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Editorial

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Next fall will mark the two hundred year anniversary of the Terranova Incident in Canton (Guangzhou), China. On 23 September 1821, Francis Terranova, an Italian sailor on the *Emily*, an American merchant ship anchored on the Pearl River, was buying Chinese rice wine from Ko Leang-she, a woman, who was conducting trade in a sampan next to the ship. After lowering an olive jar with money in it from his ship, Terranova was dissatisfied with the amount of goods he received in return. A quarrel ensued and Terranova dropped a pot over the side that struck Ko on the head, presumably knocking her unconscious and causing her to fall overboard and drown. The U.S. consul offered Ko's family a large sum of money, but Chinese authorities demanded that he surrender Terranova to them. The *Emily's* captain, as sole arbitrator of justice aboard his ship, refused. In response, the Chinese threatening to revoke U.S. trading privileges in Canton. American merchants in China appealed to the U.S. government to intervene, resulting in the *Emily's* captain placing Terranova in Chinese custody. Following two trials and a conviction, on 28 October, the Chinese executed Terranova by strangulation. This incident was an example of clashes that occurred between Western traders and a Chinese government trying to limit outside economic penetration of its country. By 1839, China's efforts to terminate the flood of imported opium led to war and Britain won it easily. Imposition of the Treaty of Nanjing forced China to accept free trade in four more ports, pay an indemnity, and accept outside jurisdiction over the criminal trials of foreign citizens. Although these privileges extended to the United States, the John Tyler administration sent Caleb Cushing to negotiate the Treaty of Wangshia in 1844 that extended extraterritorial rights to civil cases. The United States clearly was no friend of China.

American businessmen envisioned huge profits from sales in a vast Chinese consumer market. Simultaneously, missionaries traveled to China to

Christianize and civilize a backward people. In 1934, Reverends Elijah Bridgman and David Abeel, representing the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, were the first to arrive at Canton. Many more followed and sent home reports that developed the popular belief that the United States was the protector and patron of China and that the Chinese wanted to emulate the U.S. example. The Burlingame Treaty of 1868 seemed to reflect U.S. patronage, as the United States disavowed any desire to intervene in Chinese internal affairs and left to China decisions on future trade privileges. But other American actions contradicted claims of benevolence. For example, it benefited from the unequal Treaty of Tianjin of 1858 that opened more ports for trade with fewer restrictions and legitimized missionary activities in China. Nor did Americans welcome the arrival of a growing numbers of Chinese “coolies” beginning in the late 1840s who worked in mines and on railroads, reaching by 1869 more than 100,000 workers. Racist beliefs in their inferiority led Congress in 1875 to pass the Page Act prohibiting the entry of these laborers. At that time, the Qing Dynasty was in the second phase of its Self-Strengthening Movement. Under the slogan *zhongti xiyong*, it was introducing Western methods and technology to renovate Chinese military, diplomatic, fiscal, and educational policy, while preserving old Confucian traditions and avoiding Western culture. Sam Wong and Brian Wong demonstrate in the first article of this issue titled “Chinese Perceptions of American Democracy: Late Qing Observers and Their Experiences with the Chinese Exclusion Act” that while Americans expected the Chinese to follow the U.S. model for reform, they instead saw flaws in the American system that they wisely strived to avoid.

Wong and Wong describe the experiences of Kuang Qizhao, a late Qing official, and other Chinese self-strengtheners while living in the United States to substantiate how it was thoroughly rational for them to endorse classical Confucianism and promote education before democracy in China. Kuang was translator for the Chinese Educational Mission (CEM), who lived in the United States from 1874 to 1882. Influencing the beliefs he developed about U.S. society and politics were not only personal observations, but also the insights he gained from Connecticut intellectuals. American democracy, he concluded, was flawed because demagogues were able to manipulate an uneducated populace. Furthermore, Christianity was essential for providing the moral basis of an effective U.S. society. Kuang was a confirmed Confucian, but also anti-authoritarian. He viewed Confucianism as the equivalent of Christianity in promoting democracy in China, not because of a “conservative desire to preserve the existing social order.” His experiences in the United States reinforced his Confucian distrust of allowing the masses to have a role in government,

especially the congressional passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882. Wong and Wong describe his efforts to defeat the bill, explaining how Kuang attributed this violation of American ideals to ambitious politicians exploiting a corrupt system and using emotional appeals to manipulate an uneducated electorate. He and other Chinese visitors to the United States returned home and advised Qing officials not to impose an American model, but “to introduce selectively those institutions that were appropriate for China’s conditions and to blend those institutions with its traditional ones.” The authors insightfully conclude that these “practical technocrats” focused on modernizing China’s economy because they had a “realistic and sophisticated understanding” of democracy and its dependence on an educated populace.

China’s Self-Strengthening Movement failed. In 1895, Japan exposed the weakness of the Qing Dynasty when it effortlessly defeated Chinese forces in the Sino-Japanese War and seized Taiwan. European nations then forced a defenseless and moribund China to grant them leaseholds in major ports. In response, Secretary of State John Hay issued the first Open Door Note in the fall of 1899 calling for open access to trade and investment for all nations in China. Less than a year later, Hay’s second Open Door Note committed the United States to protect the territorial integrity and political independence of China. The Chinese thus had reason to believe that the United States in fact was its protector and patron. But thereafter the United States failed to uphold the Open Door policy with anything more than words. In May 1915, Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan only stated publicly U.S. opposition to Japan imposing most of the “21 Demands” on China. In November 1917, Secretary of State Robert Lansing would recognize Japan’s right to maintain “special interests” in China. At Versailles in 1919, President Woodrow Wilson acquiesced in Japan’s occupation of the Shandong peninsula. When in September 1931 Japan established military control over Manchuria, Secretary of State Henry L. Stimson’s craven response was to declare that the United States would not recognize forcible changes violating its treaty rights in China. After the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War in July 1937, China certainly could not have been surprised that U.S. action in its defense was limited. Nevertheless, Rong Li, in the second article of this issue titled “Wartime Storytelling and Mythmaking: Interpreting and Remembering the Flying Tigers in the United States, 1941–1945,” describes how, during World War II, Americans reinterpreted reality to confirm their conviction that the United States was the benevolent protector and patron of China, when history provided no basis for this belief.

