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China's Image in the New York Times: Political, Historical and Cultural Factors

潘志高 著

《纽约时报》上的中国形象：
政治、历史及文化成因

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前 言

“形象”，按照鲁宾斯坦(Rubinstein)的定义，指的是“一个人或群体传达给另一个人或群体的讯息”。研究一个国家在另一个国家的形象具有重要的现实意义，因为它是国家领导人在对外决策时的重要依据之一。比如，如果美国认定某一国家为“无赖国家”(rogue nation)，那么美国决策层在制定对该国的外交政策时必然要考虑到这一因素。美国人把某一国家看做是友好国家还是敌对国家至少在外延上规定了美国制定对该国政策时的选择范围。

一个国家在另一国家的形象与对象国的舆论领袖的作用密切相关。这些舆论领袖们，无论是政客、商人、学者还是记者们，他们作用于公众的主要途径是各类媒体。而对于一个国家的广大群众而言，想逃避媒体的影响基本上也是不可能的。因为他们不可能到世界每一个角落去亲自了解每一个国家，所以他们对外国的印象只能来自各类媒体。因此，研究一个国家在另一个国家媒体上的形象就显得尤为重要。

自1989年以来，中国在美国媒体上的形象问题成了专家及公众共同关心并热切探讨的话题。国外的学者，尤其是美国学者以及媒体从业人员也参加了这场讨论。中外人士对中国在美国媒体上的形象为何如此负面，应如何改善等问题各抒己见，莫衷一是。有中国学者认为美国媒体是在“妖魔化中国”，并举出了不少例证。美国方面对“妖魔化”这类带有感情色彩并隐含有美国媒体与政府

有阴谋这样的指责大不以为然。一些美国学者认为美国媒体对中国的报道一贯秉承其客观、公正的原则,并没有超出常规。在这方面的纯学术研究近年也大量涌现,大有汗牛充栋之势。

这些前人的研究成果对本书的撰写起到了巨大的参考作用。它们就像是巨人的肩膀,使得后来者能够登高望远。本书只希望在前人尚未研究或研究得尚不充分的领域做一些初步探讨和补充。这一领域就是关于中国在美国媒体上的形象的定量分析。前人虽已有研究,但不系统、欠充分。

本研究把《纽约时报》从1993到1998年间的全部对华报道作为量化分析的“目标总体”(target population),或者叫“全域”(universe),而每一篇报道则作为“分析单元”(unit of decoding)或者叫“个体”(elements)。把每一分析单元按报道类型及报道的语气(正面、负面还是中性)归类,以期了解《纽约时报》的对华报道在多大程度上是负面的以及负面报道主要集中在哪些方面等问题。

马克思主义关于物质基础决定上层建筑的论断仍适用于今天我们对美国媒体这一上层建筑领域的研究。媒体不可能摆脱其阶级和社会的特点和局限性。但马克思主义作为一个哲学体系不可能也没必要对具体的诸如中国现阶段在美国媒体上的形象等问题给出答案。对这一具体问题的分析还需要具体的理论和分析方法。

本书列举了近几年在研究中国及其他第三世界国家在美国的负面形象方面比较流行的五种主要理论。它们分别是:“阴谋论”,“社会体制制衡论”,“社会认证论”,“媒体特性论”以及“媒体霸权论”。很难说它们都属于马克思主义的范畴,但它们都各自具有自己的特点,并各自说明了部分问题,同时也都有局限性。本研究认为“媒体特性论”和“媒体霸权论”的合理内核综合起来可以用来说明美国媒体对华负面报道这一现象。

“媒体特性论”认为媒体作为商业企业的属性以及自认为是社会监督者的双重特点决定了它注重负面的天然倾向性。但媒体在

报道某一国家时注重哪些负面的东西以及如何看待这些负面的因素则取决于媒体所属的社会的价值取向和流行观点。这是“媒体霸权论”的主要论点。美国媒体如何报道一个国家从本质上取决于美国主流社会对这个国家当时所持的成见。本书的最终研究结果证明了这一点。

