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In the first two decades of the twenty-first century, for officials in the People’s Republic of China (PRC) and the United States alike, the most significant of all bilateral diplomatic relationships is that with the other country. China’s phenomenal industrial development since the late 1970s made it into the world’s second largest economy, set to surpass the United States in net size—though nowhere near rivalling it in per capita income—within less than a decade. Wealth has been rapidly translated into international power and influence, with speculation rife among academics, journalists, and political commentators around the world that within two to three decades China will inevitably surpass the United States and replace it as the global hegemon.¹ Some assume—citing earlier international balance of power shifts from the Peloponnesian War onward—that any such transition may well be the outcome of outright war between the existing hegemon and the challenger.² Others take a less sensational or apocalyptic view, anticipating that China—despite various unresolved internal problems—is likely to be a major, but far from the only, great power in a world characterized by increasing multipolarity.³

¹ See, e.g., Michael Pillsbury, *The Hundred-Year Marathon: China’s Secret Strategy to Replace America as the Global Superpower* (New York: Henry Holt, 2015); Martin Jacques, *When China Rules The World: The End of the Western World and the Birth of a New Global Order*, 2nd ed. (New York: Penguin, 2012); Henry A. Kissinger, *On China*, rev. ed. (New York: Penguin, 2012); Gideon Rachman, *Easternization: Asia’s Rise and America’s Decline from Obama to Trump and Beyond* (New York: Other Press, 2017); and Tom Miller, *China’s Asian Dream: Empire-Building Along the New Silk Road* (London: Zed Books, 2017).

² Graham Allison, *Destined for War: Can America and China Escape Thucydides’s Trap?* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017).

³ See, e.g., Howard French, *Everything Under the Heavens: How the Past Helps Shape China’s Push for Global Power* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2017); David Shambaugh, *China Goes Global: The Partial Power* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); Shambaugh, *China’s Future* (Malden: Polity Press, 2016); Thomas J. Christensen, *The China Challenge: Shaping the Choices of a Rising Power* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2015); and Michael R. Auslin, *The*

American and, more broadly, Western writing on China's relations with the outside world and, most of all, the United States has increased exponentially in recent decades, a response to China's steadily expanding international clout and activity. Chinese policymakers—or at least their advisers—voraciously devour much of this output, as they seek to interpret how the world beyond China perceives and interprets its international stance. So too do Chinese academics, for many of whom—however sharply they may disagree with specific analyses or interpretations—anything published on China beyond its borders is grist to their mill. Non-Chinese are, by contrast, far less familiar with how Chinese scholars themselves regard and interpret their country's foreign policies, especially its dealings with the West, and above all the United States. Those Chinese works that win greatest elite and popular attention overseas tend to be somewhat sensationalized volumes that predict that China will succeed—quite possibly through unconventional means such as digital warfare—in weakening and supplanting the United States.⁴

In a forum recently published in *Diplomatic History*, three articles by four well-qualified mainland historians—all but one of them still based in the People's Republic—attempt to take up the challenge of allowing non-Chinese scholars to appreciate how their Chinese counterparts interpret the making and implementation of China's policies toward the United States since 1900. The first, by Yafeng Xia of Long Island University and Zhi Liang of East China Normal University in Shanghai, offers an overview literature survey of China's twentieth-century diplomacy toward the United States.⁵ Two additional articles on the 1960s and 1970s, by Dong Wang of the School of International Studies at Peking University and Xin Zhan of Northeast Normal University in Changchun, offer pertinent case studies that focus upon the forces driving China's late 1960s turn toward rapprochement with the United States, and China's nuclear arms control policy in the early years of that rapprochement.⁶

Xia, one of the most prolific and distinguished historians of China's policies toward the outside world since 1949, is the author of a major study of contacts between the United States and China in the 1949-1972 period, and co-author of a volume on Sino-Soviet relations under Mao Zedong.⁷ As detailed in footnote three of his article, he has also published several earlier overview articles surveying Chinese scholarship on Cold War History and PRC Diplomatic History. The co-authored essay included here takes a broader chronological

End of the Asian Century: War, Stagnation, and the Risks to the World's Most Dynamic Region (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017).