Li Rong explains how during the weeks after Japan’s attack on Pearl Harbor, U.S. pilots in the American Volunteer Group (AVG)—better known as the Flying

Tigers—scored a string of aerial victories against the Japanese air force. Their exploits immediately captured the attention and imagination of Americans who were desperate for some evidence of U.S. military success in fighting Japan. Li then develops how this led to storytelling and mythmaking about the AVG's daring deeds that "helped many Americans regain confidence . . . after enduring the shock of . . . Japan's advance in Asia and Pacific." More important, she describes how newspaper articles and movies promoted "selectiveness and distortion" in how Americans perceived the AVG. First, they viewed AVG pilots as selfless and benevolent heroes committed to protecting and rescuing the "backward, primitive, and incapable" Chinese, but ignored the major Chinese military and civilian contributions to the U.S. war effort. Second, Americans disregarded how "the Flying Tigers gained a reputation of getting drunk, reckless driving, assaulting Chinese civilians, and even looting, which caused local resentment." Third, they concluded that U.S. democracy had instilled in American pilots individual initiative which explained their success against the brutal and obedient Japanese. Fourth, Americans believed that the AVG pilots not only used superior "strategies, training, and skills to outwit and outfight the Japanese," but their victories provided "proof of American mastery of modern technology and machines." Fifth, American storytelling about "the Flying Tigers was an early step toward the mythmaking that the United States [alone] decisively saved the world from the Axis." Challenging the image of World War II as the "Good War," Li persuasively concludes that wartime perceptions in the United States about the AVG instead "demonstrated the persistence of American racism and paternalism toward the Chinese."

Since World War II, Sino-American relations have been a rollercoaster ride moving from total estrangement to euphoric friendship in the 1970s to mutual recriminations after Tiananmen to circumspect coexistence early in the 21st Century. A steady escalation of discord and hostility has occurred under President Donald J. Trump. As a presidential candidate, Trump blamed the unfair economic policies of the People's Republic of China (PRC) for the huge U.S. trade deficit and loss of American manufacturing jobs. He promised action to end the PRC's intellectual property theft, currency manipulation, and export subsidies. Once in office, however, Trump courted Beijing to enlist its support to compel North Korea to end its nuclear weapons program. When the PRC limited its cooperation, Trump opened a full court press to force China to change its economic policies. He first placed tariffs on imported PRC solar panels and then, in March 2018, on Chinese steel and aluminum imports. Beijing retaliated and the trade war that followed led to U.S. duties on \$550 billion worth of Chinese products and the PRC placing tariffs on \$185 billion

worth of U.S. goods. Trump also blocked sales of U.S. technology companies to Chinese firms and increased restrictions on major PRC technology firms operating in the United States. In August 2019, the administration labeled China a currency manipulator. After rejecting the PRC's claims in the South China sea in July 2020, it prepared for new arms sales to Taiwan. Sino-American relations reached their lowest point in the past half-century in 2020 when Trump blamed the PRC for causing and hiding the severity of the coronavirus pandemic. Surprisingly, his administration was far less decisive or successful in neutralizing Beijing's pursuit of regional economic dominance, as Edward Ashbee explains the third article in this issue titled "We don't drown our partners in a sea of debt: U.S. Policy Responses to China's Belt and Road Initiative."

Ashbee emphasizes that the Trump White House, unlike the Obama administration, "declared its vehement opposition" to the PRC's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), condemning it as a strategy to make neighboring nations economically dependent upon it. In response, Trump's administration resorted to multilateralism and "soft power" strategies for economic cooperation that conflicted with Trump's presidential election campaign promise of a unilateralist, "hard power" foreign policy. Ashbee attributes this reversal to "the established foreign policy or 'expert' community 'harnessing' the Trump administration's policy thinking on this particular issue." Trump's initial "America First" policies to increase defense spending and narrow development programs demonstrated his preference for using "hard" rather than "soft" power. After at first maintaining his campaign disparagement of the PRC as an "economic predator," Trump shifted to countering the BRI as a strategic threat, resulting in his signing of the Better Utilization of Investment Leading to Development (BUILD) Act in October 2018 to raise private sector funding for infrastructure projects for "market-based development" in underdeveloped nations. Later that year, the administration initiated "Prosper Africa" to double U.S. trade for development on that continent. Neither initiative experienced much success because of a limited commitment of U.S. resources. Trump also supported creation of the multilateral Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) to foster regional infrastructure development, but Japan resisted U.S. efforts to make it a direct competitor with the BRI. Nor would India serve as a U.S. proxy in offering development options challenging the PRC. Ashbee concludes that because of "tension, friction, and abrasion between the different ideas" in the foreign policy community, U.S. "connectivity" initiatives and projects "to counter the BRI were limited and fragmentary in character."

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