one hand, Chinese economic development has made obvious progress, and the market economy has been basically established. This advancement has created an environment conducive to democratic development and has produced greater demand for those changes. On the other hand, economic growth in China is unbalanced and the country faces many challenges to sustainable development. The second set of conditions are cultural, mainly in regard to political culture. Political culture involves the degree to which a nation or society embraces and believes in democratic values. Although China has made great progress in this respect, serious problems still exist. Traditional Chinese political culture is an important component of contemporary political culture in China. Confucian thought, which is considered the kernel of traditional culture, contains some elements that are unfavorable to democracy. For quite a few Chinese citizens, Confucian political culture influences their thoughts either directly or indirectly. The final set of conditions is social, mainly consisting of social structure and social environment. For many reasons, as far as social structure is concerned, civil society in China is relatively weak. At the same time, the power of civil society can limit the power of a nation so that it will invite the interference by the state, which increases the difficulty of building civil society in China.

The prospects of democratic development in China are mainly determined by the cultivation of conditions in the economy, culture, and society. For the time being, although economic conditions are relatively mature, the economy still needs to be strengthened and consolidated. Compared with economic conditions, conditions in culture and society are relatively weak; cultivation of cultural and social conditions has a long way to go.

NOTES

- 1 “North Mountain,” Minor Odes, 诗经 [*shi jing*] (*The Book of Poetry*).
2. *The Analects of Confucius*.
3. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Complete Works of Marx and Engels*, vol.4 (People’s Publishing Press, 1979), 122.
4. *Ibid.*, 179.
5. *Constitution of the People’s Republic of China*, (Law Publishing Press, 1999) 14-18.
6. Garry Wasserman, *The Basics of American Politics*, (London: Longman Publishing), translated by Lu Zhenlun, etc. (China Social Science Press, 1994) 221.
7. *Ibid.*, 225.

BALANCING INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS AND GROUP INTERESTS: WHO DECIDES?

Jamie P. Horsley

How our two countries define, determine, and balance individual rights and group interests fundamentally impacts mutual perceptions held by our respective peoples and governments. The commonly accepted view is that individual rights are more valued in the United States—and the West more generally—while collective interests are more valued in China—and Asia more generally. Chinese people often view Americans as selfish and uncaring toward family and society and perceive our democracy as chaotic, inefficient, and unjust. At one extreme, some Americans believe that the Chinese people and government do not respect individual rights or value each human life, and that individual interests are unfairly subordinated to economic development and asserted state or Communist Party interests without due process.

In fact, our two countries and cultures may not really be so far apart in how we view the importance of both individual rights and group interests, especially in this complex era of wrenching economic, social, and political change.

We both agree that individuals are important and that they contribute to and promote group interests. Both our traditions respect and encourage

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individualism in the sense of self-realization of the individual. In theory and in practice, in both our countries any individual (who typically had to be male) could and can rise to a position of economic, social, and political power and even become head of state. Indeed, Americans attribute the inspiration for our own open and competitive civil service system for selecting career government employees to the Chinese imperial examination system, which recognized and rewarded individual merit through a system of neutrally administered written examinations.

We even seem to agree in principle on many of the most important individual rights. China's 1982 Constitution enumerates a list of fundamental rights of citizens that sound familiar to Americans, including the right to vote and stand for election; freedom of speech, press, assembly, association, procession, demonstration, religion, person and correspondence, and the right to criticize and complain to the government.¹ China also now recognizes the right to own private property and receive compensation if it is taken by the government in the "public interest,"² and recently amended its Constitution to provide that the state "respects and preserves human rights."³

Turning to how we value "group interests," our two peoples both cherish family and community, have rich traditions of associational activity, and feel strong loyalty to our respective countries. We both love our heroes and heroines who bravely sacrifice their interests and themselves for a greater good. We also agree that, as members of larger groupings and communities, the highest expression of which for most of us is the state, individuals must be willing in some respects to accommodate their own particular rights and interests to legitimate group or "public interests."

In the United States, we think of this compromising of individual rights as a "social contract," entered into voluntarily by members of society who cede limited powers to government, subject to continuing majority consent and certain constitutional guarantees of individual rights. In China, this compromise is expressed as the constitutional principle that "citizens, in exercising their rights and freedoms, may not infringe upon the interests of the state, of society or of the collective, or upon the lawful freedoms and rights of other citizens,"⁴ appearing to give prominence to group interests.

While we both recognize the importance of group interests, what is less clear is how we respectively define “group interests.” Are these national, state or provincial, community, family, industry or other kinds of interests? Chinese tend to emphasize the exercise of individual rights *in service of* and *duties to* the nation and the collective while, in the United States, which was founded by individuals fleeing repressive governments, our discourse tends to emphasize protecting individual rights against infringement by others, including the nation-state and those acting on its behalf.

This difference in emphasis, despite many shared values relating to individual rights and group interests, has led our two societies and countries to organize ourselves with different approaches and institutions to define, deal with, and balance individual rights and group interests. Where the United States and China seem to differ most in institutional design for dealing with this balancing act is in *who decides* what is the “group” or “public” interest at stake in a given issue, and *how it is decided*.

Instead of elaborating on the differences and nuances in the respective ways we view and value individual rights and group interests, this paper will explore two issues that impact how decisions about individual rights and group interests, expressed as government policy and law, are made and that affect our mutual perceptions: (1) the role of civil society in involving individuals in the process of defining, promoting, and protecting various group interests and in balancing individual rights and group interests; and (2) the related issue of how the state views and handles criticism and dissent as part of the process of determining “group interests” and balancing them against asserted individual rights.

THE ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN DEFINING THE COLLECTIVE INTEREST

A dynamic associational life is one hallmark of American society. We have since our earliest days formed groups to promote a wide variety of common interests, whether charitable, business, religious, political, recreational or social. The formation and operation of these groups is largely unregulated,

so long as they do not violate any laws and, traditionally, the state intervenes only when groups seek benefits from the government such as incorporation, tax preferences, and the ability to raise funds from the public. The growth of associations in the United States was further spurred by passage of the 1946 Administrative Procedure Act, which mandated that government agencies must inform the public, seek their input during the drafting phase, and provide an explanation of adopted regulations and decisions that affect the rights and interests of individual and corporate citizens. All kinds of groups and associations in the United States have played an important role in collecting, reconciling, and promoting various individual and associational interests in dialogue with the state as it attempts to work out laws and policies in the greater “public interest.”

Chinese people, like their American counterparts, have a long history of associational and charitable activity. The contexts and motivations may have differed somewhat, but the impulse to associate outside of government around professions, place of origin, religious and political beliefs, philanthropic goals, hobbies, and other common interests seems to be a human impulse shared by all peoples around the world. Indeed, freedom of association is recognized in the Chinese Constitution and an array of Chinese laws and regulations now legitimate and regulate this “third sector” lying between government and the individual citizen.

The major differences between the United States and China with respect to the formation and role of civic organizations lies in the requirement under Chinese law for government sponsorship and approval to form and maintain an association or social group, and informal limitations on the ability of those groups to advocate—through participation in law and policy formulation and through China’s legal system—for the protection and promotion of the individual and collective rights and interests represented by those organizations. Yet, despite continued restrictions on the right to form such groups, registered non-governmental, non-profit and service-oriented groups have continued to proliferate year-by-year, and the numbers of unregistered, informal grassroots groups working in such areas as rural health, children’s and women’s rights, environmental protection and labor rights, has skyrocketed into the millions.⁵

At the 17th Congress of the Chinese Communist Party in October 2007, Party General Secretary Hu Jintao seemed to envision an expanded role for China's fledgling "civil society," as more than just a mechanism through which to implement government policy. In addition to calling for expansion of "citizens' orderly participation in political affairs at each level and in every field," Hu supported the role of "people's organizations" in providing public services and protecting the lawful rights and interests of the public, and encouraged social organizations to help expand the public's participation, reflect the people's demands and increase their self-governance capability.⁶ These sentiments were repeated nearly word for word in the work report delivered by Premier Wen Jiabao to the National People's Congress in March 2009.⁷

It is important that the utility of civil society in helping mediate between state and society is recognized and given legitimacy in official statements emanating from the Party-State. These kinds of statements signal leadership thinking and endorse cautious experimentation in new directions, including that of greater citizen participation in legislation and policymaking that affects various interest groups and individuals. Nonetheless, the Chinese government's apparent continued discomfort with assertive non-governmental actors puzzles the American public. We read in the Western media of non-profit groups and public interest law firms in China being charged with having failed to abide by a variety of regulatory requirements and shut down in apparent retaliation for attempting to represent the interests of the most vulnerable in society when they come in conflict with the state.

One of the main purposes and utility of such groups is precisely to help government determine what are the various individual and group interests and issues at stake in a given situation and to better "harmonize" the often competing interests involved to reach an acceptable compromise. Why should a strong, successful, and much-admired government fear challenge from and occasional conflict with individuals and civil society groups?

This question leads us to a second issue that illustrates the differences between our two countries in balancing individual rights and group interests: the treatment of criticism.

THE CHALLENGE OF DEALING WITH CRITICISM

In the United States, the right to peaceably criticize government and advocate for certain actions or policies to protect individual rights and various group interests are an important part of our democracy and are protected as free speech and expression. In China, the Chinese people similarly have the constitutional right of free speech, as well as the right to criticize government and officials, and to bring complaints regarding alleged violations of law or dereliction of duty.⁸ As China's economy becomes more market-oriented, society more pluralistic and complex, the people more sophisticated and expected by government to do more for themselves, we have witnessed what appears to be a growing assertiveness on the part of the Chinese people. They are demanding more resources and information, equal opportunity, and fair treatment by the government, and complaining about and criticizing government when they see failures and injustices.

The ingrained, traditional response of monarchs to criticism from their subjects has been to view those critics as troublemakers and enemies. This imperial reaction lives on among leaders in all kinds of political systems, including the United States and modern China. No one enjoys criticism, however just and accurate it may be. However, constructive criticism is not necessarily the same as opposition.

Western democracies have developed a variety of mechanisms to permit and deal with peaceful criticism and dissatisfaction, and to take account of such criticism in determining the individual rights and deciding the "group interest" at stake in the particular issue. In the United States, such mechanisms include petition, the right to participate in legislation and policy-making, media reporting and editorials, peaceful protests and demonstrations, public interest litigation, elections and recall procedures. We have also developed federal law protecting "whistleblowers" who reveal wrongdoing on the part of companies and government.

