

The role of perception in Sino-American relations

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ABSTRACT

Both China and the United States enjoy numerous ties via trade, exchanges, and international relations. In spite of these ties, both countries view each other as potential rivals at best and at worst as enemies. What lies at the root of these perceptions and why do relations between the world's current superpower and its largest trading partner tend to be more troubled than other relations?

Using Robert Jervis' framework from his pivotal book, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*, this paper explores such factors as cognitive affect balance which promotes a view of the world in an oversimplified "good" and "bad" imagery; the influence of preexisting beliefs, historical memory, domestic politics, and the perception of centrality which color how countries are viewed and ultimately perceived.

Using the above theories of international relations, the paper then explores historical, philosophical and current events and their interpretation using both the American and Chinese lenses. Finally, the paper discusses possible solutions to help move Sino-American relations from the current state as antagonists to a more friendly and productive arena of dialogue and stability to ultimately bring a lasting peace to North East Asia.

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Dedicated to my family

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1. ABM- anti-ballistic missile
2. Affect of expectations of perceptual sets, The--or the impact that expectations have on perception. Expectations create predispositions that cause certain aspects to be noticed and interpreted while others are dismissed, resulting in the inability to consider other possibilities.
3. Antitraditionalism-type of nationalism employed by China which sees China's tradition as the source of its weakness.
4. Boxer Rebellion, The- The 1900 antiforeign nativist reaction backed by the Qing Empress Dowager Cixi reached its apex, forcing intervention after the murder of foreign missionaries and nationals.
5. Centrality- the belief that the behavior of others is more centralized, planned, and coordinated than it is.
6. CCP-Chinese Communist Party
7. China's New Security Concept- builds upon the "Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence" which stress trust, mutual benefit, equality, equality and cooperation.
8. Chinese Exclusion Act, The-Prohibited immigration due to the perceived threat of a "Yellow Peril" passed by the U.S. in 1882.
9. CTBT-Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty
10. Congagement- An international relations tactic employing both engagement and containment put forth by the RAND corporation.
11. Cognitive-affective balance. Perceptions, "good," or favorable, ideas or characteristics are attributed to "liked" nations and unfavorable views to "disliked" nations
12. Deterrence theory- fear that the aggressor will underestimate the resolve of the defender. Deterrence theorists assume that war will likely occur if an aggressor believes a status quo power is weak. Accordingly, for status quo states must demonstrate a will and ability to wage war, and in doing so, develop a strong national defense and a resolve to defend issues of even little value in order to further avoid the appearance of weakness.
13. EP-3E-Reconnaissance aircraft used by the United States
14. Evoked Set is a term used to describe the thinking that leads a person to perceive events as confirming a potential predisposition of the other actor
15. F-8-Chinese fighter plane
16. FBI-Federal Bureau of Investigation U.S.
17. Hegemon or Hegemony-leadership or dominance, esp. that of one state or nation over others.
18. ICBM- Intercontinental ballistic missile
19. International Monetary Fund (IMF)
20. Irrational cognitive distortion- new evidence is "twisted" in order to fit an older model or theory.
21. Irrational Consistency-- A policy is favored, just because it is seen to be supported by many independent rational variables.

22. KMT –the Koumindang or Goumindang, China’s nationalist government which fled to Taiwan in 1949.
23. Multipolarity-allows for more than one pole of influence as opposed to hegemony.
24. NMD-- National Missile Defense
25. Nativism-Type of nationalism which sees subversion of indigenous Chinese virtues are the root of China’s weakness.
26. NATO- North American Treaty Organization
27. NEASA-Northeast Asian Security Apparatus
28. NPT-- Non-Proliferation Treaty
29. NSC-National Security Council
30. OSCE- Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
31. Pragmatism-type of nationalism employed by China which uses any ideology which may be useful to China’s development
32. PRC- People’s Republic of China
33. Premature Cognitive Closure- A factor in decision which causes one to be too attached to the established theory or view, rather than being accepting of change that may better match the situation.
34. Rule of Law (*fazhi*)
35. Rule of Man (*renzhi*)
36. Security Dilemma--perception arises that the other is a threat, then precautionary measures are taken, which lead to countermeasures in kind, further increasing tensions and perceptions and creating “spirals” of threats.
37. Source-message interaction applies specifically to the use of experts to help determine the information about a given country or institution
38. Spiral theory sees the very values used by deterrence theorists as the reasons causing conflict. Spiral theorists choose instead to stress the importance of states expressing their non-aggressiveness, avoiding the provocation of other states, and stressing multilateral initiatives.
39. Tiananmen Square Incident-Government crackdown on Chinese students occurring on June 3-4, 1989.
40. TMD-Theater Missile Defense
41. V-2 German rocket used during World War II.
42. WMD-Weapons of Mass Destruction
43. WTO-World Trade Organization
44. 人情味 or “the flavor of human feeling”

"...Why should we expect China not to imitate the United States? Why should we expect that China won't want to dominate its backyard the way we dominate our backyard? Why should we expect that China won't have a Monroe Doctrine, when we have a Monroe Doctrine?"

John Mearsheimer Conversations with History, UC Berkeley¹

"The United States cannot treat China as an enemy and expect to find a friend."

Joseph Nye, Conversations with History, UC Berkeley²

Ties between China and the United States are numerous and essential, affecting both of the countries' economic growth, trade and potential future relations. But within various circles of the U.S. media, academics, the American military, and government, it has been said that China will be the next Superpower and, therefore, a rival to be contained. At the same time, China's state-run media, military and intellectuals paint America as an aggressor.

What leads to these perceptions? How can both the United States and China come to better understand one another? Most importantly, what can be done to remedy the patterns of misunderstandings that tend to be the norm for Sino-American relations?

Robert Jervis's well known *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* gives us many key factors which lead to misunderstandings. It is necessary to understand not only what of the issue, but also why these misperceptions exist. I will therefore detail issues which lead to misperception and how best to resolve these.

¹ John Mearsheimer, "Conversations with History University of California," Berkeley
<http://globetrotter.berkeley.edu/people2/Mearsheimer/mearsheimercon2.html>

² Joseph Nye, "Conversations with History University of California," Berkeley
<http://globetrotter.berkeley.edu/conversations/Nye/nye-con3.html>

First, I will explore factors which often lead to misperception between China and the United States. Acknowledging the many historical and philosophical differences that surround Sino-American interactions, and attempting to reduce inconsistency of fundamental perceptions of each other, I will use Jervis' cognitive consistency framework to examine several key incidents involving both China and the United States. I will use these factors as lens to examine Sino-American relations. Finally, based upon this investigation, the last section of the paper will make some suggestions to help promote better communication and understanding between the two countries.

The misperceptions that exist between China and the U.S. have formed over years of strained relationships, cultural differences and will not be immediately solved. But there is reason for hope. Ties in this increasingly global age will not lessen, but rather will make it increasingly difficult for China and the United States to continue their current status as antagonists. It is essential--via the numerous ties each shares politically, culturally, economically--that reconciliation be promoted.

Perception and Decision-Making in International Relations

Theory

Psychologists suggest that, as we interact in the world, we create a model of how the world works. As we sense the objective world, we tend to map our sensations to percepts, and these percepts are provisional, in the same sense that scientific hypotheses are provisional. As we acquire new information, our percepts shift. An example is Person A, who looks down on foreigners living in his country but unable to speak his language. But once Person A travels to another country and becomes a foreigner, unable

to speak the language of his adopted country, he suddenly can empathize with the struggles of the immigrant. Person A no longer sees Person B as stupid, lazy, or uneducated, but feels the complexity of language and culture and survival in a new country. A perception change has occurred allowing Person A to understand the difficulties Person B has in acclimating to his new environment.

This simple and somewhat obvious concept is applied to international relations in Jervis' classic study *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*. As Jervis himself summarized,

The central message of the book is that perception is profoundly theory-driven, that decisionmakers [sic] tend to see what they expect to see, and that these expectations are often driven by stereotyped lessons of history, analogies, or routine scripts that provide shortcuts for making assessments under uncertainty...counseled an awareness of the likely sources of misperceptions and constant self-monitoring.³

Given the murky intangible nature that perception has, it is necessary these perceptions be accurately and adequately studied. One critical aspect of Sino-American relations is the theory or lens used when examining the other State's actions. Though there are numerous dissertations on the subject, but Jervis' *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* is generally considered an authority on these theories which affect fundamental perceptions, misperceptions and decision-making within the field.

At the most basic level, Jervis contests the idea that decision-makers have the ability to make accurate decisions. It is typically assumed that political actors can accurately perceive the world and, if mistakes are made, they are random accidents.⁴

³ Robert Jervis: Illuminating the Dilemmas of International Politics. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, Sept, 2000, by Jack Snyder http://www.findarticles.com/cf_dls/m2139/3_33/65241307/p3/article.jhtml?term=

⁴ Robert Jervis, "Perception and Misperception in International Politics," (Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1976), p. 3

This is simply unrealistic. If, as Jervis suggests, many are making misinformed, ill-fated decisions, then it is necessary to understand the kinds of perceptions and misperceptions that drive these decisions.

Theories and Models

The Deterrence and Spiral Theories

Both deterrence and spiral theorists focus on the fear of misunderstanding and the need for each state to make clear its intentions. Deterrence theorists fear that the aggressor will underestimate the resolve of the defender. Further, deterrence theorists assume that war will likely occur if an aggressor believes a status quo power is weak. Accordingly, for status quo states must demonstrate a will and ability to wage war, and in doing so, develop a strong national defense and a resolve to defend issues of even little value in order to further avoid the appearance of weakness.⁵ America's doctrine during the Cold War and even now relies upon deterrence premises. The development of the, Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) that is designed to repel Inter-Continental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) strike capabilities of countries like China is a prime example of America's willingness to defend herself, and demonstrate, classic deterrence-based decision-making.

Conversely, spiral theory sees the very values used by deterrence theorists as the reasons causing conflict. Spiral theorists choose instead to stress the importance of states expressing their non-aggressiveness, avoiding the provocation of other states, and stressing multilateral initiatives.⁶ According to this model, states demonstrate openness and a commitment to diplomacy are able to diffuse tense situations and avoid spiraling into conflict.

⁵ Jervis Ibid. p. 84, 58

⁶ Jervis Ibid. p. 84

Security Dilemma

The security dilemma model examines the nature of these conflicts more closely. In this model, states often share concerns, but the very nature and structure of their interactions prevents once mutually-desired outcomes. Once the perception arises that the other is a threat, then precautionary measures are taken, which lead to countermeasures in kind, further increasing tensions and perceptions and creating "spirals" of threats.⁷ In Jervis' own words, "an increase in one state's security can make others less secure not because of misperception or imagined hostility, but because of the anarchic context of international relations."⁸

An example of security dilemma comes from the Korean conflict-- increased American security decreased China's perception of her own security. The American desire to conquer North Korea decreased China's sense of security, forcing China's entry into the conflict.⁹ Had the U.S. been more aware of China's perception of threat, the conflict potentially could have been avoided. In hindsight, the U.S. should have been more aware of China's fears and more accurately communicated its intentions of only conquering North Korea or bringing the war quickly to an end.

Another useful tool for analyzing relations is the prisoner's dilemma, which says States would be better off if they cooperated. In the prisoner's dilemma, each player gains when both cooperate. But if only one cooperates, the other one, the defector, will in the end gain more. If both decide not to cooperate, both lose. The implication is that

⁷ Jervis, Ibid pp. 167-174

⁸ Jervis Ibid. p. 76

⁹ Jervis, Ibid. p. 71

arrangements which stress cooperation are not likely to be gained through coercion.¹⁰ If States unintentionally provoke each other, tension will only rise provoking war—a result none desired and ultimately a “lose-lose” scenario for both actors. Rather, states must patiently work together to underscore their non-aggressive intentions to foster cooperation to deter actors from defecting.

Clearly, perception plays an important part in how countries view each other’s intentions. The theories and models reviewed above give us very useful lenses with which to examine Sino-American relations. At this point, given China’s rise and America’s current dominance, both have the potential to “spiral” into conflict given each other’s desire for security and potential for misperception. China sees within in American intentions a desire for hegemony while segments of American society see China’s rise as an attempt to counter-balance the U.S. and eventually to usurp America’s dominance in the region and potentially the world. A current example is American withdrawal from the ABM Treaty. This has the potential to increase American security, but conversely decreases Chinese security. Likewise, Russian arms sales and security pacts between China and Russia have decreased American security.

Cognitive Consistency in International Relations

Cognitive Consistency holds great promise for explaining the reality behind common misperceptions in Sino-U.S. relations. Drawing upon Jervis’ insights, this section will examine the many ways in which cognitive consistency influences state-level decision-making.

Cognitive-Affective Balance

¹⁰ Jervis Ibid p. 67

Nation states generally view each other as countries—that which falls into the categories of either “good” or “bad.” This is known as cognitive-affective balance. When dealing with these perceptions, “good,” or favorable, ideas or characteristics are attributed to “liked” nations and unfavorable views to “disliked” nations.¹¹ These value judgments tend not to be cognitive, since most individuals attempt to use scientific methods to formulate their views and, once realizing their views are based more upon prejudice would reject them.¹² Furthermore, the degree of friendliness (like/dislike) further influence the amount of a threat or conflict that country poses.¹³

Source-Message Interaction

Source-message interaction applies specifically to the use of experts to help determine the information about a given country or institution. If a source is divergent from the views or beliefs of a given incident, it tends to be discredited.¹⁴ Second, if a source is proven to be wrong on its analysis, the views held by this source will be judged more critically.¹⁵ Third, the sources’ credentials tend to be of less influence if the information given tends to be “believable.” In the third case, the reputation of the informant is taken into consideration, especially if the information requires large amounts

¹¹ William Scott, “Psychological and Social Correlates of International Images,” in Herbert Kelman, ed., *International Behavior* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1965), p. 100 (from Robert Jervis, “*Perception and Misperception in International Politics*,” (Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1976), p. 121)

¹² Robert Jervis, “*Perception and Misperception in International Politics*,” (Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1976), p. 119

¹³ Milton Rosenberg, “Cognitive Structure and Attitudinal Affect,” *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 53 (1956), 367-72 (from Robert Jervis, “*Perception and Misperception in International Politics*,” (Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1976), p.121)

¹⁴ Carolyn Sherif, Muzafer Sherif, and Roger Nebergall, *Attitude and Attitude Change* (Philadelphia: Saunders, 1965); Carolyn Sherif and Norman Jackman, “Judgements of Truth by Participants in Collective Controversy,” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 30 (Summer 1966), 173-86 (from Robert Jervis, “*Perception and Misperception in International Politics*,” (Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1976), p. 122)

¹⁵ Robert Jervis, “*Perception and Misperception in International Politics*,” (Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1976), p. 122

of time to access its validity; conversely, an unknown source is scrutinized more before being relied upon.¹⁶

The influence of reputation brings out an interesting aspect of Sino-American interaction. If two parties are involved in a dispute and a mediator offers a point that may provide resolution, that view may be accepted since it was advanced by an ally. But if the opposing side advances the very same argument, it has the potential to be rejected. Also, critical critiques may be more apt to be accepted if the giver of the critic is seen as friendly.¹⁷ If the issue is seen as important, negative critique given by a friend will be more readily accepted.

The implications of the above analysis is that non-cognitive perceptions of *like* and *dislike* can be very influential in international relations. If A is friends with B, and B is friends with C, A will most likely be friendly with C, too. Note, however, that failed the Americans as they viewed the hostility that Russia and China shared towards each other, especially during the 1960s.

Irrational Consistency

Sometimes a policy is favored, just because it is seen to be supported by many independent rational variables, this is known as irrational consistency.¹⁸ In other words, a policy that is already favored will seem to be supported by other variables whether or not there is any scientific basis for those claims. A person wants to believe a certain policy is

¹⁶ Carl Hovland, Irving Janis, and Harold Kelley, *Communication and Persuasion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953), pp. 19-55 (from Robert Jervis, "*Perception and Misperception in International Politics*," (Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1976), p. 123)

¹⁷ Robert Jervis, "*Perception and Misperception in International Politics*," (Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1976), p. 123

¹⁸ Edward Jones and Harold Gerard, *Foundations of Social Psychology* (New York: Wiley, 1967), pp. 180-81 and Herbert Kelman and Reuben Baron, "Inconsistency as a Psychological Signal," in Abelson et al., eds., *Theories of Cognitive Consistency*, pp. 331-36 (from Robert Jervis, "*Perception and Misperception in International Politics*," (Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1976), p. 128)

best so he will find ways to support it. As a result, values are not easily sacrificed or "Value Trade-Offs" are avoided to insure that a minimum of actors' goals are achieved.¹⁹ Once the factors of a decision are arranged, to produce irrational consistency, all further decisions are seen as rational, since these variables support the conclusion. The effect is to actually implement value trade-offs and fail to factor in other variables that affect the decision.²⁰ Once a policy has been agreed upon, it is typically seen as the most efficient means to achieve that end, and those involved put a high probability of policy working versus alternative policies.²¹

Irrational consistency is dangerous since it attempts to achieve too many goals, rather than any goal creating the worst of both worlds. As a result, "illusionary incompatibility is added to the pre-existing real incompatibility, the spiral of tensions and hostility...is fueled, and possible compromise solutions are first unappreciated and then rendered unacceptable."²²

The Affect of Pre-existing Beliefs

The affect of pre-existing beliefs is another factor influencing perception. In other words, this can make people use previous experiences or logic to interpret information and see, in that information, what they expect to see and fail to see alternatively plausible explanations. This is called rational cognitive consistency. An example of this is the refusal of a British reconnaissance analyst during World War II to

¹⁹ Richard Cyert and James March, *A Behavioral Theory of the Firm* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1963). (from Robert Jervis, "Perception and Misperception in International Politics," (Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1976), p. 129)

²⁰ Cyert, *Ibid* pp. 138-41. (from Robert Jervis, "Perception and Misperception in International Politics," (Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1976), p. 129)

²¹ Robert Jervis, "Perception and Misperception in International Politics," (Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1976), p. 130

²² Jervis *Ibid* p.141.

recognize a German V-2 rocket because he was expecting a much larger “70 ton monster.” As a result of his pre-existing beliefs of what the rocket must be, he failed to notice “a thick vertical column about forty feet high and four feet thick” which was an actual V-2 erected for launch.²³

The Affect of Expectations of Perceptual Sets

A further factor in rational cognitive consistency is the affect of expectations of perceptual sets, or the impact that expectations have on perception. Expectations create predispositions that cause certain aspects to be noticed and interpreted while others are dismissed, resulting in the inability to consider other possibilities. The key factor to perceptual predispositions is a person’s experiences and environment, which prepares the person to expect certain stimulus.²⁴

For example, during the Cold War, American decision-makers only used small bits of information to conclude that a communist state was an enemy. Another more simple example would be the printed word. Oftentimes, we overlook mistakes, since we expect to see the proper spelling. This shows the same principle at work, albeit in a more mundane context.

Irrational Cognitive Distortion

According to irrational cognitive distortion, new evidence is “twisted” in order to fit an older model or theory. An example of this would be Copernicus’ advancement of the heliocentric theory versus the prevalent geocentric theory. The old paradigm did not factor in new evidence, hence the lack of acceptance for the heliocentric theory.

²³ Roger Hilsman, *To Move a Nation* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1967), pp. 186-87 (from Robert Jervis, “*Perception and Misperception in International Politics*,” (Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1976), p. 143)

²⁴ Robert Jervis, “*Perception and Misperception in International Politics*,” (Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1976), p. 145, 147

Additionally, the astronomer Lalande could have been the first to discover Neptune, but since his observations did not match the prevalent ideas of his time, he dismissed them. Therefore, prevalent theory can lead to missing essential new insights.²⁵ The application to Sino-American relations could be using *realpolitik* i.e. power to view the others' intentions as hostile versus allowing other theories to supply other plausible explanations.

Given the vast amounts of information, the complexity and usually the short amount of time to actually formulate policy, the true usefulness of theory comes to light. Complex thoughts can be compressed into relatively simple, succinct and useful tools. If all potential observations were not checked against theory or a new theory was developed with each new discovery, science could no longer advance due to the minutiae of information needing to be tested against both old and new theories.

Categorization

A further facet impacting perception is categorization. Once information is categorized, it is further seen in a certain manner.²⁶ Secondly, that information, once categorized, may not be so easily attainable.²⁷ An example of improper categorization occurred in 1950, when the American ambassador wrote a report concerning capabilities of the North Korean army. Once the Korean War broke out, the State Department was seeking information on North Korea's military, but this information could not be found, since it was filed under "Appeals."²⁸ Again, the application to Sino-American relations is

²⁵ Jervis, *Ibid.* p. 157

²⁶ Hall, "The Effect of Names and Title upon the Serial Reproduction of Pictorial and Verbal Materials." (from Robert Jervis, "*Perception and Misperception in International Politics*", (Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1976), p.162)

²⁷ Jervis, *Ibid.* p. 162

²⁸ Marder, *From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow*, vol. 5, *Victory and Aftermath*, p.102; Joseph De Rivera, *The Psychological Dimension of Foreign Policy* (Columbus, Ohio: Merrill, 1968) p. 19. (from Robert Jervis, "*Perception and Misperception in International Politics*," (Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1976), p. 162)

seeing China or America as they have previously been categorized. In other words, once a country is in the category of enemy or aggressor, it may be difficult to rectify that perception.

