

四川大学211工程项目
中国区域历史与文化
区域文化的交流与互动

America in the Era of Globalization 全球化时代的美国

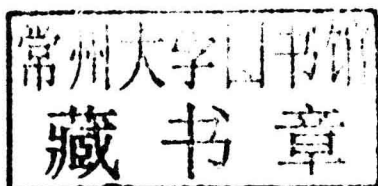
四川大学美国研究中心 编



Sichuan University Press
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责任编辑:敬铃凌
特邀校对:余 芳
封面设计:米茄设计工作室
责任印制:李 平

图书在版编目(CIP)数据

全球化时代的美国 = America in the Era of
Globalization: 英文 / 四川大学美国研究中心编. —
成都: 四川大学出版社, 2010. 12

ISBN 978-7-5614-5086-4

I. ①全… II. ①四… III. ①美国—研究—英文
IV. ①D771. 2

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字 (2010) 第 240100 号

书名 全球化时代的美国 America in the Era of Globalization

编 者	四川大学美国研究中心
出 版	四川大学出版社
地 址	成都市一环路南一段 24 号 (610065)
发 行	四川大学出版社
书 号	ISBN 978-7-5614-5086-4
印 刷	成都蜀通印务有限责任公司
成品尺寸	170 mm×240 mm
印 张	26. 5
字 数	457 千字
版 次	2010 年 12 月第 1 版
印 次	2010 年 12 月第 1 次印刷
定 价	60. 00 元

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◆网址:www.scupress.com.cn

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Hopes and Fears—Characteristics of Mutual Perceptions of Americans and Chinese in a Globalizing World

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In discussing American perception of China and Chinese perception of America, we need to pay attention to two factors. One is, there is sometimes marked difference in perception between the elite or opinion leaders and the public. The other is, the Americans always have two Chinas in their minds. (This may also be the case, to a lesser degree, with the Chinese.) This is typically reflected in *Scratches on Our Mind: American Images of China and India* by Harold Isaacs. Since the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries, two sharply opposing images of China have persisted. As Randall Peerenboom puts it in *China Modernize* “Two sharply opposing popular images of China prevail today. Skyscrapers, urban professionals in Italian suits dashing into Starbucks for their morning latte, streets filled with shiny new BMWs—this is the positive face of the self-confident China seen in glossy advertisements beamed around the world on CNN. . . . On the other hand, there is the much darker image of China .”^[1] The existence of opposing images is partly due to historical tradition, partly due to a reflection, accurate or biased, of the two sides of Chinese society, the positive side and the negative side.

This paper tries to explore the new development of images of each other and locates the issues of importance to both countries.



1. Perceptions of Each Other

Based on the surveys of Committee of 100 (2007), Pew (June 2008), Gallup (2008), BBC World Service (2008), Chicago Council on Global Affairs (2008), the picture of mutual perceptions is both encouraging and disappointing.

(1) It is encouraging because both countries, elite as well as public, see the significance of U. S. -China relations. (Tables 1 and 2)

Question: How important do you think the Sino-U. S. relationship is?

Table 1

		U. S. Survey					
		General public		Opinion Leaders		Business Leaders	Congressional Staffers
		2007	2005	2007	2005	2007	2007
China	Important	55	48	68	58	69	82
	Not Important	44	50	33	39	31	17
"Important" includes most important and very important; "Not important" includes somewhat important and not very important							

Source: "Hope & Fear: American and Chinese Attitudes toward Each Other," Committee of 100 2007 Survey, released in December 2007

Table 2

Very important	Somewhat important	Not very important	Not important at all	Refuse to answer/not sure
31.1%	60.7%	5.4%	0.7%	2.0%

Source: "Eyes on the World, Future in Hand—Horizon 2006 Chinese Opinion Polls," Horizon Research Consultancy Group 2006 Survey, published on December 14, 2006

According to the Committee of 100 Survey (2007), 55% of the general public in the U. S. thought the relations important. As to U. S. elite, an average of 68% had the same view. What is encouraging is 82% of

Congressional staffers came to appreciate the importance of the relations. On the Chinese side, the Horizon Research Consultancy Group 2006 Survey showed that over 90% of the polled thought the relations important or somewhat important.

