



Essays on modern China: the uses of history as a political device.

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Abril de 2010

Abstract

China history has become an unavoidable subject for students of international relations wishing to understand “China’s rise”. Increasingly important in this sense is to comprehend how history is “used” as a political tool in China, by the Communist Party of China; it’s leaders; intellectuals; common people; *inter alia*. The present essays have the objective of deepening the understanding of the uses of history, working around the notion of a “mythologized past”-i.e. the construction of history that serves political needs. Four events that have shaped Modern China, and that have been subsequently used as a political device, are selected around the notion of *waihuan neiluan* - the interaction between foreign aggression and domestic disorder- which preannounce that every mythologization discussed here will have a combination of domestic history and problems, and the relationship with the “outside” - essentially the West.

Keywords: Foreign Relations, History, China

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China's history has become an unavoidable subject for students of international relations wishing to understand "China's rise." Increasingly important in this sense is to comprehend how history is "used" as a political tool in China, by the Communist Party of China; its leaders; intellectuals; common people; *inter alia*. The present essays have the objective of deepening the understanding of the uses of history, working around the notion of a "mythologized past" –i.e. the construction of history that serves political needs. Four events that have shaped Modern China, and that have been subsequently used as a political device, are selected around the notion of *waihuan neiluan* –the interaction between foreign aggression and domestic disorder- which preannounce that every mythologization discussed here will have a combination of domestic history and problems, and the relationship with the "outside" –essentially the West.

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Introduction¹

Although the work of a historian is to try to understand history in the most objective way –which is obviously always a Weberian ideal- the history that lives in the minds of most people mind conforms a mythologized past. A mythologized past, in Paul A. Cohen's work, is a construction of history to “serve the political, ideological, rhetorical, and/or psychological needs of the present.”² Mythologizers, then, in contrary to what would be a “correct” historiographical approach, “start with an understanding of the past, which in many (though not all) cases they may sincerely believe to be ‘correct.’”³ Interpretations of China's history are, of course, full of events that have been later used for political purposes. This compendium of essays will work on four events that have significantly shaped Modern China, and that have been subsequently used as a political device by, essentially, a process of mythologization.

The time frame chosen goes from the mid-19th century (with the appearance of the West as a relevant player in China after the Opium War of 1839-1842) until present times –i.e. Modern China. Any such periodization has risks. In the case of Modern China, this periodization is usually related to the beginning of “one hundred years of humiliation” in the hands of western countries (for the mainstream Chinese historiographical debates) or the “dawn of the new, the modern” (in Western minds). As it will be shown in the first essay, there was no such radical rupture in China's history. Nevertheless, as this work does not try to construct an accurate understanding of Modern China's history, but focus on the interpretations of these events in Chinese and Western debates, there are no substantial risks in periodization; as long as that periodization actually exists on the debates. The central analysis will be centered on the responses and interpretations of *waihuan neiluan* –the interaction between foreign aggression and domestic disorder- in China.⁴

¹ The present version has benefited from the criticisms, comments and suggestions of Ambassador Dr. Alvaro Moerzinger.

² COHEN, Paul A., "The Contested Past: The Boxers as History and Myth," *Journal of Asian Studies*, 51, 1 (February 1992): p. 83.

³ Ibidem.

⁴ It could be argued that giving prominence to the “domestic” when selecting the cases of study would be the most suitable decision to study the “uses” of history in China. The reason for choosing events that have the West as a primary player –with the exception of the essay on

The first essay discusses an early event that will shape the relationship between China and the West until our days: the Unequal Treaties that were signed after Great Britain defeated China in the First Opium War. The second essay looks at the interpretations that have been constructed by the Chinese, and the West, on the Boxer Rebellion. In the following one, two cultural movements –although with abysmal differences in their objectives, popular reach, and consequences- are studied in a comparative way, looking for some answers on the always intricate question of the role of intellectuals in Modern China and their interpretation of China's past. Lastly, one of the seminal events in Sino-U.S. relations, the rapprochement and subsequent restoration of diplomatic relations in the 1970s, is analyzed taking special focus in how Chinese and American governments and societies understand the event and how they use it in their current relations.

the Cultural Revolution- is based on two assumption: a) that the history of Modern China –*i.e.* from the second half of the 19th century onwards- cannot be studied neglecting the link with the foreign as a central characteristic; and b) that the most interesting phenomenon in China's history mythologization process nowadays is the use of nationalism to pursue political ends – essentially in a framework that highlights the dichotomy between “them” and “us.”

Unequal Treaties: the Treaty System Era and Discourses of Humiliation in China

The mid-nineteenth century marks one of the most drastic shifts in China's history, or so is the widespread view. Post-Opium War developments, particularly the introduction of the "treaty system," will ignite the beginning of a complete transformation in the relationship between China and the West, and their mutual perceptions. This era can also be studied as an example of historical interpretations that serve specific political agendas. The first section of this brief paper will introduce the unequal treaties and the treaty system in their most basic facts. The second section discusses the relevance of the era of unequal treaties, problematizing the reductionist arguments that tend to portray it as a homogeneous and teleological process. This will help understand some of the Chinese discourses and rhetoric on the unequal treaties, the concern of the final section.

The "Unequal Treaties"

By the end of August 1842 the Qing dynasty had lost the Opium War.⁵ British warfare was preponderant in every aspect and for the first time, the Manchus, that glorious dynasty of the powerful Middle Kingdom, had been defeated in a humiliating way. After some debates about the moral aberration of appeasement, on August 29th Emperor Daoguang decided to accept the Treaty of Nanjing, thus giving closure to the war but opening the era of the so called "treaty system."⁶

The treaty's main conditions were: full security for Chinese and British citizens and their properties within the territories of the two countries; the opening of five Chinese cities to trade –Canton, Fuzhou, Xiamen, Ningbo, and Shanghai; legal possession of Hong Kong by the British; an indemnity of \$21 million; equalization of intercourse between officials of both countries; and the abolition of the Cohong monopoly, *inter alia*.

⁵ For the opium war see: WAKEMAN, Frederic, Jr., "The Canton Trade and the Opium War, " in FAIRBANK, John K., ed., *The Cambridge History of China*, Volume 10, Late Ch'ing, 1800-1911, Part I (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 163-212.

⁶ That the agreement was signed aboard the barbaric-owned ship *Cornwallis* was by no means symbolically insignificant.