Theory also affects how information is processed and ultimately utilized. Expectations and perception, therefore, cause people to view the same information differently. Therefore, individuals will be affected by their prior values and views when visiting a country versus what they actually see while in that country.²⁹ This similar disposition is seen in the theory that the V-2 (previously mentioned) must be a “monster.”

Pre-existing Beliefs as Factors in Decision-making

One consequence of situation in which the decision-maker sees the stimulus as self-evident, or “clear,” is over-confidence, causing potentially unusual information or alternatives to be dismissed, since that information is interpreted through the lens of pre-existing beliefs.³⁰ The consequence of viewing the information thus is that it reinforces the decision-makers pre-existing beliefs, effectively discrediting other competing views which may offer further insight into the situation. Individuals fail to recognize the potential that their view may be compatible with other existing hypotheses.³¹

Pre-existing beliefs can also lead to application of a “double standard” when interpreting events. An example of a double standard is A who dislikes B, as time goes by, and A becomes more steeped in his view of B, A will not change his view, even if he realizes he is wrong. His other relations who encouraged him to dislike B also put

²⁹ Robert Jervis, *“Perception and Misperception in International Politics,”* (Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1976), p. 163, 64

³⁰ Abelson et al., eds., *Theories of Cognitive Consistency*, p. 637 (from Robert Jervis, *“Perception and Misperception in International Politics,”* (Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1976), p. 181)

³¹ Robert Jervis, *“Perception and Misperception in International Politics,”* (Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1976), p. 181

pressure on him, real or imagined, and now “face” is at stake. If the view of B is popular, it will be harder to change that view, given this pressure to conform.³²

Premature Cognitive Closure

Another factor in decision-making is being too attached to the established theory or view, rather than being accepting of change that may better match the situation. An implication of premature-cognitive closure is to dismiss new views since they are too difficult to research. And again, if the established views are widely accepted, a decision-maker is forced to be loyal to the prevailing view.³³

The second example is well-illustrated by the following quote concerning Chinese and U.S.-Japanese relations:

“Some Chinese analysts, usually younger experts, with extensive experience abroad, do recognize that Chinese military strengthening and provocative actions could be seen as legitimate reasons for Japan to launch a military buildup of its own. On a sober note... Chinese experts who take Japanese concerns seriously are often viewed with suspicion in government circles and sometimes have difficulty when presenting their views to their older more influential colleagues, particularly in the military.”³⁴

This illustrates how premature-cognitive closure can affect a decision-maker’s ability to adequately process information.

The practical outcome of premature-cognitive closure is the persistence of a potentially ossified theory or policy, since perception is slow to change. Secondly, rather

³² Jervis, *Ibid.*, p. 184

³³ Jervis, *Ibid.*, p. 187

³⁴ Thomas J. Christensen, “China, the U.S.-Japan Alliance, and the Security Dilemma,” Quoted in G. John Ikenberry and Michael Mastunduno, eds., *International Relations Theory and the Asia-Pacific*, (New York, Columbia University Press, 2003) p. 39

than using various lenses are not utilized to best describe the situation, but rather whichever one seems to “fit” or is most convenient at the time.

Shackled to pre-existing beliefs, many an actor falls back on these “safe ideas,” especially if the information is difficult to interpret or the information is ambiguous. A further factor is his or her commitment to the predominant view. Interestingly, many of the scientific breakthroughs which have occurred have been driven by individuals outside of that discipline. These innovators are able to break from ossified frameworks to provide a new insight.

Conversely, those who fail to maintain pace are best described as “Shut up in their own enclosure, living off the information of a decade earlier, wedded to their own small concerns, and bemused by their investments of time, money, and pride...they could not discern that the changing times required new solutions; they could not even discern that times had changed.”³⁵ Given the above analysis, policy-makers must be open to new insights and theories which may enable them to affectively craft policy versus allowing dominant theory to color their analysis preventing advancement.

The best solution for those who are in the position to make decisions is to have the time and the willingness to use various lenses to question the dominant view and further analyze areas where the popular policy fails to adequately explain the issue. Further caution is necessary for those newly arrived to a foreign country which addressing issues in a foreign country since these individuals must have a “perceptual

³⁵ Elting, Morison, *Men, Machines, and Modern Times*, (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press 1966), p. 129 (from Robert Jervis, “*Perception and Misperception in International Politics*,” (Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1976), p. 197)

openness.”³⁶ Perceptual openness would allow the individual time to consider multiple facets of an issue before utilizing one theory or lens especially when one is outside his culture.

Evoked Set

Evoked Set is a term used to describe the thinking that leads a person to perceive events as confirming a potential predisposition of the other actor. In other words, actor A wrongly believes actor B has exactly the same set of beliefs when dealing with a subject. Practically, what is important to A may be lost to B, since the assumed background enabling understanding is actually missing.³⁷ Each side must be vigilant to make sure such an outcome does not occur. When messages are conveyed, communication may be inhibited by the inaccuracy of the communication and where it fails in demonstrating its perceived importance or lack thereof.³⁸

This is particularly dangerous when agreed upon policy is not implemented especially when one actor A assumes an agreement. The result has a potential to jeopardize current and future agreements between both actors since the other party is seen as untrustworthy.

Historical Memory and its Impact upon Perception

The impact of a decision-makers' perception of historical events is another essential variable affecting policy options. Generally, decision-makers tend to use historical lessons in broad and over-generalized views; these lessons are then analyzed

³⁶ Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*, (Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1976) p. 201

³⁷ Albert Mehrabian and Henry Reed, "Some Determinants of Communication Accuracy," *Psychological Bulletin* 70 (November 1968), 378-9 (from Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*, (Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1976), p 205)

³⁸ Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*, (Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1976) p. 205

from the angle of “what” happened versus “why” it happened.³⁹ As a result of such simplistic analysis, events tend to be classified—aggression in Korea must be stopped since Germany was appeased, and that led to World War II. The implication is that failed policy, (for example appeasement) is forever shunned and the contrary policy (aggression in Korea) is preferred. Conversely, if a policy is proved successful, it will be used again, whether it is truly applicable to the situation or not. As a result of the initial success, the policy will become part of institutionalized thinking and training, affecting future generations of policy-makers.⁴⁰

Individuals learn the most through first-hand experience of an event. This is especially true if it is of great importance when it occurs in that person’s life, and if the event had an important impact upon the individual or that individual’s country. That person is often hindered in their capacity to use alternative perspectives in international relations to adequately analyze the event.⁴¹

The affect of historical learning, then, has three major areas of impact upon perception: First, the historical events used for justifying future actions are not always the best criteria for judgment. Second, the “why” or the cause of events is often not adequately explored, resulting in overly general and simplified analysis that leads to misapplication of historical lessons. Third, due to predispositions, decision-makers cannot or do not allow the full spectrum of other potential models or explanations to factor into their thinking.⁴² Given China’s history of domination by Western powers in the early nineteenth century, the lessons of history are themselves very poignant. It is,

³⁹ Jervis, *Ibid.* p. 228

⁴⁰ Jervis, *Ibid.* p. 238

⁴¹ Jervis, *Ibid.* p. 239

⁴² Jervis, *Ibid.* p. 281-2

easy to see that China was dominated, but the question of why must also be asked, a far more difficult but essential component to any productive application of China's historical experience. For example, to determine what factors contributed in China being dominated. To simply state, "Western powers are dangerous and desire domination" would be an oversimplification of the complex variables involved.

Perception as Caused by Domestic Politics

Domestic politics is another key factor in determining how one fashions his or her perspective of other States. The affect is in many regards very subtle, but telling. The affect of domestic politics determines how one perceives relations with other countries and the countries' internal systems of governance. Jervis points out,

"domestic politics have supplied both his [decision-makers] basic political concepts and the more detailed lessons about what strategies and tactics are appropriate to reach desired goals. Predispositions are most influenced by those domestic practices that are so deeply ingrained throughout the society that people do not realize the possibility of alternatives. These are most prevalent in homogenous and isolated societies."⁴³

For Americans in particular, the above analysis is essential, since Americans tend to view the world through their own distinct historical and political lens. For example, America never experienced a socialist revolution like China. As a result, a feudal society being overthrown in the name of a bourgeois revolution tends to imply a negative connotation, given the French and Russian Revolutions especially given their violent and

⁴³ Jervis, *Ibid*, p. 283

chaotic nature. For Americans this can particularly be difficult given their societies disposition towards being "born equal."

The affect of such perception is first, the inability to perceive the depth of a social angst against a regime or institution, and secondly, the inability of Americans to allow that violence may potentially be a precursor to democracy and/or stability.⁴⁴ Given the differences between the Chinese and American political systems, it is easy to see how factors of perception arising from domestic political affairs further impair mutual understanding. Many Americans have a stigma associated with governments using communist, socialist, or other such rhetoric, while in Chinese political rhetoric simple words such as "foreign" can be loaded terms with often strong emotional and patriotic connotations.

Another factor in perception which is somewhat similar to domestic-political influence is each individual's discipline. Training affects perceptual dispositions. Interestingly, Joseph Kennedy's training allowed him to perceive Nazi aggression in economic terms. It was his belief that the Third Reich was dangerous and expansionist due to its unsound economy.⁴⁵

Perceptions of Centrality

A major factor in misperception is seeing "the behavior of others as more centralized, planned, and coordinated than it is."⁴⁶ This can be seen quite in the Chinese response and explanation for the U.S. bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade,

⁴⁴ Jervis, *Ibid* p. 283-4

⁴⁵ William Kaufman, "Two American Ambassadors," pp. 658-9 (from Robert Jervis, "*Perception and Misperception in International Politics*," (Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1976), p. 287)

⁴⁶ Robert Jervis, "*Perception and Misperception in International Politics*," (Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1976) p. 319

Yugoslavia in May 7, 1999. Mistakes and bad intelligence are not given their full due. Rather, the "other side" predisposes well-coordinated plans which may be inaccurate. Further variables include confusion, which manifests itself via lack of coordination, and planning, but is blamed upon the enemy sabotage or other covert operations.

Stupidity, is often not adequately stressed. This leads parties to credit the other party's decisions and actions with greater coherency. This greater coherency further elevates the perceived threat and in turn spirals into a greater false insidious nature than actually exists. The stupidity factor was ignored in the Chinese analysis of U.S. actions during the American bombing of the Chinese embassy.⁴⁷

Given the human predisposition to see order, a grand scheme is often visualized when one does not actually exist. Rather, a myriad of variables may be at play, influencing the actual outcome of the policy and its implementation as well as how it is perceived by the implementer and other States.⁴⁸ This can be seen in China's decision to enter the Korean War when it failed to consider the numerous discussions and statements within pluralistic governments. Rather, when discussions occurred, any random statement was taken to be coming from the highest echelons within prospective governments.⁴⁹ This shows the dynamic that domestic politics has upon one's perception of events. Within China, policy comes from the highest echelons within in the government. This colored China's ability to accurately analyze the numerous statements

⁴⁷ Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*, (Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1976) pp. 321-2

⁴⁸ Jervis, *Ibid*, p. 323

⁴⁹ Allen Whiting, *China Crosses the Yalu* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1968), p. 169 (from from Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*, (Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1976), p. 325)

that are part of democratic governments. Given this failed analysis, China assumed the worst and entered the war.

In dealing with the concept of centrality and unity, other factors which further induce this perception include: First, alliances that appear to be more durable from the outside versus from the inside. Secondly, domestically, groups see the other side as more unified than they may be. Third, the view that the other side is highly centralized and “Machiavellian” is more likely to occur if the two sides are in conflict.⁵⁰

Belief that You are not the Threat

The sum of the belief that one is not a threat is played out by policy which actually harms the other’s interests. The actor further perceives his actions as benign. Instead, it is assumed that the opposing actor intended such harmful policy. Again, several factors come into play: First, “lack of context” inhibits perception of the actor’s intentions. Secondly, the attempt to defend one’s innate interests appears directed against them.⁵¹

Theory Applied

Given the effects of cognitive distortion discussed above, it is difficult to condemn individuals for their inability to reconcile new bits of information. Oftentimes, they fail to recognize the implications of that information or simply cannot process it due to the overwhelming amounts of information they must deal with. At the same time, observers with only limited theoretical frameworks in which to place their information

⁵⁰ Robert Jervis, “*Perception and Misperception in International Politics*,” (Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1976) pp. 326-9

⁵¹ Jervis, *Ibid.* p. 354

can easily be swayed by each new bit of information. This was the case with American observers in China during the 1940s, which lacked strong theoretical frameworks.

Jervis puts forth three situations in which a person's expectations may match the situation and yield an accurate, influenced analysis of circumstances. The first is luck. Those individuals who shaped policy had the right prediction at the right time. The second is an accurate interpretation of the environment due to previous experience or insight. In other words, an individual may be accurately interpreting general trends, therefore affectively crafting policy. Third, a person's previous experiences help him to anticipate events. Again, a decision-maker may have an insight from previous experiences which are similar, enabling him to craft an appropriate policy.⁵² Any of these can lead to good results.

Since the American advisors lacked the appropriate lens to view events their conclusions were flawed. Likewise, individuals who craft policy must take great care to be sure their lenses adequately and accurately appreciate the many variables at hand.

As is generally known, the two types of decision-makers which will be able to make an accurate prediction of the event are those who, first, have an accurate perception and, second, those who wait to have adequate information before making a decision.⁵³

Given the many misperceptions within Sino-American relations, it will be necessary to use several different theories and models to adequately interpret how best to resolve conflict between these two countries.

First, the Spiral theory gives the most useful understanding, since it sees the need to make the desires and goals of each country explicit to rectify misunderstanding.

⁵² Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*, (Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1976), p. 178, 180-81

⁵³ Jervis, *Ibid.* pp. 191, 93

Conversely, the reliance of U.S. and Chinese decision-makers on classic deterrence theories seems only to cause the two nations to further "spiral" in the direction of hostility.

The security dilemma further helps us understand Sino-American relations. Misperception is a much larger factor in the "spirals" of hostility than is currently accounted for in international relations. The anarchic state of international relations does indeed have bearing upon how situations are played out, but even more fundamental to the field is how acts are viewed, interpreted and how policy is ultimately crafted given the interpretation.

An example of this would be the April 1, 2001 collision between the EP-3E and Chinese F-8 fighter. Due to the anarchic state of international relations, the actual cause of the accident could not be determined. But what perceptions and misperceptions before and after allowed for the incident to occur and from there spiral into conflict? Both sides maintain their side is correct, but it is essential to recognize how perception, and ultimately misperception color and shape even our ability to understand what caused the incident to occur in the first place.

From the many theories discussed above, a number of models emerge as being particularly cogent tools for analyzing Sino-American relations. In particular, cognitive-affect balance, pre-existing beliefs, cognitive dissonance, the presence of an evoked set, historical memory, domestic politics, centrality or hegemony are all useful lenses, each of which lends depth and accuracy to our understanding of bilateral relations. Actual circumstances such as inter-dependence each shares, China's rapid rise in power, and America's influence within the region heighten emotional involvement and making

mutual understanding still more difficult. By taking a multi-lensed view of Sino-U.S. relations, this paper hopes to show how perception and in many cases misperception is at the root of much bi-lateral conflict.

Pre-existing Beliefs and the Historical and Philosophical Rationale for
Those Beliefs in Sino-American Relations
Recurring Historical Patterns

Before analyzing the current state of relations, it is important to examine some of the historical causes of misperception. A historical framework is necessary to help understand current events in Sino-American relations since many perceptions are drawn from these events. I will not attempt to right these wrongs or over-analyze these incidences, but rather to state them, draw from them the obvious deductions both countries have had, and then analyze the historical results of those deductions.

As Jervis states, lessons from history tend to be over-generalized, essentially rendering the lesson useless. Furthermore, the "what" of the event tends to be studied versus the "why." These predispositions then affect how history is seen and what lessons can be learned.⁵⁴ But without the bearing of history and the understanding of previous events, it is difficult to value current events, especially when viewing a cross-cultural event. The following events are key to both countries' realization of the present.

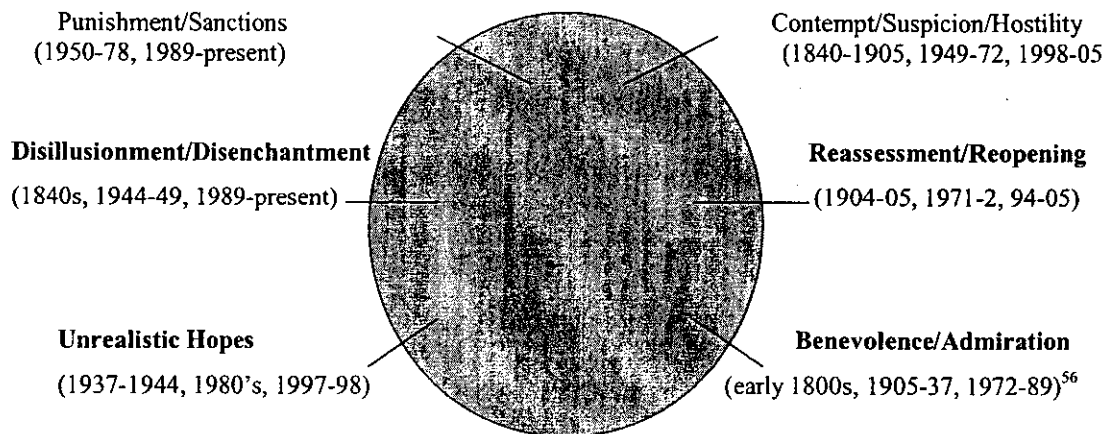
The Sino-American relationship at its best is characterized by mistrust and misunderstanding. Throughout periods of time, there have been "bright spots" but these have quickly faded away. The Sino-American relationship can be best described as having "deeply-rooted differences in outlook [that] mutually generate fear and admiration,

⁵⁴ Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Relations*, (Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1976) p. 238

superiority and inadequacy, trust and suspicion between the two countries.”⁵⁵ (See

Figure 1)

Figure 1: THE RECURRING PATTERNS IN U.S.-CHINA RELATIONS
1800-PRESENT



A historical frame is essential to comprehend the genesis of the malaise in Sino-American relations. The modern origin of Chinese distrust of foreign powers can be traced to the Opium Wars of 1840-42 and the ceding of Hong Kong in 1856 to England. To the British, the Opium War was the right to trade with a country as they saw fit, but to the Chinese it was a fight for its own soul. This can especially be seen in the rampant use of opium within China.⁵⁷

Despite China's attempts to strengthen itself, the 1870s unleashed a wave of foreign aggression upon China, namely the Japanese against Formosa (1871-74); the Russian occupation of Ili (1871-81); and the Sino-French War over Annam (1884-85).

⁵⁵ Bates Bill, *Contrasting Visions: United States, China and World Order*, Presented to U.S.-China Security Review Commission, Session on U.S.-China Relationships and Strategic Perceptions, August 3, 2001, p. 5

⁵⁶ Note: Adapted and revised from Harold R. Isaacs, *Scratches On Our Minds: American Views of China and India* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1980) and Susan Puska, "United States-China: Perceptual Differences", *Foreign Area Officers Association Journal* (November 1999), <http://www.faoa.org/journal/china/html>. (Note: Contempt/suspicion/hostility and Benevolence/admiration state 1998-present not 2005 in original diagram)

⁵⁷ Immanuel C.Y. Hsu, *The Rise of Modern China*, Sixth Ed. Oxford University Press, 2000, Pg. 190, 184

Japan began its move to annex Korea from China's control beginning in 1873. This led to Japan's eventual defeat of China and the signing of the Treaty of Shimonoseki in 1895, which showed the true weakness of the Qing Dynasty and made Japan the leading state in Northeast Asia. As a result of this treaty, foreign powers began to divide China amongst themselves, conduct trade as they saw fit and impose their views on an increasingly weak country.⁵⁸

By 1898 and 1899, the foreign powers had used various pretexts to expand their power throughout coastal China. And in 1900, due to the supposed threat the foreign powers posed to China, Cixi, the Empress Dowager, allied herself with the Boxers demonstrating the Qing's inability to check foreign advance. The Boxer Rebellion reached its apex, forcing intervention by foreign powers to curtail the murder of foreign missionaries and nationals. As a result:

the Qing⁵⁹ agreed to erect monuments to the memory of the more than two hundred Western dead, to ban all examinations for five years in cities where antforeign atrocities had taken place, to forbid all imports of arms into China for two years, to allow permanent foreign guards and emplacements of defensive weapons to protect the legation quarter in perpetuity...they also agreed to pay an indemnity for damages to foreign life and property of 450 million taels (around \$333 million at the then current exchange rates), a staggering sum at a time when the entire annual Qing income was estimated at around 250 million taels. The Chinese were to pay the indemnity in gold, on an ascending scale, with 4 percent interest charges, until the debt was amortized on December 31, 1940. With all interest charges factored in, total Chinese payments over the thirty-nine-year period would amount to almost 1 billion taels (precisely 982,238,150).⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Immanuel C.Y. Hsu, *Ibid.* Pg. 344, 345

⁵⁹ For clarification, China currently uses the "Pinyin" or Romanization of Chinese words, where other sources use Wade-Giles; i.e Emmanuel Hsu's book *The Rise of Modern China*. My personal writing will use Pinyin, but other sources may use the Wade-Giles system. Hence "Qing" versus "Ching" etc.

