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"MISUNDERSTANDING" CHINA

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Allen S. Whiting



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REFLECTIONS ON “MISUNDERSTANDING” CHINA*

Allen S. Whiting

It is an honor and privilege to speak here tonight. Gaston Sigur and I often disagreed but always with mutual respect. It is also a pleasure to be invited by Bruce Dickson and David Shambaugh, both former students of mine. Finally it is especially gratifying to offer my valedictory thoughts to so many friends and former colleagues. I began teaching in 1951. After fifty years of academia, RAND, and the State Department, it will be nice to be wholly on my own.

First, however, I wish to honor three of my closest colleagues who taught me much: Doak Barnett, Paul Kreisberg, and Mike Oksenberg. Their professional and personal excitement about China fueled all of us wrestling with this elusive and often maddening subject. We are diminished without them.

My title is not original nor perhaps what I say, especially personal anecdotes heard before or seen in my writings. But most of you will not

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* This paper is based on a talk delivered as the 2001 Gaston Sigur Memorial Lecture at the George Washington University on March 15, 2001.

remember, and stories always improve with time. My use of inverted commas for “misunderstanding China” deserves some explanation. Despite the term’s frequent use, we *have* understood China rather well much of the time. On the other hand, the Chinese cannot always be understood, particularly when they don’t know themselves what they are doing. Granting these two points, there is a shelf of books that tell how misunderstanding China pervades our engagement with that country, from Harold Isaacs’ pioneering study, *Scratches On Our Minds* to Jonathan Spence’s sweeping survey, *The Chan’s Great Continent: China in Western Minds*.¹ As Isaacs noted, “The name of Marco Polo is scratched onto the mind of almost every American school child.”² Certainly every public swimming pool hears the cry—MARCO! POLO! but not necessarily with China in mind. A journalist’s survey of public opinion in 1964 concluded, “It is on the whole very poorly informed. Clichés, illusions and taboos are still widely prevalent. Public discussion is shallow and limited.”³ Twelve years later a 1976 Gallup Poll found 61 percent favored “establishing relations with mainland China” while 70 percent favored “continued relations with Nationalist China.”⁴ Mike Oksenberg and Bob Oxnam attributed this confusion to doubtful assumptions,

1. Harold Isaacs, *Scratches On Our Minds* (Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1958); Jonathan D. Spence, *The Chan’s Great Continent: China In Western Minds* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1998).

2. Isaacs, *ibid.*, p. 63.

3. A.T. Steele, *The American People and China*, (New York: McGraw Hill, 1966), p. 238.

4. Michel Oksenberg and Robert B. Oxnam, *China and America: Past and Future* (New York: Foreign Policy Association Headline Series, April 1977), p. 46.

great sudden changes, declining attention after change, and inconsistent self-perception.

Sudden changes came at the very start. In September 1950 Secretary of State Dean Acheson disparaged the Soviet alliance involving China in the Korean War, "I give the people in Peiping credit for being intelligent" yet he could not see "why they should...[be] getting at cross purposes with all the free nations of the world who are inherently their friends and have always been friends with the Chinese."⁵ In May 1951, Assistant Secretary of State for the Far East Dean Rusk declared, "The Peiping regime may be a colonial Russian government—a Slavic Manchukuo on a large scale. It is not the government of China. It does not pass the first test. It is not Chinese."⁶ In 1990 George Hicks introduced a symposium on the Tiananmen tragedy by reflecting, "Over the past decade the romantic politicians and investors in the West...have been anxious to see China as a mirror which reflected an image of themselves...the mirror the West always held up to itself when it thought it was looking at China."⁷

In short, the problem persists. Tonight, therefore, I would like to reflect on how misunderstanding, mine included, has or has not plagued perceptions and politics through more than five decades of the People's Republic. Second, I will reflect on how understanding the past may be relevant in the future.

In 1999 the Sigur Center had a fascinating conference, titled "Trends in China Watching: Observing the PRC at 50."⁸ But none of the

participants were present "at the creation" so I will start at that point. Shortly after the Korean War began, though new to Chinese studies at Columbia University, I addressed an Air Reserve unit on Long Island. I warned that the real threat was war with China by our positioning the Seventh Fleet in the Taiwan Strait. The Chinese Communist Party had fought the Kuomintang since 1927, driving it off the mainland by 1949. It would not tolerate our intervention in the civil war. Moreover Mao Zedong could not stand pat. He had to take Taiwan "to save face." I was wrong, and not for the last time.

