BEAUTIFUL IMPERIALIST

CHINA PERCEIVES AMERICA, 1972–1990

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Introduction

In his classic study *Scratches on Our Minds*, the late Harold R. Isaacs argued that Americans hold a series of dichotomous “love/hate” images of China and the Chinese. This study examines the other side of the Sino-American perceptual dyad—Chinese images of the United States—and concludes that, for their part, the Chinese have held equally ambivalent sets of images of the United States. “Beautiful Imperialist,” the title of this study, is a literal translation of the oft-used term “American imperialism,” which nicely captures the ambivalence—admiration and denigration—that distinguishes Chinese perceptions of the United States. If one accepts the premise that underlies this study, namely, that behavior is principally a function of perception, then it can be argued that the ambivalent images that China and the United States hold of each other have had much to do with the recurring cycles of amity and enmity that have characterized Sino-American relations since the late nineteenth century.

When President Nixon arrived in Beijing in February 1972, a new era of Sino-American relations opened. After the civil war on the Chinese mainland ended, a great gulf of communication had developed between the societies of The People’s Republic of China and the United States, perpetuated by the Cold War confrontation between the two governments. The first two decades following the civil war were punctuated by repeated conflict between the United States and China around China’s periphery: the Korean War of 1950–1953; the Taiwan Straits Crises of 1954–1955 and 1958; and the war in Vietnam, which brought limited engagement of People’s Liberation Army and United States troops in 1965. During these two decades the United States tried to “contain” “Communist China” militarily, also blocking Beijing’s admission into the United Nations and enforcing a trade embargo against the People’s Republic.

With Nixon’s dramatic opening and historic visit to China, contact between the two societies and governments was reestablished after a twenty-three year hiatus. How did the long period of no contact, and the vitriolic anti-American propaganda waged in China during this time, affect Chinese perceptions of the United States? What im-

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ages of America did Chinese bring to this new phase of the relationship? How have Chinese views of the United States evolved since the Nixon visit? Is there a range of Chinese interpretations of America, and do they cluster into identifiable categories? If so, how do they vary over time?

To answer these questions fully requires an examination of Chinese perceptions of the United States during the 1950s and 1960s, if not of earlier periods. This has been and is being done by others. This study, therefore, examines Chinese perceptions of the United States during the period from the Nixon opening to China in 1972 to the immediate aftermath of the Tiananmen tragedy of 1989. In terms of state-to-state relations, this period encompasses extremes of amity (following the Nixon visit and the normalization of diplomatic relations in 1979) and enmity (following the Tiananmen crisis of 1989), as well as several periods of uncertainty (1977, 1980–1982, and progressive interaction 1978–1980, 1983–1988). To a certain extent the images and perceptions presented in this study parallel the fluctuating status of state-to-state relations between the two countries, but they also exhibit a distinct quality of linear development from the critical and ideological to the respectful and nuanced.

Important, of whom do I speak when referring to “Chinese” images and perceptions? This is a study of China’s “America Watchers” and their articulated perceptions of the United States. An “America Watcher” is an individual whose full-time professional occupation is to study and interpret events in the United States or American foreign relations for China’s concerned elite or mass public.

Because autonomous channels of information are few and the Chinese media are generally controlled, it is via China’s community of America Watchers that both the leaders and the mass public receive most of their information about the United States. Thus, to a significant extent, the America Watchers serve as the interpretive prism through which information about the United States is processed before it reaches the Chinese elite and public. China’s America Watchers inform the leadership by means of oral briefings and classified government channels. They inform the intelligentsia about the United States through specialized professional publications (including both books and periodicals), and the mass public through the print and broadcast media. The America Watchers are therefore critically important in determining broader “Chinese” images of the United States, and hence what national images and elite perceptions help to shape China’s policies toward the United States.

The distinction between “image” and “perception” is not made clear in the literature, and the two terms are usually used interchangeably. In this study “image” will be used to describe categories of specific articulated perceptions. The image is a mental construct that categorizes and orders disparate pieces of information and helps to shape an articulated response (perception). My distinction follows that of Allen S. Whiting: “Image refers to the preconceived stereotype of a nation, state, or people that is derived from a selective interpretation of history, experience, and self-image. Perception refers to the selective cognition of statements, actions, or events attributed to the opposite party as framed and defined by the preexisting image. To use a figure of speech widely found in the literature, image provides the frame and the lenses through which the external world is seen or perceived.” Allen S. Whiting, China Eyes Japan (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), p. 19.


China’s America Watchers

America watching in China has become a growth industry, responding to the insatiable demand among the populace for knowledge about the United States. Chinese have long been fascinated by “Old Gold Mountain” (the term for San Francisco but used more generally to describe America). But during the 1980s the thirst for knowledge about the United States grew at an unprecedented rate. Untold millions of Chinese tune in daily to the Voice of America, and Chinese

4 I use the term “articulated perceptions” because it is uncertain whether the perceptions offered in this study are indeed the true cognitive beliefs of those considered. The perceptions used for this study were articulated in publications and interviews with the author; both forums are subject to manipulation for propaganda purposes.

bookshops are swamped by eager readers searching for translations of American books (of which nearly a thousand were published in China during the decade 1977–1987).6

Paralleling this fascination with things American among the Chinese public has been a need to know more about the inner workings of the United States among China’s leaders and throughout the sprawling government bureaucracy. The dearth of knowledge about China inside the American government at the time of rapprochement was at least matched on the Chinese side. As Zhang Wenjin, a senior America specialist who was intricately involved in the opening to the United States, admitted when asked about the influence of America specialists on the making of China’s America policy, “Chairman Mao and Premier Zhou actually knew very little about the United States; they had to rely upon us. Now our leaders have much contact with Americans in China, they read many articles and materials on the United States, but they still need us to help interpret the United States for them.”7

When presidential envoy Henry Kissinger arrived at the Nanyuan military airport south of Beijing on his July 1971 secret mission, he was greeted by a small group of specialists on the United States that included Huang Hua, Ji Chaozhu, Zhang Wenjin, and Tang Wenqiang (Nancy Tang).8 When President Nixon arrived on his historic state visit the following February, he was met by the same group plus Han Xu and other old America hands. This small cohort has played an important role in guiding China’s America policy since the rapprochement, and for several their involvement dates from before 1949. Huang Hua, Zhang Wenjin and Han Xu were aides-de-camp to Zhou Enlai during the civil war and participated in both the Chongqing and Nanjing negotiations. Zhang Wenjin accompanied Zhou to the 1954 Geneva Conference on Indochina, the first time that senior

7 Interview, Beijing, May 16, 1990.
8 Zhang Wenjin, Nancy Tang, and Wang Haizong, had been dispatched to pick Kissinger up in Islamabad. For Kissinger’s account see Henry Kissinger, White House Years (Boston: Little, Brown, 1979), p. 43. In an interview in Beijing on May 16, 1990, Zhang Wenjin recalled the first meeting: “We arrived in Pakistan ahead of Kissinger. We boarded the [Pakistan] aircraft first. Shortly after midnight Kissinger boarded. When he met us he was very animated and happy to see us, but his Treasury Department guards very surprised! After takeoff we talked for a while. Our discussions were not of a substantive nature; Kissinger had much preparing to do for his meetings with our leaders. After landing at Nanyuan [airport] we took him to the Diaoyutai Guest House where he met Premier Zhou Enlai a few hours later. From the start, the personal atmosphere was excellent.”

American and Chinese officials had met since the revolution. Ji Chaozhu had served at the Military Armistice Commission meetings at Panmunjom, later interpreted for Chairman Mao and other Chinese leaders in their meetings with U.S. officials, and served as the longtime number two in Washington before being appointed envoy to the United Kingdom. Huang Hua went on to a number of ambassadorial postings and later crowned his diplomatic career as China’s foreign minister. Zhang Wenjin and Han Xu held high posts in the Foreign Ministry and became ambassadors to the United States. Nancy T’ang was purged along with her mentors, the Gang of Four, following Mao’s death.