本书沿用了费尔克劳(Fairclough)关于话语分析三步走的方法。先用“内容分析”(content analysis)的方法对《纽约时报》从1993到1998年间的所有对华报道做一事实层面上的描述。这一部分的发现是:《纽约时报》这几年的对华报道的确以负面为主。负面与中性及正面报道的比率是:55:44:1。按照“媒体特性论”,这一发现是预料之中的。通过进一步观察中性与负面报道分别涉及的主题可以看出:中性的报道大都集中在中国的经济领域,而负面的则大都是关于中国的政治体制及人权、西藏等问题。在分析中国在经济领域取得的成就时,《纽约时报》的作者们往往把它们归功于中国“资本主义化”的改革,也就是符合美国口味的改革。而在报道中国经济、政治等领域仍然存在的问题和矛盾时,作者通常将其归因于中国的“共产主义”制度。几乎在所有领域,《纽约时报》的撰稿人都认为美国可以“教导”中国如何做才好。这证明了“媒体霸权论”的有关论述是站得住脚的,即美国媒体的对华报道的视角及语气等方面反映了美国主流社会的价值观及其对中国的主要看法。

那么美国主流社会对中国的看法又来自何处?回答这一问题也就回答了美国媒体为何如此负面报道中国这一本研究的中心问题。对这一问题的回答主要由本研究的定性研究部分,即关于《纽约时报》1993到1998年间对华报道分析的第二步和第三步来完成。第二步是具体问题具体分析。文章选取了影响中美关系的四个重要议题(“人权”、“台湾问题”、“西藏”和“中美经济关系”),并分析了《纽约时报》的有关报道不够全面甚至片面、歪曲的原因。第三步是综合分析,即探求贯穿《纽约时报》所有对华报道的主题

是什么。综合前面(第三章、第四章)关于中美文化差异以及美国两百年来如何看待这一差异的分析,本研究得出结论认为:美国媒体负面报道中国,除了媒体本身偏好负面这一原因之外,还有:

1. 美国文化及其限定下的美国主流社会的价值观。其中影响美国人对外看法的主要有“天定命运”、“上帝选民”等思想。

2. 中国的现状以及美国对中国的传统看法。两百年来美国一直把中国当做一个需要“拯救”的信仰“异教”的国家看待。今天,对于仍然实行大大有别于美国的政治制度的中国,美国人对中国的看法依然如故。

3. 国际大格局及美国的国内政治需要。“冷战”的结束大大降低了中国在一些美国人心目中的作用。“冷战”后美国对外政策制定过程中多元化的趋势使其国内政治需要频频影响对外政策。

4. 中美关系的大势。美国媒体的对华报道随着中美关系的变化而起伏。当中美关系好转时,美国媒体对华报道中负面成分会大大降低,反之则负面成分呈上升趋势。“冷战”后中美关系磕碰不断的现实决定了美国媒体的对华报道不可能太好。

文章的最后,笔者不揣冒昧地提出了若干关于如何改善美国媒体对华报道的想法。作为本研究的延伸和补充,其作用充其量是提出问题,供大家参考。

本书是在笔者博士论文的基础上扩充而成的。作为我的导师,北京外国语大学的梅仁毅教授给了我莫大的帮助。可以说,没有梅教授的精心指点与帮助我是不可能写成此书的。特向他表示衷心的感谢。另外,我还要感谢我的妻子赵翠莲以及其他同志给我的关怀、鼓励和帮助。

由于笔者水平的局限,本书的缺点与错误在所难免,欢迎读者批评指正。

潘志高

2003年1月

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Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Importance of the Media

What has been China's image in the U. S. media? What has contributed to this image? This study attempts to explore answers to these questions by examining China's image in the *New York Times* from the year of 1993 to that of 1998 and, assuming that to be the most representative image of China in the United States, tries to locate the reasons behind it.