⁶⁰ Jonathan D. Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, W.W. Norton and Company, NY, New York, 2000, Pg. 235

At this point, China became a ship without a rudder, desperately searching for a mooring. Many students went abroad, searching for means to revive China from its decline. Traveling to Europe to study and learn Western ways, many students wanted to emulate France and Britain. Others opted for Japan, due to its recent ascendancy to world power by means of the progressive Meiji Restoration. It was at this time that many anti-Qing organizations began to rise in prominence. Sun Yat-sen's "Revolutionary Alliance" is one example. The Revolutionary Alliance aimed to bring western forms of governance to China to help reform many of the problems within China. Finally, in October 1911, the Qing Dynasty began to crumble and on February 12, 1912, Emperor Puyi abdicated.

The event which became the main catalyst for demonstrations in China was the Twenty-one Demands signed by Yuan Shi kai in May 1915. During World War I, China was neutral. Japan, however, helped the Allies oust the Germans from Jiaozhou, giving them control over most of Shandong. In order to legalize its occupation, Japan made sure to have its demands on Shandong included in the Twenty-One Demands. To ensure their demands were met, Japan insisted these demands be fulfilled if they were to remain a part of the League of Nations and uphold many other secret treaties.⁶¹

At the end of World War I, thanks to their many secret treaties, the Japanese were confident of their ability to come out on top on the Shandong issue. Both the Allies and Chinese were bound by secret treaties, the Chinese by the 1918 secret agreement, the British to support the Japanese in Shandong, Russia to recognize the Twenty-one Demands, and other similar agreements with France and Italy. By the time the Chinese

⁶¹ Immanuel C. Y. Hsu, *The Rise of Modern China*, Oxford University Press, NY, NY, 2000: p. 502

arrived in Versailles, they were told it was too late. Rather than address the many Chinese grievances, the other signatories brought a conclusion to the war.⁶²

“The Allies were bound by secret treaties to support the Japanese position, which left Wilson as the lone champion of the Chinese cause. Japan threatened to raise the issue of racial equality for discussion and to withdraw from the conference if its demands were not met. It was clear that Japan could not be denied [being given]...Shandong [province]. Ultimately, Wilson persuaded by the Allied representatives as well as his own advisers that it was important to first establish the League of Nations with Japan in it, and to secure justice for China later. On April 28, 1919, the peace conference adjudicated the Shandong question in favor of Japan.”⁶³

This showed a grave lack of understanding of the importance of China in the region. Due to Wilson's desire to include Japan in the League of Nations, he bypassed China. Wilson's desire to preserve the League of Nations attained much, but, as a result, ostracized China. This is an example of irrational consistency which leads ultimate failure of the policy. As Jervis points out, by seeking so many goals or too broad of goals, the contradictions of the policy are not analyzed.⁶⁴

Due to the verdict of the Versailles Treaty, thousands of students and other Chinese citizens began to protest the “national humiliation” faced by the Chinese at Versailles. This spawned the May Fourth Movement of 1919. As a result, Chinese intellectuals turned to Marxist Socialism to find answers to this final humiliation.

The intellectual revolution of 1917-23 represents China's third stage of response to the Western impact. The first stage—Self-strengthening Movement from 1861 to 1895—saw superficial attempts at diplomatic and military modernization. The second—the era of reform and revolution 1898 to 1912 witnessed the acceptance of Western political institutions. The intellectual awakening of 1917-23 marked a further shift away

⁶² Immanuel C.Y. Hsu, *Ibid* p. 503

⁶³ Immanuel C.Y. Hsu, *Ibid*, p. 503-4

⁶⁴ Jervis p. 140

from the traditional Chinese base toward complete Westernization. Communism proved over time to be the Western ideology most easily accepted to post-imperial China's social circumstances. The Chinese Communist Party and its historians regard May 4, 1919, as the watershed which separated the eighty-year period of the 'Old Democracy' from the period of 'New Democracy.' During this latter period, the proletariat had become a conscious, independent political force, and communism had developed into an increasingly powerful ideological tool in the social, political, and Cultural Revolution of China.⁶⁵

Since China was unable to right its wrongs, Marxism seemed to be the final ideology to hold promise. The Western idealism of the Treaty of Versailles failed China, and the final "untried" ideology of Marxism seemed to be the only solution. Again, had Wilson not fallen to Irrational Consistency for the "broader good" of the League of Nations, many of today's issues with China would have been prevented.

It is, again, important to see how the lessons of history can affect current perceptions. In this instance, history shows that internal weakness and foreign domination may lead to future instability. Hence, much criticism lies with the Qing Dynasty's response to foreign encroachment. Today, inept Chinese government responses may lead to problems. Any power which may try to influence Chinese affairs is viewed as a potential threat, especially since previous foreign powers encroached upon China's sovereignty.

⁶⁵ Immanuel C.Y. Hsu, *Ibid.* p. 510

American Discrimination against the Chinese

Another historical event that has colored both Chinese and American perceptions is the racial prejudice suffered by those of Chinese descent in nineteenth century America.

The Chinese first came to California in 1848, lured by promises of great wealth. As a result, many more immigrated, taking arduous tasks in the U.S. labor market, including building the railroads and working the gold rush. These were jobs that Americans refused to fill.

But, in 1852, California Governor Jim Bigler declared the Chinese to be a menace.⁶⁶ Anti-Chinese sentiment increased to the point that legislation was finally passed in 1882. The Chinese Exclusion Act prohibited immigration due to the perceived threat of a “Yellow Peril” as represented by the large Chinese labor force. Originally, the law was to be enacted for ten years, but it was not repealed until 1943.

Due to the Exclusion Acts, only 105 Chinese were legally allowed to immigrate each year. Furthermore, the Geary Act of 1892 required all Chinese aliens to carry their Certificate of Residence at all times. If found without the permit, they could be immediately deported.⁶⁷ Angel Island, the “Ellis Island of the West” provides further examples of the anti-Chinese sentiment; many Chinese were either detained or deported

⁶⁶ <http://www.museumca.org/goldrush/silver-chman.html> Museum website dedicated to describing the gold rush in California and various issues facing the Chinese in America.

⁶⁷ www.digitalhistory.uh.edu The Huddled Masses Chinese Exclusion Act

upon arriving there. It was not until the 1960s that immigration laws were rewritten to fully rectify this discrimination.⁶⁸

Given America's history, it is not surprising to see the lens of racial prejudice being employed to interpret many American actions. In addition, many Chinese assume that America is still suffering from bad race relations, given the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s and current events which still surface and are given much "play" in the Chinese media.

Modern Misperceptions: 1940s to Present

As the historical issues of the nineteenth century are vital to a complete understanding of Sino-American interactions, so are the modern issues facing their relations. These lenses include: cognitive-affect balance, pre-existing beliefs, cognitive dissonance, the presence of an evoked set, historical memory, domestic politics, and centrality or hegemony.

Domestic politics are especially vital to the American view of Communism, since its perception is merely seen as "bad." Furthermore, as China became a communist country, and America fought in Korea, both countries became enemies of each other because they had enemy allies. Jervis, once again, states the affect that domestic political institutions have upon perception.⁶⁹ Given both China's and America's vastly different experiences with their domestic political systems, it is essential to understand their impact upon relations and resolution to impasse. First, "domestic institutions color the

⁶⁸ <http://www.angelisland.org/immigr02.html> *Angel Island Association, in cooperation with the California Department of Parks and Recreation.*

⁶⁹ Robert Jervis, *"Perception and Misperception in International Politics,"* (Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1976) p. 283

view of international relations and the others' internal system of governance." And secondly, domestic politics give a framework to understand how another's political system works. Finally, domestic politics provide models for basic strategies in resolution of conflict, etc.⁷⁰ These vastly different perspectives still contribute to the current status of Sino-American relations. It is, therefore, understandable why China and the U.S. fail to communicate in the broader realm of international relations.

Events in World War II also have a lasting affect on current perception. At that time, both the Chinese Communists and the U.S.-supported Nationalists (KMT) were locked in a power struggle for China against Japan. Much internal fighting occurred between the American personnel who were there to assess the communists and get to know the Communist leader Mao Zedong. In fact, many Americans were quite impressed with the vision and social reform the communists envisioned for China, especially in wake of the inept -- and corrupt -- Chiang Kai-shek of the KMT.

Individuals, like Ambassador Patrick Hurley, were lacking in many of the essential understandings of foreign policy, which resulted in their failure to accurately determine the strength of the communists in China. Assuming that the communist's armies were a band of rag-tag peasants and students, they would not be able to adequately battle the Japanese, unite with the Guomindang and in the end Chinese communists were even shunned by the Soviets. Hurley therefore assumed the communists would accept Chiang's offers since he assessed them as "weak."⁷¹ This and the successful lobbying of

⁷⁰ Jervis, *Ibid.* p. 283

⁷¹ Tsou, *America's Failure in China*, p. 340; Crow, "The Effect of Training upon Accuracy and Variability in Interpersonal Perception." (from Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*, (Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1976), p. 175)

the American government by the Nationalists allowed the Americans to side with the KMT against the communists.

Several factors contributed to Hurley's faulty perception and influenced American policy decisions. First, American policy was formulated around Hurley's assessment, which allowed cognitive distortion to affect his perception of events. In other words, he could not reconcile new information or variables to the equation forcing him to not consider other possible scenarios. Because they were communist, they were also "bad" in his mind. And because others relied on his preconceived ideas of communism, other information had no impact on his analysis.⁷² Second, cognitive-affective balance also affected America's ability to understand the Chinese, because communism was seen as "bad" and the KMT as "good" by most Americans.⁷³ Due to this presupposition, the American decision-makers did not adequately understand the context which gave rise to China's communists but quickly labeled them, forming a negative opinion. This belief forms a potential third factor: the historical implications of the perception that communists are "bad" given Russia's communist revolution.

A fourth factor is domestic politics.⁷⁴ Since many Americans had never experienced social upheaval, it was difficult for them to understand popular Chinese anger against the ruling regime the KMT.⁷⁵ George Kennan states, one of the failures of American China policy during China's civil war "was to underrate the depth of the inner

⁷² Tsou, *America's Failure in China*, p. 340 (from Robert Jervis, "Perception and Misperception in International Politics," (Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1976), p. 172)

⁷³ William Scott, "Psychological and Social Correlates of International Images," in Herbert Kelman, ed., *International Behavior* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1965), p. 100 (from Robert Jervis, "Perception and Misperception in International Politics," (Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1976), p. 175)

⁷⁴ Jervis, *Ibid*, pp. 284-85

⁷⁵ See Jervis, "Perception and Misperception in International Relations." (Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1976) concerning American interpretation of events as a result of domestic politics. pp. 283-85

political differences which racked the country.”⁷⁶ The U.S. continued to aid the KMT furthering the rift between the communists and the Americans which would escalate with the defeat of the KMT and the later conflicts over Korea and Taiwan, the intervention of the U.S. in 1950 to prevent the forceful reunification of Taiwan with mainland China. Likewise, the Korean War (1950-53) further prevented normalization of relations between America and China with China intervening on behalf of North Korea and the U.S. joining the South Korea effort. Once the Cold War began in earnest, Chinese communists were seen to be fully allied with the Soviet Union, further strengthening American perceptions of China as the enemy.

Due to China’s desire to “liberate” Taiwan and use aggression if necessary, the United States moved its naval fleet into the Taiwan Straits at the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950, thus preventing a forceful reunification of Taiwan with China. This again gave the Chinese the perception of an American desire of centrality in depriving it of a major national aim—reunification -- and a larger scheme in which China viewed America as having the desire to control Asia. The insidious nature of the American aggression was seen as a precursor to eventual strikes directly against China.⁷⁷

A second major factor in modern Sino-American relations is the affect which the Korean War had upon relations and perception. Prior to Chinese intervention in the war, American policy makers learned from the Indian ambassador of possible Chinese intervention, but this was dismissed due to the Indians’ opposition to many American

⁷⁶ George Kennan, “*Russia and the West under Lenin and Stalin*” (New York: Mentor, 1962), pp. 142-43, 351 (from Robert Jervis, “*Perception and Misperception in International Politics*,” (Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1976), p. 284)

⁷⁷ Bradford Perkins, *The First Rapprochement*, p. 221; Perkins, *Prologue to War* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1961), pp.282-85 (from Robert Jervis, “*Perception and Misperception in International Politics*,” (Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1976), p. 339)

policies. This is a classic example of rational consistency, and it resulted in a huge policy blunder. Since the Indian ambassador was seen as hostile to American policy, his information concerning Chinese intervention was also dismissed. Further investigation could have led to talks and/or negotiations between China and America at an earlier time, thus avoiding unnecessary fighting.

Perhaps the two greatest causes for mistrust in Sino-American relations can be traced to the perception of the Tiananmen Square Incident on June 3-4, 1989, and the collapse of the Communist dictatorships in Eastern Europe. As a result of the government crackdown on the Tiananmen protestors, the United States refused to engage in high level contacts for four years, a measure that was never employed against the Soviet Union, even during the height of the Cold War. Thus, human rights became the centerpiece of America's angst with China.⁷⁸ For many Americans, this produced a "black and white" perception of China. Once again, problems with the cognitive-affective balance yielded judgments that casually applied give a clear-cut "bad" vs. "good" mold to an entire country and all its deeds.

Additionally, U.S.- Chinese ties were further strained by American intervention in the Gulf War of 1991 which showed America's resolve to intervene in global issues. Secondly, the preeminence of American technology and financial domination has led to a global inundation of American culture and influence. Third, the collapse of the Soviet Union has further alienated China giving the United States dominance.⁷⁹ China has therefore attempted to balance American influence by foster closer ties with the Russia and opposing American intervention throughout the world. In spite of these dramatic

⁷⁸ Kissinger, Henry, *Diplomacy* New York: Touchstone, 1995

⁷⁹ Bates Gill, *Ibid.* 7

changes, the Chinese government and analysts persisted in forecasting a move towards greater multi-polarity in the world, a "balance among the great powers," a decline in the influence of 'Western values' and a reemergence of Asian values such as Confucianism in Asia and the use of institutionalized economic development and diplomacy versus *realpolitik*.⁸⁰ This, in its entirety, has not happened. This shows China's misperception of premature cognitive closure.

China's current domestic situation only serves to to increase existing mutual suspicions. China's vast economic transformation over the last twenty-five years and her growing economic disparity, the predictions vary as to whether China can--and will--become a stable, prosperous nation. If it becomes unstable, it has the potential to affect all of Asia as it did at the turn of the century and potentially cause a humanitarian crisis.

This begs the question: why is China's future so unclear? China is transforming in major ways that a country of this size and stature has never experienced before:

First, China is changing from an overwhelming agricultural to an industrial economy and thus from a rural to an urban society. Second, China is shifting from a planned, command economy to a heavy state-regulated market economy and from a Leninist political system to some form of authoritarian or eventually possibly even democratic system. Third, rapid economic growth facilitates the development of a large and growing middle class, historically unprecedented in China. China could become, in relatively short order, a major engine of global growth. Politically, if the new Chinese middle class mimics the middle class of other countries, it will participate in political decision-making and stability to protect its gains. Finally, China is completing a generational succession. A generation of Communist revolutionaries, reared in the early part of this century, ruled China from 1949 to the early 1990's. The successor generation, educated as engineers and technicians and steeped in the mores of Chinese bureaucracy, has now ascended to power. But it is not clear what vision, if any, they have brought with them to power.⁸¹

⁸⁰ Yu Qifen, "The International Security Situation in the 1990's", *China Military Science* (Spring 1995); Gao Heng, "Future Military Trends", *World Economics and Politics*, No. 2 (1995); Yao Youzhi, and Liu Hongson, "Future Security Trends in the Asian-Pacific Region", *China Military Science* (Spring 1994). These articles, originally published in Chinese, appear in English translation in Michael Pillsbury, ed. *Chinese Views of Future Warfare*, rev. ed (Washington D.C.: National Defense University Press, September 1998), pp. 69-104 (*realpolitik: politics based on practical rather than moral or ideological considerations.*)

⁸¹ Michel C. Oksenberg, Michael D. Swaine, and Daniel C. Lynch, *The Chinese Future*, China Reader Pg. 508

Currently, China's foreign policy is focused on reacting to others, in other words, they seem to lack independent objectives. Therefore, they must have an enemy, without which they can offer no vision for "a Chinese future" that creates the need to perceive someone as an enemy.

To further complicate things, China's ruling regime must maintain a Gross National Product of at least 5 percent. If it does not, many predict China has the potential to unravel internally through civil unrest. China would like to see a GNP of "\$2.16 trillion by the year 2010, six times the 1993 figure." If that is to occur China must annually maintain a growth rate of over ten percent.⁸²

Similarly, current demand for gasoline, fuel oil and other related products are already exceeding domestic production levels.⁸³ As a result, China was required to find other means of oil production to meet its growing needs; she became an oil-importing nation in 1994. This largely explains China's interest in the South China Sea, which may contain as much as 12 percent of the world's oil and natural gas reserves.⁸⁴ It is, therefore, necessary for China to have these reserves if it is to continue building its economy and, ultimately, feed its populace.⁸⁵

Since China has joined the World Trade Organization (WTO), many more challenges have appeared. This new membership and the constraint it requires will aggravate unemployment, bind China to international rules that will further diminish the

⁸² Lin Chung-Cheng, Spread the Risk, *Free China Review*, Vol. 46, No. 3 (March 1996) Pg. 52

⁸³ Craig S. Smith and Mary, Scott, "Demand for Refineries is High in China", *Wall Street Journal*, December 26, 1995 Pg. A4

⁸⁴ Ding Zongyu, "Lun Zhonggong Yu Nanhai Zhoubian Guojia Lingtu Di Fenzheng (On the Territorial Disputes between Communist China and the Countries Bordering on the South China Sea)," *Studies in Communism*, Vol. 21, No. 4 (April 1995), Pg. 39

⁸⁵ Andrew Nathan, Nayan Chanda and Kari Huus, "China: The New Nationalism" *Far Eastern Economic Review* Nov. 9, 1995 Pg. 28

role and authority of the party, and weaken their ability to bully ordinary citizens. This demands political reform. The question is how to reach this goal without seeing the same type of collapse that the Soviet Union experienced.⁸⁶

These domestic questions, closely entwined with each nation's historical experiences and their international relations pose major hurdles which Sino-American relations must clear. At the same time, there are also many basic philosophical and worldview differences which form the basis for many misperceptions.

Fundamental Philosophical/Worldview Differences

The source of the dissimilarity between the United States and China is actually much older than the last 200 years of historical interactions and in many cases can be traced back to basic worldview differences. The Chinese

...tend to see an ever-evolving, ever-changing nature, without a set beginning and with no "end" to which the world is inexorably evolving; Chinese 'analogical' or 'correlative' thinking 'accepts the priority of change or process over rest and permanence' and 'presumes no ultimate agency responsible for the general order of things.'⁸⁷

Conversely, world-views from the United States,

based on Western/Judeo-Christian philosophies and Enlightenment values, tend to presume a philosophical 'beginning' and 'end' point that history moves linearly from an initial chaos, anarchy or 'law of the jungle' toward a desirable, universalistic end, and that man can shape that destiny through concrete action.⁸⁸

In practical terms, China's worldview means:

Chinese interlocutors will tend to take a politically pragmatic, even cynical, 'long-term view', and prefer personal, informal relationships forged on trust and mutually recognized codes of conduct rather than formal, institutionalized relationships based on legally-derived, concrete covenants."⁸⁹

⁸⁶ "Intimations of mortality" *The Economist* June 30, 2001 Pg. 21

⁸⁷ David L. Hall and Roger T. Ames, *Anticipating China: Thinking through narratives of Chinese and Western Culture* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), pp. xvii-xviii, 183-84

⁸⁸ Bates Gill, *Contrasting Visions: United States, China and World Order*, presented to U.S.-China Security Review Commission Session on U.S.-China Relationship and Strategic Perceptions August 3, 2001, 2

⁸⁹ Bates Gill, *Ibid.* 3

For the United States, their general Western/Judeo-Christian philosophical underpinnings means, “[the] U.S. ...would favor action over acquiescence, regularized, formal, transparent, and predictably ordered relationships, and to mark progress by the steady and timely achievement of binding instruments and arrangements.”⁹⁰ These divergent ways of viewing the world have strong implications for how governments perceive and act.

Different ideological missions:

One fundamental difference is where each stands in the world. The United States is at the ascendancy of its power capable and willing to spread its influence worldwide and China, once a historically powerful country with its own values and systems which run counter to the current dominant “hegemon.”

At the end of World War II, the U.S. was rising until it emerged from the Cold War as the preeminent power in the world. America has always been motivated to spread its values around the world and the new world order has often embraced American political and economic values. The spread of ‘American values’ and ‘soft power’ is sometimes termed ‘cultural pollution’ or ‘peaceful evolution,’ by many Chinese.⁹¹ The spread of American values is often perceived through the lens of centrality, and thus a grand master scheme to dominate the world at large. Much of America’s pop culture is spread with more of a desire to benefit economically than it is to control another country an unintended though perhaps welcome consequence.