⁴ See, for example, Liu Mingfu, *The China Dream: Great Power Thinking and Strategic Posture in the Post-American Era* (New York: CN Times Books, 2015); also Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui, *Unrestricted Warfare: China's Master Plan to Destroy America*, 2nd ed. (Brampton: Echo Point Books, 2015).

⁵ Yafeng Xia and Zhi Liang, "China's Diplomacy toward the United States in the Twentieth Century: A Survey of the Literature," *Diplomatic History* 42:1 (April 2017): 241-264.

⁶ Dong Wang, "Grand Strategy, Power Politics, and China's Policy toward the United States in the 1960s," *Diplomatic History* 42:1 (April 2017): 265-287; Xin Zhan, "Prelude to the Transformation: China's Nuclear Arms Control Policy during the U.S.-China Rapprochement, 1969-1976," *Diplomatic History* 42:1 (April 2017): 288-304.

⁷ Yafeng Xia, *Negotiating with the Enemy: U.S.-China Talks During the Cold War, 1949-1972* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006); and Zhihua Shen and Yafeng Xia, *Mao and the Sino-Soviet Partnership, 1949-1959* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2015).

sweep, covering the entire period since 1900, from Secretary of State John Hay's Open Door notes to the late twentieth century. The authors note a number of encouraging trends. These include a reappraisal of Guomindang policies; greater emphasis upon the role of individuals, as opposed to interpretations foregrounding the impact of class or broad historical forces; and the willingness of Chinese scholars to advance new interpretations, some of which conflict with others, prompting further historiographical debate. "Chinese scholars are more contentious than ever, and willing to advance arguments that contradict [those of] their colleagues" (242).

The authors describe how Chinese academics have recently highlighted the emergence within the Guomindang (GMD, Kuomintang) bureaucracy of a group of experts on the United States, including Gu Weijun (Wellington Koo), Kong Xiangxi (H.H. Kung), Song Ziwen (T.V. Soong), the bankers Chen Guangfu (K.P. Chen), and Hu Shi (Hu Shih). Overall, many argue, from the Treaty of Versailles onward, these individuals proved quite adept at furthering China's interests between the wars, cultivating their contacts within U.S. diplomatic and political circles to win international support and financial backing for China. These interpretations mark a new departure in studies of China's pre-1949 rulers. Some make extensive use of the recently opened diaries of Jiang Jieshi (Chiang Kai-shek), which have revealed that during World War II, Sino-American tensions were more entrenched and pervasive than was previously known, with Jiang seeking greater wartime assistance than the Franklin D. Roosevelt administration—especially the U.S. War Department—was prepared to provide. As Xia and Liang rightly note, these reassessments of the record of the Chinese Communists' immediate predecessors in power owe much to "a more relaxed political and academic environment, including Beijing's tacit permission to rehabilitate the record of the Nationalists" (262).

A number of Chinese scholars have also explored relations between the United States and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) during the 1930s and 1940s. The well-known historian Zhang Baijia has perceptively noted that, during the later 1930s, CCP leaders found it difficult to understand U.S. foreign policies toward China and Japan. Their incomprehension was almost certainly shared by many others around the world. Others, notably the respected Niu Jun of Peking University, argue that in the later 1940s, both the GMD and CCP "gave priority to China's domestic politics when handling relations with the United States" (253). For the CCP, dealings with the Soviet Union ranked higher than those with the United States, and domestic and military considerations were controlling. Niu Jun also highlights the prevalent lack of diplomatic experience among Chinese Communist leaders at this time, especially in terms of working with their Western counterparts, as well as their frequent preoccupation with other issues, then and later: "Consequently, they were routinely cautious and preferred to hold off dealing with the United States" (254).

