Introduction

Sino-American relations have fluctuated wildly over the five decades explored in these pages. Chinese and Americans suffered war, famine, inflation, and revolution. Through good times and bad they displayed a variable mixture of friendship, compassion, ruthlessness, and antipathy toward one another, making the exercise of diplomacy a complex and sometimes fruitless pursuit.

The Chinese had worried about contacts with alien peoples long before Westerners arrived, and had fashioned a system designed to allow for domination over, distance from, or, when necessary, appeasement of outsiders. Traditionally known as the tribute system, it required neighboring states to bring gifts to the Chinese emperor in exchange for the privileges of borrowing Chinese culture, conducting limited trade and, on occasion, securing China's protection. At times, tributary relations consisted of little more than nominal submission to the throne, a pretense of hierarchy through which the Chinese could disguise their weakness. When the Westerners arrived, it seemed natural to the Chinese to incorporate these new barbarians into the existing mold. Even after China accepted the idea that the western barbarians were different and were strong enough to demand a more formal and active commercial network, suspicion and distaste remained. Above all, the Chinese wanted to believe themselves to be the center of the world, and they felt little need to know much about the periphery.

Americans shared some of China's reservations about the outside world and the dangers of intimate association with decadent peoples. George Washington, who tried to shape his countrymen's views of foreign affairs in his hallowed 1795 Farewell Address, warned against entanglements, observing that "the nation which indulges toward another an habitual hatred or an

habitual fondness is in some degree a slave." But the caution demonstrated by the United States with regard to international relations extended to political, *not* commercial, intercourse. Americans quickly came to believe that open markets abroad held out the promise of rapid growth and prosperity at home. The United States dispatched its first merchant ship to China as early as 1784. In fact, although Washington had asserted that "our commercial policy should . . . [be conducted] by gentle means . . . forcing nothing," the United States compelled China to sign the first bilateral Sino-American treaty in 1844 (the Treaty of Wangxia), never hesitating to capitalize on Britain's military victory in the Opium War (1839–1842).

By the 1930s, these contrasting principles and the often painful lessons of history had created a framework for relations of inequality. The Americans clearly belonged to the community of imperialists who enjoyed legal immunities and preferential trade terms. Although those same Americans liked to think of themselves as more generous and less opportunistic than their European or Japanese counterparts, the differences were often lost on the Chinese who felt victimized by the unequal treaty system. The Second Sino-Japanese War, formally launched in 1937, would eventually improve Sino-American relations as Washington felt compelled to aid the Chinese. But before the United States aligned itself with China, there were years of American indifference and even trade in war matériel with Japan. When assistance did materialize, it came not from a searching reappraisal of the needs of the Chinese, but rather from the confluence of war in Europe and Asia as Washington sought to assist allies in the European theater by preventing Japan from striking out at the Russians. Tons of equipment, food, and funds flowed and Washington renounced unequal privileges in China. But the United States never considered employing the kind of force in China that it deployed on the European continent, investing only enough in Chiang Kai-shek's war effort to keep him on the battlefield.

The experiences delineated here follow directly from these strikingly different legacies: Americans interpreting their encroachment as beneficial, Chinese feeling victimized. For the most part, these particular Americans approached China with sympathy and the desire to improve conditions for individual and national survival. Their routes into the Foreign Service of the United States, and the China service in particular, varied considerably, but were not perceived as opportunities to exploit or control China. Everett Drumright, eventually U.S. ambassador to China, clearly found the

country as captivating as did so many American missionaries and businessmen. "I had found the China that I had gotten to know [in the early 1930s] . . . charming. I found the Chinese to be an interesting and enjoyable people. And, on that basis, I decided I would, perhaps, try to make China my career. I found the study of the Chinese language to be incredibly difficult, but I stayed with it. In fact, one time I was ordered by doctors to leave [Beijing] for a month because of my health. But I came back."

Others joined through inadvertence. Ralph Clough remembers, "When I was a freshman at the University of Washington, I applied for and received an award for an exchange scholarship at Lingnan University in Guangzhou (Canton), China. I hadn't particularly been interested in China before that—I had been studying Spanish. I was majoring in foreign trade . . . and hoped to get into business with Latin America. But suddenly came this offer to go abroad, and I was interested in traveling. It happened to be China; it could have been Argentina or Germany or whatever. So I went off to China . . . and . . . I was hooked."