⁹⁰ Bates Gill, Ibid. 2-3

⁹¹ Bates Gill, Ibid. 3

In response to America's preeminence in the world new voices of dissent are appearing in China. *A China That Can Say No*, details this aversion to American cultural pollution and its basis:

"In writing down such views in our book which includes chapters titled "We Don't Want MFN" and "I Won't Get on a Boeing 777"--we and the other contributors are not "confessing our sins" about once being attracted to the ways of the West. We are only pointing out a dangerous fact: The sense of loss and resentment at this overwhelming Western influence in the Third World is a breeding ground for a growing, anti-Western post-colonialism. As a consequence, saying no to America will become more and more common in the world, particularly in Asia."⁹²

Global versus Regional Power:

In the aftermath of World War II, the U.S. has found herself in possession of military alliances, a undeniable military superiority, and at times unilateral foreign policy. Additionally, it is the American Dollar which is the basis for most of the world's economy. Furthermore American influence around the world spreads through fast food, economics and America's pop culture. Conversely, China has no "formal" alliances militarily, has no troops involved in military or humanitarian operations abroad, and is in the process of modernizing its military. Furthermore, Beijing seeks a multi-polar world to help balance and equalize potential rivals such as Japan, India and the United States.⁹³

Hegemonist/status quo versus revisionist:

At this point in time, the United States is generally perceived as the hegemonist enjoying the status quo. America has enjoyed unparalleled prosperity; economic, and military and political power, which enables the U.S. to influence others abroad—and

⁹² Zhang Xiaobo and Song Qiang, "China can say no to America," *New Perspectives Quarterly*, Vol. 13 No. 4 p. 55 (Fall 1996)

⁹³ Bates Gill, *Contrasting Visions: United States, China and World Order*, presented to U.S.-China Security Review Commission Session on U.S.-China Relationship and Strategic Perceptions August 3, 2001, 4

therefore wants no change. To the Chinese, this is a problem with potential for the U.S. to turn against China. This fear translates into China's desire for "...a new security concept" which would establish a more "fair" and equitable international order enabling the establishment of world peace and security.⁹⁴ In sum,

"The United States prides itself on being the world's only superpower; its president speaks often of providing "global leadership," and its foreign policy contains many universal principles that they seek to impart to others. But the identity and the mission of the Chinese Communist regime rest precisely on countering what it describes as "hegemony" and the "superpower mentality" while steadfastly refusing to adopt such universal principles as human rights and democracy China's entire modern history since the mid-nineteenth century, and hence its core national identity, is one of resisting foreign dictates and building up national power to do so. Today, as China grows strong, Chinese nationalism grows stronger. And America's power and global agenda are butting up against it. America's superpower status and liberal nationalism are thus the antithesis of China's (official) national identity."⁹⁵

The above quote shows that American worldview directly opposes the Chinese. The practical result is both will work to counter each others influence. America will work to maintain the status quo, while China will work to counter American dominance. The assessment of the above statements calls into question what perceptions are being employed. For both cognitive-affect balance since the Chinese, see "good" versus "bad," or they see the current world system as unfair. Conversely, to the American's using the same system of analysis, see the system as fair and good and therefore must be maintained.

⁹⁴ Bates Gill, *Ibid.* 4

⁹⁵ David Shambaugh, "The United States and China: Cooperation or Confrontation" *China Reader* p. 471

Technologically Advanced versus Developing:

Technologically, the United States enjoys “global leadership in the ‘information revolution.’”⁹⁶ Additionally, the U.S. is second-to-none in military capabilities. Financially, the U.S. dollar is the benchmark for most currencies in the world, and American universities draw the “best and brightest” from around the world.

China, in spite of remarkable growth over the last twenty years, is still often considered a developing country with a large percentage of the population living at or below poverty level.⁹⁷ So, China feels “no fundamental change has been made in the old, unfair and irrational international political and economic order.” It adds, “neo-colonialism” is ascendant, and damaging the “sovereignty, independence, and development interests of many countries...”⁹⁸

Once again, the affect of cognitive-affective balance can be seen since the world is drawn into two contrasting poles, one good and the other bad. In other words, the system is seen by the Chinese as fundamentally unfair. They would like to see the system reorganized to better favor their desires.

Rule of Law Versus Rule of Man

One of the biggest challenges presently facing China is the transition from the Rule of Man (*renzhi*) to the Rule of Law (*fazhi*). It is not uncommon to see many individuals within China that act as a law unto themselves --the Rule of Man-- versus allowing the concept of the Rule of Law to direct their actions. “Rooted in a natural law approach, the American political and legal heritage locates inalienable rights of self-

⁹⁶ Bates Gill, *Ibid.*, p. 5

⁹⁷ Bates Gill, *Ibid.*, p. 5

⁹⁸ *China's National Defense in 2000* (Beijing: Information Office of the State Council, October 2000)

determination and political and social freedoms in the individual.”⁹⁹ The practical outcome is that *fazhi* is an objective standard, in which all are held accountable. Conversely, *renzhi* is a tool at the disposal of the ruling elite; flexible and subjective and ultimately a tool used to achieve goals.

Chinese tradition allows ‘renzhi’ to dominate its political systems. The *renzhi* philosophy allowed the emperor to rule without oversight or censor, which is contrary to the modern Western view of government. As an example, in the Tiananmen protests of 1989, the Chinese government felt it perfectly within its authority to militarily repress the student movement. Moreover, “for both historical and cultural reasons, the Chinese tradition vests rights in the larger community or nation, and they are defined according to the ruler’s determination of society’s greater good.”¹⁰⁰ An example of what is good for society can be found in the party’s censorship of the media. Currently, much of the Chinese media, concerning internal unrest and domestically volatile issues is censored. The rationale, by the party, is that it is for “society’s greater good” since it promotes, in their view, social stability. Practically speaking, this affects how both the U.S. and China view religious freedom, political rights, human rights and humanitarian intervention and can be seen as one of the major areas of difference within Sino-American relations.

A recent *Washington Post* article analyzing the plight of defense lawyers in China shows how Chinese rulers resolve the conflict between the rule man and the rule of law in their country.

⁹⁹ Bates Bill, *Contrasting Visions: United States, China and World Order*, Presented to U.S.-China Security Review Commission, Session on U.S.-China Relationships and Strategic Perceptions, August 3, 2001, p. 5

¹⁰⁰ Bates Bill, *Ibid.*, p. 5

"The battle for justice, due process and media coverage being waged by defense lawyers... tells much about how legal power is wielded in China these days and how much the country has -- and has not -- changed during two decades of economic development. [It shows] the conflict between the organs of state power -- the nearly all-powerful police and prosecutors -- and the emerging influence of lawyers, scholars, common folk and even some officials who are calling for wider rule of law. Still, lawyers have no place at the pinnacle of power. None of the nine Standing Committee members of China's all-powerful Politburo is a lawyer; they are all engineers. Only six of China's 3,000 national legislators have a background in law. In a speech on Christmas Day, Zhou Yongkang, soon to be appointed minister of public security, ranked "loyalty" to the law and "consciousness" of the law last on a list of priorities for the police."¹⁰¹

These deep-seated differences in worldview produce often unconsciously-radically different perceptions. To Americans, the perceived lack of democracy and human rights in the Chinese state makes the system unfair. Again, the "good" versus "bad" dynamic is at play, as well as domestic political system factors. China's traditional affinity for the rule by man influences her domestic political institutions, and leads her to make decisions she perceives as good that are doomed to be perceived as cruel by Judeo-Christian dynamics of misperception. These many historical events and opposing worldviews add up to the present dynamics of misperception. These historical and philosophical factors contribute to modern day lenses that will be examined below using a theoretical scaffold. The current lenses employed by the two states must be made explicit so that we can continue to endeavor to build the healthy Sino-American relationship, a relationship that is essential for a stable Northeast Asia and indeed the whole world.

¹⁰¹ By John Pomfret, *Defense Lawyers In China Find State Is Judge and Jury*, *Washington Post Foreign Service* Tuesday, December 31, 2002; p. A01

Current Events through different Lenses

American Perceptions

The Lens of a Sensational Media

Modern American views of China are strongly influenced by the mainstream media, which has often described China as an updated 1930s Germany or Japan.¹⁰² At any time, one can go to various websites of human rights groups, Christian organizations, or mainstream media¹⁰³ and find articles depicting some discrimination, lack of the Rule of Law, human rights abuses, environmental problems, or other negative stories within China. Since these media groups overwhelmingly depict negative aspects of China, they tend to skew the U.S. perceptions of China towards seeing China as a country bent upon domination of its populace.

Though there are many key dynamics of perception imbedded in U.S. reporting on China, cognitive affect balance and domestic politics, seem are especially influential.

As discussed above, cognitive-affect balance allows the interpretation of events as only either “good” or “bad.” Seen through the lens of U.S. domestic politics, the events in 1989 Tiananmen Square and the governments use of force to put down these demonstrations presented the Chinese government as “bad.” Furthermore, China’s attempt to influence the 1996 Taiwanese election by using ‘Missile Diplomacy’ once again showed the “bad” character of the Chinese government and their willingness to use

¹⁰² See China 20/20 Article on “Crackdown” word’s use in U.S. China reporting

¹⁰³ See: <http://www.nytimes.com/pages/world/asia/index.html> As of Feb. 2005 various articles reporting *China’s Great Divide*, *China’s reach* and others which show its growing influence and social problems.

force against a country who was exercising its natural right to choose its president democratically.

While actual events such as the Tiananmen Square Incident of June 1989, 'Missile Diplomacy' of 1995-96, the reaction to the bombing of the Chinese Belgrade embassy in 1999, and finally, the collision between the two naval aircraft in April of 2001, have all served to put China firmly in a "negative light," U.S. media representations have strongly enforced this perception with their simplified "good" or "bad" analyses. Given the degree to which American life is "mediated," it is not hard to understand why China is perceived negatively.

One of the other main concerns for Americans considering China is the perceived lack of human rights. As Secretary of State Christopher Warren said in 1996,

"The American people have a deep and abiding interest in the promotion of human rights in China and around the world. We will continue to speak out on behalf of those in China who defend universally recognized rights, as we did together with the European Union at the UN Human Rights Commission... We will continue to work with China to strengthen its judiciary. We know that change in China will take time, and that the most repressive periods in recent Chinese history have occurred when China was isolated from the world. That is why we pursue engagement."¹⁰⁴

From the American point of view, this assumes the average Chinese feels the same way the average American does concerning China's legal system, an American evoked set. American media has furthered this perception by reporting from the American viewpoint alone and perhaps inadvertently colored the analysis using the lens of domestic politics. Finally, the above analysis oversimplifies the "good" versus "bad" dynamic.

¹⁰⁴ Secretary of State Christopher Warren, American Interests and the U.S.-China Relations. Speech to the Asia Society, the Council on Foreign Relations and the National Committee on U.S.-China Relations, NY, NY May 17, 1996

Further damaging to U.S. popular perceptions of China were the “China-gate” revelations, which showed China to be a key contributor to the Democratic presidential campaign in 1998. Shortly following in 1999, the Cox Report, a U.S. congressional paper on “American Security and Military/Commercial Concerns with the People’s Republic of China” detailed charges of Chinese espionage against the U.S. focusing on nuclear warheads, missile technology, and the neutron bomb. This contributes Americans’ next prominent fear: The threat posed by a large and powerful Chinese military.

The Lens of Military Aggression

A spat of recent books such as Samuel Huntington’s influential book *Clash of Civilizations* further put China as a potential enemy. The popularity of other titles such as Richard Bernstein and Ross H. Munro’s *The Coming Conflict with China*, further demonstrates the trend towards negative perceptions of China in America.

With respect to U.S. perceptions of Chinese military intent the unfortunate incident on April 1, 2001 between the American EP-3E and the Chinese F-8, as well as the subsequent detention of the American crew served to increase suspicion of hostile intent. David Shambaugh writing about the collision states:

The most recent crisis in Chinese-American relations is escalating tensions with every passing hour and threatens to spiral the relationship out of control if not appropriately handled by the Chinese side. The Bush administration, for its part, has acquitted itself well so far by invoking international law and customary practice for dealing with such incidents. The White House, the United States Pacific Command and American diplomats in China have been clear and reasonable in their expectations, moderate in their language and steady in this first international crisis for the new administration. By contrast, the Chinese government has obfuscated, has been accusatory and caustic

in its official statements, and threatens to deepen the crisis by dragging it out and not acting cooperatively.¹⁰⁵

Ross Terrell goes on to write,

Disgusted that there is but one superpower, and that is not China, Beijing needs time to develop the muscle appropriate for China's high self-image." This means, "the best policy in the interim is to demonize the 'wolves,' 'Hitlerites,' and 'hegemonists' who block the path between China and its glorious future. With this China, it is difficult to have a rich relationship, let alone former President Bill Clinton's 'Strategic Partnership.'¹⁰⁶

The spy plane helps clarify the perceptions that both China and the United States bring into events. To America, China's inability to abide and agree to international rules is much a like an arrogant adolescent which unwilling to submit to the system; when employing the American lens, this perception is mostly accurate. Conversely, the American response is seen by China as an overbearing hegemon unwilling to allow others play by other standards. In using the Chinese lens to view this event, it again may be seen as accurate. In sum, both have ascribed a negative cognitive-affect balance perspective to each other.

Maria Chang says, "If China is not deterred in its irredentism, there will be untold implications for the future stability of Asia and the Pacific. One possibility includes the involvement of the United States in a conflict between the PRC and Taiwan or Japan."¹⁰⁷ Many countries interpret China's recent moves as threatening and further perceive China's military modernization as a threat, given its increase in arms spending and procurement.¹⁰⁸ Again, understanding whose lens is employed when viewing China's military build up either ascribes a positive or negative perception. Employing a negative perception ensures a security dilemma dynamic escalating tensions.

¹⁰⁵ David Shambaugh, "No Easy Way Forward with China" *The New York Times*, 3 April 2001

¹⁰⁶ Ross Terrell, A Crisis that Beijing Really Needed, *Los Angeles Times*, April 15, 2001

¹⁰⁷ Chang, Maria Hsia 7 "China's Irredentist Nationalism: The Magician's Last Trick" *Comparative Strategy* Vol. 17, No. 1 Jan. -March 1998

¹⁰⁸ "Asia's Arms Racing" *The Economist*, Feb. 3, 1996 p. 29

William C. Kirby, in his opinion page "Politics Rules," in *Asiaweek* July 6, 2001, discussed the potential for Taiwanese and Chinese reunification:

"If history is any guide, there is no automatic connection between economic integration, on the one hand, and political partnership, on the other. Unlike Hong Kong before 1997, Taiwan is politically autonomous. Unlike Hong Kong, Taiwan has an army, a navy, an air force...unlike Hong Kong, Taiwan has strong political parties, each one of which is committed to maintaining Taiwan's autonomy. In short, in Taiwan there is no compelling economic reason, and no political constituency, for unification."¹⁰⁹

Ultimately, U.S. misperceptions are a huge problem that it must address if the average citizens and surrounding countries are going to have a more positive perception and understanding. China, for its part, must also understand how it is misperceived and find active means to address these issues. All sides must be aware of how their own prejudices color their interpretation of events and the perceptions they ascribe to one another. Only then can true reconciliation and constructive partnerships occur.

Chinese Perceptions

The Lens of Centrality- China's Fears

"Strategic conflict between the United States and China stems from both a mutual perceptual gap and genuine differences in interests. Vast power asymmetry in this bilateral relationship is compounded by Beijing's perpetual victim consciousness, thereby generating a dynamic for conflict escalation."¹¹⁰

In May and June of 1995, the *Chinese Youth Newspaper* conducted a survey on how "Chinese Youth View the World." Polling over "one hundred thousand young respondents, 87.1 percent thought of America as the least friendly country to China; 57.2 percent rated America as the most disliked country; and at the same time, 74.1

¹⁰⁹ "Politics Rules" William C. Kirby *Asiaweek* July 6, 2001 p. 26

¹¹⁰ Erik Eckholm, "What America Calls a Defense China Calls an Offense," *New York Times*, 2 July 2000

percent deemed America as wielding the greatest influence on China."¹¹¹ If these statistics are indeed true, the future of Sino-America relations is not promising.

Like the U.S., the Chinese media plays an important role in influencing Chinese perceptions of America. Given the governments control of the state-run media and direct hand in education, the question arises: how does the media reflect government perception? Certainly, the Chinese perceive the current international system as biased and unfair.

Many within the Chinese government see centrality, or a concerted desire to dominate, in American policy. Centrality sees a grand scheme in actions, always seeking to find a coherent pattern in events that have no reasonable explanation. Centrality fails to factor in accidents, mistakes and stupidity. Instead, policymakers attempt to derive coherency where no coherency can be found. An excellent example is the NATO bombing of the Belgrade embassy. Rather than accept the explanation as given by the Americans, China saw a grand scheme to attack and thwart China— from their perspective, there could be no other rational explanation.¹¹²

The Chinese side pointed out that the explanations the U.S. side has supplied so far for the cause of the incident are not convincing and that the conclusion that it was a so-called "mistaken bombing" is by no means acceptable to the Chinese Government and people. The Chinese side strongly refuted the explanations of the U.S. side and pointed out: First of all, it was impossible for the U.S. not to know the accurate location of the Chinese Embassy in Yugoslavia. Second, everything points to the fact that the U.S. side knew fully well the overall layout of foreign missions in Belgrade. Thirdly, the U.S. claim of locating the FDSP [Yugoslav Federal Directorate for Supply and Procurement], an intended target for air strike, by employing a method that is used in the field by the Army is not logical. Fourthly, the U.S. target databases are updated frequently and a clear

¹¹¹ Yang Yusheng, *Zhongguoren De Meiguo Guan: Yige Lishi De Kaocha [Chinese Views on America: A Historical Perspective]* (Shanghai: Fudan University Press, 1996), 301-302

¹¹² Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*, (Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1976), p. 319-323

distinguishment (sic) is made between the target list and no-hit list. The U.S. argument that the Chinese Embassy was mistakenly fed into the databases as the FDSP does not hold ground. Fifthly, the explanation given by the U.S. side that its review process failed to detect and correct the "intelligence errors" is inconceivable. The Chinese side emphatically pointed out that the U.S. government must give full recognition to the seriousness of the U.S. bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade, give serious attention to the Chinese Government's solemn position and demands, conduct a comprehensive and thorough investigation and severely punish the perpetrators so as to give, with concrete actions, a satisfactory account and explanation to the Chinese Government and people. The Chinese side pointed out that the attack on the Chinese Embassy constituted an act of international unlawfulness on the part of the United States.¹¹³

Due to the irrationality of the attack on the embassy, China then could only assume a grand scheme since there was no other explanation beyond centrality.

Since the United States is now the preeminent world power, China's has adopted an overarching philosophy to counter the American influence. According to Yong Deng professor of international relations,

From the Chinese perspective, concentrated power without counterbalancing is both dangerous and unnatural. A balance of power underpinned by the five principles of peaceful coexistence¹¹⁴ should represent the new world order. Chinese views hold that a more rigid adherence to sovereignty actually constitutes the key ingredient for a truly new world order of equality, peace, and justice. They contend, unlike the Western concept of balance of power that presupposes monopoly among great powers, that the Chinese notion of multipolarity entails an equally determining role of the Third World countries. It also means that China constitutes a pole with much freedom to act internationally.¹¹⁵

Given this perspective, it is natural for China to attempt to balance American power and use other countries' and institutions' influence to do the same.

From the Chinese perspective, the United States has taken advantage of a rare window of strategic opportunity to deploy globally before other powers are prepared to

¹¹³ Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, U.S.-led NATO's Attack on the Chinese Embassy in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/wjz/zjg/bmdyzt/gjlb/3432/3441/t17317.htm> 2000/11/15

¹¹⁴ See below for the five principles and the actual precepts from the "New Security Concept."

¹¹⁵ Yong Deng, "Hegemon on the Offensive: Chinese Perspectives on U.S. Global Strategy," *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 116, No. 3 (Fall 2001), 346

balance U.S. power. Chinese insecurities lead them to see a grand scheme in America's actions. The following quotations

The United States will contain, besiege, and even launch preemptive military strikes against any country which dares to defy the U.S. world hegemony or which has constituted a latent challenge to the United States. Among its main targets are a number of countries in Eurasia, including Russia, Yugoslavia, Iraq, Iran, Libya, North Korea, and China.¹¹⁶

NATO expansion and its war in Kosovo [was] designed to weaken and encircle Russia. On the Asian front, the United States revitalized its security alliance with Japan, proceeded with the Theater Missile Defense (TMD) program, and maintained large forwardly deployed troops in the West Pacific to keep an eye on China.¹¹⁷

According to Chinese analysts, the United States, following the Kosovo conflict, has advocated a view of "neo-imperialism," a "neo-interventionist" strategy to increase its influence and dominate the world.¹¹⁸ The practical interpretation of this is that,

the United States has been highly inclined to interfere in other countries' domestic affairs, to use force if necessary, and to cynically manipulate international rules or institutions—at times flouting them outright, at other times seeking self-interest under the pretext of upholding world order.¹¹⁹

Chinese analysts see the U.S. advocating "limited sovereignty," using human rights to over ride sovereignty. Thus, they perceive the U.S. to be cynically using human rights as a tool to interfere in China's and other countries' domestic issues and further increase the perception of China and others as bad, especially those countries which go against the United States. They interpret U.S. Human Rights dialogue as an example of "realpolitik"

¹¹⁶ Wang Jincun, "The New Changes in International Situations as Viewed from NATO's Aggressive War Against Yugoslavia," *Qian Xian* (Beijing), 5 July 1999, 21-23 in Foreign Broadcast Information Service – (Hereafter FBIS) China, 9 August 1999, 2

¹¹⁷ Yong Deng, *Hegemon on the Offensive: Chinese Perspectives on U.S. Global Strategy*, *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 116, No. 1 (Fall 2001), 349-50

¹¹⁸ Shi Yukun, "An Analysis of New Interventionism: Interviews with Researchers of the Academy of Military Sciences," *Zhong guo junshi kexue*, 20 May 1999 in FBIS-China, 2 August 1999; Peng Guangqian and Shen Fangwu, "'Humanitarian Intervention' is Inhumane," *Zhongguo Guofang Bao*, 29 May 2000 in FBIS-China, 29 May 2000.