While this elite corps of China’s leading America hands have played key roles as formulators and implementers of China’s policy toward the United States since rapprochement, their numbers have expanded considerably over the last two decades. Today, China’s leaders have at their disposal multiple sources of information and intelligence about the United States emanating from a sprawling community of approximately six hundred to seven hundred America Watchers spread throughout a complex civilian and military bureaucracy (see figure 1.1). Most central government and party organs (first tier) and professional research institutes (second tier) now have large sections and staffs responsible for monitoring developments in the United States; many universities (third tier) have established American Studies centers; and a variety of national research associations (fourth tier) have been formed to bring together Americaologists from different professional walks of life. In addition, several dozen New China News Agency correspondents now file regular reports from the United States in Chinese newspapers.

I have detailed this expansive community of America Watchers elsewhere.9 Suffice it here to offer some observations about this community collectively, and subgroups among them.

Expertise among such a large cohort of specialists varies, as would be expected. It varies for a number of reasons, which include access to published data on the United States, opportunities to visit the United States, exposure to other cultures and modes of interpretation, educational training, and professional role. The potential impact of these and other variables on the actual perceptions articulated by the America Watchers is discussed in chapter 7, but brief elaboration of the professional-role variable will highlight the spectrum of

Fig. 1.1 The Structure of China's America-Watching Community

First Tier

- CCP CENTRAL COMMITTEE
  - CCN CENTRAL COMMITTEE
  - PROPAGANDA DEPARTMENT
    - PROPAGANDA DEPARTMENT
  - NEW CHINA NEWS AGENCY
    - NEW CHINA NEWS AGENCY
  - CORRESPONDENTS IN US
    - CORRESPONDENTS IN US
  - MINISTRY OF NATIONAL DEFENSE
    - MINISTRY OF NATIONAL DEFENSE
  - ACADEMY OF MILITARY SCIENCE
    - ACADEMY OF MILITARY SCIENCE
  - GENERAL STAFF DEPARTMENT
    - GENERAL STAFF DEPARTMENT
  - MILITARY ATTACHES ABROAD
    - MILITARY ATTACHES ABROAD
  - OFFICE OF VICE FOR MIN (AMERICAS)
    - OFFICE OF VICE FOR MIN (AMERICAS)
  - AM-OCEANIAN AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT
    - AM-OCEANIAN AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT
  - N. AM. AFFAIRS DIVISION
    - N. AM. AFFAIRS DIVISION
  - US SECTION
    - US SECTION
  - US EMBASSY
    - US EMBASSY

Second Tier

- CHINESE ACADEMY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
  - CHINESE ACADEMY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
  - WORLD ECONOMICS AND POLITICS INSTITUTE
    - WORLD ECONOMICS AND POLITICS INSTITUTE
  - WORLD HISTORY INSTITUTE
    - WORLD HISTORY INSTITUTE
  - SHANGHAI ACADEMY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
    - SHANGHAI ACADEMY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
  - WORLD ECONOMICS INSTITUTE
    - WORLD ECONOMICS INSTITUTE
  - N. AM. DIVISION
    - N. AM. DIVISION
  - SHANGHAI MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT
    - SHANGHAI MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT
  - SHANGHAI INSTITUTE OF INTL. STUDIES
    - SHANGHAI INSTITUTE OF INTL. STUDIES
  - INTL. STUDIES RESEARCH CENTER
    - INTL. STUDIES RESEARCH CENTER
  - STATE EDUCATION COMMISSION
    - STATE EDUCATION COMMISSION

Third Tier

- SHANDONG UNIVERSITY
  - SHANDONG UNIVERSITY
  - NANNING UNIVERSITY
    - NANNING UNIVERSITY
  - PUDONG UNIVERSITY
    - PUDONG UNIVERSITY
  - PEKING UNIVERSITY
    - PEKING UNIVERSITY
  - BEIJING INTL. STUDIES UNIVERSITY
    - BEIJING INTL. STUDIES UNIVERSITY
  - COLLEGE OF INTL. RELATIONS
    - COLLEGE OF INTL. RELATIONS
  - PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY
    - PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY
  - INTL. POLITICS DEPARTMENT
    - INTL. POLITICS DEPARTMENT
  - POLITICAL ECONOMY DEPARTMENT
    - POLITICAL ECONOMY DEPARTMENT
  - WORLD ECONOMICS AND MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE
    - WORLD ECONOMICS AND MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE
  - HISTORY DEPARTMENT
    - HISTORY DEPARTMENT
  - AMERICAN CULTURE RESEARCH OFFICE
    - AMERICAN CULTURE RESEARCH OFFICE
  - AMERICAN STUDIES CENTER
    - AMERICAN STUDIES CENTER
  - US HISTORY RESEARCH GROUP
    - US HISTORY RESEARCH GROUP
  - AMERICAN STUDIES CENTER
    - AMERICAN STUDIES CENTER
  - US HISTORY RESEARCH GROUP
    - US HISTORY RESEARCH GROUP
  - NORTH AMERICAN ECONOMICS RESEARCH INSTITUTE
    - NORTH AMERICAN ECONOMICS RESEARCH INSTITUTE
  - AMERICAN ECONOMY RESEARCH ASSOCIATION
    - AMERICAN ECONOMY RESEARCH ASSOCIATION
  - AMERICAN HISTORY RESEARCH ASSOCIATION
    - AMERICAN HISTORY RESEARCH ASSOCIATION
  - AMERICAN LITERATURE RESEARCH ASSOCIATION
    - AMERICAN LITERATURE RESEARCH ASSOCIATION
  - AMERICAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION
    - AMERICAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION

Fourth Tier

- Formal Relationship
- Informal Relationship

- AMERICAN ECONOMY RESEARCH ASSOCIATION
- AMERICAN HISTORY RESEARCH ASSOCIATION
- AMERICAN LITERATURE RESEARCH ASSOCIATION
- AMERICAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION
different types of America Watchers and hence shed light on the range of expertise to be found in this community.

Essentially there exist four types of America Watchers. That is, America Watchers perform four different professional roles in Chinese society: those who work in the central government bureaucracy; journalists; research institute personnel; and university teachers (this schema varies slightly from figure 1.1).

Many of those who work in the central government bureaucracy are merely functionaries who implement various policies related to the United States for their concerned organization. An individual in the Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations and Trade (MOFERT) who must deal with a Chinese end-user for selling a U.S. product in China, an official of the State Educational Commission responsible for placing American students in Chinese universities, or personnel from the foreign affairs bureau of any unit who make local arrangements and translate for American visitors all perform staff duties related to Sino-American relations that require some knowledge of the United States, but because their job is not interpretive, they do not count as America Watchers. Certainly many America Watchers in the central government bureaucracy perform important implementation duties, but they simultaneously work as policy advocates, policy advisers, and policy makers. To perform these professional roles properly requires significant expertise on, and up-to-date information and intelligence about, the United States.

**The Central Government Bureaucracy**

Many ministries under the State Council maintain a cadre of at least ten America specialists, many of whom have now had significant exposure to the United States and Americans. Not surprisingly, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of National Defense and its related organs, MOFERT, and other economic, trade, and financial institutions maintain the strongest concentration of expertise on the United States. But even units such as the Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Nuclear Industry, or the Bank of China maintain Americanists on their staffs. This is only natural, as it reflects the institutionalization of the Sino-American relationship.  