Xia and Liang note that Chinese sources on the post-1949 period have only gradually become available, meaning that serious Chinese scholarly work on Communist China's foreign policies only began to appear in the late 1980s. Since that time, as they detail, Chinese scholars have put forward stimulating and often differing interpretations of Sino-U.S. relations in at least the first three decades of the PRC. Despite considerable debate, most still doubt whether the Sino-U.S. confrontation and antagonism of the early 1950s could have been avoided, though discussion of the pros and cons of China's decision to enter the Korean War still continues. The priority that the Chinese placed on keeping some channel of communication with the United States open, through the Warsaw ambassadorial talks that began in August 1955 and lasted until February 1970, suggests that, however entrenched the hostility between the two might appear, top PRC officials considered these contacts something of a lifeline or insurance policy.

Xia and Liang highlight the numerous important insights offered by Chinese scholars into the making of early PRC policies towards the United States. Several have dealt in depth with the successive Taiwan Straits crises. Yang Kuisong has ably brought out the importance of nationalism and his own highly emotional “victim mentality” (257) and sense of China’s past humiliation as factors that drove Chairman Mao Zedong, China’s supreme leader from 1949 until his death in 1976, to deliberately provoke showdowns with the United States over the offshore islands. Zhang Baijia has rightly reminded readers that Sino-American relations were never truly bilateral, but always at least trilateral, often affected by their relationship to third parties, whether large nations such as the Soviet Union or smaller states such as Vietnam. Li Jie has argued that domestic factors invariably affected the making of China’s foreign policies. But so too, it seems, did apprehensions of genuine external threats, whether from the growing U.S. presence in Vietnam in 1964-1965, fears highlighted by Jiang Ying and Lv Guixia, or Soviet border clashes in 1969, as discussed by Gong Li and others. Chinese scholars have also devoted significant attention to exploring why, after the initial overtures of the late 1960s and early 1970s and the establishment of informal contacts, further progress in Sino-American relations remained stagnant for much of the decade. While Americans have cited domestic political developments in the United States to account for this, Xia Yafeng and Yang Kuisong bring out just how ambivalent Mao Zedong himself remained until his death, as he “flip-flopped and returned to his anti-American approach” (262).

The two remaining articles in this trio are each effectively dominated by the towering figure of Chairman Mao Zedong, the leader who for almost thirty years bestrode China like a colossus, the ultimate arbiter setting the direction of China’s external and internal policies alike until his death in August 1976. When Mao’s thinking shifted, China’s policies followed suit forthwith. Dong Wang, like many mainland scholars an aficionado of realist theories of international relations that regard the maintenance of a balance of power favorable to the interests of their own nation or state as the ultimate objective of most if not all policymakers, ably depicts the fluctuations in Mao’s strategic thinking during the 1960s. Yet Mao’s policies fit somewhat uncomfortably within the realist framework Dong Wang chooses to employ. Faced with unfavorable outside conditions, throughout his career Mao was certainly capable of making massive tactical adjustments to his existing or previous positions on international affairs, modifications that he himself would then quite brazenly justify as being entirely consistent with his overall theoretical outlook.

It is also notable that, with the one massive exception of Chinese intervention in Korea in 1950—and even then, Chinese armies went to war proclaiming the entirely fictional pretense that they were merely ‘volunteers’ on a fraternal mission to assist their beleaguered North Korean comrades—once he attained power, Mao was exceptionally cautious in terms of not allowing precarious military confrontations to escalate into outright war with another major power. He deliberately kept China’s 1962 war with India brief and limited. Ensuring both his own political survival and that of the Communist regime in China at almost any expense were twin priorities that—at least after the ending of the Korean War, a conflict that Mao rashly insisted on entering over the opposition of most of his colleagues in the Politburo⁸—apparently superseded all others. In pursuit of these goals, which he almost certainly viewed as complementary, Mao quite ruthlessly sacrificed all other considerations. Like Ralph Waldo Emerson, in practice the Chairman regarded ‘a foolish consistency’ as ‘the hobgoblin of little minds.’ An acrobatic master of communist dialectical practice, with impressive legerdemain

⁸ Chen Jian, *China’s Road to the Korean War: The Making of the Sino-American Confrontation*, rev. ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996); and Shu Guang Zhang, *Mao’s Military Romanticism: China and the Korean War, 1950-1953* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1995).

