

## **America's Changing Views of China: Through the Eyes of Janus**

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### **Abstract**

The history of United States' relations with China began within five years of the founding of the United States. From our first contacts in 1784, until today, our image and thus our relations with China have followed a dualistic pattern. This pattern is like the two faces of the Roman god Janus. One face is seen as benevolent, the other face is seen as malevolent. This paper will discuss the history of these two faces so that we can understand how United States-Chinese relations have gotten to this point in history and what might be the future of those relations.

### **Introduction**

Steven W. Mosher quoting Thomas Friedman writes "Men have never taken the world just as it comes. We need to explain the world to ourselves, and to do so, we have used stories, myths and fables-to record our experiences and shape our values. In most cultures, these narratives are tied together in what has been called a 'super story'."<sup>1</sup>

The history of America's perceptions of China is based on two such super stories. Stories I like to think of as the two faces of Janus. This presentation is a history of those stories. I will direct most of my focus to the pre-Communist period when the foundation of the 'Super Stories' took place, and comment only briefly on how these stories continued in the period after 1949.

### **Discussion**

Three basic characteristics can be found in the history of America's perceptions of China. The first characteristic is dualism. The images, or 'super stories' Americans have created of China are like the two-faced Roman god Janus. First the eyes of one face, the Confucian face, open and we see China as wise and benevolent. Then the eyes the other face of Janus opens, and the face of Fu-Manchu appears: sinister, barbaric, villainous, a dragon threatening to devour all that is within its path. Harold Isaacs writes that "... two sets of images rise and fall, move in and

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<sup>1</sup> Steven W. Mosher, *China Misperceived* ( A New Republic Book, 1990), 49.

out of the center of peoples minds over time, never wholly displacing each other, always coexisting, each ready to emerge at the fresh call of circumstances, always new, yet instantly garbed in all the words and pictures of a much written literature, made substantial and unique in each historic instance by the reality of recurring experience.”<sup>2</sup>.

The second characteristic is the relative ease with which American opinion shifts back and forth between the two faces of China. Perhaps no issue has seen such a see-sawing of American opinion as that of China. What makes the issue even more complicated is that often during periods of transition, the dual images are held simultaneously and we see both faces of Janus at the same time. Today is such a period. This explains the confusion in many American minds over which is the true face of China.

The final characteristic is that these popular images are often created by what Steven Mosher calls “*culture brokers*”.<sup>3</sup> The images which these Culture brokers produce are often distorted, since these individuals and groups often have hidden agendas or simply lack a direct, in depth, knowledge of China and its culture. Consequently they often present a picture of China and its culture which is far from the reality of China.<sup>4</sup>

The study of our changing views of China is one of considerable importance for Americans. China, while on the opposite side of the world from the United States, has played a special role in the history of the American economy, American diplomacy and even more importantly, the

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<sup>2</sup> Harold R Isaacs, *Scratches on our Minds: American Views of China and India*, (New York: Greenwood press, 1973), 64.

<sup>3</sup> Mosher, 21

<sup>4</sup> It is ironic that “in China the public is excluded by the very structure of the political system, and in the United States the public largely excludes itself by its legendary ignorance and apathy about foreign affairs that do not directly and obviously affect domestic interests.” Richard Madsen, *China and the American Dream: A Moral Inquiry* ( Berkley: University of California Press, 1995), xiii.

American psyche.<sup>5</sup> The tea dumped into Boston Harbor was from China and America's first Most Favored Nation treaty (MFN) was with China.

Just as important as what our views of China say about China is what these views say about our vision of America. A writer often reads his own experiences into the subject.<sup>6</sup> Our views of China, therefore, are often distorted not simply because they are often based on incorrect facts, but because they often reflect the views and hopes we hold for ourselves. T. Christen Jespersen writes that "... images of China have largely come from Americas' assumptions about themselves and not from the reality of Chinese linguistic, historical, or cultural similarities..."<sup>7</sup>.

American's images of China, or what James Mann calls "snapshots images"<sup>8</sup> are most often based not on facts, but are rather the perceptions of what Mosher calls "...a relatively small diverse band of culture brokers"<sup>9</sup>.

These 'culture brokers' regardless of their ideological viewpoints are good at using words and images to manipulate their audience. As the world moves into the twenty-first century, modern technology makes it even easier to manipulate public opinion through the popular media. Since few people are willing to check the facts they are being presented for themselves, they are even more susceptible to manipulation especially when those facts represent a preexisting bias.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Isaacs discusses the importance of this relationship when he writes that "...the history of America's emergence as a major power has been peculiarly linked to Asia and its rise as a primary setting for decisive world events". Isaacs, 38

<sup>6</sup> Madsen maintains that "for all their differences, though, the stories shared certain common limitations grounded in the structure of American society itself. They all postulated that both China and the United States, as different as they were, could fit into a universal model of the good society" Madsen, 57. In other words they were like us.