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10 It was a working premise of the Carter and Reagan administrations that the creation of constituencies of Americanists throughout the Chinese bureaucracy may serve the purpose of pro-American advocacy groups within the Chinese government, which, if not arguing for policies benefiting expanded relations, would at a minimum serve to better inform the generalists who make China's America policy or, at a maximum, serve to anchor the relationship bureaucratically and thus stabilize it during times of stress. Some of this argument is developed by Michel C. Oksenberg, "The Dynamics of the Sino-American Relationship," in The China Factor: Sino-American Relations and the Global Scene, ed. Richard H. Solomon (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1981), pp. 60-80.

11 Interview, March 29, 1985.

12 For a discussion of America’s China specialists, see the essays in David L. Shambaugh, ed., The American Study of Contemporary China, forthcoming.

13 For additional details of these and other concerned organizations in the Chinese foreign policy bureaucracy, see David L. Shambaugh, "China’s National Security Research Bureaucracy," China Quarterly, no. 110 (June 1987): 276-304; and A. Doak Bar-
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The CIS is an organization similar to the U.S. National Security Council in that its main function is to coordinate research on international affairs within the Chinese government and channel it to the Chinese leadership. The CIS serves not only as a transmitter of reports from lower to higher levels, but also as drafter of policy position papers. For example, China's shift away from the United States in favor of a more equidistant policy vis-à-vis the Soviet Union in 1982-83 was reportedly initiated by CIS staff.

The JICIR, in short, China's CIA. It is China's largest civilian intelligence research unit, with a research staff of three hundred. It provides the senior elite of the party and government with current intelligence and finished estimates, as well as briefing materials prior to official visits. The U.S. research division, headed by Song Baoxian, has about thirty researchers who look mainly at U.S. domestic issues, while the "comprehensive" research division focuses on U.S. foreign, defense, and strategic policies. Strategic analysts Zhou Jirong, Wang Baoqin, Qi Ya, Ren Mei, and Gu Guanfu rank among China's most astute observers of international security affairs.

The IIS, with a total research staff of approximately 175, is the Foreign Ministry's main think tank. IIS studies are sent mainly to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but sometimes they circulate more widely throughout the upper echelons of government. The ten staff members of the U.S. research division essentially set their own research agendas, but they also regularly contribute papers to the North American Affairs Division (Bei-Mei shi) of the Foreign Ministry, sometimes write biographical profiles and background papers prior to a diplomatic visit, and occasionally write specific studies requested by senior leaders. Senior America Watchers at the IIS—Zhuang Quan-nett, The Making of Foreign Policy in China: Structure and Process (Boulder: Westview Press, 1985).

14 Interview at the State Council Center for International Studies, May 12, 1990. Founded in 1982, the center was headed by former ambassador and senior foreign policy adviser Huan Xiang until his death in 1989. Since Huan's passing and the removal of Zhao Ziyang from office (Zhao relied extensively on this and other think tanks under the State Council), by its own admission the center's influence in the Chinese foreign policy making process has declined.


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beng (retired), Pan Tongwen, Jin Junhui, Song Yunmu, and Ye Ru'an—rank among the best of their profession in China. The SIIS also theoretically serves the Foreign Ministry, although its location in Shanghai gives it significant autonomy. While small in staff size, the institute produces an analytical product of high quality—which does not go unnoticed in Beijing. The State Council CIS frequently asks SIIS staff for specific papers. Leading America Watchers at SIIS include Zhang Jiafu and Ding Xinghao.

The Chinese Academy of Social Sciences' Institute of American Studies is, as would be expected, the central locus of expertise on the United States in China. The IAS is also the institutional home of the Chinese Association of American Studies. Founded in 1981, the IAS has a critical mass of Americanists (now totaling forty full-time researchers), most personally recruited by former director Li Shenzhi (often referred to as China's Arbatov). Li, a former aide to Zhou Enlai, drew upon his Yanjing University connections, and a source of many leading Americanists and other guanxi to build a high-quality scholarly institute. While scholarly research is IAS's main pursuit, leading staff members are frequently called upon to prepare reports for, or brief, China's leaders. Li himself has accompanied several of China's leaders on visits to the United States. Among its high-quality research staff, the leading Americanists at IAS include current director Zi Zhongyuan, economist Chen Baosen, strategic specialists Zhang Jingyi and Wu Zhan (retired), diplomatic historians Zhang Yebai and He Di, domestic politics experts Li Miao and Zhang Yi, and U.S. society and culture specialist Dong Leshan.

America Watchers working in the above five institutes generally perform the first of the two aforementioned professional roles—intelligence analysts sum policy advisers. Their analytical products are generally nonideological, straightforward analyses of the United States. One should add to these five civilian institutes those under the military (Academy of Military Sciences, National Defense University, and Beijing Institute of International Strategic Studies), as well as a number in the trade and finance spheres, since their work is also highly policy oriented and generally non-Marxist in character.

A second, and different, professional role performed by America Watchers in research institutes is that of "establishment intellectual."

17 For example, in May 1990 SIIS America Watcher Chen Peiyao was preparing a paper, at CIIS's request, on the future U.S. role in NATO as a result of the political changes in Eastern Europe and the Warsaw Pact, while Ding Xinghao wrote a special report for the Central Committee on the implications of most-favored nation status for China's America policy (in which Ding argued for limited Chinese retaliation if the United States revoked MFN status). Interviews in Beijing, May 12 and 16, 1990.
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This term was coined by Carol Lee Hamrin and Timothy Cheek to denote Chinese intellectuals who are members of the establishment, serving and operating within the governing institutions of the People's Republic. . . . As a subgroup within the ruling elite, they have a deep interest in perpetuating the system . . . . They play a key mediating role in coordinating a symbiotic exchange of services—an implicit social contract—between rulers and the larger intellectual elite. In this exchange the establishment intellectuals provide expertise and buttress the moral legitimacy of the governing group by explaining and popularizing its policies.18

How does being an "establishment intellectual" in a professional research institute affect China's America Watchers? Unlike their counterparts in the above-mentioned five institutes, who contribute to the policy process, the principal professional task of the second group is more theoretical and abstract in nature. That is, their job is to analyze the United States within a specific theoretical framework set down by the "establishment"—namely, Marxism-Leninism. The task of researchers in such institutes is not to write studies for policy elites, but rather to view the world through a Marxist-Leninist lens, write theoretical treatises, and hence justify policy in ideological terms.

Such is the case with research institutes affiliated with the CASS, such as the Institute of World Economy and Politics (IWE), the Institute of World History, Institute of Modern History, Institute of Economics, Institute of Sociology, and, of course, the Institute of Marxism-Leninism–Mao Zedong Thought. Outside the CASS, several institutes within the Central Party School are also included in this category. Such institutes operate at the periphery of the America-watching community insofar as their America Watchers have broader theoretical pursuits than their counterparts in policy-related institutes, but they nonetheless contribute a significant amount of the total written product of the America-watching community.

Taken together, professional research institutes in these two categories—policy- and ideology-oriented—constitute the second type of America Watchers. Numerically, they constitute the largest contingent within the America-watching community, and they are generally well-informed about the United States, even if some of their analyses are cast in doctrinaire terms.


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Journalists

The third professional type of America Watcher is the journalist who works for the New China News Agency (NCNA). An official organ of the Propaganda Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, NCNA plays an extremely important role in interpreting the United States for the Chinese leadership and populace alike. NCNA has posted its correspondents in the United States since 1979 (since 1972 at the United Nations), and their reports appear daily in the Chinese print and broadcast media. This is the single most important source of information about the United States for the general public. The agency also maintains a translation staff of several thousand whose full-time job is to translate American press. The translations are carried in Cankao ziliao (Reference materials) for a limited number of high officials and cadres with a "need to know," and in Cankao xiaoxi (Reference news) for a more general, though still restricted, readership.