An image, as defined by Rubinstein, "is a message that is sent from one individual or group to another".^①

The image of one nation in another is determined to a large extent by the opinion leaders in the latter country. As far as China's image in the United States is concerned, the opinion

① Murry A. Rubinstein, "American Board Missionaries and the Formation of American Opinion toward China, 1830—1860", in Jonathan Goldstein, Jerry Israel and Hilary Conroy, eds., *America Views China: American Images of China Then and Now* (Bethlehem: Lehigh University Press, 1991), p. 68.

leaders include: the businessmen, the missionaries (active in the nineteenth century, but their influence still being felt now), labor union leaders, journalists, diplomats, scholars, and politicians who had direct or indirect contact with the Chinese.^① These people, due to their relatively high social positions and more importantly their chance of having access to China, share the responsibility of introducing China to the United States, via various kinds of media. It is apparent that the American news media, due to its wide spread and long lasting influence on the audience, is the most important conduit by which China's image is transmitted to the U. S. general public. Walter Lippmann, in his landmark book, *Public Opinion*, which is still frequently referred to and quoted by scholars today, points out that the pictures formed in the public's minds by the media are the leading source from which public opinion is formed. In the book, Lippmann argues that an important distinction should be made between the environment (the world that is really out there) and the pseudo-environment (our private perceptions of that world). Since it is impossible for people to experience first hand everything about the "world out there", according to Lippmann, it is the news media that sketch a large number of the pictures in our

① Hongshan Li, "Introduction: Image and Perception in U. S.-China Relations", in Hongshan Li and Zhaohui Hong, eds., *Image, Perception, and the Making of U. S.-China Relations* (New York: University Press of America, 1998), p. 2.

heads so that we think we know the "world out there".^①

When it comes to foreign countries, the media's role becomes even more crucial. John Merrill believes that the media are "instrumental in creating, perpetuating, and modifying images of foreign nations and international leaders for the public".^②

This is especially the case in the United States.

The Americans are well-known for their lack of knowledge of and interest in international affairs.^③ So they have to rely heavily on the media for information. They are especially ignorant of China and the Chinese. To most Americans, for a long time, as Warren I. Cohen points out, "China was a distant world where everything was upside down, where people ate dogs and wore white in funerals, where women wore pants and men wore gowns."^④ In a poll conducted in 1942, only less than 40% of

① Walter Lippmann, *Public Opinion* (New York: The Free Press, 1922).

② John C. Merrill, ed., *Global Journalism: Survey of International Communication*, cited in Yanmin Yu, "Projecting the China Image: News Making and News Reporting in the United States", in Hongshan Li and Zhaohui Hong, eds., p. 45.

③ See Herbert Gans, *Deciding What's News: A Study of CBS Evening News, NBC Nightly News, Newsweek, and Time* (New York: Vintage Books, 1980).

④ Warren I. Cohen, "American Perceptions of China", in Michel Oksenberg and Robert B. Oxnam, eds., *Dragon and Eagle: United States-China Relations, Past and Future* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), p. 67.

Americans could locate China in a map. ^① And it should be noted that it was a time when the United States and China were forming a wartime alliance against the Japanese. The Chinese were supposed to be the friends of the Americans. More than fifty years later, the situation did not get any better. In a classroom poll conducted in the week when China's president Jiang Zemin visited the United States in 1997, only 4 out of 100 students knew who was Deng Xiaoping. Nobody could identify Jiang Zemin. Without adequate knowledge or information of China, the American public has no alternative but accepting the image of China created by others, such as the media. ^② As Yanmin Yu points out, "When people are not informed on certain issues, they are more vulnerable to the influence and manipulation of what they read in the newspaper and what they watch on television." ^③

What has been China's image in the media of the United States?