<sup>7</sup> T. Christopher Jespersen, *American Images of China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press 1996), xv.

<sup>8</sup> James Mann, "Left, Right, Mainstream, and Goldilocks," *China in the American Political Imagination*. Ed Carola McGiffert (Washington: The CSIS press, 2003), XV

<sup>9</sup> Mosher, 21.

<sup>10</sup> To better understand the impact of the culture brokers we need to realize that they are creating 'super stories'. To understanding the creation of a super story we can adapt the theory of narratology. While narratology is used primarily to analysis works of fiction, a knowledge of the theory is useful in understanding how culture brokers unconsciously develop the stories which shape our view of cultures and play such a large role in the creation of our political 'reality'. The works of Vladimir Propp & Gerard Genette are particularly useful. If we look at the super

Major shifts in attitude do not suddenly appear without cause or reason. The shift from one image to another has always been the result of from some major event. Unfortunately China always seems able to provide such events.

The first ‘culture brokers’ to influence the American image of China<sup>11</sup> were the Europeans who in the Eighteenth Century saw in the Chinese many of the elements for which the Europeans had been struggling in the period leading up to the French Revolution. The Europeans and Americans read into China what they wanted to see in their own societies.<sup>12</sup> Mosher maintains

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stories being created we can see the setting, in this case China, and major characters through which the stories operate like Chiang kai-shek. By using narratology we can see the way a narrator, in this case the culture brokers, can manipulate our view of the characters making some heroes and others villains. There are even plot devices such as plot twists, flashbacks or flash forwards for dramatic effect. The one thing these super stories do not have is an ending since they are written during the continuum of history. Also useful in understanding the actions of the ‘culture brokers’ are Michel Foucault and Robert Jervis. Foucault writes of the link between narrative and knowledge. This means that it is first necessary for the ‘culture brokers’ to create a narrative which draws upon ideas and images that are present within the audience. In reading the works of these culture brokers it is easy to discern the narrative of their stories even if it is unintended. It is also easy to see how they fulfill Foucault’s relationship of power to knowledge. Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences*. ( New York: Vintage Press, 1994). While Foucault later rejected much of what he wrote in this book, the relationship of knowledge to power remained a keystone of his thinking.

Robert Jervis discusses the methodology behind the creation of perceptions and their importance in the development of international policy. His discussion of signals and indices are among the tools to analyze the narration of the culture brokers and why they are or are not effective. Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University press, 1976). Robert Jervis, *The Logic of Images in International Relations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970).

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<sup>11</sup> America has gone through at least 11 such shifts of opinion. Harold Isaacs in his book, *Scratches on Our Minds*, establishes a chronology of dominant American viewpoints.

1. The Age of Respect (Eighteenth Century)
  2. The Age of Contempt (1840-1905)
  3. The Age of Benevolence (1905-1937)
  4. The Age of Admiration (1937-1944)
  5. The Age of Disenchantment (1944-1949)
  6. The Age of Hostility (1949-)
- Isaacs, 71.

Thirty-one years later Steven Mosher in *China Misperceived* accepts these divisions and adds three more of his own.

7. The Second Age of Admiration (1972-1977)
8. The Second Age of Disenchantment (1977-1980)
9. The Second Age of Benevolence (1980-1989)

Mosher, 21.

Since then there have been two new ‘Ages’ which I would like to add to the list.

10. The age of Tiananmen (1989-2002)
11. The age of Concern (2002-??)

<sup>12</sup> Warren Cohen warns that when dealing with American images of China there are “...several points should be kept in mind. First, there is rarely, if ever, a single perception held by all Americans...Second, few Americans have anything but a shallow understanding of China...Third, the two principal determinants of attitudes are perceptions of relative power and perceptions of cultural values and whether they are shared or opposing.” Warren Cohen,

China was seen as "...a country whose creed was rationalist in temper, owed nothing to revealed religion, and had produced a virtuous, meritocratic (sic) government and a prosperous, contented citizenry."<sup>13</sup>

As the Americans were being influenced by their English cousins as to the beauty and dignity of the Chinese culture, Robert Morris in 1784 sailed the appropriately titled clipper ship "Empress of China" into Canton harbor. Morris, would introduce the first element of the God and Mammon equation what J.A. Hobson called "the cooperation of economics and religion"<sup>14</sup>. Morris saw the great economic potential of China, "...the myth of the China market..."<sup>15</sup> would come to dominate the American world of business again in the 1920's and today. While the risks of such trade were great, the profits were even greater and fortunes were made for some of the most important of America's merchant families like the Delano's, a name which would become linked with China for almost two centuries.