¹¹⁹ Yong Deng, *Hegemon on the Offensive: Chinese Perspectives on U.S. Global Strategy*, *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 116, No. 1 (Fall 2001), pp. 350

a politics based on practical rather than moral or ideological considerations.¹²⁰ Once

again, centrality is shaping Chinese perceptions:

Beijing's predilection to attribute to the United States a highly coherent global strategy bent on power expansion defines how Beijing perceives American China policy. Such a perception breeds conspiratorial view, which in turn predisposes China to see ill intentions and sinister motives in every U.S. act. That's why it is almost universally believed in China that the NATO bombing of [the] Chinese embassy in Belgrade in May 1999 was a deliberate, calculated attack, to punish China's opposition to the war, to destabilize and humiliate China, and to probe Beijing's external reaction and domestic response to the outburst of nationalism that the bombing was bound to ignite."¹²¹

During the early nineties, the Chinese believed America was acting as a stabilizer in East Asia. But following the Taiwan Crisis of 1995-96,

China's strategic planners began to have second thoughts about their earlier assessment of the U.S. regional role. They feared that their worst nightmare could come true and that China might become the target of containment through U.S.--led security alignment in the Pacific Asia. Beijing has become increasingly worried about signs that the United States now may be abetting rather than checking Japanese remilitarization to limit rising Chinese power."¹²²

For this reason, America's insistence on Theatre Missile Defense (TMD) worries China. China may not have the ability to strike with its minimal nuclear deterrent and may actually encourage Japanese militarism.¹²³

Furthering China's worries is the potential to include Taiwan under the Japanese TMD umbrella, allowing for a military alliance among the U.S., Japan and Taiwan.¹²⁴

TMD further abets U.S. unilateralism and enables offensive use of U.S. forces.¹²⁵

¹²⁰ Fang Ning, et al., *China's Road*; Wang Xiaodong, "On Liberation and Hegemony," *Jianchun Zhishi* (Internet Version), 14 June 1999 in FBIS-China, 17 July 1999.

¹²¹ Fang Ning, et al., *China's Road*, 6; Li Xiguang, Liu Kang, et al., *Yaomo Yu Meiti Hongzha* [Demonization and Media Bombardment] (Nanjing: Jiangsu People's Press, 1999), pp. 82-4

¹²² Thomas Christensen, "China, the U.S.-Japan Alliance, and the Security Dilemma in East Asia," *International Security* 23 (Spring 1999): pp. 49-80.

¹²³ Shi Yukun, "An Analysis of Neo-interventionism", Xu Xingei, "Theater Missile Defense Causes Trouble in East Asia," *Xiandai Bingqi*, 2 February 2000, 10-12 in FBIS-China, 17 April 2000.

¹²⁴ Thomas Christensen, "Theater Missile Defense and Taiwan's Security," *Orbis* 44 (Winter 2000): 79-90

¹²⁵ Yong Deng, *Hegemon on the Offensive: Chinese Perspectives on U.S. Global Strategy*, *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 116, No. 1 (Fall 2001), pp. 350

According to Beijing's perspective, the belief that the current security regime can only be maintained under current U.S. dominated security regime, the opposition to a rising China, stationing of American forces in the Pacific, and security balances which conflict with China's desires now sees America's role less as a stabilizer, and more as threat to "China's [own] independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity, and national security," especially over Taiwan."¹²⁶

According to China's current interpretation, U.S. missile defense indeed may have the ability to provide security against 'rogue countries,' but the main motive is to gain overwhelming security against adversaries such as China, enabling the U.S. to intervene freely in world affairs and to establish her "over lordship in the world."¹²⁷ Note the assumed status of adversary.

The view of America as the lone "hegemon" is very popular in China amongst the media elite and government officials. As a result, it is then propagated to the masses through the many media outlets within China. A majority of the Chinese believe that America, to some degree, is bent upon domination of other countries, especially those which have the potential to challenge the U.S. world influence. Thus China's rise must be a threat, and one which the U.S. would naturally resist.

¹²⁶ Chu Shulong, "Bilateral and Regional Strategic and Security Relationships between China and the United States after the Cold War," *Xiandai Guoji Guanxi*, 20 May 2000, No. 5, 7-14 in FBIS-China, 1 June 2000

¹²⁷ Qian Ton; Li Mingjiang, "Sha Zukang Says ABM Treaty is Cornerstone for Global Strategic Balance and Stability," Beijing Xinhua Hong Kong Service, 8 June 2000 in FBIS-China, 8 June 2000; Zheng Yuan, "Egoism and Overbearing Attitude," *Renmin Ribao [People's Daily]* (overseas edition), 7 July 2000, 7; U.S. Nuclear proliferation Threatens Global Security—Sha Zukang on Ways China Should Handle It, Stressing Needs to Ensure the Effectiveness of Retaliatory Capacity" in Wen Wei Po, (Hong Kong) 11 July 2000 A5 in FBIS-China, 11 July 2000.

Yan Xuetong, former director of the China Institute of Contemporary International Relations (CICIR) Center for Foreign Policy Studies, one of China's leading think tanks states,

By the mid-1990s, the United States had begun to view China as a primary potential strategic adversary. If "the U.S. strategic pressure on China in the 1990s was mainly political, in the next ten years, the United States may possibly exert more military pressure on China...Regardless of who is in power in the United States, the strategic element of encircling and containing China will not diminish. Sino-American conflict is "structural," as China is on the rise and the United States wants to maintain its unipolar dominance. China and the United States clash on virtually every level—strategic, political, and economic as well as over global institutional designs. Among all the great power relationships, the U.S.-China one is by far the most conflictual, twice as much as the most tension-ridden U.S.-Russia relations.¹²⁸

This is the standard Chinese interpretation of Sino-American relations shared by most policy-makers within China. China believes that American strategic planners see China as a threat which must be contained in order to maintain its absolute grip around the world. Unfortunately,

such strategic antagonism imposes significant limitations on functional cooperation between China and the United States. The countries may share some interests in certain specific issues or in certain realms such as trade, environmental protection, cracking down on terrorists' activities and international crimes, and preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.¹²⁹

Ironically, due to the new level of practical U.S.-China cooperation achieved in the mid-nineties, China has not yet officially abandoned a hopeful future outlook advocated by Deng Xiaoping. In 1982, Deng interpreted the world events as moving more towards peace and development. World war was unlikely, giving China a stable

¹²⁸ Yan Xuetong, "China's Strategic Security Environment," *Shijie Zhishi*, 1 February 2000, No. 3, 8-9, 10 in FBIS China, 16 February 2000.

¹²⁹ Wang Weiguang, "Predicament and Options—China's Post-Cold War Foreign Policy toward the United States," *Zhanlue yu Guanli*, 1 June 2000 in FBIS-China, 23 June 2000

international environment to carry out economic development. This interpretation would allow China to develop economically, politically and militarily.¹³⁰

However, in response to the global uncertainties of the mid to late 1990s, China returned to some older ideas in the 1996-97 document entitled "New Security Concept" (NSC). The New Security Concept is largely based on principles the Chinese government has formally advocated since the 1950s, such as the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence which include mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual nonaggression, mutual noninterference in internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence.¹³¹

In 1999, Jiang Zemin gave a major foreign policy speech outlining the New Security Concept, showing how it builds upon the "Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence". Jiang first stressed that, "the core of such a new concept should be mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality, equality and cooperation." Second, he said that "political foundation underpinning world peace" should be the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence and other "universally recognized norms governing international relations." Jiang also claimed that, the economic guarantee for peace is founded upon "mutually beneficial cooperation and common prosperity." Finally he explained that the New Security Concept demands that "dialogue, consultations and negotiations by parties

¹³⁰ Bates Gill, *Contrasting Visions: United States, China and World Order*, Presented to U.S.-China Security Review Commission Session on U.S.-China Relationship and Strategic Perceptions August 3, 2001. p. 9

¹³¹ As listed in Yong Deng, Hegemon on the Offensive: Chinese Perspectives on U.S. Global Strategy, *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 116, No. 3 (Fall 2001), 346; Also Bates Gill, *Contrasting Visions: United States, China and World Order*, Presented to U.S.-China Security Review Commission Session on U.S.-China Relationship and Strategic Perceptions August 3, 2001. pp. 9-10

concerned on an equal footing are the correct approach to resolving disputes and safeguarding peace.”¹³² (See Figure II)

Figure II: China's New Security Concept

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The world is undergoing profound changes which require the abandonment of the Cold War mentality and the development of a new security concept and a new international political, economic, and security order responsive to the needs of our times.

The core of the new security concept should be mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality and cooperation. The UN Charter, the five principles of peaceful coexistence and other universally recognized principles governing international relations should serve as the political basis for safeguarding peace while mutually beneficial cooperation and common prosperity is its economic guarantee. Conducting dialogue, consultation, and *negotiation on an equal footing* is the right way to solve disputes and safeguard peace.

Only by developing a new security concept and establishing a fair and reasonable new international order, can world peace and security be fundamentally guaranteed.

The New Security Concept buttresses China's view of herself and the world by giving China a voice in the arena of world peace and peaceful coexistence, and opposing American war-mongering.

According to Kenneth Waltz, “in international politics, overwhelming power repels and leads others to balance against it.”¹³⁴ This basic hypothesis says that it is logical that China will attempt to balance the U.S. by fostering new relationships throughout the world and is part of what the NSC is attempting to establish. Since as stated in “China's National Defense in 2000” (a Chinese “white paper”), American “neo-interventionist,” “neo-gunboat” policy and U.S. resistance to reunification with Taiwan

¹³² See “Chinese President Calls for New Security Concept”, summary of a March 26, 1999 speech by Jiang Zemin before the United Nations Conference on Disarmament in Geneva, accessible at <http://www.china-embassy.org>. These principles are reiterated in the Chinese white paper entitled, *China's National Defense 2000* (Beijing: Information of the State Council, October 2000). Bates Gill, *Contrasting Visions: United States, China and World Order*, Presented to the U.S.-China Security Review Commission Session on U.S.-China Relationship and Strategic Perceptions August 3, 2001. pp. 9-10

¹³³ *China's National Defense 2000* (Beijing: Information Office of the State Council, October 2000)

¹³⁴ Kenneth Waltz, “Evaluating Theories,” p. 915

threaten Sino-American relations, China, therefore, must enhance its military capability to protect its sovereignty and national interests.¹³⁵

This same 2000 white paper showed that China was questioning Deng's interpretation that 'peace and development' represented current world trends.¹³⁶ Officially, the 2000 white paper settled any question about China's perception of the overall situation concerning international security: "factors for instability in the world have 'markedly increased' and that the world is 'far from peaceful,' and that 'hegemonism' and 'power politics' are pointedly singled out...local wars are increasing, according to this assessment, and 'some countries' have purposely undermined the authority of the United Nations under the 'pretexts of "humanitarianism" and "human rights."'”¹³⁷

Based upon this accurate perception of the world situation, "Beijing has taken omnidirectional initiatives to cultivate new ties in Asia and beyond to improve its security environment, to ward off threats, and to protect its critical interests. It hopes that other powers—Japan, Europe, Russia and even Third World countries—would rise to help curb U.S. power and move the world toward greater multipolarization."¹³⁸ Clearly, U.S. power is singled out as the largest threat to Chinese interests and this despite unprecedented levels of bilateral cooperation and economic integration.

¹³⁵ The Information Office of China's State Council, "China's National Defense in 2000," Beijing Xinhua in English, 16 October 2000 in FBIS-China, 16 October 2000.

¹³⁶ *China Reconsiders Its National Security: The Great Peace and Development Debate of 1999, Project Asia Regional Assessment* (Alexandria, Virginia: CNA Corporation, December 2000)

¹³⁷ *China's National Defense 2000* (Beijing: Information Office of the State Council, October 2000).

¹³⁸ Yong Deng, *Hegemon on the Offensive: Chinese Perspectives on U.S. Global Strategy*, *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 116, No. 3 (Fall 2001) 358

This perception goes a long way to explain China's reverse in seeing Russia as the key relationship to balance American hegemony.

Both China and Russia are opposed to NATO expansion, U.S. national and theater missile defense programs, and NATO air war in Kosovo. They both advocate 'multipolarization of world politics,' support each other's policy in defending territorial integrity (Chechnya for Russia, and Taiwan for China), and share a commitment to crack down on 'ethnic separatism, international terrorism, regional radicalism, and transnational crimes' in central Asia.¹³⁹

In sum, Russian experience supports China's fears since Russia has attempted to join the West, but has failed. Russia, like China has been also treated as a threat by the West.¹⁴⁰ Moreover, from China's perspective, any attempt to become a responsible power and to "behave responsibly [may not succeed as] the U.S. sense of cultural superiority and 'potential racial exclusion' may have predisposed the United States to view China, 'a non-Western power,' as a threat."¹⁴¹ All these factors confirm Chinese affinity with Russia and her perception of America as a threat. China's predisposition to see the United States as an enemy has led to it to "find what it expected."

The official Chinese government view of the United States is indeed to see her as a hegemon bent upon thwarting any country or institution which denies the U.S. the right to project its power and pursue its interests. America, therefore, is a threat which must be countered and contained. Moreover, this threat is a centrally planned dominant thought, driving and lurking beneath and behind all American policy, no matter how far removed from China. No wonder China views the U.S. as a threat desiring to dominate any potential rival.

¹³⁹ *Renmin Ribao* [*People's Daily*, overseas edition], 19 July 2000.

¹⁴⁰ Yao Youzhi, "U.S. Strategic Orientation in the 21st Century as Viewed from the Kosovo War," *Zhongguo Junshi Kexue* (Beijing), 20 May 1999, 11-14 FBIS-China, 5 August 1999, 2

¹⁴¹ Niu Jun, "China and the United States—A very Particular Bilateral Relationship" in *Shijie Zhishi*, 1 February 2000, 30-32 in FBIS-China, 16 February 2000

It is necessary for the United States to see how it is perceived and attempt to remedy this perception. It is not in America's interest to be seen as a country bent either upon world domination or as a country attempting to contain China, especially if China is rising to become a legitimate world power. Since the concept of centrality is essential to the Chinese interpretation of American policy and America, must go about explaining how and why their methods and manners are not motivated by centrality or by a hegemonic worldview. Whether or not this is true, such concerted propaganda efforts would go along way towards addressing Chinese fears and misperceptions.

Besides having a paranoid view of America, which America has occasionally encouraged by its actions, China also looks at her vast populous and fears what internal unrest could do to the present regime. Beijing has often used varying forms of nationalism and intense patriotism to support a unity that overlooks internal problems while focusing on the external intruder or rival. Here the lens of domestic politics is employed. This would allow for the seeing events through a communist worldview hence the need for the party to stay in power and resisting change. The significance of this perspective is the failure to consider alternatives or a multi-party system since this could destroy the party's monopoly of power. As the current ruling elite see it, without the CCP in power, China has a real potential to unravel into chaos.

The Lens of Nationalism

China's Preservation of Stability

Nationalism is a recurring theme in discussions regarding China, and the views of its possible implications vary. Nationalism must be properly understood in order to draw an accurate assessment of China's potential responses to recent and future issues in Sino-American relations. For the Chinese, nationalism is interpreted through the historical lens of China's past humiliations. The party sees nationalism as a tool to galvanize the populace against domination by outside powers and to further stability.

There is great dispute as to whether this new nationalism is a benign patriotism or rampant jingoist nationalism designed to keep the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in power and the people focused more on external issues. In the second case, American, Taiwanese and Japanese actions, could be stressed over and in place of certain internal issues which might threaten to unseat the CCP regime. Maria Hsia Chang, in her article *Chinese Irredentist Nationalism: the Magician's Last Trick*, sees this as the more accurate reading, warning that this new nationalism is a

“volatile mixture of memories of past humiliation, the conviction that the People's Republic is presently being thwarted from achieving greatness by the established powers, and an irredentist resolve to reclaim lost territories. Chinese irredentism not only threatens neighboring countries in Asia and the Pacific, it poses vexing dilemmas for U.S. policy makers in Washington.”¹⁴²

After the June 1989 Tiananmen Square protests, the CCP began a campaign to reeducate the nation's youth in patriotism, nationalism and expanding military training. The June incident was officially called a “counter-revolutionary rebellion” which had been influenced by foreign enemies, namely the U.S. and Taiwan. And it was stressed in

¹⁴² Chang, Maria Hsia, “Chinese Irredentist Nationalism: The Magician's Last Trick,” *Comparative Strategy* Vol. 17, No. 1 Jan. -March 1998 Pg. 2

the public media that the Chinese people must stay united under the CCP, lest the country fall into chaos.¹⁴³

According to the *The People's Daily*, the official paper of the CCP, a new document entitled *The Selected Works for Instruction in Patriotic Education*, was created in order "to fill an ideological vacuum" by exhorting the Chinese People to "love their country" and not to "forget the humiliation of foreign aggression."¹⁴⁴ According to Lou Guojie, a mainland scholar, nationalism is more a love for society, nation, and the state, whereas patriotism is understood to mean "loyalty to the prince."¹⁴⁵ Representing the other perspective, Christine Loh, a Hong Kong legislator, explained Chinese Nationalism by saying that, "If you don't bear a grudge against China's historical oppressors, then you don't *ai guo* (love your country) enough."¹⁴⁶

The Chinese Communist Party, is certainly committed to a concerted effort to legitimize its rule through nationalism. But are the consequences simply too much for the Chinese to bear? Given the fact that access to information is limited for much of the population, popular absolute belief in "facts" as presented by the CCP regime has the potential to sour relations between China and many countries: popular backlash and emotional jingoism are only a slogan away. Of course manipulation of "truth" can further damage the CCP's credibility, once the true facts are revealed.

Most western analysts look upon Chinese nationalism in a negative light.

Scholars such as Allen Whiting, Strecker Downs, Philip C. Saunders, and Michael

¹⁴³ Nyan Chanda and Kari Huus, "China: The New Nationalism" *Far Eastern Economic Review* Nov. 9, 1995 Pg. 20

¹⁴⁴ China Prints Books to Educate Farmers, *San Francisco Chronicle*, Nov. 28, 1995 A11

¹⁴⁵ Lou Guojie, "Hongyang zhonghua minzu youliang daode chuantong (Widely Publicize the Chinese Nation's Excellent Moral Tradition)." *Contemporary Thought*, No. 4 (1994) pp 4-6).

¹⁴⁶ "Shades of Loyalty," *The Economist*, April 13, 1996, p. 80

Oksenberg have been studying nationalism to see if “Chinese nationalism is affirmative, assertive, or aggressive.”¹⁴⁷ Others, such as, Ying-shih Yu, professor of Chinese philosophy, believes Chinese nationalisms ultimate aim is to replace the West as the dominant culture and make the next century a “Chinese-Century.”¹⁴⁸

Noted author, Samuel P. Huntington, softens Yu’s perspective, believing that China wants to re-emerge as the paramount power in East Asia in order to end the West’s and Japan’s century-long domination, disgrace and subordination of China.¹⁴⁹ James Lilley seems to concur, saying that, “there is a rallying cry for Chinese everywhere...that after a century of humiliation and Mao’s social and economic experiments China’s time has come...it [China] will rise in the world to the place it deserves.”¹⁵⁰ Scholars, Richard Bernstein and Ross Munro agree. They see China using nationalism as the driving force, in an attempt to redeem herself from past humiliations, to achieve international standing, and ultimately replace the U.S. in Asia.¹⁵¹

Historically, nationalism is a “modern concept [which] combines the political notion of territorial self-determination, the cultural notion of national identity, and the moral notion of national self-defense in an anarchical world.”¹⁵² Though this definition was originally European in nature, it has the potential to make China an aggressive power.

¹⁴⁷ Allen Whiting, “Assertive Nationalism in Chinese Foreign Policy,” *Asian Survey*, 23 (August 1983): 913-933; and Whiting, “Chinese Nationalism and Foreign Policy After Deng,” *The China Quarterly*, June 1995, 295-316; Erica Strecker Downs and Philip C. Saunders, Legitimacy and the Limits of Nationalism: China and the Diady Island,” *International Security* 23 (Winter 1998-99): 114-146; Michael Oksenberg, “China’s Confident Nationalism,” *Foreign Affairs* 65 (Winter-Spring 1986-87): p. 504

¹⁴⁸ Ying-shih Yu, “Minzu zhuyi de jiedu” (Interpretation of Nationalism), *Minzhu Zhongguo* (Democratic China) (electronic edition), no. 35, June – July 1996

¹⁴⁹ Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), p. 229

¹⁵⁰ James R. Lilley, “Nationalism Bites Back,” *New York Times*, 24 October 1996

¹⁵¹ Richard Bernstein and Ross H. Munro, “The Coming Conflict with America,” *Foreign Affairs* 76 (March/April 1997): p 19.

