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US FOREIGN POLICY: DOMESTIC PLURALISM AND THE SEARCH FOR A GRAND STRATEGY FOR CHINA

STEFAN ANDREW FERGUS

**Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in International Relations**

**School of Government & International Affairs
University of Durham**

2011

ABSTRACT

While each of the dominant theories of International Relations offers segmented contributions to contemporary foreign policy analysis – and consequently contradictory prescriptions for US-China policy – none of them simultaneously encapsulate the overarching historical trends in US foreign policy-making and the contemporary dynamics of foreign policy construction. This thesis, therefore, offers a historical account of the trends and traditions of US foreign policy through the lens of grand strategy; and follows this with an in-depth analysis of the post-Cold War era and the forces that seek to exert influence over the decision- and policy-making process. This aspect of the thesis concentrates on the three main sectors that battle for and claim policy-making dominance: the media; special interests and lobbies; and the executive branch itself. A proper understanding of how these three sectors interact is essential for understanding any underlying construction of US foreign policy, and in particular the struggle to marshal a contemporary grand strategy for China.

From the *Federalist Papers*, to “Hearst’s War” in 1898, to the CNN Effect and controversies over press coverage of the Iraq War, the media has been an ever-present actor in US foreign relations; and yet its actual level of influence is difficult to ascertain. Like the media, the role of special interests has been a constant in US foreign policy and politics as a whole. Far from being the ‘conspiracy’ of popular imagination, lobbies and special interests have, at times, helped guide foreign policy – because they advocate popular policy positions, or because they are able to exploit disengaged policy elites. A final chapter analyses the importance of the president and other executive offices in the making of policy, building on the previous two chapters to present the case for an engaged president. Each of these chapters uses the problem of developing a grand strategy for China to examine and define a pluralist approach to contemporary US foreign policy-making. This study will conclude by locating the Obama administration’s early foreign policies and international experiences – again focusing on China – within this framework, and offer suggestions for how future policy issues could be surmounted through proper process.

DECLARATION

No material in this thesis has been previously submitted for a degree at this or any other University.

The work is solely that of the author, Stefan Andrew Fergus, under the supervision of Doctor David Kerr.

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(In Order of Appearance)*

Stewart Fergus, Emma Newrick & Alyssa Mackenzie

Without your help and support, I couldn't have done this

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INTRODUCTION

CHINA AND AMERICAN GRAND STRATEGY

American foreign policy officials, scholars, and journalists have grown comfortable with the notion of US foreign policy pursuing a 'Grand Strategy', a unified theory and/or approach that can be followed when constructing America's relations with the world at large. For much of its history, the United States has been able to follow a form of grand strategy, as global affairs and the international structure allowed for clear divisions and categorisation of states and actors, and how best to deal with them. The Cold War, in particular, allowed for a relatively easy construction of a grand strategy, based on ideological opposition to Communism and easy categorisation of allies and 'enemies' or 'competitors'. With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the emergence of globalisation and regionalism, a single grand strategy has remained elusive, as the proliferation of urgent or important issues has given rise to a concurrent proliferation of actors in America attempting to influence the foreign policy decision-making process. With a pluralisation of process, it is perhaps correct to argue that there has been a pluralisation of core (if not grand) strategies, each dealing with key issues and nations in foreign policy.

One of the main complicating factors about American foreign policy is that it evolves not just from the world-view of statesmen and diplomatic craft, but out of the US political process; from what the country wants, or at least what key actors believe it should want. As far back as the 1970s, scholars were arguing that the domestic underpinnings of US foreign policy were sorely in need of fresh consideration. The widely-sensed failure of US foreign policy during the 1960s spurred non-traditional governmental institutions and broader segments of the public to try to share policy control with the Executive.

In addition, disenchantment with the notion of a 'bipartisan consensus' (which is sometimes argued to have been deployed to choke off debate) also explains congressional and public readiness to challenge the President and his advisors on foreign policy. Writing in 1974, Rosenfeld explained how "Serious discussion of our government's role in the world now begins and ends with the government's role at home," and that foreign policy decision-making had become ever-more influenced by the question, "What state of domestic affairs do we wish to preserve or establish by our international policy?" Rosenfeld posited that, as the interrelatedness of foreign and domestic policy deepens (or, as pluralisation expands), one can expect that foreign-policy debates would place less emphasis on whether a particular policy or strategy responds to a 'vital national interest', and instead place more emphasis on what domestic interests, interest groups and values are served.¹ Many argue that this is most certainly the case today when, since the end of the Cold War and the enhanced pluralisation of the foreign policy-making process, an ever-increasing number of parochial interests are clamouring to be heard.

There has been much literature and analysis produced on the influence of the media, special interests, and the Executive Branch of government on policy making, on both domestic and foreign policy. There remains, however, little consensus as to the levels of influence enjoyed by these three sectors. This is a gap in the literature the thesis aims to help fill. Some argue that the centrality of the President and governmental organisations is paramount, disregarding the media and lobbies as so much white noise. Others argue that, in certain times of crisis, the media's influence can be substantial, as it can move much quicker and more freely than government organisations into zones of conflict and tension. Lobbies, with their specialist and extensive knowledge in issues dear to their political hearts, can provide necessary information for a government short on manpower (a role the media can also provide), but bring with them a zeal that can theoretically push policy proposals in certain directions. This thesis, therefore, seeks to fill some of the gap that remains in the study of American

¹ Rosenfeld (Jan.1974), pp.263-266

pluralism; offering an original take on the study of domestic pluralism by looking at all three sectors and how they relate to and interact with each other.

Zbigniew Brzezinski has identified three domestic impediments to 'proper' and executive-led foreign policy, which complicate presidential efforts to gain public support for a rational foreign policy "attuned to the complexity of the global dilemmas facing the United States."² The first is the fact that foreign policy lobbies have, through increased access to Congress, become more influential in American politics. These lobbies, especially those financially well-endowed, have promoted legislative intervention in foreign policy-making, be it military or, more successfully, economic. To cite Rosenfeld once more, foreign policy has become "domesticated" and "forced to go over the same political hurdles and to submit to the same political processes that are for the domestic course."³ More than ever, Brzezinski argues, "Congress not only actively opposes foreign policy decisions but even imposes some on the president". Congressional intervention such as this, undoubtedly promoted by lobbies, is "a serious handicap in shaping a foreign policy meant to be responsive to the ever-changing realities of global politics", and makes it increasingly difficult to ensure that American interests are being served.⁴

Brzezinski's second obstacle is the "deepening ideological cleavage" in American politics, which is "reducing the prospects for effective bipartisanship in foreign policy." The resulting polarization "encourages the infusion of demagoguery into policy conflicts", and "poisons the public discourse." The role of the media, therefore, becomes more important, as the polarisation of domestic and foreign policy discourse also informs reporting in both print and broadcast media, with clear ideological biases freely (some might say gleefully) displayed. "Still worse, personal vilification and hateful, as well as potentially violent, rhetoric are becoming widespread in that realm of political debate that is subject to neither fact checking nor libel laws: the blogosphere."⁵

² Brzezinski (Jan/Feb 2010), p.28

³ Rosenfeld (Jan.1974), p.267

⁴ Brzezinski (Jan/Feb 2010), pp.28-29

⁵ Brzezinski (Jan/Feb 2010), p.29

The final obstacle is that of America's uninformed public. Of the large democratic countries, the United States has one of the "least informed publics when it comes to global affairs", despite having what can only be described as a vast and vibrant 'news' media. Brzezinski attributes poor levels of knowledge to the "accelerating decline in the circulation of newspapers" and the "trivialization of once genuinely informative television reporting". One can connect this domestic obstacle with the ideological cleavage mentioned above, as remaining print publications (but also broadcast media) attempt to carve out niches in such a polarized political and media market. In conjunction, these amount to a decrease in availability of reliable and timely news about critical global issues. In this context, "demagogically formulated solutions tend to become more appealing, especially in critical moments."⁶

It is in this context of deepening pluralisation around the foreign policy process and widening in the range and complexity of different 'core strategies' that we need to locate the evolving US-China relationship. The relationship stands apart from all others. Over time, but especially since China's economic opening in the 1980s, the United States and China have become inextricably linked economically and increasingly at odds politically. The state of economics between the two nations has been described as a "superfusion"⁷ that has even given birth to a new economic term, "Chimerica".⁸ The US-China relationship has shown "enormous change over time, with patterns of confrontation, conflict, and suspicion much more prevalent than patterns of accommodation and cooperation." The bilateral relationship has shown some remarkable improvements over the past forty years, as both American and Chinese leaders have "pursued practical benefits through pragmatic means." However, these relational improvements are often "incomplete, thin, and dependent on changeable circumstances at home and abroad", and therefore short-lived, as a result of salient differences between the two governments when it comes to critical issues of security, economics, and also values.⁹

⁶ Brzezinski (Jan/Feb 2010), pp.29-30

⁷ Karabell (2009)

⁸ Fergusson (2008), pp.333-341

⁹ Sutter (2010), pp.2-3

After 1989, China tied its fortunes to the US, and many American companies (particularly manufacturing and services corporations) tied theirs to China. This inadvertently led the US governmental balance sheet to become more reliant on China, as well as making China more vulnerable to the global economic systems than authorities in Beijing intended, or perhaps fully realized: “In the United States, there was complacency that risk had been banished. In China, there was complacency that the domestic economy was still insulated from the global.” The financial crisis of 2008 would expose the fallacy of these assumptions.¹⁰

Since the Tiananmen Square Massacre, the Sino-American relationship has remained one of “wary distrust that occasionally deteriorates into enmity.” Accusations from 1989 have neither been forgiven nor forgotten, and their influence remains evident in both American and Chinese policy and media coverage.¹¹ Robert Suettinger argues that, “after Tiananmen, the bilateral relationship lost its insulation from domestic politics.”¹² However, as will be explained through the course of this thesis, US-China policy was never fully insulated from domestic politics in the first place, as economic forces and other special interests have jockeyed for influence over how and when the United States interacted with China, and in what form that interaction took.

The events at Tiananmen “demonstrated the enormous gap between the values held dear by the American people and those that motivated the Chinese government.” At the same time, China’s “great capacity for jeopardising American interests around the world” made it essential to develop a good working relationship, to accept differences, work together, and avoid conflict. Clinton’s “comprehensive engagement” strategy was remarkably similar to George H.W. Bush’s, of which he had been so contemptuous during the 1992 campaign.¹³ George W. Bush’s approach to China would eventually mirror that of his two predecessors, as the majority of his administration’s attention would be consumed by events in the Middle East. By all reckonings, the Obama

¹⁰ Karabell (2009), p.284

¹¹ Suettinger (2003), pp.2-3

¹² Suettinger (2003), p.5

¹³ Cohen (2010), p.257

administration is pursuing the same (or similar) strategy. It is for this reason that the chapters in part two of this thesis focus on post-1989 US-China policy.

Zachary Karabell, who coined the term “superfusion”, has described the US-China relationship as “every bit the special relationship that once existed between the United States and Great Britain before World War II”; however, it faces considerable obstacles. The challenge facing the relationship is whether “Chimerica will be allowed to grow and evolve or whether it will be stifled”: As strong as support for fusion between the US and China has been in the past, “the fact that it has taken place beneath the collective radar has been beneficial.” The greater the awareness people in both China and the US have of the countries’ interconnectedness, the greater the discomfort.¹⁴

This discomfort has various roots – not least the erosion of sovereignty perceived in China’s vast holdings of US government debt, and the potential damage that could be done to the US economy, should Beijing decide to divest itself of these bonds. The stark differences between US and Chinese impressions of what constitutes human rights and proper international comportment (for example, China’s willingness to deal with unsavoury regimes to meet its ever-growing demand for resources and markets, despite the frequent hypocrisy inherent in America’s opposition) could also be a source of discomfort for increased interdependence between the two nations. During the trade tension with Japan in the 1980-90s, many Americans came to view Free Trade as a loss for them and their way of life, because it was not reciprocal. Therefore, even before the 2008 credit meltdown, Americans as a whole had become “more ambivalent about free trade, more insecure about their place in the world, and more antagonistic toward China.” This was not solely seen as a foreign-born problem, however, as the reaction was also partly against the excesses of free-market ideology, the erosion of the middle class, the incredible increase in elite wealth, as well as a perceived loss of sovereignty due to superfusion.¹⁵

There has always been an “inherent tension” between what is best for markets and what is best for states, and much of modern history has been the

¹⁴ Karabell (2009), p.287

¹⁵ Karabell (2009), p.292

story of this tension. States have usually attempted to control commerce for their own self-interest, and the United States is certainly no exception. One reason America was a such a passionate advocate for free trade in the twentieth century is because “its interests were well served by a world that was more open to its capital and its companies, given that both... were in a dominant position and usually had the upper hand wherever they had free reign.” For this reason, many on both the right and left of America’s political spectrum drew little distinction between U.S. military power and economic power: “both served to enhance the dominance of the United States globally.”¹⁶

Napoleon Bonaparte is reported to have cautioned, “Let China sleep, for when she wakes, she will shake the world”.¹⁷ It would appear that American political rhetoric may have had this quotation in mind, recently, as China is frequently identified as a rising, imminent threat. However, despite the aggressive, sometimes jingoistic rhetoric of American leaders, US-China relations have remained predominantly steady and businesslike. Why is this? There appears to be a central conflict between what American media and politicians say about China, and the policies that are actually in force. What forces exert themselves on the decision-making process, and how does this rhetoric impact governmental policy and official rhetoric? Is fiery, anti-Chinese rhetoric heartfelt, or is it a cynical political ploy to play to the electorate’s fears? Answering these questions can help scholars and policy-makers sift through China reporting, and come to sensible and rational conclusions about US-China relations and how best to approach them.

Ever since the attacks of 9/11, American foreign policy has been particularly focused on the struggle against global terrorism. Terrorism will continue to challenge societies everywhere for some time, but the relationship between China and the United States is the crucial issue for the 21st Century.¹⁸ As the two largest economies in the world, with the two strongest and largest militaries, it is inevitable that relations between the two nations will help shape international relations for decades to come. Cooperation will likely benefit the

¹⁶ Karabell (2009), p.293

¹⁷ Bonaparte, quoted in Kynge (2007), p.7 – The quote is considered by many to be apocryphal.

¹⁸ Karabell (2009), p.3

international system, just as conflict could have repercussions or ripple-effects in all regions of the globe. In addition, American self-consciousness will be an important factor in coming years, as it attempts to get its house in order after the 2008 financial crisis and the blow to its economic legitimacy. That America is distracted from issues regarding China at present is not new, as will be shown in the history chapters of Part One of the thesis.

In order to understand the current and potential future course of US-China relations, one must be able to understand and appreciate the shared history of the two nations. In this regard, certain trends and traditions will become visible, as potential handles for assessing current relations in the context of shared history and relations.

AIMS AND CORE HYPOTHESIS

The aim of this thesis, therefore, is to discuss the development of US 'grand strategy' towards China against the background of domestic pluralism: that is, against the background of competing domestic pressures. The argument advanced is that US-China policy has always, to some degree or another, been influenced by various competing special interest groups. However, since 1989, US-China policy has become increasingly 'pluralised' and 'domesticated', as changes in the American political environment and system have subjected policy-making in general to the increasing influence of lobbies, media, and Congress. This increased domestication of US-China policy has had a strong impact on China policy and also how China policy is presented (by both the media and politicians).

None of the dominant epistemologies fully capture the essence of United States foreign policy, particularly US-China policy. This thesis will advance the political concepts of pluralism and grand strategy in order to attempt a more complete explanation of US foreign and China policy-making. Positivist social science is focussed on testing. Therefore, certain hypotheses need to be stated and

subsequently tested over the course of the thesis. Research questions designed to allow hypotheses to be tested will be stated, below.

As state-centrality has declined in US foreign policy-making, so too have domestic interests become more central. The expansive, pluralist nature of American domestic politics leads to the belief that domestic interests can have a considerable impact on US foreign policy, or put another way, in foreign policy “agency lies everywhere”.¹⁹ This thesis will test this hypothesis, to ascertain whether or not this is accurate for US-China relations.

There remain some core assumptions, trends and traditions that continue to inform US foreign policy in ‘normal’ relations (that is, excepting for international or bilateral shocks or crises), with which domestic sources of influence must contend, and which they can rarely circumvent. For this reason, this thesis will identify the trends evident in the history of US-China relations, and ascertain whether they continue to exert influence over the conduct of the bilateral relationship. What is unclear is how much domestic political considerations can influence the policy-making process, and also what types of influence domestic actors can have. In recent history, according to many scholars, it has become increasingly the case that, “Less and less does foreign policy evolve from a professed and coherent world view. More and more does it reflect a test of strength among competing domestic forces.”²⁰ Inderjeet Parmar agrees, stating that, “the line demarcating private and public spheres in modern life has become indistinct”, a result of closer connections developed between the state and various organised interests – connections that have resulted in a series of new domestic and international political, economic and financial institutions. It is my belief that domestic pluralism, which often sees the state as a “relatively neutral umpire brokering the demands of competing interest groups... particular social class, or... overshadowed by powerful private interests”,²¹ is in the case of the United States, a valid theory for inclusion in the study of its foreign policy – it cannot stand on its own, but it can inform a pluralist theory of American foreign policy and international relations.

¹⁹ Hill (2003), p.3

²⁰ Rosenfeld (Jan.1974), p.267

²¹ Parmar (Apr.1995), pp.73-74

If the American foreign policy process is heavily or even partially influenced by domestic interests, is the realist claim that elites dominate the decision process and therefore foreign policy-making wrong? This question is of particular interest to this study, and poses a number of further questions about the American foreign policy-making process. If members of the foreign policy elite are disinterested in or disengaged from policy-making, or lacking in expertise – be they members of the Executive Office or members of Congress – do non-governmental interests rise to the task, taking over the responsibility of producing foreign, and particularly China-policy? How much of an impact does elite disinterest, disengagement or lack of expertise have on the process, and what sort of alternative mechanisms can arise in such instances? Does elite disinterest prevent policy coherence, or outright policy construction? If this is the case, will policies be suboptimal, based on incomplete or popular sources of information and intelligence (such as the media or non-governmental organisations and interests)? The truth, as will be explained in this thesis, is that foreign policies are not the product of “pristine calculations of national interests by trained experts with all the facts at their disposal”. Rather, American foreign policy is often the result of “profoundly political processes in which differing, sometimes competing, domestic interests, bureaucracies, and individuals affect the outcome.”²² In addition, this thesis advances a neutral position on the pluralisation of American foreign policy-making, as the role of the media and special interests is neither uniformly negative nor positive.

Despite the important role the media and lobbies play in the formulation of US foreign policy, it remains the contention of this thesis that the Executive, and the President in particular, remain central to actual policy-making and strategising. As Colin Dueck has posited, presidents act as focal points for their party when it comes to foreign policy, and the latitude they enjoy when making foreign policy ensures their central role in the process. Dueck argues that after all external forces are taken into consideration, “the triumph of one foreign policy tendency over another is crucially shaped by the president’s own

²² Suettinger (2003), pp.5-6

choices,” and that “foreign policy is what the president says it is.”²³ As will be explained over the course of this thesis – particularly in Part Two – Dueck is not strictly speaking wrong, as the personal beliefs and biases of a president and his immediate staff are, indeed, important to understanding which policies he is likely to favour. However, Dueck attributes too much power to the president. This is not an unusual mistake to make. The president is not omnipotent, and foreign policy is not made in an immaculate vacuum, deaf to the clamouring voices of public discourse. Rather, policy issues and proposals are filtered through various levels of government that are open to external pressures to varying degrees.

External forces that are presumed to push presidential decision-making one way or another – namely, economic interests, political considerations, international pressures, and public intellectuals – are important, but many dismiss them too readily. Dueck’s contention is that these influences are more important when considering domestic politics, and should not be given too much credit when it comes to foreign policy because, “foreign policy is not made in exactly the same way as domestic policy in the United States.”²⁴ This is irrefutable, but what Dueck and others of his ilk fail to realise is that, following the end of the Cold War, foreign policy has gradually lost its traditional isolation from domestic political considerations and discourse that grew out of the unifying security needs of that era. As will be shown in the historical chapter, in the post-Cold War world, we are seeing a reversion to form in US foreign policy-making, exaggerated and exacerbated by technological advances in the media.

With the lack of a central thread or focus since the end of the Cold War, and the relative decline of the USA as new powers rise – India, China in particular, and also a resurgent Russia – it is both timely and necessary to understand the processes by which eventual foreign policy decisions percolate through the American system before reaching the Oval Office, becoming strategy, and then being implemented. Therefore, this thesis, aims to test the

²³ Dueck (2010), pp.3-7

²⁴ Dueck (2010), p.6

hypothesis that the United States has had much more difficulty in defining a consistent and consensual strategy for China than for any other relationship.

The core research question is not, in this case *why*; rather, it is more complex. Specifically, what is it about the different social, economic, political and constitutional forces that come together around foreign policy-making in the United States that makes the China policy case particularly difficult to be consistent and consensual about? Why is China not one thing to all (as with the USSR), but rather different things to different forces, and arguably at different times?

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This thesis is based around three specific research questions, one empirical and two analytical. The empirical question seeks to develop our understanding of the pluralistic forces, intellectual and social, that shape the foreign policy process in the United States. The following two questions employ the problem of establishing a grand strategy for China as a way of exploring contemporary pluralism. Therefore the questions are:

1. What are the dominant formative processes that constitute US Foreign Policy in terms of intellectual trends and traditions and the multiple social and constitutional institutions that translate ideas about America's role in the world into a foreign policy posture that is recognisably a 'grand strategy'?
2. What does a case study approach that balances the conventional concern for executive decision-making in foreign policy with analysis of the role of social institutions, like the media and special interest groups, have to tell us about the pluralised nature of the foreign policy process in contemporary America?
3. Why has China remained such a persistent problem for the US tradition of deploying grand strategy? Is this because China is a difficult case; or

because, unlike the Soviet Union or the European Union as evident negative or positive cases, China divides rather than unites the pluralist interests and perspectives of US foreign policy pluralism?

The research approach adopted to answer these questions is a conventional qualitative one, where I will follow King, Keohane, and Verba's definition of qualitative research as focusing on

“one or a small number of cases, to use in-depth interviews or intensive analyses of historical materials, to be discursive in method, and to be concerned with a rounded or comprehensive account of some event or unit.”²⁵

In the case of this thesis, this approach leads to the following framework of analysis: an extensive survey of historical materials will provide the information and evidence to identify key issues areas and construct a number of smaller case studies across the three main empirical chapters (Chapters Four to Six), and one single chapter-length case study. These case studies offer a number of perspectives from which to approach these key issues, and as a result the thesis offers an in-depth, comprehensive account of US-China relations and the impact of domestic pluralism.

THESIS STRUCTURE

The fusion of America's and China's economies, the two most powerful in the world today, is “upending conventional wisdom and reshaping the global system.”²⁶ Emerging from the financial crisis of 2008, how the United States and China adapt to the changing system will dictate largely the future course of International Relations and global economics. Just as it is important to look to the future, it is also valuable to look at history to understand the evolution of both US foreign policy as a whole, and US-China policy in particular. This thesis will examine the US-China policy-making-process, how trends and traditions

²⁵ King, Keohane & Verba (1994), p.4

²⁶ Karabell (2009), p.1

influence policy, and how domestic actors in America interact with each other and, more importantly, with government officials, in the US's increasingly pluralistic foreign policy-making system. It is for this reason that the chapter topics have been chosen, as follows.

Part One of the thesis (Chapters Two and Three) addresses the theory and history of US Foreign Policy and China policy. **Chapter Two** addresses and outlines key theories of foreign policy (realism, liberalism, and constructivism) and how they relate to US foreign policy in particular. The chapter then examines and explains the idea of 'Grand Strategy'. The second half of the chapter gives a detailed account and analysis of pluralist theory (with specific sections dealing with the media and Congress), and finishes with a methodology to advance a pluralist approach. **Chapter Three** provides a historical overview of US-China policy from the beginning of the Republic until the end of President George W. Bush's administration (2008). It locates US-China relations in the grand sweep of American foreign policy, highlighting key trends and traditions that have become inherent in US foreign policy.

After the outline of the history of US foreign policy in **Part One**, the three chapters that comprise **Part Two** of the thesis (Chapters Four, Five, and Six) provide a closer analysis of the US foreign policy decision-making process, and the actors operating within it. The chapters utilise key issue areas to ascertain how or why China policy is constructed as it is. Each chapter addresses first US foreign policy as a whole, before focusing on US-China relations, and addresses issues of economics, security and normative values. **Chapter Four** addresses the American Media and foreign policy, and is followed by an in-depth case study of the American media's treatment of a key turning-point event from US-China relations: the Tiananmen Square incident (this is identified as Chapter Four-II). **Chapter Five** addresses the role and influence of special interests and lobbies in the US foreign policy-making process, and contains three case studies of varying length on the role of business and special interests and China policy. **Chapter Six** brings the analysis into the Executive Branch and government institutions, assessing how presidential appointees and government bureaucracies account for and adjust to the increasing pluralism in US foreign

policy (and politics as a whole). The influence and part played by Congress is discussed throughout the thesis, as to separate it would be to undermine the fact that each sector is both impacted by and has an impact on the US Congress. Academics' and think tanks' role in the foreign policy-making process is, likewise, discussed across these chapters.