The exposure to things Chinese occurred, in not a few cases, before conscious choice intervened. Donald Anderson recalled that "when I was in the third grade, my school teacher was a former Chinese missionary. She used to read us stories about China and show us all of the things that she had brought back from China." For quite a number of China diplomats, the decision to spend a lifetime addressing the relationship followed from their missionary backgrounds. Arthur Hummel, an ambassador to China after normalization, spoke about those early roots at some length:

> I was born in China, and spent my early years mostly in Peking. I left when I was eight years old. Missionaries were normally on a seven-year cycle, six years followed by a year of furlough. We left early because Chiang Kai-shek and his troops were moving North, mopping up the war lords, and unifying the country for the first time on the Northern Expedition of 1927.[1] Whenever he took over a place, there was quite a bit of turmoil, unrest, and shooting—as well as anti-foreign actions by his troops.
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> Like a number of missionary kids coming back to the States it was traumatic and I sort of put all that away and didn't even want to speak Chinese anymore. As a matter of fact, because of the Chinese servants and the fact that my parents were practicing their own Chinese, I spoke Chinese before I spoke English, but that withered away considerably

because I refused to speak it, which, I understand, is not too unusual among kids born abroad who want to be like other Americans.

My father moved to Washington where, being more of a scholar than a missionary, he was asked to be the head of the Library of Congress Oriental Division. Then my father was invited to go back to Peking for a book buying and research stint of several months, so my parents decided to take me with them and sent me ahead. I arrived in September 1940 [when I was 20]. The tense and worsening situation between the United States and Japan caused their trip to be canceled. So there I was, a young bachelor all alone in Beijing. My Chinese came back with a rush. I learned 40 times faster than anybody else in this language school, the same school where my father had been part of the faculty and where I used to live as a child, the Peking Language School. I was working as an English teacher in a Chinese high school, a Catholic mission high school. I was too dumb to leave before Pearl Harbor, even though the embassy and my parents were all urging me to leave. So I was interned by the Japanese.

The war shaped the careers of a number of men who became diplomats. For John Holdridge, wartime conditions comprised an introduction to China, "My father was an Army officer stationed in the Philippines. I was eleven. We went to Beijing via Tianjin . . . in 1937 . . . on a Japanese ship serving as a troop transport from Osaka. It was just loaded to the gunnels with Japanese troops. In the city of Beijing itself you could feel a sort of tenseness. One of my early memories of that place was seeing the Japanese troops marching through the old city walls for exercises." John Lacey, a little older, found himself putting his college degree in Chinese literature to use when "Pearl Harbor changed . . . the lives of many, many millions of Americans. . . . I immediately quit schooling. I tried to get into the government service . . . fighting those dirty Japs. The best I could do immediately was to join the Office of Censorship in the Chicago branch, where my Chinese enabled me to censor Chinese mail that was picked up, intercepted."

Art Hummel, meanwhile, watched the war first from occupied Beijing, then from a Japanese internment camp along with 3,000 other enemy aliens, and finally as part of a Nationalist Chinese guerrilla unit on the North China plain. His escape from the camp, engineered through bribing camp workers, landed him with a group that

offered to come in with large forces and do away with the Japanese guards. They would quickly construct an air field, the Americans would come and fly us all away to Free China. This, of course, was a hare-brained idea—not practical, for many different reasons. However, eventually, it was decided by the prisoners' camp government that two people would be given authorization to escape and go to these guerrillas and establish contact with Chongqing, presumably. The camp would then have a liaison base outside. We had a small ladder which we used to get over a brick wall. We put a stepping stool outside, stood on that, jumped over the barbed wire, and we were out.

We were considered valuable assets. We sent a couple of messengers back by land, who eventually arrived in Chongqing and contacted the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) detachment there. Plans were being made, right at the end of the war, for a large air drop of ammunition and a small unit of OSS troops—Americans—to drop into our guerrilla area. The thinking was that it seemed possible then that American troops might be landing somewhere on the coast of China and it could turn out very useful to have some Americans in place. Unfortunately, the weather was bad the day that the air drop was supposed to come, and the planes flew back to Chongqing. Our unit was of course Nationalist, rather than Communist. There were also Communist guerrillas nearby, who had clear lines of communications all the way back to Yan'an, their headquarters. By accident, we had been contacted by Nationalists. If we had wound up with the Communists, we could have walked out through Communist territory and gotten back to Chongqing, had we chosen to do so.