¹⁵² Suisheng Zhao, “Chinese Nationalism and Its International Orientations,” *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 115 No. 1 (Spring 2000): p. 3

If the twenty-first century is indeed Chinese, and China is still smarting from the historical wrongs and humiliations of her past, the future may not be too promising especially if she has the power and the ability to rectify these past wrongs and any other potential future humiliation.

Benjamin Schwartz does not over state his case when he states nationalism marks a major turn in a new direction for modern Chinese culture.¹⁵³

All leaders of China in the twentieth century have been fiercely determined that China must be restored as a great power. In the words of Suisheng Zhao, Executive Director of the Center for China-US Cooperation states:

all Chinese leaders from Sun Yat-sen, Chiang Kai-shek, and Mao Zedong to Deng Xiaoping, and Jiang Zemin have shared a deep bitterness at China's humiliation. They determined to blot out the humiliation and restore China to its rightful place as a great power. Having accepted the norm of modern nation-state system, these leaders no longer thought of China as the center of the world and Chinese culture as a universal set of values. However, they were convinced that China ought to stand equal with other great powers and that there is something profoundly wrong with a world that denied it this status.¹⁵⁴

John Garver, in his book *Foreign Policy of the People's Republic of China*, tells of the desire to restore China as a great power is the catalyst behind Chinese nationalism.¹⁵⁵ Zhao adds that this view supports China's current goal and mantra of successful politics within China.¹⁵⁶ In other words, nationalism is an attempt by the CCP to awaken China's nascent power. This mentality can be seen in the offense China took during the embassy bombing in Kosovo in 1999, and the "spy plane" incident in April

¹⁵³ Benjamin I. Schwartz, "Culture, Modernity, and Nationalism – Further Reflections" in Tu Weiming, ed., *China in Transformation* (Cambridge University Press, 1993), p 247

¹⁵⁴ Zhao, "Chinese Nationalism and its International Orientations," *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 115, No. 1 (Spring 2000), p. 4

¹⁵⁵ John W. Garver, *Foreign Policy of the People's Republic of China* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1993), p. 20.

¹⁵⁶ Zhao, "Chinese Nationalism and its International Orientations," *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 115 No. 1 (Spring 2000), p. 4

2001. China must create the image of a country denied its preeminence among the world's powers, or else admit that she herself or her ruling party elite are to blame for her current lack of preeminence. An outward focus helps to detract from internal issues and covers over problems which would otherwise fall at the Chinese government's doorstep.

Within China there are three of the dominant Chinese strains of Nationalism:

Nativism, Antitraditionalism, and Pragmatism.

Nativism

Nativism sometimes referred to as, "Confucian fundamentalist nationalism" 儒家民族主义 (rujiaminzuzhuyi). Nativism calls for:

a return to Confucian tradition, [since] the impact of imperialism on Chinese self-esteem and the subversion of indigenous Chinese virtues are the root of China's weakness. It asserts that China's decline is primarily due to foreign transgressions and that the sine qua non of national recovery is vigilance against foreign insults and pressure. In the Nativist view, the eradication of foreign influences is the route to revived national strength. National salvation must be attained through exclusive reliance upon indigenous virtues and ideas. Nativism is often related to confrontational antiforeignism, which is hyper sensitive to perceived foreign insults and often [responds] militant[ly]. Nativism may thus turn into ultranationalism, which believes that other nations or nation-states are either inferior or threatening and must be dealt with harshly. Ultrnationalism is characterized by suspicion, dislike, or fear of other nations and is associated with feelings of national superiority and with superpatriotism, an intensity that makes ultrnationalism to a certain extent similar to fundamentalism.¹⁵⁷

Nativist nationalism was preeminently expressed during the Boxer Rebellion of 1900 and during the Cultural Revolution (1966-76). More recently, the 1996 best seller *Zhongguo Keyi Shuo Bu*, or *The China that Can Say No*, offer a bold response to the dominance of America and other Western powers in current world affairs. Of course, the authors continue the popular belief that foreign powers, especially the American

¹⁵⁷ Suisheng Zhao, "Chinese Nationalism and its International Orientations," *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 115, No. 1 (Spring 2000), pp. 5,11

“hegemon,” are attempting to check China’s advance. Carrying this logic to its end, they even suggest that the moral decline and other social ills within China are a result of Western values infiltrating Chinese society. Nativism sees within China sufficiency to rectify any ill it may face versus using the west and its philosophy.

Antitraditionalism

The second strain on nationalism coursing through China is Antitraditionalism, which “sees China’s tradition as the source of its weakness. To revive China, elites took a hostile view toward China’s past, calling for the complete rejection of Chinese tradition and boundless adoption of Western culture.”¹⁵⁸

The most prominent example of Antitraditionalist Nationalism in China was the May Fourth Movement of 1919 blamed many of China’s traditional ideas for China’s weakness and her inability to deliver herself from foreign domination. Thus many turned to then iconoclastic Marxism to rectify wrongs.

As a result of the Treaty of Versailles’ failure to secure Chinese sovereignty against Japanese aggression, China’s intellectuals began to cast about for foreign ideologies to adapt to China’s National characteristics and rectify China’s ills. In the 1950’s when Mao ordered the destruction of the “four olds” – ideas, culture, customs,

¹⁵⁸ Suisheng Zhao, “Chinese Nationalism and its International Orientations,” *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 115 No. 1 (Spring 2000), pg. 7

¹⁵⁸ Suisheng Zhao, *Ibid.* pg. 9

*Song Qiang, Zhang Zangzang, and Qiao Bian, *Zhongguo Keyi Shou Bu* (The China that Can Say No) (Biejing: Zhonghua Gongshang Lianhe Chubanshe, 1996) This book is *the most-discussed best-seller in China, China Can Say No -- Political and Emotional Choices in the Post Cold War Era* (May, 1996). *China that Can Say No* borrows from 1991 tract by the Japanese Nationalist Shintaro Ishihara, *A Japan That Can Say No*. See http://www.npq.org/archive/1996_fall/china_say_no.html

and habits-and to destroy any remnants of Confucianism this too exhibited

Antitraditionalist strains.

Once China was opened to reforms in the late 1970s and early 1980's, Chinese traditional culture came under attack due to the excesses carried out under Mao since these very traditions allowed for the excesses which were committed during the Great Proletariat Cultural Revolution. These attacks were "code" for attempting to reform China. Since it was taboo to attack the Communist Party, 'traditional' Chinese culture and Chinese national character became targets of criticism. Many criticize China's 'feudal culture' for the country's absolutism, narrow-mindedness, love of orthodoxy, and even called Chinese people ugly."¹⁵⁹ In fact, it is not uncommon to see many Chinese actively studying Western ideas and means in order to advance China economically and nationally. China's own traditions are rejected and the "adversary's" language, culture, philosophies and systems are embraced. Here is China's love/hate relationship with her perceived adversary in a nutshell.

Pragmatism

The third common strain of Chinese nationalism emphasized Pragmatism.

Historically Chinese pragmatic nationalism sees:

foreign economic exploitation and cultural infiltration as a source of Chinese weakness, but believes that the lack of modernization is the reason why China became an easy target for Western imperialism. China fell victim to external imperialism because political decay, technological backwardness, and economic weakness had eliminated any possibility of defending itself. Pragmatists would like to adopt whatever approach may make China strong. Since the 1980s, pragmatism has undoubtedly dominated the thinking of Chinese people. Most communist leaders, including Deng Xiaoping, Zhao Ziyang, Hu Yaobang, and Jiang Zemin, are pragmatists. They have adopted a strategy of modernization by

taking any pragmatic policies justified by the slogan, 'building socialism with Chinese characteristics'...they have tried to make China strong by gaining access to the world's most advanced science and technology and by opening commercial and cultural exchanges with all foreign countries, including the advanced industrial democracies. In the meantime, they have rejected what they deemed not fitting with 'Chinese characteristics,' including any ideas that may threaten their authoritarian rule.¹⁶⁰

Perhaps the most famous example of Pragmatism was Deng Xiaoping's declaration that "It doesn't matter if a cat is black or white, as long as it catches mice." For Deng and other pragmatic nationalists, the method is unimportant and the vehicle is relative as long as it accomplishes the proper goal: nation building.

The practical implications of each perspective are explained by Suisheng Zhao, "Nativism infuses xenophobia into a confrontational policy toward the Western powers, Antitraditionalism tries to adapt to the modern world by invocation of certain foreign models; and pragmatism lies between the two, asserting China's national interests by both reacting to and absorbing from the outside world."¹⁶¹

It is of vital importance to discover the exact strain of nationalism being embraced by China, since each carries consequences that may not be for the Chinese alone to bear. Should China revert to a xenophobic Nativism similar to that employed during the Cultural Revolution, Sino-American relations will certainly deteriorate. Pragmatism or some forms of Anti-traditionalism would perhaps be most conducive to propel relations, since both are using "the best of both worlds"-- not only seeing the good of the West, but the bad, and selecting which is most useful for China. Obviously, to simply label nationalism as "jingoist" is too simple; nationalism must be viewed in context. For China's leaders, nationalism must not develop along an anti-foreign Nativist lines To do

¹⁶⁰ Zhao Ibid, 9-10

¹⁶¹ Zhao, Ibid.10,

so could spell a return to past isolationist traditions and the very opposite of the global growth and recognition she seeks.

The bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade produced, in China, a Nativist “knee-jerk” reaction that was fueled by the Chinese government. This led to the damaging of the U.S. and Irish Embassies, as well as the personal injury of some *Western-looking* persons. If China and its leaders expect to be taken seriously in international relations, such events must not occur. Perspective is essential. To the Chinese, past humiliations and perceptions of centrality in American actions the government’s need to keep domestic China stable and unified while lenses may seem justified, they must be set aside in order for discussions between the two countries to be clear-headed, progressive and successful.

Recent Events Interpreted

This section will highlight a few key events, and examine how perceptions and misperceptions effected and were effected by the final outcomes. Many of these interactions were fraught with error and accomplished less-than-desirable results. But as we learn from our mistakes we can discover the hope in Sino-American Relations.

Tiananmen 1989

Though many years have now elapsed, one of the most damaging modern incidents for Sino-American relations was and perhaps still is the Chinese state’s repression of the student protestors in Tiananmen Square in June 1989.

American perceptions of China previous to the beginnings of normalization in 1979 were negative, but improving. Initially, when the U.S. and China began to normalize relations in 1972, 71% of Americans looked on China with an “unfavorable” opinion, versus 23% with a “favorable” one. Continuing through the 1970s until 1979, most viewed China in an overall “unfavorable” light. When the U.S. and China officially recognized each other diplomatically following Nixon’s visit, U.S. public opinion of China changed dramatically to 65% “favorable” and 25% “unfavorable.”

Mirroring this rapprochement, public opinion continued to swing in favor of China during the 1980s. According to a February 1989 Gallup Poll before the Tiananmen Square protests, 72% of the Americans looked upon China “favorably” and 13% “unfavorably.” In July 1989, after the Tiananmen protests of June 1989 and just five months after the earlier Gallup poll, 31% of Americans viewed China “favorably” and 58% “unfavorably.” In 1990 and 1991, polls showed that most Americans looked upon China, with 39% and 35% respectively, with “favorable views,” and 47% and 53% respectively, as having “unfavorable impressions.”¹⁶² Since population’s and national media so easily adapt the binary logic of the “good” or “bad” cognitive-affect balance, one simple visible event can quickly and powerfully change a whole nation’s perception of another. Such views are emotional and often are not amenable to argument and logical refutation.

Taiwan

Presently, the U.S. policy towards Taiwan is described as ‘strategic ambiguity’ by scholars familiar with the region. The Taiwan Relations Act states that the United States

¹⁶² Harry Harding, “A Fragile Relationship: The United States and China since 1972,” *Brookings Institution*, December 1992, p 363

would “consider any effort to determine the future of Taiwan by other means than peaceful means... a threat to the peace and security of the Western Pacific area and of grave concern to the United States.”¹⁶³ While trying to keep all happy, the current policy of strategic ambiguity has hindered consultations with U.S. allies since Washington itself may not be entirely sure what it would do in a true crisis. Furthermore, strategic ambiguity has hampered communication between the U.S. and Taiwan. In the 1995-96 Taiwan Straits crisis, many Pentagon and intelligence specialists did not know just how Taiwan would respond to the China’s provocative missile tests across the Strait.¹⁶⁴ Many factors influence U.S. decisions and actions regarding Taiwan, include:

the promotion of democracy, the preservation of U.S. credibility, loyalty to traditional allies and friends, the engagement and integration of an emerging power into the international system, and the maintenance of peace and stability in Asia as a whole. The interplay and clash among these various goals make the Taiwan Strait an unpredictable and therefore dangerous place. Moreover, Taiwan’s recent democratization has undermined the ‘one-China’ policy and made the prospect of conflict increasingly likely. Compounding the problem is the deep division with the U.S. foreign policy elite over how to maintain the increasingly fragile peace there.”¹⁶⁵

Given the increased tensions, lack of meaningful dialogue, and increased rhetoric on both sides of the strait, Washington’s current policy is obviously unable to affect change. Therefore, Washington must find a new way if she is to be an agent of resolution to this dilemma.¹⁶⁶

To China, the American approach appears to be centrality, especially if mixed and unclear signals are sent leaving China to guess what is being said. From the Chinese perspective, close adherence to the “One China” policy is essential for all sides to be

¹⁶³ Kurt M. Campbell and Derek F. Mitchell, Crisis in the Taiwan Strait? *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2001, Vol. 80 No. 4

¹⁶⁴ Kurt M. Campbell and Derek F. Mitchell Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Kurt M. Campbell and Derek F. Mitchell, Ibid

¹⁶⁶ Kurt M. Campbell and Derek F. Mitchell, Ibid. p. 24

communicating clearly when in a discussions especially since this is a major policy concern of the Chinese and a tenet of the 1972 Shanghai Communiqué signed both by the US. and China.

The Belgrade Embassy Bombing

Perhaps the most severe test for modern Sino-American relations was the 1999 bombing of the Chinese embassy. The event could not be adequately understood by the Chinese as anything other than an attempt to thwart China's growth and its influence. As a result of China's inability to find a coherent reason for such a tragic event, centrality was gain employed to analyze American actions. To the Americans, an apology and stating the event as an accident adequately explained the incident. However the perceived failure on the Chinese side to take the American explanation and apologies seriously combined with the lack of accurate reporting in the state-run media further damaged U.S. perception of China. The controlling effect of domestic politics on American perceptions as well as the idea of a free and open press, further strengthened the popular perception that China is "bad." Finally, what appeared to be the calculated manipulation of the Chinese citizenry's angst by the Chinese government to further solidify its grasp upon the hearts and minds of the populace showed most Americans that the Beijing rulers were coldhearted and untrustworthy.

Hainan Spy Plane Incident

A final recent event which further strained relations was the April 1, 2001 collision between a Chinese and an American military plane. The resulting diplomatic fallout produced a fight over the American refusal to apologize and the Chinese demand for one. In the end, China was able to get an official "apology" but chose to disseminate

a version different than what the Americans originally offered. The war of words showed the different factors influencing each side's decisions. The Americans were operating from a domestic system rooted in the Rule of Law. They therefore felt and that an American apology constituted an admission to wrongdoing and thus opened them to liability. This, from the American perspective, could potentially put the American crew at risk of a trial. To the Chinese, operating with a 人情味 or "the flavor of human feeling" the emotional value of the apology was essential, especially in light of the death of the Chinese pilot.¹⁶⁷ Different values led both sides to perceive the issues differently and ultimately contributed to misperceived motives.

Degrees of Regret

China at first insisted that the United States deliver a "daoqian": **道歉** (formal apology conveying admission of wrongdoing)

The United States letter accepted by China did not include "daoqian," or "apology." And although the English-language phrases used by the United States government and the official New China News Agency were identical, the Chinese translations varied:

| ENGLISH | CHINESE-LANGUAGE STATEMENT RELEASED BY U.S. EMBASSY | CHINESE-LANGUAGE REPORT IN THE NEW CHINA NEWS AGENCY |
|----------------|--|---|
| sincere regret | 诚挚的遗憾 chengzhi de yihan (sincere regret) | 真诚的遗憾 zhencheng de yihan (sincere regret) |
| very sorry | 非常惋惜 feichang wanxi (very sorrowful) | 深表歉意 shen biao qianyi (to express profound regret) |
| very sorry | 非常抱歉 feichang baoqian (very sorry) | 深表歉意 shen biao qianyi (to express profound regret) |

Sources: U.S. Government, New China News Agency

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The above graphic shows two different versions: the left column state what was said in Chinese by the American embassy, with the interpretation given by the New China News Agency on the right. Perception played a crucial role in how both sides

¹⁶⁷ Professor Fei-Ling Wang: Chinese react online to spy plane incident April 4, 2001
<http://edition.cnn.com/COMMUNITY/transcripts/2001/04/04/wang/>

¹⁶⁸ US Government Statement, April 2001

interpreted both their responsibilities and their statements. The Chinese version released to the Chinese public expressed a greater degree of regret, implying guilt and wrongdoing the Beijing government felt compelled to show that "proper" contrition was wrung from the arrogant American hegemon.

Post September 11th Cooperation

Since September 11, 2001, Sino-American relations have taken a turn for the better. Both sides have realized that there are other and greater threats, threats that they share in common. Given the American media's penchant for reportage on the "Chinese Peril," many must now wonder if the sudden turn of Washington's approach may portend a return to reason.¹⁶⁹ One potential reason for China and America to help each other is their congruent desire to control fundamentalist extremism within their borders--in this case, China's western Uighur populace and those within America who have affiliations with al Qaeda.

Chinese citizens were also victims of the September 11th terrorist attacks; then-President of China Jiang Zemin was one of the first to contact President Bush to offer condolences and support. China willingly lent its influence with Pakistan to encourage it to abandon the Taliban in the wake of the New York and Washington terrorist attacks. Additionally, China was quick to back the UN resolution which froze suspected terrorists' assets and closed its western border with Afghanistan. In an unprecedented December 2001 meeting, experts from both countries met to share information and potential methodologies to for dismantling terrorisms support networks. Further

¹⁶⁹ Fareed Zakaria, "The Big Story Everyone Missed" *Newsweek*, Dec. 30, 2002/Jan. 6 2003. Pg. 52

concessions by China even allowed for an FBI legal attaché office in the American Embassy in Beijing, a striking concession give the state of relations one year previously.

Again, in the spring of 2002 when nuclear tensions were heating up between India and Pakistan, China used its influence in coordination with Colin Powell to relieve tensions.¹⁷⁰ This cooperation may pave the way for still closer ties between the U.S. and China, enabling Asia to be more stable. This is especially true in the wake of North Korea's decision to withdraw from the Non-Proliferation Treaty, a move which has the potential to cause Japan to go nuclear and revise its constitution to allow for preemptive military action.

Most recently, Colin Powell praised China for its help in resolving the North Korean nuclear crisis. Powell stated that Sino-US relations, though strained as recently as three years ago, are now at a 30-year high.¹⁷¹

Perhaps recent cooperation shows that both sides are learning to understand one another. Perhaps future perceptions will be more accurate and informed, less driven by subjective factors. Certainly for the present there is a growing area of common concern which has the potential to point the way forward

Outstanding Issues in Need of Dialogue

Common Strategic Interests

Despite the many differences between the United States and China, commonalities and similar goals do exist, and these areas of cooperation, which include

¹⁷⁰ H.D.S. Greenway, "The China threat fades away Bush needs help, and Beijing seems likely to oblige," *International Herald Tribune*, 14 January 2003.

¹⁷¹ Strait Times Asia <http://straitstimes.asia1.com.sg/asia/story/0,4386,218664,00.html>? Nov. 7, 2003

the following, must be capitalized upon. China hand Ezra Vogel gives the following list of areas of mutual concern:¹⁷²

1. Stability of the International Order: Both the U.S. and China are interested in limiting arms proliferation.
2. Expanding Trade and Preserving Open International Markets: Both countries benefit from trade and global markets.
3. Strengthening International Organizations: Both the U.S. and China have fundamental interests in international organizations like the United Nations, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Since China's influence is growing, China must be actively and positively involved.
4. A Prosperous and Stable China: If China was to become unstable, given its massive population, the resulting refugee flows and instability in Asia would require a massive relief effort, destabilizing the whole of Asia. But should China's economy continue to grow, it will help to promote stability and economic growth throughout the region.
5. A Peaceful Resolution in Taiwan and Tibet: Both the Taiwan and Tibet sovereignty issues must be resolved peacefully. Otherwise, these could result in a widening of conflict.
6. Terrorism: China and the United States have had a coming together since the terrorist attacks of September 11th, 2001, through sharing of information to combat crime and other worthwhile endeavors.

David Shambaugh's article *The Inescapable Ambiguity* further illustrates ties which help to bind the U.S. and China to each other.¹⁷³ As his observations are trenchant, they will be quoted at length.

In the security realm, numerous concrete areas of cooperation exist. Both governments:

- share a common desire to stem the spread of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and their means of delivery;
- seek to control the spread of fissile nuclear material and other militarily and strategically sensitive items;
- adhere to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) (despite non-ratification by the U.S. Senate) and work together in the field of non-proliferation;
- share a common desire to bring both India and Pakistan into the NPT and CTBT, and to freeze the nuclear programs of both nations before they move to weaponization and deployment;
- share common interests in a peaceful, WMD-free, economically viable, socially stable, and ultimately reunified Korean peninsula;
- share a mutual desire for a peaceful resolution of the Taiwan problem, and agree on the important "One China Principle".

