

A BRIEF HISTORY OF CHINA-U.S. RELATIONS 1784-2013

Tao Wenzhao



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This *Brief History of China-U.S. Relations* is a condensed version of my three-volume Chinese-language work *History of China-U.S. Relations, 1911-2000*. The three-volume *History* was published by the Shanghai People's Publishing House in 2004, eleven years after the publication, in 1993, of the first volume, which dealt with the Republic of China period. In 1994, I was transferred from the Institute of Modern History of the Chinese Academy of Social Science (CASS) to work at the Institute of American Studies, and enjoyed precisely the right conditions to continue with the subsequent two volumes. For various reasons, the second volume was the fruit of collective creation, with the collaboration of my colleagues Niu Jun, Ji Hong, Fan Jishe, Yu Wanli at the Institute of American Studies and of Pan Yining of Sun Yat-sen University. During work on the third volume, I was invited to the University of Hong Kong by Dr. Priscilla Roberts, Director of its Center of American Studies, and my six months there in the winter of 1999-2000 greatly facilitated this endeavor. In the summer of 2002, at the invitation of Dr. Robert Hathaway, Director of the Asia Program at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, I spent three months of research at the Center. This was a brief but precious opportunity to interview former government officials in Washington DC, namely:

Charlene Barshefsky, Deputy U.S. Trade Representative (1993-1996), USTR (1997-2000);

Richard Bush III, Chairman and Managing Director, American Institute in Taiwan (1993-2000);

Charles Freeman III, Deputy Chief, American Embassy

in China (1983-1985), Assistant Secretary of Defense (1993-1994);

Kenneth Lieberthal, Senior Director for Asia, National Security Council (1998-2000);

James Lilly, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs (1985), U.S. Ambassador to China (1989-1991), Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs (1991-1993);

Alan Romberg, Deputy Spokesman of the State Department (1991-1994); Deputy Chief, Policy Planning Staff, State Department (1993-1996);

Stapleton Roy, Deputy Chief of the U.S. Liaison Office in Beijing (1978), Deputy Chief of U.S. Mission in China (1979), Assistant Secretary for East Asian and Pacific Affairs (1986); U.S. Ambassador to China (1991-1995);

James Steinberg, Chief, Policy Planning Staff, State Department (1993-1996), Deputy National Security Advisor (1997-2000);

Robert Suettinger, Director of Asian affairs, National Security Council (1994-1997);

Lee Hamilton, Chairman, House Committee on Foreign Affairs;

Robert Kapp, President, U.S.-China Business Council.

Through these interviews I not only increased my understanding of the historical facts of China-U.S. relations during the period, but also sensed and grasped the overall U.S. policy toward China, and I greatly benefited from their insights and personal experience.

My long-time research into China-U.S. relations has led to frequent and highly valuable discussions with many U.S. counterparts. Regrettably, space constraints preclude my mentioning them all individually.

During the course of writing, many superiors and colleagues at the CASS Institute of Modern History and the Institute of American Studies provided encouragement and help in various forms. Following the publication of the first volume, the encouragement of Professor Liu Danian, former Director of the Institute of Modern History, prompted me to continue writing. At the Institute of American Studies, colleagues Wang Jisi, Gu Guoliang and others also gave me support. Colleagues at the libraries of both institutes provided a patient and thoughtful service. Wu Shengqi of the Beijing Foreign Studies University, Zhang Wenzong of the China Institutes of Contemporary International Studies, and Qian Hao of the Shanghai International Studies University gave their help in my search for materials in writing this book.

My gratitude also goes to Professor Warren Cohen, Ambassador Stapleton Roy (Director of Kissinger Institute on China and the United States, Woodrow Wilson Center) and Professor David M. Lampton (Director of China Studies, SAIS, Johns Hopkins University) for writing the Forewords for the book. I first met Professor Cohen at the annual meeting of the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations in 1983, and have benefited from his academic achievements and his friendship for more than thirty years. Stapleton Roy is former U.S. ambassador to China for whom I have great respect; since his retirement from his diplomatic post, we have had the opportunity to conduct academic exchanges. Professor Lampton is my colleague, and we thus have many opportunities to discuss and consult; many of his writings have been important references for my understanding the views of American scholars and in reflecting on my own opinions. The Forewords have deeply encouraged me.

As the title indicates, this is simply a concise book by a Chinese scholar on the history of China-U.S. relations. But my hope is that it can reflect the main line and the trend of exchanges between the

two countries over the course of 230 years. My aim has been to supply a balanced and well-proportioned narrative; my hope is that it will help English-speaking readers understand Chinese scholars' view of China-U.S. relations. Criticism and discussion on its contents by experts and readers of this book are very welcome.

FOREWORD

WARREN I. COHEN

Many years ago, I invited my friend Luo Rongqu, a prominent Peking University historian, to lecture to my class on John Hay's *Open Door Notes*. He proceeded to give a classic Marxist version that contradicted virtually every point I had made in my own lecture the day before. Tao Wenzhao's *A Brief History of China-U.S. Relations* is not a Marxist version. Much of it will be familiar to and acceptable to American specialists in the field. Tao is a conscientious scholar who tries to stick to the facts. *But*, it is a Chinese version, often based on Chinese sources, some unfamiliar to American historians, and as such should prove enlightening to readers in the United States, especially those familiar with the writings of Michael Hunt, Meredith Oyen, and Nancy Bernkopf Tucker and my own *America's Response to China*.