Reflection: a little knowledge is a dangerous thing, especially in "understanding" China.

This might seem obvious. Yet repeated citations from Sun Tzu on "winning without fighting" continue to skew analysis of whether China will use force, when, and how. Fortunately Alastair Iain Johnston has challenged this cliché with his awesome survey of Chinese military classics and military behavior under the Ming.⁹

But a much worse misunderstanding followed. That fall, Beijing warned the U.S./UN forces against crossing the thirty-eighth parallel. Dismissal of the warning as sheer bluff came at the highest level of General Douglas MacArthur in Tokyo and the lower ranks of military analysts in Washington. And bluff it truly appeared. Chinese "volunteers" first hit South Korean and U.S. units below the Yalu River and then broke contact for three weeks. However, Cassandra spoke—through two China Foreign Service officers who had not yet run afoul of Senator McCarthy's witch hunt. O. Edmund Clubb and John Paton Davies warned that war with China loomed ahead. They were ignored. Washington

5. Robert Blum, *The U.S. and China in World Affairs* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1966), p.113.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 116.

7. George Hicks, ed., *The Broken Mirror: China After Tiananmen* (Chicago: St. James Press, 1990), pp. xvi-xvii.

8. *Trends in China Watching: Observing the PRC at 50* (Washington, D.C.: The Sigur Center for Asian Studies, 1999).

9. Alastair Iain Johnston, *Cultural Realism: Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in Chinese History* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995).

permitted MacArthur to launch his disastrous Thanksgiving offensive and the rest, as they say, is history. Clubb and Davies subsequently both suffered humiliation and virtual dismissal.¹⁰

Reflection: expertise is always valuable but not always heeded or rewarded.

Like a radioactive cloud, the fallout from the furor over "who lost China" fell far and wide. The first notable academic casualty was Owen Lattimore.¹¹ His books on Inner Asia displayed great breadth and depth on a remote subject. Then in 1949 televised hearings thrust him into the national spotlight as a suspect in the hunt for subversives. The following March I took my oral exam for the Foreign Service. The very first question hit the mark, "I understand that you study Mongolia. Whom do you consider the outstanding experts on Mongolia?" Did they want cupidity or integrity? I replied, "There are two: Nicholas Poppe at the University of Washington and Owen Lattimore." The questioner said nothing. But his facial expression, not visible to his colleagues, reassured me it was what he had wanted.

However pursuing the Ph.D. landed me at Northwestern University that fall. Suddenly invited by telegram with no interview, Alice and I were euphoric. Only after we arrived did we find out why. Two senior professors, William McGovern and Kenneth Colegrove, were just as suddenly tied up in Washington to testify about alleged communist penetration of the Institute of Pacific Relations while I was filling in with a one-year contract. Soon, another senior professor in the department asked me to lunch. In an inimitable Indiana drawl, he began, "Whiting, I understand

you teach courses on Russia and Red China. It's always seemed to me that people who study foreign countries wind up sympathetic to them. Are you sympathetic with China and Russia?" After a painful pause, I replied, "Yes, I teach the politics and foreign policies of the Soviet Union and China. I think the students should understand how the regimes of both countries perceive and cope with their problems. So I must be empathetic but am not sympathetic." The look on his face showed complete disbelief. When he later became chairman of the department, his letters to applicants ended, "Of course we will be interested in the candidate's political views." He later became president of the American Political Science Association.

Reflection: suspicion of foreign countries in some parts of our society can taint those who take area studies seriously.

This atmosphere dissuaded potential students of Chinese foreign policy for more than a decade, despite the enormity of Sino-American combat in Korea. Only a few bona fide specialists emerged by 1960.

Early in 1953 I decided it was not worth the struggle for myself and my family. I had Russian and some Chinese, my thesis was to be published, as was a co-authored international relations text, yet no relief from McCarthy's minions was in sight. Then a close friend with the Ford Foundation came to see us. I told him I might as well go back to the band business and enjoy what I was doing. In 1943 I had led a small Big Band at Northwestern as a freshman. My friend countered: if Ford gave me a fellowship to the Far East, would I stay in the profession? I said, "Yes." And off we went to Taiwan in 1953.