"Negative" is the most frequently used term in referring to China's image in the U. S. media. It is alleged that the American media, in their coverage of China, focus only on the negative aspects of China. China's "violations" of human rights, such as "forced abortion, detention and harsh treatment of political dissidents", China's "cultural extinction" policy toward Tibet,

^① Hadley Cantril, *Public Opinion* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1951), p. 67.

^② Hongshan Li, p. 4.

^③ Yanmin Yu, p. 46.

China's "bullying" of its weak neighbors, to name a few, are the constant themes in the U. S. media. On the other hand, the American media seldom, if ever, mention the development and progress that has occurred so obviously in China. ①

Many Americans are sympathetic to the Chinese viewpoint. Some famous scholars and politicians such as Henry Kissinger, James Sasser, Doak Baum, Kenneth Lieberthal, and Michel Oksenberg, etc, have criticized the U. S. media for their one-sided, misleading portrayal of China. ②

While few Americans would argue against the existence of the negative coverage of China in the U. S. media, fewer agree that the U. S. media have been demonizing China. Some American scholars argue that the coverage of China in the American media is already fair enough, if not positive enough. ③ Speaking at a meeting held in the University of California which aimed at searching for the ways to improve the coverage of China in the U. S. media, Seth Faison, the head of the *New York Times* Shanghai bureau, said that the media would not change the way China was portrayed. It was the way it should be. ④

What did he mean? Why will the media not change its China

① 马世琨。“美国政客出言不逊，中美关系风雨难平，美国如何看待中国”，载环球时报 1999 年 12 月第 10 期，第 1 页。

② 郝雨凡，张燕冬编。无形的手：与美国问题专家点评中美关系。新华出版社，2000。

③ 凯丽·丹博(Kerry Dumbaugh)。“国会：双边关系的新变数”，载郝雨凡，张燕冬，第 403 页。

④ “美报批评传媒对华报道不负责任”，载参考消息 2000 年 3 月 1 日。

coverage? And just how negative is China's image in the U. S. media? Why is China so portrayed in the U. S. media?

1.2 Hypothesis

There is no evidence to show that the U. S. media have been conspiring to demonize China. Nevertheless, there is no denying the fact that China's image in the U. S. is distorted. No single reason can explain this phenomenon.

In the United States, media practitioners have traditionally considered themselves to be the "watch dogs" of the government. Critical reports are considered to be more conducive to the benefits of the society. What is more, the media enterprises in the United States are mostly privately owned. Their aim is to make money, if just for survival. So the most important consideration is to make their media attractive to the audience. Negative news is considered to be more appealing to the audience than positive reporting. It is just natural for the media to be more inclined to negative reporting. This is the media's nature. But how negative a foreign nation is presented in the United States media and what negative aspects are highlighted are determined by the dominant assumptions held by the mainstream of the American elite society toward the country.

As far as China's image in the U. S. media is concerned, the media's commercial and critical nature predisposes their negative inclination in their China coverage. The dominant assumptions held by the mainstream elite society in the United States about China decide how negative China is portrayed in the U. S. media

and what aspects of China are stressed in the U. S. media. These assumptions in turn are determined by:

- 1) The dominant values of the American society which are determined by its culture;
- 2) The situation in China, and the traditional views of China and its culture held by Americans;
- 3) The international environment and American domestic politics;
- 4) The state of U. S. -China relations.

1.3 The Significance and Uniqueness of This Study

The study of image and perceptions is very important in that image and perceptions have always been essential in the making of U. S. -China relations. ① National image and perceptions are related to U. S. -China relations, as Warren I. Cohen points out, by “setting the broad context for policy making” in Washington and Beijing. ② Or as Hongshan Li argues, “Washington and Beijing might attach different degrees of significance to its relations with the other from time to time. The role of image and perception has never been changed. The relations between the United States and China have always been shaped by image and perception.” ③

Harold Isaacs expresses a similar view by saying that, “ima-

① Hongshan Li, p. 1.

② Warren I. Cohen, pp. 55—56.

③ Hongshan Li, p. 1.