Mao invariably rationalized and justified his every new position as merely the latest twist or turn on the lengthy but inevitable road to the ultimate Marxist Nirvana. Chinese party dogma was almost infinitely adaptable. Yet few have been better entitled than Mao to proclaim, with the American poet Walt Whitman: “Do I contradict myself? Very well then I contradict myself. (I am large, I contain multitudes).”⁹ As with the Bible, within Mao’s voluminous writings and pronouncements over the decades, one can find statements that endorse almost any views one may care to maintain.

Dong Wang’s article is carefully researched and argued, and contains much interesting information on the views of top Chinese foreign policy officials during the 1960s, including their pride in the development of a Chinese nuclear capability and the self-confidence that this instilled among them. Yet, reading it, I found myself asking why on earth, given the increasing apprehensions to which the rapidly growing U.S. military involvement in Vietnam, uncomfortably close to its own borders, gave rise within China in 1964 and 1965, the Sino-Soviet split continued in existence. Realist prescriptions would surely have suggested that China should move decisively to heal the breach with its former partner and patron. There are even indications that many on both sides would have welcomed a reconciliation, as would such allies as North Vietnam. As it was, for several years the two communist great powers managed to cooperate—however acrimoniously at times—in providing military and economic assistance to Vietnam.¹⁰ Yet the Cultural Revolution that Mao launched in spring 1966 targeted the Soviet Union as a major antagonist of China, a revisionist communist state that had betrayed the true faith. And in spring 1969, along the border dividing China and Russia, it was Chinese forces that began attacking Soviet troops at Zhenbao Island, an operation apparently undertaken on Mao’s instructions. Seemingly, the Chairman hoped to put an end to the chaos he had instigated during the Cultural Revolution by uniting all Chinese against a common national foe. Unfortunately, the Soviet Union retaliated in kind, while Russian officials inquired whether their U.S. counterparts would raise any real objection to a Soviet attack on Chinese nuclear installations. Having raised an exceptionally unpleasant whirlwind he had failed to anticipate, Mao panicked. Other Chinese leaders, notably the four retired top generals instructed to review China’s foreign policies, began to raise the possibility of a rapprochement with the United States, a major strategic realignment that Mao ultimately endorsed.¹¹

Given Mao’s continuing status as a national icon, it is not the easiest of tasks for Chinese scholars to come to grips with the often ad hoc, improvised nature of his thinking and the mixture of calculation and grandiosity, rationality and self-delusion that characterized many of his pronouncements. No other Chinese leader dared challenge him. In April 1971, the Chinese Foreign Ministry—having supposedly decided against inviting the U.S. ping-pong team to visit China—suddenly went ahead and issued the invitation, a reversal prompted by

⁹ Walt Whitman, “Song of Myself,” *Leaves of Grass* (1892).

¹⁰ See esp. Li Danhui, “The Sino-Soviet Dispute over Assistance for Vietnam’s Anti-American War, 1965-1972,” in *Behind the Bamboo Curtain: China, Vietnam, and the World beyond Asia*, ed. Priscilla Roberts (Washington, D.C. and Stanford: Wilson Center Press and Stanford University Press, 2006), 289-318.