We read in Western media about courageous Chinese individuals exposing villages afflicted with AIDS derived from unsafe blood collection and transfusion methods, doctors releasing information about a new disease later named "severe acute respiratory syndrome" (SARS), and exposés of child slave labor

in small mining operations, of tainted milk powder that killed or injured thousands of Chinese children and posed a threat internationally, and of shoddy school construction that contributed to the high number of school-children killed in the Sichuan earthquake of May 2008. We are puzzled when we subsequently read that many of these brave whistleblowers end up in jail, accused of defamation, leaking state secrets and/or subverting state security.

These seeming over-reactions by the Chinese state to the “citizen critic” and “rights defenders” are puzzling to and create negative images within the American public of an insecure Chinese state that distrusts its own people. Despite a long tradition of the noble official remonstrating with his emperor about perceived wrongdoing or erroneous policies, to the Western eye it appears that China lacks a framework for dealing constructively with criticism and unfavorable publicity, as well as dissent and policy opposition, even though its Constitution recognizes the basic right of Chinese citizens to criticize, complain, and supervise their government.

Despite these and other recent publicized instances of a coercive government response to criticism and protest, the Chinese leadership has over the past several years demonstrated its recognition of the need to develop new mechanisms of dealing with complex issues and diverse interests, vowing to build a more transparent, participatory, and accountable government. Indeed, Chinese leaders have been quietly instituting new mechanisms to promote greater transparency of and public participation in the law and policymaking processes,⁹ so that government makes better-informed decisions that gain better compliance by the public and reduce the rapidly growing number of disputes.

Both China’s National People’s Congress Standing Committee and the State Council have pledged to publish essentially all draft laws and regulations for comment from the general public prior to finalization. The Chinese government at all levels is experimenting with public hearings, different kinds of open meetings and procedures to solicit written input on draft laws and policies and to respond to those comments. Chinese leaders espouse the need for open and transparent government “under the sunshine.” China has adopted its first-ever “freedom of information” statute, obligating government agencies to make public a wide range of information and to disclose

information from their files upon request from the public. National open government developments benefit from experimentation in governance and legal reforms at local levels in places like Hunan province, Shanghai, Chongqing and Shenzhen in Guangdong province.

Through a series of administrative laws giving citizens new rights including to sue government and obtain a hearing about or an explanation of adverse government action, China's leaders have begun to make government itself subject to the law, to curb abuse of discretionary powers, to listen and respond to different voices representing diverse interests and to become more accountable to individuals and the general public. Indeed, China is developing a legal system that is beginning to pay more attention to due process and the importance of protecting individual rights against abuse of state power as fundamental to achieving the stated goal of a "harmonious society."

Chinese leaders are also recognizing that government legitimacy is enhanced by allowing citizens to participate and criticize. In his March 2010 work report to the National People's Congress, Premier Wen Jiabao vowed to "innovatively revise the methods and mechanisms of the government's legislative work and expand public participation in it," while safeguarding "the democratic rights of the people as masters of the country, particularly their rights to vote and to stay informed about, participate in, express views on, and oversee government affairs."¹⁰ Moreover, Wen for the first time admonished fellow deputies that government also needs to "create conditions" for the people to *criticize government* and called for a greater role of the media in overseeing government and ensuring that its operations are carried out "in the sunshine."¹¹

Nonetheless, as U.S. President Barack Obama has often stated, including in announcing his Open Government Initiative to improve our own federal government and increase public trust,¹² it is difficult to turn an enormous aircraft carrier in mid-course. Transition to new methods of dealing with competing interests, criticism and conflict, especially conflicts between individual rights and asserted group interests, will take time and require bureaucratic culture changes.

IMPACT ON MUTUAL PERCEPTIONS

Both of our countries are in constant transition, as the world becomes more complex and interconnected, and as our respective societies face new social, economic and political challenges. From the U.S. perspective, governments govern best when they listen to and are openly accountable to the diversified and often contentious sectors of society and when they devise mechanisms to engage individuals and groups in continually defining and re-defining various kinds and levels of “group interests” and balancing those against individual rights at stake. This process often looks unruly and inefficient, as illustrated by the frequently uncivil and even violent controversy and debate surrounding health care reform in the United States in the summer of 2009, where even after compromise legislation was passed, criticism and opposition continues. However, Americans see this kind of open debate and give-and-take as the basis of a dynamic society, a resilient economy, and a stable polity.

The United States perception of China is of a country that, through this prism, looks relatively intolerant of criticism and individual and collective activism, which views these as threatening opposition to the Party and state, rather than as necessary inputs to ensuring that decisions are made with a better understanding of the complexity of acting in the “public interest” at any given time.

On a bilateral and international level, there is the sense that regimes that do not tolerate and accommodate criticism and dissent, whether from individuals, groups or other entities, and do not make policy decisions collaboratively and transparently at home are unlikely to prove willing and able to do so in the international sphere and thus pose a potential risk to the international order.

China’s leadership today does seem to recognize that, in principle, a harmonious society is not one without any conflict, but one in which conflict is resolved in a way that is accepted by the parties involved and the general public, so that social order and government legitimacy are maintained.

The challenge for both our countries is to establish and continually improve frameworks that permit advocacy for and reconcile competing individual and group interests and to promote decision making that self-consciously balances individual rights and various group interests in a transparent manner, based

on the best available information at the time, and explains the final decision to the affected public. Hopefully, decision-making processes in both our countries that are more transparent, participatory and collaborative will help build not only domestic trust and support but greater bilateral and international trust as well.

NOTES

1. Constitution of the People's Republic of China, last amended March 14, 2004, Chapter Two, available in English at: http://english.gov.cn/2005-08/05/content_20813.htm.
2. Ibid., Article 13.
3. Ibid., Article 33.
4. Ibid., Article 51.
5. The numbers of registered social organizations, civil, non-enterprise entities and foundations was 430,791 as of February 2010, up from some 414,000 at the end of 2008 and 354,000 the end of 2006; see Ministry of Civil Affairs statistics as of February 2010 at: <http://files2.mca.gov.cn/cws/201008/20100804145335737.htm>.
6. Hu Jintao, Report to the 17th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, October 15, 2007, available in English at <http://www.china.org.cn/english/congress/229611.htm>.
7. Wen Jiabao, Report on the Work of the Government, March 5, 2009, available in English at http://www.npc.gov.cn/englishnpc/news/Events/2009-03/14/content_1493265.htm.
8. Constitution of China, Articles 35 and 41.
9. Jamie P. Horsley, "The Development of Public Participation in the People's Republic of China," in Ethan J. Leib and Baogang He, *The Search for Deliberative Democracy in China* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).
10. Wen Jiabao, Report on Work of the Government, delivered to the Eleventh National People's Congress on March 5, 2010 and adopted March 14, 2010, available in English at: http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2010npc/2010-03/15/content_9593380.htm. These "democratic rights" in Chinese are: 选举权、知情权、参与权、表达权和监督权 [*xuanju quan, zhiqing quan, canyu quan, biaoda quan he jiandu quan*].
11. Ibid.
12. See <http://www.whitehouse.gov/open>.

HUMAN RIGHTS DEVELOPMENT IN CHINA: PERSPECTIVES AND CHALLENGES

Sun Zhe

FOREWORD

In recent years, along with a series of activities to commemorate the 30th anniversary of Reform and Opening Up, the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and China's signature of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), human rights development in China has scored significant achievements, such as the enshrinement of "human rights" in the People's Republic of China's (PRC) Constitution and the announcement that drafting of a National Action Plan on Human Rights has begun. At the same time, China has also faced human rights criticism and challenges at home and from abroad. For example, a group of Chinese intellectuals, in their 2008 "Charter 08," proposed to amend the Constitution, adopt the principles of separation of powers and checks and balances, and implement a democratic legislative process. In early 2009, some foreign governments took advantage of the UN review of the human rights situation in China to harshly criticize the Chinese government's human rights record.

In my opinion, during China's integration into a globalized world order, with pushes from various domestic and international forces, the development of human rights in China has followed a road of "selective transformation,"

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a road determined by the unique historical-social-and-cultural conditions of China, as well as the world trend of globalization. As long as those conditions do not change significantly, the human rights agenda in China will still follow the same road in the future.

The complexity of the Chinese puzzle has two aspects. On the one hand, the Chinese government says that the Constitution and the statements of leaders make clear that China is a “rule of law” country. Chinese citizens are educated in law, and “wei quan” (upholding rights) is now the term used when Chinese people—including migrant workers or farmers—say that they have been deprived of things, such as land or salary, to which they are entitled. That is, the country now has law and rights as part of the vocabulary that is used by all. On the other hand, everyone knows that it is unlikely that courts will listen to common people who assert their rights about “sensitive” matters—for example, parents who lost children in poorly constructed schools destroyed by the Sichuan earthquake or to bad milk powder. Many people ask “if we have rights only because the government or the leaders say we have rights, are they really rights?”

At this point, it is necessary to go one step further and compare the Western and Chinese traditions. In the West, the development of “rule of law” followed the “Judeo-Christian” tradition in which people believed in a God who is superior to all men. Rights come from that deity, and not from men—all of whom are, as the U.S. Declaration of Independence famously says, “created equal.” But China lacks this tradition, and instead has a tradition of rule by central human authority—whether emperor or party. So the question is whether the stronger words now used in the Chinese Constitution, and even by leaders, can ever be matched by the practical experience of law as something to which powerful people, as well as common people, are held to account.

This paper consists of four parts. The first part explains the Chinese government’s views on its history of human rights development from the perspective of the 30 year period of reform and opening up; the second part presents different assessments, both at home and from abroad, of the actual performance of the Chinese government in improving human rights; the third part

analyzes criticism of China's human rights record by Western countries; and the fourth part presents some of my own observations.