10. E.J. Kahn, *The China Hands: America's Foreign Service Officers and What Befell Them* (New York: Viking, 1975).

11. Robert P. Newman, *Owen Lattimore and the Loss of China* (Berkeley: University of California, 1992).

Reflection: Foundation funding is essential to survival as an area specialist, especially for years of tough language study.

Recently a Washington columnist wrote, "The small number of China security specialists within the U.S. intelligence community must be increased by up to 3,000 more, all of whom must be fluent in Chinese."¹² Even one third of his target would be a Great Leap Forward toward his goal of "knowing and understanding both the threats and the opportunities presented by China." But would Congress appropriate the money for the Bureau of Intelligence and Research in State? And unfortunately language may not suffice. I once witnessed an American, fluent in Chinese, provoke Deng Xiaoping into an intemperate outburst in late 1975. He was insensitive to Deng's tense reaction. He also lacked empathy for Deng's tension at this critical moment in the Cultural Revolution. Six months later Deng fell from power in another purge.

Reflection: language by itself is not enough for understanding China.

Moving ahead, at RAND my primary assignment was the Sino-Soviet alliance. In July 1958 the buildup on airfields opposite Taiwan signaled something would happen. The August 1 visit to Beijing by Khrushchev and his defense minister suggested high level consultation with Mao on military matters. When the shelling of Quemoy began, Khrushchev remarked in an interview, "We have given them rockets." I concluded the U.S. must avoid involvement lest it trigger Sino-Soviet cooperation in an assault on the offshore islands. My study of alliances in general and the Sino-Soviet alliance confirmed this conclusion. Only later did we learn that Mao never told Khrushchev he planned to bombard Quemoy three weeks later.

12. Bill Gertz, "More U.S. Spies Needed in China," *Baltimore Sun* (February 13, 2001).

His defiance of basic alliance obligations prompted Khrushchev to cancel promised help for China's atom bomb.

Reflection: international relations theory cannot account for idiosyncratic decisions by an omnipotent leader.

Mao's calculation of costs and benefits from the alliance did not concur with that of some colleagues. Moreover Chinese behavior cannot be understood simply by theoretical generalizations from other countries. China is unique in its length of recorded history and the preoccupation of its leaders to learn from that history as they understand it. "Remember the past as a guide to the future" is a mantra. It is ritualistically repeated when problems with other countries are linked with the past as selectively recalled. Dependence on others can be galling after the "century of shame and humiliation." Mao decided to go his own way, regardless of the consequences.

In 1961 I was invited by Roger Hilsman to join INR. He quickly warned me not to appear "soft" on China so we could work slowly to change the political atmosphere in Washington. I obliged. My first memo proposed that we study what could be done by seeding the cloud system over northwest China to increase flooding or drought. We would then offer our surplus grain as relief provided Beijing stopped supporting communist insurgencies in Southeast Asia. Roger exploded, "What the hell are you doing?" I said that if he wanted "tough," I could be "tough," knowing nothing would ever come of it. It ended there, or so I thought. Years later, Mike Oksenberg called me from Washington. He was reviewing classified files for Freedom of Information Act declassification requests. Without going into detail Mike said, "I'm handling this memo as not for real but you would have a hard time in the China field if it got out."

Reflection: not all memoranda are meant to be policy.

My first real assignment was formation of an inter-agency task force to anticipate and if possible degrade the political effects of a Chinese nuclear detonation. President Kennedy saw this eventuality as threatening U.S. national security.¹³ Speaking informally in the Department of State that fall, he said, "We must learn how to reach the minds of the men in Beijing before they acquire this capability."¹⁴ His National Security Assistant, McGeorge Bundy, repeatedly expressed concern verging on alarm over the prospective bomb. Both men, though sophisticated on European matters, saw China with the age-old image of threat, indeed, worse than the Soviet Union. They even probed Khrushchev for possible unilateral or bilateral action against China's production facilities.

Reflection: instinct can override intelligence when addressing China.

In 1962 I became head of the Office of Research and Analysis for the Far East with an excellent staff of civil servants and Foreign Service officers. Working with the wider intelligence community, we monitored indicators of Chinese nuclear progress. However in May we were challenged by the sudden deployment of three PLA divisions opposite Taiwan.¹⁵ It seemed incredible to foreshadow an attack but no defense rationale was evident. Then an interagency task force met. CIA's Ray Cline revealed that Chiang Kai-shek had

renamed and reworked invasion plans, encouraged by the massive famine after the Great Leap Forward. Moreover Taiwan was trying secretly to acquire five hundred of the largest Johnson outboard motors. Ray added that probable PRC penetration of the Republic of China made Beijing aware of these developments. This was confirmed when our ambassador in Warsaw was summoned by his Chinese counterpart and warned, "Remember Korea! You will be responsible for whatever Chiang Kai-shek does!"¹⁶ In reality keeping Chiang at bay was the prime focus of our Taiwan policy.