Shortly after Morris discovered *mammon* in China the second element of Hobson's equation was added: *God!* In the 1830's American missionaries began to enter China. By the last half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century China became the largest mission field for American churches. By combining the word of God and the culture of America the missionaries, according to Jespersen, could "...give China the opportunity to remake itself in America's spiritual, political, and cultural image".<sup>16</sup>

It did not take long for this idealized 'Age of Respect' to change into an 'Age of Contempt' as the original illusions were swept away by continued close proximity of Americans to the

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"American Perceptions of China, 1789-1911", *China in the American Political Mind*. Ed. Carola McGiffert (Washington, D.C.: The CSIS Press, 2003), 25.

<sup>13</sup> Mosher, 36.

<sup>14</sup> Jespersen, 1.

<sup>15</sup> Kornberg, Judith and Faust, John, *China in World Politics: Policies, Processes, Prospect* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2005), 127

<sup>16</sup> Jersperson., p. 2

Chinese.<sup>17</sup> Any illusion which the Americans still had about the power of the Chinese state was lost during the Opium War and the resulting Treaty of Nanking.<sup>18</sup>

The contempt shown by the merchants was paralleled by the paternalism of the missionaries. While the missionaries recognized that the Chinese had an old culture which had been materially progressive they also saw the Chinese culture as an incomplete culture. The march toward a 'true' culture would only be completed when they accepted the ideas and religion of the West, especially Americanism. Charles Denby in 1895 expressed this idea when he wrote "The educated Chinaman, who speaks English, becomes a new man; he commences to think".<sup>19</sup>

The key to the acceptance of the American ideal was the acceptance of American Christianity. It was believed that Christianity would not have to be imposed because there was a "...simple but fundamental assumption that the Chinese people wanted (or at least should have aspired) to become more like Americans."<sup>20</sup> Since it was accepted by the American missionaries that all that was good about America was rooted in Christianity it was assumed the first step would be to spread the gospel. After all you cannot build the house until you have laid the foundation. "Starting with Christianity Americans sought to bring the light of heaven to the heathens of Asia; from there, democracy quite naturally followed. From a religious conversion to

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<sup>17</sup> As Mosher points out The Yankee "merchants and their consuls were not interested in abstract Confucian principles, but in establishing a workable, and profitable, trading relationship. Mosher, 37.

<sup>18</sup> By this treaty, not only did the Chinese lose monetarily by having to pay a large indemnity, but by being forced to open up 5 treaty ports to the West and having extraterritoriality imposed upon them, but China lost sovereignty as well. The loss of sovereignty would be a far greater blow to the Chinese than the mere loss of money and would remain a sticking point with the Chinese to the present day.

This treaty and subsequent treaties are one of the reasons that China is not only concerned about slights to its own sovereignty, but shows a similar concern in the United Nations when it the United States and others attempt to impose sanctions on other U.N. members which impose upon their sovereignty.

The Chinese response to the American bombing of their Embassy in Belgrade and the resulting demonstrations in front of the American Embassy and Consulates in China were not simply orchestrated by the Chinese government but were a reflection of a growing nationalism. Americans viewed this as government inspired, but in many ways it represented the Chinese sensitivity over the issue of sovereignty.

<sup>19</sup> Jespersen, 3.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 3.

Christ came the ability to comprehend and enjoy the democratic way of life. That, in turn, invariably led to a demand for American agricultural, industrial, and manufactured products, until the Chinese were destined to become just like Americans”.<sup>21</sup>

In this combination of ‘Americanism’ and Christianity we can see the difference between the missionaries of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and the missionaries of the first centuries of Christianity. The first Christians missionaries were primarily concerned with spreading the Christian faith and not overtly in spreading the Classical culture of Greece and Rome. They were able to adjust their message to the various local cultures accepting many of their outward symbols and practices and in the process Christianizing these symbols. Missionaries of the last two centuries seem to be just as concerned with the spreading of Western Culture as they were the spreading of Christianity.

Here again we see the combining of God and mammon. “Charles Denby, writing secretary of state Gresham in 1895, observed that “missionaries played a crucial; role in the development of overseas trade...”<sup>22</sup> Commerce obviously not only follows the flag, but it also follows the cross. This is an attitude which is not limited to our relations with the Chinese. It can be seen in our relations with the world of Islam in the twenty-first century.