¹⁷² Ezra F. Vogel, *Living with China U.S.—China Relations in the Twenty-first Century*, The American Assembly, (Columbia University, W.W. Norton and Company New York, 1997), pp. 30-31

¹⁷³ The extended quote is taken from David Shambaugh, "The Inescapable Ambiguity: China and the U.S. share a network of cooperation—and competition." www.Asiaweek.com 20 April 2001 Vol. 27, No. 15

"These are all important strategic commonalities. In addition, the two governments cooperate on what may be described as "low security" issues: combating narcotics trafficking; fighting organized crime; controlling alien smuggling and piracy; controlling weapons smuggling; protecting the environment; working together in peacekeeping operations and providing disaster relief. While world peace does not hang on these matters, the global security agenda is increasingly concerned with them, and they add heft to Sino-American interconnectivity."¹⁷⁴

With so many areas of agreement, it is striking that antagonisms-often deeply emotional ones still exist. Clearly, focusing on common ground is key to offsetting mutual distrust. But ultimately, the areas of disagreement cannot be ignored; they are unlikely to go away on their own.

Areas of Disagreement

Taiwan

The first issue that must be addressed is Taiwan. Without addressing this, there can be no lasting peace in Asia the failure to see the need for new ideas is a classic example of premature cognitive closure, especially on the mainland Chinese side given the many changes in Taiwan over the last couple of decades. . There must be constructive substantive dialogue between Beijing and Taipei. The current system is "fraught with danger" threatening both U.S. interests and broader issues with in the Asia-Pacific region.¹⁷⁵ Given the escalating tensions in the region, the lack of meaningful dialogue, and increased rhetoric, the U.S. needs to review its approach to the region.¹⁷⁶

The current potential for resolution is perhaps higher than ever before, given the known fact that "senior Chinese officials concede privately, that they are considering options besides the 'one country, two systems' formula that was used for former colonies, Hong Kong and Macau."¹⁷⁷ As David Shambaugh points out in his article "Facing Reality in China Policy," the idea of a confederation is one chance towards a lasting

¹⁷⁴ David Shambaugh, *Ibid.* www.Asiaweek.com 20 April 2001 Vol. 27, No. 15

¹⁷⁵ David Shambaugh, "Facing Reality in the China Policy" *Foreign Affairs* January/February 2001 Vol. 80, No. 1 p. 51

¹⁷⁶ Calder Kent E., "The New Face of Northeast Asia," *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2001 Vol. 80 No. 2

¹⁷⁷ David Shambaugh, *Ibid.* p. 24

solution.¹⁷⁸ Regardless, the current stalemate can only be broken if all parties are willing to consider new alternative scenarios.

National Missile Defense

The second issue is the pursuit of National Missile Defense (NMD) by the United States. This policy could potentially begin a second arms race in Asia, undermining stability in the region. Both sides must determine how to work with each other in this context.¹⁷⁹ To the Chinese, this is perceived as a clear product of American centrality, and so a classic security dilemma dynamic of arms escalation ensues. There may be a better way of bringing peace and security to our country while still encouraging the maintenance of a more stable Northeast Asia. Is America able to accurately perceive and account for China's fears?

The U.S. Role in Korea and Northeast Asia

The third area of tension is the Korean Peninsula, a dangerous situation which points out the clear need for a regional security apparatus "that redefines, yet enhances, U.S. mutual security alliances in East Asia and keeps American military forces forward-deployed, but in a way that China can live with."¹⁸⁰ Currently, China's official policy is to annul current U.S. alliances, demanding a withdrawal from the region. The current Chinese policy fails to recognize America's current role as a stabilizer in region. Once If America were to pull out of the region, who would fill the void? For both the Chinese and Americans, the inability to see potential new ways to resolve issues forces them to make old-fashioned decisions that do not befit the present time and way of life. Once again, premature cognitive closure, or the inability to reconcile new information into an old paradigm, is preventing both sides from adequately accounting for the constraints and possibilities of Globalization.

¹⁷⁸ David Shambaugh Ibid p. 51

¹⁷⁹ David Shambaugh, Ibid

¹⁸⁰ David Shmabaugh Ibid

Divided American Policy

Finally, Washington is currently divided into two camps by the conflicting perceptions that China is either a huge market waiting to be tapped or, conversely, a threat.¹⁸¹ Indeed, if some view China as a market and some as a threat, America's China policy will necessarily continue flip-flopping, sending mixed signals. America needs to find a middle way between engagement and containment which allows it to meet its desired needs of engaging China and potentially liberalizing China, while also ensuring that major policy issues, such as a peaceful resolution to the question of Taiwan, will be enforced. The current lack of consensus in U.S. policy is inherently destabilizing. A China that cannot predict U.S. actions will herself be necessarily unpredictable. Domestic confusion must not dictate the terms to rapprochement.

In sum, many core American foreign policy goals are at risk:

IV. Toward a Healthy Sino-American Relation

Basis for Active Engagement with China

To resolve the fundamental issues between China and the U.S., both sides must ask honest questions of each other and themselves in order to establish a common ground in negotiation. It is, therefore, critical that all sides understand first what perceptions each carries when viewing the other. It must also be acknowledged that both countries stand

¹⁸¹ Calder Kent E., *The New Face of Northeast Asia*, *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2001 Vol. 80 No. 2

to gain from closer ties. Until both sides recognize rapprochement as in their best interests, all efforts at reconciliation will be necessarily hamstrung.

Academician and policy-maker Kenneth Lieberthal's 2001 policy brief for the Brookings Institute expresses clearly many of the factors that should drive both sides eagerly towards the drawing table.¹⁸²

America has a fundamental interest in China's accepting international norms and rules. Sino-American relations are typically at their best when Beijing adopts international norms and rules, then works to achieve these goals. Other areas, such as human rights, have shown over history that sanctions or other rhetoric does not achieve its desired end but, rather, is generally perceived as foreign bullying. Typically this leads China to reject international norms and, ultimately, inhibits progress.

The United States and Asia benefit from the type of stability that comes from China's meeting the needs and demands of its people. If China were to become unstable due to internal discontent, all of Asia would be affected. This tragedy would not be for the Chinese alone to bear, but all of Asia and, potentially, the world. At present, China faces major social, economic and political issues that affect its stability. Avoiding a massive breakdown is within America's interest but that need not require an endorsement of the current Chinese political system. Washington must work with Beijing to encourage liberalizing effects within the country and this should include giving China's masses a voice in government.

¹⁸² Paraphrased from Kenneth Lieberthal, U.S. Policy Toward China, *Brookings Institution*, Policy Brief #72, March 2001. I am heavily indebted to Lieberthal's assessment of how to better address Sino-American since his assessment addresses many foundational issues to bring rapprochement.

The United States must show China that it is not hostile. Rhetoric which reinforces China as enemy creates an environment of hostility. Since the 1980s, many Chinese believe that the United States is the least-friendly country to China. This perception must be changed. Both sides need to work together to help foster better relations and tone down rhetoric which causes further alienation.

Diplomatically, the United States must pursue a "one China" policy. The diplomatic premise that there is "one China" and that Taiwan is a part of it is fundamental to the U.S. relationship with the People's Republic of China (PRC). Given the United States' agreement with the Shanghai Communiqué in 1972, this formed the basis for Sino-America rapprochement. If the U.S. were to suddenly back out of the one China policy, it would deprive China of a core security issue, increase tensions, and only further sour relations. The future holds the promise of a peaceful resolution to the Taiwan question as China opens and future leaders are willing frankly address this difficult issue.

Engagement tends to further muddy the waters. American policy towards Taiwan to date can best be classified as "strategic ambiguity," which puts America somewhere between China and Taiwan. As an example during the Missile Diplomacy crisis of 1996, President Clinton sent two carrier battle groups into the region, which expressed American concern yet also provoked China. The United States must find a more active means to engage both countries within the one China framework a new policy of "conengagement." The stickiest aspect of this tense relationship is that, for the time being, there is no compelling reason for Taiwan to join China.

Maintaining peace and prosperity in Asia is in America's core economic and security interests. The United States must actively engage China to help promote

stability but must be prepared to act if China's actions threaten regional stability. As said above, one of the most volatile differences of opinion between China and the U.S. at this point is Taiwan a definite case of regional instability.

David Shambaugh, in his article *Facing Reality in China Policy*, has laid out a key component to bringing resolution to the Taiwan issue.

"Defense Consultation Talks allow "senior officials of the two military establishments to exchange views on global strategic and regional security issues. These talks also set the schedule for bilateral military exchanges. These exchanges are important to both sides for a number of reasons."¹⁸³

Regular annual meetings also help to promote understanding and to break down barriers to achieve broader consensus on issues and ultimate resolution. This is the case in China's WTO ascension and the controls placed on nuclear proliferation made public in late 2000.

These dialogues between senior officials on both sides can help formulate policy on recent events and the cost of implementation. Such dialogues will help both sides to see the value each country plays, moving discussions beyond petty differences and allowing major concerns to be clearly stated. Such annual meetings help communication between high-level officials and allow more open, productive communication during crises. Given China's desire to join WTO and America's willingness to openly communicate, such communication within other realms of Sino-American relations direly need such forthright communication to help resolve such pressing matters.¹⁸⁴ As of July 2005, annual high-level talks between China and the U.S. have been initiated.

Joseph Nye, in his writings, supports this perspective that is willing to work with China under current institutions and norms, until they prove to be "irresponsible" or until discussions fail. Nye brings optimism to the dialogue, which is rare but essential. The

¹⁸³David Shambaugh, *Foreign Affairs*, Ibid. Pg. 54

¹⁸⁴Kenneth Lieberthal, U.S. Policy Toward China, *Brookings Institution*, Policy Brief #72, March 2001

United States cannot treat China as an enemy and expect to find a friend. Just as Beijing must be willing to change its own approach towards Taiwan, so must the antagonists in the U.S. be willing to offer new perspectives towards Beijing. As Nye states,

There are a number of people who think that we should follow a policy of containment toward China similar to the policy of containment we followed toward the Soviet Union. I think that's a mistaken approach for several reasons. One is that the Soviet Union in the 1940s and China today are very different. The Soviet Union then was a communist country believing in expansionism under communist ideology. In China today, the ideology is a facade. The thing that really holds the Chinese together is nationalism, not ideology.

The other thing is that, unlike the Soviet Union in the 1940s, China's neighbors today don't see it as a clear and present danger. We couldn't organize such a coalition for containment if we tried. The only country that could contain China is a China that becomes a bully. And that might be a policy to follow sometime in the future if China does behave that way, but it would be a great mistake now. The reason -- and this is the third reason why that policy would be mistaken and why we resisted it -- is that we don't know what the future with China will be. If we predict failure, if we predict conflict, if we treat China as an enemy now, we're guaranteed an enemy. But in fact there's at least an equal chance or more that we can reach an arrangement with China where China will be a responsible power. If that's true, we'll be better off, China will be better off, and so will the other countries in East Asia.

So what we tried to do in designing our policy was to say, "Let's make sure that we have a position of strength by re-cementing the U.S. - Japan security relationship, and let's offer China a place at the table, a chance to be a responsible power in the region." So the first thing we did, essentially, was to reaffirm the U.S. - Japan security relationship to make sure China couldn't play off Japan against the U.S. But the second thing we did was then to tell China that we were willing to work with them on friendly terms if they acted as a responsible power. And President Clinton said to President Jiang Zemin, "We're not afraid of China as a strong power if China is a responsible power, and we will work with you on that."¹⁸⁵

Rejecting Mearsheimer's containment view, Nye's perspective is vital to normalized relations and offers a viable option, versus defining China only as a threat to be contained. Both the U.S. and China must take active steps to reconcile differences;

¹⁸⁵ Joseph Nye, *Conversations with History* University of California, Berkeley <http://globetrotter.berkeley.edu/conversations/Nye/nye-con3.html> See also: Henry A. Kissinger, "China: Containment Won't Work," *Washington Post* Monday, June 13, 2005; A19 http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/06/12/AR2005061201533.html?nav=rss_opinion/columns

otherwise, Sino-American relations will only continue to be “up and down” and potentially deteriorate to the point of non-reconciliation. To simply call each other names is counter-productive, fulfilling stereotypes.

According to Peter Hays Gries and Shiping Tang, three fundamental steps need to occur in the U.S. China relationship: first, both countries’ leaders should communicate areas of agreement versus areas of differences and be prepared for the inevitable conflicts which come about in any relationship. Second, both countries need to watch the language they use when communicating about the other—rhetoric is counterproductive. Clinton’s optimism, perhaps overly so, did help to create new positive dynamics within Sino-American relations. Conversely, George W. Bush’s billing of China as a threat has only hampered relations.¹⁸⁶

Both the United States and China must understand the perceptions they bring with them if they are to avoid future misunderstandings. The next section deals with reforms that both countries must undertake in order for there to be better relations. Some of these reforms will be difficult to implement but are necessary in order to promote stability and understanding in the wider context of Sino-American relations.

Suggested American Reforms:

America must undertake a wholesale reevaluation of its current China policy and the perception of China is based upon. Currently, many of the pressing issues in Sino-American relations are unresolved. While America, under Clinton, allowed for a much more positive view of China to be fostered, this was all largely nullified by the embassy bombing and domestic issues. George W. Bush’s re-classification of China as a

¹⁸⁶ Peter Hays Gries and Shiping Tang, “It’s time to anchor US-China relations” *The Christian Science Monitor*, 19 February 2002

“strategic competitor” is another setback to bilateral relations. Can this on-again off-again cycle be broken?

Reassessment of Popular Beliefs: Bates Gill, the Freeman Chair in China Studies at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, states that America needs to make three main changes in thinking to resolve the caustic nature of so many Sino-American interactions. First, the U.S. must understand Chinese patterns and differences and “let go” of old perceptions and approaches. This new found flexibility should allow America to employ several lenses as Jervis suggests in pursuit of a more accurate evaluation of Chinese intent. Such reforms would include reassessing common perceptions so as not to hold them with unflinching confidence. American policymakers need to be attentive and open to positive change in China fostered by the new international environment. This requires realism, and tangible goals which could dispel illusions, assist in the understanding of differences, and, ultimately, exploit opportunities. This kind of approach would downplay marginal breakthroughs, symbolic summitry, or exaggerated expectations of becoming ‘strategic partners’ or ‘strategic competitors, and emphasize common ground and substantive cooperation.¹⁸⁷

New China Policy: “Congagement” Currently U.S. policymakers lack the adequate understanding to craft an effective policy toward China--neither engagement or containment by itself works affectively. The U.S. must realize how history colors and constrains her perceptions of China. Because of this, Washington must not rely upon Beijing’s having a common evoked set: real differences exist and must be factored in.

¹⁸⁷ Bates Gill, *Contrasting Visions: United States, China and World Order*, Presented to U.S.-China Security Review Commission Session on U.S.-China Relationship and Strategic Perceptions, August 3, 2001

Finally, the influence of American domestic politics profoundly affects Washington's ability to craft affective China policy, as does China's domestic politics. This effect must be managed.

As John Ikenberry argued in a Foreign Affairs article:

Unchecked U.S. power, shorn of legitimacy and disentangled from the post-war norms and institutions of the international order, will usher in a more hostile international system, making it far harder to achieve American interests. The secret of the United States' long brilliant run as the world's leading state was its ability and willingness to exercise power within alliance and multinational frameworks, which made its power and agenda more acceptable to allies and other key states around the world.¹⁸⁸

If America takes a strictly inflexible approach to China policy, it will only provoke China, forcing China and her allies to attempt to balance the United States in a spiral of military escalation. As Joseph Nye has cogently observed, if "we treat China as an enemy now, we're guaranteed an enemy." America must "congage" China with a realistic hope—we must engage to contain. As President Clinton said to President Jiang Zemin, 'We are not afraid of China as a strong power if China is a responsible power, and we will work with you on that.'" ¹⁸⁹

Due to America's schizophrenic view of China, one calling for engagement and the other desiring containment, America should implement a policy of conengagement as suggested by the Rand Corporation."¹⁹⁰ Conengagement would address the concerns of both China lobbies in Washington by seeking to build a China that both develops peacefully and responsibly, and one that can be contained. Conengagement would seek to bring China into the current international system. Conengagement would be open to

¹⁸⁸ G. John Ikenberry, "America's Imperial Ambition," *Foreign Affairs*, September/October 2002, Vol. 81 No. 5 p. 56

¹⁸⁹ Joseph Nye, Conversations with History University of California, Berkeley
<http://globetrotter.berkeley.edu/conversations/Nye/nye-con3.html>

¹⁹⁰ Zalmay Khalilzad, Abram N. Shulsky, Daniel Byman, Roger Cliff, D. Orletsky, David A. Shlapak, Ashley J. Tellis *The United States and a Rising China*,
<http://www.rand.org/publications/MR/MR1082/MR1082.chap4.pdf> p. 72

Change in China and resistant to cognitive distortion. As the Rand Corporation's scholars envision it,

Congagement should foster:

1. Attempts to enhance military-to-military relations between Japan and South Korea. Efforts could include various "confidence building measures," such as more transparency with respect to their respective defense plans.
2. Attempts to enhance political-military cooperation among the ASEAN states. In particular, they should be encouraged to approach the issue of their overlapping claims to the Spratly Islands and the South China Sea in a multilateral context that includes China; however, a Chinese refusal to engage multilaterally should not prevent the other states from pursuing the issue among themselves.
3. Encouragement of a Japanese-Russian rapprochement, including a settlement of the dispute over the "northern territories."
4. Enhanced military-to-military cooperation between the United States and the ASEAN states.¹⁹¹

Further enhancement of relations with other countries in the region would also emphasize the danger of a belligerent China bent upon domination and the advantages of an engaged and open China.

In the wider context of popular dialogue concerning China, areas of agreement and the potential of China imploding need to be stressed.

Introduce the Possibility of a Weak, Disorganized China into the Debate. At present, American public discussion of China has mainly focused on one possible future China: a strong, antagonistic China (the "China threat"). America needs to consider other possibilities. Given China's transition from a State-run economy to a market-based economy, her social, political and economic structures are all under a great tension. Implosion is a possibility. Current internal pressures may prohibit the government from dealing with proliferation, attacking pollution, sustaining economic growth, fighting

¹⁹¹ Zalmay Khalilzad, et al., Ibid, <http://www.rand.org/publications/MR/MR1082/MR1082.chap4.pdf> p. 74

transnational crime, slowing the spread of HIV/AIDS, and managing the movement of people across the country's borders. Failure in any area is bad for China and bad for Asia. Ultimately, a weak and unstable China is as great a threat as a strong and antagonistic China. "Indeed, an unstable China might even be more inclined to adopt an anti-American posture in order to mobilize domestic support."¹⁹² Washington, therefore, needs to help China build, in order to reduce China's chances of failure and improve its opinion of America.¹⁹³ David Shambaugh states, "However, a prosperous, stable, and responsible China is clearly in American national interests—and modernizations and growth in certain civilian realms will move China in that direction."¹⁹⁴

Provide assistance to increase China's capacities and willingness to manage those issues where Chinese success can have beneficial transnational consequences.

The United States relies on Chinese efforts to address many transnational issues that have a "Chinese component." These areas are extensive and important including such things as environmental protection, controlling the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery, trade obligations, and countering transnational crimes, such as terrorism, narcotics trafficking, and illegal smuggling of people. But at present many U.S. laws and policies prohibit Sino-American cooperation in these areas.¹⁹⁵

In the areas where China's success is fully compatible with American interests, Washington should seek the legal and political changes necessary for America to provide

¹⁹² Kenneth Lieberthal, U.S. Policy Toward China, *Brookings Institution*, Policy Brief #72, March 2001

¹⁹³ Kenneth Lieberthal, *Ibid*

¹⁹⁴ David Shambaugh, "Facing Reality in the China Policy," *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2001, Vol. 80, No. 1 p. 64

¹⁹⁵ Kenneth Lieberthal, U.S. Policy Toward China, *Brookings Institution*, Policy Brief #72, March 2001

appropriate technical and related assistance. Past practice strongly suggests that the most effective way to deal with China on such issues is to:

1. Initiate and support discussions among U.S. and Chinese specialists in order to develop Chinese counterparts who appreciate the problem and understand international experience and norms in dealing with it.
2. Seek agreements that commit the Chinese government to specific goals and methods.
3. Bolster those agreements with offers of technical and other assistance, as appropriate. Encourage the relevant American agencies to establish cooperative ties with their Chinese counterparts to handle the issues.
4. Rigorously monitor Chinese performance and provide the Chinese government, where possible, with information on compliance failures while holding it to its obligations on implementation.
5. Encourage, where practicable, Chinese participation in multilateral agreements in these spheres so as to achieve desired results while taking some of the burden off the U.S.-China relationship.¹⁹⁶

As Lieberthal states, this path is not an easy one.

