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THE
UNITED STATES
AND
China

By

John King Fairbank

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The United States and China

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FOR MY MOTHER
LORENA KING FAIRBANK

INTRODUCTION

The Harvard University Press can offer the readers of its Foreign Policy Library no more timely or important book than John King Fairbank's *The United States and China*.

During and since the years of the second World War American public opinion has been often confused, and not infrequently altogether baffled, in its effort to understand the course of the developments which are taking place in China and to comprehend the reasons for the innumerable difficulties that have arisen in the conduct of our relations with China.

The American people are being told by a large number of self-proclaimed "experts," only a few of whom have actually lived and worked in China, that the Government of the United States should pursue a policy designed solely to support and strengthen the Nationalist Government of the Kuomintang Party under the leadership of Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, and that unless such a policy is vigorously followed China will, within a short time, become a mere satrapy of the Soviet Union.

At the same moment, they are being advised by a smaller, but by no means less vociferous, group that the Communist government which has established itself in Northern China is a purely autonomous regime, by no means subservient to Moscow, and that this government if given the opportunity without foreign interference, can find the means of fashioning purely Chinese solutions for many of the economic and

social ills from which the Chinese people have so long suffered.

As so frequently occurs in ideological controversies of this character, both sides to this continuing debate tend to be blinded by their predispositions and by their own individual prejudices. But it can, I think, be safely asserted that those who speak or write as though the 400 millions of the Chinese people could be used today as the servile instrument of the Soviet Union, or of an American policy of containment of the Soviet Union, are offering the people of the United States no objective appraisal of the facts of present international life. The Chinese people are awake. An increasing number are fully aware of their latent power. Nationalism is daily becoming, as it is throughout the Far East, a more potent factor in shaping human destinies.

The fundamental truth which public opinion in the United States should bear in mind in any attempt to grasp the underlying realities in the relations between China and the United States is set forth by Professor Fairbank in this passage of his book:

Chinese society is very different from our own. We cannot hope to succeed in our policy toward China unless we take account of this difference. Consequently, one of our worst enemies is wishful thinking, subjectivism and sentiment. Another is plain ignorance. We court disaster if we let our patriotic defensive measures against Russian expansion, or a purely doctrinaire anti-communism, dictate our China policy. Our policy must take full account of China's own process of social change . . . We cannot remake Chinese society in our own image. We have to go part way in the process of Sino-Western adjustment. Those of us who believe in the American century are not used to this idea. But the Chinese people, when forced to it, will fight for Chinese ideals just as bitterly as we will fight for American ideals.

There can be no doubt that "wishful thinking" and "plain ignorance" have for many generations gravely prejudiced

our relations with the greatest nation of the Far East. The concept that we can "remake Chinese society in our own image" has almost always made itself felt in the formulation of American policy toward China. No better example of this could be given than these words spoken to me by an American Secretary of State almost thirty years ago, after the Chinese Empire had been replaced by a Chinese Republic: "Now that the Chinese people are practicing our form of democracy they will, within a quarter of a century, solve all of their difficulties."

Some of us, and I among them, will agree wholeheartedly with Professor Fairbank's assertion that "the Chinese Revolution is fundamentally a matter for the Chinese people to decide." We will also agree with him that the Chinese Communists differ from the Communists of other nationalities in their circumstances rather than in their ideas and that to deal with the Communist problem in China we must pay close attention to the circumstances which lead communism to flourish. For while it is obvious that for reasons of expediency the Soviet system has at times been willing to cooperate with truly democratic parties, and is at times disposed to permit a great measure of independence to local Communist organizations, there is not yet the slightest shred of evidence available which would indicate that any Communist party organization from Brazil to Indonesia, or from Chile to Denmark, is not in the last analysis subservient to the authority centralized in Moscow.