Many NCNA correspondents are newcomers to America watching, but several senior correspondents are old China hands. The agency became something of a haven for these individuals during periods of political turmoil and persecution. Senior China hands such as Li Shenzhi, Peng Di, Li Miao, Chen Youwei, Li Yanning, and Zhang Haitao all took refuge at NCNA for long periods of time and, as a result, built bona fide careers as journalists while their previous careers were suspended.

In terms of professional role, many journalistic America Watchers can certainly be considered "establishment intellectuals," as their trade can be a highly propagandistic one. But, as will be seen in this study, NCNA correspondents were among the first to break free from ideological interpretations of the United States.

Universities

American studies in Chinese universities and colleges is a rapidly growing field. By virtue of faculty concentration and institutionalized programs, at least fifteen different universities and colleges can be considered part of the America-watching establishment (see figure 1.1).

The quality of America watching in universities is uneven. The majority of their analyses are highly doctrinaire, and most teaching and research takes place within the Marxist-Leninist intellectual tradition.
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This is partially because there are a number of genuine Marxist-Leninists in Chinese universities, but also because university professors also play the role of “establishment intellectual.” Universities in China, like the news media, are supposed to be “transmission belts” for inculcating certain state-approved knowledge and norms of behavior in their students. University professors are civil servants and do not generally have the adversarial relationship with the state that is characteristic of Western intellectuals. Their job is generally to transmit and perpetuate doctrine, not to create knowledge or foster independent thinking.

Thus, much America watching in Chinese universities is generally ideological and highly doctrinaire. There are important exceptions to this rule, particularly at Peking University and Fudan University in Shanghai, but the majority of America watching academics in China toe the party line. Even when there is no party line to toe, as was the case during much of the 1980s, they continue to churn out Marxist studies of the United States.

When one considers Chinese perceptions of America, therefore, the aforementioned institutional landscape and differing professional roles must be borne in mind. America Watchers in China do not simply ply their trades individually; they must work within definite bureaucratistic intellectual confines.

These observations about the professional roles of China’s America Watchers are developed at greater length in chapter 7. They are noted here to provide the reader with an institutional sense of the America Watchers who articulate the specific perceptions provided in chapters 2–6 of this study.

The Informing Literature

This is a study of the perceptual sources of Chinese foreign policy. In so doing it draws upon and joins three sets of literature in the field of comparative foreign policy: decision-making analysis; Soviet foreign policy and images of the United States; and the domestic sources of Chinese foreign policy. This informing literature also offers useful perspectives with which to view the images and perceptions offered in this study.

Images and Decision-Making in International Relations

Why study images? We are concerned with studying images because people’s interpretations of a phenomenon do much to shape their subsequent behavior, and social scientists are fundamentally concerned with why people act as they do. As W. I. Thomas observed in 1928, “If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences.” This is why we study images.

Students of international relations seek to explain the behavior of nation-states and other institutional actors. But states are not abstract entities; they are composed of human beings. Thus, to understand the foreign policy behavior of a given nation, one must comprehend the images of those concerned elites who make the policy decisions that help shape their state’s actions in the international arena. These images, in turn, are the product of many stimuli, but ultimately all considerations external to the individual must be filtered through one’s internal perceptual screen before one acts.

Cross-cultural images as a variable in interstate relations have been an object of study by scholars at least since ancient Greece. The classic account by Athenian historian Thucydides, the History of the Peloponnesian War (431–404 B.C.), is essentially a psychological analysis of the Athenian and Spartan combatants. Aside from analyzing the political causes and technical aspects of the war, Thucydides emphasized the cultural characteristics that gave rise to it. The importance of understanding the psycho-cultural bases of one’s adversary in war has been a persistent theme in analyses of international relations ever since Thucydides, from Chen Shou’s third-century History of the Three Kingdoms through Clausewitz’s On War and more recently Waltz’s Man, the State, and War. With the advent of the “behavioral revolution” in American social science in the 1950s and 1960s, the study of the relationship between cognition and behavior began to attract an increasing number of scholars across several disciplines. Social and cognitive psychologists led the way, but political scientists, sociologists, and historians soon followed suit.

Those who study international relations, and its subfield of comparative foreign policy, were quick to embrace the new focus on the study of perception. The study of the domestic sources of foreign policy began to assume prominence as scholars took issue with the “Realist” school of foreign policy analysis, which tended to conceive of nation-states as unitary and rational actors pursuing their national interests. Gradually over time the foreign policy behavior of states

19 The traditionally symbiotic relationship between universities and the state, and the intellectual and the state more broadly, is discussed in Jerome Grieder, Intellectuals and the State in Modern China (New York: The Free Press, 1981).

increasingly came to be viewed as the product of various domestic factors acting autonomously, and in conjunction with, external stimuli. As a result, the boundary between the study of comparative politics and international relations, as subdisciplines of political science, began to break down.

Of crucial importance among these domestic factors are the cognitive constructs of foreign policy decision makers. By introducing the intervening variable of the perceptual process through which a decision maker interprets stimuli before formulating a response, scholars try to look inside the "black box" of decision making by focusing on the "idiosyncratic" level of analysis. They try to explicate the intuitive belief that reality exists in the eye of the beholder, but they have found this empirically difficult. Ole Holsti, a leading scholar of perception and foreign policy, has noted that access to hard data for use in constructing and analyzing belief systems (the basis of images) is a fundamental methodological impediment: "Unlike the analyst who can index his variables with such measures as GNP per capita, arms budgets, trade figures, votes in the U.N. General Assembly, or public opinion polls, those interested in beliefs of decision makers have no yearbook to which they can turn for comparable evidence, much less quantitative data presented in standard units." 22

Despite the methodological problems associated with constructing and analyzing belief systems, research on what in 1956 Sprout and Sprout termed the "psychological milieu" (as distinguished from the "operational milieu") of international politics has proceeded apace in the field of international relations. 23 Efforts to probe inside the "black box" of decision making has produced a voluminous number of "pretheoretical" models and case studies, but few middle-range theoretical works. 24 By placing the individual decision maker's belief system at the center of a complex network of organizational and other influences, Snyder, Bruck, and Sapin pioneered this era of foreign policy decision-making theory in general, and the consideration of cognitive factors in particular. 25 Others followed. As Holsti reminds us in a useful state-of-the-field survey, diversity has been the rule in this research. 26

The individual policy maker has been the main level of analysis and central focus of this genre of studies because of the assumption that beliefs held by individuals are heterogeneous, and therefore when put into a decision-making situation the variations will become manifest. Consequently, the belief system of the individual decision maker is conceptualized as the intervening variable between the independent variable of external stimuli (information) and the dependent variable of the decisional output (policy). Thus, in one form or another, much of the comparative foreign policy literature on decision making has attempted to reconstruct individuals' belief systems and assess their impact on information processing, the articulation of a perception, the making of a policy decision, and learning from postdecision feedback. This sequence is represented in figure 1.2.

The literature on belief systems and foreign policy decision making has centered on how the elements of one's belief system interrelate. This literature has drawn heavily upon cognitive psychology. Concepts such as cognitive balance and congruity, cognitive complexity, cognitive distortion, cognitive consistency, and cognitive dissonance are some of the operative concepts in this field. If there is one core theme in this literature, it is that there is a strong tendency for people to recognize what they expect to see, and to assimilate incoming information into preexisting image structures. In psychology these

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21 James Rosenau was among the first to specify this interaction in "Foreign Policy as an Issue Area," in Domestic Sources of Foreign Policy, ed. James N. Rosenau (New York: The Free Press, 1967), pp. 11-50.


phenomena are known respectively as cognitive consistency and dissonance reduction. In short, people assimilate or reject information in such a way as to maximize the congruence among the cognitive elements of their belief system. To anticipate one of my principal findings, this study offers strong evidence that such is also the case among China’s America Watchers. That is, more often than not, the America Watchers find in the United States what they expect to see. In essence, many of them look in search of confirmation of pre-existing images.