Although the Treaty of Nanjing should be seen as a watershed in the relationship between China and the West, it must also be seen as the starting point of a much more extended process: the “treaty system.” From 1842 onwards, a series of treaties, that represent the essence of the term “unequal treaties,” will be adopted -the Treaty of Tianjing⁷ (1858) and the Boxer Protocol⁸ are some of the most salient. This “treaty system” was not an arrangement between Britain and China alone; it involved other western powers as well. These countries obtained the same conditions as Great Britain through direct pressure and the establishment of the Most Favored Nation (MFN) clause.⁹

From a tributary system, in which the western powers were just other barbaric nations searching profits from commerce, the relationship turned -slowly but persistently- into a system in which the West had “legal” rights; rights that exponentially increased its benefits in each subsequent treaty.

Historical Relevance of the Unequal Treaties: Undisputed Dawn of the New?

The privilege of seeing events from a historical perspective can also muddle interpretations. If the adoption of the “treaty system” is considered to be the “dawn of the New”¹⁰ -i.e. a huge transformation in China’s history imposed exogenously, for good or for bad- it is easy to end up in the reductionist position that 1842 was the end of an era in which the Chinese were in control of themselves, and the commencement of one in which the West was the major force in China’s historical evolution. This article suggests that the implementation of the treaty system was neither the “dawn of the new” nor an insignificant affair.

Most of the *ex-post* arguments about foreign imperialism, Qing treason, and the birth of a salvation movement arising as a consequence of an intelligible period of

⁷ An agreement between the Qing and Great Britain, which stipulated the establishment of an ambassador to Beijing, freedom of Christian preaching, and ten new treaty ports.

⁸ The following clauses of the Protocol are worth reviewing: payment of an indemnity of almost half of the Qing annual budget, prohibition to import arms; punishment for officials, between others.

⁹ The MFN clause stipulated beforehand that any privilege gained by one country from the Qing was applicable to all other foreign states.

¹⁰ FAIRBANK, John K., “The Early Treaty System in the Chinese World Order,” in Fairbank, ed., *The Chinese World Order: Traditional China's Foreign Relations* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), 257-275.

unequal treaties –i.e. KMT or CCP-, fail –consciously or unconsciously- to grasp the continuance in the dynastic order after the Opium War. This is not just a Chinese perspective: for the West,¹¹ the mid-nineteenth century indicates the opening of an archaic and closed entity; an opening to the forces that were guiding the progress of the world; a major event. But actually, there was no teleological pathway from 1842 to the fall of the Qing dynasty and the consolidation of what then will be called the “one hundred years of humiliation.” This article agrees with Fairbank that the treaty system may “*be viewed as a Ch’ing device for accommodating the West and giving it a place within the Chinese world,*”¹² and thus “managing” barbaric demands in faraway corners of the empire. Their Kingdom was still the one in the Middle. In other words, and this is the main point, the setting up of the treaty system was not, at least in the first phases and seen within the big picture of Chinese history, an irrevocable inflection point in the commencement of “one hundred years of humiliation.”

This is not to say that the “treaty system” was irrelevant. The Treaty of Nanjing and subsequent clashes between China and the West corroborated a massive change in relative power capabilities. Now the West could assertively pursue its objectives in China, if necessary by force. And it did so; which eventually gave rise to the discourses of “unequal treaties” and “one hundred years of humiliation.” Nevertheless, two ideas must be emphasized: firstly, the period of unequal treaties was not a uniform process heading towards the domination and humiliation of China, which, as shown below, the discourses tend to highlight. Secondly, for much of the nineteenth century the *primary* moving forces in China –positive or negative- were internal issues, not external ones like imperialism. These statements may or may not be shared, but to think of them, comparing and contrasting them with the ones that will be presented in the final section is an illuminating exercise in analyzing the social creation of the discourses.

The Discourses of Unequal Treaties as Political Devices

Historical interpretations can be a powerful political tool. The Chinese have usually interpreted the treaty system as a breaking point in their history, especially when reflecting a particular political agenda. Their story is one of a civilization defeating

¹¹ The author apologizes for the necessary generalizations.

¹² FAIRBANK, John K., op cit., s/n.

and humiliating the other and from then on imposing a particular dominance structure. It must be acknowledged that westerners have also elaborated this kind of argument, but usually explaining treaties as a positive and powerful force in Chinese history. In their minds “*the effect of the treaties was markedly beneficial.*”¹³ This was the new world engaging the old and incorporating it into modernity (whatever this word means). For the Chinese, as we shall see below, this argument is outrageous. The “unequal treaties” are for them a period in which China “*was attacked, bullied, and torn asunder by imperialists.*”¹⁴

January 1943 is typically seen as the end of the treaty system and the abolishment of the unequal treaties. Thereafter and without delay, the Kuomintang (KMT) and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) were cheering out loud about the end of “one hundred years of unequal treaties” and claiming primary roles in the process of achieving this circumstance. The battle to conclude the treaties with the West was over. However, another conflict continued: the ideological fight between the KMT and the CCP to explain this period in a way that fitted their political goals.

The concept of “unequal treaties” is a good example of history as political instrument. The term was coined after 1923,¹⁵ although feelings of humiliation were older. Both the CCP and the KMT used it as part of their political programs and were strong advocates of definitely concluding the treaties. As Dong observes, “*unconditional treaty termination became the diving line...between good and bad.*”

At first glance there was not much divergence in the essence of the rhetorical diatribes against the treaties.¹⁶ Nevertheless, the clashes were colossal when defining

¹³ Rev. DARROCH, J., *China, the Foreign Powers and the Unequal Treaties* (Shanghai: Presbyterian Mission Press, 1927), p. 2.

¹⁴ WANG, Zheng, “National Humiliation, History Education, and the Politics of Historical Memory: Patriotic Education Campaign in China,” *International Studies Quarterly*, 52, (2003) No. 4, pp. 783 – 806.

¹⁵ WANG, Dong, “The Discourse of Unequal Treaties in Modern China,” *Pacific Affairs* 76, (Fall 2003): 399-425.

¹⁶ The communists, naturally, gave their discourse a class struggle background and a Hegelian way of analyzing history. For them, the unequal treaties were a tool of capitalist imperialism; to escape falling into a vassal state they needed to be abolished in a process of national liberation towards a communist state.

who the great patriotic movement behind the abolition was.¹⁷ With the consolidation in power of the CCP (1949) the discourse will be adapted to fit specific political goals of the Communist party/state.