TRANSFORMATION: CHINA'S HUMAN RIGHTS DEVELOPMENT SINCE 1978

Three historic events have influenced human rights development in China:

The first event was the Third Plenum of the 11th Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee held in December 1978, which adopted the decision to carry out reform and opening up. This meeting asserted such important ideas as the protection of citizen rights and the equality of all before the law, emphasizing the importance of building up “democracy and the legal system” in the process of modernization. This meeting symbolized a new chapter in the protection of human rights in China. For example, the Communiqué of the Third Plenum stated that, “citizens' rights stipulated by the Constitution must be resolutely safeguarded and no one may violate them.” Guided by this principle, a series of concrete measures were taken to right numerous previous wrongs, measures such as: the rehabilitation of large numbers of important leaders of the CPC and the government, including Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping; the rehabilitation of the government sectors which suffered the most from the Cultural Revolution, e.g., the information and cultural sectors, the police, procuratorate and court system, the united front, the ethnical and religious sectors; implementation of the proper policy regarding intellectuals; restoration of the honor of rightist and regional nationalists; implementation of the proper policy regarding Kuomintang (KMT) personnel who surrendered to the CPC; and the restoration of 700,000 peddlers' and craftsmen's identity as working people. By 1982, more than three million people who suffered from miscarriages of justice had been rehabilitated, and the CPC party membership of more than 470,000 people had been restored. After 1978, the People's Congress system was restored and made rapid progress. Between 1979 and 1990, the National People's Congress (NPC) and its Standing Committee enacted 99 laws, 21 decisions to amend existing

laws, and 52 resolutions relating to legal issues; the State Council enacted more than 700 administrative regulations; and the People's Congresses and their Standing Committees of the provinces, autonomous regions, and municipalities passed many local laws and administrative regulations. Among the above mentioned laws and regulations, more than 1000 were related to human rights. For example, *The Organic Law of the Villagers' Committees of the Peoples Republic of China (for trial implementation)*, enacted in 1987, stipulated that rural residents can carry out self-government in managing their own affairs, educating themselves, and serving their own needs through democratic election, decision making, administration and oversight. In December 1989, *The Organic law of the Urban Residents' Committees of the Peoples Republic of China* made further efforts to introduce a grass-roots democratic system characterized by democratic elections, decision making, administration and oversight in the administration of cities.

As for international human rights activities, since 1979 China has sent delegations to participate in the drafting of international human rights legal documents and to take part in the working groups for the drafting of various conventions. For example, beginning in 1981 China participated positively in every session of the governmental experts' group organized by the UN Commission on Human Rights to draft the Declaration on the Right to Development until the Declaration was passed by the UN General Assembly in 1986. Since 1980, China has signed and ratified seven international human rights' conventions.

The second event was the issuance of the White Paper, *Human Rights in China*, by the Chinese Government in November 1991. It was the first time for China to affirm, by its inclusion in a government document, the positive status of the concept of human rights in its socialist political development. Human rights was identified as the "great concept," the full implementation of human rights was "a lofty goal required by China's socialism" and "a long-term historic task." Since that first White Paper on human rights, to the end of 2008, China published more than twenty White Papers, significant contributions to the theoretical study of human rights. For example, the China Society for Human Rights Studies was established in 1993, and the China Foundation for Human Rights Development was set up later. Higher learning

and research institutions in Beijing, Shanghai, Tianjin, Wuhan, Guangzhou, and Jinan have also established research centers and offices for human rights. These institutions and their research teams illustrate the rapid strengthening of human rights research.

During this period, as U.S.-led Western countries strongly criticized China on human rights issues, launching “human rights diplomacy” against China—exemplifying the theories of “Human Rights without Borders,” and “Human Rights above State Sovereignty”—China carried out a tit-for-tat struggle with Western countries, while at the same time adopting more flexible approaches on specific issues. For example, in 1993 China admitted the universality of human rights for the first time diplomatically. From 1997 to 1998, large-scale workshops such as “*The Universal Declaration of Human Rights* and Chinese Human Rights” and the “50th Anniversary of *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights*” were held by the government, and some foreign human rights researchers began to come to China for academic exchanges.

Particularly worth mentioning is the ruling party’s amendment of the Party Constitution by adding the concept of “human rights.” Both the 15th National Congress of the CPC in September 1997 and the 16th National Congress of the CPC in November 2002 wrote the concept of “human rights” into the political reports of the National Congress, and made “respecting and safeguarding human rights” an important goal of Communist Party rule and of the construction of a national democracy and legal system.

The year 2004 witnessed the third major event in China’s human rights development. The PRC Constitution was amended by adding the provision that “the state respects and safeguards human rights.” For the first time, “human rights” was elevated from a political concept to a legal one, and respecting and safeguarding human rights became a fundamental principle embedded in China’s law. After that, China formulated the “Real Rights Law of the People’s Republic of China” and a series of laws which focus on the protection of the rights of disadvantaged groups. In 2007, the 17th National Congress of the Communist Party of China inscribed “respects and safeguards human rights” in the CPC Constitution, and clearly stated that the CPC will “guarantee the people’s right to be informed, to participate, to be heard, and to oversee.” In

2008, responding to the requirement of the United Nations, China began to formulate a “National Human Rights Action Plan,” which will cover human rights topics such as improving government functions, expanding democracy, strengthening the rule of law, improving people’s livelihood, protection of women, children, minorities’ special rights, and improving the whole society’s consciousness of human rights. Research on human rights in China has also undergone rapid development. Recently, the human rights themes which have drawn great attention in China include the following:

- The protection of the rights of disadvantaged groups;
- Food safety and the protection of human rights;
- The protection of citizens’ privacy, including privacy on the Internet and the privacy of the celebrity;
- The protection of human rights in administrative proceedings, mainly referring to the protection of the rights of person and of property;
- The concept of a harmonious world and the development of international human rights.

From China’s official perspective, the achievements noted above were all unimaginable thirty years ago. They fully demonstrate that China’s human rights cause has made great strides, and can thus be characterized as “transformational” in the following five ways:

- The protection of human rights legally and politically;
- The development of human rights, as part of the modernization process, has found a road suitable to China’s national conditions;
- The institutionalization of the protection of human rights has made significant progress;
- The recognition by other countries of the development of China’s human rights;

- China has laid the basis for continued progress in protecting citizens' personal freedom, freedom of expression, and participation in society.

DIFFERENT EVALUATIONS OF CHINA'S HUMAN RIGHTS DEVELOPMENT

Although reform and opening-up has made great achievements, China still faces serious human rights criticism from international society. For example, over the last decade, the China sections of the Annual Report of Amnesty International all pointed out that China still has severe human rights violations in Internet freedom, rights assertion, religious freedom, rural migrant workers' rights and interests, and so on. Flaws remain in individual rights protection and the building of the legal system.

There is no doubt that the Chinese government has intentionally adopted a strategy of selective development in its efforts to promote human rights in China. The political logic behind the Chinese government's controversial strategy can be analyzed in the following perspectives:

The Selectivity of Human Rights Standards

Disputes on human rights between China and the West reflect different standards. Measuring China's human rights development with democratic criteria like elections and political party alternation, countries like the United States, Canada, Australia, and the Netherlands critically assert that China should take concrete measures to protect information and speech freedom, ensure the independence of courts and lawyers, provide detainees with lawyers, protect lawyers from retaliation and harassment, and give religious and migration freedom to minorities like Tibetans and Uigurs. All these criticisms reflect basic values of Western countries and are usually rejected by the Chinese government.

The Chinese government has taken a broader standard which regards human rights as the transformation of life styles and diversification of values, thus arguing that substantial improvement in human rights has been made in various aspects of social life in China. Although corruption still exists, China has a relatively healthy economy. It remains stable without financial crises and disintegration like the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. “The Beijing Consensus” has been reached inside the country and received certain support from abroad. For example, when the United Nations reviews China’s human rights, some developing countries like Pakistan, Egypt, Russia, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Cuba, Ghana, Venezuela, Brazil, and Senegal all approve that the right of development is an important condition for people to enjoy human rights. In this sense, it is argued that problems reflected in discussions of China’s human rights has gone far beyond China’s borders and will continue to lead to various international disputes about human rights standards and human rights protection.

The Selectivity of Priorities for Human Rights Development

Critics, domestic and foreign, focus on the slow progress in advancing political rights and civil liberties:

- Politics in China still overrides law, i.e., “rule of law” is still not put into actual practice;
- Citizen rights to know cannot be guaranteed;
- Citizen criticism of government is always regarded as an indication of “social instability” and is therefore suppressed;
- Government’s policymaking lacks transparency. Leaders enjoy outlaw prerogatives;

- Collective corruption of government officials remains widespread;
- Government takes tough control measures to clamp down on social crises, neglecting and trampling human rights;
- The government's slack law enforcement leads to violations of basic human rights such as food safety, labor rights, and environmental protection;
- The government still employs a host of rules and regulations to intervene and restrict citizen freedom of belief and religion.

Facing these criticisms, the Chinese government has emphasized that it always regards the rights of survival and development as the most important human rights. Through 30 years of continuous effort, the impoverished population in China has also decreased considerably. According to a UN report, the number of poor decreased from 835.1 million in 1981 to 207.7 million in 2005, which meant a sharp decrease in China's poverty rate, from 84 to 15.9 percent.¹ The income of urban and rural residents has experienced a remarkable increase. No doubt, people in China now enjoy an ever-rising living standard.

The Selectivity of Issues in Human Rights Contention

In the search for a suitable pattern of human rights development during the past 30 years, China has taken part in various international human rights activities with an open mind, including face-to-face dialogue with Western countries. Through these dialogues, both sides have achieved a deeper understanding of the other's viewpoints. But, there have been confrontations between China and Western countries as well. China's response to Western criticisms includes the following three points:

- Admission of existing human rights problems, but emphasis on the considerable progress China has made and will continue to make, if China continues on its current development road;
- Calling attention to human rights problems in countries criticizing China, and asserting that these problems render those countries unqualified critics;
- Stressing the fact that China is an Oriental state and a developing country, and that the right of economic development is China's top priority. Since reform and opening-up, China's stunning economic development is an historic leap forward for human rights.

Western countries' perception of China contains a large paradox. On one hand, they talk about China's economic miracle and its rise, and even suggest that China has invented a new model of development. On the other, they totally deny China's progress on human rights, and in fact contend that the protection of rights has regressed. Obviously, this is a partial and prejudiced understanding of China.

CHALLENGES TO CHINA'S HUMAN RIGHTS DEVELOPMENT

This author argues that Chinese human rights development faces four dilemmas.

First, Chinese human rights protection faces a dilemma in which it needs the government to take the lead, but at the same time needs to balance the government's power. To date, the mainstream concept of Chinese human rights development still places great emphasis on the people's rights to subsistence and development, and the role of the government in addressing these rights. However, from human rights experiences in other countries, it is the government which is most likely to violate human rights. The Chinese government, while noting the importance of broader human rights development,

emphasizes the importance of maintaining “political stability” and therefore continues measures which enhance government power, e.g., it still “supervises” the media and most areas related to people’s living conditions. Also, terms like political reform and constraints on government power are not included in the National Human Rights Action Plan. The People’s Congress, although called the “body of supreme power,” does not actually have much “money power.”