A further problem was that many of the missionaries had not been to the United States for decades. This led to them having many illusions about what America was really like. “Pearl S. Buck recounted how her parents told her wonderful stories about an idealized America, a ‘dream-world, fantastically beautiful, inhabited by a people...entirely good, a land indeed from which all blessings followed.’”<sup>23</sup> They were so filled with the idea that America was the proper road for all peoples that they made little attempt to understand the Chinese culture and attempted

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 3

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, 3

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 5.

to create little American enclaves around their missions. They failed to see that they too were in fact imperialists, but according to Kornberg and Faust the Americans “...were *sentimental imperialists*-they believed they were unlike their more rapacious brethren in Europe and therefore had a special relationship with the Chinese.”<sup>24</sup> because they had not taken Chinese territory. Thus when the Boxer Rebellion and later the 1911 Revolution broke out, many missionaries could not understand how they could be the object of attack. Walter H. Judd, a medical missionary wrote in 1927 that the missionaries should not be surprised since they lived in “...elaborate brick compounds, which he thought not only was inconsistent with the missionary purpose but also had the effect of severing ties with the Chinese community...they constructed ‘a miniature homeland’, a little America in which their immediate and overriding loyalties were only to themselves and to those of their ‘own blood, language, flag, and culture’.”<sup>25</sup>

In many cases what they created were not Chinese who had truly converted to the Christian way of life, but rather what came to be called ‘rice Christians’ who simple were concerned with the physical benefits they could gain by pretending to be Christian.

At the same time many of the missionaries were forced to accept that the illusions which they had of their world in the West were crumbling. The period prior to World War I was one of great optimism. They felt that the West was on the verge of a brave new world, a world which would eventually encompass China as well. For many the optimism ended in Flanders fields. When they viewed the horrors of The Great War, with its irrational bloodshed and its inhumanity, they began to reevaluate a world which they had perceived to be on the verge of

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<sup>24</sup> Kornberg & Faust, 128.

<sup>25</sup> Jespersen, 8.



perfection. Now as a result of the 'Great War' there was a growing questioning of "...the merits of their own civilization".<sup>26</sup>

The missionaries began to question the belief that they had all of the answers for what ailed China. The missionaries began to look as much to the practical effects of their presence as to the religious effects. They were now as likely to be influenced by a social gospel, which like the 'Liberation Theology' of the 1960's "...came to count success not only by the number of conversions, but also by the number of their good works."<sup>27</sup>

The dualistic vision of China was further compounded by the direct contact Americans were having with the Chinese immigrants who began coming to the U.S. in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to help with the building of the transcontinental railroad. In an attitude and actions which paralleled the attitudes which whites of the American South had towards their black population, segregation laws, restrictions on citizenship and property and a series of racially motivated immigration laws were passed. It was a time when lynching and brutality towards the Chinese was not uncommon.

Examples of American intellectual dualism can be seen in anti-Chinese statements made by Horace Greeley who, in a column heavy with racial invective, "...described them as 'uncivilized, unclean, and filthy beyond all conception... lustful...every female is a prostitute of the basest order.'"<sup>28</sup> The call for tolerance was most poignantly represented by Bret Hart who "expressed his horror in the famous obituary for Wan Lee: 'Dead, my reverend friend, dead. stoned to death in the streets of San Francisco, in the year of grace 1869, by a mob of half-grown boys and Christian schoolchildren.'"<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Mosher, 44.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>28</sup> Cohen, 28.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 28.

## Forum on Public Policy

The two faces of Janus can be seen in a subject as basic as food. While Chinese restaurants became very popular during the 1920's, cookbooks of the inter war period not only taught women proper gender roles, but “simultaneously taught them that Anglo-American mores and foods were superior to all others...They were taught that Chinese food and Chinese people should be perceived as even more exotic and mysterious than their Mexican counterparts “. <sup>30</sup>  
Soy sauce was referred to as ‘bug juice’. <sup>31</sup>

In the same way Americans adjusted how they saw the reality which was China to make it palatable, they adjusted the Chinese food so much that it seldom resembled what would have been served in China. <sup>32</sup>This negative racial image which Americans had of the Chinese during this period was reflected in the phrases which developed “indicating incompetence or weakness (as in “Chinese fire drill” or Chinese homer or Chinese degree”).”<sup>33</sup> In 1905. When Theodore Roosevelt wanted to point out the stupidity of the Russians he ‘...accused them of Chinese folly’. ”<sup>34</sup>

Up until the inter-war period the main sources of information were the churches and missionaries. Most churches had connections with the missionary movement and one of the highlights of the church year was the visit of the missionaries to China. Sometimes they were even accompanied by ‘magic lantern’ shows. While the missionary circuit continued during the

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<sup>30</sup> Sherrie A. Inness, *Diner Roles: American Women and Culinary Culture* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press 2001), 10.

<sup>31</sup> In most recipe books of the period recipes called for the substitution of Worcestershire sauce ‘to add flavor to vegetables boiled to death.’

<sup>32</sup> As late as 1961 the cookbook “Make it Now, Bake it Later” American ingredients like mushroom soup and canned tuna were added to what was in effect Chop Suey so that it became “...a rough translation of the (traditional American) Tuna noodle Casserole” Mary Drake McFeely, *Can She Bake a Cherry Pie: The American Woman in the Kitchen*, (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2000), 111. Inness maintains that “Anglo-Americans had a deeply inculcated fear that Chinese food was unpalatable, barely edible—they feared what was hidden under the concealing Chinese Sauces” Inness 105.