On 1997 Hong Kong was returned to China after 99 years of lease to the British. This was the perfect occasion for Jiang Zemin to use the discourse of humiliation to foster CCP's aims. First, he introduces the issue in the larger intellectual framework of the unequal treaties: *"The return of Hong Kong marks an end to the 100-year national humiliation of leaving Hong Kong under foreign occupation...The occupation of Hong Kong is an epitome of the humiliation China suffered in modern history."* Subsequently, he confers the treaties era the relevance to change the course of China's history, so that the causal relation he intend to present remains clear: *"The brutal aggression of China by big powers...aggravated their sufferings (Chinese people) and hence the crisis of the Chinese nation. On the other hand, they also awakened the entire nation and aroused people's resistance which contributed to the development and social progress of China."* Finally, he ends up attributing to the CCP the main role in liberating the people from the yoke of imperialism, concluding that the Party is imperiously needed to avoid another era of unjust domination: *"What the modern history of China also tells us is that the leadership of an advanced political party and guidance by scientific theories are indispensable for national liberation and for building a strong and prosperous country."*¹⁸ This is historical interpretation for political purposes at its best.

This longstanding rhetoric has gained energy in recent years as the political significance of nationalism has grown. The CCP no longer enjoys overwhelming intellectual and ideological legitimacy, corruption has soared, alternative voices are still repressed and, although economic improvement has been miraculous, a large part of the country still lives detached from the centers of wealth. Nationalist credentials are a potent instrument in increasing legitimacy and control devices for the CCP –

¹⁷ This tendency to highlight the role of the party survives until today: *"Our party...has made the biggest sacrifice and the biggest contribution in the struggle of national independence and safeguarding of national sovereignty. The Chinese Communist is the firmest, the most thoroughgoing patriot."* Jiang Zemin quoted in WANG, Zheng, op cit., p. 11.

¹⁸ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, *President Jiang Zemin's Speech to Celebrate HK's Return*, available online: <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/wjdt/zyjh/t24926.htm>

although they can be a dangerous double-edged sword for China's international relations.¹⁹ In conclusion, the unequal treaties and "one hundred years of humiliation" discourses are still a powerful political tool that will probably only increase its weight with the passage of time.

Further Reading:

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¹⁹ This pattern of turning on and off nationalist sentiments as a strategy in domestic and international politics must be closely followed by China analysts. The prospects for these instances getting out of control are significant, although, until now, the CCP has been able to manage them quite adroitly. A good example is the furious public demonstrations against US official properties in response to the American bombing of China's embassy in Belgrade, instance in which leaders like Jiang Zemin made comments like the following: "*US-led NATO must bear all responsibilities arising therefrom and make thorough answers to requests issued by the Chinese government...the great People's Republic of China can never be bullied!*" *People's Daily*, "President Jiang's Speech at Meeting Welcoming Embassy Staff Members Back From Yugoslavia," 14/05/1999, available online: http://english.people.com.cn/english/199905/14/enc_990514001001_TopNews.html

The Boxer Uprising and its Political Uses

The 1898 Boxer uprising, as a peasant revolt, was not a new phenomenon in China; the Middle Kingdom had seen previous and more devastating revolts rising from the hinterlands. Nevertheless, this event was novel in its anti-Christian/Western spirit. Both characteristics (an internal revolt consistent with China's history and a new canalization of the movement's violence against Western individuals and officials) left this historical event especially suited for diverse post-hoc interpretations and political uses not only of China's history, but also of its relationship with the West.

Introduction

Understanding the Boxer movement demands an immersion into China's hinterland historically, culturally, socially and economically. The Boxers United in Righteousness had their most immediate roots in northwest Shandong during 1898. Although the spontaneous and eclectic nature of the movement makes it difficult to give a straight and clear view of the myriad characteristics that composed the Boxer Rebellion, it is useful to start by the ecosystem. As most of the historical events that sprang out from the Chinese hinterland, climatic conditions -and their consequences on daily peasant life- are a factor of primary relevance, always contributing to the spread of popular uprisings. Shandong, an area prone to natural disasters, had various years of bad conditions before the uprising, especially a severe flood in 1898.

The Boxers rose from Shandong popular culture.²⁰ One of the salient features of this culture was sectarian groups, of which there was a wide array. Some were related to martial arts, others to shamanism and "healing techniques" and others to possession rituals,²¹ themes not uncommon to traditional Chinese history. The movement -because of the "boxing" (to Western eyes) and rituals of possession- had an inherently egalitarian nature: *"any young man with a pure heart could be*

²⁰ ESHERICK, Joseph W., *The Origins of the Boxer Uprising* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), p. 214.

²¹ Esherick describes the ritual in the following way: "With his eyes closed, the boxer would slowly go into a trance, begin wavering about and breathing rapidly until he finally went into a frenzy of possession by his god." Ibidem. p. 218.

possessed."²² For peasants with almost no prospects of better conditions in the future, these characteristics of belongingness and brotherhood must have been an attractive feature to join the movement.

Nevertheless, there was a new trend influencing their conception: anti-Christianism. Their enemy was always the Christians and eventually the foreigners, never the Qing dynasty and the status quo. "*Revive the Qing, destroy the foreign*" or "*Protect the Qing, destroy the foreign*"²³ was their typical slogan. Foreign threat and Christian disruption in village life were the *leitmotif* for the uprisings, necessarily accompanied by natural disasters, poor social conditions, cultural traditions, and an official structure in Beijing that, most of the times, chose to look to the other side when aggressions began.

The Boxers' organizational patterns were far from institutionalized and formal. Most of the dissemination of their ideas was made "from mouth to mouth." There was no real vertical authority aside from some *lumpen-intelligentsia* leaders. Needless to say, the difficulties to control the uprising once it was ignited were to be expected.

By 1899 (a year of poor harvest) violent clashes with Christians mounted substantially; several Christian converts were killed while property was stolen and destroyed. In early June 1900 the Boxers began their move into Beijing and Tianjin. Some foreigners were killed, railways were damaged, stations were burnt and telegraph lines cut: violence had arrived to the capital. The Empress Dowager was pressed between avoiding conflict with the West and relying on her people's strength and will –i.e. incongruous and chaotic Boxer violence- she went for the latter.²⁴

In this tense atmosphere the Boxers laid siege to the foreign complex where Western embassies stood in Beijing. After receiving the news of advancing western forces, Cixi declared war against the foreign powers, which gave a kind of blank check for Boxer aggressions. On August 14, 1900, after 55 days of siege, a coordinated

²² Ibidem. p. 219.