There is little in this volume to satisfy students who grew up on a diet of American exceptionalism. When mistakes are made, especially after 1949, they are made by policy-makers in Washington. At a 1986 conference in Beijing I asked Li Shen zhi, a prominent intellectual leading the Chinese delegation, whether *all* the mistakes in relations between the People's Republic of China and the United States had been made by the Americans. He graciously said no, China had made mistakes – but they were little ones. Pressed, he could not think of even one. Readers of this volume will have comparable difficulty finding any.

Tao does an excellent job of explaining Chinese dissatisfaction with American policy, with arms sales to Taiwan for example. He is profoundly troubled by the U.S. media's reporting on China. There were some events in Beijing and elsewhere in June 1989, unmentionable in China, that he insists were badly distorted in reporting by

Americans determined to demonize his country. Nonetheless, he is optimistic in his conclusions.

Tao sees China and the United States as having formed a community of interest. Certainly they are dependent on each other economically. He views the Xi Jinping-Obama meeting in 2013 as resulting in a commitment to build a “new big-country relationship.” Yes, there will be competition and ideological differences, but he bets that the leaders of the two countries will have the wisdom to overcome these. The future will be marked by mutual respect and win-win cooperation. Let us pray that he is right. In any event, he provides us with insights into Chinese perspectives that may help us to avoid conflict.

Warren I. Cohen, University Distinguished Professor Emeritus, MSU and UMBC;
Senior Scholar, Woodrow Wilson International Center

FOREWORD

J. STAPLETON ROY

China's relations with foreign countries extend back thousands of years, reflecting China's long history as an independent nation. The Chinese Buddhist monk Xuanzang brought back Buddhist sutras from India in the middle of the seventh century, during the early years of Tang Dynasty rule in China. Chinese merchant vessels were frequent visitors to Calicut in southern India well before the voyages of Zheng He to the Indian Ocean in the early Ming Dynasty. Such activities occurred long before intrepid European seafarers discovered the Western Hemisphere and established colonies there, leading over time to the emergence of the United States as an independent country.

Viewed in this context, Sino-U.S. relations are of relatively brief duration. They can be traced back to the last two decades of the 18th century, when a U.S. merchant ship made its first voyage to China five years before the United States was founded in 1789 under its present constitution.

Over the ensuing 230 plus years, China's relations with the United States have had many ups and downs. The two countries have been allies against common enemies and have fought bitter wars with each other. During the 19th century, Chinese laborers made vital to U.S. westward expansion, while U.S. medical and educational missionaries were helping to spread modern health care and education to various parts of China. On the negative side, Chinese have at times been subjected to harsh discrimination in the United States and been barred from entry in violation of U.S. treaty commitments. Americans, in turn, have been the victims of anti-foreign riots in China. From the beginning, trade has been an important link between the two countries, reaching enormous volumes in good

times, and shrinking to near zero when bilateral relations have been strained or hostile. Even when relations have been bad, the lure of trade has provided an incentive to overcome difficulties and put the relationship on a better footing.

More recently, distinguished Chinese-Americans have earned Nobel Prizes for scientific achievement, risen to prominence in corporate America, designed architectural monuments in both countries, become governors and vice governors of U.S. states, served in the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives at the Federal level, and represented the United States as ambassador in Beijing. Since the establishment of diplomatic relations between the United States and the People's Republic of China in 1979, U.S. foreign direct investment has flowed into China, bilateral trade is now in excess of \$500 billion per year, and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce in Shanghai is now the largest in the world. As China's economy has grown and prospered, Chinese foreign direct investment in the United States has also begun to rise rapidly and is widely distributed throughout the United States.

Against this checkered background, Sino-U.S. bilateral relations are as important as they are complex. With the realization of China's dream of restoring the nation's position as a wealthy and powerful member of the international community drawing ever closer, strategic rivalry between China and the United States has been increasing. If left unchecked, this rivalry could cast dark clouds over the future of East Asia and the world. And yet, each country has frequently viewed the other with admiration and respect. Americans are in awe of China's ancient culture, its respect for learning, the creativity of its people – which gave the world such inventions as paper, printing, gunpowder, and the compass – and its exquisite cuisine. Chinese have admired the United States for its high levels of modernization, its scientific advances, the freedom and openness of its society, and the opportunities for people to better their situation in life.

Improved understanding of the history of bilateral relations between China and the United States will better equip people in

both countries to recognize the opportunities and avoid the dangers that lie ahead. Every country has its own particular view of its own history, even though individual interpretations of that history may vary widely. This reflects in part the way that history is taught in the schools, and in part the natural tendency of human nature to interpret your own country's actions in the best possible way and to play down or explain away instances of questionable or less honorable behavior.