The effects of cognitive dissonance on foreign policy decision makers have been noted in a number of case studies, but nowhere more comprehensively than by Robert Jervis in his landmark study, Perception and Misperception in International Politics. If his study can be summarized, Jervis concludes that the strong tendency toward cognitive consistency, in all its various manifestations, leads foreign policy decision makers to misperceive their adversaries and other actors in the international arena much more often than they receive signals as they were intended. On this basis Jervis concludes that misperception often leads directly to conflict. As a result, he identifies elite images as the single most important variable in international relations. It is this premise that underlies the present study.

Soviet Foreign Policy and Images of the United States

Perhaps nowhere in the comparative foreign policy literature is the study of images better developed than in the subfield of Soviet foreign policy, particularly in Soviet-American relations. Ever since the Bolsheviks came to power in 1917, American scholars have attempted to assess the impact of Marxist-Leninist ideology on the global perspectives of Soviet elites, as well as upon domestic institutions, policies, and the populace. During the Cold War, attempts to understand the mindset of Soviet foreign policy elites flourished, and Marxist-Leninist ideology assumed prominent attention as a variable in studies of the domestic sources of Soviet foreign policy. As such, ideology has been conceived of both as autonomously affecting an elite’s belief system and images and as an integral component of the belief system—that is, as an independent and dependent variable respectively. It has also been conceived of as a post facto rationalization for policies pursued “rationally and efficiently.”

well as their proliferating publications, provided a glimpse into the previously murky world of elite discussions on foreign policy issues. Western scholars quickly gravitated to this level of analysis and new data base. They discovered not only more discriminating analyses than emanated from Politburo and Foreign Ministry spokesmen, but also an entire world view that fundamentally departed from previous Stalinist dogma.

In his pioneering study of this era, William Zimmerman detailed these changed Soviet “perspectives” on international relations. Zimmerman found evidence in Soviet commentaries of general movement away from the simplistic, ideologically driven, and zero-sum (i.e., two-camp) assumptions characteristic of the Stalin era toward greater understanding of the complexities of international relations and increasingly empirical appraisals of the international system that paralleled Western concepts, terminology, and images. Zimmerman discovered that in Soviet commentaries the main actors in international relations had become nation-states and not the class-based world systems of capitalism and socialism. Soviet analyses of the international hierarchy were reconfigured to allow the Soviet Union equal status with the United States, with each country controlling well-defined spheres of influence. Assessments of the balance of power had passed through a cycle from “balanced distribution” to “preponderance” of power to “equilibrium,” and back to a more ambiguous balance dubbed the “correlation of forces.”

What is particularly relevant to this study in this literature is how Soviet elite images of the United States changed during this period. To anticipate another principal finding, the Chinese perceptions of the United States as presented in this study bear a striking similarity to those articulated in the Soviet Union during the Khrushchev era in terms of terminology used, issues debated, and conclusions reached.

The American recognition that the systematic study of Soviet elite images of the United States may yield fruitful insights into what motivates Soviet behavior toward the United States, bilaterally and multilaterally, has resulted in an impressive body of scholarship, in both quantity and quality. As the major protagonist of the United States, the Soviet Union has received considerable attention from scholars, journalists, and government analysts.

Invariably these studies place Soviet images of the United States in the broader context of Marxist-Leninist theories of capitalist development. As a result, they all include an analysis of how the Stalinist image that the capitalist state apparatus is subordinate to the monopoly bourgeoisie eroded during the Khrushchev era. This is traced both in the general context of Soviet doctrinal assessments of imperialism and “state-monopoly capitalism” and in the particular case of the United States. The Chinese interpretation of these issues is examined in chapter 2.

Frederick Barghoorn was the first Western scholar to analyze the challenge to Stalin and his “subordination thesis” posed by Eugen Varga, the exiled Hungarian economist and director of the Institute of International Relations and World Economics (IMEMO) in Moscow. Varga’s heretical views (in the eyes of Stalin) not only landed him in personal disgrace, but also resulted in the closing of the institute. After Stalin’s death, however, Varga was rehabilitated and the institute was reconstituted. Stalin’s legacy, however, did not die easily. Stalin’s “subordination thesis” and imprint upon Soviet political economists long outlived him. It was not until after Khrushchev’s famous denunciation of Stalin in his “secret speech” to the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1956 that Soviet analyses of imperialism and state-monopoly capitalism began to change.

A key element in Varga’s critique was the assertion that the state acts in the interests of the bourgeoisie as a whole, not solely on behalf of the financial oligarchy. This, in effect, was a rejection of the Leninist-Stalinist postulate that only the goal of state monopoly-capitalist society is to procure greater and greater profits for the monopoly and finance oligarchy strata of the bourgeoisie. As a matter of doctrine, though, several scholars have noted that Lenin’s views of the relationship between the state and monopoly bourgeoisie and financial oligarchy were more ambiguous than Stalin’s.


\[2^{33}\] Bob Jessop, The Capitalist State (New York: New York University Press, 1982);

perceived a unidirectional relationship of control of the former by the latter, Lenin envisioned a relationship of "coalescence" between the two.

Of particular relevance here are the marked doctrinal changes during the Khrushchev years. Zimmerman, Hough, Marantz, and others have analyzed these changes in Soviet elites’ worldview, and in Soviet foreign policy more generally. A analysis of Soviet perceptions of the United States also became a flourishing area of study.


INTRODUCTION

These studies tell us that there is a trend over time toward increasingly complex and nonideological Soviet images of the United States. This is due not only to the development of American studies in the Soviet Union, but also to the emergence of a professional cadre of America Watchers—the Amerikanistiki. American studies was not the only area studies field to blossom during the Khrushchev era; Soviet Sinology, for example, also enjoyed a rejuvenation. All of these studies detail the altered imagery of U.S. domestic and foreign affairs resulting from the doctrinal changes in Marxism-Leninism under Khrushchev. Having abandoned the notion that a unitary and omnipotent finance oligarchy dictated U.S. domestic and foreign affairs, Soviet Amerikanistiki shifted their focus from Wall Street to Washington. They began to analyze intraexecutive branch bureaucratic politics, executive-legislative relations, and a variety of interest groups. The latter was significant because it implicitly recognized that elements outside the bourgeoisie participated in the policy process. Even analyses of the bourgeoisie became more differentiated as other regional monopoly groups appeared to challenge the old monied interests in the Northeast. Soviet Americanists discovered the U.S. middle class, and in so doing realized that they were not on the verge of revolution. They saw that, while beset by nagging problems, the U.S. economy was in no immediate danger of collapsing. Finally, they discovered "sober elements" among the U.S. "ruling circles" who favored détente with the Soviet Union.

In short, the Varga controversy and de-Stalinization had a far-reaching impact on Soviet perspectives on international relations. Soviet commentators became much less dogmatic and doctrinaire in their ideological interpretations, and they came to accept many of the methodologies popular in the West. Soviet scholarly analyses of international affairs after Stalin therefore became less of a guide to predicting Soviet behavior because of their post hoc rationalizing nature, and more of a guide to understanding the parameters of Soviet elite thinking and policy options because of the increased role of specialists in the policy process. The linkage between elite and specialist

perceptions and foreign policy output is thus a complex reciprocal process whereby perceptions contribute to the decision-making environment in which policy is made. In other words, in the post-Stalin era the study of elite perceptions became fundamental to assessing the domestic sources of Soviet foreign policy.