Reflection: empathy helps to see the situation as the other side sees it.

Earlier that spring an allied diplomat found the Beijing leadership "panicky." I dismissed his report. These men had spent their entire life prevailing over all odds. But I was wrong. A huge Hong Kong exodus had publicized China's plight to the world. A concurrent Xinjiang exodus prompted Beijing to suspect Soviet subversion. In this context seeing a U.S.-Chiang plot to exploit catastrophe came naturally.

Knowing Beijing's state of mind, our office tracked Sino-Indian tensions and correctly forecast the first Chinese attack that fall as well as the second with its incredible halt on the undisputed line at the bottom of the foothills. Nothing was based on special intelligence. Instead what might be called "technical intuition" came into play. The Pentagon's head of nuclear weapons testing coined this term from decades of personal success and failure.¹⁷ Cumulative knowledge combined with

13. William Burr and Jeffrey T. Richelson, "Whether To 'Strangle' The Baby In The Cradle: The United States and the Chinese Nuclear Program, 1960-64," *International Security* (Winter 2000/2001), vol. 25, issue 3, pp. 54-99, offers a close study of declassified records and interviews.

14. Author's notes.

15. Unless otherwise noted, the following sections draw on Allen S. Whiting, *The Chinese Calculus of Deterrence: India and Vietnam* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1975), chs. 2-5, pp. 42-170.

16. Author's reading of text as received; different from published version, Embassy Warsaw to Department of State, 23 June 1962, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961-1963*, vol. XXII, pp. 273-75.

17. William J. Broad, "Scientist at Work: Philip E. Coyle III," *The New York Times* (January 16, 2001), p. 24, quote and paraphrase from Dr. Coyle.

hunch or intuition to empower “going out of the box” of conventional wisdom and sheer brainstorming. Thus our sanguine analysis of a limited border war countered the wide range of other forecasts, including invasion of Assam, cutting India in two via the Chumbi Valley, and bombing Indian cities to panic the population. Fortunately we were right.

In 1964 the accelerated preparations for China’s nuclear test challenged our analysis. In August photography showed a test tower at Lop Nur.¹⁸ But production facilities at Lanzhou lacked sufficient energy input and water outflow to reach critical levels for a plutonium fueled bomb. This analysis proved erroneous because the Chinese were actually using uranium. Therefore some dismissed the tower as having been done because it was easy to get it out of the way. But Chinese work patterns are rarely that anticipatory. Then in September a source reported Zhou Enlai, on a visit to Mali, telling its president, “We expect to detonate our first atomic bomb by October 1. We hope you will support us.” Some scoffed that he was only talking up China’s power. But Zhou was putting China’s image on the line. He had to have confidence in the coming test. Therefore the time had come publicly to anticipate the Chinese nuclear detonation. This would show skeptics at home that without diplomatic relations we were nonetheless studying China closely. We could also reassure allies and friends abroad the event would not give China superpower status with Moscow and Washington. A leak to Marvin Kalb and CBS news did the trick.

Unfortunately no detonation occurred on October 1 despite *The Washington Post* headline to the contrary! Later, Rusk, always the gentleman, reassured me, “Allen, you can’t win them all.” Meanwhile the Atomic Energy Commission

18. Burr and Richelson, op. cit., and author’s recollection.

(AEC) protested to State for violating an agreement that all such matters were to be handled by the AEC. More than two weeks passed with no bomb. Then on October 16 the Foreign Broadcast Information Service translated the *Peoples’ Daily* front page reprinting of a Zbigniew Brzezinski article. The comment alleged this showed the U.S. would share nuclear weapons with Germany. We told Rusk that this backhanded way of telling the people why China needed the bomb meant it was still on track. Two hours later the Atomic Energy Commission detected the explosion.¹⁹ The next spring, CIA Director John McCone, in his annual address, said that failure gets attention while success does not. But, he noted, the “intelligence community” had forecast the Chinese atom bomb more than two weeks in advance. It was a community effort, combining U-2 photography and scientific analysis with “technical intuition.”