²³ Ibidem, p. 226.

²⁴ "Today China is extremely weak. We have only the people's hearts and minds to depend upon. If we cast them aside and lose the people's hearts, what can we use to sustain the country." This sad statement shows the difficulties a government can suffer when, while being weak, it wants to remain strong and assertive vis-à-vis foreigners. SPENCE, Jonathan. *The Search for Modern China*, 2nd edition. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2001, p. 233.

foreign force, manned mostly by Japanese, German, British, American, Russian and French soldiers, arrived at Beijing ending the uprising.²⁵ The Empress left the city, leaving the always “well-disposed” Li Hongzhang²⁶ to negotiate what would conclude as the most shocking of the “unequal treaties”: the Boxer Protocol.²⁷

Discourses on the Boxer Uprising

Reviewing and decoding *a posteriori* interpretations of the event helps understand how the Chinese see and *use* their own history. Paul Cohen has done a great job in identifying Chinese interpretations of the Boxer Rebellion during most of the twentieth century.²⁸ Using his useful categorization of a “mythologized past” he divides the discourses on three different periods: the New Culture Movement; the anti-imperialist struggles of the 1920s; and the Cultural Revolution.

For the New Culture Movement,²⁹ everything in traditional Chinese culture was suspicious, if not outwardly polluted.³⁰ Thus, the Boxer Rebellion represented, for these individuals, the worst of Chinese tradition and history: a movement created on the base of superstition and irrationality; the opposite of what these 20th century *philosophes* considered positive values for a society.

When, in the 1920s, the enemy shifted from Chinese culture to foreign imperialism, historical representations of the Boxers as the epitome of “rotten China” ceased to be useful. Now, positive meanings could be derived from the Rebellion. “Protect the Qing, destroy the foreign” was, within this new ideological framework, the representation of a Chinese patriotic movement that, in its own way, had stood up

²⁵ It should be highlighted that the way to Beijing implied major proportions bloodshed.

²⁶ Li Hongzhang was a Chinese official that participated in most of the relevant events of China’s foreign policy in the second half of the 19th century. He was also the public face and negotiator of the Qing dynasty with foreign countries when things went wrong for the Qing’s—e.g. the negotiations with Japan after the First Sino-Japanese War of 1894.

²⁷ For the Boxer Protocol see: “Unequal Treaties: the Treaty System Era and Discourses of Humiliation in China,” footnote number 4.

²⁸ COHEN, Paul A., op cit.

²⁹ For a brief explanation of the New Culture Movement see pages 23-24.

³⁰ Impressive comments like “a barbarian race like ours” could be heard just a few years after the fall of the Qing dynasty. SCHWARCZ, Vera, *The Chinese Enlightenment: Intellectuals and the Legacy of the May Fourth Movement of 1919* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), p. 121.

to the yoke of foreign imperialism.³¹ By a mythologizing process, political goals of the day had changed Chinese understanding of their own history.

Three re-interpretation characteristics are highlighted by Cohen for the Cultural Revolution period. First, a re-adaptation of the discourse to a period of Cultural Revolution and its necessities. Second, the completeness of a process of *mythologization* of the event in detriment of explaining it as a *historical* phenomenon. Lastly, the tight control of this process by the state, to a degree not seen before. Ultimately, “anti-foreignism” and “patriotic anti-imperialism” were still the relevant attributes that mythologizers highlighted.³²

Nevertheless, another potent source of interpretation that can be said to cross most of the PRC’s history, not fully discussed by Cohen, was the myth that the Boxer Uprising was a “progressive” force that in combination with other revolutions and rebellions had led China teleologically to the imposition of the proletariat dictatorship and a Communist state.³³

On the other hand, it should not be a surprise that interpretations about the Boxers are mainly negative in the West. To most western eyes, this kind of “nonsensical” violence cannot be easily accepted -even more so when it was directed to a faith representative of western culture and, for the West, a force of progress in China. A typical western statement could be the following: *“The Boxer Rebellion revealed the courage of missionaries--and the resentment they sparked. Within six months, thousands of angry Chinese came screaming out of the villages of North China, twirling swords and chanting, ‘Burn, burn, burn! Kill, kill, kill!’ They tore down chapels, cathedrals, orphanages, hospitals, and schools, and murdered missionaries and Chinese*

³¹ This does not mean that the negative myth was over, but the recast of the Boxer image was impressive nonetheless.

³² As Mao stated during the zenith of the Cultural Revolution: *“Was it the Chinese people who organized the Boxer groups and sent them to Europe, America, and Japan to rebel [against the governments there] and to kill and burn. Was it the imperialist powers which came to invade China and exploit the Chinese people, thus provoking the Chinese people to fight imperialism and its lackeys, to corrupt officials of China? This is a grave matter of right and wrong and should be made absolutely clear.”* MAO, Zedong, *Directives Regarding Cultural Revolution*, 1966-69, available online: http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-9/mswv9_84.htm.

³³ ESHERICK, op cit, p. 220.

Christians."³⁴ One of the consequences of the Rebellion was the increment in racist perceptions towards China.

Researching interpretations of the Boxer Movement in current Chinese politics (approximately since the 1978 reforms) is a disappointing task. It is safe to say that this event has lost power as a historical interpretation for political objectives. What could be the causes for this loss of interest in the Boxers?³⁵ One of the possible explanations is that Communist ideology is not as useful as it used to be for the CCP. In this sense, interpretations that praise the role of events as the White Lotus, the Taiping Revolution or the Boxer Rebellion in a progressive pathway towards a Communist society do not pay (in a political sense) any longer. Nowadays, it is much more convenient to talk about nationalism and patriotism as a way to increase CCP's legitimacy than to find a scientific pattern of history that legitimizes Chinese Communism.

Another tentative explanation could be linked to the "victim syndrome," which pictures China as a ravaged nation, exploited by the West while it was weak (approximately since the Opium War until 1949). As Zheng Wang states: *"the official Maoist 'victor narrative' (China won national independence) was...superseded by a new 'victimization narrative,' which blames the 'West' for China's suffering."*³⁶ The aggressive and offensive nature of the Boxer Rebellion does not fit well in the victimization narrative, especially compared to the "unequal treaties" and "one hundred years of humiliation" discourse. This could partly explain the very limited use of the Boxers in contemporary Chinese politics.