**Domestic Sources of Chinese Foreign Policy**

Western scholarship on the domestic sources of Chinese foreign policy, including elite images and perceptions, is conspicuous by its absence. The field's laggard productivity is particularly striking in contrast to the progress made by colleagues studying the sources of Soviet foreign policy noted above. Remarkably, there are no counterpart volumes in the Chinese foreign policy literature to Zimmerman's or Hough's studies of Soviet international relations specialists and their images of the international system, to Bialer's volume on the domestic sources of Soviet foreign policy, or to others who have studied Soviet images of America.

A. Doak Barnett's 1985 study of the Chinese foreign policy decision-making structure and process is a welcome addition to a small and dated literature. This volume, taken together with a few other, shorter studies of international relations-related institutions in China, has contributed to our understanding of the structure of key organizational and individual actors who make Chinese foreign policy, but our knowledge of the roles that international relations specialists play in the decision-making process remains sketchy. We have no equivalent study of foreign policy specialists to compare with Halpern's study of economists and economic policy making in China, or Lieberthal and Oksenberg's study of energy policy decision making. There exist only two assessments of international relations as an academic discipline in China, and a few state-of-the-field appraisals of political science.

If the paucity of scholarly attention paid to decision making in Chinese foreign policy is striking, then the lack of consideration of elite images and perceptions is even more notable. This inattention is even more the result of an inadequate data base than a lack of recognition by scholars that elite images and perceptions are important variables to study. Opportunities to interview Chinese policy makers and international relations specialists were virtually nil until recent years. Moreover, until the revival of professional research institutes and their publications in the post-Mao era, the documentary data base was limited to a handful of official media organs such as the *People's Daily*, *Beijing Review*, *New China News Agency* dispatches, and monitored radio broadcasts—all of which helped contribute to a unitary-actor model of Chinese foreign policy.

With the revival of professional research on international relations and the explosion of periodical, newspaper, and book publishing since the late 1970s, foreign analysts of China (including Chinese foreign policy) now confront a situation of bibliographic overload. The net result has been the gradual emergence of more discriminating studies based on these varied primary data, which have had the overall effect of eroding the efficacy of monolithic approaches to the

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3 See sources cited in note 40.


study of contemporary China in all its facets. The study of the Chinese domestic economy and political scene has revealed this trend more readily than the fields of Chinese foreign and defense policy. The latter are still severely constrained by the availability of published data and by Chinese fears of infringement upon areas of national security—some of which are justified and some not because of the extraordinary scope of the Chinese definition of "state secrets."

To offer but a single example relevant to those wishing to conduct research on Chinese scholarly views of international relations, as recently as mid-1984 more than half of seventy periodicals relevant to the study of Chinese foreign policy were classified nelbu and therefore restricted to internal circulation.31 These periodicals contain the highest quality and frankest scholarly assessments written by Chinese international relations specialists and foreign policy practitioners.

Gilbert Rozman was the first Western scholar to tap extensively into this newly available literature in his landmark book on Chinese images of the Soviet Union.32 Rozman and Michael Ng-Quinn have also drawn on these primary data in articles.33 Allen S. Whiting's major study of Chinese perceptions of Japan also draws on this new material, as do several studies by Jonathan Pollack and Banning Garrett and Bonnie Glaser.34 There is much more potential research to be done, however, given the West's new access to international relations institutes, scholars, and publications in China.35 The opportunity to probe the thinking of this "influential elite" and juxtapose their "input" against various types of foreign policy behavioral "output" will be at the cutting edge of research in the field for some time to come.

The systematic and empirical study of the domestic sources of Chinese foreign policy, including elite perceptions, should begin to proliferate. One gets the sense that the field is in a state analogous to the study of Soviet foreign policy during the Khrushchev era. Perhaps within a generation of scholarship the field of Chinese foreign policy will have true counterpart studies to those of Zimmerman, Hough, Bialer, Griffiths, and the others noted above.

These observations about the relative paucity of Western studies of the domestic sources and elite images underlying Chinese foreign policy rationale and behavior should not be misconstrued to mean that there has been a total absence of such studies. Important exceptions exist. While the main thrust of the field has focused attention on the output of Chinese foreign policy with respect to dyadic relationships, regional subsystems, and international institutions, there remains a rather substantial body of literature that attempts to explain Chinese foreign policy from the input side, including the consideration of "Chinese" images. The problem with most of this literature, however, is that it tends to proceed from a unitary-actor paradigm and does not generally disaggregate "Chinese" images to distinguish between competing images of different elites. The exceptions to this rule are studies that extrapolate from domestic political factional analysis to identify foreign policy "debates" among the leadership. This genre of studies is discussed below, but first some summary comments are warranted about studies of Chinese images of the world in the unitary-actor tradition. Three main strands in this literature can be identified: traditional, normative, and rational approaches.

The traditional approach is found in the writings of historians who emphasize the continuity of Chinese historical images. Proponents of this approach argue that the most productive way to comprehend the images underlying contemporary Chinese foreign policy is to study imperial China's view of the world. This approach is exemplified in the writings of such historians as Fairbank, Mancall, Fitzgerald, Ginsberg, Feuerwerker, and others.36 To oversimplify, these scholars tend
to proceed from the premise of a Sinocentric tribute system. As such, China presides over a hierarchical system of peripheral states organized in concentric realms around it.\(^{75}\) All such states establish tributary relationships with China on the basis of China's superiority and location at the center of this system. These scholars have naturally found this explanation to have its greatest validity in explaining China's relations with its Asian neighbors, but they have also drawn upon specific instances in China's past to explain contemporary Chinese foreign policy.

A more normative set of interpretations of Chinese images of international relations can be distinguished based on "Maoist ideology." This cohort of studies combines Mao's simplified version of Marxism-Leninism with political tactics developed during the Communists' rise to power. These studies address both Mao Zedong's personal role in policy making and the externalization of the Chairman's "thought" on Chinese images of world affairs. Scholars such as Okenberg, Pye, and Hinton have written of the Great Helmsman's preeminent role in Chinese foreign policy making during his lifetime.\(^{58}\) Other scholars, such as Gittings, Schwartz, Kim, Yahuda, Meisner, O'Leary, Tsou, and Halperin, looked to Mao's theoretical interpretations of Marxism-Leninism as the foundation of Chinese images of the world.\(^{59}\) Of central importance in these studies are such concepts as Mao's "theory of the three worlds" and "people's war," his reinterpretation of Lenin's theory of imperialism, his application of Hegelian dialectics to the analysis of "contradictions," combined with the more general influence of his populist, nationalist, and egalitarian impulses. In essence, these scholars explain Chinese foreign policy behavior as guided by Maoist ideology.

Yet other scholars, such as Armstrong, Van Ness, Van Slyke, and Mozingo, examine the role of "united front" tactics, as derived from Communist strategy in the Chinese civil war, in Mao's global thinking.\(^{60}\) In these authors' view, the "united front" doctrine was externalized by China's dichotomous foreign policy of maintaining state-to-state relations ("united front from above") with party-to-party relations and support for insurgencies ("united front from below").

Finally, one can also discern studies of Chinese images that seek to establish the "rational calculation of China's national interest. These are mainly studies of Chinese crisis management and national security behavior, such as those by Whiting, Pollack, Venzteiger, Zagonia, Gurtov and Hwang, and Ross.\(^{61}\) These studies examine Chinese assessments of threat to its national security, and the effects of diplomatic signaling and miscalculation on conflict escalation. A related body of literature by scholars who study the Chinese military attempts to establish linkages between Chinese perceptions of international and regional security trends and outlays in the defense budget, force disposition, and the performance of the PLA in battle.\(^{62}\)

What this large and diverse body of literature shares in common, it seems, is that it proceeds from the assumption that China acts externally as a unitary and, in the case of the third group, essentially rational actor. On the whole, these scholars do not question the fact that a “Chinese” image of situation “X” exists, from which “Beijing’s” foreign policy is derived. Most studies of this genre were written during a period when China was viewed abroad as having a certain monolithic and purposive character. Indeed, hindsight and discussions with Mao’s associates have given some credence to this paradigm.