The guerrilla outfit was very interesting and very self sufficient and very patriotic. It was one of the very few such efficient and patriotic Nationalist guerrilla outfits. From time to time the guerrillas would receive a warning that Japanese or Chinese puppet troops were advancing on the border of our area. We would pack up everything that we could pack up and become mobile. There was no point in a frontal battle, which is what the Japanese were trying to force them into. Fundamentally, the Japanese would sweep back and forth through our area, sometimes for as long as two weeks, trying to capture the guerrilla headquarters and leaders. But there wasn't any running around and riding horses in mountain forests. It was a typical North China plains area, densely populated.

> As the war dragged on, mutual hostilities were commonplace between Communist and Nationalist units and antipathies were high. In fact there was a three-cornered war going on, and it was difficult to say which side was more at fault. As the Japanese looked more and more like losers, the Communists in Shandong systematically started to wipe out Nationalist guerrilla areas one by one, with an eye on occupying more of the territory at the time the war ended.[2]

Conditions in China became more chaotic as world war was replaced by a renewed civil war. American Foreign Service officers found themselves in the vortex of revolution, aligned with one side and yet aware that the other side appeared increasingly likely to win. When these premonitions proved accurate, American representatives left the Chinese mainland and did not return for twenty years. During those two decades, they observed developments in the new People's Republic of China from afar, never sure that they understood the internal dynamics, always uncertain as to the external implications of growing Chinese power.

While the Chinese mainland remained closed to American representatives, the Foreign Service officers interviewed here watched Communist China from Hong Kong, analyzed its behavior in Washington, or conducted relations with the competing Nationalist Chinese regime on the island of Taiwan. In Hong Kong, they found themselves deeply immersed in pursuing cases of visa corruption, enforcing trade sanctions against China, and attempting to gauge agricultural production in the PRC by examining the size of hogs sold in Hong Kong markets. American policy mandated that the diplomatic corps pretend that the Taipei government represented all Chinese and insist that Taiwan retain the Chinese seats in the United Nations General Assembly and Security Council. In Washington, this meant endless hours lobbying allies to stand with the United States in annual admission contests that depleted political capital in increasingly useless battles.

When not arrayed against the mainland or other foes of American policy, these Foreign Service officers found they also had to struggle with their allies in Taiwan. Although ties could be very close when confronting artillery fire in the Taiwan Straits, different goals and values produced antagonism and even rioting that destroyed the American Embassy in 1957. In the midst of political and military turmoil, however, Taiwan also underwent an economic development miracle that accentu-

ated not just indigenous talent, but also the virtues of American aid and technical cooperation.

Eventually, Washington and Beijing found that they needed each other (far more than Washington needed Taipei), and they set their relationship on a new course. The opening for this reversal of fortunes came with developments in the United States and the Soviet Union. Richard Nixon sought a China opening to help negotiate a way out of Vietnam, and manipulate Moscow into living up to détente. At the same time, Soviet leaders were dealing with disarray in the communist bloc and, as they suppressed dissent in Czechoslovakia, they issued the Brezhnev Doctrine, which claimed the right to rescue bloc regimes from destabilization. In Beijing, this was seen as a threat. Subsequent fighting along the Sino-Soviet border, coupled with the advantages of reconciliation with Washington such as open markets and access to technology, led Chinese leaders, most especially Zhou Enlai, to see advantages in an opening to the United States. Given the stakes, neither side allowed Taiwan and the Nationalist Chinese regime to get in the way.

Into these uncharted waters, American diplomacy was piloted largely by a new generation of Foreign Service officers. These people could claim to be more professional than their predecessors. No longer primarily the sons of missionaries, like Arthur Hummel or John S. Service, they came to the China field through study of the language and history, hoping that someday they would be able to serve in the country rather than on the periphery, but never certain that that time would come. Their delight in living among the Chinese is apparent from their words recorded here.