Many Americans are shocked to find how United States history is taught in foreign schools, where the judgments on U.S. behavior may be quite different from those at home. To cite one example, the majority of Americans believe that the use of the two atomic bombs against Japan in the final days of World War Two was justified by the enormous American casualties that would have resulted if the United States had been forced to invade Japan's home islands in order to bring the war to a close.

I was surprised in the Soviet Union several decades ago to discover that Russians held a very different view. They believed that Soviet entry into the war against Japan in its final stages had guaranteed Japan's defeat, making use of the atomic bombs unnecessary. In their view the sole purpose of the United States in dropping the bombs on Japan had been to intimidate the Soviet Union by demonstrating that the United States had a powerful weapon that Moscow had not yet developed. I am unaware of any evidence in the historical record to support this interpretation of U.S. behavior, but such differing assessments can foster animosity and mistrust.

Such considerations underline the importance of Professor Tao Wenzhao's brief but comprehensive history of China-U.S. relations. The publication of this history in English will make it more accessible to American readers, who are generally unfamiliar with how U.S. history is taught in Chinese schools.

Many if not most of the facts and interpretations in Professor Tao's book are consistent with U.S. histories of Sino-U.S. relations, but in a variety of instances the emphases will be different. For ex-

ample, many U.S. readers may be surprised to discover that Americans were actively involved in opium trafficking in China in the early 19th century and that the U.S. government only belatedly began actively to discourage such trade when forced to do so by public opinion in the United States. When I studied U.S. and Asian history as a college student many decades ago, we learned that the British were responsible for the opium trade with no mention of U.S. involvement.

Such examples illustrate why the publication of Professor Tao's book is a welcome development. Serious readers will gain an improved multidimensional understanding of the historical interactions between China and the United States that can provide a better base for managing the bilateral relationship in the future.

Ambassador J. Stapleton Roy is Founding Director Emeritus of the Kissinger Institute on China and the United States at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington DC and a Wilson Center Distinguished Scholar. He served as Director of the Kissinger Institute from September 2008 until August 2013 and continues to be a Senior Adviser to the Institute. His ambassadorial assignments included Singapore, the People's Republic of China, and Indonesia. His final post with the State Department was as Assistant Secretary for Intelligence and Research.

FOREWORD

DAVID M. LAMPTON

With this superb volume Professor Tao Wenzhao has created a keystone in the intellectual edifice of an informed, balanced, and historically grounded understanding of U.S.-China relations. He stands with an exceptionally small group of scholars in both China and America who have a command of the history between our two countries and is simultaneously able to extract from that complex flow of events the essential lessons for the management of this critical relationship.

A Brief History of China-U.S. Relations is comprehensive, starting with the mixed U.S.-China relationship in the 19th and first half of the 20th centuries, moving through the era of Sino-American cooperation in World War II and the much darker period of Sino-American conflict during the Cold War, and moving on to address both the normalization of relations under Nixon and Mao and the bumpy progress made thereafter. This important volume concludes where it should – with the challenges of managing the U.S.-China relationship in an era when the power equation between the two countries is moving toward greater balance. *A Brief History* comes out at a moment when, for the first time, Asia must manage the simultaneous strength and sometimes conflicting desires of China, the United States, and Japan, not to mention significant middle powers. Never before have Beijing, Washington, and Tokyo been strong at the same time.

Professor Tao's book underscores the essential point that a constructive future requires that the U.S. and China must not only intelligently manage their own bilateral relationship, but they must also sensitively deal with all of the third-party relationships they each have with consequence for the other. Taiwan is one such case of

long-standing, being a most sensitive aspect of bilateral ties. Somewhat different examples of triangular relationships are North Korea, Japan, Vietnam, Philippines, and Pakistan. Even the U.S.-Russia-China triangle is becoming a consideration once again.

Among the critically important points raised in this illuminating and wide-ranging volume, three are particularly germane as we think about today and the rapidly unfolding future:

To start, there is a need for the United States to recognize its growing equality with China, as China needs to understand its modernization still has a long way to go in terms of per capita income and quality of life for many citizens. To me, this says both China and the United States need to be more realistic about their respective capabilities.

Second, the United States, irrespective of who its president is in the future, will see America as a comprehensive Pacific power, with economic, cultural, and military interests and sway in the region. As Professor Tao says, this necessarily implies that not only is there an essential need for Sino-American cooperation, but there also will be important competitive dimensions to the relationship. A key part of that future will be characterized by economic, security, and ecological interdependence. Both nations need to guard against an exceedingly narrow, military definition of security.

And finally, Professor Tao's book is wise in admonishing readers and foreign policy leaders in both nations not to be captives of simplistic templates that some analysts would seek to impose on the U.S.-China relationship. The U.S.-China relationship is not the Anglo-German relationship of the 1930s; not the U.S.-Japan relationship of the 1940s; nor is it the Soviet-American relationship of the Cold War. This is a relationship that is distinct and far more hopeful in many respects. To start, nuclear and cyber powers have never gone to war with one another. Moreover, climate change has the potential to be a massive security problem that forces the two nations (and others) to cooperate if this global danger is to be effectively addressed. And finally, each nation has pressing domestic concerns