(2) In spite of the fact that different polls may produce different results of how each viewing the other, American favorable views of China fluctuate between around 40% and 50% while Chinese public favorable view has constantly been above 50%. (Tables 3 and 4)

Table 3 Favorable Views of China (U. S.)

		2005 %	2006 %	2007 %	2008 %
Committee of 100	General Public	59		52	
	Elite (average)	48.3		48.3	
Pew Global Attitudes Survey		43	52	42	39
Gallup's 2008 World Affairs Survey		47	44	48	42

Table 4 Favorable Views of the U. S. (China)

		2005 %	2006 %	2007 %	2008 %
Committee of 100	General Public			60	
	Elite (average)			90	
Pew Global Attitudes Survey		42	47	34	41

There are three things worthy of our attention. (a) Committee of 100 survey shows that in the United States, opinion and business leaders have greater favorable views of China (56% and 51% respectively in 2007) than the favorable view held by the public (52% in 2007). In China, opinion and business leaders have much higher percentage of favorable views of the U. S. than the general public (86%, 94% vs. 60%). (Table 5)



Table 5 (U. S. SURVEY) How would you describe your impressions of China?
(CHINA SURVEY) How would you describe your impressions of the U. S. ?

	U. S. Survey								China Survey		
	General Public		Opinion Leaders		Business Leaders		Congressional Staffers		General Public	Opinion Leaders	Business Leaders
	07	05	07	05	07	05	07	05	07	07	07
Very Favorable	12	9	10	15	15	17	3	1	13	28	34
Somewhat Favorable	40	50	46	48	36	46	32	18	47	58	60
FAVORABLE	52	59	56	63	54	63	35	19	60	86	94
Somewhat Unfavorable	27	26	33	28	26	29	46	63	20	10	5
Very Unfavorable	18	9	10	9	15	6	16	16	6	1	1
UNFAVORABLE	45	35	43	37	41	35	62	79	26	11	6
Not Sure	3	6	2	1	5	1	3	2	14	3	1

Source: "Hope & Fear: American and Chinese Attitudes toward Each Other," Committee of 100 2007 Survey, released in December 2007

(b) Congressional staffers have the least favorable view of China (19% in 2005, 35% in 2007) but the encouraging sign may be that the percentage is rising. It is a known fact that Congressional staffers have mostly held a critical or negative view of China and their attitude may influence Congressional approach toward China. The 2008 U. S. -China Economic and Security Review Commission Report is a case in point. More contact with these people and on-spot investigation would help in reducing their suspicion.

(c) Pew survey shows that China's favorable views of the U. S. in 2008 (41%) is higher than U. S. favorable views of China (39%). The Committee of 100 survey shows that among the general public, U. S. unfavorable views of China (45%) is much higher than Chinese unfavorable views of the U. S. (26%) and such views are even less among Chinese opinion leaders (11%) and business leaders (6%). This gap between the two countries is not an encouraging sign which requires both sides, especially the American side to address. If we ignore the sign and let the gap exist or widen, the consequence may be disastrous. The Chinese would feel that their good will does not get reciprocal answer and frustration may lead to resentment. Once emotional

bitterness gets the upper hand, irrational response may occur.

(3) All the polls show that there has been a decline of favorable view of China between 2005 and 2008. The cause of the decline can be attributed to media report about the safety issue of imported Chinese food, toys and other product, about the loss of jobs for Americans as a result of outsourcing and about the manipulation of exchange rate. The polls used in this paper were all taken before the Lhasa unrest in March 2008 and protests at Olympics Torch Relay in Europe and North America. Otherwise, the favorable view might decline further. This tells us that the mutual perceptions of China and the U. S. are very much even-driven. Proper and careful handling of issues and avoidance of using inflammatory language when issues arise will be helpful in the solution of issues and the nurturing of more positive mutual images.

2. The Rise of China—Basic Cause of Concern

(1) Committee of 100 survey shows that 81% of American public and over 90% of American opinion leaders hold that China's global influence has increased in the past 10 years while 38% of Chinese opinion leaders and 24% of the general public think that America's global influence has decreased in the past 10 years.