This genre of literature did not own exclusive rights to the field. A competing group of scholars emerged during the 1970s who, owing their origins to the study of Chinese domestic politics, challenged the unitary-actor approach through the application of factional analysis. They proceeded from the recognition that since competing groups of elites could be distinguished as advocating different images of China’s domestic evolution, so too must they hold differing views on foreign policy questions. The flood of new data that emerged during the Cultural Revolution, mainly in the form of Red Guard tabloids, greatly contributed to the dismantling of the totalitarian model for interpreting domestic affairs and the unitary-actor model in foreign affairs alike. Textual exegesis inherent in “Pekingological” analysis, as inherited from the “Kremlinological” tradition, became the accepted method for distinguishing differing foreign policy perceptions within the Chinese elite and high command.

Studies such as those by Ra’an’an, Zagoria, Yahuda, and Gurtov and Harding detected a heated “strategic debate” within high policy councils during 1965–1966 over the implications for China of the American military escalation in Vietnam.” Studies by Gottlieb and


Garver similarly documented debates in 1969–1970 over the opening to the United States. Other scholars such as Lieberthal, Van Ness, and Oksenberg and Goldstein have discovered more nuanced perspectives within the elite on issues related to China’s general opening to the outside world. Yet others, such as Harding, Shirk, Fingar, Robinson, Whiting, and Lieberthal, have explored the broader interplay of domestic politics, economics, and foreign policy.

While all of these studies disaggregate a unitary actor, China, to consider differing perspectives in the leadership, and hence are welcome attempts to explore images and other domestic sources of Chinese foreign policy, they nonetheless focus on the top elite. With the possible exceptions of Shirk’s and Fenyk’s studies of Chinese foreign trade policy, none explores the bureaucratic origins of the relationship between images and policy. More important, none explores the images articulated by second-echelon international relations specialists (as opposed to elites and foreign policy practitioners) and the potential impact of these individuals and their images on policy. Finally, none explores the cognitive dynamics of Chinese elite’s images.

Where, then, if anywhere, in the Chinese foreign policy literature
CHAPTER ONE

are these gaps filled? With respect to the second echelon of international relations specialists there is only the pioneering work of Rozman on China's Soviet Watchers, Johnston on Chinese arms controllers, mine on national security specialists, and Whiting on China's Japan hands. The study of the cognitive sources of perceptions held by Chinese foreign policy elites is virtually nonexistent. Other than Boardman's exploratory essay on possible methodological approaches to the subject, the only actual study of the cognitive dynamics underlying Chinese images of external affairs is that by Bobrow, Chan, and Kringen. While this volume is an important first cut at the subject matter, its findings must be questioned on the grounds of an inadequate data base. The authors tried to ascertain Chinese elite perceptions on foreign policy issues from interviews and content analysis of the Chinese media. The interviews, however, were conducted not with policy makers or specialists but with refugees in Hong Kong, and the media sample was limited to a few periodicals and monitored radio broadcasts that were aimed primarily at foreign audiences and had been translated into English. In other words, the authors' reliance on English-language sources limits the utility of their otherwise provocative findings.

It is to these bodies of literature on elite images as domestic sources of foreign policy that the present study is intended to contribute. When reading the ensuing chapters one should keep in mind that this is a study at the "individual" and "role" levels of analysis. There are indeed alternative levels of analysis at which one can analyze United States-China relations over this time period: global systemic, nation-state interactive, societal, governmental.71

Thus, this is a study of United States-China relations as seen through one medium—China's America Watchers and their articulated perceptions of the United States. In my view, we can only understand China's increasingly complex behavior toward the United States during this period as a function of the increasingly complex images the America Watchers hold and the perceptions they articulate to those policy makers who shape and guide China's America policy.

Scope of the Study

This study is primarily concerned with establishing the content and variation of perceptions of the United States as articulated by China's America Watchers over the period 1972-1990. That is, what is the substance of their articulated perceptions, what is the variation among them, and how have they evolved over time? Simply to bring to light and explicate systematically a whole body of writing and statements about one culture by the other is of intrinsic interest. When these two countries are as important on the world scene as are the United States and the People's Republic of China, making such perceptions known publicly is not of insignificant consequence. As was asserted in the previous section, behavior depends much on how one perceives and defines the environment; thus, to understand China's approach to the United States and what might be called the "inner structure" of Sino-American relations, an examination of Chinese perceptions of the United States is of vital importance.

Second, and related to the above, this study is interested in explaining the variance and evolution of perceptions over time. That is, why have they changed or, in some cases, not changed? Put another way, why do the America Watchers articulate the perceptions about the United States that they do? What are the key explanatory factors (political, diplomatic, intellectual, sociological) that shape the specific perceptions and the images that lie behind them? In other words, what linkages can be established between image formation and articulation of perceptions? Answering this second set of questions helps account for variation among individual America Watchers, cohorts of them, and as a total community.

Third, this study seeks to come to terms with the relationship between perception and policy, and the impact of the former on the latter. The reader should be forewarned that this is an extremely difficult gap to bridge empirically. After a decade of almost constant work on the subject of perceptions while observing the behavioral interactions between the United States and China, I remain as convinced as ever of the empirical difficulties involved in making categorical conclusions about the impact of China's America Watchers' perceptions of the United States on policy. The evidence simply re-

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mains too fragmentary to sustain more than informed and reason ed conjecture about the impact. This is because the broad direction of China’s policy toward the United States, like Chinese foreign policy more generally, continues to be made by a handful of individual politicians at the top of the government and party apparatus. These individuals most certainly draw on the perceptions and advice of China’s America-watching community, but without opportunities to interview at that most elite level of the system or to use material from party and government archives, making empirically firm the linkage between perception and policy is impossible. Nonetheless, one can make reasoned inferences about the nature and milieu of the information and advice provided to the leadership by China’s America Watchers. Thus, clarifying the relationship between the input of perception and the policy output is the third main goal of this study.

Organization of the Text

These questions are pursued in five thematic chapters and the conclusion. Each covers the eighteen chronological years that are the temporal focus of this study (1972–1990), although different chapters may emphasize different years more or less intensively. Throughout the study the perceptions articulated by China’s America Watchers cleave into two separate schools of images (Marxist and non-Marxist), but in examining American foreign policy a third tendency of articulation appears: traditional Chinese. These schools not only reflect the substantive differences between the major cohorts of America Watchers but also serve as convenient organizing constructs to order systematically the disparate perceptions within each chapter. Throughout the text more refined opinion groups within the two principal schools also emerge.

Chapter 2 is a chapter on ideology. In case some may believe that Marxist-Leninist ideology is dead in China, it offers strong evidence to the contrary. Ideology not only remains an important legitimating tool for the Communist Party but continues to serve as a major mode of discourse and dialogue among certain intellectuals. It also continues to play an important role in the policy arena as it serves as both an explanatory and a legitimating device for justifying policy decisions made on more pragmatic grounds. This is why chapter 2 is im-

important. It details internal Chinese discussions about three theoretical subjects that have important bearing on analysis of the United States: imperialism, state-monopoly capitalism, and hegemony. All three issues are of key importance to Chinese officialdom not only in terms of justifying the “superiority of the socialist system,” but because they had to be reconciled with Beijing’s new relations with the United States. How was it that a bastion of socialism like People’s China could enter into an extensive relationship with the world’s foremost imperialist, state-monopoly capitalist, and hegemonist power? Chapter 2 examines how Chinese Marxist theorists made the theoretical readjustments necessary with respect to these three issues after the opening to the United States.