Chapter Seven, the concluding chapter of the thesis, draws together and synthesises the conclusions from all previous chapters to answer explicitly the research questions, address the hypothesis presented in this chapter, and also will attempt to ascertain the key domestic influences on US foreign and China policy, and the impact of political pluralisation on the policy-making process.

CHAPTER II

AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY, THEORY & PLURALISM

The study and formation of American foreign policy presents a two-level problem of analysis: Grand Strategy is a paradigmatic issue, while pluralism operates on a constitutional level. How, therefore, could paradigmatic international relations theory interact with pluralism? According to Daniel Drezner, a grand strategy “consists of a clear articulation of national interests married to a set of operational plans for advancing them.” Sometimes, grand strategies are articulated in advance of policy. At other times, strategic narratives are offered as “coherent explanations connecting past policies with future ones”. Whether articulated before or after policy implementation, a well-articulated grand strategy can offer an “interpretive framework” through which everybody, including foreign policy officials, can understand an administration’s behaviour.¹ Pluralism is a method through which we can see how certain paradigms are reached for foreign policy: how domestic actors and groups work with or against others in their attempts to influence foreign policy to further their own agendas, and also perhaps how articulated or perceived Grand Strategies are interpreted by domestic actors.

Foreign Policy Analysis emerged in the 1950s, a reaction to both the Cold War and its associated crises and the realist preoccupation with explaining scientifically external state behaviour.² This environment made it crucial for international relations specialists and scholars to make sense of state behaviour and interaction. Following the end of the Cold War, and the implosion of the Soviet Union, it became apparent to scholars that existing theories might not be

¹ Drezner (Jul/Aug.2011), pp.58-59

² White (2003), pp.1-2

as relevant in the new environment, in part because they had failed to predict the decline of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War. According to David Kerr, analysts began referring to a state of “paradigms lost”, as a crisis of confidence emerged within the IR community, as scholars questioned the theoretical ability “to assert its intellectual grasp over the dynamic, complex and interdependent world order”.³

The study of foreign policy has remained problematic, as differing theories and assumptions are made on the proper way to pursue FPA by IR scholars. As Walter Carlsnaes suggests, while there is “relatively stable consensus” on what constitutes the subject matter of foreign policy analysis, there are “deep-rooted disagreements within the field regarding both its conceptual boundaries and the most appropriate manner to analyse its substance”.⁴ This lack of consensus on how to approach foreign policy analysis has caused ruptures between and within different schools of thought, robbing FPA of a “sub-disciplinary identity”. Indeed, Carlsnaes continues by referring to the notion that the attitude towards foreign policy analysis is, to paraphrase Mao Zedong, one of ‘allowing a hundred flowers to bloom’, with reference to the number of theories and sub-divisions that have come to populate the foreign policy analysis sphere.⁵ Carlsnaes points out that in the 1970s, there was an “unquestioned assumption that the subject matter of foreign policy belongs naturally to the empirical domain of public policy rather than international relations”, and it is for this reason that most treatises on foreign policy and FPA in textbooks could be found within policy chapters or inserted alongside or within chapters on diplomacy.⁶

Foreign policy, therefore, inhabits a strange, elusive position in the world of international relations theory. It is a “kind of free-floating enterprise, logically unconnected to, and disconnected from, the main theories of international relations”.⁷ Often, foreign policy is dismissed as a way of looking at system level and unit level theories. The ‘free-floating’ nature of the study does allow for

³ Kerr (2007), p.2

⁴ Carlsnaes (2004), p.331

⁵ Carlsnaes (2004), p.334

⁶ Carlsnaes (2004), p.331

⁷ Houghton (2007), p.24

great freedom in the study of foreign policy, offering near-endless opportunities and scope for analysis.

There remains the question of what foreign policy actually *is*, and how to deal with its study. Carlsnaes defines foreign policy as consisting of:

“those actions which, expressed in the form of explicitly stated goals, commitments and/or directives, and pursued by governmental representatives acting on behalf of their sovereign communities, are directed toward objectives, conditions and actors – both governmental and non-governmental – which they want to affect and which lie beyond their territorial legitimacy”⁸

Christopher Hill proposes two slightly different definitions of foreign policy:

“Broadly interpreted, foreign policy is about the fundamental issue of how organised groups, at least in part strangers to each other, interrelate. The nature of these groups and their interrelations is naturally in evolution.”⁹

And, even more succinctly: “The sum of official external relations conducted by an independent actor (usually a state) in international relations.”¹⁰

In terms of what foreign policy analysis should focus on, Hill outlines the two extremes of approach. The first, which is a study purely of what diplomats say to each other, he claims, would “leave out many of the most interesting aspects of international politics”. The second is a broader study that “include[s] almost everything that emanates from every actor on the world scene”. Hill rightly believes that the best solution is to find a balance between these two approaches, but that definitions of foreign policy are difficult to conceptualise given the changing nature of the field: “Now that foreign offices do not monopolise external relations” there is a need to decide on which personnel are

⁸ Carlsnaes (2004), p.335

⁹ Hill (2003), p.xvii

¹⁰ Hill (2003), p.3

to be counted as foreign policy decision-makers,¹¹ and essential to understand what informs their decisions.

One approach to the question of foreign policy formulation believes that “agency lies elsewhere”, with a proliferation of actors in the process, which wield increasing and varying amounts of influence on a nation’s international affairs. Other theorists have chosen “to ignore agency altogether... concentrating their attention on structures”.¹²

Given the nature of the United States policy-making system and political environment, this thesis adheres to the former approach, that agency is as important as structure, and that domestic actors in the United States are important in the American conception and creation of foreign policy, and that they are able to exert influence on foreign policy (although, as will be explained later, measuring influence is extremely difficult). To speak of ‘US foreign policy’, “is really to speak of a number of foreign policy decisions determined by competition among a number of actors,”¹³ because “the decision is not made by some abstract entity called ‘the United States’ but by some combination of actors within the foreign policy establishment.”¹⁴ It is this belief in the importance of domestic actors that requires a pluralist approach to the study of American foreign policy. “Competition, coalition building, and compromise will often result in a decision that is then announced in the name of the United States”. The reality is that a ‘state decision’ may be the result of lobbying carried out by a multitude of nongovernmental actors (including, for example, multinational corporations or interest groups), or it may be influenced by something as amorphous and immeasurable as public opinion or media coverage.

A nation’s foreign policies “are not the product of pristine calculations of national interests by trained experts with all the facts at their disposal”, as realists might have us believe. Rather, foreign policies are “the result of a profoundly political process in which differing, sometimes competing, domestic

¹¹ Hill (2003), p.3

¹² Hill (2003), p.3

¹³ Viotti & Kauppi (1999), p.8

¹⁴ Viotti & Kauppi (1999), p.199

interests, bureaucracies, and individuals affect the outcome.”¹⁵ While some policymakers may well be experts (Richard Nixon, Henry Kissinger, Sandy Berger, Brent Scowcroft, George H.W. Bush, to name but a handful), “they are often working with incorrect or incomplete information, as well as inaccurate assumptions and cultural prejudices.”¹⁶

This thesis looks at decision- and policy-making, the “very human process by which ideas, beliefs, strategies, theories, prejudices, pressures, trade-offs, and choices become identifiable foreign policies”. A “complex and confusing process, often misunderstood, especially by those who look only at the policy outcomes,”¹⁷ it can help understand why certain policies are pursued, who might influence them, and how they are conceived. As no single theory of international relations can account for or explain US foreign policy-making, a pluralist approach will be taken – an explanation of pluralism follows immediately after the brief descriptions of key international relations theories that are traditionally used to discuss American foreign policy and grand strategy. By first briefly outlining what American foreign policies have been, in Chapter Three, the second and main part of the thesis will take a closer look at which actors and sectors of domestic political society try to exert influence on the foreign policy-making process, how they operate, and attempt to ascertain the level of their respective influence.

THEORIES OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS, AGENCY & STRUCTURE

American foreign policymakers may or may not identify themselves as “realists”, but many will nevertheless share some or many realist assumptions (possibly unstated), and therefore see international relations and foreign policy-making through a realist lens. Other policymakers may be liberal internationalists, neoliberal institutionalists, or constructivists, “even if such terms are foreign to them.” Whether or not policymakers consciously identify with an international

¹⁵ Suettinger (2003), pp.5-6

¹⁶ Suettinger (2003), p.5

¹⁷ Suettinger (2003), p.5

relations ideology, they “nevertheless tend to have internalised the set or sets of assumptions, material and ideational understandings, and theories offered by one or another of these camps.”¹⁸ Therefore, it is important to understand what these theories have to say about the conduct of international relations. This section will briefly outline realism, liberalism, and constructivism.

There is an ongoing and important debate in international relations, the Agent-Structure argument, which argues over the best way to conceptualise the relationship between the international system and (state) actors. Introduced by Alexander Wendt in 1987, the paradigm was framed thus:

“1) human beings and their organizations are purposeful actors whose actions help reproduce or transform the society in which they live; and 2) society is made up of social relationships, which structure the interactions between these purposeful actors”.¹⁹

It is within the discussion of this debate that FPA can become increasingly difficult, as well as diminished. The world of politics and international relations is populated by agents – for example, states, human individuals, corporations – and the structures within which they operate. These structures can be either international organisations, treaties, or global regions (for example, East Asia). Agent-Structure theories can be split between those who preference the influence of agents, those that preference structures, and a third group that argues for the mutual influence of both agents and structures. The debate has been “the root cause of a number of deeply entrenched disputes, stretching from the late medieval differentiation between individual and the state to contemporary metatheoretical controversies within science, epistemology, and political philosophy”.²⁰

Waltz, considered a structural realist or neo-realist, argued that while states are obliged to look after themselves and regard other states as potential threats, they are not inherently aggressive. Rather, it is the nature of the

¹⁸ Viotti (2010), pp.153-154

¹⁹ Wendt (1987), pp.337-38

²⁰ Carlsnaes (1992), p.245

international system (or structure) that forces them to adjust their stance in the world in accordance with their perceptions of other states' power in relation to their own.²¹ What this does not take into account, however, is that different actors *within* states will view international events in different ways, and therefore make different decisions. This will prove to be a major hindrance to attempts to apply any of the traditional theoretical models to the formation of American foreign policy.

At the heart of the agent-structure debate, as Carlsnaes points out, lies "an increasingly wide-spread recognition that, instead of being antagonistic partners in a zero-sum relationship, human agents and social structures are in a fundamental sense inter-related entities, and hence that we cannot account fully for one without invoking the other", or in other words: "the properties of both agents and social structures are relevant to a proper understanding of social behaviour".²²

The theory most often utilised in foreign policy analysis is that of Realism. The realist image of foreign policy sees the State as the main, unitary and rational actor in foreign policy and international relations, seeking to maximise its national interest or objectives, usually starting from the emphasis on international security.²³ Put differently, realism argues that "politics, like society in general, is governed by objective laws that have their roots in human nature".²⁴ After the inter-war period, realism became the orthodoxy in academic writing, and during the Cold War period, it appeared "self-evident that states, and military force, were the main features of the international system".²⁵

From a realist state-centric stand-point, agents will pursue their national interests regardless of the system/structure in which they operate. As Morgenthau states, the absence of a world government in the international system forces states to pursue their national interests by increasing their power.

²¹ Brown & Ainley (2005), pp.42-43

²² Carlsnaes (1992), pp.245-6

²³ See, for example: Bull (1971), Keohane & Nye (1989), Morgenthau (1993), Machiavelli (1996), Thucydides (1999), and Hobbes (2002) – to name but a few key theorists and historians.

²⁴ Morgenthau (1993), p.4

²⁵ Hill (2003), p.6

Indeed, when national interests can only be pursued by power, the pursuit of power itself becomes a national interest, or in Morgenthau's terms, "statesmen think and act in terms of interest defined as power."²⁶

Philip Bobbitt agrees with realism's central premise that the national interest is key in understanding – as well as forming – foreign policy. Bobbitt argues that neither internal changes to strategy, nor changes to the international system will *cause* wars or conflict. Rather,

"Wars are fought over the usual mix of ambition and fear that has characterised state conflict from the time states began. The causes of epochal wars are no different from the causes of war generally."²⁷

In addition to this, the realist perspective holds that only government policy elites are of consequence in foreign policy-making. Jacobs and Shapiro suggest that the President "is the single source of decisive direction in American foreign policy making and the primary force for counteracting rampant fragmentation and division". It is the President who "lead[s] public opinion to unify elites", and a chief executive that can "mobilise public support behind [his] foreign policy ha[s] a powerful resource for imposing direction on the separate, uncoordinated actions of countless government institutions and elites." Realists require policy elites to make the distinction between a good foreign policy informed by intelligence and elite opinions, and a poor or sub-optimal foreign policy informed by public opinion. "Elites are uniquely qualified to make foreign policy because they possess substantial objective knowledge and capacity for complex and hard-headed reasoning about the realities of global power struggles," and are more likely to take into account the 'long-view' of international relations by not bowing to fleeting, emotional preferences of the public.²⁸ Morgenthau argues that to base foreign policy decisions on public opinion is to "sacrifice... good policy on the altar of public opinion... exchanging short-lived political advantage for the permanent interests of the country."²⁹

²⁶ Yee & Storey (2002), p.7

²⁷ Bobbitt (2002), pp.777-778

²⁸ Jacobs & Shapiro (Sep.1999), pp.594-595

²⁹ Morgenthau (1973), pp.146-148

In Morgenthau's realist tradition, "the pursuit of, and the struggle for, power in international politics is both reasonable and natural".³⁰ Morgenthau observed "that statesmen think and act in terms of interest defined as power, and the evidence of history bears that assumption out". Morgenthau argues that using this assumption "imposes intellectual discipline on the observer" of foreign policy processes and practitioners, bringing a rational order into the matter of politics and making a theoretical understanding of politics possible. Morgenthau suggests realism's superiority by pointing out that using a realist theory of international relations "will guard against two popular fallacies: the concern with motives and the concern with ideological preferences", because it allows for continuity – able to make "American, British, or Russian foreign policy appear as an intelligible, rational continuum, by and large consistent within itself, regardless of the different motives, preferences, and intellectual and moral qualities of successive statesmen", allowing for greater comparison between different states' policies.³¹ This thesis does not deny Morgenthau's assertion of power and the national interest's dominance in foreign policy. Where I will diverge from Morgenthau, rather, is how the national interest is *defined* in the United States.

Neoliberalism, which also recognises the primacy of the state in the international system, grew as a response to neorealism. Neoliberals also believe that states "behave like egoistic value maximisers", and that the international system is "essentially anarchic". Neoliberalism is a "structural, systemic and top-down view" of international relations.³²

Neoliberals differ from realists in their belief that international cooperation *is* possible in an anarchic international system between autonomous, rational states and institutions, even if they pursue their own interests. This is because the system, while in a state of anarchy, "can

³⁰ Yee & Storey (2002), p.6

³¹ Morgenthau (1993), p.5

³² Carlsnaes (1992), p.337

nevertheless be positively affected by the institutional provision of information and common rules in the form of functional regimes.”³³

Neoliberalism can work as a structural approach to foreign policy analysis at the sub-systemic level, focussing on the causal relationship between states and the agencies within them (and how agencies conform to the demands of the state). For neoliberals, individual decision-makers can be a focus of study; assessing how structural confines dictate how these individuals operate within the state or agency.³⁴ Equally, liberal theory emphasises the positive role public opinion can play in “providing guidance to state officials and producing good public policy, including foreign policy.”³⁵

Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye Jr, two leading neoliberals, refute the realist importance of egoistic national interest (in a contemporary context) as a primary driving force in international relations. Particularly, Keohane has disagreed with Mearsheimer’s statement that “institutions cannot get states to stop behaving as short-term maximizers”,³⁶ because, Keohane argues, neorealism does not account for the investments that states make in international organisations such as the European Union, NATO and the United Nations.³⁷ Keohane and Nye believe we are “presented [with] a world of complex interdependence, with states maintaining contacts at various levels and in various dimensions.” They believe that “the interdependence paradigm sees inter-state relations as disaggregated, international co-operation as feasible and actual, and the ‘national interest’ of realist theory as illusory.”³⁸

Keohane and Nye accurately point out that the line between domestic and international issues is blurring, with issues that bridge both categories (known by some as ‘intermestic’ issues) becoming central (for example, oil prices). Keohane and Nye argue that, in international politics, there are multiple channels through which states are connected, including informal governmental

³³ Carlsnaes (1992), p.337

³⁴ Carlsnaes (1992), p.337

³⁵ Viotti & Kauppi (1999), p.201-202

³⁶ Mearsheimer (1995), p.82

³⁷ Keohane & Martin (1995), p.47

³⁸ Keohane & Nye (1977), cited in Dumbrell (1990), p.13

ties, multinational corporations and also other organisations that operate in the international system (such as Non-Governmental Organisations), and that “The rise of integrated world markets for capital constitutes another dimension of contemporary interdependence.”³⁹ Keohane & Nye, in *Power and Interdependence* (1977), argued that increased interdependence, binding economic and political interests ever more tightly, could help promote peace and stability by limiting the use of force, the cost of which would become prohibitive; this would mean the role of the military as problem-solver between countries in which complex interdependence exists, would be reduced.

The constructivist theory of foreign policy holds that international relations are, to a considerable degree, shaped by subjective factors, “by the beliefs and ideas that people carry around in their heads and that cause them to interpret events and data in particular ways”.⁴⁰ The nature of relations and interactions between two states is not just the result of objective and material factors, such as comparative military power and the balance of bilateral trade. Constructivists believe that international relations are “socially constructed”.⁴¹

As a school of thought, constructivism is far from unified, and it is becoming less so as more literature is produced.⁴² There are, however, some uniformly-accepted elements to the school. Constructivist theory, like realist theory, accepts that the world of international relations is generally anarchic; constructivists, however, believe this to be the case for very different reasons. At a most general level, “constructivists assert that international politics tends to be competitive and violent, not because some immutable principles of human behaviour require that it be so but rather because, across the centuries, national leaders have tended to believe this to be the case.”⁴³ In other words, as Alexander Wendt says, “realism is a self-fulfilling prophecy.”⁴⁴

³⁹ Keohane & Nye (1977), cited in Dumbrell (1990), p.13

⁴⁰ Friedberg (2005), p.24

⁴¹ Friedberg (2005), p.34

⁴² Andrew Hurrell, “Introduction”, in Bull (2002), p.xi-xii

⁴³ Friedberg (2005), p.35

⁴⁴ Wendt (1992), p.140

A handicap of constructivism is that it is difficult to measure. Hedley Bull is deeply committed to the centrality of norms and institutions in international politics, and to the “notion that society is constituted through diverse political practices built around shared, inter-subjective understandings – that is, understandings that exist between and amongst actors”.⁴⁵ In a nod towards realist thought, Bull also believes that “brute material facts and cold power politics could act as a powerful check on both the aspirations of practitioners and the methods of the analyst”.⁴⁶ Constructivism studies the process by which international institutions and ideas are socially constructed over time, and how they influence nations’ interaction on the international stage. This is, of course, important and could suggest it is a better theory for the purposes of this thesis. However, domestic pluralism will be favoured over constructivism for the simple reason that this latter theory (detailed below) examines the role of *domestic* non-state actors operating in the policy-making system, which constructivism does not account for sufficiently.

Neoliberals and neo-realists, in the wake of the Cold War, offered influential structuralist approaches to the study of international relations and foreign policy, diminishing the importance of the state as actor within the international system.⁴⁷ Wendt (along with Kenneth Waltz) took a similar position, and therefore is “interested in international politics, not foreign policy”.⁴⁸ Such separation between international relations and the individual foreign policies that feed into them seems absurd, and has been contested. James Fearon takes issue with Wendt’s and Waltz’s insistence that it is an “error” to conflate theories of international politics and theories of foreign policy.⁴⁹ Specifically, Fearon points out that “the things that structural realist theory seeks to explain – such as balancing, the probability of major power war, or a general disposition to competitive interstate relations – are either foreign policies or the direct (if sometimes unintended) result of foreign policies.”⁵⁰ In

⁴⁵ Bull (2002), p.xii

⁴⁶ Bull (2002), p.xii

⁴⁷ White (2003), p.3

⁴⁸ Wendt (1999), p.11

⁴⁹ Waltz (1979), p.121

⁵⁰ Fearon (Jun.1998), pp.292-293

other words, within the broader structure of international relations are interacting foreign policies determined by individual states. Fearon's position converges with the overall thesis of my research – that international relations are the product of foreign policies which are, in turn, products of the domestic political systems in which they are made, that the state and its internal composition are actually very important in the examination of its foreign policy. If domestic actors and structures are to be examined as contributing factors towards foreign policy, therefore, the previously discussed international relations theories will not suffice.

The changing nature of international relations, and the difficulty in qualifying its study within one theory or approach has long been recognised. Henry Kissinger, one of the world's most famous realist practitioners, was already aware of the growing importance of a pluralist appreciation of international relations, in 1975:

“progress in dealing with the traditional agenda is no longer enough. A new and unprecedented kind of issue has emerged. The problems of energy, resources, environment, pollution, the uses of space and the seas now rank with questions of military security, ideology, and territorial rivalry which have traditionally made up the diplomatic agenda.”⁵¹

Waltz, however, “find[s] it hard to believe that economic processes direct or determine a nation's policies, that spontaneously arrived at decisions about where to place resources reward or punish a national economy so strongly that a government either does what pleases the ‘herd’ or its economy fails to prosper or even risks collapse.”⁵² To Waltz, the 21st Century is going to be another century of the nation-state.⁵³ Perhaps a better understanding of economics in the agent-structure debate is to detach multinational corporations from their

⁵¹ Kissinger, “A New National Partnership” (*State Department Bulletin* #72, February 17th 1975), p.199 – quoted in: Viotti & Kauppi (1999), p.8

⁵² Waltz (1999), p.4

⁵³ Waltz (1999), p.5

state-moorings, and to consider them individual actors in their own right.⁵⁴ As will be shown, however, economic concerns *can* influence a nation's foreign policy – and, referring specifically to the work in the upcoming chapters, America's experience with China has frequently been informed by economic decisions in the past and continues to be so today.

While each of the three theories discussed above have strong components for the study of international relations, they are each flawed for the purposes of studying how foreign policy is influenced by domestic actors – each of the theories has components that could be used to study the role of the Executive (realism), special interests (liberalism), and also the media (constructivism). Individually, however, they do not account for the reality of American domestic politics, despite the frequent presentation of foreign policy in both realist and liberal terms. In order to better understand the domestic forces at work in the American foreign policy-making system, this study will draw on pluralist theory to consider the role of the media, special interests and government institutions. Before looking at pluralism, however, we need to take a look at 'Grand Strategy' in US foreign policy history.

UNITED STATES FOREIGN POLICY & GRAND STRATEGY

*"[T]he subject of foreign policy in the United States is like the subject of snakes in Ireland. There are no snakes in Ireland."*⁵⁵

Lord Bryce, UK Ambassador to the USA (1907-13)

Throughout its history, like all other nations of the world, the US has acted in defence of its national interests, "but a continuous thread of idealism has also found a place in American foreign policy". This idealism is based around the belief in America that it has a duty (or, in Cameron's words, "a unique mission")

⁵⁴ Increasingly, corporations are in fact doing this, moving their base of operations and headquarters from one country to another. A good example of this is Halliburton, a corporation believed to typify corporate influence on US foreign policy and particularly American adventurism in the Middle East (not to mention, a former employer of Dick Cheney who served as its CEO): Halliburton moved its HQ to the United Arab Emirates in March 2007.

⁵⁵ Bryce, quoted in: Mead (Fall 2005), p.589

to promote its values of “freedom, independence, and democracy”, as well as its market economy or capitalist economic system.⁵⁶ This mix of realism and idealism combines to inform the idea of an American Grand Strategy, which many scholars believe is in evidence throughout US history.