Second, there is a paradox between the substance of international human rights cooperation and the campaign to burnish “China’s national image.” So far, China’s participation in human rights exchanges and negotiations is mostly done for the purpose of “public relations” or image campaigning. This is evident from the fact that there are no domestic campaigns to explain or implement international human rights conventions. The government has yet to carry out a human rights educational campaign based on the United Nations Agreements on Human Rights and other international human rights documents. Both the government and the public lack understanding of the basic rights written in these documents.

Third, there is a paradox between the “modern trend” of human rights standards and the government’s lack of psychological preparation. In the midst of fast economic growth and social transformation, the Chinese government finds it is barely able to manage the maintenance of the basic rights of living standards. It is very difficult to handle, at the same time, problems such as food security, right to employment, and so on. As China gradually modernizes, the human rights standards it applies should also evolve to resemble more closely those of a modern nation. Admittedly, from this perspective China still has a lot to do.

Fourth, while debates on sensitive human rights issues increase both in China, as well as internationally, China is still not able to handle these issues in a more open manner. For instance, as there are more and more international concerns regarding China’s religious freedom, the examples of Tibet and Falun Gong, etc. are attracting more and more criticism. The Chinese government’s reaction to international criticism has followed the pattern of taking a tough and counter-attacking stand, defending the Chinese government’s protection of citizens’ freedom of religious belief in accordance with laws, and asserting that Chinese people of all ethnic groups enjoy full freedom of

religious belief, while at the same time, saying that those who criticize China have “meddled in China’s internal affairs.”

PROPOSALS ON CHINESE HUMAN RIGHTS DEVELOPMENT

Below are the author’s proposals to further improve the human rights situation in China:

First, the Chinese human rights framework needs to be formalized. The basic rights written in the report of the 17th Party Congress should be also included in the Constitution. For instance, the right to survival as the “first human right” to which the Chinese government is committed is not included in the list of rights in the Constitution. Other rights, such as the right to be informed, to participate, to be heard, to oversee, and to develop should also be included in the Constitution. In today’s world when ecological conservation has become a major issue, environmental rights should also be added to the list of civil rights in the Constitution.

Second, the People’s Congress should carefully study immediately, and then approve, with appropriate adjustment, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. At present, China has already joined 25 international human rights agreements, including the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. In 1998 the Chinese government signed the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, but it is yet to come into force. The covenant included the basic rights and freedom citizens should enjoy. The approval of this covenant will help to raise China’s international reputation and help to promote Chinese human rights protection.

Third, rights protection should expand to include rural areas and the agricultural population. The present Chinese laws focus on urban areas, and the agricultural population is sometimes not included in the legal system, e.g., in the social security system, the labor protection system, and the granting of equal voting rights.

Fourth, a national human rights agency should be established. At present there are more than one hundred countries in the world which have their own national human rights agency, which is dedicated to the betterment of international human rights image and domestic human rights protection, promotion of international human rights exchanges and human rights education and related ends, etc. China's national system currently lacks these four functions. A national human rights agency would remedy this shortcoming. It would facilitate China's human rights development. In fact, a scholar has proposed to set up a "National Human Rights Committee" through constitutional amendment. This committee would parallel the State Council and the Military Commission and answer directly to the National President or the People's Congress.

CONCLUSION

Until now, China has not yet created a separate supervision office or human rights committee to independently review the Chinese Human Rights Development Report. The Chinese government has long emphasized that it is important to critically study, improve, and adopt Western human rights thinking and theories, to conform to the trend of international human rights developments, to better human rights theories according to China's own national conditions, and to use human rights theories with Chinese characteristics to guide China's human rights practice. The emphasis attached to human rights by China provides the foundation for human rights discussions with international society. The modernization of China will surely bring us a more diversified Chinese society and a gradually democratized political system.

NOTES

1. The UN report was cited in Thalif Deen, "Is Global Poverty Reduction a Political Myth?" *Inter Press Service* (IPS), July 13, 2010, <http://ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=52142>.

**PART IV:
POLICY
IMPACT OF
DIFFERING
PERCEPTIONS**

HOW U.S. PERCEPTIONS OF CHINA AFFECT U.S. POLICY

Ellen L. Frost

Chinese leaders have long complained that American perceptions of China are unduly negative. To their credit, they have admitted that some U.S. perceptions are accurate, such as the prevalence of environmental pollution, dangerous working conditions, and corruption. But quite apart from whether these perceptions are accurate or not, the key questions addressed by this paper are: First, why are certain perceptions magnified and others downplayed or suppressed? Second, to what extent do they shape U.S. policy toward China?¹

To answer these questions, the paper looks first and foremost at the U.S. media for three reasons. First, media coverage of China is what Chinese leaders complain about most. Second, dramatic media stories mobilize voters to contact their representatives in Congress, and Congress has a powerful role in the policymaking process. Third, the media are the only public source of perceptions that reaches and provides input to all of the diverse groups that compete for influence.

The second section of the paper turns to three of these groups: the business community, outside experts, and civil-society and other non-government organizations, such as research institutions and issue-oriented nonprofit groups. The third section briefly describes the values that mold the characteristic

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“filters” through which these groups select and process perceptions of China. American policymakers share these values, even though they may override them for reasons of state, for the sake of exports, or for any other reason.

The final section of the paper argues that the diverse and often contradictory perceptions presented by the media and various interest groups feed into two broad policy narratives that transcend narrower concerns and shape the contours of Executive Branch debates. These overarching narratives center on (1) China as a dynamic economic power and constructive political partner, and (2) China as a rising military power and potential political-military threat.

MEDIA COVERAGE IN CHINA

Overall, neither the U.S. media nor the U.S. public pays much attention to China. According to the Pew Year in Review, in 2009 only 0.7 percent of all articles in the U.S. media were related to China: 1.2 percent of newspaper articles, 1 percent of online articles, and 0.2 percent of cable TV segments. Michael Jackson received ten-times as much coverage as China on cable TV (2.3 percent).² Nevertheless, this smattering represents a four-fold increase in the last decade. Not surprisingly, attention paid to China has surged most sharply in the media’s coverage on economic news.³

When the media do focus on China, their tone is sympathetic when it comes to disasters such as the massive earthquake in 2010, but most of their other stories convey one-sided or negative messages. Typical themes include China’s growing military power, low wages and harsh working conditions, weak legal system, suppression of ethnic and religious minorities in Tibet and Sinkiang, persecution of Falun Gong, long prison terms for those alleged to have compromised vaguely defined “state secrets,” severe environmental pollution, currency manipulation aimed at sustaining exports, health and safety concerns associated with Chinese products imported into the United States, and the leverage supposedly conveyed by extensive Chinese holdings of U.S. government debt.

The Chinese government’s conflict with Internet provider Google attracted considerable media attention. It seemed to belie the perception that China is becoming more open. The story broke amid reports from other U.S.

companies that despite China's rapid recovery from the global recession, it is becoming more difficult to do business in China. A letter from leading business executives citing the emergence of preferential policies favoring "indigenous innovation" received wide publicity.

These examples do not mean that reports transmitted by the media are necessarily inaccurate, merely that they are one-sidedly negative. Omitted from these stories are the Chinese government's own efforts to enforce better working conditions, improve the legal system, stem the disastrous tide of pollution, and encourage wider participation and consultation in local decisionmaking. Nor do the media report that the overwhelming majority of Chinese approve of their government's performance. Similarly, stories about U.S. government debt pay more attention to alleged Chinese leverage than to China's actual financial behavior. Coverage of the global financial crisis noted China's rapid recovery but drew attention to such weaknesses as the shortage of financing for non-state-owned firms and the possibility of more bad loans.

An example of inaccurate (as opposed to one-sided) reporting arose from President Obama's trip to China. The visit, which was undeniably a success, was widely publicized in China but received very little attention at home.⁴ The stories filed by U.S. reporters pitted Chinese and American leaders as contestants in a zero-sum battle and downgraded the president's performance.⁵ Veteran journalist James Fallows, who lived in China for three years and followed the visit closely, accused the media of cooking up a "manufactured failure."⁶

Media stories are necessarily superficial. They rarely capture the diversity, complexity, and even chaos that Americans living in China experience every day. Media producers gravitate toward dramatic events that galvanize viewers and readers. Since competition among media companies is fierce, producers are under pressure to present news as entertainment. China is only one of many countries whose leaders have reason to complain. Fortunately, U.S. policymakers are well aware of these limitations.

PERCEPTIONS OF KEY NON-GOVERNMENT GROUPS

U.S. Companies

The business community is a major source of U.S. perceptions of China and wields considerable influence in Washington. Leaders of large U.S. companies with a stake in China have long supported closer U.S.-China relations. They argue, thus far persuasively, that such ties serve U.S. policy goals such as U.S. export expansion and liberalization of the Chinese economy. Opposing them are major automobile companies, textile companies, and smaller manufacturing companies. If China's export juggernaut rolls on, their executives and workers, backed by labor unions, fear further job losses.

The Office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) has the lead on trade policy (broadly defined).⁷ But since opening the U.S. market to Chinese imports is widely perceived to contribute to the loss of U.S. manufacturing jobs, and since the U.S. Constitution assigns authority to regulate trade to the Congress,⁸ political pressure on trade negotiators is heavy and constant. Chinese practices are often perceived as "unfair."

The experiences of U.S. companies in China contribute substantially to the annual report on barriers to U.S. exports by the USTR, which is mandated by Congress. Recently, even U.S. companies that are strongly pro-trade have been reporting that doing business in China has become more difficult. Chinese spokesmen deny that policies have changed, but trade negotiators are skeptical.

The USTR's 2010 report contains a long list of improvements in China's trade and investment regime but cites an even longer list of barriers. Of particular concern is growing discrimination in favor of "indigenous innovation" and other non-tariff barriers that put U.S. companies at a disadvantage. China's judicial system is perceived as unreliable at best. The report notes that in cases where courts or arbitration panels have ruled in favor of foreign firms, "enforcement of the judgments has often been difficult." It adds that political influence on the judicial process is believed to be widespread.⁹ Information of the sort compiled in the report is often the basis of an official trade complaint, which often leads to friction between Beijing and Washington.

Outside Experts

Military Experts—Supplementing the many U.S. government analysts who track China’s military development and its political consequences are a number of outside experts. Some have served in the U.S. military, the intelligence community, or in civilian agencies. Some are retired, some are professors, and some are authors and analysts in research institutions such as the RAND Corporation.