Reflection: the whole can be greater than the sum of its parts provided they work together.

Of course failure is inevitable and deserves attention so as to succeed next time. In 1964 our office claimed China would back Vietnam against U.S. intervention under two contingencies: first, U.S. bombing of the north, and second, U.S. invasion of the north. Indicators foreshadowing Chinese air cover lay in the preparation of airfields in south China, a unified radar system for both countries, and joint Sino-Vietnamese air exercises. Accordingly bombing escalated slowly to test Beijing’s response. No Chinese planes appeared. We were wrong. But so was Hanoi. A Vietnamese military historian later said that in 1964 Beijing had promised it would provide air cover.²⁰ But in

19. Whiting, op. cit., pp. 176-77.

20. History of the American War Conference, Hanoi, November 26, 1988, information given the author. See also Nguyen Khac Vien, *Vietnam: A Long History* (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1987), p. 327, “In July [sic] 1965, denying previously signed agreements, the

June 1965 the Chinese informed Vietnam they would not do this. So, as he remarked, "The bombs rained down on our heads."

Reflection: people can change their minds.

More important, however, a joint CIA-State forecast on the second contingency was correct. Subsequent evidence from both Beijing and Hanoi testifies to the deployment of 320,000 Chinese troops from 1965 to 1973, reaching a maximum 170,000 in 1967.²¹ Anti-aircraft units shot down U.S. planes. Railroad engineering and logistics forces kept key supply routes open from China. Then and later, skeptics dismissed any possibility of "Chinese coming into the war."²² But they were never expected to enter the fighting in South Vietnam. The main function of the People's Liberation Army (PLA), in addition to providing material support to Hanoi, was to deter a U.S. invasion of the north. In 1950 no Chinese military presence had existed in North Korea to make credible Beijing's warning against crossing the thirty-eighth parallel. We ignored the warning. But in 1965-68 sizeable PLA units could back up Vietnamese forces should we invade and, if necessary, enter combat there. Was China bluffing as later claimed by critics of our limited war?²³ One cannot disprove counterfactual theorizing. But Beijing fought in Korea with no air force, navy, or modern weapons. That it would have run

Chinese command informed the Vietnamese command that the Chinese air force would not come to Vietnam's help."

21. Qiang Zhai, *China and the Vietnam Wars, 1950-1975* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), p. 135.

22. Nancy Bernkopf Tucker, *China Confidential: American Diplomats and Sino-American Relations, 1945-1996* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), pp. 202-04 for the views of John Holdridge and Marshall Green recalling their insistence at the time that China would not "enter the war."

23. Harry G. Summers, Jr., *On Strategy: A Critical Analysis of the Vietnam War* (New York: Dell, 1982), pp. 65-66.

and abandoned Vietnam to an American invasion fifteen years later is truly incredible.

In forecasting Chinese behavior one faces a genuine dilemma: we cannot anticipate what Beijing will do when it does not know this itself. The unanticipated crisis may not be responded to by advanced planning. In the immediate aftermath of Tiananmen, Mike Oksenberg wrote a frank and insightful "Confession of a China Watcher."²⁴ *Newsweek* highlighted the article, "Why no one predicted the bloodshed in Beijing." The first of Mike's four reasons hit the mark: the leadership was more divided than we knew so it could not respond quickly and coherently to the crisis. Whatever faults may lie in the excerpted *Tiananmen Papers*, they plausibly track the cumulative impact of widespread demonstrations from late April to early June 1989.²⁵ Students blocked trains between Tianjin and Shanghai and on the main north-south bridge at Wuhan. Minority areas reported large riotous crowds. Nothing on this scale had ever confronted the regime. Martial law was declared, but to no avail. Panic and paranoia radically transformed *Zhongnanhai* discussions. Worldwide press and television coverage resurrected the hoary refrain: Western imperialism is trying to overthrow the regime. The resulting tragedy engulfed innocent bystanders as well as demonstrators. The ubiquitous photograph of a lone protestor confronting tanks continues to haunt our image of China. But no one could have predicted what the leadership itself did not foresee.