(2) The BBC World Service Poll of 2008 finds that the majority of both Americans and Chinese view the influence of their own country positively while viewing the influence of the other negatively, and that 56% of Americans consider their influence mainly positive while 46% of Chinese view American influence negatively. In contrast, 90% of Chinese hold that the influence of their country is mainly positive while 54% of American regard such influence as negative.

(3) Gallup's 2008 World Affairs Survey shows that in answering which country is the leading economic power in the world, 40% of American respondents named China and 33% named the United States, but 8 years ago, in answering the same questions, 65% of American respondents named the United States, only 10% named China.

(4) In posing the question "Will China replace the U. S. as the world's



leading superpower?”, the Pew Survey finds that 31% of Americans say “yes” and 54% say “never” while 53% of Chinese say “yes” and 23% say “never.”

These polling (Tables 6, 7, 8 and 9) results tell much:

1) The polls show that fear, suspicion and concern do exist and the current comparatively smooth relationship does not have a solid basis.

2) Another danger lies in the contrast of how China views itself and how the U. S. views China and vice versa. This can be seen in the BBC poll and Pew poll.

Table 6 Views of China

	Unfavorable	Favorable
USA	42%	39%

Source: “Global Economic Gloom? China and India Notable Exceptions,” 24-Nation Pew Global Attitudes Survey, released on June 12, 2008

Table 7 Views of the United States’ Influence

	Mainly positive	Mainly negative
USA	56	35
China	38	46

Source: The BBC World Service Poll of 2008, conducted by GlobeScan and the University of Maryland’s Program on International Policy Attitudes

Table 8 Views of China’s Influence

	Mainly positive	Mainly negative
USA	33	54
China	90	4

Source: The BBC World Service Poll of 2008, conducted by GlobeScan and the University of Maryland’s Program on International Policy Attitudes

Table 9 Will China Replace the U. S. as the World's Leading Superpower?

	Will replace %	Has replaced %	Will never replace %	DK %
U. S.	31	5	54	10
China	53	5	23	19

Source: "Global Economic Gloom? China and India Notable Exceptions," 24-Nation Pew Global Attitudes Survey, released on June 12, 2008

3) Pew poll shows that in 2008, 82% of Americans think China's military prowess is a bad thing for America, 14 percentages higher than that in 2007. This fear is shared by Germany (81%) and France (87%) and Committee of 100 finds between 74% and 87% of American elites hold that China's emergence as a military power is a serious threat to the U. S. This concern is also reflected in *NIC's Global Trends 2025: A Transformed World* which states "Few countries are poised to have more impact on the world over the next 15 – 20 years than China. If current trends persist, by 2025 China will have the world's second largest economy and will be a leading military power. It could also be the largest importer of natural resources and even greater polluter than it is now."

U. S. security and economic interests could face new challenges if China becomes a peer competitor that is militarily strong as well as economically dynamic and energy hungry. This picture is rather frightening. Such concern and fear is shared by the authors of the report on China's Strategic Modernization from the Secretary's International Security Advisory Board (ISAB) Task Force which shows American's concern and fear with China's modernization.

The fact that the rapid growth occurs in a country having different political system from the United States makes the growth more dangerous to American security. This is the view of the authors of the 2008 Report of the U. S. -China Economic and Security Review Commission, yet western expectations that China's path of economic liberalization also will lead it eventually to free market capitalism and even to democracy have been dashed. As this report describes, China has taken a very different path. And China's lengthy economic growth spurt have been employed more as a justification of continued Communist Party



rule than as a stepping stone to political reform.

4. Deeper Roots of Concern About the Rise of China

4.1 The theoretical root of concern

John J. Mearsheimer of University of Chicago in his *The Tragedy of Great Powers Politics* states at the very beginning that “international politics has always been a ruthless and dangerous business, and it is likely to remain that way. Although the intensity of their competition waxes and wanes, great powers fear each other and always compete with each other for power.”^[2] “There are no status quo powers in the international system” and all powers want to change the status quo “at a reasonable price” and look for ways “to alter the distribution of world powers in their favor.” This is because “states can never be certain about other states’ intentions.”^[3] Therefore, Mearsheimer concludes, “In short, China and the United States are destined to be adversaries as China’s power grows.”^[4] Such an analysis of relations between powers is typically reflected in the polls and the arguments of government officials and pundits. When China says it will develop peacefully, these people will respond by pointing out that it may be the case now but what will happen twenty years from now when China is much stronger. So it will be better and safer for the United States to prepare for any eventuality now and this is the theoretical ground for American hedging strategy toward China. This approach turns every economic achievement and military technological advancement of China into a looming threat to the United States. The different political system of China makes the threat ever more frightening.