¹¹ See especially Sergey Radchenko, “Untrusting and Untrusted: Mao’s China at the Crossroads, 1969,” in *China, Hong Kong, and the Long 1970s: Global Perspectives*, eds. Priscilla Roberts and Odd Arne Westad (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 31-54.

the fact that Mao had switched from opposing to supporting this move.¹² Policies changed quite literally overnight at the Chairman's whim. Yet he remained deeply suspicious of the United States. Xin Zhan's well-researched and crafted article on China's nuclear arms control policies in the early years of the rapprochement with the United States not only describes how fear of the Soviet Union led China to become less revolutionary and more accommodating in its dealings with Western powers, but also details Mao's continuing anxieties that the United States and the Soviet Union might at some point join forces against China. In the first half of the 1970s, China feared that the consultative provisions of the Soviet-U.S. Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT) might easily develop into a Soviet-American accord directed against China, one designed to keep China perpetually subordinate to its two greatest Cold-War rivals. In late 1973, Mao harshly criticized Zhou Enlai, his ailing premier and long-time lieutenant, for failing to persuade the Americans to eschew any such agreement with the Soviets. He feared that SALT represented a new form of superpower hegemony. Only after Mao's death did China become more amenable to entering into arms control arrangements. As the first article in this trio points out, Yafeng Xia and Yang Kuisong have both written articles that "contend that Mao was constantly vacillating between promoting world revolution and seeking a détente with U.S. 'imperialists,' even when he switched from his hardline anti-American policy to a more reconciliatory approach" (261). Until Mao's death, this erratic pattern continued in force.

Circumspection in approaching the formidable figure of Mao Zedong is only one and far from the foremost brake inhibiting Chinese scholars who wish to write on the history of their country's dealings with the outside world. In this respect, Yafeng Xia and Zhi Liang rightly highlight the enormous advances that have been made since the late 1970s. Within China, archival sources have become increasingly available to research.¹³ A substantial number of major documentary collections, including selections from the archives of leading officials from Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai downward, have been published in print, as have chronologies, memoirs, and oral histories of leading policymakers. An increasing amount of research funding has become available, not just to fund such publications, but also to finance individual and group scholarly projects focusing on China's foreign policies. Chinese scholars have become prominent exponents of the 'New Cold War History,' the multinational, multilateral, transnational, and comparative perspectives pioneered by the Cold War International History Project based at the Woodrow Wilson Center in Washington, DC, that was established shortly after the ending of the Cold War in Europe, with the initial objective of exploring the archives of the 'other side' of that competition. Chinese scholars are beginning to focus on the less formal aspects of international affairs: cultural diplomacy and relations; non-state actors, individual and institutional; non-governmental organizations, such as think tanks, philanthropic foundations, and non-profit organizations; educational and cultural exchanges; business and economic relationships; flows of immigration; women's issues and groups; the role of religion; and the insights to be gained from non-traditional sources, including literature, film, art, music, and even comic books. And China's scholars are displaying far greater interpretive skill and sophistication than was true of many in the past. They contribute regularly to leading

¹² Xu Guoqi, "Reimagining and Repositioning China in International Politics: The Role of Sports in China's Long 1970s," in *China, Hong Kong, and the Long 1970s*, eds. Roberts and Westad, 116-117.

¹³ On the current situation in Chinese archives, see Charles Kraus, *Researching the History of the People's Republic of China*, Cold War International History Project Working Paper No. 79 (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center, April 2016). Available online at <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/researching-the-history-the-peoples-republic-china>.

international journals, and constitute a regular presence at major scholarly gatherings of historians of international affairs.

Yet the message is one of at best modified rapture. Xia and Liang point out “[t]hree glaring weaknesses” that characterize current Chinese scholarship on China’s relations with the United States and, indeed, other countries. First, it is patchy and “unsystematic” (263), with numerous major issues still largely ignored or at best treated only sporadically or sketchily. Second, available Chinese sources are still far from being either adequate or comprehensive, with little information available on debates within the Chinese leadership, or indeed on the implementation of decisions once reached. As the history of the U.S. series *Foreign Relations of the United States* has repeatedly demonstrated, printed compilations of selected documentary sources, though often an excellent starting point for research, may censor or omit completely significant documents or pass over certain topics in silence.¹⁴ Yet many of the Chinese collections from which the recent published collections are drawn remain closed, and seem likely to remain so indefinitely. In addition, confidential internal *neibu* (classified) materials produced by a wide range of Chinese ministries and official organizations are normally off-limits to ordinary researchers, even though these are often indispensable to any understanding of the domestic context of the making of Chinese foreign policy.