<sup>33</sup> Cohen, 29.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

inter-war period a new source of information began to take center stage. Beginning with the inter-war years China was being covered in the growing national media.

Two examples of this new national focus were Pearl S Buck and Henry R. Luce. What is interesting about these two individuals was that they both had been raised in China. The presence of missionaries in China brought forth a new creature the mission child or ‘Mishkid’. These were the children of missionaries who spent their childhood years in China. Their ideas of both China and America were thereby artificially shaped. China was shaped by vision they had of China through the stained glassed windows of the mission compound. At the same time, since they did not have any memories of America, they were raised on idealized images of America created for them by parents who had not lived through the changes in America of the first decades of the 20th century. Luce would later remember how America appeared to him during his years in Qingdao. “There was one department store, wonderfully cool in summer, full of many of the wondrous things Americans could read about in the Sears Roebuck catalogue, and rich with the smell of newly opened boxes”<sup>35</sup>

With Time magazine, Luce created not just a news magazine, but a magazine which would mould public opinion.” Instead of simply reporting events, he wanted to shape public opinion. Like a preacher who seeks to save the unrepentant, Luce tried to fulfill his personal destiny of converting Americans to his understanding of the United States.”<sup>36</sup> As with many culture brokers on a mission he had no intention of being impartial. “Impartiality,” he once said was “often an impediment to the truth.” Luce was according to Jespersen “the most vocal salesman of an Americanized China”.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Jespersen, 5.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 11-12.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 12.

It should be recognized that Luce would not have succeeded so well if the ground had not already been prepared by the positive tradition of China's Janus face spread by the returning missionaries and the "...the willingness displayed by Americans to accept a sentimental and paternalistic rendering of China".<sup>38</sup> An image which paralleled the sentimental view found in the works of Pearl S. Buck and the movies which were made from them. Pearl S. Buck's book touched a responsive cord with Americans. Jespersen writes that "The exoticism of Asia came home to Americans in the form of a central character whose attachment to the land closely resembled Jeffersonian ideas about a virtuous class of yeoman farmer."<sup>39</sup>

Had everything been quiet in China during this period the message of Luce and Buck would probably have fallen upon deaf ears or at least been seen as unimportant by most Americans. But the actions of these two influential 'culture brokers' coincided with a major change in the Asian international situation, which directed America's attention to China. The Japanese invasion of China helped Luce in his move into the field of motion pictures when in 1935 he created The March of Time Newsreels. These news shorts would eventually appear "...in more than 5,000 theaters in the United States and more than 700 in Great Britain".<sup>40</sup> The graphic depictions of the Japanese aggression gave the series the visual punch it needed. "The more Luce packaged his version of events in an appealing manner, the more people were willing to believe them, in spite of their distortions or inaccuracies".<sup>41</sup> This use of newsreels by Luce to influence the viewer was similar to his use of photographs in the pages of life magazine. Both were chosen to show China at its best and the Japanese at their worst.

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 19.

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When Buck's 1931 novel 'The Good Earth' was released in 1937 theater goers could see both a graphic and horrifying newsreel of Japanese barbarism and Chinese suffering and then watch a film which for two hours extolled the virtues of the Chinese peasant. Movie goers could relate to this because the ideals expressed in the book and movie were more about America than about China and the fact that the major roles were played by Caucasians added to the familiarity.<sup>42</sup>

Luce and Time magazine were also very influential in the popular acceptance of Chiang Kai-shek as the leader of China. Luce and other culture brokers were drawn to Chiang because he was most like us. He was one of the 'good guys'.<sup>43</sup>

His anti-communism appealed to American leaders. But just as important was Chang's marriage to Soong Meiling, a very western appearing Chinese Christian. Chiang's subsequent conversion to Christianity helped as well. According to Jespersen "these two developments had a great deal to do with Luce's conviction that the United States could fulfill its historic mission in China".<sup>44</sup>

The influence of Buck and Luce would also find their way into American war movies. In those movies which dealt with the Chinese theater of the war, China formed merely the backdrop to actions by Americans. This genre was what Bernard F. Dick calls "Yank in the far east movies".<sup>45</sup> Chinese characters played only minor roles in films like *God Is My Co-pilot* and

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<sup>42</sup> "Wang Lung's persistence and his subsequent ability to overcome the obstacles that his family faced by returning to his land offered at least some hope to disillusioned Americans" (Ibid., 26) who saw themselves as experiencing the same sorts of crisis during the depression. 'See the Chinese are just like us' they were being asked to think.

<sup>43</sup> "Writers (particularly journalists) whose audience is the general public...usually represent history as drama, as a tale about good and evil from the point of view of actors struggling to do right or yielding to do the wrong thing" Madsen, 5

<sup>44</sup> Jespersen, 25.