Walter Russell Mead, a noted foreign policy historian, has argued that “American grand strategy is almost a contradiction in terms, in the sense that very few administrations are able to consistently develop a strategy that they can then maintain over a long period of time.” However, he continues, “over the decades and even centuries, one does see the tracks of a grand strategy in American history.”⁵⁷ Or, as Daniel Drezner’s explains it, the “tyranny of the status quo” prohibits new administrations from rebranding or diverging much from traditional conceptions of American grand strategy.⁵⁸ Mead argues that US Grand Strategy began with the idea of a US monopoly of the Western Hemisphere, “along with balances of power in the chief theatres of the world; with belief in the primacy of sea and air power and the need for an economic system to support these; and the objective of transforming international politics.”⁵⁹

A survivor of the 18th Century is the language used by the Founding Fathers, and their characterisations of international relations have proved stubbornly institutionalised in the American political psyche. In his 1796 Farewell Address, George Washington warned that “No nation is to be trusted farther than it is bound by interest; and no prudent statesman or politician will venture to depart from it.” Washington also added that nations don’t act to the benefit of others, “unless both [nations’] interests happen to be assimilated.”⁶⁰ Therefore, in colonial Americans’ hierarchy of values, “there was no expectation

⁵⁶ Although, whether it can truly be considered unique is debateable – at one point or another, all five permanent members of the UN Security Council have shared the same desire to export their key values and ideology (different as China’s and Russia’s may have been to the United States). As Cameron points out, however, the United States is in a unique position to actually attempt this mission with a high probability of success. (Cameron, 2002, p.3)

⁵⁷ Mead (Fall 2005), p.590

⁵⁸ Drezner (Jul/Aug.2011), p.59

⁵⁹ Mead (Fall 2005), p.589

⁶⁰ MacGregor-Burns & Dunn (2004), p.105

that states would or should pursue anything other than their own interests, and political science was tasked with finding where that true interest lay.”⁶¹

According to Alexis de Tocqueville, Washington’s and Jefferson’s principles of neutrality and opposition to entangling alliances, and solicitation of special privileges from foreign nations (the ‘Great Rule’, as McDougall refers to these principles), were

“easily understood by the people, [and] have greatly simplified the foreign policy of the United States. As the Union takes no part in the affairs of Europe, it has, properly speaking, no foreign interests to discuss, since it has, as yet, no powerful neighbours on the American continent... The foreign policy of the United States is eminently expectant; it consists more in abstaining than in acting.”⁶²

McDougall understands de Tocqueville’s point as, the United States at this time was “a nation... uninterested in practicing grand strategy as the rest of the civilised human race understood it – hence the Great Rule obeyed since Washington’s time”.⁶³

The American conception of grand strategy has evolved since the country’s inception, yet many of the politically-charged topics of the 18th Century have survived into the modern era. Specifically, these topics revolve around trade, national defence in a hostile world environment, and individual states’ interests.

Economics and foreign policy and grand strategy have been inextricably linked since the end of the Revolutionary War.⁶⁴ In McDougall’s characterisation of economic grand strategy, “the real motive for U.S. foreign policy during all eras of history was not security or liberty, but the capitalist appetite for new markets, resources, and customers, at home and increasingly abroad. So the American Dream was real, but therein lay tragedy because in order to meet the

⁶¹ Hendrickson (Winter 2005), p.41

⁶² De Tocqueville (1945), pp.240-245; quoted in McDougall (Spring 2010), p.169

⁶³ McDougall (Spring 2010), p.170

⁶⁴ See, for example: C. Wright Mills, William Appleman Williams, Richard Immerman (in part), and Andrew Bacevich.

growing expectations of a growing population the United States was ineluctably drawn to imperialism that belied its liberationist rhetoric.”⁶⁵

The pursuit of an economic grand strategy also has its roots in the early language of the Republic. Beyond James Madison’s *Federalist No.10*, which called for a proto-pluralist societal system comprised of multiple “factions” with broad interests that would aid the expansion and economic improvement of the fledgling nation, a Congressional address to the American public, on May 8th 1778, announced that,

“The sweets of a free commerce with every part of the earth will soon reimburse you for all the losses you have sustained. The full tide of wealth will flow in upon your shores, free from the arbitrary impositions of those whose interest and whose declared policy it was to check your growth.”⁶⁶

There was little doubt among political leaders of the time that it was in the United States’ particular interests to pursue free trade with the rest of the world, and that the US would inevitably be the main beneficiaries of such a policy.⁶⁷

In conjunction with Americans’ focus on economic expansion is an idealistic component to American foreign relations. ‘Doing the right thing’ is very important to Americans “as to no other people”, making “American politics... like politics nowhere else”.⁶⁸ John Dumbrell has identified this idealist impression of America’s duty as a form of liberalism, and that this liberalism – the combination of idealism and economics – forms “the ideological core of American foreign policy”.⁶⁹ To further explain: “An optimistic interpretation of the relationship between capitalism and democracy is central to the driving ideology of US foreign policy: [this is] the ideology of liberalism.”⁷⁰ At the same time, Americans’ feelings about the “justice of their cause” runs deep. “Practical idealism”, Hendrickson writes, would become the “American leitmotif”, and the

⁶⁵ McDougall (Spring 2010), p.177

⁶⁶ Congressional Address, May 8th 1778, quoted in: Hendrickson (Winter 2005), p.42

⁶⁷ Congressional Address, May 8th 1778, quoted in: Hendrickson (Winter 2005), p.42

⁶⁸ Codevilla (2009), p.273

⁶⁹ Dumbrell (1990), p.2

⁷⁰ Dumbrell (1990), p.5

Founding generation would understand the language of interests, yet speak in morally idealistic terms.⁷¹

Conventional wisdom holds that “no country can escape its geography and history when it comes to establishing its foreign policy principles and priorities,”⁷² and this was certainly the case with the new American Republic. Along with US dominance of the Western Hemisphere (as outlined in the Monroe Doctrine and later Roosevelt Corollary), US grand strategy has strong roots in a British legacy, and the early Republic would aspire to Britain’s “geopolitical advantages as an insular, maritime, commercial power benefitting from the rivalries and balance of power prevailing among its continental European rivals”.⁷³

In the late 19th Century, there grew the realisation that the undefined nature of American Grand Strategy would have to be institutionalised in a strategic environment facing rapid change – revolutions in commerce, shipping, communications, and other technologies “were forging a global economic and military arena” in which “Britain and her many challengers for naval and colonial power bumped up against U.S. interests and spheres of influence”.⁷⁴ The input of a number of influential men would help codify US grand strategy. Commodore Stephen B. Luce (founder of the Naval War College, in 1884), Captain A.T. Mahan, and Secretary of the Navy Benjamin Tracy convinced Congress to fund a two-ocean US Navy. Business leaders, especially those involved in ship-building-related industries, would form the US’s “first military-industrial-complex” to boost military expenditure. Finally, operating in the slipstream of powerful publicists, and journalists – including, for example, William Randolph Hearst – politicians such as Theodore Roosevelt and Henry Cabot Lodge would articulate the new US grand strategy, a “great equation” of “federal policies to promote defence, exports, sustainable growth, conservation,

⁷¹ Hendrickson (Winter 2005), p.41

⁷² Cameron (2002), p.2

⁷³ McDougall (Spring 2010), p.171

⁷⁴ McDougall (Spring 2010), p.174

assimilation of immigrants, free enterprise with measures to check its worst abuses, and both secular and Social Gospel safety nets”.⁷⁵

For example, the focus on maintaining sea and air power would enable the United States to protect its interests wherever they might be threatened. The American economic strategy also developed from the British power experience:

“America will build an economic system, given this balance-of-power policy, that will make it rich enough to afford the military investments necessary to maintain its power strategy, just as in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the British made enough money from trade to be able to afford subsidies to their continental allies and to maintain the forces necessary to meet their military objectives.”⁷⁶

In addition to enhancing its way of life, the US also hoped to use its economic system to pacify other countries. Both Germany and Japan, for example, were able to increase their wealth dramatically after World War II by participating in the US economic system. A contemporary example of this, argues Mead, is that “Washington is trying to keep the Chinese focused on their ability to enrich themselves by participating in the world’s economic system, so they aren’t tempted to overturn it.” Exclusion from the system is almost as strong a factor as participation. To continue the China-example:

“as China industrialises, it becomes more dependent on exports to the United States. That dependence would make China think two or three times before entering into war with America... Washington is encouraging China to be globalised, dependent on commodities they do not have that come from all over the world, where U.S. air and sea power, if necessary, can interdict these supplies.”⁷⁷

Mead’s greatest contribution to the study of US foreign policy was his identification and subsequent categorisation of the four ‘schools’ of American foreign policy grand strategy. “Americans through the centuries seem to have

⁷⁵ McDougall (Spring 2010), p.174

⁷⁶ Mead (Fall 2005), p.590

⁷⁷ Mead (Fall 2005), p.591

had four basic ways of looking at foreign policy, which have contrasted with or sometimes complimented their ways of looking at domestic policy. These approaches appear early in American history, and while they have each evolved in response to changes in the international order and in American society, they have also remained identifiable over the centuries... They reflect deep-seated regional, economic, social, and class interests; they embody visions for domestic as well as foreign policy; they express moral and political values as well as socioeconomic and political interests.”⁷⁸ These four schools are the Hamiltonians, Wilsonians, Jeffersonians, and Jacksonians (useful terminology for this discussion here, but they will feature little in the following chapters).

For Hamiltonians, the “first task of American government [is] promoting the health of American enterprise at home and abroad,” which requires a “strong alliance between the national government and big business”, and have long espoused a need for the nation to be “integrated into the global economy on favourable terms”. The Wilsonian school are less concerned with economic agendas, and favour moral and legal international concerns, believing America has a “moral obligation and an important national interest in spreading American democratic and social values throughout the world”, the result of which would be a peaceful international community. Jeffersonians are more domestically-minded, and argue US foreign policy should be “less concerned [with] spreading democracy abroad than about safeguarding it at home”, and adhere strongly to Washington’s caution against foreign entangling alliances. Mead’s final school, the Jacksonians, “believe that the most important goal of the U.S. government in both foreign and domestic policy should be the physical security and the economic well-being of the American people.” Jacksonians believe America should not seek out foreign quarrels, but there is no question that there is no substitute for victory against belligerents.⁷⁹

All four schools made necessary adjustments following the decline of the British Empire and the changes in the international environment this entailed. Hamiltonians “dropped their historic protectionism and supported free trade as

⁷⁸ Mead (Fall 2005), p.593

⁷⁹ Mead (Fall 2005), pp.593-594

a necessary economic policy for a hegemonic power”; Jeffersonians “modified their historic aversion to great-power politics to provide critical support for the Cold War”; Wilsonians “linked their vision of a universal moral order... to the concrete needs of the American hegemony”; and the Jacksonians provided “forty years of broad and unwavering popular support” for the Cold War, as the predominant group favouring containment.⁸⁰

There are clearly certain areas of overlap between these four schools, but Mead’s categories provide a good base with which we can systematically study differing approaches to US foreign policy throughout its history.

Grand strategies are useful tools for identifying what an administration believes US foreign policy to be, and to make plans accordingly. They are easy to devise, because “they are forward-looking, operate in generalities”, and are useful as a signalling device for both domestic and foreign audiences. During normal times, foreign policy decision-makers will “extrapolate from current capabilities or past actions to predict the behaviour of others.” This is also true of uncertain times. As Drezner explains, “Ideas matter most when actors are operating in uncharted waters. They can function as cognitive beacons, guiding countries to safety” and, during these times, grand strategies “can signal to outsiders the future intentions of a country’s policymakers, reassuring or repulsing important audiences.” Foreign policy officials can infer what to do from their government’s strategic documents, which actors abroad can also use to develop expectations about the future: “foreign governments will care about how much a country’s proposed response to uncertainty seeks to revise or reinforce the status quo. Countries prefer devils they know.”⁸¹

Despite each new administration’s attempts to re-articulate or rebrand grand strategy (often to differentiate themselves from immediate predecessors), the “tyranny of the status quo often renders grand strategy a constant rather than a variable”.⁸² The biggest obstacle a new strategy can face is troublesome domestic politics: “Viable grand strategies need to rest on a

⁸⁰ Mead (Fall 2005), p.595

⁸¹ Drezner (Jul/Aug.2011), pp.61-62

⁸² Drezner (Jul/Aug.2011), p.59

wellspring of domestic support.” When constructing and articulating a grand strategy, presidents and officials are often handicapped by the “mismatch between the complexity of the global system and the simplicity of U.S. foreign policy rhetoric.” For example, politicians and the American public have little difficulty understanding the differences between “friends” and “enemies” and the policies that these would suggest. At the same time, however, they have greater difficulty understanding the more nuanced term, “rivals”. This means it can be difficult for an administration to use the potential threat posed by rising powers as a way to goad the United States or a recalcitrant Congress into action, without at the same time stimulating excessive demagoguery about, for example, China: “Official rhetoric is at least partly to blame for inflated public fears about Chinese power.” Therefore, because “politics abhors a rhetorical vacuum”, a president who is not clear about his grand strategy will leave his policy open to attack from foreign policy critics and political opponents, and also domestic interest groups, who “will be happy to define it for him, using less than flattering language”,⁸³ as a means to further their own political agendas.

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, international relations theories are not enough to fully conceptualise the policy-making process in the United States. The fractured and porous policy-making system, not to mention the articulated economic focus of US foreign policy presents a problem for administrations, in that it “increases the likelihood of domestic discord” and opens up foreign policy further to domestic partisan and special interest politics. Demographic and political changes in the United States are having an impact on any domestic foreign policy consensus that may have existed (for example, the right’s increased rejection of multilateralism and the left’s rejection of power projection).⁸⁴ Therefore, the increased encroachment of domestic politics and considerations creates an imperative to study American foreign policy – and particularly, China policy – through the lens of pluralism, which is better suited to understanding the forces, influences and actors at work in the American foreign policy-making system. With this in mind, we now

⁸³ Drezner (Jul/Aug.2011), pp.67-68

⁸⁴ Drezner (Jul/Aug.2011), p.67

turn our attention to a brief explanation of pluralist theory, and how the media, Executive and Congress are seen through the lens of pluralism.

PLURALISM

Perhaps no other country displays so clearly the myriad influences that now go into creating a nation's foreign policy than the United States: evidence of a growing number of non-governmental actors participating in or influencing the policy-making process only increases the importance of a pluralist approach to its study. The United States' highly pluralistic domestic political system informs not only policy decisions and implementation at home, but also America's interaction with the rest of the world. Much of pluralist theory is based on a refutation of specific realist assumptions, but it is not in itself a wholesale rejection of realist principles. This thesis will take an approach that attempts to find the connection between realism and pluralism.

American academics "are prone to see international politics through domestic political lenses", and the image some of them hold "can be understood as a projection of American political processes onto the entire globe." In other words, American domestic political processes are not all that different from American international relations processes, "and may even be considered an extension of those conducted within the boundaries of a given state." Therefore, pluralists tend to reject realism's distinction between "international" and "domestic" politics, as the line demarcating the two has become increasingly blurred over time.⁸⁵

Pluralism takes particular issue with the realist conception of the role of domestic actors. According to realists, "domestic influences over a nation's foreign policy are held to have been aggregated at the level of the nation-state," and therefore the impact of domestic actors hold little interest to their analysis of foreign affairs.⁸⁶ Presidents, cabinet secretaries, mayors, governors,

⁸⁵ Viotti & Kauppi (1999), p.203; also Parmar (Apr.1995), p.74

⁸⁶ Dumbrell (1990), p.12

legislators and bureaucrats are certainly the most visible actors in the American policy-making process, and they tend to receive the lion's share of media attention, and also in courses about politics and public policy, and therefore also in the public mind. But public policies are made in a complex political system, and cannot be understood primarily by looking at presidential and governmental actions.⁸⁷ Therefore, any observer of the American political process will recognise that, in the United States, domestic policies and agendas are clearly relevant to the formation and implementation of foreign policy.

To illustrate the fractured and broad policy-making structure in the United States, Sir Nicholas Henderson, a former British Ambassador to Washington, once noted in evidence to the UK Parliamentary Select Committee, "When you say the US administration, I am sorry to be pedantic, but there is the Pentagon view, the State Department view, and the White House view."⁸⁸ The formation of US foreign policy is certainly not limited to these three governmental bodies, however. American foreign policy "is also the product of a militarised economy, of unaccountable and private power, and of periodic drives towards secrecy which seem to be stimulated by the fragmentation of its policy-making structure."⁸⁹

Central to pluralism is the role of interest groups and non-state actors, creating a "policy-making environment characterised by fragmentation."⁹⁰ According to David Truman, an early pioneer of pluralist theory, "the outstanding characteristic of American politics... [is the] multiplicity of co-ordinate or near co-ordinate points of access to governmental decisions."⁹¹ The access points draw the attention of a considerable number of domestic actors, drawn from the media, business, lobbying groups, labour unions and many

⁸⁷ Lindblom & Woodhouse (1993), p.3

⁸⁸ Henderson (1984); cited in Dumbrell (1990), p.1

⁸⁹ Dumbrell (1990), p.2 – It should be pointed out, too, that these three elements of foreign policy making structure have all been in clear evidence during George W Bush's administrations: the militarisation of the US economy has grown, with a Defence budget of over half a trillion dollars; the influence of private business interests (particularly Halliburton and its subsidiary KBR, as well as health-care companies and Wall Street banks) has soared with the ever-growing number of lobbyists operating in Washington, D.C.; and Vice President Dick Cheney appears to be addicted to increasing levels of secrecy at almost every level of government. The role of business, special interests and lobbies will be discussed in Chapter Six.

⁹⁰ Dumbrell (1990), p.1

⁹¹ Truman, quoted in Viotti & Kauppi (1999), p.204

others. It is difficult to see how domestic politics can be pushed aside when discussing or analysing the American foreign policy-making process.

Despite the fragmentation of the US foreign policy-making system, Richard Immerman has argued that the most important element in understanding the development of the American approach to foreign policy is individual choices:

“This is not to play down the power of broad political, economic, social, and cultural forces at the national and international levels. But when one sifts through the multiple influences that are the stuff of history, one ends up with individuals who choose to do one thing and not another. That is the crucial ingredient of contingency.”⁹²

Immerman continues, pointing out that “neither the formulation nor implementation of U.S. foreign policy is democratic”, but instead “only an elite few” get to ‘vote’ on policy decisions, despite the pluralistic nature of American society and its political system. While this may appear to support the realist/statist, elite-centric conception of foreign policy-making, Immerman continues by adding a qualifier: “Without broad public support, policies are unlikely to succeed,”⁹³ and it is, for this reason, important to identify and understand the role of the media, public opinion and special interest lobbies in US foreign policy-making.

Pluralism, as opposed to realism and statism, is a weak state theory, in which government reacts to external pressures: Though state officials ‘make’ policy, pluralists argue that “they do so under the pressure of demands made by more powerful special interests”. The role of government, therefore, “is to ‘weigh up’ conflicting demands so that a ‘balanced’ policy emerges that satisfies a broader general interest.”⁹⁴ In addition, the plethora of interest groups at work in the system is believed to be self-corrective and self-regulating. Pluralist politics are “applauded as fair and desirable” due to their self-regulating nature. Robert Reich has paraphrased Adam Smith’s famous adage on the market and attributed it to the pluralist political system, in that they have their own

⁹² Immerman (2010), p.14

⁹³ Immerman (2010), p.15

⁹⁴ Parmar (2004), p.12

‘invisible hand’ (the interest groups and factions) guiding them, which “renders a more socially optimal result”.⁹⁵

No discussion of pluralism and how it can be used to discuss the United States’ policy-making process is complete without a brief description of the evolution of the theory itself. The pluralist theoretical ‘discipline’ was begun with Arthur F. Bentley’s *The Process of Government* (1908), and followed by David Truman’s *The Governmental Process* (1951). Bentley’s text revolutionised the field of American political studies and analysis, by asserting that the formal political institutions in the United States were not as important as had traditionally been believed. According to Bentley, governmental institutions offer little more than a ‘playing-field’ upon which a range of ‘interests’ compete over scarce political power, influence, and policy outcomes. Politics, therefore, is not found in competition between political parties, the work of government bureaucrats and federal judges, or social class struggles. Politics is found instead in the interaction of myriad interest groups (defined by shared material, ideological, cultural and social values and agendas), in a “great moving process” of competition and coalition building.⁹⁶ Truman stressed the importance of countervailing group organisation – that is, the formation of groups to combat the potential influence of other groups, which is certainly apparent in American politics⁹⁷ (for example, labour groups organising to combat business groups; also, in a way, Fox News forming to counterbalance the perceived ‘liberal bias’ of the mainstream media).

Of all contributors to pluralist theory and analysis, none has been as influential as Robert Dahl, whose book *Who Governs?* (1961) is still cited repeatedly in key texts on the subject;⁹⁸ even attempts to refute Dahl’s arguments tend to accept his more fundamental pluralist assumptions and observations. New texts have acted as updates to, and qualifications of, *Who Governs?*, taking account of subsequent developments in both American politics

⁹⁵ Reich (1990), pp.20-21

⁹⁶ Bentley (1908)

⁹⁷ Truman (1951)

⁹⁸ See, for example, McFarland (2004), which includes a perhaps excessive number of Dahl quotations.

and technology, which has allowed greater transparency of special interest activity and data.

Dahl identified the core issue when studying American politics, which in turn is a central question of pluralist analysis: “In a political system where nearly every adult may vote but where knowledge, wealth, social position, access to officials, and other resources are unequally distributed, who actually governs?” This question, Dahl writes, is “peculiarly relevant” to the United States,⁹⁹ because “if... there are great inequalities in the conditions of different citizens, must there not also be great inequalities in the capacities of different citizens to influence the decisions of their various governments?”¹⁰⁰

Pluralist analysis begins with the assumption that political power and resources are widely dispersed, and not evenly distributed among political actors. An individual, pluralists argue, is politically quite helpless, “but a group unites the resources of individuals into an effective force.” In this environment, individuals with similar interests and agendas will form interest groups, and it is these groups that pluralism takes as its prime unit of political action and analysis. These groups use their resources to advance their interests (often, but not solely, economic) in the political system. In the United States, this would take the form of lobbying – government, media, and also business interests, in some instances. Therefore, Dahl writes, “most of the actions of government can be explained... simply as the result of struggles among groups of individuals with differing interests and varying resources of influence.”¹⁰¹

In a later work, Dahl described the “fundamental axiom” in the theory and practice of American pluralism as follows: “Instead of a single centre of sovereign power there must be multiple centres of power, none of which is or can be wholly sovereign.” American pluralism in theory and practice, he continues, assumes that the existence of multiple centres of power “may indeed

⁹⁹ Dahl (1961/74), p.1

¹⁰⁰ Dahl (1961/74), p.3

¹⁰¹ Dahl (1961/74), p.5

be necessary” to help tame power, secure the consent of all, and peacefully settle conflicts.¹⁰²

One of the limitations of the explanations and theories of pluralist politics that came before Dahl’s book was that they “left very little room for the politician. He was usually regarded merely as an agent – of majority will, the political parties, interest groups, or the elite. He had no independent influence.”¹⁰³ Dahl does not offer an opposing opinion, describing a system “dominated by many different sets of leaders, each having access to a different combination of political resources”¹⁰⁴ – in other words, a system in which governmental leaders are just one group among many (including those who lead interest groups, and business and the media, with some operating in overlapping spheres – such as corporate owners of media outlets).

Theodore Lowi is equally concerned with the role of government and politicians in pluralist theory, and disapproves of “the zeal of pluralism for the group and its belief in a natural harmony of group competition.” Lowi’s criticism is that pluralism “break[s] down the very ethic of government by reducing the essential conception of government to nothing more than another set of mere interest groups.”¹⁰⁵ Despite Lowi’s dislike for this conception of American politics, it is nonetheless possible to witness this dynamic at work in the United States, where non-governmental groups are also in competition with groups formed within government. However, what is also clear is that the White House and Executive Branch do retain sufficient power and control to bring the multitude of governmental organisations into line.¹⁰⁶

The role of groups in American politics is as old as the Republic. In Federalist #9, Hamilton argued that the new government must work as a “barrier” against the “horror” of “factions”.¹⁰⁷ In Federalist #10, Madison wrote of the importance of regulating these factions. According to Lowi, Madison and

¹⁰² Dahl (1967), p.24

¹⁰³ Dahl (1961/74), p.6

¹⁰⁴ Dahl (1961/74), p.86

¹⁰⁵ Lowi (1969/79), p.36

¹⁰⁶ See Chapter Six

¹⁰⁷ Hamilton (1799), p.48

his supporters believed that groups were “a necessary evil in need of regulation”.¹⁰⁸ Madison was concerned that, left unchecked, these factions could run amok and corrupt the new democracy, arguing that “The regulation of these various and interfering interests forms the principle task of modern legislation”.¹⁰⁹ In Madison’s conception, no single group can dominate the system, and therefore all groups will learn to cooperate, bargain, and deliberate. They will learn to ally with other groups, and translate their specific interests into the “language and reality of public interest”. Interest groups that fail to learn these lessons will drop out of existence as they lost influence.¹¹⁰

To modern pluralists, interest groups are “good, requiring only accommodation.” Lowi argues that pluralism’s faith in interests groups “has badly served liberalism by propagating the faith that a system built primarily upon groups and bargaining is self-corrective.”¹¹¹ The findings of this thesis suggest that American pluralism is far more Madisonian than Lowi’s interpretation would suggest – the government does ‘regulate’ special interest influence by acting as a filter and arbiter of the cacophony of modern interest groups. This does not, however, mean that certain presidents and legislators are immune from being ‘captured’ by interest groups who attempt to win their attention.