Unlike virtually all other U.S. government agencies, the Defense Department has the resources to fund a vast array of conferences, strategic reviews, gaming exercises, scholarly papers, individual consultancies, and other means of soliciting expert opinion on China’s military evolution and its consequences. Of particular concern are plans for force projection and “access denial,” growing capacity for space and cyber warfare, and lack of transparency in certain categories of defense spending.

The main conclusions drawn from this extensive information-gathering process are public, appearing in such publications as the Pentagon’s annual report to Congress on Chinese military power, the *Quadrennial Defense Review*, and the National Defense University’s quadrennial *Global Strategic Assessment* and other publications. The process of writing reports like these is one way that policy gets made.

The job of the military officers everywhere is to prepare for combat even if (as in this case) war is highly unlikely, so there is nothing ominous about what defense experts look at. Their perceptions are in fact mixed: some take a dark view of China’s intentions, but many do not. All are aware, however, that China, too, has its “hawks,” especially within the military, and some believe that their influence is growing.

The Pentagon’s China-watchers have recently made serious efforts to understand China’s economic growth and China’s place in the world economy. They noted China’s rapid recovery from the recent financial crisis and perceived a loss of U.S. influence, especially in Asia. Their primary emphasis, however, is on how economic trends might affect Chinese defense spending, political stability, nationalism, and the choice of future leaders.

Economic Experts—Compared to the number of military experts, those who both specialize in China’s economy and are called on for advice are few and

far between. They are usually lodged in universities and research institutions. Most support free trade and open investment and resist protectionist measures. Their perceptions of China, however, are varied.

Most believe that China's economy has many strengths and that vigorous growth will continue. They see evidence that reforms aimed at rebalancing the Chinese economy are underway and that consumer spending is growing, but they caution that there are significant distortions in China's resource allocation. Their other perceptions are mixed. Some argue that the renminbi is undervalued by 25 percent or more; others either cite a smaller number or dismiss the notion that revaluation will help rectify America's yawning trade deficit. Some fear a resurgence of asset bubbles and bad loans; others do not.

With few exceptions, economists who study China's economy pay little attention to political-military developments. Virtually none of them take the prospect of a "China threat" seriously, and they tend to ignore or disparage the concerns of their political-military counterparts.

Civil-Society and Other Non-Government Organizations

The U.S. policymaking process grants a voice to a bewildering variety of civil-society and other non-government organizations. Some have a statutory role in a formal advisory process. Many of their representatives fill executive branch jobs or serve as members of various advisory commissions. Some write books and articles that policymakers and their staffs actually read (or more likely, skim). Virtually all of the major organizations and key individuals, and many of those less prominent, are invited to testify before various Congressional subcommittees, the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, and/or the Congressional-Executive Commission on China.¹⁰

China has become so large and visible in the American political landscape that it has attracted more than the usual amount of policy attention from these various players. Each group channels its messages into the policy stream, emphasizing its own perceptions and downplaying those of others in hopes of obtaining a desired foreign policy outcome. Environmental groups, for example, may press for more funding for educational and technical exchanges in the field of clean energy. Groups dedicated to human rights may urge

economic sanctions against China or stronger efforts to secure the release of political prisoners. The Dalai Lama has many champions. Each cluster tries to find supporters within the Congress and the Executive Branch.

The Taiwan lobby is not as strong as it was in the days of Chiang Kai-shek (and later, his widow), but it retains Congressional support. It presses for the sale of advanced U.S. weapons to Taiwan and resists anything that smacks of diplomatic isolation, but does not favor a hostile U.S. approach to China. It opposes trade embargoes or sanctions, and it backed China's membership in the World Trade Organization.

VALUES, ATTITUDES, AND DOMESTIC POLITICS

To return to the first of the two opening questions, why are certain perceptions of China magnified and others downplayed or suppressed?

I suggest that the way that perceptions of China are selected and processed by all of these groups depends on the extent to which they resonate with—or contradict—fundamental U.S. values, self-images, and convictions about America's role in the world. Policymakers, almost all of whom grew up in American society, are likely to have unconsciously absorbed these attitudes and may assume that they are universal, or nearly so. To the extent that a Chinese action or posture runs counter to these “filters,” U.S. policymakers have less flexibility.

American Values and Self-Images

Americans have always cherished the rule of law, freedom of speech and religion, and respect for the individual as both inherent natural rights and basic foundations of a good society. When Americans look at the rest of the world, they see evidence that other people desire them as well. They read about bad governments and assume that people would like to have the right to criticize them in public and then vote them out of office. Despite the many shortcomings of the U.S. political system, they believe that the United States is a standard-bearer of human rights and democracy, which they see as inseparable.

What Americans call “individualism” is central to their support for human rights. When “individualism” is translated into Chinese, the characters imply selfishness or self-centeredness. To Americans, however, the word suggests character and determination and therefore has a positive connotation. The so-called “American dream” is a society that offers each individual a reasonable chance of achieving personal fulfillment. Such fulfillment is not synonymous with making money. Nor is it the opposite of group interests; indeed, Americans believe that individualism contributes talent and strength to the society. Fulfilling one’s potential may mean becoming a nurse, a social worker, a teacher, or a scholar.

Chinese violations of these basic emotional drivers mobilize members of Congress, send the media chasing after stories and photo opportunities, and frame policy debates. When conflicting goals are in play (e.g., trade versus human rights), tension between various advocates polarizes both the policy-making community and the wider policy audience.

The U.S. reaction to the 1989 crackdown in Tiananmen Square sent China’s popularity plunging. The man standing in front of a tank became an icon in the human rights community and beyond. According to Gallup, in March 1989, 72 percent of Americans had a “very favorable” or “mostly favorable” impression of China. That figure dropped to 16 percent in June, bounced back to 31 percent in August, but has hovered below 50 percent ever since.¹¹ The reaction to Tiananmen was so intense that U.S. policymakers had to support sanctions, even if they did not believe in their effectiveness. Subsequent incidents, such as the 1995-96 tensions in the Taiwan Strait, the 2001 collision of the EP-3 reconnaissance plane and Chinese fighter jet, and the arrest of various individuals for allegedly leaking “state secrets,” did not trigger the same widespread reaction.

America’s Role in the World

When it comes to America’s global role, Americans tend to believe that what is good for the United States is also good for the world. They may have lost the Vietnam War, but they have no experiences that are remotely comparable to China’s “century of humiliation.”¹² Those who are aware of U.S.-led postwar

institutions have a generally benign view of them. They reason that China has benefited enormously from becoming an active member of these institutions and therefore that China should and will support them. They see the U.S.-led institutional order as basically good for the world, not as a set of tools manipulated in the service of U.S. hegemony (as some Chinese believe).

U.S. officials echo this view. They also believe that China's participation in rules-based institutions will both symbolize the respect that China deserves and encourage Chinese adherence to international norms. When former Deputy Secretary of State Robert Zoellick called on China to become a "responsible stakeholder," he did not imagine that the Chinese might have doubts about the system in which they were asked to be responsible. He certainly did not envisage any radical overhaul of the global system.¹³

Accordingly, the United States supported China's membership in the World Trade Organization (albeit with stringent conditions), and U.S. officials have pressed for voting arrangements that would give China a stronger voice in both the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Neither decision was controversial. Even now, Chinese support for an "Asian Monetary Fund" and calls to reduce dependence on the dollar as the main global reserve currency do not shake American confidence.

Domestic Politics

Whenever perceptions of China infuse U.S. domestic politics, they necessarily influence the foreign policy bureaucracy. A president who appears to be too "soft" on China or who fails to solve an ongoing problem in U.S.-China relations can become a political target for the opposition party. Conversely, a breakthrough perceived to benefit the United States can boost a president's standing.

Past election campaigns gave both parties a chance to criticize their opponents' perceived China policy. In some areas of the country, Democratic candidates for Congressional seats proclaimed unconditional support for "fair trade" and promised that they would "get tough" on China once in office (similar themes were trumpeted with respect to Japan in the 1980s). Other candidates sounded the theme of human rights. Candidate Bill Clinton

denounced the “butchers of Beijing” and criticized George Bush for “coddling” China’s dictators.

It is worth noting that China does not seem to be an issue in the 2010 mid-term elections. Right-wing groups such as the Tea Party, the gun lobby, and certain anti-abortion organizations have not focused on China. Even in years when China has been a campaign issue, however, U.S. presidents settle down to a middle-of-the-road policy that combines support for America’s friends and allies in Asia with steady and ever-deepening engagement with China. President Clinton, for example, eventually reversed his campaign rhetoric and de-linked Most Favored Nation treatment for China from his post-Tiananmen stance on human rights.¹⁴ Even the capture of a U.S. Navy EP-3 reconnaissance plane and crew in 2001, which was widely publicized in the United States, did not reverse the policy of engagement; instead, it contributed to the eventual establishment of a “hot line.”

Nowadays it is China, not the United States, which suspends contact. Taiwan–China’s number-one issue in U.S.-China relations—is the usual flash-point. Chinese authorities put U.S.-China military-to-military relations on hold when the George W. Bush administration announced the sale of arms to Taiwan in 2008, and they froze them altogether when the Obama administration followed suit in 2010. For the United States, by contrast, Taiwan is not the number-one issue; it is only one of several. A key U.S. policymaker, mindful of broader regional and global challenges in which China and the United States share common interests, saw the freeze as “lacking in logical foundation” and expressed support for resuming military-to-military ties.¹⁵

DOMINANT NARRATIVES SHAPING EXECUTIVE BRANCH POLICY

The second question posed at the outset of this paper is, to what extent do perceptions of China shape U.S. policy toward China?

In my judgment, media coverage and public opinion do not have as much influence on U.S. policy as Chinese leaders may believe. In the first place, executive branch appointees with China-related responsibilities have usually been highly professional. Some have previously served in Asia-related positions

in the executive branch or the Congress; others are China experts drawn from universities. They are all more or less “mainstream” analysts with a relatively sophisticated perception of China.

In the second place, policy toward China is embedded in, and driven primarily by, two broad narratives: (1) China as a dynamic economic power and constructive political partner, and (2) China as a rising military power and potential political-military threat. Both of these narratives are inseparable from perceived global and regional imperatives motivating U.S. foreign policy more generally. These points are elaborated below.

Impact of Public Opinion

Building on perceptions derived from key interest groups, and mindful of public concerns, U.S. policymakers add two overarching and dominant narratives: “China as Economic Powerhouse” and “China as Rising Power.” Each narrative centers on the redistribution of global power and influence and its consequences for America’s role in the world. Each differs substantially from those of the public.