All of these fundamental questions—questions that are of increasingly vital importance to every American citizen—are taken up for full ventilation in Professor Fairbank's book. That is why a volume such as this, which gives the average American an understanding of what Chinese history really is, of what makes the Chinese political, social, and economic machine function, and of the immense contribution that the Chinese people during more than two

thousand years have made to civilization, represents a contribution to American thinking that is of almost unique value in these crucial years.

Sumner Welles

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J. K. F.

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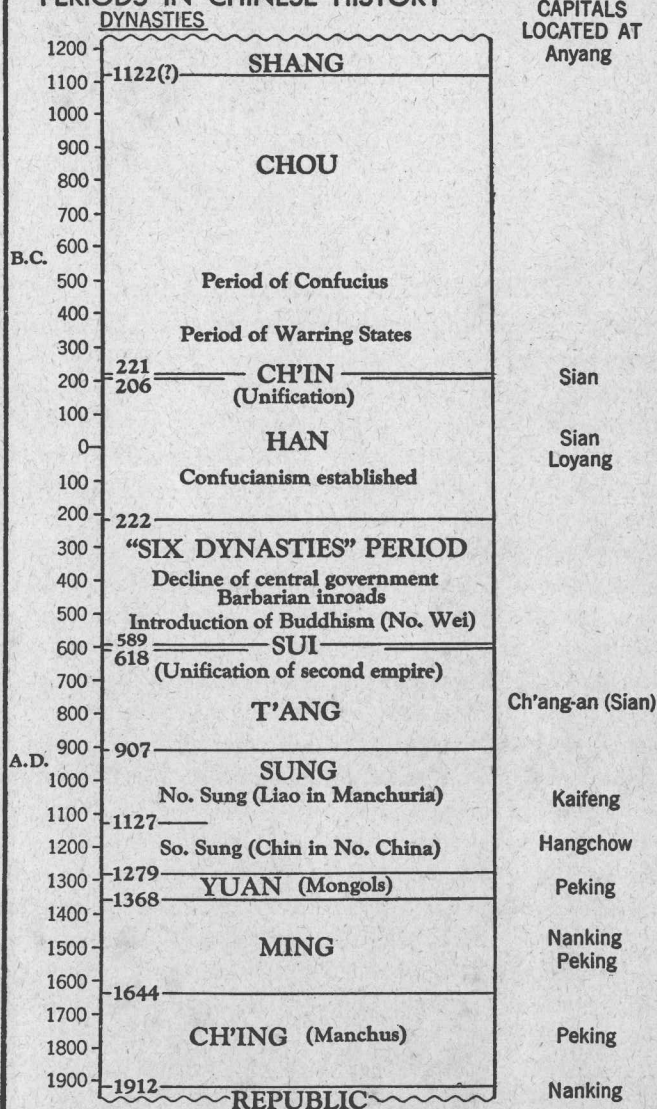
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The United States and China

CHRONOLOGICAL CHART OF MAIN PERIODS IN CHINESE HISTORY



(From Edwin O. Reischauer, CHRONOLOGICAL CHART OF FAR EASTERN HISTORY, 1947)

1. Our China Problem

China is only superficially a meeting point between the United States and the Soviet Union. Fundamentally it is a society alien to both Russia and America, which is developing according to its own tradition and circumstances. The greatest error that Americans can make is to look at China but think only of Russian expansion. If we let ourselves become obsessed with power politics, in our approach to China, we will be disastrously defeated in our policy there. China has a life of her own. To be sure, both America and Russia have exerted powerful influences on China; and we who are ten thousand miles away have exerted much more influence, on the whole, than Russia which is close at hand. But as Modern China responds to this Western impact we may be sure that she will develop ways of her own, under the influence of long millennia of her own history and cultural tradition.

We too easily forget that the Chinese people are the most ancient social group in the modern world. Their roots go back continuously for at least three, and more nearly four thousand years, without interruption—their language, their ethical values, their social and political institutions have all had greater continuity than ours, remaining geographically localized and maintaining their own inertia through the centuries in a way that ours have not. It is incredible that Modern China, the greatest and oldest single mass of