The discourse, nevertheless, can be adapted to fit the more general and powerful one of "one hundred years of humiliation," and it is in this context that it can rarely be seen used as a political device. A Xinhua 2004 article said: *"China's modern history is one of repeated humiliations at the hands of foreign powers: memories of the*

³⁴ GALLI, Mark, "Fury Unleashed," *Christian History*, 15, (1996) Vol. No. 4, p31, 3p.

³⁵ A loss of interest in a particular historical subject can also be a form of mythologization.

³⁶ ZHENG, Wang, "National Humiliation, History Education, and the Politics of Historical Memory: Patriotic Education Campaign in China," *International Studies Quarterly*, 52, (2003) No. 4, pp. 783-806, p. 792.

*destruction wrought by the eight country alliance sent by the United States, Britain, Germany, France, Russia, Japan, Italy, and Austria to quell the Boxer uprising still linger.”*³⁷ It can be expected that future uses of the interpretation will be inextricably linked to this bigger intellectual framework that dominates historical discourse in the political sphere, and shadows most of China’s historical events, including the Boxer Uprising.

Even more, the Boxer case seems to be an illustration of a broader phenomenon. The Communist understanding of history as a Hegelian progress towards a goal –i.e. Communism– has been eclipsed by a nationalist-centered mythology. In the words of Jiang Zemin: *“From the Taiping Heavenly Kingdom Uprising to the Boxing Movement, from the Reform Movement of 1898 to the Revolution of 1911 led by Dr. Sun Yat-sen, numerous sons and daughters of the Chinese people and noble-minded patriots advanced wave upon wave and endured all difficulties and hardships in pursuit of the salvation for the country and the people.”*³⁸ The universalism of Marxism gives way to the particularism of nationalism. As the Boxer case shows, in contemporary discourses, the Chinese nation is the central and unavoidable theme.

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³⁷ "China Threat," a great fallacy," *Chinaview*, available online: http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2004-04/30/content_1448307.htm, 2004-04-30.

³⁸ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, *President Jiang Zemin’s Speech to Celebrate HK’s Return*, available online: <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/wjdt/zyjh/t24926.htm>, emphasis by the author.

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The Cultural Revolution and Intellectuals in 20th Century China

During the Cultural Revolution intellectuals were, as numerous times in China's history, at the center stage of social and political developments. Nevertheless, their composition, role and objectives differed significantly from previous experiences. This brief paper compares Cultural Revolution to New Culture Movement intellectuals in search of patterns of continuity and change. Finally, some concluding remarks on intellectuals in present China are sketched.

Introduction

Portrayed as "one of the most extraordinary events of [the twentieth] century,"³⁹ the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (CR) remains one of Communist China most commented events, while at the same time one of its most enigmatic and obscure periods. Lasting officially from 1966 until Mao Zedong's death in 1976, the CR, as the tragic event that will be presented below, had its core period from 1966 to 1969.

Arguments about its origins are varied and range from the perspective that "*It is no exaggeration...to conclude that the principal responsibility for the Cultural Revolution...rests with one man [Mao];*"⁴⁰ to the views that the Cultural Revolution was the inevitable expression of social classes clashing. While its goals were "*aimed to transform state, society and human nature,*" its outcomes were uninspiring, with the somber estimation of half a million people dead.

The revolution was an urban phenomenon. During this period the countryside was hardly affected, while "*relatively few urban residents remained unaffected by the Cultural Revolution.*"⁴¹ Arguably, and not surprisingly, cultural and educational areas suffered devastating consequences. The arts –operas, films, ballets, concerts, et cetera– were, as never before, the tool of a political cause. Contact with the outside world was eliminated, and every link to foreign thought canceled. Even more sadly, "*Universities*

³⁹ HARDING, Harry, "The Chinese State in Crisis, 1966-9," in MACFARQUAHR, Roderick, ed., *The Politics of China: The Eras of Mao and Deng*, Second Edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 148.

⁴⁰ Ibidem. p. 235.

⁴¹ Ibidem. p. 240.

were shut down in the summer of 1966, and middle schools suspended instruction in the fall, so that their students could participate in the Cultural Revolution.”⁴² The terrible consequences of a decade without education are obvious.⁴³

Intellectuals and the Cultural Revolution: Change and Continuity

The term “cultural” in the CR was not only a rhetoric brand. One of the triggers of the revolution was the critique of Jiang Qing, Mao’s wife, and her followers against “The Dismissal of Hai Rui from Office;” a play which, for them, was an attack on Mao. “Culture” will be the trigger and *leitmotif* during these years of upheaval.

Jiang Qing’s clique can be defined as a group of “*radical or non-establishment intellectuals*.”⁴⁴ For them, Chinese culture, and thus society, was following a path of revisionism, looking increasingly bourgeois; “*they were pushing for socialist purification of art, and generally favored the search for new dramatic forms untainted by either so-called feudal or Westernized May Fourth elitist values*.”⁴⁵ The idea, not new as will be shown below, was to end with the old forms, the old traditions; for example, by destroying “*blind faith in Chinese and foreign classical literature*.”⁴⁶ This mood spread through the education system with students and radical professors attacking “reactionary” intellectuals with fierce conviction. It is in this context that the Red Guards –high school and university students- are grouped as the avant-garde of intellectualism⁴⁷ in the CR, guided by their new bible: Mao’s little red book.⁴⁸ Youth was

⁴² Ibidem. p. 241.

⁴³ Although it was in 1970 that a new generation of university students were recruited, it would take even more years to get to pre-Revolution levels of education. Ibid.

⁴⁴ SPENCE, Jonathan, *The Search for Modern China*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2001), p. 602.

⁴⁵ Ibidem.

⁴⁶ Ibidem. p. 603.

⁴⁷ *Nota bene*: the term “intellectual” significantly differs from its use in the West. The Western view of a deeply educated individual dedicated to “a life of the mind,” had nothing to do with these Chinese intellectuals, many of whom were not even college graduates, and sometimes not even high school graduates.

⁴⁸ There is a theoretical incoherence in the relevant role of students, if we have in mind that this was supposed to be a communist proletarian society. As Perry and Li say: “*the term ‘Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution’ is something of a misnomer. Important as workers were in the later stages of the movement, the cultural transformation of this era...was largely the work of brash young students*.” PERRY, Elizabeth J. and Li Xun, “Revolutionary Rudeness: The Language of Red Guards and Rebel Workers in China’s Cultural Revolution,” in *Twentieth Century China*, (London: Routledge, 2003.) p. 224.

an essential device to fulfill CR objectives. And for several reasons,⁴⁹ *“The youth needed little urging from Mao to rise up against their parents, teachers, party cadres, and the elderly, and to perform countless acts of calculated sadism,”*⁵⁰ joining massively in this new man-devised colossal enterprise. The attack on the “four olds” – old customs, old habits, old culture, and old thinking – was the conceptual core of the CR. Jiang Qing’s objective: a complete cultural reform of China.