<sup>45</sup> Bernard F. Dick, *The Star-Spangled Screen: the American World War II Film*, (Lexington: U of Kentucky, 1996).

*Thirty Seconds over Tokyo*. It appears that the film industry was only concerned with China's exotic appeal.<sup>46</sup>

While Luce supported Chiang's government an alternative to the Nationalist was being discovered. Since the days of the Long March many reporters began to see an alternative to the corrupt Nationalist government. "Between the Japanese invasion in 1937 and the Communist triumph in 1949, almost all of the foreign correspondents reporting from China came to see the conflict between the Nationalists and the Communist as a struggle between the forces of Reaction and those of Progress".<sup>47</sup>

While the Luce/Time position was accepted by most ordinary Americans many intellectuals and those more aware of what was really going on in China began to look more seriously at the Communist side of the story. Here, as in the case of the supporters of the Nationalists, the journalists saw what they wanted to see, or rather what the Communist wanted them to see. In this the Communists were far more successful in manipulating the story than the Nationalists. They were given brilliantly organized tours of Communist held territory, but all these 'parachute journalists' saw was what Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai wanted them to see. Madsen relates how "The dispatches they sent in from the Communist capital rang with an almost evangelical fervor,

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<sup>46</sup> There were exceptions studied by McLaughlin & Parry in *We'll always Have the Movies: American Cinema During World War II*, *Lady from Chungking* (1942) is a good example of the exception which proves the rule. In this film Kwan Mei represents the new China. The 'new' Chinese had the same aspirations as Americans and wanted to create a Chinese American society. The characters in *China* (1943) and *Dragon Seed* (1944) (where the main Chinese Characters were played by Caucasians) also represent an American vision of the future. McLaughlin & Parry maintain that in this way "...an immediate connection is made between these foreign characters and the American viewers; they may look different, but not far beneath their appearance is someone recognizable and familiar" McLaughlin and Parry p.168 The same applied to their ideas, as when Ling Tan (Walter Huston ) talking about his family says that "they were very much like such families in any other land" meaning the U.S.. McLaughlin and Parry p. 169 The similarity of message behind Hollywood films and Luce is not meant to imply any complicity. It simply shows that once again the image which Americans had about China were being shaped in literature, in the news media and in Hollywood with the same goal in mind. That of gaining support for the war effort by portraying our Chinese allies who are just like us and as such are worthy of our support.

<sup>47</sup> Mosher, 49.

as each seemingly tried to outdo the other in praising the new society the Communists were constructing.”<sup>48</sup>

In comparison to the Communists the Nationalist do not seem to have made a real attempt to win over the American reporters. In part it was the result of the arrogance of the Nationalist government but it also may have been a result of the traditional Chinese concern with sovereignty. It may also simply have reflected the traditional way the Chinese dealt with negatives. The Chinese have a saying *Jia chou bu wang wai yang-a* phrase whose nearest English equivalent is “Don’t hang out your dirty laundry in public”.<sup>49</sup> The Nationalist said nothing about their dirty laundry, perhaps because there was a great deal of it and the top leaders were involved and were reluctant to provide detailed information “...among copy hungry correspondents...”.<sup>50</sup> The Communist, on the other hand, cleverly covered their ‘dirty laundry’. Correspondents will go where they get fed information for their columns and the Communist were providing them with plenty of food in the form of copy; food which was specifically prepared for them. There is a saying in the American food preparation business that ‘presentation is everything’. If that is true the Communist knew how to woo the journalist with events and sights, which were specially prepared for them.

This favorable attitude toward the communists was also held by some important American diplomats many of whom reported that the Chinese Communist were not really Communist. In writing about the Communist “American diplomats usually referred to the activities of the ‘so-called communists’”.<sup>51</sup> Those diplomats who saw the negative face of Janus maintained the Communists were just ordinary bandits. Those who held the positive face of Janus saw them as

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 61.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 55.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 55.

<sup>51</sup> Warren Cohen, *Americas response to China: An interpretive History of Sino-American Relations* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, inc, 1971), 166.

moderate agrarian reformers who did not have a tradition of Communism on which to build. Cohen points out that it was not easy for the Americans to overcome both their stereotypes of China and their stereotypes of Communism “For Americans who were most comfortable with their stereotype of a Communist as a city-dwelling Eastern European Jew, it was easier to decide that Mao’s bands could not really be Communist and that they would wither away as soon as the Chinese government recognized the need for land reform.”<sup>52</sup>

If Luce was one of the major figures shaping the American view of the Nationalist, Edgar Snow and his *Red Star Over China* in 1938 was a major force in shaping American’s view of the Chinese Communists. The basic problem remained however, his descriptions of the Chinese Communists was as illusionary as the descriptions of the Nationalist and the American public was no more able to discern the truth then they are today.