The American public’s two main concerns are human rights and jobs. Perceptions of such topics as the rule of law, the status of religion, and the treatment of the individual are variants of the human-rights theme. But except for the 1989 events in Tiananmen Square, human rights play a somewhat circumscribed role in the current American foreign policy calculus. Even the crackdowns in Tibet and Sinkiang evoked a moderate and careful response. Outraged letters and resolutions from Congress, however sincere, serve to placate constituents and do not become law.

The other major public concern, widespread job losses in the manufacturing sector, ignites protectionist flames in Congress. China’s low-cost manufactured imports draw attention to America’s huge trade deficit with China and add heat to calls for revaluing China’s currency. But the attractions of China’s huge market—and the belief that a richer China will be even more peaceful and stable—channel these concerns into a drive to expand U.S. exports rather than restrict imports across the board. It is true that U.S. trade officials invoke “safeguard” clauses and other WTO rules to impose temporary protection in

specific product areas, but so do the Chinese; such procedures are consistent with WTO rules.

The Two Narratives

The two narratives—one primarily political-economic, and the other primarily political-military—develop in separate vertical chains of bureaucratic authority (nicknamed “stovepipes”), but they have much in common. U.S. policymakers view China’s resurgence as a positive development and genuinely welcome opportunities for both collaborative approaches to global problems and a greater role for China in international institutions. At the same time, they see rising nationalism and some recent backsliding on human rights and economic openness. As a result, they cannot be sure of China’s political evolution or future intentions.

This uncertainty about Beijing’s intentions is one of the basic drivers of U.S. foreign policy. The core question dividing U.S. policymakers centers on the long-term consequences of China’s rising economic and military power and its attitude toward the prevailing global and regional order.

Officials who handle economic affairs are impressed by China’s stunning transition from Maoist autarky and collectivism to today’s outward-looking economic dynamism. No other country has lifted so many people out of poverty in such a short time. They find reason to hope that further economic development will nourish more liberalizing trends. They worry that the social strains associated with rapid economic growth put stability at risk, and they much prefer a stable China. They would guess that nationalist instincts will be kept in check, and that the current improvement in cross-Strait relations will eventually solve the problem of Taiwan. They are influenced by the notion that growing economic wealth will lead to a more open and participatory political system, if not some form of democracy. They certainly do not believe that war with China is inevitable; few are even aware of fear-mongers fixated on the “China threat.”¹⁶

Some members of the “strategic” camp agree with this assessment. Others, however, citing the history of rising powers, believe that the opposite is quite possible.¹⁷ They suspect that Beijing’s long-term goals are to coerce Taiwan to re-join the mainland, persuade America’s Asian allies and friends to abandon

their military ties with Washington, reduce the U.S. military presence in Asia, build a China-centered “East Asian Community” that marginalizes the United States, and subvert America’s regional and global influence. China’s economic growth cuts both ways: China’s rapid recovery has bolstered Beijing’s assertiveness, but if recovery lapses, nationalism and xenophobia could fuel aggression. This dark view was more prevalent in the last administration, but still lingers in some military and defense intelligence circles.¹⁸

Even China’s supporters in Washington cannot dismiss these fears entirely. The Chinese government prides itself on not promoting its own values and telling other governments what to do. Most Chinese resist calls for global leadership, saying only that China is not ready for such a role. They add only that they will never become a “hegemon,” a thinly veiled reference to the United States. But the flip side of this seemingly benign version of non-interference is that no one knows what kind of world the Chinese government would like to see in the future.

Compounding this uncertainty is the secretive nature of Chinese decision making and China’s political succession. No one knows who is really in charge until a handful of men walk out on a stage. China’s defense spending is similarly opaque; the government is moving toward greater transparency, but many items still do not show up in the budget. Meanwhile, the definition of “state secrets” remains cloaked in darkness. American policymakers believe that such secrecy hurts China’s own interests.

The Grand Compromise

The compromise between the two narratives is a “hedging” strategy that allows for both “good” and “bad” outcomes. Such a strategy—

- Promotes all forms of engagement, including trade, investment, and military-to-military dialogues, and joint military training exercises aimed at countering non-traditional threats;
- Seeks cooperation whenever U.S. and Chinese interests coincide, as they do frequently, and takes disagreements in stride;
- Calls on China to help rebalance the global economy;

- Rejects protectionism and trade sanctions but maintains export controls and selective restrictions on technology transfer;
- Seeks cooperation in energy policy while tracking China's efforts to lock up oil supplies and to reduce dependence on the U.S. Navy;
- Supports positive trends in cross-Strait relations but continues to help Taiwan sustain its military preparedness in case of attack;
- Seeks to avoid provoking China's "hawks" but maintains the U.S. military presence in East Asia;
- Emphasizes the need for greater transparency, especially in defense spending;
- Encourages basic human rights and the rule of law but avoids criticizing China publicly.

These elements account for a remarkable degree of consistency in U.S. policy, almost regardless of either media "hype" or fluctuations in public opinion. Unless China's behavior changes dramatically, this mix of approaches is likely to characterize U.S. policy towards China for quite a long time.

NOTES

1. The author wishes to thank David M. Herron for research assistance on the media and Andrew D. Marble for editorial comments.

2. *Pew Research Center's Project for Excellence in Journalism*, "2009 Year in the News Interactive," <http://features.journalism.org/year-in-the-news>.

3. Source: Factiva data base.

4. Pew Research Center, http://www.journalism.org/index_report/pej_news_coverage_index_november_16_22_2009.

5. For bloggers' reactions to the Google case, see http://www.journalism.org/index_report/debate_over_health_care_reaches_new_level_online.

6. James Fallows, "Manufactured Failure #2: the Press, Obama, Asia," *The Atlantic*, November 21, 2009, <http://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2009/11/manufactured-failure-2-the-press-obama-asia/30617/>.

7. "Trade policy" now encompasses a wide range of issues beyond tariffs and quotas, including intellectual property, subsidies, investment, sanitary and phytosanitary standards, government procurement, dispute settlement, and others.

8. Article I, Section 8 of the U.S. Constitution assigns to the Congress authority to "regulate commerce with foreign nations." Congress then delegates that authority to the president but must approve what his administration negotiates.

9. The 2010 National Trade Estimate Report on Foreign Trade Barriers, available at <http://www.ustr.gov>. For the discussion of law in China, see http://www.ustr.gov/sites/default/files/uploads/reports/2010/NTE/2010_NTE_China_final.pdf, pp. 34-35.

10. For background on these two commissions, see <http://www.uscc.gov/about/facts.php> and <http://www.cecc.gov/pages/general/overview.php>, respectively.

11. *WorldPublicOpinion.org*, "General Attitudes Toward China," http://www.americans-world.org/digest/regional_issues/china/china1.cfm.

12. The closest candidates would be southerners after the Civil War and Native Americans.

13. It has long been the position of the United States, however, that China should be allocated voting power in international institutions that is more commensurate with its growing economic weight. In April 2010, after months of negotiation, World Bank members agreed to boost China's voting shares to a level that exceeds those of Germany, Britain, and France. See <http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/N25164682.htm>.

14. For a detailed account of President Clinton's decision, see James Mann, *About Face: A History of America's Curious Relationship with China, from Nixon to Clinton* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998), Chapters 15 and 16.

15. Remarks of Jeffrey Bader, at the Stimson Center, excerpted in *The Nelson Report*, June 7, 2010. Bader is Senior Director for Asian Affairs at the National Security Council.

16. Examples include Bill Gertz, *The China Threat: How the People's Republic Targets America* (Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing, 2000) and Richard Bernstein and Ross Munro, *The Coming Conflict with China* (New York: Vintage, 1998).

17. Former Cheney adviser Aaron Friedberg is the most articulate advocate of this view.

18. Professor Aaron Friedberg, a sophisticated proponent of this view, spent several years working for Vice President Dick Cheney; Daniel Blumenthal, who expresses many of the same concerns, was senior director for China, Taiwan, and Mongolian Affairs in the Department of Defense during the George W. Bush administration.

CHINESE PERCEPTIONS OF THE UNITED STATES: IMPACT ON POLICY

Tao Wenzhao

It has been 31 years since China and the United States normalized bilateral relations. In these three-plus decades China has viewed the United States differently at different times. My purpose in this paper is to review briefly the recent history of Sino-American relations, focusing on the evolution of Chinese perceptions of the United States and their impact on China's policy towards the United States, as well as background for elaborating present mainstream Chinese thinking on the United States and its policy implications.

THREE PERIODS OF CHINA-U.S. RELATIONS

The past three decades can be divided into three periods, roughly ten years each:

1979 to Early 1989: A Golden Era in Sino-American Relations

In this period China regarded the United States as an ally in resisting Soviet expansion, and as an economic partner in modernization. Normalization took place at the same time as the Communist Party of China (CPC) work meeting

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before the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Party Congress. This was not a coincidence. To normalize relations with the United States was an important component of Deng Xiaoping's grand strategy of reform and opening-up. It would be a key to safeguarding a stable international environment, and the United States would be an important source of capital and technology for China's modernization, as well as a market with great potential for Chinese products. Deng Xiaoping clearly expressed his views in this regard. He said in February 1978, when receiving the Norwegian Foreign Minister, that:

We have a clear-headed assessment of ourselves. To realize the four modernizations we need to cooperate with the West. What is more important, to deal with the superpower politically we need more cooperation with the West.¹

There is no question that by "superpower" Deng Xiaoping meant the Soviet Union. In addition, China's relations with Vietnam were deteriorating at the time. The provocation from Vietnam not only threatened the safety of China's south-western border, but was also a kind of check on China's modernization drive. China's reform and opening needed a favorable environment, a critical part of which was normalizing relations with the United States. When Deng Xiaoping visited the United States at the end of January 1979, he mentioned to President Carter the need to "teach Vietnam a lesson." Clearly he regarded the United States as a strategic ally, and even more crucially, as an important economic partner.

Sino-American relations achieved comprehensive and meaningful development during the 1980s. Especially after concluding the third Joint Communiqué in August 1982—on U.S. arms sale to Taiwan—the Taiwan issue was put onto the back burner for the time being, as the Reagan administration generally lived up to the commitments made in the communiqué. Every aspect of bilateral relations developed quickly, most notably military-to-military ties between the two countries. (Given the current strained relations between the two militaries, the author greatly misses that period.) The golden era in Sino-American relations lasted for a whole decade.