Especially disturbing, though, are intensifying efforts to restrict and cut back on the information available to Chinese scholars. Xia and Liang are sufficiently tactful to avoid any mention of the closure to researchers of the Chinese Foreign Ministry archives, a policy that went into effect in late 2013 and early 2014 and is still in effect today.¹⁵ This is only one aspect of the policies initiated by the Chinese authorities that threaten the ability of scholars within China—and potentially even beyond—to access the extant historical record. Official Chinese demands that Google, Facebook, Apple, and other internet organizations censor content, and in some circumstances either provide personal information on Chinese users or leave the China market, have been well publicized in the international press. Other measures are more insidious. The media recently carried reports that Chinese officials had told Cambridge University Press that, if it wished to continue to market its other electronic materials in China, it must block several hundred articles published by the *China Quarterly*, a leading journal specializing in contemporary China. The press initially complied with this demand, but following heavy criticism of its acquiescence in censorship reversed its position and declined to accept these restrictions. Apparently, Cambridge is now going head to head with China over further demands from a state-owned importer that it withdraw certain articles published in the *American Political Science Review*.¹⁶ This

¹⁴ On well-justified complaints by leading U.S. historians that the *Foreign Relations of the United States* series ignored the role of the United States in the 1953 coup in Iran, the 1954 coup in Guatemala, the assassination of Congolese president Patrice Lumumba in 1960, and government-sponsored killings in Indonesia in 1965-1966, see Joshua Botts, “‘A Burden for the Department’? To the 1991 *FRUS* Statute,” 6 February 2012, Office of the Historian, U.S. State Department Website, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus-history/research/to-the-1991-frus-statute>; “History Bleached at State,” *New York Times*, 16 May 1990; David N. Gibbs, “Let Us Forget Unpleasant Memories: The US State Department’s Analysis of the Congo Crisis,” *Journal of African Studies* 33:1 (1995): 175-180; and “CIA Stalling State Department Histories: Archive Posts one of Two Disputed Volumes on Web,” 27 July 2001, National Security Archive Website, <http://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB52/>.

¹⁵ Amy King, “Navigating China’s Archives,” 2 August 2016, Asian Studies Association of Australia Website, <http://asaa.asn.au/navigating-chinas-archives/>.

¹⁶ Richard Adams, “Cambridge University Press, blocks readers in China from articles,” *The Guardian*, 18 August 2017; Tom Phillips, “Cambridge University Press accused of ‘selling its soul’ over Chinese censorship,” *The*

case is far from unique. In spring 2017, one academic learned that a major Western publisher of archival materials had been instructed to remove certain items from particular China-related collections—electronic databases that draw on a wide variety of primary sources, including British and U.S. Foreign Office and State Department files—if it wished to continue selling versions of these in China.¹⁷ While scholars outside China would still be able to consult the full record, those within China would view only what their government wished them to see. How many other Western publishers have received such requests from Chinese officialdom is not yet known.

China is steadily tightening control over its academics and intellectuals. President Xi Jinping has repeatedly announced his goal of developing think tanks in China that are taken seriously and respected beyond China, institutions that help to set the global agenda, whose publications and findings are held in esteem by scholars, policymakers, and the general public. Clearly, he regards such intellectual powerhouses of ideas as ranking high among the necessary and desirable trappings and accessories of the international great power that China aspires to be, and views developing “a new type of think tanks with Chinese characteristics” as essential to China’s ability to compete with the United States.¹⁸ Yet China’s avowed objective of developing internationally respected think tanks to boost its soft power and global standing may well be seriously undercut by expectations that these organizations should give policymakers only the advice that they wish to hear, mandates often enforced by the government’s ingrained habit of harassing or arresting such institutions’ personnel when they deviate from prevailing dictates.¹⁹ Even private think tanks in China are now under pressure to toe the party line, facing closure should they fail to do so, a fate that befell the liberal Beijing-based Unirule Institute of Economics in January 2017, provoking skepticism that China as currently run can host credible think tanks.²⁰