4.2 The failure to understand the flattening of the world

Economically, the world is becoming increasingly globalized. In the description of Thomas L. Friedman in his *The World Is Flat*, the world is being more and more flattened. As a result, outsourcing, uploading, offshoring take place and lower-end service and manufacturing jobs move out of Europe, America and Japan to India, China and the former Soviet Empire, while new jobs and new specialties are created and the world becomes more complex. The

creation of new jobs and new specialties requires better education and wiser governance. Without more enlightened education and regulations and policies adapted to the flattening world, protectionism and public resentment will grow because people are blaming China, for example, for taking away the jobs of the workers in America and for the shrinking of the ranks of the old middle class. Trade friction usually arises and in order to pacify the resentment of the Americans, China would send, from time to time, a business delegation to the United States on a shopping spree. Such measure may have temporary effect but cannot solve the real issue. It is an issue of the flattening world and has to be solved with measures designed to cope with the flattening world.

4.3 The cultural root of fear

Fear is rooted in American psychology. Ever since the landing of the first group of settlers, this sense of fear has existed. The first communities established showed that within the communities, the Gospels of God reigned while outside the communities, Satan was the ruler. The fear of being led astray prevailed. This is the beginning of “we” and “they.” In the early days of the Republic, the territory of the Republic was the Garden of Eden while the rest of the continent was inhabited by barbarians who posed as threat to American civilization. After World War II, fear of the spread of communism and atheism became the motive force of the defense of western civilization. So for the past few centuries, Americans have lived with fear, fear of Satan, of native Indians, of Catholics, witches, Jews, of Mexicans, of Chinese, Japanese, Filipinos, of communists, socialists, anarchists, and now of Muslims and home-grown terrorists.

On the other hand, the Chinese should guard against two extremes in their psychology. One is what is called humiliation psyche by western media people and scholars. Some Chinese are very sensitive to negative reports and criticism in the West. They cannot understand why people in the West cannot see the progress in China. China has been oppressed and humiliated by Western colonialism for nearly a century and now when China is moving ahead, they are not happy and try to block China’s progress. So sometimes the response is not rational and these people fail to demonstrate tolerance. The other is when China succeeds in doing a thing, such as the holding of the Olympics or the launching of Magic Seven and wins praise in the



world, some people will get swollen with success and become arrogant. Both tendencies actually are the two sides of a coin which should be ridden of. Conscious effort of education of correct attitude towards negative reports and positive praise should be conducted in a persistent manner. Otherwise, Chinese irrational response may aggregate the fear and suspicion and get U. S. -China relations into a vicious circle which neither side wishes to see.

5. Conclusion

The U. S. -China relationship is complex and unique and the importance of U. S. -China relations is shared by elites and public in the two countries. Economic interdependence between the United States and China has been growing. This is the basis for more stable relationship. But fear, concern, and suspicion exist on the two sides and they are rooted in the culture of the two countries. The ISAB Task Force has the following to recommend to the incoming administration:

The United States must take seriously China's challenge to U. S. military superiority in the Asia/Pacific region. . . . Effective deterrence of China in the future has both offensive and defensive components. In the nuclear field, the United States must take seriously China's perception of its own nuclear weapons as effective tools of military power and intimidation. . . . Washington should make clear that it will not accept a mutual vulnerability relationship with China—something Beijing seeks through its expansion of offensive nuclear capabilities. . . . The United States should deploy more robust sea- and space-based capabilities to contribute to deterrence in a future crisis over Taiwan. . . . The United States must also maintain dominance over the sea lines of communications. . . . U. S. arms transfer policies and practices that enable friendly nations in Northeast Asia to sustain a credible conventional defense as the PLA is modernized should be an important dimension of U. S. non-proliferation policy. ^[5]

This report tells that the dismantling of “the wall” separating the two is a difficult job, requiring long, persistent and patient efforts. In order to improve