Mid-1989 to the End of the Last Century: Renormalization of Bilateral Relations after the Cold War

This period can be divided into two sub-periods:

FIRST HALF OF THE 1990S

For America, the sudden end of the Cold War and the disappearance of its major strategic adversary caused its overall foreign policy to lose strategic focus. Consequently, Sino-American relations entered a period of instability. In 1992 the Bush administration sold 150 F-16 fighters to Taiwan, which constituted the first serious violation of U.S. commitment in the Third Communiqué. In the early Clinton years the administration's policy priority was to put pressure on China to compel it to change key policies, especially its human rights policy. The U.S. Congressional resolution against Beijing's bid for the 2000 Olympic Games and linkage of China's Most Favored Nation (MFN) status to its human rights situation were important elements in that policy. This led Chinese leaders to believe that the United States was following exactly the same path advocated by Secretary of State John Foster Dulles in the 1950s: promoting peaceful evolution.

The Chinese government resolutely opposed this policy, and accordingly resisted U.S. pressure. A notable example was Premier Li Peng's meeting with Secretary of State Christopher in mid-March 1994. Premier Li gave an hour-long lecture to his American guest about how China had been bullied, invaded, and exploited by foreign powers in modern times, which so disappointed Secretary Warren Christopher that he contemplated discontinuing his visit.² Bilateral relations remained tense through early 1996, which was a result of the Clinton administration issuing a visa to Taiwan's Lee Teng-hui and allowed him to visit the United States, as well as sending two aircraft carrier battle groups towards the Taiwan Strait in the spring of 1996.

SECOND HALF OF THE 1990S

After these difficult years the Clinton administration finally realized that the policy of pressure did not work, and that the United States and China shared

extensive common interests during the post-Cold War period. Starting from May 1996, the Clinton administration's policy emphasis shifted from putting pressure on China to stabilizing bilateral relations. Chinese President Jiang Zemin's visit to the United States in the fall of 1997 and President Clinton's return visit to China in June-July 1998, were symbols of the renormalization of bilateral relations after the end of the Cold War. Chinese perceptions of the United States accordingly changed again. Chinese leaders and media stopped talking about externally-promoted "peaceful evolution," emphasizing that whether and how China could be changed mainly depended on herself. Also, as China became more deeply integrated into the world community, the U.S. role as an indispensable economic partner became more and more obvious. This was especially true since Chinese leaders were determined that their country would become a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO), and negotiations with the United States was a decisive factor in China's WTO accession. Although the United States was no longer a strategic ally against the Soviet Union, good relations between China and the United States were still a necessity for China to have an overall stable international environment.

As a result Chinese leaders tried hard to establish a better and more solid relationship with the United States. An important element in this effort was the new notion of strategic partnership put forward by the two presidents when President Jiang visited the United States in 1997. This new perception helped the two countries tide over the very difficult time in bilateral relations after the tragic bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade. The bombing took place early Saturday morning Beijing time on May 8, 1999. The following day, (at 6:00 p.m.), Vice-President Hu Jintao delivered a televised speech, which was very unusual in China not just then, but also now. On one hand, he condemned NATO'S violence and praised the students' patriotism; while on the other, he called for students to remain calm, to keep the situation stable, and to conduct protests and demonstrations in an orderly way, fully aware that some people intended to use them to undermine normal social order. On behalf of the Chinese Government he proclaimed to all that China would stick to its peaceful independent foreign policy, protect the nation's sovereignty and dignity, and at the same time continue the policy of reform and opening, and protect diplomats and other foreigners who were lawfully

engaged in economic, educational, and cultural activities.³ A few days later on May 13, President Jiang Zemin delivered another speech welcoming the Chinese diplomats returning from Yugoslavia. He emphasized that China would oppose hegemony on the one hand, and develop normal relations with the United States on the other.⁴ After a few months' suspension the negotiations on China's accession into WTO gained new momentum, and the two countries reached an agreement in mid-November. The following year, in 2000 the Clinton administration went all out to pass legislation on Permanent Normal Trade Relations (PNTR) with China. This successful legislation constituted the biggest breakthrough in Sino–American relations since the early 1970s.

Development of a Comprehensive and Constructive Bilateral Relationship

The Bush Administration took a unilateral approach towards many international issues and did not leave many positive legacies to his successor in foreign affairs. But his China policy was among the positive diplomatic legacies. Although some “neo-cons” in his administration were hostile to China, President Bush himself is still quite popular among the Chinese people. This is mainly due to the following reasons:

First, George W. Bush was a “free-trader.” Even during the campaign in 2000, he urged Congress to support China's accession to the WTO. He released an open letter to senators and congressmen of both parties, asking them to support China's PNTR status and to let China be a normal trade partner of the United States.

Second, Bush was supportive of Beijing's hosting the Olympic Games in 2008. When Beijing was making its bid for the Olympic Games in 2001, the Bush administration took a neutral position. When President Hu visited the United States in April 2006, President Bush told President Hu that he would attend the opening ceremony of the Beijing Olympic Games in August 2008. He was the first foreign leader to openly announce his willingness to do so. And after that he did not change his mind. There was a riot in Tibet

in March 2008, after which some European leaders decided not to attend the opening ceremony of the Beijing Olympic Games. President Bush was also under mounting pressure from the U.S. Congress and human rights groups to boycott the opening ceremony. But he refused to do so. On the contrary, he came to China with his whole family and watched various competitions in Beijing with great interest for two days, including a basketball match between the U.S. and Chinese teams.

Third, the Bush administration was open, strong, and resolute in opposing *de jure* independence of Taiwan as advocated by Chen Shuibian. In December 2003, at the joint press conference with visiting Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao, Bush directly criticized Chen Shuibian for his willingness to unilaterally change the status quo across the Taiwan Strait. Especially after Chen, in June 2007, put forward his plan for joining the UN under the name of Taiwan, and calling for a referendum on this issue in the March 2008 election. Several high-level officials of the administration, including Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, Deputy Secretary John Negroponte, and Deputy Assistant Secretary Thomas Christensen, delivered numerous speeches or made comments in regards to Chen's actions, calling the referendum "provocative,"⁵ and appealing directly to the people of Taiwan to oppose the referendum. These combined efforts by China and the United States stabilized the situation in the Taiwan Strait. In Taiwan's March 2008 elections, Ma Ying-jeou won by a big margin. It is not an exaggeration to say that the Bush administration's attitude contributed to his victory. And on March 26, 2008, four days after the Taiwanese elections, President Hu and President Bush had a telephone conversation in which Hu expressed his appreciation for the U.S. government and President Bush in upholding its one-China policy, the three Joint Communiqués between China and the United States, and opposing the "splittist" activities of the Taiwan secessionist forces.⁶

Mainly due to the three reasons above, many people in China still think that Bush was honest and trustworthy, in spite of the many mistaken sayings and doings of several high-level officials in his administration. To sum up, during the Bush administration, constructive cooperation between China and the United States was greatly expanded and upgraded.

This trend, in general but not completely, continued during the early Obama administration. Frankly speaking, not many Chinese observers predicted that an African American could win the election, at least not before early September 2008. People in China generally acknowledge that the result of the election has shown the social progress achieved in the United States in past decades. But Obama's victory was also due to the following three reasons:

First, U.S. voters were deeply dissatisfied with the Bush administration's unilateral approach to foreign affairs, especially evident in the decision to attack Iraq. Despite the heavy expenditure of many resources, the situation in Iraq was still chaotic, and more than 80 percent of the American people thought that the country was on the wrong track in the summer of 2008.

Second, the timing of the outbreak of the financial crisis was also important. Many people in China thought that if the crisis had broken out in early 2008, Senator Hillary Clinton may have won the Democratic nomination and finally won the election, because under the Clinton administration there were 90 months of economic growth; if the crisis had broken out after the election, Senator McCain may have won. But it broke out in mid-September, less than two months before the election. As a Chinese saying goes, “人算不如天算” (*ren suan buru tian suan*; heaven's calculation is always smarter than people's calculation). So to a certain extent, it was the financial crisis that sent Senator Obama to the White House. Third, there is no doubt Senator Obama's personal charm attracted voters.

During the first months of 2009, for the first time since normalization, Sino-American relations proceeded smoothly during the transition from a Republican administration to a new Democratic administration. When the two leaders met in early April in London on the sidelines of the G-20 Summit, they agreed to build a positive, cooperative, and comprehensive relationship between the two countries. They agreed to combine the Senior Dialogue and the Strategic Economic Dialogue into an enhanced Strategic and Economic Dialogue; the first round of the Dialogue took place successfully in May 2009, in Washington, D.C. In November President Obama paid a productive visit to China, and the two sides released a Joint Statement setting an important framework for bilateral relations during the 21st century.

However as always, China-U.S. relations did not experience continual smooth sailing. In the past one-and-half years, the bilateral relationship also encountered twists and turns. Now people in China generally think that, in spite of some improvements in bilateral relations, the basic pattern of the China-U.S. relationship has not yet changed. That is, the two countries share extensive common interests and have expanded cooperation in many fields, but they also have differences in many areas. I will elaborate below.

MAINSTREAM CHINESE THINKING ABOUT THE UNITED STATES

Chinese society has become more and more diversified since opening up. It is quite natural that there are different opinions, sometimes very different opinions, or even antagonistic views on many things. The United States is not an exception. But the author still wants to summarize some important mainstream views on the United States, including elite and general public views, in the following ways:

First, the United States is the only superpower today, and will remain so for decades to come. Because of the global financial crisis the U.S. economy is experiencing some difficulties today, and prosecuting the war in Afghanistan is by no means easy. China recently overtook Japan as the second largest economy in the world, and will most probably continue high speed economic growth. In spite of all these developments, there is no fundamental shift in the power balance between the United States and China. Even when the total size of China's economy catches up with or surpasses that of the United States, as some economists predict will occur in twenty years or so, there will still be a great gap in GDP per capita between the two countries, not to mention the gap in military power, technological innovation, and other aspects.

Second, the Obama administration has realized that a unilateral approach in foreign affairs does not work. As a result it wants to establish productive partnerships as broadly as possible throughout the world and regards China as one of its most important global partners. But the Obama administration has

changed its approach, rather than its goal. Its goal remains the maintenance of global supremacy, a goal sought by previous administrations.