Dahl, despite his general assertion that “leaders are enormously influential”, does differentiate the levels of influence certain leaders will have. Most importantly, and something that will be supported by Chapter Six, “among all the persons who influence a decision, some do so more directly than others in the sense that they are closer to the stage where concrete alternatives are initiated or vetoed in an explicit and immediate way.”¹¹² This would suggest that governmental leaders, specifically those close to Congressional legislators and also members of the Executive Branch, will wield greater influence over the policy-making process by virtue of their perceived proximity to power. For this

¹⁰⁸ Lowi (1969/79), p.58

¹⁰⁹ Madison (1979), p.57

¹¹⁰ Bailey & Braybrooke (2003) – in Polsby (2003), p.103

¹¹¹ Lowi (1969/79), pp.57-58

¹¹² Dahl (1961/74), p.89

reason as well, they are likely to be the actors whose attention is most coveted by special interest lobbies.

Neopluralism, a progression from Dahl et al's initial conception of pluralism, gives priority to the recognition that there is a plurality of issue areas as well, often characterised by their own plurality of interest groups and elites operating within and around them. These are called "policy niches" by McFarland, and further divide the policy-making arena into perhaps hundreds of separate policy areas in which very few interest groups may be active.¹¹³ Research in the 1990s into policy niches discovered a considerable issue proliferation, and that in many of these niches special interest influence was potentially greater, given the lower number of active participating groups attempting to influence policy outcomes.¹¹⁴ "Multiple elitists", to use McFarland's terminology, "viewed the American political process as fragmented into the hands of a multitude of separate elites controlling their own policy turf."¹¹⁵ These elites are not only comprised of extra-governmental actors, but also governmental and state actors.

Pluralism and neopluralism now identify "government officials, their associations, and their departments or agencies as playing interest-group roles" – so, for example, the Departments of Defence and State could be viewed as specific intra-governmental interest groups. Any "policy-influencing interactions of government officials that go well beyond the direct use of their authority" or beyond the jurisdiction and purview of their departments, "often is not very different from that of private interest groups." This considerably expanded the scope of interest-group studies, and has enriched the broader understanding of the US political system. Lindblom and Woodhouse offer some examples of how intra-governmental institutions operate like interest groups: the Joint Chiefs of Staff play an interest-group role by influencing Congress. Congressional committees and individual representatives sometimes try, in

¹¹³ McFarland (2004), p.3

¹¹⁴ McFarland (2004), pp.58-60

¹¹⁵ McFarland (2004), p.9

turn, to influence the Department of Defence by, for example, convincing it to locate a new military installation in a particular congressional district.¹¹⁶

Pluralist theory rejects a core assumption of statism, that power and control are properties of the state – a notion that, according to Lowi, pluralism “renders absurd”.¹¹⁷ Pluralism recognises instead that there are multiple sources of power and control other than the state, and that they are instead widely distributed and ubiquitous, represented by organisations able and willing to use power, rejecting notions of “a national distinction between the functions of government and functions of nongovernmental institutions.”¹¹⁸ That being said, special interest group competition on any given issue “provide[s] leeway for governmental agency autonomy or ‘statism’”,¹¹⁹ in which case the state is able to reassert a greater level of control over the process.

The realist perspective of the state as a unitary actor is rejected by pluralists as “an abstraction that masks the essence of politics” found within states. The state, pluralists contend, is “not some reified entity – an abstraction to be treated as if it were a physical being that acts with single-minded determination, always in a coherent manner.” Instead, states are composed of individual government bureaucracies, a multitude of interest groups, and individuals that attempt to influence the formulation of foreign policy. Competition, coalition building, conflict, and compromise among these actors form the essence of politics. Pluralism therefore challenges the notion of the State as a rational actor, “which follows logically from the pluralist image of the disaggregated state in which the foreign policy decision-making process is the result of clashes, bargaining, and compromise between and among different actors.”¹²⁰ Statesmen and policymakers may be “tempted to take their cue from public opinion polls, evincing more concern for their personal standing or power position than for the good of their country as a whole”.¹²¹ This possibility that a policy may be proposed in order to enhance the bureaucratic power and

¹¹⁶ Lindblom & Woodhouse (1993), pp.74-75

¹¹⁷ Lowi (1969/79), p.33

¹¹⁸ Lowi (1969/79), pp.31-34

¹¹⁹ McFarland (2004), p.61

¹²⁰ Viotti & Kauppi (1999), pp.7-8

¹²¹ Viotti & Kauppi (1999), p.200

prestige of one organisation or department at the expense of another challenges the rational actor model, even if it doesn't discount the realist assumption of the importance of the 'national interest'. Pluralists "disaggregate the state – break it into its component parts," and pluralism therefore "offers greater complexity" and breadth than realism,¹²² and "reject[s] the high politics versus low politics dichotomy accepted by most realists."¹²³

Dahl has identified two main factors that he believes sustain the political status quo and consensus in US politics: education and the media. For the former, "the amount of formal education appears as a highly significant variable" as the greater one's formal education, the more likely one is to endorse key propositions in prevailing political ideologies.¹²⁴ For the purposes of this thesis, however, the role of the media is of far more interest and import, and will be discussed within a pluralist framework below, after a brief outline of the evolution of the media and foreign policy.

The role of special interest groups such as lobbies in the pluralist framework is clear – they are the clearest examples of non-governmental actors contributing (or attempting to contribute) to policy-making. There are two key sectors that must also be addressed individually within the framework of pluralism: the government itself (the Executive Branch and the Congress) and also the Media. Each receives a section, below.

THE MEDIA, US FOREIGN POLICY, & PLURALISM

The role of the news media, writes Philip Bobbitt, has "changed, constitutionally speaking, in the last three periods of the state." In the era of the state-nation – that is, states that provide their people "civil and political rights of popular sovereignty", "not responsible *to* the nation... [but] *for* the nation" – the "constitutional role of the press was foremost to transmit the political leadership's views. This often amounted to functioning as an organ to shape

¹²² Viotti & Kauppi (1999), p.8

¹²³ Viotti & Kauppi (1999), p.200

¹²⁴ Dahl (1967), p.335

public opinion.” A good example of this would be Napoleon’s ‘Bulletins’, through which he disseminated his administration’s version of his wars. Similarly, the *Federalist Papers* were “first published as essentially op-ed pieces”¹²⁵ by the framers who wished to acquire support for their particular views on how the constitution should be written and what it should allow.

In the preceding section on general pluralist theory, direct influence was discussed (that is, the influence enjoyed by those closest to the policy-making process). It is equally important, from a pluralist perspective, to discuss the role of *indirect* influence on the policy-making system. Special interest groups could enjoy considerable indirect influence, but it is in the role of the media where, I believe, greater indirect influence can be inferred, if not proven. Indirect influence, Dahl writes, “might be very great but comparatively difficult to observe and weigh. Yet to ignore indirect influence in analysis of the distribution of influence would be to exclude what might well prove to be a highly significant process of control in a pluralist democracy.”¹²⁶

When state-nations evolved, with the addition of democracy, into nation-states, the role of the media evolved as well, with the addition of the “function of informing leaders about the public reaction as the public spoke back to government through the media.” In the late 19th Century, William Randolph Hearst had a particularly shrewd appreciation of the power of his and others’ newspapers to funnel and shape public opinion to suit certain needs and agendas.¹²⁷ In the United States, the media has particular power in shaping public and political discourse on major domestic and foreign policies or issues (particularly war):

“The pivotal role played by the *New York Times* in opposing the War in Vietnam that it had so heartily supported and the *Washington Post*’s crucial exposure of Watergate felonies both showed the press not only leading the public but also constantly reporting trends in public opinion on the same issues. Editorial opinion and its

¹²⁵ Bobbitt (2002), p.783

¹²⁶ Dahl (1961/74), p.89

¹²⁷ Bobbitt (2002), p.783; see also Evans (2010)

counterparts in the electronic media eventually stood for public opinion. When the CBS anchorman Walter Cronkite turned against the Vietnam War, President Johnson is reported to have concluded that his war policies no longer had the confidence of the public.”¹²⁸

The media’s reporting of negative public opinion would be revived in particular following the invasion of Iraq in 2003, as growing opposition to the war led many reporters and commentators to recant their initial support for the invasion.

To continue with Bobbitt’s era-classifications, the state has now moved into the “market-state” era, and once again the role of the media has evolved to match the times. The media, Bobbitt argues, “have begun to act in direct competition with the government of the day,” and “the switch in roles by the media, which retains the credibility of reportage... now also have the mission of opposition,” which appears now to be their sole driving purpose.

“The media are well situated to succeed in this competition because they are trained to work in the marketplace, are more nimble than bureaucrats hampered by procedural rules, are quick to spot public trends, can call on huge capitalisations, can rely on sophisticated managers and technocrats, and are the most capable of users – far out-pacing politicians – of the contemporary techniques of advertising and public relations.”¹²⁹

In addition to these operational advantages, “protected in many countries by statutes and constitutional amendments”, the media “are free of many of the legal and political restraints that bind government officials.” Beyond the role of opposition, the focus of news is also changing. As a state’s understanding of popular welfare changes to economic and employment opportunity, “Business activities – and the activities of business leaders – are replacing politics as the central source of news about the welfare of the people.”¹³⁰

¹²⁸ Bobbitt (2002), pp.783-784

¹²⁹ Bobbitt (2002), p.784

¹³⁰ Bobbitt (2002), pp.784-785

When considering the American case, however, Bobbitt's impression of the media's overarching role as opposition to the government is limited and potentially flawed. The media arena in the United States is more demarcated than many (if not all) other nations. Indeed, one might say that the US media arena is as pluralistic as its political and policy-making arena. Depending on one's political ideology and biases, there are leading publications, television news channels, and websites to provide the viewer or reader with appropriately slanted news. Depending on the party in power at any given time, one or other section of the news spectrum will be acting in opposition to the administration.¹³¹

There is another point to be made in addressing the impression of the media as hostile to government, in that there is also the widespread impression that the media serves the needs and agendas of elites. This, according to Lindblom and Woodhouse is "not because of any conspiracy, but for perfectly mundane reasons." In a society such as the United States, it is "entirely natural" for journalists to base their stories largely on what elites are saying and doing. The nature of the journalism business also "imposes a gentle tyranny" (the deadline) on journalists who can rarely afford the time and expense of extended, in-depth research. Government elites hold news conferences, pass out news releases, issue reports, which provide journalists much of what they need to file their stories on deadline. "The effect of continual quoting of persons in positions of authority is that their opinions often come to circulate as fact."¹³²

In a nation where politics sometimes appears guided by the press, polling data and public opinion, a brief discussion of how public opinion can affect the decision-making process, as well as theories on where public opinion belongs (if at all) in the foreign policy-making process is necessary. It would be particularly useful to place public opinion within the Realist-Liberal debate, outlined earlier in this chapter. While differences between realist and liberal theories extend

¹³¹ Although it appears as though liberal news outlets will almost always be in opposition to a certain degree, as they are almost always disappointed by the inability of 'liberal' presidents to pass left-ist bills and laws – though, in reality, this is usually a reflection of Congressional maths denying them the means to pass their agenda without significant dilution.

¹³² Lindblom & Woodhouse (1993), p.119

across virtually all central questions and issues of foreign policy, international relations and statecraft, “the appropriate role for public opinion in foreign policy-making is at the centre of persisting debates between the two approaches to international affairs.” One of Holsti’s questions about the role of public opinion is if it is “a force for enlightenment – indeed, a necessary if not sufficient condition for sound foreign policy and, thus, a significant contributor to peaceful relations among nations – as celebrated by Woodrow Wilson and many other liberals?” Or, if not a force for good, “is the public more appropriately described as a source of emotional and short-sighted thinking that can only impede the effective pursuit and defence of vital national interests?”¹³³

Holsti outlines the liberal argument as *for* the inclusion of public opinion in the policy-making process, stating that “the essence of the liberal thesis is... a distinction between the peaceful public and leaders who may, for a broad range of reasons, pursue policies that lead to war.” This is because the liberal vision favours the pacific settlement of disputes, rather than the bloody recourse to forceful resolutions.

On the realist side of the argument, there is a far more formidable lineage of theorists and statesmen that have taken a sceptical position on the public’s contribution to “enlightened and effective diplomacy”. According to realists, “man is by nature self-regarding and is largely motivated by such passions as greed and fear, qualities that are not lost when men are aggregated into political units such as nation-states.” For realists, therefore, public opinion is usually considered a barrier to creating a coherent and sensible foreign policy, “hindering efforts to promote national interests that may transcend the moods and passions of the moment.”¹³⁴ This viewpoint helps to explain some developments in US foreign policy in the past decade: if the US is a nation seemingly addicted to polling and gathering information about public opinion, then how come the George W. Bush administration appears to not actually pay

¹³³ Holsti (1996), p.2

¹³⁴ Holsti (1996), pp.4-5; see also Fearon (Jun.1998)

too much attention to the results?¹³⁵ Realism's grounding in pessimistic theories of human nature, therefore, places it in stark contrast to liberal, relatively optimistic opinions of public intentions.

If international relations theories conflict over the role of the media in the policy-making process, pluralism offers a more concrete explanation of its place, with one important caveat – media influence is very difficult to accurately measure. The mass media are “a kind of filter for information and influence.” Only a relatively small selection of the American public ever has much immediate experience in politics, and most of what they perceive about politics comes filtered through the mass media. “Those who want to influence the electorate must do so through the mass media.” The same is true for those who wish to (indirectly) influence governmental institutions and officials. As will be explained in Chapter Six, governmental actors are as conscious of the media's portrayal of issues as are the voting public. The media (newspapers, television, radio, magazines) “enjoy a unique immediacy and directness in their contact with citizens”, and that is that “they do not force their way in [to peoples' homes]; they are invited.” This willing exposure to media – be it favoured newspapers, magazines, or television channels – suggests a potential, considerable influence on the views of the sections of the electorate who consume them. By willingly exposing themselves to the views and commentary of any given source, one can assume a high-level of acceptance of any issue framing. However, despite this considerable opportunity, “one cannot say with confidence exactly what or how much effect” the media have on influencing the electorate,¹³⁶ or how much effect they have on influencing the Executive Branch, Congress, or other governmental decision-makers.

The level of influence a media source has on the policy-making process, specifically with regard to governmental actors, is dependent on the actors' assumption of how much any given media source can influence public opinion: “If politicians are convinced that the newspapers [or other media] can influence

¹³⁵ This is the case not just in foreign policy, either: President Bush's veto of the SCHIP Bill that would have extended health care coverage of poor children was almost universally supported by the American public, with polling data to back this up, yet still the president vetoed the bill.

¹³⁶ Dahl (1961/74), pp.256-257

‘public opinion’, a publisher [or news editor] can exercise a fair measure of control over the choices politicians are likely to make.” Therefore, the influence of the media on politicians depends largely “on a *belief by politicians* in the actual or potential influence” of the media on voters.¹³⁷

One of the most important roles the media plays in a pluralist, democratic society is that of arbiter of traditional and societal norms. In pluralistic political systems like the United States, “the range of acceptable strategies is narrowed by beliefs and habits rooted in traditions of legality, constitutionality, and legitimacy”. These traditions are “constantly reinforced by a great variety of social processes for generating agreement on and adherence to political norms.” Any group that departs from acceptable strategies based on these norms will likely incur a “high risk of defeat”, because the resources that can be “mounted against the political deviant” will almost certainly be “vastly greater than the resources the political deviant can himself muster.”¹³⁸

Shared social values can help shape the values of those who govern, and if politicians and leaders perceive an issue as important because of the frequency or way that the media portrays it for the engaged public, then the media acquires considerable indirect influence. A public who, for example, sees China’s human rights record as reprehensible – due to the frequent critical reports offered by the media – will likely pass this on to politicians and representatives. “If it were not for elections and competitive parties, this sharing would – other things remaining the same – rapidly decline.”¹³⁹

As a result of this important norms-arbitration role, identifying perceived trends and traditions in American politics and foreign policy (or, the politics of foreign policy) is very important. On only rare and exceptional circumstances has a president or other political figure been able to break with orthodoxy to reinvent foreign policy (see, for example, Nixon’s opening to China). The media in particular are strong influences on maintaining the traditional conception of

¹³⁷ Dahl (1961/74), p.259

¹³⁸ Dahl (1961/74), pp.225-226

¹³⁹ Dahl (1961/74), pp.91-92

(foreign) policy issues and norms, while also acting as framers and public agenda-setters.¹⁴⁰

We can see that Dahl's assertions hold true in today's political environment: the *New York Times*, *Washington Post* and *Wall Street Journal* are widely perceived as highly influential on their readers, just as Fox News and MSNBC are perceived to be influential, respectively, on their conservative and liberal audiences. As a result, politicians are more likely to court these media over others. The same can be said for lobbying groups who are most likely to approach those media outlets that adhere closely to a lobby's own ideological position.

However, where the media have logical and obvious reasons for paying attention to the activities of the US government, this is not true for special interest groups. This, then, is where Dahl's portrayal of the media's place in politics comes under some criticism. Lindblom argues that the US political, business and media environment does not offer a level playing field in which multiple actors are self-regulating or ensure the most democratic outcomes. Lindblom argues that while "ordinary citizens can hypothetically reach vast audiences through press and broadcasting, doing so is too expensive." The market-driven aspect of the media means that "Speech is costly rather than free." In addition, "newspapers and broadcasting stations are owned and operated by market elites,"¹⁴¹ which gives an unfair advantage to corporate owners of media outlets who have much easier access and ability to potentially influence media reporting.

As with other indirect influences, that of the mass media is much "harder to assess", and comes under fire from both sides of the ideological spectrum. Critics on the left argue that the "great bulk of Americans are lulled by the mass media into a complacent acceptance of the values in the prevailing ideology" – specifically, the emphasis on private property and personal success, which, in

¹⁴⁰ The media's role in framing, agenda-setting and acting as arbiters of values and traditions will be discussed in Chapter Four.

¹⁴¹ Lindblom (2001), p.213

turn, is said to protect the position of important elite and business groups.¹⁴² Lindblom takes a look at the media through the lens of the market system and operations of the market elite, therefore presenting an image of media's function as manipulated by market elites and politicians. He argues that the role of the media is "obfuscation", focussing on "sales promotion and political persuasion... often intend[ed] to confuse rather than clarify."¹⁴³ Critics on the "radical right", however, see the media (as well as the educational system) as major instruments with which the 'liberal establishment' "acquires and retains its dominance over American institutions and attitudes."¹⁴⁴ It would appear, from the findings outlined in Chapter Four, that *both* critical factions may be correct, as the media appears to reinforce both 'right' and 'left' ideologies and status quos. In terms of foreign policy and China, the media helps to reinforce the trends and traditions of US foreign policy, explaining why both realist and liberal agendas are promoted by most, if not all, media sources. In order to show this, an identification of said trends and traditions will be provided in the historical overview (Chapter Three).

There is one other assertion by Dahl that should be addressed with regard to the contemporary media environment. Dahl claimed that it was difficult to find non-status quo reporting,¹⁴⁵ but it could be argued that this is no longer the case, or at the very least needs to be updated for today. Given the proliferation of ideological press and media, it could be argued that, if not presenting 'non-status quo' reporting, in the current media environment there is *more than one* status quo to report; for example, a conservative and a liberal status quo – which are reinforced, respectively (but not exclusively), by Fox News, *Wall Street Journal*, *The Weekly Standard* and *National Review*; and MSNBC, *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *The American Prospect*, and *The Nation*.

The capacity of the news media to influence specific public attitudes is "highly complex and variable",¹⁴⁶ and there are three critical limits on the levels

¹⁴² Dahl (1967), p.335

¹⁴³ Lindblom (2001), pp.217-218

¹⁴⁴ Dahl (1967), pp.335-336

¹⁴⁵ Dahl (1967), p.337

¹⁴⁶ Dahl (1961/74), p.258

of potential influence that any one media can achieve. First is the “distinct handicap of being widely regarded as politically biased and even eccentric”,¹⁴⁷ which is even more of an issue with the proliferation of ideologically-identified media. Individual political media are prevented from reaching monopolies of influence due to the variety and multiplicity of media formats and sources – politically active members of the public are unlikely to acquire information from a single source of news.¹⁴⁸ In addition, the “relatively low salience of politics in the life of the individual”, or apathy, further hinders the media’s abilities to exert greater influence on politics: “Political indifference,” Dahl points out, “surrounds a great many citizens like impenetrable armour plate and makes them difficult targets for propaganda.”¹⁴⁹ Here we could argue that ideological sides of the media can acquire levels of influence that individual sources cannot – it is unlikely that a member of the public will read or watch widely and from all sides of the ideological spectrum, unless they were somehow invested in understanding the differences between conservative and liberal media portrayals of political issues. This could account for the perceived growth in influence dependent on ideological consistency between media outlets and the administration in office and in the Congressional and Senate majorities.

There are examples throughout American history of foreign policy decisions possibly influenced by public opinion, which were not considered in the best interests of the nation. For example, in 1812, when President James Madison went to war with Great Britain; in 1898, the US went to war with Spain because of growing resentment and tension (fuelled by “yellow journalism”); and during World War II, President Franklin Roosevelt was warned off involvement in Europe by strong public opposition.

For some traditional domestic political theories – not only pluralism, but also Marxism, and elitism – the state is assumed to be ‘weak’. This is a position that has been endorsed by a number of recent studies of American politics.

¹⁴⁷ Dahl (1961/74), p.258

¹⁴⁸ Dahl (1961/74), pp.260-261

¹⁴⁹ Dahl (1961/74), p.264

These studies can see the state as “a relatively neutral umpire brokering the demands of competing interest groups”.¹⁵⁰ Increasingly, this is the perception of American foreign policy-making as well. In this context, domestic pluralism is becoming a more viable theory for the study of US foreign policy-making, given the blurring of the borders that delineate domestic and international issues.

“The democratic features of the [American] political system and the diversity of attitudes and interests in a continental-sized nation... ensure that the state cannot lead without national mobilisation; and cannot mobilise without taking due regard of the major social, economic and political interests within the United States.”¹⁵¹

A pluralist approach to American domestic and foreign policy posits that American political culture and institutions are “characterised by openness, accessibility, equity and free and fair organised competition between opposing social, economic and political forces.” In this representation, the political system is “more or less dominated by organised interest groups”. While state officials indeed ‘make’ policy, pluralists argue that they do so “under the pressure of demands made by more powerful special interests”, relegating the role of government to ‘weighing-up’ conflicting demands so that a balanced policy that satisfies the national interest can emerge.¹⁵² It is the contention of this thesis that this is only partly correct. The US federal government must, indeed, weigh and balance domestic considerations (ones frequently brought to their attention by lobbies or the media). However, the entrenched, traditional conception of the national interest exerts equal, if not more, pressure on what is or is not acceptable in the construction of American foreign and China policy.

CONGRESS & PLURALISM

The role of Congress is extremely important in the US foreign policy-making system. However, it is also exceedingly broad, extending across all three sectors

¹⁵⁰ Parmar (Apr.1995), pp.73-74

¹⁵¹ Parmar (Apr.1995), pp.75-76

¹⁵² Parmar (2004), pp.11-12

that will be discussed in Part Two of the thesis. Therefore, this brief section will outline some pluralist perceptions of the role of Congress in the American system, related to the Executive Office and also special interests.

As per the Constitution, there were three minimum functions expected of the Congress: to represent 'the people' of America, to make national laws, and to check the power of the Chief Executive.¹⁵³ In terms of the pluralist nature of US politics, however, "even if it is taken for granted that Congress is to 'represent the people', in some sense, should it represent each citizen equally, or should some minorities or 'interests' be given extra protection by means of extra weight in the national legislature?"¹⁵⁴ This question, posed by Dahl, is important to understanding the role of Congress. Active and vocal interest groups present issues and problems that need addressing. Silent majorities do not.

In the American system, 'sub-governments' abound – that is, groups of elites who operate in specific policy niche areas, somewhat autonomously. Lindblom and Woodhouse identify the congressional committee system as part of this "government within a government": legislation usually comes to the floor of the House or Senate only after a committee has considered it. Very few bills survive committee scrutiny, and of those that do, fellow legislators "more often than not follow committee recommendations".¹⁵⁵

Without the supervision of any kind of "supercommittee" or coordinating body such as a legislative cabinet, "committees and even subcommittees practice a striking degree of autonomy."¹⁵⁶ Tight focus on specific issues can also open them up to "capture" by outside interests who will target them for lobbying. The same is true for bureaucratic departments and employees, who enjoy the "time, expertise, and closeness" to issues and are equally specialised (as Congressional and Senate Committee members),¹⁵⁷ and can "pretty much go their own way" on their particular issue-areas.¹⁵⁸ In addition, as policy is made

¹⁵³ Dahl (1967), p.109

¹⁵⁴ Dahl (1967), p.111

¹⁵⁵ Lindblom & Woodhouse (1993), p.49

¹⁵⁶ Lindblom & Woodhouse (1993), p.50

¹⁵⁷ Lindblom & Woodhouse (1993), p.71

¹⁵⁸ Lindblom & Woodhouse (1993), p.65

by lower levels within an agency, it can become difficult to ensure the process is not corrupted (by political agendas or outside influence), and that the resulting policy proposals and prescriptions are relevant and intelligent.¹⁵⁹ Despite their autonomy, committees and subcommittees are faced with an ever-more complex and technical overall policy agenda, which has resulted in a premium on expertise.¹⁶⁰ This has meant that lobbies and interest groups who can provide the relevant expertise, research and data, can increase their influence by providing members and staffers of (sub)committees with the relevant information they need to properly conduct their work. With recent Congressional bans on “earmarks”, however, bills are becoming more straightforward and less open to padding (at the same time, this closes off a negotiating tool for getting hesitant legislators on board for any given bill).