Guardian, 19 August 2017; Tom Phillips, “Cambridge University Press censorship ‘exposes Xi’s authoritarian shift,’” *The Guardian*, 20 August 2017; Tom Phillips, “Cambridge University Press faces Boycott over China Censorship,” *The Guardian*, 21 August 2017; Maev Kennedy and Tom Phillips, “Cambridge University Press backs down over China Censorship,” *The Guardian*, 21 August 2017; Tom Phillips, “Cambridge University Press Censorship U-turn is Censored by China,” *The Guardian*, 22 August 2017; Benjamin Haas, “Cambridge University Press headed for Showdown with China over Censorship,” *The Guardian*, 9 September 2017; Rana Mitter, “Why China Hurts Itself More Than Others With Censorship,” *South China Morning Post*, 26 August 2017.

¹⁷ Personal communication.

¹⁸ Cary Huang, “Think Tanks Face Hurdle in Answering Xi Jinping’s Call,” *South China Morning Post* (3 November 2014).

¹⁹ Adrian Wan, “Chinese Academy of Social Sciences is ‘Infiltrated by Foreign Forces’: Anti-graft Official,” *South China Morning Post* (15 June 2014); Cary Huang, “Chill Wind Blows through Chinese Academy of Social Sciences,” *South China Morning Post* (2 August 2014); and Huang, “Think Tanks Face Hurdle in Answering Xi Jinping’s Call,” *South China Morning Post* (3 November 2014). For a more detailed analysis of the operations of Chinese think tanks and policy institutes, see Christopher Ford, *China Looks at the West: Identity, Global Ambitions, and the Future of Sino-American Relations* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2015), especially chapter 2.

²⁰ Zhuang Pinghui, “Is China’s Quest for its own Chatham House or Brookings in Vain when Loyalty is Required for Think Tanks?,” *South China Morning Post* (5 May 2017); also Wendy Wu and Jane Cai, “Beijing Internet Censors close Websites of Liberal Economic Think Tank,” *South China Morning Post* (21 January 2017); Jun Mai, “Chinese Liberal Think Tank Slams Beijing Censors after Media and Website Accounts shut down,” *South China*

One month earlier, in December 2016, President Xi Jinping declared that Chinese universities should become “strongholds that adhere to party leadership” and “must adhere to correct political orientation.”²¹ Commentators almost immediately suggested that these expectations would undercut China’s ambitions to be the home of internationally respected tertiary institutions that could attract leading outside scholars.²² They may even cease to attract China’s own. One Chinese-born but U.S.-trained historian of my acquaintance has told me that, although Chinese universities would offer him whatever salary he might demand should he return to China, the political constraints he would face there mean that he will not do so.²³ In increasing numbers, liberal Chinese academics are fleeing China for the outside world, an exodus that the veteran China expert Jerome Cohen has compared to the flight of Jewish intellectuals—including Albert Einstein—from Nazi Germany in the 1930s.²⁴ The analogy is not encouraging; it is also decidedly uncomplimentary to China.

Sadly and probably far from coincidentally, Xia Jiping and Liang Zhi note a third problem afflicting mainland studies of relatively recent Chinese foreign policy: that despite the existence of a “core group of well-established Chinese scholars . . . who have published important works on these topics and earned national and international recognition . . . mid-career and younger scholars have yet to establish a good record of publication in order to establish that they are up to the challenges ahead” (263-264). This is not entirely true: I think of work by at least some of the younger scholars included in two recent collections that I edited, that demonstrated the high standards of methodology, research, sourcing, and analytical sophistication that numerous up-and-coming Chinese academics now consider a given.²⁵ But it is not difficult to understand why the best minds of China may well hesitate before entering a field of study that shows ominous signs of becoming a political minefield. Ever since the opening to the United States in the late 1960s and early 1970s, Chinese policymakers have sought to attain in-depth and informed understanding of the world beyond China’s borders and their own country’s dealings with that world, a quest in which the need for accurate knowledge of the United States ranked foremost of all. This indispensable imperative shaped and drove China’s intelligentsia and helped to facilitate a certain level of relatively free and unfettered inquiry, even as some Chinese policy analysts and America-watchers continued to adhere relentlessly to an ideologically rigid