Tracing back half a century, there was another movement that placed culture at its core, had intellectuals as primary actors, and devised huge –sometimes unrealistic– goals: the New Culture Movement. This was an urban intellectual movement which utilized a strong Western background to react against the disillusionment with Chinese traditional culture during the 1910s and 1920s.⁵¹ The movement cannot be understood without empathetically recognizing the dilemma between cultural critique and nationalism.⁵² This will be the most complex issue for intellectuals that were *“cosmopolitan by temperament and nationalist revolutionaries by vocation.”*⁵³ The crucial question to this generation was: What is wrong with Chinese culture and how can it be reformed without falling in an anti-Chinese stance? The goal of the New Culture movement was to carry Enlightenment to Chinese society; to develop an *“independent, egalitarian, and logical thinking,”* while bringing down the unscientific Chinese culture characterized by Confucianism and its *“ritualized subordination.”*⁵⁴

⁴⁹ Some of the reasons young people joined the revolution were: being part of a big event in the history of their country; ideological communist conviction; or even much more trivial ones as getting out of classes and travelling through the country in free trips organized by Cultural Revolution leaders.

⁵⁰ According to Spence: “Thousands of intellectuals were beaten to death or died of their injuries.” SPENCE, op cit. p. 606.

⁵¹ Comments like: *“A barbarian race like ours”* were most common during these days. SCHWARCZ, Vera, *The Chinese Enlightenment: Intellectuals and the Legacy of the May Fourth Movement of 1919* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), p. 121.

⁵² It must be said that this is not uniquely a Chinese problem but one of intellectuals in modernizing societies outside the West by large. In Latin America, cultural critique, particularly of traditional European roots, was presented as pure nationalism while most of the times using European currents of thought as Marxism.

⁵³ SCHWARCZ, op cit. p.9.

⁵⁴ Ibidem. pp. 96-99.

The New Culture Enlightenment struggle against the “*old, outworn feudal mentality*,”⁵⁵ tempts the writer to link the role of intellectuals in this movement to the one they played during the CR, where the objective was also to iconoclastically destroy the “old concepts.” Moreover, the overarching dilemma between transforming the unprogressive old, while preserving nationalism was also central for both movements. The way culture was vital for both movements, as an issue that went further from Western Enlightenment or Communism might also be cited as a commonality. Nevertheless, this temptation has several shortcomings.

While intellectuals in the first decades of the twentieth century arose to question the absolutes of Chinese tradition –the Central Kingdom as pinnacle of civilization and conventions of Confucian hierarchy as unchangeable- radical intellectuals of the Cultural Revolution, especially Red Guards, had no serious project other than agitating fuzzy concepts of “bourgeois classes” and “revisionism inside the CCP.” This is clear in the trivialized Red Guard activities –e.g. “*change the traffic signals so that red, the color of revolution, would signify ‘go’ rather than ‘stop’*” or abolishing “*bourgeois habits of keeping crickets, fish, cats, and dogs*.”⁵⁶ These amusing actions, nevertheless, must not shadow the more violent and irrational behavior, like brutally harassing and humiliating any individual they decided was to be considered as part of the despised bourgeoisie.⁵⁷

Furthermore, while May Fourth intellectuals dedicated themselves to a critical and deep study of their society, trying to use what they saw suitable from external techniques to understand China’s particular, and to them negative, situation, “*the Red Guards took to the streets looking for evidence of bourgeois culture*,”⁵⁸ as a methodology of cultural critique. This is, of course, inextricably linked to the authoritarian character of the Cultural Revolution. As Perry and Li say: “*As an event inspired and directed by the ‘Great Helmsman,’ the movement was severely constrained in its cultural expression*.”⁵⁹

⁵⁵ Ibidem. p. 284.

⁵⁶ HARDING, op cit. p. 182.

⁵⁷ For graphical images of this humiliation rituals see: LI, Zhensheng, *Red-Color News Soldier* (London: Phaidon Press, 2003).

⁵⁸ HARDING, op cit. p. 182.

⁵⁹ PERRY and LI, op cit. p. 233.

Authoritarianism left the movement both as a phony cultural critique and as a null source of cultural renewal: *"The Cultural Revolution Small Group –which reported directly to Mao- shut down hundreds of journals and placed unprecedented restrictions on the performing arts. Only works deemed politically correct by the central leadership were permitted."*⁶⁰

Finally, but more importantly, the relationship of both movements to the dynamics of "destruction and creation" are abysmally distinct. While it is true that there was an inherent iconoclastic trend in the New Culture Movement that supposed a dynamic of "destruction and *then* creation," it was a rational and moderate mechanism not far from European Enlightenment propositions.⁶¹ The driver of the New Culture Movement was its will to historicize Confucianism and thus show the need for a cultural change –i.e. a critique of *"attachment to tradition far more than tradition itself."*⁶² The Cultural Revolution, on the other hand, was a commitment with destruction *per se*, destruction that only led to a restoration of order by Mao and his faction. Interestingly, it can be argued that the mother of all differences between both movements was that CR intellectuals had an antithetical *ethos* to the one of the New Culture Movement. The CR can be understood as a new type of subservience, similar to Confucian hierarchical traditions so despised by intellectuals in the 1910s and 1920s. This new subservience was: *"dogmatic faith in Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought."*⁶³

Conclusion

It needs to be acknowledged that there is no general and unequivocal pattern of intellectual (youth or not)-state relationship. This link has been in a state of constant flux: intellectuals went from being *part* of the state in dynastic times, to a radical counter-culture movement during the 1910s and 1920s, to being once again a tool of powerful politicians during the Cultural Revolution. In the 1980s, especially during the Tiananmen incidents, intellectuals seemed once again a force analogous to the New Culture Movement -although less nationalistic. This seems to be changing once more. Largely working through the Internet, pseudo-intellectual youths are recasting

⁶⁰ PERRY and LI, op cit. p. 233.

⁶¹ SCHWARCZ, op cit., p. 289.

⁶² Ibidem.