As the stories of corruption and Civil War found their way into the American media, the negative face of Janus slowly began to reemerge despite the efforts of Luce to keep it hidden or at least explained them away. It angered Americans that while they were sacrificing blood and treasure the nationalists were holding back from combat and were wallowing in corruption. Thus, during the war Americans began to turn away from both factions. And with the victory of the Communist the image of China again became one of a dangerous dragon.

For the Chinese Communist the timing of the victory could not have been worse. It came in the midst of the growing panic in America over Communist expansion in Europe after the war. The expansion of universal communism in the West now found its parallel in the East. A panic fueled by demagogues who used fear as a major tactic in their political campaigns. But what was most unforgivable was that the Communists rejected the American path to democracy and the

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 167-8.



American culture. “The Yellow Peril was now a part of the Red menace.”<sup>53</sup> The new totalitarian paradigm that was accepted contained all of the most negative images which Americans had ever had of China.

One of the differences between the American view of China in the 1950’s and 60’s and that of previous periods was that to hold views that differed from the officially accepted totalitarian paradigm would bring the holder of such unacceptable views into serious professional and personal difficulties with the authorities, both public and private. There were still authors, like Edgar Snow who wrote glowingly of the Chinese experiment. The problem was that once again these writers on the left were just as delusional as those on the right. The negative aspects were glossed over or were accepted as being part of Chinese tradition. This was not as important as it might have been in shaping American images of China since “Few of these books were published in the United States and those that were sold poorly”.<sup>54</sup> The reason was that the ideas found in these books just did not fit the ‘truth’ Americans were being fed by the dominant popular ‘culture brokers’. It also did not fit what they wanted to believe. This was exacerbated by the presence of a chilling effect caused by demagogues who equated disagreement with the officially accepted totalitarian paradigm as sympathy with the ‘Red menace’.

The events within China over the next two decades did nothing to assuage American fears of China. The Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution highlighted the negative face of Janus and the way these events were covered by the American media added to American unease.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Jespersen, 172.

<sup>54</sup> Mosher, 101.

<sup>55</sup> · David Edelstein points out that similarities of culture and ideology tend to mute potential discord “...inimical ideologies, such as Soviet communism and American liberalism, contribute to the negative images that states hold on each other”. David Edelstein, “American Images of a Rising China: Lessons from History and Theory”, ed. Carola McGiffert, *China in the American Political Imagination* (Washington D.C.: The CSIS press, 2003), 17.

The next seismic shift in American image of China was the Nixon visit to China. To gain acceptance for his policy President Nixon had to change the prevailing American view of the Chinese. To do so Nixon, as the new culture broker created three fictions. “The first step taken by Nixon was to stop calling them Communist. In official press releases and public statements the word China was now prefaced by “People’s Republic of” and not “Communist”, ‘Red’ or even “Mainland’...”

“...Nixon’s second fiction concerned the character of the Chinese leaders....Nixon ordered China-watchers in the State department...to refrain from public discussion of the bitter infighting underway within the communist party.

“...Nixon’s third fiction was that China’s ‘system’ or ‘philosophy,’ was its own affair and that differences between the United States and China should not be allowed to impede relations.”<sup>56</sup>

Once again the positive side of the faces of Janus was emphasized and the optimism of the Americans began slowly to dominate American thinking about China. The problem was that Americans once again saw the actions of China through American glasses. “For many Americans the opening to China was of the liberalization of the whole Communist world: finally, ‘they’ were becoming like “us”.<sup>57</sup>

In Nixon’s wake came the journalists. Once again the Communists showed their ability to shape American views though strict control of access on the one hand and excessive flattery on the other. Mosher referred to these journalists as “Gullible Travelers”.<sup>58</sup>

After the first handpicked groups of journalistic ‘gullibles’; in 1977, China opened up its borders and along with the tourists came more critical journalists and the stories became more critical. Books like Jay Mathew’s *The Revenge Of Heaven* with its exposé of the excesses of the

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<sup>56</sup> Mosher, 140-141.

<sup>57</sup> Madsen, ix.

<sup>58</sup> Mosher, 144.

Cultural Revolution is a perfect example. Ironically there was still a tendency for even the critics to make allowances for the Chinese.<sup>59</sup>

According to Mosher needing a new paradigm to replace the totalitarian paradigm they developed “The idea of the “authoritarian modernizing regime...”<sup>60</sup>

This new image of China had something which would appeal to everyone. For the first time since the pre-war days the businessmen began to look to China as a new field for markets and even production. It was, therefore, in their interest therefore to continue the positive image of China.<sup>61</sup>

To continue the positive image of China, the Carter Administration muted its criticism of China even in the area of human rights. Though Jimmy Carter put great store in human rights, when it came to China, as opposed to the Soviet Union, Carter was very mild in his criticism. The position of the Carter administration mimicked the old view point that we can make China just like us. As James Mann points out “the Carter Administration officials believed that by educating students and scholars from China, they were cultivating a future generation of Chinese leaders who would, a few decades hence, steer Beijing toward policies sympathetic to America.”<sup>62</sup>

Even Tiananmen Square was unable to change, for long, the image or more correctly the hopes which Americans had for China. Despite the fact that the years since Tiananmen have seen further problems with Sino-American relations, the image we are presented is confused with the supporters of both images doing battle for the American public’s mind.