Chapter 3 commences examination of perceptions of the United States per se and builds upon chapter 2’s emphasis on economic change in modern imperialist systems. It looks at the America Watchers’ contrasting views of the American economy, in particular their perceptions of two issues dear to the hearts of the Marxist School—monopoly capitalism and economic crises. It concludes with a survey of the America Watchers’ perceptions of the general conditions of the U.S. economy during the Carter and Reagan years.

Chapter 4 analyses the America Watchers’ perceptions of American society. It is found that, not unsurprisingly, the Marxists see American society in class terms. Discussions of the American bourgeoisie, middle class, working class, and poor are considered, and an intense Chinese debate about the American proletariat’s degree of “impoverishment” is uncovered. This debate is linked to the question of the potential revolutionary militancy of the American working class, which is also considered in the context of the Marxists’ perspectives. The non-Marxists hold a much more dynamic view of American society that is focused less on classes and more on social phenomena. Many of the non-Marxists’ writings on American society are conveyed in the forums of travelogues. Several of the more notable of these are examined, presenting a relatively integrated view of American society, as well as the Chinese media’s discussion of racism and family life in the United States.

Chapter 5 leaves the economic and social “base” and examines the America Watchers’ contrasting views on the political “superstructure” in the United States. Their perceptions of American politics fall into four main realms: (1) the role of monopoles and other nongovernment actors in the political process; (2) the structure and process of policy making in and among different branches of government; (3) social groupings and ideological tendencies in the general polity; and

Chapter 6 examines the America Watchers' contrasting perceptions of the conduct of American foreign policy. Their perceptions of the roles of both government and nongovernment actors in the foreign policy-making process are examined in the context of domestic politics in chapter 5; thus, the discussion in chapter 6 is limited to the "output" side of U.S. foreign policy. Perceptions of the general conduct of American foreign policy are examined in the context of U.S. policies toward the Third World, the Soviet Union, and China.

The conclusion begins by seeking to explain why the America Watchers articulate contrasting images of the United States, and it concludes with a discussion of the importance of this study's findings for Sino-American relations. I assess a series of variables that shape the America Watchers' perceptions and speculate on their relative importance, in particular the potential impact of professional role and foreign exposure, but also the influence of political, diplomatic, and cultural factors. The conclusion returns to the question posed at the outset of the introduction, namely, what are the implications of China's America Watchers' perceptions of the United States for Sino-American relations? What progress in mutual understanding has been made since the rapprochement of 1972, and what perceptual gaps remain? What is the impact of these perceptions on China's America policy?

Thus, the text that follows is organized in a "building block" approach that begins with the ideological milieu that lies behind many of the more specific perceptions examined in the case studies of chapters 3, 4, 5 and 6. Considered together, the core data chapters capture a fairly complete sample of the United States and Chinese perceptions of it. There are no doubt some missing elements that certain readers would like to know more about, but one cannot cover everything.

Finally, I reiterate that this is intentionally not a study of the behavioral dimension of Sino-American relations. Its purpose is to probe beneath the behavioral level to explore one source of that behavior—perceptions. This might be described as the "inner structure" of the relationship. The study therefore does not catalogue the evolution of the relationship over time—governmental dialogue, state visits, agreements, cooperation and discord, and so forth. That is done in many other studies. Chapter 7, the conclusion, does place the perceptions in a policy context, but those expecting a straightforward history of Sino-American relations will be disappointed.

Sources and Data

With respect to the Chinese sources used in preparing this study, I drew upon a full range of books, periodicals, newspapers, and newsletters (lunqun). Many were restricted-circulation (neibu) materials; two neibu periodicals that were particularly useful were Shijie jingji yu zhengzhi neicuo (Internal reference materials on world economics and politics), published by the Institute of World Economics and Politics at the CASS, and Meiguo yanjiu cunkao (Reference materials for research on the United States), published by the CASS Institute of American Studies. Neibu journals, as Gilbert Rozman also discovered in his research on China's Soviet Watchers, are extraordinarily valuable because they are meant for discourse among concerned specialists and elites and thus often display an analytical candor and discussion of policy issues absent in open-source (gongkai) journals. To some degree the same can be said for neibu books, but they are meant for circulation among a much wider Chinese audience and frequently find their way into the hands of foreign scholars. They too are used extensively in this study. I have not designated neibu sources as such in the footnotes, but their classification will be evident to the knowing reader. In addition to neibu materials, I use a full range of unclassified books, periodicals, newspapers, and other printed materials in Chinese and translation. This study brings to light much published data never before examined.

In addition to these written sources, over the course of seven years of research I formally interviewed 160 individual Chinese, of which approximately 140 are bona fide America Watchers (carrying out full-time research on the United States) while the other 20 are theorists who work on related subjects. Many were interviewed more than once, thus affording more candid and in-depth discussions resulting from familiarity with the individual and the subject. While the majority of these interviews took place in China, some were in the United States and a few in Europe. The majority of these interviews were on the record, but only in a very limited number of cases have I chosen to identify the individual concerned. The changeable political climate in China warrants the continued protection of identities.

My third data source are lecture notes taken in classes about the United States that I attended in the economics, history, law, and international politics departments at Beijing University when I was a student there from 1983 to 1985.

Central Arguments and Principal Findings

In the following chapters I present a spectrum of views on the United States presented by China's America Watchers. Throughout, these perceptions cleave into two major image clusters: Marxist and non-Marxist. The Marxist School is distinguished by interpretation of the United States using Marxist-Leninist categories of analysis and terminology. The non-Marxist School is characterized, quite simply, by non-Marxist interpretations and terminology. While there exists an intellectual coherence in the Marxist School, the non-Marxist School is notable precisely for its atheoretical, nonideological, ad hoc, and descriptive nature.

Within each school two more refined lines of analysis appear. Within the Marxist School there exists a dogmatic group that follows Stalin's analysis of capitalism, as well as a more flexible line that can be characterized as Leninist. Within the non-Marxist School one discerns “statists” whose focus of analysis is the apparatus of state, and “pluralists” who view the United States in far more variegated and pluralistic terms. The study reveals an evolution over time from the Stalinists to the pluralists, but also a continuing competition between Marxist and non-Marxist interpretations of the United States. In chapter 6 a third major opinion group is encountered in the context of American foreign policy. This group emphasizes U.S. hegemonic behavior abroad, and consequently I label them “hegemonists.”

Each opinion group has its adherents in different institutions: the Marxists are primarily located in universities, the Central Party School, the Institute of World Economics and Politics of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), and the Shanghai Institute of International Studies. The non-Marxists are found mainly in the central government bureaucracy (particularly the Foreign Ministry), the CASS Institute of American Studies, the Institute of International Studies, the Institute of Contemporary International Relations, the New China News Agency, and military-affiliated institutes. The hegemonists cut across all of these institutions.

Based on these divisions, the central argument of this study is that professional role is the primary determinant of China's America Watchers' articulated perceptions. Other variables such as an individual's socialization, exposure to the United States, access to source materials, and cultural factors all contribute to shaping the America Watchers' perceptions of the United States, but the evidence suggests that professional role is primary.

The spectrum of perceptions of the United States articulated by China's America Watchers as presented in this study leads one to the conclusion that, despite considerable progress, Chinese understanding of the United States remains shallow and seriously distorted. With a few exceptions, the vast majority of America Watchers in China do not understand the United States very well. The non-Marxists are best informed about the United States, but even their analyses usually lack subtlety and sophistication. The main implication of this conclusion is that a significant perceptual gap exists on the Chinese side that will continue to contribute to the fluctuating nature of Sino-American relations in the future.