Many of the most important foreign and military decisions do not require direct legislative action or involvement. Dahl has characterised the dynamic between the Executive and Legislative branches as the President acting as “the motor in the system”, while the Congress “applies the brakes.”¹⁶¹ For example, in the case of sudden military action: the president acts as the motor, driving the policy (to continue Dahl’s metaphor), while the Congress then has to act as either the brakes or the fuel (by appropriating the funds for the action or not). In addition, Executive Office elites must also contend with frequent legislative opposition because of more parochial considerations: Congress operates mainly with an eye to the domestic, which can mean that when a leader is “ready to launch a grand design”, a congressman can come in and apply the brakes “because one or another aspect of it might discomfit some industry in their state.”¹⁶²

Therefore, “the relative importance of President and Congress in policy-making is not and probably cannot be static.” The roles vary depending on the circumstances and stakes involved. For example, despite its reputation for inactivity and legislative lethargy, the Congress can sometimes act with

¹⁵⁹ Lindblom & Woodhouse (1993), p.72

¹⁶⁰ Berry (Jul.1993), p.37

¹⁶¹ Dahl (1967), pp.136-137

¹⁶² Mead (Fall 2005), p.589

“exceptional dispatch”. Nevertheless, the legislature is not as suitable as the Executive Branch for handling emergencies; “Like all legislatures, Congress is most handicapped in times of crisis and in dealing with military and foreign affairs.”¹⁶³

There are other avenues Congress can take in the foreign policy arena, in order to retain or acquire a modicum of control over the process and temper any Executive exuberance or enthusiasm. Through a “plethora of sanctions”, Henry Kissinger has pointed out, Congress has sought not only to legislate the tactics of foreign policy, but also to “impose a code of conduct on other nations”. Usually defined by the dominant party in Congress at the time, these sanctions can lean towards protectionist policies (predominantly a Democratic favourite) and also improvement of human rights (usually a Republican and conservative requirement, but also popular with Democrats).

“Successive administrations have acquiesced [to Congressional demands], in part as a compromise to gain approval for other programs, in part because, absent an immediate outside danger, domestic politics has become more important to political survival than handling of foreign policy.”¹⁶⁴

Domestic interest groups are not created equally. Differences in resources, incentives, the skills of group leaders, their allies, and their opponents have prevented, and likely will always prevent, “a close approximation of perfect equality” among citizens and their ability to influence government conduct. That being said, there are few groups in the United States determined to influence the government – “certainly few if any groups of citizens who are organised, active, and persistent” – who lack the opportunity or ability to influence officials somewhere in the political system in order to achieve at least some of their goals.¹⁶⁵

An individual, group, organisation, or movement that seeks a major change in government policies must turn to the White House for leadership.

¹⁶³ Dahl (1967), p.137

¹⁶⁴ Kissinger (2001/2), p.27

¹⁶⁵ Dahl (1967), p.386

Groups with less ambitious goals, however, may be able to achieve them with the cooperation of a handful of Congressmen. They can use Congress in a number of ways to do this. For example, Congressmen can be convinced to veto, delay, or amend hostile measures proposed by the President. Strategically placed support in Congress may be enough to influence marginal changes to existing policies: crafting loopholes, altering appropriation levels, launching investigations, Senate floor speeches in favour or opposition to specific policies. A Senator or Representative can also serve as a group's ambassador to relevant administrative agencies. Sometimes, groups may seek to achieve their ends by directly approaching administrative agencies, with or without the help of lobbyists. In these instances, the relationship that develops can be antagonistic, as groups push against the agency's official marching orders or Executive preferences. Occasionally, however, an interest group "may virtually capture the government agency."¹⁶⁶ But, it is not just agencies that can be "captured"; indeed, many influential leaders in Congress can appear to be "captives of their constituents".¹⁶⁷

Yet another option for an interest group, if they find their overtures ignored or blocked at the Executive and Congressional levels, is to try to influence local governments. State and local governments "are in many ways duplicates of the national government on a local scale," and groups may succeed at these levels in achieving what they could not at the national level.¹⁶⁸

METHODOLOGY

In order to ascertain what level of influence governmental and non-governmental actors can exert on the foreign policy-making process, and to what extent the existing traditions of American national interest exert reverse pressure, the roles of the media, special interests, and the legislative and the

¹⁶⁶ Dahl (1967), pp.381-384

¹⁶⁷ Dahl (1961/74), p.89 – A contemporary example would be Californian Senators and Representatives, who often appear beholden to the defence industries with factories and offices in the state and their Districts.

¹⁶⁸ Dahl (1967), p.385

executive branches of the US government will be discussed in the second part of this thesis. Through a pluralist analysis of these sectors, this thesis will ascertain whether or not the relevant agencies in the American federal government can plan, coordinate, and execute a grand strategy to secure the nation and defend its vital interests, in general and in the case of China policy. In order to achieve this goal, it is first important to obtain an overall view of the history of American foreign policy, and an understanding of the trends and traditions that help inform the United States' approach to the world and China (Chapter Three).

An analytical and descriptive route will be pursued, in order to answer the research questions and test the hypotheses posed in this introduction, through an extensive review of literature and the use of case studies of varying length. The nature and scope of this research is qualitative, dealing predominantly with accounts and appraisals of historical events, incorporating original analysis, before offering conclusions. Therefore, existing literature is qualitatively reviewed in order to tease forth the relevant information regarding the construction of American foreign and China policy.

The range of primary sources drawn from is particularly broad. Extensive use is made of news pieces and long-form journalism, which offer the timeliest and 'immediate' impressions of foreign policy events and governmental decision-making (the 'first draft of history', to use a favourite phrase of many journalists), from a sector of key importance to this study. The media sources drawn from are those considered part of the 'elite' media (in its broadest conception). This included newspapers such as *The New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and *Wall Street Journal*, universally accepted as those most likely to be read by Washington officials and the 'politically-informed public'. News magazines, a particularly valuable source, were selected based on the ideological and/or party biases they evinced, and an attempt was made to draw from across the political/ideological spectrum – for example, *The Weekly Standard* and *National Review* on the right; *The Nation*, *The American Prospect* and also *Rolling Stone* on the left; and also more centrist (or ideologically

flexible) publications, such as *The Atlantic* and *The New Republic* – this ensured that a more general impression of media perspectives of foreign policy, and China in particular, was acquired. The online ‘newspaper’, *The Hill*, was also a valuable source of quotations and opinions from and by legislators in the House and Senate.

Transcripts of interviews with policy-makers and also official speeches were used, in order to gather government impressions and public explanations for certain policy decisions – a particularly useful source for these documents was the *US State Department Dispatch* (readily and freely available online as PDFs), which collects major speech transcripts and articles written by State Department officials and employees, as well as other government officials and advisors.

Presidential Libraries – particularly the George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton Presidential Libraries – were also valuable sources of presidential and executive-level material and documentation.¹⁶⁹ Where possible, the published personal memoirs or histories written by those involved in the policy process were acquired and reviewed – these texts proved particularly valuable in advancing the study by providing personal insights, reflections and impressions of the American foreign policy system, structure, and the actors involved in relation to specific strategic and political decisions that were made (particularly valuable, as it turned out, were the memoirs of James A Baker III and Warren Christopher, and books by Peter Rodman, Leslie Gelb, Warren Cohen, and Zbigniew Brzezinski).

The United States Congress and Senate Committee websites¹⁷⁰ and the Library of Congress website¹⁷¹ were equally valuable sources of primary source information: particularly transcripts of hearings, press releases, and House and Senate legislation (passed and proposed) from which lobby and media activity

¹⁶⁹ Unfortunately, many National Security documents – particularly those related to China – remain classified at the time of writing.

¹⁷⁰ <http://www.house.gov> and <http://www.senate.com>, respectively

¹⁷¹ <http://thomas.loc.gov/home/thomas.php>

can be inferred.¹⁷² In addition, the “Open CRS” website, part of the Wikileaks effort to release documents pertaining to the functioning of the US government and its diplomacy, was also a useful source of information.¹⁷³

For secondary sources, this thesis draws on a broad range of published literature: primarily scholarly texts, books by investigative journalists, historical accounts and treatises, and also a wealth of journal articles on international relations, foreign policy analysis, domestic politics, presidential and governmental studies, and historical analysis. These sources have provided a mix of timely scholarly analysis (far more in-depth than a journalistic piece could achieve), and more extensive and in-depth works that benefit from hindsight. A preference for recently-published texts must be admitted, given the increased chances that authors of these texts will have benefitted from being able to draw upon the ever-increasing number of declassified documents. Given the predominantly empirical nature of this research – that is, its focus on what, how, and why certain policies and decisions were chosen by policy-makers, and how they fit in with the traditional American foreign policy framework – these sources are essential and invaluable for compiling as complete a picture as possible of the foreign policy-making process.

All of these sources, primary and secondary, are not without their limitations. For example, scholarly or investigative books can quickly become dated or superseded by newer volumes (hence the bias for recent publications wherever possible) when discussing contemporary events. Journalism is prone to being ill-informed, and can rapidly become obsolete by later, more thorough pieces – this should explain the clear bias towards weekly, fortnightly and monthly publications drawn from for this research, as they benefit from more time to establish and check facts and chronologies than do daily newspapers. In addition, ideological and political bias often informs the angles of reportage, particularly on China (as will be shown in Chapter Four), and must be taken into

¹⁷² A debt of gratitude is also due to Justin Landon, a friend who works for the US Government, and gave up some time to help me acquire some of the transcripts I needed, as well as relevant Congressional Research Service Reports

¹⁷³ “Congressional Research Service Reports for the People” (<http://openocrs.com/>): a source for Congressional Research Service Reports, some of which are often difficult to obtain

account – that many American media outlets and publications flaunt their political bias does, of course, make it easier to apply one's own 'filter' through which to read or watch American political reporting. Personal memoirs can suffer from the authors' desire to defend their own actions, pass blame, or 'white-wash' poor decisions, while also suffering from the authors' personal ideological and political biases. These limitations can be somewhat overcome by comparing the way memoirs by different officials, or articles published in ideologically opposed publications, represent the same issues, events, and key decisions and the processes through which they were made. In other words, none of these sources can be taken on their own, and must stand alongside other sources in order to get to the 'truth' of policy- and decision-making.

The chapters on the media, lobbies, and government institutions will each look at three predominant themes in US-China relations: normative, economic, and security. By keeping to these three issue areas, clear continuity and also proper comparisons can be drawn. Pluralism favours decision-making analysis when discussing the issue of policy influence. Many pluralists have argued that influence over policy-making is best determined by isolating and reconstructing key decisions and how they were reached, "thereby allowing observers to decide which particular actor or actors played the most significant role" in defining the policy direction taken.¹⁷⁴ In order to assess the influence of nongovernmental actors in foreign policy-making, select issues in US-China relations will be identified and discussed individually as specific case studies. These case studies will take different forms in each chapter, dependent on the subject of the study. The media chapter will be followed by a single, long-form case study of the media's treatment of the Tiananmen Square crackdown and its legacy in the US media's reporting of China. The lobby chapter will look at three case studies, each related to one specific corporation and its experiences with China, and also an issue case study on China's Most-Favoured-Nation trade status debate that became a political battleground following Tiananmen. The chapter looking at governmental institutions will look at specific issues and how the government has addressed these issues.

¹⁷⁴ Parmar (2004), p.20; see also Dahl (1961/74) and Polsby (1963)

By drawing on these media, it will be possible to ascertain the ways in which certain actors influence, or at the very least participate, in the American foreign policy-making process.

CHAPTER III

A BRIEF HISTORY OF US-CHINA POLICY

Perhaps no other country displays so clearly the myriad influences that now go into creating a nation's foreign policy than the United States. As a result, the United States is a perfect candidate for the study of the changing nature of foreign policy. For the purposes of this thesis – that is, the domestic sources of US-China policy – it is important to look at the historical development of US-China policy, before identifying and discussing the roles of domestic foreign policy actors. This chapter provides a brief look at the history of US-China relations, and places it within the context of the wider history of American foreign policy.

An examination of the literature on American foreign policy will clearly show that, for over two centuries, American foreign policy has sought to protect two main elements of republican liberty: that of “a synthesis of two traditions, liberal institutionalism and realism.”¹

While some believe these two schools to be antithetical, as “liberal internationalists emphasize the norms of world order [and] realists [emphasise] the realities of power politics”, it can also be argued, as Michael Lind has, that they actually complement each other.² This complementary aspect of the theories is a basis for a pluralist approach to international relations. Michael C. Desch, has described American liberalism as “a political system or a set of political values based on some combination of individual freedom, equality of opportunity, free markets, and political representation.”³

¹ Lind (2006), p.23

² Lind (2006), p.23

³ Desch (2007), p.10

Over the course of this chapter, it will become clear just how important free markets are to the formation of US foreign and, particularly, China policy.

Any attempt to discern the likely trajectory of America's future engagement with China (and the world at large) first requires knowledge of what has come before. Therefore, this chapter will develop an analysis of the arc and evolution of US China policy, providing the context within which the chapters to come will analyse the impact and influence of domestic actors on the policy- and decision-making process. The chapter is split into six sections, dealing with significant time periods, and will conclude with a summary identifying the thematic trends and traditions of US China policy (the focus on China also explains the less-orthodox time periods).

1776-1850s

Conventional wisdom holds that “no country can escape its geography and history when it comes to establishing its foreign policy principles and priorities,”⁴ so it is instructive to go back to the beginnings of the American Nation. This was a turbulent time when the fledgling United States was still coming to terms with itself as a new nation, and what this meant in terms of international relations – specifically, the contested American tradition of ‘isolationism’.

Following Independence, the US faced an uncertain political future. Surrounded as it was by territory controlled by hostile European powers, and reliant on foreign aid from others, the first century of American foreign policy was concerned with expanding and consolidating territory, to ensure national security by removing all potential threats from the continent. Only after this process was complete, did the United States start looking at competition with Europe.

Recurring themes in American foreign policy literature identify two common phases. The first is so-called “isolationism”, the second

⁴ Cameron (2002), p.2

internationalism. Many see US foreign policy in the late-18th and 19th centuries as falling within the former, intent on avoiding the entangling alliances cautioned against in Washington's Farewell Address. As Perkins has written, "In the first hundred years and more of the history of American foreign policy the distinctive feature, outside of the expansion of territory, is the crystallisation of the tradition of what has come to be called isolationism."⁵ The years following (and including) the two World Wars are often considered the beginning of the internationalist phase. These simple categories are imperfect.

As Andrew J. Bacevich has pointed out, "only by the loosest conceivable definition... could 'isolation' be said to represent the reality of United States policy during the first century-and-a-half of American independence." This is because, by 1900, America "had quadrupled its land mass at the expense of other claimants, engaged in multiple wars of conquest, vigorously pursued access to markets in every quarter of the globe, and acquired by force an overseas empire." This does not represent the actions of an "isolationist" nation, in any meaningful sense of the word.⁶

The isolationist period of American foreign policy coincided with an era when European empires still dominated international relations. Considering the uncertainty about the viability of the American experiment, it is little wonder the fledgling nation wished to separate itself from the machinations and conflicts of Europe, seen as a "perpetual menace to American liberties", as they sought "to involve the republic in their tangled affairs". Because some American statesmen were not always as deaf as they ought to be to Europe's pleas and seductions, safety was seen to lie in "complete abstention from political contact with Europe".⁷ In the face of the perceived insidious nature of European politics, John Quincy Adams wrote in 1793 that it was the duty of all American statesmen "to remain the peaceable and silent, though sorrowful, spectators of the sanguinary scene" of European affairs.⁸ This statement ultimately inspired the enduring isolationism from European affairs that characterised early

⁵ Perkins (1966), p.27

⁶ Bacevich (1994), p.75

⁷ Craig (1976), p.187

⁸ John Quincy Adams, quoted in: Craig (1976), p.187

American foreign policy – an aspect that would be severely tested in the first half of the twentieth century, and ultimately jettisoned during the Cold War.

The Founding Fathers knew the United States needed a foreign policy, a need to find foreign support where it could, and it certainly needed opportunities to trade; in other words, it needed at least some international involvement. Both idealists and realists in American government were comfortable with this strategy of isolation, believing the country could “get what it needed – growing commerce – without making enduring political or military commitments to other states.” By not choosing sides, it was believed, “the republic would be able to enjoy free trade with all [European] parties.”⁹

From the very beginning, American leaders have been intent on protecting and fostering its strong economy. George Washington and his successors pursued foreign trade to the extent that it contributed to American prosperity, seeking to develop commercial relations with as little political connection as possible. To this end, approximately 70 percent of all treaties and international agreements signed by the US in the nineteenth century were related to trade and commerce.¹⁰ Its frequent minor forays into internationalism during the first century-and-a-half were the result of commercial concerns (particularly in Latin America), interested more in protecting commerce than shaping any balance of power. Commerce would also fuel American continental expansion. Planters were searching for more fertile land to expand into (Texas, in particular, was seen as ideal for further cotton production), and expansion to the West Coast was seen as a way for both farmers and traders to broaden access to East Asian markets.¹¹

Understanding that it served the fledgling nation to draw upon lessons from Europe, but equally intent on leaving behind for good “Europe’s social ills, religious quarrels, and political jealousies”,¹² American leaders split into realist and idealist factions. Led by Alexander Hamilton and John Jay, American realists “attacked the notion that increased trade would lead to perpetual peace,”

⁹ Kupchan (2002), p.166

¹⁰ Jentleson (2007a), pp.63-64

¹¹ Kupchan (2002), pp.170-172

¹² Kupchan (2002), p.164

specifically refuting the idealist position that increased interdependence breeds more stability in the international environment.¹³ Hamilton in particular exhibited little patience (in *Federalist 6*) with the idea of democratic or commercial peace:

“Has commerce hitherto done anything more than change the objects of war? Is not the love of wealth as domineering and enterprising a passion as that of power and glory?”¹⁴

John Jay wrote, in *Federalist 4*, that no matter what anyone might wish or hope for, “it is too true, however disgraceful it may be to human nature, that nations in general will make war whenever they have a prospect of getting anything by it.”¹⁵ In the realist’s opinion, the United States should be guided by “sober self-interest just like any other country”. Interestingly, Hamilton and Jay’s realist faction do not appear to have shared the opinion that expanding economic opportunities around the globe *was* serving the American national interest. The idealist camp, most prominent in which were Thomas Jefferson and Thomas Paine, believed that the United States should make a clean break from the then-traditional methods of foreign policy, replacing the power politics of Europe with “a foreign policy guided by law and reason”.¹⁶

In his farewell address of 1796, George Washington laid down the foundations of a realist tradition in American foreign policy: “No nation is to be trusted farther than it is bound by interest; and no prudent statesman or politician will venture to depart from it.” He went on to add that nations don’t act to the benefit of others, “unless both [nations’] interests happen to be assimilated.”¹⁷ The arena in which mutual interests were most likely to be enjoyed, of course, was trade. Hamilton, exhibiting shrewd realist instincts, and adhering to Washington’s advice, “was perfectly willing to make arrangements with European governments as long as they promised to bring tangible advantages to his country.” Unlike John Adams and Thomas Jefferson, he

¹³ Cameron (2002), p.4

¹⁴ Hamilton, *Federalist 6* (2008), p.31

¹⁵ Jay. *Federalist 4* (2008), p.22

¹⁶ Kupchan (2002), p.164

¹⁷ MacGregor-Burns & Dunn (2004), p.105

objected “to the basing of foreign policy upon sentimental affinity or gratitude or any other emotion” which would involve “sacrifices of our substantial interests, preferences inconsistent with sound policy, or complaisances [*sic*] with our safety”.¹⁸

As the United States became more secure in its position (after its first half-century), the American notion of isolation did not preclude assertions of power and interests in its own hemisphere. The Monroe Doctrine would codify American hegemony in the Western Hemisphere, crafted by then-Secretary of State John Quincy Adams for President Monroe in 1823, but solidified by President James K. Polk in the late 1840s. The Monroe Doctrine “boldly expanded Adams’s proposition that the United States refrain from entangling itself in European affairs into a warning to Europe not to entangle itself in American affairs, defined as embracing the entire Western Hemisphere”. President Monroe asserted that any efforts on the part of colonial powers in South America would be seen as “dangerous to our peace and safety”, and therefore would be treated as a *casus belli*, requiring American intervention.¹⁹

The United States conducted a large number of foreign adventures throughout the nineteenth century – including Tripoli (1801-1805), Algiers (1815), Greece (1827), Sumatra (1832, 1838-1839), Liberia (1843), considerable interest in China (1843, 1854, and 1856 – see below), Angola (1860), Japan (1863-1864 and 1868), and Korea (1871). The objectives of these adventures, despite the number of operations outside of the Western Hemisphere, were “limited to defending U.S. traders and civilians,” supported by small “squadrons” of only a handful of vessels. President Polk would later blend idealism and realism in his pronouncement that the United States “ever maintain that people of this continent alone have a right to decide their own destiny” stating that any territories that wished to join the Union were free to do so, and warning the Europeans to keep their rivalries out of the American continent.²⁰

¹⁸ Craig (1976), p.188

¹⁹ Kissinger (2002), pp.238-239

²⁰ Kupchan (2002), p.171

With regards to US relations with China, ‘first contact’ occurred when the aptly-named *Empress of China* merchant ship docked in Canton in August 1784. While diplomatic relations with China were not formalised until 1844, consular officials were present in China from 1786, when Secretary of Foreign Affairs John Jay named Samuel Shaw (who sailed on the *Empress of China*) the first American consul to Canton. Shaw, a member of a prominent New England merchant family with trade interests through Hong Kong, devoted most of his energies to his family’s affairs and had only “very limited influence over the other American traders or with the Chinese government itself.”²¹

Relations between America and China would revolve around the ongoing diplomatic and military conflicts of the British and French, who aspired to “wring commercial concessions” from the Chinese Empire.²² American businessmen and diplomats did not initiate the treaty system that emerged from British and French activities, but “they offered no alternatives” and, worried that Britain’s successes might limit their own access to China, pragmatically took part in them demanding the same privileged status as the Europeans within the ‘treaty ports’.²³

During the Opium War, America sat on the sidelines in neutrality, while China (unsuccessfully) looked for a way to use the US to its advantage against the “obstinate English barbarians”. This would become a common theme in this period – while the US enjoyed the same benefits as other Western powers meddling in China’s affairs, the Americans were the least problematic and belligerent. The origin of the ‘Open Door’ (which called for equal opportunity for all traders), was designed by the Chinese to “elicit gratitude from the United States ‘and others’, in the hope of banking goodwill that might later be turned to China’s advantage.” Therefore, “without firing a shot and without issuing a

²¹ Dobson (2009), p.7

²² Dobson (2009), p.7

²³ Cohen (2010), p.8

threat,” the US was able to expand its commercial operations along the Chinese coast.²⁴

Responding to concerned business interests in China, Congress appropriated funds for a major diplomatic mission, and President John Tyler named Massachusetts congressman Caleb Cushing commander of a small naval squadron to emphasise U.S. strength and intentions. Cushing was able to negotiate the 1844 Treaty of Wangshia, which bestowed most favoured nation status on the US, granting it the same privileges as the British and French.²⁵

1850s & ANTEBELLUM AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY

American foreign policy in the 1850s and '60s (during and after the Civil War) was predominantly focused on generating support and funds for the different sides in the war.