⁶³ Ibidem. p. 298.

nationalism as an intellectual force in China.⁶⁴ This kind of nationalism tends to be xenophobic and aggressive, identifying China as a ravaged and humiliated nation that is gaining back its place of pride in the world. Protests against Japan when Japanese leaders visit the Yasukuni shrine, or the ones that developed after the mistaken bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade by U.S. forces in 1999, are examples of this nationalism in action.⁶⁵ Nonetheless, this is only one trend in a much more pluralized China, in which liberal, leftist, new left, conservative, postmodern, and quite a long etc., are participating in the intellectual debate.

The stance the state is taking towards the youth-web-nationalism is still unclear. Some analysts have argued that it has been used as an instrument to promote CCP's policies. Others say the Party has been struggling to maintain it controlled, in the way a juggler does. Being both options plausible, the only certainty is that this kind of movement has the potential to get out of control. Government's encouragement or constraint will be essential in maintaining a stable China, not only domestically, but also internationally.

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Sino-American Rapprochement: Interpretations and Mythologization

On 21 February, 1972, President Richard Nixon went to China and met Chairman Mao Zedong and Prime Minister Zhou Enlai: a Sino-American rapprochement had materialized. Interpretations of this event and its consequences have been part of a mythologized past in the bilateral relation. This brief paper analyzes the basic characteristics of these interpretations and its influence on current U.S.-China relations.

Rapprochement

Several conditions during the 1960s and 1970s facilitated a shift in both U.S. and China's foreign policies. Some were strategically explicit, while others were arising from complex domestic considerations. The 1960 decade was complicated for Sino-Soviet relations. A former comrade ally had now displaced the U.S. as the most pressing security issue for China.⁶⁶ Approaching the U.S. was a logical move to improve China's strategic position vis-à-vis the USSR and to prevent an eventual realignment between the U.S. and Russia. But the Soviet Union was not the sole *leitmotif* for rapprochement. China wanted to positively transform its place in the world -e.g., by entering the United Nations. A solution to the Taiwan issue was also in the PRC's calculations. From the domestic side "*it is important to note that the Sino-American rapprochement came at a time when the Cultural Revolution and...Mao's continuous revolution have been declining.*"⁶⁷ The new image of the USSR and the ideological shock of Mao's fading continuous revolution shaped foreign policy-making in ways adepts of geopolitics may not appreciate.

The Nixon Administration came into office also willing to pursue deep modifications in its international stance -which Nixon had announced in his electoral campaign.⁶⁸ The theoretical foundation of its grand strategy was the existence of five

⁶⁶ The negative reactions of the Soviets to the Great Leap Forward; "Khrushchev's revisionism;" the 1969 border skirmishes; the dangerous assertiveness of the Brezhnev Doctrine; Soviet consideration of Mao Zedong as a danger in their search for "peaceful coexistence" with the U.S., *inter alia*, were some of the factors leading to a split.

⁶⁷ CHEN, Jian, *Mao's China and the Cold War* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001), p. 239.

⁶⁸ Although the origin of the rapprochement idea is sometimes supposed to come from Henry Kissinger or Kissinger *and* Nixon, the actual source was Richard Nixon. See: "Memorandum

major powers in world politics: the U.S., USSR, Europe, Japan and China. Plying in this scenario, and recognizing the USSR as the greatest foe, approaching China was a reasonable move. Moreover, the U.S. wanted to improve its capacity to prevent a Sino-Soviet conflict. Washington was also willing to “*work together to settle arrangements throughout East Asia*” –basically, finding an exit to Vietnam, but also as a way to reduce the costs of heavy bombing in Indochina- while at the same time setting limits to communist expansion (Chicom) in East Asia.⁶⁹ Finally, domestic politics, as preventing democrats from playing the China card first, influenced Nixon’s decision-making.

Chinese and American Interpretations

Few issues in U.S.-China relations have received such a consensual support as the mutual decision of rapprochement and the process of normalization of relations. After four decades, it is still seen as one of the watersheds in the annals of 20th century diplomatic history, almost always through positive lens.

This, of course, does not mean complete uniformity in interpreting the event. The resumption of contacts and subsequent normalization of relations was a complicated process, to say the least. To begin with, it took eight years, from 1971 to 1979, to achieve full normalization. From the American side, Congress and opposition politics played a big role in retarding normalization. Illustrating is Kissinger’s observation to Mao that: “*If we had paid attention to them (domestic politics), Mr. Chairman, I’d never have been here on my first trip. Everything important has been done against their opposition.*”⁷⁰ Public opinion was also an issue, with periods during the 1970s where negative feelings towards China were extended (leaving Taiwan, an old friend, was difficult to cope with for Americans).⁷¹ Domestic considerations were also an issue for China. With the passing away of Chairman Mao Zedong and Prime Minister

From President Nixon to his Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger)”, p. 7, in *Foreign Relations of the United States, China, 1969-1972*.

⁶⁹ MANN, James, *About Face: A History of America’s Curious Relationship with China, from Nixon to Clinton* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1999), p. 50.

⁷⁰ BURR, William, ed., *The Kissinger Transcripts: The Top Secret Talks with Beijing and Moscow*, (New York: New Press, 1999), p. 182.

⁷¹ As Harry Harding says: “*The American public, which had responded enthusiastically to the Nixon visit of 1972, now [1974] began to have second thoughts about China...by 1976 the proportion having favorable images of China fell to 20 percent...*” HARDING, Harry, *A Fragile Relationship* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 1992), pp. 83-84.

Zhou Enlai in 1976, the succession question became a door of re-entrance for radical elements in China's political landscape which were "not very amicable" towards normalization.⁷² In short, the process was far from being swift and straightforward.

Furthermore, the assumption of consensus does not suppose that current historical interpretations do not have critics –of course, much more common in the pluralized environment of American historical writing. The epitome of this trend is James Mann's book *About Face*. Some of his criticisms are stated in the following way: *"It was a relationship beset with contradictions...For nearly two decades, these contradictions in American policy didn't seem to matter much. But after the tumultuous upheavals from 1989 to 1991 the contradictions became overwhelming."*⁷³ Another criticism is that *"American policy itself was often shrouded in secrecy,"* which sounds odd in a democratic and transparent system.⁷⁴

Consensus and Political Uses of History

Nevertheless, there is an overwhelming bias towards seeing this diplomatic move as timely and positive for both countries and the world, criticizing neither the goals nor the means. This is especially true for the interpretations arising from the political arena. One of the most authoritative documents on Chinese –i.e. CCP- interpretations of the Maoist Era shows the basic ideas on which their understanding of this period revolves. In a reproduced speech in the mentioned document, Hu Yaobang states: *"Even in the last few years of his life, when his errors had become serious, Comrade Mao Zedong still remained alert to the nation's independence and security and had a correct grasp of the new developments in the world situation. He led the Party and people in standing up to all*

⁷² Mao's wife, Jiang Qing, declared in 1975: *"We do not have 'white friends,' 'big friends,' or 'rich friends.'"* Ibidem. p. 65.