Third, there are still many people in the United States, especially in intelligence and defense circles, who view China's rise, even peaceful rise, as a threat to U.S. supremacy. They still want to slow down China's growth, or balance China's development. The Bush administration began the redeployment of U.S. military power around the world, and now there is a heavy concentration of U.S. naval forces in the Pacific, including 60 percent of its submarines, engaging in frequent surveillance activities in China's Exclusive Economic Zone. The United States has also developed military and nuclear relationships with India and Vietnam. In addition, Secretary Clinton made an inappropriate remark on the South China Sea at the July 2010 ASEAN Regional Forum in Hanoi, marking a change in the traditional U.S. neutral policy towards the issue. To many Chinese this U.S. move was provocative.

Fourth, Taiwan is still the most sensitive issue in China-U.S. relations. The development of U.S. policy towards Taiwan during the George W. Bush administration was very important not just because it frustrated the Taiwan secessionist forces' attempt at "constitutional engineering" and its referendum on joining the UN under the name of Taiwan. It was also important because it proved to the Chinese people that the U.S. policy of "not supporting Taiwan independence" is real, not false. However, the United States insists on strengthening military ties with Taiwan, as well as continues arms sales to Taiwan. To many Chinese, including policy makers, elites, and the general public, this means that the U.S. will continue to play the Taiwan card in dealing with China, using the Taiwan issue to check China's development.⁷ Many people in China believe that the United States sees its interests served by ensuring the continuation of the present peaceful, but not unified, cross-strait relationship. As long as the Taiwan Relations Act remains intact and the United States continues arms transfers to Taiwan, the major source of strategic distrust between China and the United States will not disappear.

Fifth, China and the United States are mutually important economic partners and the interdependence between the two countries will only deepen. It is fair to say that neither can afford to lose the other. But because various sectors of the economy, different states, and different industries have all been

affected differently by economic and trade relations with China, trade disputes can, have, and will arise from time to time. In many cases, the economic and trade issues between the two countries are politicized in the United States, as some politicians use trade disputes for their own political purposes. For instance, many states and cities welcome Chinese investment. Some politicians however, tend to exaggerate the political and strategic significance of such Chinese investment. For example, the very strict control over high-tech exports to China has hindered bilateral trade relations for many years. It is imperative to eliminate these political barriers to improvement of our bilateral economic and trade relations.

SOME KEY POINTS OF CHINA'S POLICY TOWARDS THE UNITED STATES

CHINA DOES NOT AND WILL NOT CHALLENGE U.S. SUPREMACY IN THE WORLD.

In spite of three decades of rapid economic growth, China is still at the primary stage of socialism, and there are still more than 40 million people living under the poverty line according to the Chinese standard, which is much lower than the international one. China's economic growth still depends heavily on cheap labor and high investment. Its quality is still relatively low, and the transformation of the economic development model is an imperative and difficult problem for China to resolve. Furthermore, the increasing gap between the rich and poor, the East coast and inland, and the urban and rural areas, as well as environment degradation, the establishment of a nation-wide social security and health care system, etc.—none of these problems is easy for China. Some are common in developing countries, while some are unique to China. It means that China has a long, long way to go to build a modern society and achieve comprehensive economic and social development.

China has learned two significant lessons from the two superpowers. One lesson was learned from the Soviet Union, namely never challenge U.S. supremacy. The Soviet Union exhausted itself by trying to compete with the

United States for world hegemony, an attempt which, with many other complicated reasons, finally led to its collapse. China will not repeat this mistake. Beijing will stick to the road of peaceful development, and the purpose of China's peaceful development is not to pursue hegemonic power in the world. Consequently, China will not be a challenger to the present hegemony in the world. China still needs to maintain a low profile in the international arena. The second lesson was learned from George W. Bush's unilateralism, namely that to be a superpower is also exhausting. Despite its overwhelming economic and military power, the United States still cannot do whatever it wants. For these reasons Chinese leaders today categorically assert that whether today or in the future, no matter how strong China becomes, it will never seek hegemony, will never seek military expansion or involvement in arms races with other countries, and will not constitute a military threat to other countries.⁸

CHINA IS A BENEFICIARY OF AND ACTIVE PARTICIPANT IN THE PRESENT INTERNATIONAL ORDER, AND WILL WORK TOGETHER WITH THE UNITED STATES AND THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TO RESTRUCTURE THE GLOBAL ORDER FOR THE FUTURE.

Frankly speaking, the current order has basically been established by the West and led by the United States. In the past thirty-plus years China accomplished tremendous developments within this order, and China will continue to develop within it. It is difficult for traditional political science theory to explain this phenomenon, but it is a fact. There must be three preconditions: (1) the United States does not see China's development as fundamentally detrimental to its interests, and allows China to develop; (2) China does not challenge U.S. hegemony; and (3) no one attempts to organize a united front to contain China's development.

These three preconditions have existed in the past. Although the two countries have not always seen eye-to-eye with each other, and accommodation of the two countries' interests remains a constant problem to work out, nevertheless China will stick to a course of peaceful development, pursue a

win-win relationship with the United States, and will try its best to expand the areas where the two countries can cooperate.

Of course, the international order itself does not stand still. It is evolving and improving constantly according to new challenges, such as climate change, international terrorism, the global financial crisis, and new emerging economies. China is playing a constructive role and will continue to do so in the process of restructuring and rebuilding the international regime. China will continue to work together with the United States and the international community towards this end. Here cooperation between the two countries is essential.

ENTERING THE NEW CENTURY, THE SCOPE OF SINO-AMERICAN RELATIONS CONTINUES TO EXPAND, AND TO INCLUDE MORE AND MORE REGIONAL AND GLOBAL ISSUES.

Some scholars call this phenomenon the “globalization of Sino-American relations.” In spite of this, the Taiwan issue remains the most important and sensitive issue in the bilateral relationship. The author has consistently maintained the view that there are numerous aspects to Sino-American relations, of varying importance, but the Taiwan issue remains the most critical and can upset the whole China-U.S. relationship. Consequently, both China and the United States must deal with the Taiwan issue very carefully. To understand the mainland’s policy towards Taiwan, it is useful to mention the following points:

First, needless to say, Taiwan is a part of China. The Chinese government, as well as the Chinese people are determined to accomplish the great cause of national reunification in this century in spite of any difficulties. This is a sacred duty of the Chinese people. Nothing can stop them from realizing this goal.

Second, the Taiwan issue has a very long history. After 60 years of separation the two sides of the Taiwan Strait have developed two different societies. Therefore, realizing unification will probably take a very long time. The mainland is patient, however and people on the mainland believe that time is on their side, not on the side of the Taiwanese secessionist forces. The peaceful

development policy is not a ploy. People on the mainland believe that as long as cross-Strait relations go along the road of peaceful development, they are moving closer and closer to eventual reunification. The mainland will continue to implement the peaceful development policy, while at the same time reserving the right of solving the Taiwan issue by non-peaceful means as a necessary deterrent to the Taiwanese secessionist forces.

Third, China has not and will not accept U.S. arms sales to Taiwan, and will continue to oppose any U.S. transfer of arms. U.S. arms sales to Taiwan have long constituted a major hurdle to the development of bilateral relations. As stated above, the Taiwan Relations Act and on-going U.S. arms sales to Taiwan is the major source of China's mistrust of the United States. The Act also poses a major threat to the peaceful development of cross-Strait relations, because it is precisely the Act that has sheltered Taiwanese secessionist activities. In spite of the peaceful development of cross-Strait relations, we should not relax our vigilance regarding the "Taiwan independence" secessionist forces. They still harbor the hope of using the Taiwan Relations Act to kidnap the United States and drag it into military conflict against its will.

The Taiwan Relations Act represents a freak product of history. The international landscape has changed dramatically in the last 30 years, during which period China has attained extraordinary achievements and world-wide envy in its opening-up and reform drive and general modernization. As a result, the China-U.S. relationship has evolved into one of the most important bilateral relationships in the world. In such a context, the Taiwan Relations Act is more and more incompatible with the overall status of bilateral relations—neither in line with the interests of the two countries' people nor in keeping with those of the international community. Tremendous changes have also taken place in cross-Strait relations, and the improvement of the cross-Strait relationship has in turn provided a favorable environment for furthering China-U.S. relations. The Taiwan Relations Act remains out of tune with the peaceful development of cross-Strait relations. The author believes that as both China-U.S. and cross-Strait relations evolve, more and more people in the United States will realize that the Taiwan Relations Act is of no use and in fact harmful, and as a result the Act should and will die naturally.

THE UNITED STATES HAS BEEN ONE OF CHINA'S MOST IMPORTANT ECONOMIC PARTNERS FOR THREE DECADES AND WILL REMAIN SO FOR DECADES TO COME.

China realizes that only a win-win relationship is sustainable. Of course, as stated above, there are also competitive elements in our economic relationship, and disputes can and will occur from time to time. But there are now more than 60 different mechanisms and dialogues between the two countries, many of which are about economy and business, such as the Joint Economic Committee, the Joint Committee on Commerce and Trade, and of course the Strategic and Economic Dialogue. They are very good venues for addressing differences. In case the two countries cannot solve the differences by themselves, WTO dispute mechanisms are available. It is a healthy practice to solve trade and economic disputes through WTO mechanisms.

China-U.S. relations have been driven by interests. In spite of differences, disputes, ups and downs, bilateral relations continue to move ahead. This is because the two countries have overlapping interests. But because we are two different countries, especially since the United States is an established power and China is a rapidly rising country, we have different, sometimes conflicting interests. To mutually accommodate interests is the constant task between the two. In the 1990s the accommodation mainly took place in bilateral affairs, such as the Taiwan issue, human rights, and economic and trade issues. Those issues are still there.

As the scope of our bilateral relations has expanded greatly, now we also need to mutually accommodate our respective interests in regional and global affairs. Events of the past few months are an example of accommodation of interests in regional affairs. We will see the accommodation of interests in global affairs in the future. For instance, in the restructuring of the world financial system in the post-financial crisis period, as well as in addressing other common problems such as negotiating the global regime to deal with climate change, etc. The process of accommodation may be painful, since the two sides both need to compromise and make concessions to each other. Both sides however, need to become accustomed to this process and realize that it benefits and strengthens bilateral relations.

In conclusion, the author would like to say that Sino-American relations have never been “plain sailing.” During the most difficult days in our bilateral relations, in December 1989, Deng Xiaoping said to Brent Scowcroft and James Baker, the first President Bush’s special envoys, that after all, there was no choice but to improve Sino-American relations. World peace and stability demanded it.⁹ His words have been proven true and still inspire us to pursue better China-U.S. relations.

NOTES

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