Despite the US Commissioner Humphrey Marshall (1852-4) believing that the British were attempting to destabilize China to further their own imperial designs, the Pierce administration (which inherited Marshall from the Fillmore administration) had no interest in getting involved. Adhering to a recurring theme in US-China relations for the next sixty years, government apathy and “the remoteness of events in China from the focus of the Department of State’s attention”, American representatives could “do almost anything – provided they did not require support” from the government in Washington.²⁶

In 1856, when the Western powers’ treaties were due for renegotiation, the Anglo-French War with China brought about a number of humiliating defeats for China, and the 1858 Treaty of Tientsin granted further benefits to the British, French and also Americans. After acquiring a more solid treaty, the US government once again took little interest in China.²⁷

²⁴ Cohen (2010), pp.10-11

²⁵ Dobson (2009), p.76

²⁶ Cohen (2010), p.18

²⁷ Cohen (2010), pp.14-15

At this juncture, the United States enjoyed a solid position in China, which should have allowed it to exploit the burgeoning China market to its fullest. However, the outbreak of the American Civil War focused the nation's attention inward. During the Civil War, the Confederate Navy wreaked so much damage on the U.S. merchant marine that the China market remained "a minor element" of America's international commerce "until interest revived at the time of the Spanish-American War".²⁸

William Seward, Lincoln's Secretary of State, had a profound influence on the future focus of US foreign policy. Like his mentor, John Quincy Adams, he was a believer in America's 'mission' to spread democracy and civilisation around the world, and also the important role economics should play in fulfilling this mission. Because the Union had already expanded its borders to the West Coast, Seward looked even further westward than Adams, out to the Pacific.²⁹ With territorial security came an enhanced interest in the economic security of the United States, the key to which lay in commerce, "specifically, in the establishment of a commercial empire." The principle economic 'battlefield', Seward believed, would be the Far East.³⁰ Seward was "the pioneering figure before the Civil War to recast territorial empire into a commercial [empire]". Along with its manufactures, Seward believed, the US would export its ideals, values, and principles; it would be an empire expanded "not by force of arms, but attraction."³¹ He envisioned an empire that eventually stretched across all of North America, including Canada and Mexico. "Achieved through commercial ties and political gravitation, however, the empire's cost to American lives, treasure, or ideals... would be negligible." Seward would be among the first American statesmen to recommend the acquisition of strategically-located Pacific and Caribbean islands (or, at minimum, control of their ports), to act as way-stations for America's growing international commercial interests – this

²⁸ Dobson (2009), p.77

²⁹ Cohen (2010), p.29

³⁰ Immerman (2010), p.106

³¹ Immerman (2010), p.99

also explains his support for the acquisition of Alaska, and why he would start the process of acquiring the Hawaiian islands.³²

During the Civil War, US-China relations offered some potential benefit. Seward and other foreign policy leaders believed that, if the US (at least, the Unionist North) stood shoulder-to-shoulder with the European powers in Chinese and Japanese affairs, the Europeans would have less reason to support the Confederates than they would if America posed an obstacle to their plans in Asia. Therefore, a policy of cooperating with Great Britain and France “proved remarkably easy for the United State and, in Seward’s time, of some value to the Chinese.”³³

Seward would eventually sign the Burlingame Treaty with the Chinese, which granted them Most Favoured Nation status (the beginning of a long history of US-China MFN treaties). With this treaty, he was dealing with both a domestic and international concern; attempting to both regulate and stimulate Chinese immigration. In 1868, there were over 100,000 Chinese (‘coolies’) in the US, who had been instrumental in the rapid development of the railroads and the American West. The Burlingame Treaty, in an example of economic policy trumping public opinion, flew in the face of growing domestic opposition, as Americans were starting to agitate for reducing the number of Chinese labourers in America (they demanded much lower wages than Americans). Violence against Chinese became widespread in the West, particularly California, especially in the 1870s and 1880s.³⁴

There is no denying that the US-China relationship at this time was uneven, in America’s favour. In the US, Chinese were frequently treated brutally, and the Chinese government had no recourse. On the other hand, as a result of Western involvement and the treaty system, China was “forced to admit foreigners to its territory and American gunboats patrolled her waters to protect the lives and property of Americans in China.”³⁵

³² Immerman (2010), pp.123-126

³³ Cohen (2010), p.30

³⁴ Cohen (2010), pp.32-33

³⁵ Cohen (2010), p.35

Given America's still largely isolated position towards the end of the 19th Century, "for nearly fifty years" the US did not have a "settled and generally accepted foreign policy".³⁶ This is not to say that the country was idle or immune to geopolitical realities, and a lack of a clear foreign policy goal did not prevent it from pursuing its own interests.

Guided by the Monroe Doctrine, and the prospect that the Philippines might be seized by Germany (or another great power), the McKinley administration decided to turn the entire archipelago into an American protectorate and, in 1898, the same rationale led to the annexation of Guam and Hawaii.³⁷ If Germany had managed to get a foothold in any of these territories, it was felt, it would have a base from which it could more easily spread its influence into the Western Hemisphere which, up until then, had been inviolable. The acquisition of the Philippines, however, was not only informed by balance of power considerations. Corporate and Executive Office concerns that European and Japanese imperialists were "in the process of closing the door to American commerce in China" forced the McKinley administration to rethink America's imperial ambitions. Despite McKinley's assurances that the Europeans weren't discriminating against the US, he was unable to placate those with commercial interests in Asia. The addition of naval interest in a coaling station and base of operations in Asia "focused public attention on East Asia in a way that exceeded even the hopes of the lobbyists and publicists of the American Asiatic Association."³⁸

In September and November 1898, Secretary of State John Hay sent his 'Open Door' notes to the Western powers with interests in China, requesting they agree to uphold Chinese territorial and administrative integrity, and adhere to a policy of open trade in all treaty ports (as outlined by the numerous treaties). This policy would relieve pressure from those in America concerned with power politics, from those who sought to expand American economic interests, and also from "romantic nationalists eager to see the United States play a larger role in world affairs." This was to be achieved without risking

³⁶ Lippmann (1943), p.3

³⁷ Lind (2006), p.83

³⁸ Cohen (2010), pp.41-42

overseas intervention, which would surely disturb a nation that remained “notoriously skittish about foreign entanglements.”³⁹ China ‘experts’ of the time believed China needed the ability to secure and control its own territories in order to maintain the Asian balance of power and stability. This, in turn, would help protect American interests (both economic and imperial) in Asia.⁴⁰

In 1900-1901, the McKinley administration “recognised that public interest in China was superficial”, and that – aside from business interests – public interest was “neither broad enough nor deep enough for the government to be able to muster the support it would need to become involved in [Asian] power politics”. Additionally, Hay and McKinley realised that even though the United States was of necessity concerned with the balance of power in East Asia (through tangible economic and humanitarian interests there), “none of these concerns or interests were worth fighting for.”⁴¹ It is clear, therefore, that suspicion of foreign entanglements remained ingrained in the American psyche; perhaps as the latest example of an expression of John Quincy Adams’ warning to not go abroad ‘in search of monsters’.

REALISTIC ECONOMICS & CAUTION (*McKINLEY, ROOSEVELT, TAFT & WILSON*): 1900-1920

Throughout this period, American foreign policy has been presented and accepted as being “committed to the defence and advancement of liberty and democracy in the world.” This is not, however, entirely the case, given the “rampant interventionism” of the time.⁴² There is little doubt that after 1900 the United States could no longer be considered isolationist: with the wider horizons that came with the end of the Spanish-American War and the growth of American imperialism, “the scene changed and the story became more complex.”⁴³

³⁹ Cohen (2010), p.46

⁴⁰ Cohen (2010), pp.43-44

⁴¹ Cohen (2010), p.53

⁴² Hannigan (2002), p.9

⁴³ Perkins (1966), p.27

“By 1899, the United States had become a world power in the sense that it was not only the greatest industrial nation, but it was also willing to use its new power militarily, after the fashion of the European states American leaders sought to emulate.”⁴⁴

Despite their differences, the four administrations of the turn of the century (McKinley to Wilson) all sought to articulate a coherent world view, and to determine America’s responsibilities. Their assumptions would have a profound impact on American diplomacy in the decades to come. There is a growing literature that argues American foreign policy of this time was highly influenced by social evolutionary thought or Social Darwinism.⁴⁵ However, while it is certainly true that many American policy elites evinced support for such theories that placed Americans (or, more generally, Anglo-Saxons) at the top of the evolutionary pyramid, more realistic leaders and policies better explain the foreign relations of this time.

America’s rising power would have a lasting impact on its foreign policy, and its policy towards China would remain stubbornly durable and unchanging, despite considerable evolutions in other areas and different ideologies in subsequent administrations:

“Despite the importance that businessmen and missionaries attached to their activities in China, neither the people nor the government of the United States could long focus on Asian affairs. There were much more important problems to be dealt with at home.”⁴⁶

America’s new imperialism, which resulted from the “splendidly profitable”⁴⁷ war with Spain, consisted of its acquisition of Hawaii, Puerto Rico, the Philippines, Guam, Samoa, the Panama Canal Zone, and (briefly) Cuba.⁴⁸ Far from just being an expression of messianic imperialism, the fervour for expansion also had its roots in economic determinism, itself an outgrowth of the industrial successes of the American North. The dominant concern of US

⁴⁴ Cohen (2010), pp.42-43

⁴⁵ Hannigan (2002), p.1

⁴⁶ Cohen (2010), p.59

⁴⁷ Ricard (2006), p.19

⁴⁸ Holbrooke (2002), p.2

diplomacy in the two decades preceding the First World War is “best captured in the era’s constant references to the Monroe Doctrine and the open door”, two policies with which the US, as the world’s newest rising political-economic force, hoped to “shore up and institutionalise the political boundaries and frameworks for trade” that prevailed in the Western Hemisphere and Asia.⁴⁹ The Open Door ideology – most commonly connected with China – was a policy that would allow American policy makers to “seek to realise and sustain their vision of the good society at home through open door marketplace expansion abroad”. Hannigan has argued that through this approach its author William A. Williams was able to “establish the vital importance of economics in U.S. foreign policy” for this time.⁵⁰

Theodore Roosevelt continued this fervour following the 1901 assassination of President McKinley, expanding the Monroe Doctrine with what came to be known as the “Roosevelt Corollary”. This corollary declared that the United States was to take on the mantle of international policeman in the Western Hemisphere, thereby justifying American intervention while at the same time forbidding others the same rights:

“Chronic wrongdoing, or an impotence which results in a general loosening of the ties of civilised society, may in America, as elsewhere, ultimately require intervention by some civilised nation, and in the Western Hemisphere the adherence of the United States to the Monroe Doctrine may force the United States, however reluctantly, in flagrant case of such wrongdoing or impotence, to the exercise of an international police power.”⁵¹

America’s involvement in China, during this time and prior to World War I, was liberal interventionist in nature, and like its involvement in Latin America, American interest in China was largely economic.⁵² The level of interest and will to act in the American economic interest was dependent on both the administration in office and also the global environment of the time. The turn of

⁴⁹ Hannigan (2002), p.13

⁵⁰ Hannigan (2002), p.4

⁵¹ Ricard (2006), p.18

⁵² Whitcomb (2001), p.94

the century allows for a clear analysis of how changes in three administrations can affect American foreign (specifically China) policy, and also the continuities of overall US traditions of Grand Strategy.

The US focused much of its 20th Century expansionist energies on trying to promote stable governments that would provide markets for US products and access for US businesses. President Roosevelt issued his corollary to the Monroe Doctrine, designed to promote stability in the Western Hemisphere, but when stability proved elusive, Roosevelt's successor, William Howard Taft, proudly announced the "even more intrusive policy of Dollar Diplomacy" which hoped to effectively "buy" stability and open access to international markets.⁵³

From McKinley's assassination until the 1904 Russo-Japanese War, Far Eastern policy in the US was John Hay's near-exclusive domain. During these years, focus on domestic concerns and events in Europe meant interest in China was negligible. American material interests fared badly and trade declined. Russian adventurism threatened the Asian balance of power, and when Russia threatened Manchuria, the US was forced to take note: Manchuria absorbed 90% of the US textile exports to China. The business press and American Asiatic Association expressed fear of Russia's imperialist agenda, but Roosevelt was initially ambivalent, believing that it was Western civilisation being brought to the barbarians. Japan approached the US for joint military action and an alliance against Russia, but was rebuffed: Americans still believed their military was only for the protection of Americans and their existing territories.⁵⁴

Despite the rhetoric of his friends, including Brooks Adams and Alfred Mahan, and despite some of his own earlier beliefs, as president, Roosevelt identified no vital American interest in China, and therefore devoted little attention to it. American indifference to China "derived not only from the relatively greater pressures of more urgent affairs, but also the decline in American economic interests there": trade declined sharply in North China and Manchuria, where American cotton and textile exports prospered in the 1890s. Equally, the realities of doing business in China were well known to the US

⁵³ Dobson (2009), p.164

⁵⁴ Cohen (2010), pp.55-57

business community. They had become increasingly aware that the Chinese neither had, nor were likely to have for some considerable time, “meaningful purchasing power” to absorb American products. Add to this the lack of a domestic communications system and poor infrastructure, China was simply not an attractive investment market. Cohen also suggests that this was especially true after the economic panic of the 1890s: “the quest for overseas markets became less frantic and, though never abandoned, was pursued more rationally in less exotic places.”⁵⁵

Equally, because the Japanese succeeded in checking Russian expansion, the years immediately following the end of the Boxer Rebellion saw little threat to the partition of China. Therefore, to the extent that Roosevelt remained interested in the Asian balance of power and its relation to American security, China ceased to be of importance, without economic or security significance. With neither a realist nor liberal justification to remain involved or engaged in China, the US simply didn't. The president was therefore unwilling to provide more than rhetorical support for China's aspirations for modernisation and independence from Japanese imperialism. This policy was predominantly rooted in his preference to avoid – at all costs – the risk of war with Japan.⁵⁶ Roosevelt would caution Secretary of War William Howard Taft that American interests in Asia were “unimportant, and not such that the American people would be content to run the slightest risk of collision about them”.⁵⁷ This was especially true when stacked against the relative importance of Asia to the Japanese. This cautious policy likely reflected the duelling approaches toward China that Roosevelt inherited: domestically, many voters demanded Chinese exclusion from the American workforce, while American businesses demanded adherence to the Open Door.⁵⁸

Theodore Roosevelt was the first president since the Founding Fathers to resurrect Hamilton's approach of treating the balance of power as “the distinctive feature of international relations and to undertake an active

⁵⁵ Cohen (2010), p.61

⁵⁶ Cohen (2010), pp.66-68

⁵⁷ Roosevelt, quoted in: Cohen (2010), p.73

⁵⁸ Bradley (2009), p.285

American role in shaping it.” Roosevelt’s involvement in finding a solution to the Russo-Japanese War of 1904 was a perfect example of this. Roosevelt “feared that a Russian victory might enable it to dominate Asia and thereby threaten the global balance of power”, and, though wanting Russia weakened, “resisted carrying [its] defeat... to the point where a Japanese threat would substitute for a Russian one.” The settlement reached (for which Roosevelt received the Nobel Peace Prize) was based on the premise of a balance of power in Asia, in which Japan, with British support, would “offset Imperial Russia, with the United States maintaining the ultimate balance between the two sides in Asia, much as Britain protected the equilibrium in Europe.”⁵⁹

The president’s opposition to greater involvement in China’s struggle for independence survived despite China’s supporters within his administration. For example, Taft, after a 1907 visit to China, became “convinced” of the need to “stand against the Japanese threat to economic interests of Americans in China”; William Straight, the American consul general at Mukden, “conspired with Chinese officials” to use American capital against Japan; and Assistant Secretary of State Huntington Wilson “shared Straight’s hostility toward Japan”. Nonetheless, Roosevelt would remain careful, because he still “did not consider the sum of the interest of Americans in Manchuria or China proper equivalent to a vital national interest.” This did not mean he would ignore the government’s responsibility to look out for the interests of its citizens and businesses. Where there was clear evidence of discrimination against American goods, the Washington would protest to the offending power, whether Japan or any other nation. Given the limited importance of this trade, however, “such protests would never be pushed to the point of precipitating a crisis.” The administration’s policy of protecting commercial interests, while avoiding confrontation, would be formalised in the 1908 Root-Takahira Agreement.⁶⁰

Despite being Theodore Roosevelt’s hand-picked successor, within a few months of his inauguration, “Taft left no doubt that he was determined to be his own man”. The sharpest departure from Roosevelt’s (and earlier) policies lay in

⁵⁹ Kissinger (2002), pp.240-242

⁶⁰ Cohen (2010), pp.69-70

the new administration's Asian policy. Taft's ideas about Asia were formed during his time as Governor of the Philippines, and also as part of the diplomatic Pacific cruise dispatched by Theodore Roosevelt, during which he developed sympathy for the Chinese. He would elevate former Roosevelt officials who shared his sympathy for the Chinese and opposition to Japanese imperialism. The Taft administration's diplomacy focussed on "aggressively promoting the economic interests of the United States to an extent never before attempted and not matched until the late 1990s", as a part of a considerable effort to expand American trade and investments throughout the world. This economic push was most striking in Asia because of the contrast it offered to Roosevelt administration policy, "particularly in terms of Taft's willingness to press American interests in the face of Japanese power." In many ways, Taft's approach to Asia is a synthesis of American foreign policy traditions and ideologies. Alongside his genuine belief in the potential for expanded markets for US products offered by a modernised China, he believed improving China's situation would serve the US national interest. Serving the realist tradition, Taft saw restoring control of China's sovereignty to the Chinese as a way of stabilising the balance of power in the region, checking Japanese expansion, and making the region safe for American economic interests. Serving the idealistic tradition, Taft and his Asia team honestly believed that by pursuing their own interests, they would also help China, as their aspirations were consistent with both the ideals and interests of the American people.⁶¹

Taft's policy would be known as 'Dollar Diplomacy', and in the face of scepticism from the American financial community, he offered a defence and explanation of its benefits in his December 1912 Annual Message to Congress:

"The diplomacy of the present administration has sought to respond to modern ideas of commercial intercourse. This policy has been characterized as substituting dollars for bullets. It is one that appeals alike to idealistic humanitarian sentiments, to the dictates of sound policy and strategy, and to legitimate commercial aims. It is an effort frankly directed to the increase of American trade upon the axiomatic

⁶¹ Cohen (2010), p.70,74

principle that the government of the United States shall extend all proper support to every legitimate and beneficial American enterprise abroad... Because modern diplomacy is commercial, there has been a disposition in some quarters to attribute to it none but materialistic aims. How strikingly erroneous is such an impression may be seen from a study of the results by which the diplomacy of the United States can be judged.”

In the same address, Taft defended Dollar Diplomacy by pointing to the “enormous increase in the importance and activities of those relations”. Indeed, the president would argue that the US had not done *enough* to further boost the strength of the American economy, and that,

“If this government is really to preserve to the American people that free opportunity in foreign markets which will soon be indispensable to our prosperity, even greater efforts must be made. Otherwise the American merchant, manufacturer, and exporter will find many a field in which American trade should logically predominate pre-empted through the more energetic efforts of other governments and other commercial nations.”⁶²

Taft, long overshadowed by his predecessor and successor, actually brought about an important and lasting change in American China policy. Much of American foreign policy in the 20th century “resembled a direct or indirect application of Dollar Diplomacy”. Even though specific schemes and proposals for China failed, “a form of Dollar Diplomacy continued to play a major role in Sino-U.S. relations right through the 1930s.” Another, more dramatic example of Dollar Diplomacy can be seen in the Marshall Plan of the late 1940s. Dobson argues that, while “It may have been couched in noble, philanthropic language... it had much the same goal as Taft’s Dollar Diplomacy: to stabilize economies and governments, in this instance in Europe, through the infusion of massive numbers of U.S. dollars.”⁶³

⁶² Quoted in: Dobson (2009), p.147

⁶³ Dobson (2009), pp.148-149

As with the Roosevelt administration, the realities of the Asian balance of power precluded the US from granting China much autonomy – Japan and the European Imperial powers were simply too powerful, a fact that even the Chinese recognised by continuing to angle for support from other powers and policies that avoided angering their oppressors. Taft's personal interest in and hopes for China simply did not match the geopolitical realities of the time.⁶⁴

During Woodrow Wilson's administration, it has been argued, the US exhibited more idealistic aims and policies, with realism taking a back-seat to the new president's high-minded goals. The first reaction of the United States when war broke out in Europe was neutrality, which it had adhered to through Europe's multiple conflicts of the nineteenth century. Walter Lippmann, highly critical of Wilson's foreign policy (and one-time advisor of the president), observed in 1943 that, "[w]hen the long-expected war in Europe broke out in 1914, the United States had no foreign policy which enabled the nation to determine its interests in the conflict." He added that Wilson's lack of a foreign policy "gave him [no] means of judging whether, why, when, where, how, and to what end, the United States must take its position in the war." Wilson's policy "took a zigzag course" as he and his advisers tried to ascertain what its interests actually were; at first angry "because the British blockade infringed the American doctrine of freedom of the seas", then "because German ruthlessness outraged American sensibilities".⁶⁵

The Wilson administration's foreign policy is generally well known, but its China policy (understandably) receives nowhere near as much attention as does the President's role in World War I and its aftermath. Wilson's China policy would contain foreshadowing elements of future Sino-American relations. While Wilson came into office with high-minded ideals of changing the tone of China policy, the realities of international relations – not to mention distractions in other parts of the world – would eventually result in a realignment of policy towards an economic focus. At first, Wilson's China policy

⁶⁴ Cohen (2010), pp.71-73

⁶⁵ Lippmann (1943), p.32

was to oppose the Taft administration's Dollar Diplomacy, which led to growing nervousness among American investors in China.

"In his first year as president, Wilson's handling of American policy toward China indicated less concern for power politics than Roosevelt had shown and less concern for Wall Street than Taft had shown."⁶⁶

America's approach to China during Wilson's administration can largely be described as *disinterested*: without governmental support, business interests were uninterested in remaining in China. Despite pledging the US government to play a greater role in the promotion of American trade, Wilson's opposition to previous policy in China was rooted in his belief that policy had been "subordinated to the narrow self-interest" of those banks and businesses that formed the American Group before becoming part of the international consortium in China. Wilson believed such practices "artificially restricted entrepreneurial opportunity in the U.S.", "had a debilitating effect on overall economic development", and "undermined public support for the business system."⁶⁷ Wilson and Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan "mistrusted" the bureaucracy, were "hostile to the imperialists", and were "unwilling to accept advice from those steeped in the old politics of the Old World." Wilson's China policy was therefore made without consultation with the State Department or the other nations involved in the China consortium. Progress towards a better world, Wilson believed, "could not be based on the wisdom of imperialism and avarice."⁶⁸

In 1913, Washington extended recognition to the Republic of China, which had arisen from the ashes of the civil war. In doing so, Wilson effectively ignored conditions in China and the fact that his preferred Chinese leader, Yuan Shi-kai, was implicated in the murder of another prominent Chinese.⁶⁹ In order to consolidate his control, Yuan Shi-kai approached the US with contracts for infrastructure and investment projects. The Americans eagerly accepted these,

⁶⁶ Cohen (2010), p.76

⁶⁷ Hannigan (2002), pp.127-128

⁶⁸ Cohen (2010), p.78

⁶⁹ Cohen (2010), p.79

but they did not lead to a substantial increase in America's economic role in China, which was still dominated by other powers. The outbreak of World War I, in conjunction with American withdrawal from the consortium, created conditions under which Japan could take advantage of European distraction to enhance its position in China.⁷⁰

Sympathetic Americans in China requested government help to combat Japan's attempts to run roughshod over China's sovereignty, but the realities of America's position limited its action. State Department Counsellor Robert Lansing stated that, while the US was a friend of China, "it would be quixotic in the extreme to allow the question of China's territorial integrity to entangle the United States in international difficulties". In Lansing's view, "American interests in China were commercial only", and a Japanese guarantee that American goods would receive equal treatment in China was enough to satisfy Open Door requirements.⁷¹ As American interests in Asia were considered minor, they simply could not compete for Wilson's attention while the First World War unfolded, and ultimately drew the US in.

Under the guidance of Division of Far Eastern Affairs chief E.T. Williams, China did remain at least a peripheral concern for Wilson. During the World War, Wilson would issue statements opposing Japanese imperialism, but go no further. This harmed the impression the president wished to create of the US as champion of oppressed people everywhere. However, Wilson slowly came to see expansion of American economic interests in China as a way of checking Japan's imperial expansion in the Asian arena. He came to discard his opposition to the much-criticised Taft-era dollar diplomacy and, in East Asia, embraced the policy offering businessmen support in contract negotiations.⁷²

In May 1917, the Wilson administration conceded that Japan had a "special" position in China, different to any Western power's, at the same time as reaffirming a commitment to the open door. This, according to some in the administration, caused considerable damage to America's standing with the

⁷⁰ Hannigan (2002), p.131

⁷¹ Lansing, quoted in: Cohen (2010), p.82

⁷² Hannigan (2002), p.133; Cohen (2010), pp.84-87

Chinese, which up until now had considered America the lesser of the barbarian interlopers. China's interests would suffer yet further at Versailles, when, in order to keep them at the negotiating table, Wilson acquiesced to Japanese demands regarding their Chinese conquests (specifically, Shantung). This is unfortunate, as the League of Nations was meant in part to be an organisation that could do for China what the US could not do alone: secure its territorial integrity and sovereignty.⁷³ Here we see that Wilson, like Theodore Roosevelt, was unwilling to follow any idealistic hopes they may have had for China into a confrontation with Japan.⁷⁴

A STRONG RETURN TO THE GLOBAL ARENA & BUSINESS AS USUAL IN ASIA (1920-1945)

With the defeat of League ratification, and the rise in disenchantment with international involvement among the electorate, Warren G. Harding won the presidential election in 1920 on an "America First" platform. In his inaugural address, Harding announced his opposition to American internationalism: "The recorded progress of our Republic, materially and spiritually, in itself proves the wisdom of our inherited policy of non-involvement in Old World affairs."⁷⁵

What followed was a period of increased isolationism and protectionism, during which America resorted to its historically-favoured methods of dealing with international relations, such as throwing up tariffs to protect its own industries from foreign competition, and withdrawing from the politics of the European continent.