Mike's other reasons for the bloodshed merit further consideration. Political reform at the top was superficial so under stress factional strife erupted anew. An unbridgeable gap separated the

24. Michel Oksenberg, "Confession of a China Watcher," *Newsweek* (June 19, 1989).

25. *The Tiananmen Papers*, compiled by Zhang Liang, edited by Andrew J. Nathan and Perry Link, (New York: Public Affairs, 2001).

elderly leaders from the youth with octogenarians determined to defend their life's work. And finally, Chinese politics were transformed radically by global telecommunications. History does not repeat in full, but analogies may be suggestive. Today corruption reportedly is seen by the leadership as the worst threat to its survival. The Falun Gong movement ranks second in regime perceptions. Apparently it permeates society at many levels. Neither of these threats may be susceptible to forcible repression. Downsizing bankrupt industries adds to the flood of workers from countryside to city. Economic growth will slow as World Trade Organization (WTO) admission threatens agriculture and industry with lower tariffs against foreign competition. Massive unemployment feeds rising crime. A rapidly expanding internet informs an ever widening audience about local demonstrations by angry farmers and unpaid workers. Bombings by dissident Uyghurs intermittently reverberate through foreign media. Regime censorship cannot eliminate the spreading of real news and rumor.

Is China about to erupt or implode?²⁶ Almost certainly not. But does the leadership fear this and if so, is it agreed on how to cope? We cannot know with confidence. Yet the question needs to be addressed because it may be critical to U.S. interests. PLA deployments from 1949 to 1996 show the repeated use of force when domestic turmoil coincides with perceived external threat. In this context external threat perception may be greatly exaggerated through the old mantra, "trouble within, trouble without." Notable instances of this syndrome include China's entry into the Korean War, its sudden concentration of troops opposite Taiwan in 1962, its attack on India later that year, and the ambush of Soviet border

forces on the Ussuri River in 1969.²⁷ In each case the primary motivation was defensive in order to warn off or preempt perceived threat. The political imperative gives priority to activity as against passivity. Mao's concept of "active defense" prompts taking the offensive when deterrence or coercion fails. Further, the tendency to see worst-case political contingencies raises the chance of miscalculating the consequences of military action.

Here, as I suggested earlier, empathy may allow us to anticipate the use of force in a particular instance, provided that we understand how the leadership sees China at the rice roots level. For example, rising domestic instability could coincide with a heightened perception that Washington is determined to keep Taiwan separate. If so, the 1996 missile firings confrontation posture could return in a new guise. The initial cause may be internal but the regime's response may be external. Understanding this dynamic in Beijing's decision-making may help to guide our behavior so as to reduce tension and avert a crisis contrary to the interests of all three capitals, Beijing, Taipei, and Washington.

The historian finds endless instances of misunderstanding between governments and peoples. The policy maker hopes not to repeat past mistakes. The media can both confuse and clarify these problems. Some twenty-odd years ago a major network film on the Cultural Revolution was called "The Roots of Madness." The title revived one recurring image of China. Another network called its review of different images, from the Korean War to the Nixon visit, "Misunderstanding China." At the half-hour break for commercials, a mellifluous voice reassured us, "Misunderstanding China will continue."

26. See David Shambaugh, ed., *Is China Unstable?* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2000).

27. Whiting, *Chinese Calculus*, op.cit., chs. 7-8, pp. 170-249.

Of course it will. But it can lessen if we revive the holistic approach of area studies that integrate anthropology, sociology, history, economics, and political science. Social science disciplines increasingly dismiss knowledge of one country as insufficient for quantitative methodology that require much more data for comparative study. Publication, hiring, and promotion are dependent on statistical analysis. This deters lifetime immersion in China, Japan, or Russia. International relations studies run the double hazard of simplistic quantifying history and divorcing foreign policy from domestic politics.

Last but not least, demonizing or sanctifying countries must be resisted. Politicizing analysis can deepen the "scratches on our minds" into

permanent scars of "hate" or "love." Harry Harding's superb study, *A Fragile Relationship*, warns, "To cling to these familiar caricatures of China—as ally or adversary, as willing student or as ideological antagonist—will merely doom the United States to repeat the cycles of euphoria and disillusionment that have been so costly in the past."²⁸ No society warrants excessive emotion, not even in Washington.

Fortunately there is an entire generation of new China specialists growing throughout academia and the U.S. government. I wish them well on their struggle to understand the world's most populous country. The celebrated journey of ten thousand *li* is never finished. But going part way has been fun and never boring!

28. Harry Harding, *A Fragile Relationship: The United States and China Since 1972* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1992), p. 361.