⁷³ MANN, op cit., pp. 8-9.

⁷⁴ MANN, op cit., p. 12. Confirming Mann's argument, James Carter stated in a recent speech that: *"As the year 1978 went by [the White House] realized that [it was] facing enormous political challenges in the United States because, at the time the so-called Taiwan Lobby was as powerful and important as the Israeli Lobby...Also knowing that the State Department...was loose as far as information was concerned, we never issued a single communiqué...with Leonard Woodcock from the State Department; they were all issued directly from the White house."* James Carter, "Remarks at Seminar Commemorating the 30th Anniversary of the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between China and the United States," January 12, 2009, Beijing, China. Available online: <http://www.ncuscr.org/?q=programs/seminar-commemorating-30th-anniversary-establishment-diplomatic-relations-between-china-and>.

pressures from hegemonism and instituted a new pattern for our foreign relations."⁷⁵ The "new pattern" is a reference to the relationship with the U.S. and the modifications in imperialism theory that Chen Jian talks about. Even more, the rapprochement with the U.S. was not only a good strategic decision by Chairman Mao to protect China's security, it was one of the only decisions that saved his record as a statesman during his last years, after the "errors" of the Cultural Revolution.

Later interpretations have not moved an inch from this broad picture. In 2002, Hu Jintao, then Vice-President, met with former Secretary of State Kissinger, occasion in which Hu *"spoke highly of the historic significance of Nixon's visit and the issuing of the Sino-U.S. Shanghai Communiqué, especially praising the contribution made by Kissinger."*⁷⁶ Another example is the meeting between Chinese Premier, Wen Jiabao, and former American President, and responsible for signing the Joint Communiqué on Normalization of Diplomatic Relations in 1978, James Carter. In this instance Wen observed that: *"The establishment of China-U.S. relations 30 years ago ushered in a new era. The leaders and people of the two nations who made important contributions to this milestone will go down in history."*⁷⁷

This consensus goes further than being a tool of CCP politicians. That American leaders involved in the processes of normalization –especially the ones that implemented breakthrough decisions- are still popular among Chinese public opinion, proves the broadness of the consensus. In an article that reviewed public feeling towards American leaders on the eve of President Obama's 2009 trip to China, Xinhua said: *"Nixon and Carter won their popularity among the Chinese via 'Ping-pong Diplomacy.'"*⁷⁸

⁷⁵ *Resolution on CPC History, 1949-1981, Sixty Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee of the Communist Party of China*, Hu Yaobang's speech, (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1981), p. 96.

⁷⁶ "Hu Jintao, Kissinger on Sino-U.S. Relations," *Xinhuanet*, 13 April, 2002, available online: http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2002-04/13/content_357066.htm

⁷⁷ "Chinese premier meets former U.S. president Carter amid anniversary celebrations" *Window of China*, available online: http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-01/13/content_10652984.htm

⁷⁸ "Fresh face of Obama attracts many Chinese fans," *Chinaview.cn*, available online: http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2009-01/20/content_10692035.htm

This pattern is also visible in the U.S. According to James Carter: *"This new friendship has been wonderful for your people and for the people of the United States. I believe it's also been beneficial to the entire nation, and the entire world and people all over the Earth. We have come to maintain peace and stability throughout the Eastern World."*⁷⁹ From an academic point of view, but interestingly, writing for an American government web-page, Warren I. Cohen observes: *"It was a major turning point in world history and contributed ultimately to the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War."*⁸⁰ The examples are infinite, all confirming the point that rapprochement and the process of normalization stand as part of a mythologized past in U.S.-China relations.

Advantages and Risks of a Mythologized Past

The mythologizing of U.S.-China rapprochement and normalization might have both positive and negative influences over contemporary bilateral relations and international politics more broadly.

Positive interpretations of the period have a clear constructive political use. Both governments have used, and will continue using, the event as an idealized past, which "proves" that good Sino-U.S. relations are possible. These interpretations can be very helpful in tense periods in the Sino-U.S. dyad. Moreover, the usual *racconto* shows how a single and simple rationale (improving U.S.-China relations for the reasons mentioned above) can guide a bilateral relation for a long period of time. This "common history" will continue to be a good resource were to draw upon in times of conflict and tensions as a way of returning to the "good old days."

On the other hand, negative consequences can also arise from mythologized interpretations. The first example can be seen in the over-expectations that installed dangerous trends in mutual perception, or better, misperception between the countries. As Mann argues: *"When Chinese rulers were willing to use troops to shoot citizens on the*

⁷⁹"Remarks by Former U.S. President Jimmy Carter at the Li Xiannian Library in Hong'an, China," *Carter Center*, January 14, 2009, available online: http://www.cartercenter.org/news/editorials/speeches/china_jan2009.html

⁸⁰ COHEN, Warren I., "Nixon In China: A Turning Point in World History," *America.gov*, April 1, 2006, available online: <http://www.america.gov/st/peacesec-english/2006/April/20080522121002WRybakuH0.3434717.html>

streets of its capital, then America's ties to Beijing could be justified only as geopolitics, not as a means of helping or changing the country."⁸¹ Americans had envisioned China getting ever more like the U.S. The idea that PRC's pathway was "American-like," had no real substance in Chinese society. Thus, when the June 4th bloodshed occurred, a manageable crisis almost went out of control. False expectations, incited by mythologized interpretations of the past, can be a source of problems and overreactions in international politics.

The rationale created during the 1970s was useful to bring both countries together and proved impressively resistant. Nevertheless, the U.S. and China have not been able to find a new overarching strategy that guides their interactions. Inflated interpretations of the past can put standards too high and thus be an obstacle to creating a new rationale. To remember the achievements of the past, and use them when necessary, but to be able to think creatively and audaciously outside the ideas on which the U.S.-China relationship was constructed is a necessary equilibrium to secure a stable international order as China rises to the top echelons of international relations.

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