"The twenties and thirties are popularly thought of as the height of isolationism in U.S. foreign policy. There is some truth to this, evidenced by the U.S. rejection of American participation in the League of Nations, the rise of isolationist sentiment among the American public and a strong peace

⁷³ Cohen (2010), p.88

⁷⁴ Hannigan (2002), p.135

⁷⁵ Cited in: Kupchan (2002), p.183

movement, and its reluctance to become actively involved in European conflicts (especially following the Great Depression and during the early years of World War II).⁷⁶

After World War I, Washington officials still played a leading role in disarmament negotiations, and also helped design and manage a new international monetary system. Where it remained 'isolationist' was by steering clear of alliances and commitments to collective security, save for the Kellogg-Briand Pact of 1928, which was an unrealistic attempt to condemn war and commit signatories to peaceful conflict resolutions.⁷⁷

In China, the United States and other Western powers remained committed to the imperialist treaty system, making no moves to alter the status quo, and resisted Chinese overtures for change. During this period, China experienced considerable internal strife, as factions within the country tried to consolidate or usurp power from the warlords who held de facto control. The internal conflict led many in America to believe they should stay engaged in China, protecting its economy and the Western interests therein – even in the face of increased and ever-more violent anti-Western protests. Because China remained of peripheral concern to the US government, policy was the sole responsibility of two people, who were unable to attract governmental attention for long. “A combination of sterile legislation and a rigid insistence on order” shaped America’s China policy, insisting that the troubled nation remain committed to honouring its treaty commitments. Even in the face of the May 30th Movement, which brought increasingly violent anti-Western protests, and demands from the American business community in China for protection, Secretary of State Frank Kellogg refused to act. He felt American public opinion “would no longer tolerate gunboat diplomacy”. Of equal significance in Kellogg’s thinking was the popular American belief that its involvement in World War I had been “to serve the selfish ends of a privileged few”; this sentiment instilled

⁷⁶ Rosati (1999), p.26

⁷⁷ Kupchan (2002), p.187

a profound reluctance to get militarily involved in China to protect its business interests.⁷⁸

Through much of this period, therefore, America was “troubled and confused” by events in China. Administrative and public apathy led not only to ineffective policies, but also insufficient understanding of the realities unfolding in China’s civil war. There was, however, one positive outcome from America’s hands-off approach: as the least-interfering power, the US was able to reach a rapprochement with Nationalist China, while both Japan and the USSR were excluded. This being said, diplomats at the time – including Coolidge’s Undersecretary of State, William Castle – held views similar to those of Teddy Roosevelt and his time, deferring to Japan’s interests on the Asian mainland.⁷⁹

With the onset of the Great Depression, isolationist sentiment in the United States would only grow. Hamilton Fish Armstrong attributes American isolation during these years to the attitude that “Having won the war for their allies... Americans considered that they were entitled to attend to their own affairs exclusively.”⁸⁰

Opposition to Japanese militarism in the late 1920s and early 1930s would continue to inform US policy towards Asia, but the Roosevelt tradition of semi-engagement continued but to an even greater extent: domestic concerns were the overriding priority as the Hoover administration sought a solution to the economic stagnation afflicting the country. Insofar as foreign affairs encroached on public opinion, the collection of war debts owed by European allies was the only policy of interest. When China approached the US and Europe for help against Japan, there was simply no support for foreign entanglements or intervention. America was once again confronted with the dilemma Roosevelt and Knox had struggled with in 1910: the choice of abandoning their economic interests in the region or risking war with Japan to protect China’s sovereign and territorial integrity. Within the State Department, “there was essential

⁷⁸ Cohen (2010), pp.100-105

⁷⁹ Cohen (2010), pp.108-114

⁸⁰ Armstrong (1972), p.2

agreement that American interests in Manchuria in particular and China in general were insignificant; there was no reason to fight.”⁸¹

In the broader scope of international relations, Japan’s invasion of China would become an abstraction with which internationally-minded Americans and others would contemplate the stability of the system put in place after World War I. Japan’s actions violated her treaty obligations, made a mockery of the mutual-security obligation of the League of Nations, and violated the Nine-Power Treaty and Kellogg-Briand Pact, thereby threatening the peace system intended to keep nations – specifically, the United States – out of war. Hoover’s Secretary of State, Henry Stimson, would attempt to influence events in Asia, but due to a lack of both international will and preoccupation with domestic troubles, he was able to offer nothing more than rhetorical support for China – neither the Congress nor Senate would concede that Japan’s aggression threatened US interests, thereby limiting the actions available to Stimson and others sympathetic towards China.⁸² In the interwar period, therefore,

“China became an abstraction – the victim in a test case of the interwar peace system. The system failed the test; the world lost the system – and China lost Manchuria.”⁸³

With the onset of World War II, America was once again a spectator to another European war, and again the White House was occupied by an idealistic president, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, who wished to help protect democracy around the world. However, in the decade leading up to Pearl Harbor, there were sharp differences within the US about how the growing military power and increasingly transparent expansionist ambitions of European and Far Eastern dictators should be dealt with, if at all.⁸⁴ The differences centred (as always) around how best to serve the United States’ national interests. American policymakers were split over the question of how to react to the outbreak of war: Isolationists were against any steps that might lead to aid for

⁸¹ Cohen (2010), pp.116-117

⁸² Cohen (2010), pp.118-119, 122-123

⁸³ Cohen (2010), p.123

⁸⁴ Holsti (1996), p.186

the democracies, fearing a repeat of 1917, whereby the United States would become so committed to an Allied victory that “she would be drawn into war against her will”. Interventionists, on the other hand, “wanted to abandon neutrality and give military aid to Britain and France.”⁸⁵

Despite avoiding any semblance of picking sides in the escalating conflict in Europe and Asia, “almost none of the so-called isolationists declared that the [imperial] commitments of the United States should be reduced”; there was no discussion of revoking the Monroe Doctrine, that the Philippines should not be defended, or that Japan should be given free rein in China, which she demanded as the price of peace (repeating their Versailles demands). Instead of preparing for the coming war, American policymakers devoted their efforts to opposing the alliances that were “needed in order to validate the commitments,” so blinded were they by the illusions of America’s traditional non-entanglement.⁸⁶

Some, including President Roosevelt, feared that aggressive German and Japanese ambitions represented long-term threats to American security and also the survival of democracy. With this in mind, “it was thus vital for the United States to support those resisting these dictatorships.” However, the counter-argument for this early form of pre-emptive foreign policy was that “war itself, not the European or Asian balance of power, most directly threatened America’s interests and democratic institutions.” Therefore, every effort should be made to “avoid once again being drawn into distant conflicts that pose no clear and present danger to the preservation of the Republic or its key institutions.”⁸⁷

When FDR began his presidency, the “horrors of the depression” were a more immediate threat to the interests of the United States than events in Asia.⁸⁸ Therefore, the president focussed attentions on pressing domestic politics, such as post-War and post-Depression reconstruction and also the nine million unemployed workers in America.⁸⁹ Roosevelt’s “spectacular measures”

⁸⁵ Ambrose & Brinkley (1997), p.3

⁸⁶ Lippmann (1943), p.45

⁸⁷ Holsti (1996), p.186

⁸⁸ Cohen (2010), p.123

⁸⁹ Perkins (1966), p.79

of reform gave America hope again, but there remained “little energy left to think about the troubles and dangers of others.”⁹⁰ When it came to China, and Japan’s continued aggression therein, Franklin Roosevelt would follow a path similar to his cousin, Theodore. Specifically, this meant appeasing Japan. Indeed, despite lingering sympathies in the State Department’s Division of Far Eastern Affairs, all new China projects China were “screened to avoid irritating Japan.”⁹¹ The need to ease suffering at home naturally took precedence over creating tension abroad – the national interest trumped all, and at the time interests were conceived of in measurable terms such as “commerce, investments, and occasionally missionary interests.”⁹² Simply put, involvement in China displayed no tangible benefits. During the late 1930s, when Japan stepped up its campaigns in China, and the resultant destruction of American property, American deaths, and the disruption to American commerce, FDR still refused to get involved – the ‘lessons’ of World War I prevailed, and the US was not willing to go to war for the advantage of the few.⁹³

According to Cohen, in the early years of conflict, “there was no shortage of sympathy for China” in America, but there was “simply doubt as to the relevance of Asia at a time when the ‘real world’ was endangered by Hitlerism.” This sentiment would change dramatically only after Japan signed the 1940 Tripartite Pact with Nazi Germany and Italy, and China became an official US ally. The US would continue selling oil to Japan until 1941 (thereby facilitating its war effort), but they also froze Japanese assets in America as the Japanese joined the side of the aggressors. In retaliation, Japan attacked Pearl Harbor, and America was drawn into World War II.⁹⁴ This marked the beginning of a new trend in American foreign economic policy as, from now on, the United States would use economic warfare, to varying degrees of severity and success, against a number of nations that were perceived to be “rogue” or threats.

Only after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, in December 1941, was Roosevelt able to mobilise support to get involved. Before the attack, Roosevelt

⁹⁰ Armstrong (1972), p.3

⁹¹ Cohen (2010), p.126

⁹² Cohen (2010), p.123

⁹³ Cohen (2010), p.132

⁹⁴ Cohen (2010), pp.133-135

had known that the autocracies presented potential threats to the United States, and that if threatened, America “might wade in with everything we have to give”.⁹⁵ Once again, China dropped off the policy radar.

In China, the Roosevelt years “demonstrated that American policy was designed to serve American interests without particular regard to China.” That Japan’s belligerence resulted in loans and other beneficial treatment of China, was incidental to America’s agenda.⁹⁶

TRUMAN, THE ABERRATION, & NORMALIZATION (1945-1972)

President Roosevelt implemented one of the greatest shifts in US foreign policy, “convincing Americans of the merits of not only global engagement, but of a liberal, multinational brand.” After joining the United Nations, the United States continued to participate actively in fashioning an international network of political and economic institutions aimed at managing the new international system. Roosevelt’s successes did not immediately lay to rest the spectre of America’s traditional isolation, as unmistakable signs of a retreat from the international scene arose soon after the war ended. Specifically, America wanted to return to pre-war levels of armament, and there was a substantial decline in defence spending: in the two years after hostilities ended, US defence spending fell from \$81 billion to \$13 billion, and troop levels dropped from 12.1 million to 1.6 million,⁹⁷ with planned future reductions.

Truman’s administration would see a number of revolutions in US foreign policy that would reverse America’s demilitarisation, and experience a considerable revolution in the practices and ideologies behind the United States’ perceived position and role in the world. The onset of the Cold War and the subsequent creation of national security directive NSC-68 would lead to not only shifts in America’s relations with the world at large (specifically Europe), but also draw a new course for America’s relations with China, for the first time

⁹⁵ Craig (1976), p.195

⁹⁶ Cohen (2010), p.147

⁹⁷ Kupchan (2002), pp.198-199

deviating considerably from the established pattern of economic engagement and support for China's territorial and sovereign integrity.

After 1945, when it became clear that the Soviet Union was emerging as America's new adversary, and continuing throughout the Cold War, Roosevelt's liberal internationalist cause became "inextricably bound" to the policy of "containing" Soviet-directed, expansionist communism.⁹⁸ The US did not, at first, actively seek to spread peace and democracy around the globe, but instead adhered to a goal of preventing the spread of authoritarianism.

China, "a tangle the United States could never unravel during World War II", posed even greater challenges for Truman. Rising anti-communist sentiment, and with the Soviets actively supporting the Chinese Communists, meant the US had little choice but to back the Nationalists (a regime they had not much respected during World War II). Truman dispatched General Marshall to help broker a compromise, naïvely assuming the Nationalist government would reform itself. Despite some initial encouraging signs, this ultimately proved fruitless. The Nationalists squandered their advantages, and the Chinese Communists capitalized on their failures. Truman rebuffed recommendations to send troops to support the Nationalists, as China still remained a secondary theatre of concern. Unfortunately, because of strong support from Henry Luce's influential Time-Life media empire, and ill-informed congressional Republican support for Chiang, Truman "recognised that... to abandon China in an election year would give the opposition a whip to flog him with."⁹⁹ Truman's half-hearted and incomplete support for Chiang's cause would have severe consequences both at home and abroad. When Communism finally triumphed in China, Truman suffered domestic political attacks over the question of "Who lost China?", as it was seen as a further triumph for communism. Truman despised the Chinese Communists and made no conciliatory gestures towards the new Beijing regime – albeit the US domestic political scene would not have allowed for any reconciliation anyway.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ Dumbrell (1990), p.6-7

⁹⁹ Herring (2008), pp.630-632

¹⁰⁰ Herring (2008), pp.636-638

Following his re-election, and in the face of growing support for Senator Joseph McCarthy's anti-Communist crusade, Truman needed to prove that he (and, by extension, the Democratic Party) were not soft on communism. To this end, on January 30th 1950, he authorised a complete review of American foreign policy. The result was 'NSC-68', the nation's first formal statement of national security policy, which defined the Soviet challenge as global, equating communist interests everywhere with those of the Soviet Union. NSC-68 advocated the globalisation and militarisation of the containment strategy. Coming in the wake of Mao's communist victory in China, McCarthy's "Who lost China?" accusations, and Russian advances in nuclear weaponry, the document "pictured the Soviet Union as aspiring to world hegemony, refused to rule out the possibility of war, and recommended a much broader, more energetic and expensive effort to counter this threat."¹⁰¹ In essence, it was a "practical expansion of the Truman Doctrine", which had been worldwide in implication but limited to Europe and financial means in application.¹⁰²

To gather Congressional support for implementing the suggestions put forth in NSC-68, Truman needed to prove expanding the scope of the containment policy as essential. Truman had only been able to appropriate funds, from a reluctant Congress, for containment in Europe "with the help of the crises in Greece and Czechoslovakia."¹⁰³ Therefore, the president believed he required another crisis to acquire the necessary support for implementing his new program. By June 1950, the international situation had grown more uncertain:

"Chiang could not hold on to Formosa nor Rhee to South Korea without an American commitment; the U.S. Air Force and Navy needed a justification to retain their bases in Japan; the Democrats had to prove to the McCarthyites that they could stand up to the Communists in Asia as well as in Europe."¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ Gaddis (1974), p.396

¹⁰² Ambrose & Brinkley (1997), p.111; Gaddis (1974), pp.391-396

¹⁰³ Ambrose & Brinkley (1997), p.114

¹⁰⁴ Ambrose & Brinkley (1997), p.116

On June 25th 1950, North Korean troops crossed the 38th Parallel in force, and Truman's needs were met. In other words, the policy envisioned in NSC 68 "could be wrapped up and tied with a ribbon by an Asian crisis."¹⁰⁵

Alongside containment, fear of the 'domino effect' – that communist successes in one country would lead to a wave of communist revolutions – troubled American strategists' during the Cold War and influenced their policy proposals. American leaders feared that "if the United States suffered a series of reverses in mostly symbolic contests with the Soviets, Soviet power would seem unstoppable", which would result in weak non-aligned nations, as well as some American allies, bandwagoning with the Soviet Union, "while remaining non-communist or anti-communist internally... for fear of being on the losing side in geopolitics."¹⁰⁶ The domino effect was a particular concern in the Asian theatre, where evidence suggested it might be valid:

"Common borders permitted Stalin to help Mao gain power in 1949, allowed Russia and China to help Kim Il Sung win and keep power in North Korea, and helped North Vietnam survive and eventually conquer South Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia."¹⁰⁷

China's participation and intervention in the Korean Peninsula put an end to American assumptions that there were "significant differences between varieties of communism", and from that point on, "the prevailing view was that communism in Asia, as in Europe... was a monolith" which led the Joint Chiefs of Staff to pronounce in 1952 that "each Communist gain directly involves a loss to the Western world."¹⁰⁸ Korean Communists had indeed received support from both the Soviets and Chinese Communists, but only the Chinese committed to war – Stalin would renege on his promise of air support. As the conflict continued, Truman organised a series of talks and negotiations to bring the war to an end, but the conflict would continue into Eisenhower's administration.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵ Ambrose & Brinkley (1997), p.114

¹⁰⁶ Lind (2006), p.177

¹⁰⁷ Lind (2006), p.116

¹⁰⁸ Gaddis (1974), p.397

¹⁰⁹ Herring (2008), pp.641-645

Truman inherited a nation eager to return to America's traditional policy of non-involvement, traditional civil-military relations, and anxious to return to peacetime pursuits. As a result of the containment policy, when Truman left the White House in 1952, "his legacy was an American presence on every continent, an unprecedented number of alliance commitments, and an enormously expanded armament industry."¹¹⁰ Truman turned America decisively away from the 1930s policy of unilateral disarmament and neutrality, favouring an arms build-up and collective security.¹¹¹ The measure of his success is that his successors would all stick with his policies.

The real commitment to containing communism globally, and the revolution in American foreign policy, occurred when the Truman Doctrine was supplemented by the more panoramic NSC-68, when "dominant opinion in Washington no longer held that the policies of 1947 – economic aid without military involvement – would suffice to contain Soviet expansion".¹¹²

When he came into office, the most pressing foreign policy matter on Eisenhower's agenda was how to address the stalemate in Korea. He directed his defence team to devise contingency plans for tactical nuclear strikes against Chinese forces along the Yalu River, should armistice negotiations fail. After Stalin's death, however, the new USSR leadership encouraged China to negotiate and make concessions to expedite a return to regional stability.¹¹³ That China had held its own against the United States granted it "instant great-power status". Mao's continued dependence on Soviet support would cement their alliance in the short term, but differences over the conduct of the Korean War laid the foundations for fissures in the relationship to open.¹¹⁴

Eisenhower's policy in East Asia was to bolster US allies "against China, the Soviet Union, and local Communist parties" through military aid and the 1954-5 creation of SEATO. The president's greatest challenge in East Asia came

¹¹⁰ Cameron (2002), p.8

¹¹¹ Ambrose & Brinkley (1997), p.126

¹¹² Gaddis (1974), p.394

¹¹³ Dueck (2010), p.93

¹¹⁴ Herring (2008), p.645

over Taiwan and Indochina. With regards to Taiwan, “Eisenhower entered office committed to the more aggressive support of Chiang Kai-shek’s Nationalist government.” The president withdrew the Seventh Fleet from the Taiwan Straits, with the implication that Chiang could then begin working to roll back Communism on the mainland. In reality, despite a lingering desire to protect Taiwan, Eisenhower had no interest in involving America in retaking the mainland or stumbling into the middle of a continuing Chinese civil war. This policy is not unlike previous US approaches to China, from 1850-1920. Mao would test Eisenhower’s commitment to Taiwan when he initiated “a series of crises” by shelling Nationalist positions on Quemoy and Matsu, but Mao’s actions actually led to a formal defence pact between the US and Taiwan, promising help to resist mainland aggression.¹¹⁵

The administration’s uncompromising support for Taiwan held both domestic and international benefits. It was “especially popular among Old Guard Republicans and the congressional China Lobby”, who Eisenhower required for domestic policy support. At the same time, it was part of a “deliberate strategy to force a diplomatic wedge between Moscow and Beijing.” Eisenhower and Secretary of State John Foster Dulles “understood that Communist China was no Soviet puppet, and that the possibility existed of even greater Sino-Soviet discord.” To encourage that discord, the US took a very hard line against Beijing, which forced it to make demands of Moscow that they “could not accept without the unwanted risk of general war” – this included full support against the United States over Taiwan. Mao’s attacks on Taiwan succeeded in driving the wedge home, but it was a risky strategy for the US to pursue: it alienated US allies and created considerable Sino-American tensions that increased the likelihood of conflict.¹¹⁶

“Whether any other strategy would have promoted U.S. interests much more effectively is an open question; evidence suggests that Mao was in fact profoundly hostile toward the United States during

¹¹⁵ Dueck (2010), pp.100-101

¹¹⁶ Dueck (2010), pp.101-102

the 1950s and would probably have been hostile regardless of specific changes in American policy.”¹¹⁷

The domino theory played a crucial role in American involvement in Vietnam during the 1960s, and saw the policy of containment taken to its limits. Presidents Kennedy and Johnson escalated troop deployments in Vietnam in the hope that, with the South Vietnamese army, they could defeat the North Vietnamese leader, Ho Chi Minh and the Vietcong, “thus preventing a communist takeover not only of South Vietnam but all of Southeast Asia.”¹¹⁸

The inept implementation of policy, and misguided application of American military power proved an eye-opening experience for a nation described as “cocky [and] overconfident”.¹¹⁹ In the 1970s, as a result of the spiralling costs of the Vietnam War, a strong opposition to containment developed in American public opinion: “in Vietnam the American people had been forced to face up to the true cost of containment”.¹²⁰

As a presidential candidate, John F Kennedy had criticised Eisenhower’s New Look strategy, with its “more bang for your buck” preference for more and larger bombs. Kennedy wanted to respond to communist aggression on every level. To Kennedy, Vietnam offered the perfect theatre for the United States to halt communist expansion. As Ambrose writes, “There he could show his interest in the Third World, demonstrate conclusively that America lived up to her commitments... and play the exciting new game of counterinsurgency”.¹²¹

In order to provide help to the Vietnamese, under the 1954 SEATO agreements, South Vietnam had to be under threat from outside forces, which in the 1960s it was not; the strife came from within Diem’s government, and was not comprised solely of communist forces. The bulk of the Viet Cong were, moreover, recruited from within South Vietnam. After writing the SEATO

¹¹⁷ Dueck (2010), pp.101-102

¹¹⁸ Cameron (2002), p.9

¹¹⁹ Ambrose & Brinkley (1997), p.206

¹²⁰ Ambrose & Brinkley (1997), p.215

¹²¹ Ambrose & Brinkley (1997), p.192

Treaty, John Foster Dulles had promised that, while the agreement extended protection over the region of South Vietnam, “under no circumstances would the United States be required to put down an internal uprising or get involved in a civil war.” This was, however, before the Cold War, containment, and growing fear of the domino effect. Kennedy’s Secretary of State, Dean Rusk, expressed these fears: “if the United States allowed the Viet Cong to win in South Vietnam, the Chinese would quickly gobble up the rest of Asia”, considering as he did that Hanoi was a pawn of Communist China.¹²² As a result, Kennedy would “never seriously consider changes in the U.S. policy of containing and isolating China.”¹²³

In the aftermath of the Cuban Missile Crisis, the United States and the Soviet Union appeared to be moving towards a more stable relationship. By the early 1960s, China had supplanted the Soviet Union as America’s most feared adversary; “of the two communist giants, it appeared far the more militant, hostile, and belligerent.” Robert McMahon argued that, the underlying reasons behind the fateful decision to militarily intervene in Vietnam, “however misguided they might appear in retrospect” lie “almost entirely within the realm of Cold War fears.” In the broadest sense, therefore, American intervention derived from an American desire to contain China and “prove simultaneously, for the sake both of allies and adversaries, the credibility of American power and the sanctity of American commitments.”¹²⁴

NORMALIZATION TO TIANANMEN (1972-1989)

The feared domino effect did not result in the emergence of a unified communist bloc. Unlike the post-war ties between democratic nations, the ties binding Asian communist nations would prove fragile and tenuous:

¹²² Ambrose & Brinkley (1997), pp.192-193

¹²³ Herring (2008), p.726

¹²⁴ McMahon (2003), p.100

“China split with the Soviet Union in the 1960s and fought border skirmishes with it, and in 1979 China fought a brief war with Vietnam, by then a Soviet satellite.”¹²⁵

Richard M. Nixon won the presidency at a time of great discontent with domestic, as well as foreign, affairs. It fell to Nixon to conduct foreign policy in an environment in which both realists and idealists were hostile to the war in Vietnam: Realists insisted that American principles were still valid in Vietnam, but offered two stark, extreme proposals for continued involvement: “if the war in [Vietnam] was worth fighting, it had to be won and, if it was not to be won, it had to be abandoned”; Wilsonians, on the other hand, appeared to believe that American idealism had suffered from a basic moral flaw, and once they decided the promotion of freedom and liberty was no longer an obtainable goal, they abandoned the effort.¹²⁶

This increased opposition to existing policies led Nixon to offer his own doctrine, intended to reduce the burden of America’s overseas commitments, transferring much of the responsibility onto others involved. In Vietnam (and other theatres), Nixon’s doctrine “did not represent a major shift in U.S. foreign policy”; based on the key principle that the US would “call on its allies and friends to supply their own manpower to ‘defend’ themselves against ‘Communist aggression’, while America provided only advice, aid, and arms.”¹²⁷ This process was called “Vietnamisation”, which came to stand for two different processes with regards to Vietnam: “American withdrawals and – in order to counterbalance these withdrawals – the accelerated training, equipping, and enlarging of the South Vietnamese army.”¹²⁸

Other components of President Nixon’s plan for Vietnam (created with the help of Henry Kissinger), were the use of negotiations with the Vietnamese communists; escalated ground and air operations; and also Nixon’s “madman theory”, which was the threat of excessive force. The emphasis placed on each of these components fluctuated depending on the situation in Vietnam, as well

¹²⁵ Lind (2006), p.116

¹²⁶ Kissinger (2002), p.248

¹²⁷ Kimball (2006), pp.60, 73

¹²⁸ Kimball (2006), p.65

as America domestic politics.¹²⁹ During his administration, Nixon dispatched Kissinger to negotiate peace with the North Vietnamese in Paris, but as the fighting continued and negotiations dragged on for years, there was widespread domestic opposition to American involvement in Vietnam. Eventually, in 1973, a peace agreement was signed that allowed US troops to withdraw, but the war itself did not end until two years later with the fall of Saigon and the Northern victory.