Morning Post (24 January 2017); and Wang Xuangwei, “China’s Think Tanks Overflow, but Most still Think What They’re Told to Think,” *South China Morning Post* (12 February 2017).

²¹ Tom Phillips, “China Universities must become Communist Party ‘Strongholds,’ says Xi Jinping,” *South China Morning Post*, 9 December 2016.

²² Cary Huang, “China’s Xi Jinping Wants Both Academic Excellence and Tighter Grip on Campuses. Go Figure,” *South China Morning Post*, 17 December 2016.

²³ Personal communication.

²⁴ Tom Phillips and Ed Pilkington, “No Country for Academics: Chinese Crackdown Forces Intellectuals Abroad,” *The Guardian*, 24 May 2016; Tom Phillips, “Farewell’: Qiao Mu, Dissenting Academic, Leaves China for US,” *The Guardian*, 14 September 2017.

²⁵ See chapters by assorted Chinese scholars in Priscilla Roberts, ed., *Going Soft: The US and China Go Global* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishers, 2014); and Priscilla Roberts, ed., *The Power of Culture: Encounters between China and the United States* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishers, 2016).

Marxist interpretation of international politics and others embraced an equally ferocious brand of nationalism.²⁶ For almost four decades, Chinese intellectuals and historians displayed great determination, persistence, and ingenuity in tracking down materials of every kind, within their country and beyond, that cast new light upon China's past and present international relations. They melded Chinese, Asian, and Western sources and perspectives—as do the two case studies included in this forum—to produce often world-class academic work, that at its best transcended narrow national boundaries and was truly global in scope and implication. With real generosity, older scholars also nurtured a new generation of students, who enjoyed opportunities to study and travel abroad and explore a huge range of foreign source materials that were simply not available to their mentors. Will China now turn back the clock?

Xia and Liang end on an optimistic note, anticipating the declassification of new mainland archival files and the publication of additional wide-ranging Chinese documentary series, all of which will enhance scholars' knowledge of the making of China's past foreign policies. They also urge historians that “from a methodological perspective, it is imperative to examine the process of China's diplomacy toward the United States as a whole in combination with an analysis of the intelligence, domestic politics, and policy discussions, implementations, and adjustments that shaped China's foreign policy” (264). Twenty years ago, outstanding historians in China and their peers who had moved overseas but kept their ties with China—Zhang Baijia, Tao Wenzhao, Yang Kuisong, Ren Donglai, Shen Zhihua, Li Danhui, Chen Jian, Zhang Shuguang, Zhai Qiang, Niu Jun, Su Ge, Gong Li, and others—were already following such guidelines and implementing these prescriptions to their best of their ability. I know a little about their endeavors, but most definitely not the full story, in which I played only a relatively small though not entirely insignificant part. What they have collectively accomplished has been stunning, not least because of the difficulties of various kinds so many of them had to overcome. In the world of intellectual inquiry, those who come later are supposed to stand on the shoulders of their predecessors. The four academics whose work features in this forum are prominent among those talented Chinese scholars who still seek to do so. One trusts that they and their likeminded colleagues will continue to find it possible to fulfill this ambition.

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²⁶ David Shambaugh, *Beautiful Imperialist: China Perceives America, 1972-1990* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992); Philip C. Saunders, “China's America Watchers: Changing Attitudes toward the United States,” *China Quarterly* 161 (March 2000): 41-65.

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Westad) *China, Hong Kong, and the Long 1970s: Global Perspectives* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2017). She is currently completing a study of Anglo-American think tanks and China policy, 1950-1995.

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