This approach requires patience, persistence, strength and sensitivity. It is far more difficult, domestically, than simply identifying Chinese failings and applying sanctions to compel better behavior. But its potential benefits are substantial. They include: 1) improved Chinese technical abilities to deal with problems where Chinese failures affect American and other interests, recognizing that some of the problems that concern us reflect weaknesses in the Chinese system rather than insidious efforts by the Chinese government; 2) creation of constituencies in China that favor compliance with international norms and standards; 3) on-going American and international involvement in monitoring and improving implementation; 4) increased trust and reduced threat perceptions. American assistance in addressing serious Chinese problems weakens those in China who portray the United States as an implacable enemy bent on containing and undermining China. A broad approach can thus move China's capacities and perspectives in directions that meet American interests.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁶ Kenneth Lieberthal, *ibid*

¹⁹⁷ Kenneth Lieberthal, *Ibid*

Suggested Chinese Reforms

Below are suggestions China should take to reform itself internally. These recommendations below are designed to bolster China's international perception while facilitating its ability to cope with a modern, dynamic society and world. The goal is limit others' misperception of China and thus foster improved foreign relations.

China must pursue further market-based economic development. This will, in turn, cause the formation of a middle class and increased integration with the outside world, resulting in liberalizing effects within China. China's economic miracle is nothing beyond astounding, but it is important to take a long-term view of what reforms mean, currently, unemployment, and bankruptcy bankruptcy of state-owned enterprises capture the local headlines, breeding discontent. Instead, the Chinese government needs to focus on producing real future benefits and rigorously implement reform so that all will ultimately benefit despite perceived short-term set backs. ¹⁹⁸

Free and Open Media. A free and open media is fundamental to enabling people to make choices based upon facts, which, in turn, furthers their ability to compete and make necessary contributions to society-at-large. At present, inaccuracies regarding the "outside world" abound in China, due to the current government policy of rigorous control over the media. If the Chinese Communist Party is truly interested in reform, it must change to meet this current need within society. A segment of Chinese society is already aware of the government's manipulation of facts, causing disillusionment. China, therefore, must allow its citizenry free access to knowledge, in order to facilitate their

¹⁹⁸ Kenneth Lieberthal, U.S. Policy Towards China, Brookings Institution, Policy Brief#72, March 2001

ability to compete in the modern world. Censoring facts only fosters ignorance and sense of victimization. Without a free and open media, there can be no true accountability for the party. And a party that lies to its people and is not accountable to them is a party in crisis. Once again, instability threatens.

An Effective National Security Council (NSC) In times of crisis, China must have an effective National Security Council to rapidly produce coherent responses to international incidents. At present, hard-liners, moderates, and reformers jockey for position until a consensus can be reached. This is not healthy and can result in extreme tensions between China and the country which happens to find itself at odds with it.

Reconciling China's Differences with Taiwan. China, the U.S., and Taiwan must find a constructive means to end the current impasse concerning Taiwan. China must understand that force will not work, nor will Taiwan's simple declaration of independence. This issue alone has the potential to plunge the world's fastest growing economy, the current superpower, Taiwan, and all of Asia into a large scale war. China and Taiwan must find constructive means to end this dilemma and this requires that all parties be open to new ideas. China, in particular, must find a means to woo Taiwan. The current mainland political situation holds little appeal to the average Taiwanese; therefore, China must reform to facilitate reconciliation.

As time passes, the political, cultural, and emotional divide between Taiwan and the mainland will only widen further, even as economic and commercial ties continue to develop. So far, however, the PRC seems unable to understand and deal effectively with Taiwan's changing political climate. The rise of Chen's Democratic Progressive Party has challenged the mainland's Chinese Communist Party to consider a new paradigm for its relations with the island, but the CCP has yet to implement one. Instead, it continues to develop ties with the formerly ruling Koumintang Party through public and private meetings in Beijing and Hong Kong.

The PRC's determination to deal with only those Taiwanese who agree with its interpretation of the one-China policy has exacerbated the cross-strait divide.¹⁹⁹

China's current policy of threats towards Taiwan only repels Taiwan, reinforcing their perception of China as the enemy; this kind of rhetoric will not solve the cross-strait animosity. China must initiate new policies, allowing flexibility and room for differences which will make Taiwan desire to be part of China. Taiwan, too, must work with China to help foster this attitude.

Improving Human Rights and the Rule of Law in China. For many, China cannot maintain its current systematic maltreatment of certain sections of its population and still be considered a legitimate power. Additionally, until the Rule of Law is improved, certain groups will enjoy more privileges than others. This only serves to alienate large groups of China's population, fomenting social unrest and growing disparity. According to China's president, Hu Jintao, "A harmonious society will feature democracy, the rule of law, equity, justice, sincerity, amity and vitality,"²⁰⁰ The words are nice to hear, but Beijing must work hard to make them a reality.

The United Nation's Universal Declaration of Human Rights gives one basis for specific fundamental rights that should be granted to all individuals within a country.²⁰¹ Granting implementation of such rights may require a "revolution" in thought for the current Chinese government, but such implementation would grant the legitimacy that the Chinese regime so sorely lacks. If properly managed and imbued with true transparency,

¹⁹⁹ Calder Kent E., "The New Face of Northeast Asia", *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2001 Vol. 80 No. 2

²⁰⁰ *China's top security official calls for crackdown on "hostile forces" May 2005*
http://story.news.yahoo.com/news?tmpl=story&u=/afp/20050228/wl_asia_afp/chinanpcsecurity

²⁰¹ The United Nations, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, <http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.html>

such progress could redress many current injustices and bring new levels of stability to the Chinese state.

The Adoption of a Federalist Form of Government to Ensure Stability and Resolution of Grievances. The adoption of a federal system of government would enable laws to be enforced equally throughout China. Arbitration of their meaning would be carried out via an independent national court system, ensuring that new legislation while still leaving some room for local variation, would ultimately be interpreted in a consistent manner. This standard would be used to dismantle the current system in which numerous interpretations by regional party apparatchiks result in legal anarchy, injustice, and rule by personal whim. Additionally, individual grievances could be solved by a system of law precedent, ensuring equal protection under law. This would help address some of the injustices that produce discontent amongst so many of China's rural workers and citizenry. At the same time, this would go a long way towards silencing international condemnation of China's current government and legal system.

Political Scientist Minxin Pei sees the development of these kinds of mediating institutions as key.

Weak institutional channels of resolving state-society conflict [exists within China]. A related weakness of the present political system is the absence of credible institutions that would allow individuals and groups to articulate and pursue their own interests. In democratic systems, electoral and legislative processes do this, but in China, no institutions perform such functions reliably. In their absence, collective grievances will accumulate, leading in the long term to political instability. In the short term, collective grievances are increasingly expressed in violent protests. In fact, the government admitted there were 5,000 collective protests in 1998. [Therefore, there is an] absence of effective institutions to resolve conflicts within the state. China also has no functioning institutions that might resolve conflicts among the various components of the state.

The absence of such institutions, which would typically be provided for by federalism, causes cyclical opportunism characterized by frequent policy changes by the central government and resistance to those policies from local governments. Consequently, the policy environment is uncertain and law enforcement weak. In fact, the most serious problem facing China is not that it does not have democracy, but that it does not have federalism. That is, it lacks a clear division of responsibilities between the central and regional governments.²⁰²

Given the current situation within China, implementation of a federal system of government seems very unlikely. But were it to be implemented, the main criticism of China--its human rights record and concomitant lack of the Rule of Law--could be resolved. This might also help cross-strait relations, since the mainland would potentially have a more room to allow a much freer and open society to be absorbed into its own. Such a political/legal system would surely be more attractive to modern Taiwan.

Renouncing Jingoistic Nationalism. China's leaders must not allow nationalism to become the sole catalyst for keeping China together. Patriotism and nationalism are good qualities, but, as with any ideology, when taken to extremes they produce often unintended consequences. Nationalism first, relies upon emotional manipulation; second, deception and non-transparency; third, in the long term, it is uncontrollable; and finally, it is inherently unstable.

Though easy and attractive, Beijing must eschew chauvinistic nationalism if they hope to earn the trust of the international community and the United States.

Assume a More Prominent Role in the Resolution of the North Korean Situation. Since North Korea's commitment to restart its nuclear reactor at Yongbyon, China has proven very helpful in the United States' call for multilateral

²⁰² Minxin Pei, "Is China Stable?" *American Diplomacy*, Vol.4 No. 4 1999

talks. During the previous crisis in 1994, China was influential in helping to keep the Korean peninsula nuclear-free. China must assume this role willingly in the future as a demonstration of her commitment to help others find stability in the region.

During the recent revelations of North Korea's intent to restart its nuclear reactor, China was hesitant, insisting that only bilateral talks between the U.S. and North Korea should be conducted. Unfortunately, bilateral talks between the United States and North Korea would not yield the desired results. North Korea's negotiation style does not allow for honest and forthright discussions but prefers blackmail and bluster over substance. China must play a more influential role in pressuring Pyongyang into dismantling its many overt and covert programs that threaten to destabilize the region. China is the largest donor nation to North Korea, and, without this aid, Kim Jong Il's regime would collapse. China therefore, has an obligation to the region and the world to play a more leading role.

If China is, indeed, fearful of North Korea's collapse, and the potential garrisoning of American forces on its border, it should be forthright with this information and openly discuss this possibility with all parties involved so that a solution can be found. The current impasse makes China appear to be a by-stander, willing to comment, but unwilling to use its unmatched influence to help bring meaningful and helpful dialogue.

Means to Minimize Misperception--

As this paper has argued, correctly managing perception is key to enabling resolution and getting a proper view of events. Accurate perceptions enable decision-

makers to formulate more effective policy. Both Washington and Beijing must realize their current shortcomings in policy-making and implement means to craft policy that diminishes the potential for misperception and misunderstanding.

Otherwise, misperception will produce poor policies which will increase misunderstandings and thus confirm previous misperceptions. This cycle must be broken.

Counter Confidence in Popular Beliefs. Decision-makers must become aware of common errors in perception. In order to do so, policy-makers must use checklists of common mistakes to challenge their unflinching decrease their unflinching confidence in popularly held beliefs. Alternative images and scenarios should be presented in order to decrease discrepant information and challenge their long held assumptions. Devil's advocates should be regularly employed to ensure that other lenses are used and that beliefs and viewpoints do not become institutionalized, thus thwarting comprehensive analysis.²⁰³ Even the most basic assumptions must be analyzed in order to craft affective policy.²⁰⁴

How Would the Other Country See It?: In order to affectively and accurately perceive events, one must consider other viewpoints. Analysts should constantly ask, "How would China or America view this?" Often, actors assume others see their actions as peaceful when in fact the opposite is true. The goal of analysis should be accurate perception at any cost, and this requires a concerted effort to overcome one's own worldview, and think another's thoughts. Often many different lenses will be

²⁰³ Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*, (Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1976) pp. 409,18

²⁰⁴ Jervis Ibid., p. 410

necessary to try before our own perspective receives strong enough jar. Attempting to alter one's perceptions "require(s) prolonged and/or dramatic behavior that for a long time may yet be misperceived."²⁰⁵ These actors must be careful to make sure their true intent (one of peace) is explicitly understood by the other side.²⁰⁶

Government actors must also be careful to make sure that their own message is explicitly and accurately understood by the opposing side as well. This means analyzing not just how the other side speaks but how they hear as well.

The Dynamic of Expectations: If the decision-maker is not aware of how his or her own expectations affect the process of analysis then he may be over-confident in his perception, excluding other possible explanations. Thus, as much as possible, governments must "work with, rather than against" the other side's expectations. In other words, "efforts to convince others to accept a desired image of him and his behavior will be in direct proportion to the degree to which this image is compatible with what others believe."²⁰⁷ The significance for Sino-American relations is that both sides must have individuals who are capable of understanding opposing actor's expectations to alleviate egocentric deductions.

Beliefs and Values Must be Explicit: Decision-makers must make "their beliefs and values explicit." Both the Deterrence and Spiral Theories argue that actors often do not understand the inner dynamics of other's arguments, let alone the dynamics of their own belief systems. In some instances, critical questions are "taken for granted," and it is assumed that both sides share a common understanding. This is

²⁰⁵ Jervis, *Ibid.*, p. 410

²⁰⁶ Jervis, *Ibid.*, pp. 409-10

²⁰⁷ Jervis, *Ibid.* pg. 410

common and dangerous. Given the stakes often involved in international relations, there is no room for assumed understanding. All actors must therefore fully understand where each stands hence the need for making basic beliefs and values clear.²⁰⁸

Northeast Asian Security Apparatus

A key issue within Northeast Asia is the complexity and difficulty of many of the problems within the region, some of which may be too large for any one actor to solve. This necessitates the creation of a regional security apparatus. This apparatus could help to bring about regularized talks in order to facilitate understanding and dialogue and thus destroy ossified and inaccurate perceptions.

As Ken Calder in his article "The New Face of Northeast Asia", states,

Northeast Asia, specialists have long argued, it is among the most dangerous places on earth. Only there are the world's three principal nuclear powers (the United States, Russia, and China) and the two largest economic powers (the United States and Japan) still politically and geographically engaged—their interests entwined in a volatile arc surrounding Japan. To this day, Northeast Asia lacks a regional security framework analogous to NATO or the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and there is still no peace treaty on the Korean Peninsula, where more than a million troops from opposing sides remain deployed within miles of each other."²⁰⁹

Due to this deficiency, a Northeast Asian Security Apparatus (NEASA) should be established to step into the gap and resolve differences. The NEASA would be a neutral body not dominated by any of the participants, but one that would enable all sides equally to reach a consensus on the issues at hand. NEASA would be analogous to an "Asian NATO," but one explicitly not led by the United States or any other country. It would use

²⁰⁸ Jervis, *Ibid* pg. 410

²⁰⁹ Calder Kent E., *The New Face of Northeast Asia*, Foreign Affairs, March/April 2001 Vol. 80 No. 2 p. 106

the United Nations Security Council as a model for gaining consensus on issues, employing the rubric of as an equal vote per country in Northeast Asia. Members would include those with vested interests in the region: China, Japan, Mongolia, North Korea, Russia, South Korea, Taiwan, and the United States. Currently, no institution exists to proactively address Asian issues using *realpolitik*. Taiwan's bid for independence and China's willingness to use force belies the need for more open and proactive dialogue between the region's actors and an intermediary.

In order to compel China to accept Taiwan into the NEASA, dialogue between the two would need to be stressed while mandating that the 'One China Policy' be central to NEASA. NEASA could, in time, become the appropriate forum to help resolve the Taiwan issue with China. Ken Calder writes compellingly that dialogue is absolutely critical to resolving the issue between Taiwan and China.

"Not only do the PRC and Taiwan lack military communication, but they also lack political dialogue. Normally such a situation would invite outside mediation to help break the stalemate. However, no such international efforts are underway, either in the United Nations or in Asia's security talk shop, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations' Regional Forum. Although Asian leaders recognize that a cross-strait conflict would be detrimental to regional peace, stability, and development, no one wants to get involved for fear of angering the PRC. Even those Asian leaders who could counsel restraint and mount regional pressure on Beijing have remained silent."²¹⁰

This is why we need NEASA.

²¹⁰ Calder Kent E., "The New Face of Northeast Asia", *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2001 Vol. 80 No. 2

Besides China and Taiwan, North Korea is ever problematic, especially for the United States. Again, NEASA could be essential in getting the United States and the North Korean regime into dialogue. The economic benefits to be gained in a NEASA-brokered trade system could be used as a potential "carrot" for the North to dismantle its missiles and uranium processing. Moreover, countries that border Northeast Asian nations could also have memberships in the NEASA to further facilitate better relations and stability throughout the region. NEASA could be a catalyst for establishing an economic free trade zone for all participants, encouraging the region's isolationist, North Korea, to join.

As stated by Derek Chollet in his article, "Time for an Asian NATO?" recent economic growth means that many countries within Asia can now help shoulder more responsibility within the region. Globalization means they are aware and relatively more interested in multilateral solutions to regional issues. Due to the lack of adequate means to address regional concerns, the U.S. has tried using the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Forum to improve relations within the region. Washington, too, has explored the potential for a security apparatus to help address many of the issues facing the region, but these external solutions fail precisely because they are external.²¹¹

There is much to be hopeful about in relations between China and the United States. If both countries actively desire to implement change and the concerned regional actors strive to implement the needed reforms, much can be done to improve Sino-American relations.

²¹¹ Derek Chollet, "Time for an Asian NATO?", *Foreign Affairs*, Spring 2001 (www.ciaonet.org)

V. Conclusion

Can the Sino-American impasse be best resolved? Both the United States and China must better understand how their perceptions affect relations and what lenses are being employed when they peer at one another across the Pacific. Unfortunately, new perspectives are too quickly discarded and, instead, analyses become mired in cognitive consistency (previous views) and cognitive distortion (failing to assess new information). Both sides must reassess their current policies and develop new skills in understanding the each other's viewpoints. At times, it may be necessary to give the other side the "benefit of the doubt," which will require time, great levels of trust and **dramatic behavior** in a healthy direction before negative perceptions can be changed into positive ones. As Jervis suggests, to form a basis of agreement and understanding, one must "work with, rather than against" the other's expectations in order to alter misperceptions.

As David Shambaugh in his article, *The Inescapable Ambiguity*, writes that

For the U.S., engagement with China cannot be turned up, down, on or off at the whim of an administration. The two nations experience an array of cultural, societal, educational, scientific, commercial, and other ties that bind them together in countless human interactions. Unlike the Cold War with the Soviet Union, during which the two adversaries had minimal exchanges, Americans and Chinese share a dense network of professional and personal interconnections. The thick underpinning of non-governmental exchanges — what Joseph Nye describes as the value of "soft power" — serves to stabilize the more volatile governmental relationship. So too does the web of regular contact between the bureaucracies of both governments. These links are strengthened whenever a cabinet-level official, much less a president or vice-president, pays a visit to the other country. The two nations are also bound together through extensive commercial ties. Cumulatively, they exchanged \$120 billion in trade last year, with the volume growing by more than \$10 billion per annum in recent years. That rate will accelerate following China's entry into the WTO.²¹²

Given the web of ties both countries enjoy, it is essential that each country's decision-makers not become overly confident in their assessments of events but learn to employ multiple lenses to best ascertain what policies to use and to avoid "unflinching confidence" in previous assumptions.

²¹² David Shambaugh, "The Inescapable Ambiguity China and the U.S. share a network of competition-- and cooperation." www.asiaweek.com 20 April, 2001, Vol. 27, No. 15.

When interpreting events, culture has a profound affect on how events are viewed. To simply view others from one's own perspective is overly simplistic and leads to gross misunderstandings. Policy-makers must be aware of the effect that their pre-existing beliefs have on their perceptions. Likewise, explicitly stating one's beliefs and values will also help to open forthright communication.

In the realm of broader relations, America must exercise humility when dealing with the international community. This will help China to see America not as a power that is bent upon world domination, but rather as one that is concerned about its security and its ability to shape the world for the better. In the wake of the September 11 terrorist attacks, America may feel threatened by certain groups but must still work within internationally-established institutions to bring resolution. At the same time, these international institutions must be willing-- and able -- to enforce their own resolutions. Otherwise, America will fall back on its Realist leanings and seek to prevent the rise of any peer competitor--a situation untenable in this increasingly global society especially for Sino-American relations.

China still sees most U.S. action as part of a grand centralized scheme to repress China. Intervention in Afghanistan and present U.S. combat and governmental reform in Iraq, closer ties with many Central Asian republics, and the recent renewal of security ties with Japan all seem to confirm American arrogance and her disdain for legitimate international approval. No wonder China distrusts her largest trading partner.

China, too, must understand its role in the Asia Pacific region. In its New Security Concept, it talks of a multilateral forum. But China's initial reluctance to help

defuse the North Korean situation undermines this. Internal politics aside, if China sees itself as a regional actor, then this crisis is tailor-made for its intervention. Now is the opportunity for China to prove its abilities, and then to go on doing so in the future.

Something like Calder's "Asian NATO," the Northeast Asian Security Apparatus (NEASA) is a must in the region. In wider Asia, dialogue must occur among the many different nations in the region to ensure a future characterized by understanding, peace and economic stability.

Sino-American relations can be best summarized with a Chinese idiom: *bēigōngshéyǐng*,²¹³ or to *mistake the reflection of a bow in a cup for a snake*. According to the idiom, there was a man who often got together with his friend to drink wine. One day, while drinking, his friend suddenly and inexplicably got up and went home. A few days passed, and, upon inquiring about his friend, the host heard he was very ill. The host immediately came to his friend's side and asked what had happened. After much discussion, the friend admitted seeing a snake in his glass while at the friend's home. The host, perplexed, went home, poured himself a glass of wine, and sat in his friend's seat. Much to his surprise, there was, indeed, a snake in his glass. The host could not figure out why or how a snake came to be in the glass. But looking upon the wall, the host found the culprit: a bow hanging on the wall behind him, the reflection of which was surprisingly like a snake. Immediately, the host ran to his friend's house and called him over for a cup of wine. Once again seated in his old seat, the friend again saw the snake.

1 Bēigōngshéyǐng or 杯弓蛇影

The host then grabbed the bow off the wall and the snake disappeared, curing the man's illness and restoring their friendship.

The story is a metaphor for suspicion resulting in fear and false alarm. This idiom speaks volumes of Sino-American relations. Once clear as to why there was a "snake" in the glass, both the friend and the host were able to restore their friendship and make apparent the reason for the misunderstanding. China and America must define the "snakes" in their glasses and move on towards an effective relationship.