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<sup>59</sup> “...there is some truth to the observation of George Kennan, the author of our postwar containment policy, that people who study the Soviet Union end hating the Soviet Union; people who study China end up hating themselves. Those who were driven to their quest by a feeling of alienation from their own society, or by a contempt for democratic and free-market institutions, found much in Mao’s China to reinforce these sentiments.” Ibid., 186.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.,188.

<sup>61</sup> For the role played by business in the creation of China perceptions See Robert A. Kapp, “The Matter of Business”, ed. Carola, McGiffert, *China in the American Political imagination* (Washington: The CSIS Press, 2003)

<sup>62</sup> James Mann, *About face* (New York, Vintage Books, New York, 2000), 104.

Tiananmen is an example how the cultural difference between the Chinese and the Americans which cause us to view the same event from opposite perspectives. According to Anne F. Thurston there are four images which Americans have "...indelibly scratched on our minds: The lone man in front of a tank...the statue to the Goddess of Democracy...proof that the Chinese people really want to be like us...a hunger strike...tanks rolling into Beijing"<sup>63</sup> but our images do not necessarily reflect the realities of the situation. Chinese traditions held that an events outcome, its success or failure, determined legitimacy while according to the American view success or failure has little to do with legitimacy. "In imperial China, the emperor was said to rule through the Mandate of Heaven, and the people had the right to rebel...As Elizabeth Perry points out, the Mandate of heaven bestowed instant legitimacy upon successful leaders. He who succeeds is king; he who fails is outlaw."<sup>64</sup> The success in putting down the rebels proved that the government maintained its Mandate. Again incorrect understanding of the Chinese traditions enabled the culture brokers to present an image which was misleading.

Perhaps the most dangerous view, one which has been around since the early post World War II period, but one which has become more prominent in recent years is the view that China is as a major military threat. Swaine points out that "by the latter half of the 1990's ... mainstream U.S. security elites began to view China as a potentially serious threat to U.S. interests for the first time in two decades."<sup>65</sup> Those who warn of the potential threat are serving a

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<sup>63</sup> Anne F. Thurston, "Chinese Democracy in the American Political Imagination" Carola McGiffert, *China In the American Political Imagination* (Washington, D.C., The CSIS Press, 2003), 93-94.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 95.

<sup>65</sup> Michael D. Swaine, "Perceptions of the American National Security Elite", Carola McGiffert, ed. *China in the American Political Imagination* (Washington, D.C.: The CSIS Press, 2003), 73.

public function in that they point out the potential problems.<sup>66</sup> But there are also those who make a career of waving a red flag and who are simply demagogues.<sup>67</sup>

China is also seen by many Americans as the major economic threat. This is aggravated by a growing perception on the part of American workers that American businessmen cannot be trusted to support the American worker or even the needs of the nation. Robert A. Kapp recently wrote that there is “persistent uneasiness that corporate organizations, pursuing profit, are prone to ignoring larger social and national needs including the national security interests of the United States...”.<sup>68</sup> If these views continue to grow the ability of Americans to view China benignly as a stable actor in the modern world may be in serious jeopardy. This is especially true as a new generation of demagogues have come to the forefront.

## Conclusion

Today as we enter The Twenty-First century we are still torn between both faces of China, perhaps in so doing we will see the real face of China and the dual illusionary mask of Janus will fall away. It is important not only for the United States and China, but also for the entire world, that we recognize the real China unencumbered by illusion. The history of the next fifty years will be determined to a large extent by the relationship between our two great powers. As John Fairbanks’ pointed out in 1974 “...we have to get behind the clichés on both sides and sort out the collectivist and individualist elements that Chinese and Americans actually share, the things we can agree on for the new world of A.D. 2000 when we shall all have to learn to work together, or else.”<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> For example Michael D Swaine and Ashley J. Tellis, *Interpreting China's Grand Strategy: Past, Present, and Future*

<sup>67</sup> For example Constantine C. Menges, *China: The Gathering Threat*. Menges maintains that nuclear war between China and the U.S. is possible within 4 years.

<sup>68</sup> Robert A Kapp, “The Matter of Business”, Carola McGiffert, ed., *China in the American Political Imagination* (Washington, D.C.: The CSIS Press, 2003), 85.

<sup>69</sup> John K. Fairbanks, *China Perceived* (New York, Alfred A Knopf, 1974), xiii.

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