Once Americans and Chinese came into regular contact, however, the common interest in opposing the Soviet Union could not completely divert officers from routine problems occasioned by political, cultural, and economic differences. Friction became even more obvious after the Soviet Union ceased to exist and conflicting viewpoints and goals of earlier years reemerged without the constraints imposed by the old Cold War. Indeed, suspicion and misunderstanding characterized the end of the period under scrutiny here as it had characterized the beginning.

Similarly, in the last days of the twentieth century, as at the close of World War II, the American public remained largely indifferent to foreign relations and focused almost entirely on domestic issues. When they did look abroad they continued, as had been true from the 1940s to the 1990s, to be preoccupied with Atlantic affairs and to demonstrate apathy with

regard to Asia. These realities could not help but have a powerful influence on how these diplomats carried out their responsibilities and saw their contributions. John Lacey, for instance, noted his frustration with American ignorance as he enlisted in the U.S. Navy and his superiors decided to put his Asian studies background to use, ordering him to learn Japanese. "When I protested that I knew nothing about Japanese [being a China specialist], the answer was, `Well, they are more or less the same.' " Even as American trade with Asia soared and the most serious challenges to American national security could be found in Asia, such unawareness and indifference remained endemic.

ABOUT THE TEXT

Given the nature of this project, it should be obvious to the reader that this is not a balanced investigation into the events of the years between 1945 and 1996. It is an account from one side, lacking a Chinese voice. It would be important and exciting to hear the reminiscences of Chinese diplomats and America specialists confronted with identical problems and similar experiences. Some Chinese diplomats have written useful memoirs such as Wang Bingnan.[3] One can only hope that some day Chinese scholars will be able to have the broad access to oral history collections comparable to those in the United States and that someone will then compile a book like this in China.

Meanwhile, it is crucial in reading the words of these American diplomats to keep in mind that their perception of reality in China, however sympathetic to the Chinese they may have been, remained an American perspective on China. In the course of their service, they did become composite beings no longer quite like their brethren who stayed at home and shunned things foreign. Some acclimated so much as to be called China hands or find themselves accused of clientitis. Nevertheless, they could not and did not forsake their American culture, attitudes, or values.[4]

The purpose of this volume is to provide context for understanding diplomatic interaction between the United States and China. By drawing on the reminiscences of a wide range of American diplomats, I have tried to give the memoranda, cables, and dispatches that shaped the formal relationship broader meaning and greater nuance. These interviews also provide insight into the circumstances under which difficult and crucial deci-

sions were reached and reveal the background and biases of the people who made and carried out those policies.

Oral history is to some extent an art form. Memories can be erratic, interviewers know more or less about different subjects raised in a session, some participants are expansive and others laconic, and there is the insidious problem of bias in both subject and questioner. A further problem in this volume is that the interviews were conducted by a number of different people, sometimes involving more than one interviewer for the same interviewee.[5] In the pages that follow I have tried to flag or eliminate errors, but have not tampered with strong points of view, nor have I been able to compensate for gaps in the interviews. Inevitably, you will think of important issues about which the interviewers, who were not China specialists, did not ask. Be assured that I share your frustration. To provide as much continuity and coverage as possible, I have grouped portions of interviews around particular issues and have arranged them loosely in a chronological sequence. This has meant blurring the lines between separate interviews conducted at different times.

A few additional points regarding the editing are in order. The goal in assembling this material was to retain the words of individuals who experienced these events so far as possible. I have, however, sought to make the material readable and, to this end, eliminated repetition, omitted extraneous observations, and jettisoned the occasional inarticulate lapses. Also, in virtually all cases, I dropped interjections such as "I think" or "I believe," because the entire interview represents the accumulated recollections and interpretation of the individual speaking. Further, I have sometimes dropped the questions addressed to the interviewees, sometimes rewritten them, and in rare instances added a comment (in brackets) or question not in the original transcript. This was always done without changing the substance or thrust of the interview and solely in order to clarify the meaning or context of the response.

The romanization system used here is the Pinyin system, with the exception of a few names that are far more familiar in other renderings, such as Chiang Kai-shek rather than Jiang Jieshi. In addition, the names for China's capital are used by various interviewers interchangeably: Beijing, Peking, and the civil war-era Peiping, which is discussed in the text.