The American experience in Vietnam had a lasting effect on the prosecution of American foreign policy goals in all the administrations that followed. The “Vietnam Syndrome” manifested as a reluctance to commit US troops in large numbers to hot spots around the globe in efforts to avoid quagmires, and the belief that America “should never again engage in military conflict far from home without clear, viable, political objectives, public support and an exit strategy for the military.”¹³⁰

Nixon and Kissinger recognised that the world had changed dramatically since 1945. There were still two superpowers that dominated militarily. However, there were now at least five major centres of economic power, with Western Europe, Japan, and China joining the United States and the USSR. Moreover, “from a geopolitical as opposed to ideological perspective, the USSR and China were each other’s enemies rather than socialist brethren,” which meant new diplomatic opportunities were open to America. By approaching China through a power political perspective, unlike an ideological perspective,

“allowed for the pursuit of hard-nosed negotiation with hostile powers in limited areas of mutual advantage even alongside continued competition with such powers. It also encouraged a desire to limit America’s material commitments in locations of peripheral interest.”¹³¹

Paradoxically, therefore, a foreign policy based on straightforward power politics offered a greater chance to avoid further Vietnam-type entanglements,

¹²⁹ Kimball (2006), p.66

¹³⁰ Cameron (2002), p.10

¹³¹ Dueck (2010), p.155

while also allowing for more constructive relations with America's Cold War adversaries.

"If China and the USSR were thought of primarily as great powers rather than simply ideological enemies of the United States, then there was considerable room for diplomacy with Moscow and Beijing."¹³²

Nixon eased trade and travel restrictions with the Chinese and also removed the Seventh Fleet from the Taiwan Straits; all to indicate his interest in improving US-China relations. Because of domestic obstacles, however, Nixon "feared a severe backlash from conservatives and anti-Communists should he reach out to China or abandon Taiwan." As a result, initial diplomatic overtures to China were "careful, limited, secretive, and vague on both sides."¹³³

Nixon's success with China was ultimately a bi-product of his early foreign policy successes and the calmer international environment they helped bring about. In 1969, when he entered office, the US was embroiled in and preoccupied by a costly stalemate in Vietnam, one that had "shattered America's cold war consensus" and encouraged violent social domestic conflict. During his years in office, however, Nixon and Kissinger

"extricated the United States from Vietnam, thus reducing a source of severe domestic controversy, while improving American relations with China and the USSR. This in turn allowed them to balance Soviet power, retrench strategically, and maintain an internationalist foreign policy without undue expense, a policy maintained under Ford."¹³⁴

Gerald Ford, who replaced Nixon after his impeachment and resignation, would continue the normalisation process with China, but it would not be finalised until the following presidency, of Jimmy Carter.¹³⁵ The contrast between the Carter and Reagan years owed "more to contrasts in what the two presidents and their respective entourages *said* than to any vast differences in

¹³² Dueck (2010), p.155

¹³³ Dueck (2010), p.156

¹³⁴ Dueck (2010), p.184

¹³⁵ Carter administration's approach to the Normalization process will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 6

what the two administrations actually *did*.”¹³⁶ If one looks at the basic substance of the major foreign policies, it is difficult to see more than a marginal difference. These policies included:

“continuance of support for NATO; continuance of a wary cultivation of China; continuance of support for Israel, along with as much or as little cultivation of moderate Arab governments as is compatible with the Israeli connection; a continuing consciousness that the security importance of Japan outweighs any economic rivalries; continuing orientation to the Association of South East Asian Nations and of the Pacific, including ANZUS pact countries Australia and New Zealand; [and] a continuing restraint of the basic hostility to Vietnam and Iran.”¹³⁷

Reagan’s policy toward China, in fact, appeared simply to allow the normalisation process to continue unhindered by presidential involvement or attention, save occasional, ill-advised rhetorical insults directed at the Chinese. President Reagan, long a fervent anti-communist, had never approved of détente with the Soviet Union (or China) – during previous Republican administrations of Nixon and Ford, or during Carter’s. When Reagan was elected, he knew America was not prepared to challenge Soviet power. The US had the potential advantage in both economic and military terms, but it still “languished in a political malaise inflicted by Vietnam and stagflation”.¹³⁸ The American reluctance to use its military power abroad following Vietnam had led to the assumption that there was little that could be accomplished with United States’ military power. Reagan showed awareness of this in his dealings with Poland, Afghanistan, Central America and his withdrawal of troops from Lebanon.¹³⁹ It was Reagan’s opinion that the United States should never again be in the position where it lacked the military and/or economic resources to help prevent the expansion of communism and Soviet influence.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁶ Bell (1984), p.497

¹³⁷ Bell (1984), p.497

¹³⁸ Nau (2008), p.17

¹³⁹ Ambrose & Brinkley (1997), p.xiii

¹⁴⁰ Cited in: Nau (2008), p.16

GEORGE H.W. BUSH (1989-1993)

As a former envoy to China and the UN, as well as director of the CIA, George H.W. Bush came to office with an “excellent pedigree” in foreign affairs. Despite his considerable experience, however, President Bush did not find it easy to articulate what role the United States should play in the post-Cold War world. “The sudden end of the Cold War overturned the political truths of the post-war world – truths by which the experts had interpreted and understood the world.”¹⁴¹ New concerns on the global agenda included political instability caused by ethnic and religious tensions, economic pressures, and budding conflicts over dwindling resources.

The year Bush took office was marked by “unprecedented, unpredictable, and unimaginable events” in China, the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, South Africa, and Central America and more changes were seen to the basic structure of the international system than had been since summer 1945. Unusually, and perhaps remarkably, the United States played almost no role in these worldwide events.¹⁴² By the end of that year, the Soviet Union had withdrawn inside its shrinking borders, and the Cold War was at an end in Europe.¹⁴³

Nonetheless, it was felt at the time that, providing global order was America’s “inescapable lot”. Given the nation’s considerable stake in the proper functioning of the global economy, not to mention potential spill-over effects of regional instabilities on US national security, it was considered not only a matter of duty but also of vital interest for the US to shoulder the burden of engaged leadership.¹⁴⁴

Bush inherited a range of policies from the Reagan administration, including: support for the Contras, Strategic Defence Initiative, a strong NATO, a peace process in the Middle East, liberalisation in South Africa, trade adjustments with Japan, improve relations with China, and a continuation of

¹⁴¹ Tucker & Hendrickson (1992), pp.22-23

¹⁴² Ambrose & Brinkley (1997), pp.352-353

¹⁴³ Ambrose & Brinkley (1997), pp.364-365

¹⁴⁴ Tucker & Hendrickson (1992), p.25

détente with the Soviet Union.¹⁴⁵ However, the issues that would come to dominate his presidency were mostly new. The familiar guideposts of American foreign policy disappeared with the end of the Cold War,¹⁴⁶ which meant there was a need to re-examine the extent to which the national interest should direct the nation's foreign policy, and the role of the US military in achieving those goals. Bush gave every indication that the national interest would remain at the heart of American foreign policy-making.

The primary order of business of the first two years of Bush's presidency was to shepherd the Cold War to a peaceful conclusion. Through careful diplomacy, and in the face of considerable domestic criticism, Bush did just that: In December 1989, President Bush met with Russian President Gorbachev to discuss the future of Germany. Zbigniew Brzezinski identifies this meeting as "Bush's finest hour," as the meeting effectively formalised Soviet acquiescence to the political changes in Eastern Europe, and set in motion a series of consultations that resulted, within the year, in a reunified Germany.¹⁴⁷ Despite calls from the political right to take a harsh line towards Russia, by 1990 "Bush had forged a fairly satisfying personal relationship with Gorbachev", which allowed the two leaders to achieve a number of historic developments (with minimal bloodshed) between 1990-1992: the reunification of Germany, independence for the Baltic states, Soviet troops removed from satellite nations in Eastern Europe, sovereignty for Soviet republics, Gorbachev's fall from power and replacement by Boris Yeltsin. Bush and Gorbachev also negotiated a series of arms control agreements, specifically SALT I and SALT II, which would see the removal of tactical nuclear weapons from overseas and also the reduction in their nuclear arsenals from approximately 13,000 in 1990 to between 3,000 and 3,500 warheads by 1995.¹⁴⁸

In 1989, concern for the situation in the communist world was not limited to the former Soviet Union and its satellites. China also appeared to be on the brink of chaos, as social unrest surfaced:

¹⁴⁵ Ambrose & Brinkley (1997), p.352

¹⁴⁶ Mandelbaum (1990/1), p.6

¹⁴⁷ Brzezinski (2007), p.57, 56

¹⁴⁸ Patterson (2005), pp.228-229

“With the boundaries between political control and socioeconomic liberalisation blurring, an unprecedented outburst of massive student demands for democracy made it look for a moment as if the Chinese communist regime might explode.”¹⁴⁹

Brzezinski says the events of late May and early June 1989 that culminated in the Tiananmen Square massacre, “provided an important clue to the strategy eventually pursued by the Bush administration toward the general crisis of communism.”¹⁵⁰ It was clear that American public and congressional sympathies lay with the Chinese students, and at first Bush threatened to toughen trade policies involving China, unless it released dissidents and embraced a more moderate policy to deal with such events.¹⁵¹

When it came to China, Bush’s vision was closer to Nixon and Kissinger’s than Reagan and Schultz’s; the new president favoured economic engagement and strategic opportunity over perceived and actual ideological differences. A number of issues occupied the US-China relationship during Bush’s presidency, including Chinese sale of weapons technology to Iran, Syria and Libya and the fact that Beijing would lie about doing so. China was quickly replacing Japan as the largest holder of US debt, and still maintained trade barriers to US products and investment.¹⁵²

Bush claimed to deplore the events in Tiananmen Square, but insisted on placing it within the wider context of US interests. At the time, the Cold War was not yet over, so the president still adhered to a set of strategic guidelines for China – even if the need was reduced, it was still considered a vital balance to Soviet influence in the region. Bush’s hesitance to punish China resulted in “prolonged, legislative trench warfare” as protectionists and human rights advocates forged a strong anti-China lobby, against which Bush wielded his presidential veto as a way to prevent the deterioration of US-China relations.¹⁵³ In the post-Cold War world, however, the strategic rationale for ignoring China’s poor human rights record disappeared. There can be no doubt that

¹⁴⁹ Brzezinski (2007), p.53

¹⁵⁰ Brzezinski (2007), p.53

¹⁵¹ Patterson (2005), p.228

¹⁵² Cohen (2010), pp.232-233

¹⁵³ Dueck (2010), pp.239-240

America's impression of China was forever altered by the events of Tiananmen Square, and these events have come to define much of the Sino-American relationship.¹⁵⁴

President Bush was unwilling to let public opinion jeopardise the continuing strategic relationship with China that resulted from the 1979 normalisation of relations. Bush's strategy involved "caution, secret diplomacy, reassurance and continuity, while avoiding any self-identification with the cause of the demonstrators," in order to reassure Beijing that its official position toward China was not the same as towards Poland and other nations seeking to throw off communist rule.¹⁵⁵ Bush's position on this issue would later cause him problems during the 1992 presidential election.

After June 1989, the annual renewal of China's Most Favoured Nation (MFN) trade status would become a favourite tool to punish China, and would define the Congressional China debate for the remainder of Bush's time in office. That said, by the end of 1990, China was "clawing its way back to international respectability." The greatest asset it had to offer the international community was the potential for profit resulting from its rapid modernisation. Businessmen in America "chafed at the prospect of being denied billions of dollars" in potential profit because leaders in Washington were troubled by Beijing's handling of China's internal affairs. In other words, "Issues of human rights did not loom large on many corporate balance sheets."¹⁵⁶

The business community, and eventually the Executive, took up the argument that denying China MFN would harm not only US economic interests, but also China's hopes for liberalisation and democratisation. The values-based Congressional opposition to China and also public opinion was of considerable concern for Bush, who wished to keep relations on a stable footing – open and free trade and strategic support in the UN (which China would give in regards to Iraq).¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁴ Cohen (2010), pp.235-237

¹⁵⁵ Brzezinski (2007), p.54-55

¹⁵⁶ Cohen (2010), p.244

¹⁵⁷ Cohen (2010), pp.244-246

Despite his successes in navigating the Cold War to a peaceful close, Bush's presidency would primarily be defined by two international crises, which occurred within less than a year of Bush's declaration of the Cold War's end. These crises erupted in the Persian Gulf and in Yugoslavia, and gave President Bush an opportunity to establish a new direction in US foreign policy, and beyond that, the "new world order" of international cooperation expressed in his speech following the Helsinki Summit in September 1990.¹⁵⁸ However, the president's responses to Iraqi and Serbian aggression were "starkly different – massive intervention in the first case, studied indifference in the second."¹⁵⁹

Bush and his foreign policy team were well aware of the precedent its handling of Iraq would set: "resisting aggression, limiting goals, showing the United Nations' utility as a problem-solving institution, and working with allies."¹⁶⁰ With these in mind, President Bush dispatched the largest expeditionary force – more than 600,000 troops – since the Vietnam War, and organised an "impressively wide coalition" for the Middle East operation.¹⁶¹

In contrast to Iraq, the American response to brewing violence in Yugoslavia was very different. Despite the spectacular victory in the Gulf War that clearly demonstrated US military dominance, Bush was reluctant to become involved in the Balkans. In fact, the response to the Yugoslavian civil war would be more precedent-setting than the Gulf War,¹⁶² and hark back to pre-World War foreign policy traditions. Cameron and James Patterson propose that, because 1992 was an election year and Bush was already under attack by Bill Clinton, his Democratic rival, for spending "too much time on foreign policy", Bush was unwilling to commit American troops into such a precarious situation.¹⁶³ Without being able to make a direct appeal on national security grounds, the United States was unable to muster the will or desire to get

¹⁵⁸ Naftali (2007), p.112

¹⁵⁹ Ambrose & Brinkley (1997), p.377

¹⁶⁰ Chollet & Goldgeier (2008), p.15

¹⁶¹ Mandelbaum (1990/1), p.10

¹⁶² Ambrose & Brinkley (1997), p.384

¹⁶³ Cameron (2002), p.17; Patterson (2005), p.225

involved. As Secretary of State Baker remarked with characteristic pungency “We don’t have a dog in this fight.”¹⁶⁴

After a campaign in which he was frequently “pilloried for caring more about the outside world than Americans’ fortunes at home”, Bush left office with one final call for global engagement, “tapping into a sense of compassion and responsibility.” This came in the form of one last intervention, in November 1992. As part of a UN humanitarian operation, Bush ordered 25,000 American troops to Somalia, an “overwhelming use of military power in a place that few Americans could find on a map.”¹⁶⁵ This, however, might suggest that Bush was able to put aside his antipathy towards humanitarian intervention when political considerations were not a factor, as they potentially had been in the case of Yugoslavia. Somalia would become a “major factor” in the development of America’s post-Cold War foreign policy, and with the deployment of troops to Somalia, President Bush had “presented a poisoned chalice” to his successor.¹⁶⁶

WILLIAM J. CLINTON (1993-2000)

Bill Clinton inherited a number of unfinished foreign adventures and concerns from the outgoing Bush administration. Having run on a domestic, “it’s the economy, stupid” election platform, and with no foreign policy experience of his own, there was much interest in how the new president would deal with these pressing international issues. To begin with, the Clinton administration was unable to formulate a coherent approach to a number of issues – those he inherited from Bush and those that arose during his administration. Clinton’s foreign policy would fluctuate depending on the situation that confronted him and equally often it would be influenced by the domestic political climate. Writing in 1996, Richard N. Haass referred to the Clinton approach to foreign policy as “case-by-case-ism”.¹⁶⁷ Clinton’s lack of confidence and focus on foreign

¹⁶⁴ Cited in: Brzezinski (2007), p.116

¹⁶⁵ Chollet & Goldgeier (2008), p.53

¹⁶⁶ Cameron (2002), p.18

¹⁶⁷ Haass (1996), cited in: Bacevich & Kaplan (Sep.30th 1996), p.16

affairs was evident also in the number of differing, fleeting 'doctrines' put forward by his staff.¹⁶⁸

Clinton's election saw a president and public "less interested in international affairs than at any time in the previous six decades combined."¹⁶⁹ This apathy was in large part due to the end of the Cold War and a belief that America could take advantage of a 'Peace Dividend' that would allow for reduced defence spending, and the opportunity to return focus to addressing domestic problems. However, the new era of peace and harmony was not to be. Rather than the peaceful pursuit of domestic policies, the Clinton administration was presented with a series of unanticipated international challenges to which it was obliged to respond. For a president who "loathed the military" in his youth, Clinton would employ the US military "more often, for more varied purposes, and in a wider variety of circumstances than any commander-in-chief since Franklin Roosevelt"¹⁷⁰

Decisions to intervene during the Cold War had been simpler, because presidents always knew why, if not when, to use force: "to combat the Soviet Union, its allies, and its clients, and thus defend American interests." The arguments for intervention during the Cold War were not always persuasive, but they were always plausible. According to one of Clinton's campaign foreign policy advisers, Michael Mandelbaum, the cause for intervention in Bosnia, Somalia, and Haiti "was not... plausible."¹⁷¹

Stephen Walt, who has taken a favourable view of Clinton's foreign policy record, identified four goals that dominated Clinton administration foreign policy. By remaining militarily engaged, the administration has sought to "dampen security competition and reduce the risk of major war in Europe, East Asia, and the Middle East"; the administration has "worked to reduce the threat of weapons of mass destruction (WMD)"; it has tried to "foster a more open and productive world economy"; and the administration has tried to "build a world

¹⁶⁸ See Hitt et al (Jan. 1994), p.60

¹⁶⁹ Mandelbaum (1996), p.19

¹⁷⁰ Bacevich & Kaplan (May 25th 1998), p.19

¹⁷¹ Mandelbaum (1996), p.20

order compatible with basic American values by encouraging the growth of democracy and by using military force against human rights abuses.”¹⁷²

After the Cold War, it was felt that ideological struggles might be a thing of the past. It seemed as if the entire world was adopting variations of American economic and political systems. Competition between states was primarily over achieving this goal. The Asian financial crisis of 1997 gave an additional impetus to Western triumphalism. American foreign policy became increasingly driven by domestic politics: “When pressure on foreign countries appears free of risk, there is increasing scope for legislating American domestic preferences as objectives of foreign policy.”¹⁷³ Clinton’s foreign policy, more so than his predecessor’s, would be conducted with a keen eye on the domestic political environment, which at times would limit his ability for manoeuvre.

The most significant events of Clinton’s foreign policy were a series of interventions. At the beginning, Clinton’s presidency was marred by a couple that were unsuccessful. These interventions, in Haiti and Somalia, shared several features: “Each involved small, poor, weak countries far from the crucial centres that had dominated American foreign policy during the Cold War.”¹⁷⁴ It is perhaps partly because of American unfamiliarity with these regions that the resultant outcomes were unsatisfactory.

In Africa, Clinton was faced with escalating violence in Somalia, the ‘poisoned chalice’ bequeathed to him by Bush. The debacle in Somalia “accounts for much, but not all, of the administration’s hypersensitivity to casualties,”¹⁷⁵ on display when Clinton would later get involved in Bosnia and Kosovo. By undermining public support for humanitarian interventions, the debacle in Somalia paved the way for the tragic failure to involve the US in Rwanda.¹⁷⁶

American intervention in Bosnia and Kosovo, as well as the peace negotiations, were arguably successes for the Clinton administration, and

¹⁷² Walt (2000), pp.66-67

¹⁷³ Kissinger (2002), p.252

¹⁷⁴ Mandelbaum (1996), p.17

¹⁷⁵ Bacevich & Kaplan (Sep.30th 1996), p.18

¹⁷⁶ Walt (2000), p.77

offered a considerably different international approach than that displayed by George H.W. Bush's administration.

The second Balkan intervention had an unfortunate side effect. First, the intervention was not approved by China, which adhered to its traditional stance of non-intervention and belief in the sanctity of a nation's sovereignty. Secondly, when US bombers accidentally destroyed the Chinese embassy in Belgrade, relations turned sour. Beijing rejected American assurances that it was accidental, and anti-American agitation spread through some Chinese cities. It was an unfortunate chapter in the US-China relationship which had appeared to be improving.¹⁷⁷

Clinton entered office when US-China relations were at a low ebb. The end of the Cold War had removed the anti-Soviet rationale that had sustained the relationship, and tensions remained from the Tiananmen crackdown. During his presidency, Clinton was never able to decide how much of a priority to make China. He travelled there only once, six years into his presidency. Criticism of Clinton's China policy usually focuses on its lack of cohesion, and the president's inability to decide which issues mattered to him most. This resulted in a policy that "wander[ed] among human rights, trade, Taiwan, and Korea" and had no clear path "to blend carrots and sticks in his attempts at engagement." China thus "oscillated from being portrayed as a human-rights outcast to a would-be strategic partner."¹⁷⁸

Stephen Walt, however, argues that Clinton's China policy was "an effective combination of engagement and deterrence." Even though the administration took office committed to pressing China on its human rights record, it soon learned that a confrontational approach did little for human rights, but instead threatened the entire US-Chinese relationship. Clinton therefore sought to keep China's emergence as a major power from undermining key American interests, while also avoiding any counterproductive confrontations by renewing China's "most-favoured nation"

¹⁷⁷ Cohen (2010), p.261

¹⁷⁸ Haass (2000), p.138

trading status as well as supporting China's entry into the World Trade Organisation (WTO).¹⁷⁹

After rejecting any possible military actions against North Korea,¹⁸⁰ the administration put together in 1994 what amounted to a "standstill agreement" with the government in Pyongyang. The accord was flawed, with no way of determining if spent fuel was being diverted to bomb-making. Mandelbaum proposed a multilateral coalition (including Japan and China), to exert pressure to end Pyongyang's nuclear program. This would have involved extensive consultation with Tokyo and Beijing, which Secretary of State Warren Christopher never undertook, and would have drawn attention and resources away from Asian goals developed in response to domestic constituencies – specifically, human rights violations in China, and the more immediate issue of the trade imbalance with Japan,¹⁸¹ and opportunities in China. Hard-liners criticised Clinton for rewarding North Korea's defiance of proliferation, but at the time, none had offered an alternate policy that would have achieved as much with as little cost. Both South Korea and Japan opposed the use of force, so the situation called for restraint and flexibility, both of which the administration displayed.¹⁸²

A desire to safeguard both American economic interests and ideals proved difficult when taken in conjunction with the goal of not angering China. For Clinton, this goal was never more difficult to reconcile than when Taiwan came to the fore of US-China relations. Taiwan's situation appealed to idealist foreign policy minds as a democracy under the shadow of a potentially hostile communist neighbour. At the same time, commercial interests in both Taiwan and China created the need to tread softly on any issue involving Taiwan's status. Taiwan was another area that Congress felt confident enough to encroach on Executive prerogative.

In 1995, Congress wanted to grant Lee Teng-hui a visa to give a speech at his alma mater, Cornell. As a fledgling democracy, Taiwan had considerable

¹⁷⁹ Walt (2000), p.69

¹⁸⁰ Walt (2000), p.72

¹⁸¹ Mandelbaum (1996), p.27

¹⁸² Walt (2000), p.72

bipartisan support throughout American government. Unanimous motions in both houses of Congress put Clinton in a tough spot: the issue appealed to his liberal ideals as well as the commercial imperatives of his economically focussed domestic and foreign agenda. He could not afford to alienate either pro-democracy forces or the Chinese, who had a tendency to react harshly to any support for Taiwan – either by imposing sanctions on US commerce, or threatening the fragile stability across the Taiwan Straits. Clinton chose to favour his domestic audience. Naturally, Beijing reacted negatively, and the Chinese ambassador to the US was withdrawn, the newly-appointed US ambassador to Beijing was not recognised, the cross-strait dialogue was suspended, and the PLA conducted provocative military exercises in the Straits. To defuse the situation, Clinton publicly reasserted American support for the One-China policy.¹⁸³ In the aftermath of the crisis, the two nations “agreed to disagree on issues of human rights and missile sales”, preferring instead to focus on stable commercial relations and strategic help with North Korea.¹⁸⁴

Clinton’s decision was not without opposition. The administration’s decision to sell sensitive satellite technology to China led many domestic critics to accuse the administration of “putting corporate interests... ahead of what many analysts believed to be the national interest in minimising assistance to the PLA.”¹⁸⁵

International trade was an area of foreign policy that was of particular interest to Clinton. It is also an area of policy where he had the most success, and where the influence of domestic forces is most apparent. With the expansion of free-market liberalism as a “post-Cold War purpose of American foreign policy,”¹⁸⁶ the president seemed to be resurrecting Calvin Coolidge’s famous dictum that “the business of America is business”. Clinton’s specific achievements included the passage of the North American Free Trade

¹⁸³ Tyler (1999), pp.21-25; Cohen (2010), pp.254-256

¹⁸⁴ Cohen (2010), p.259

¹⁸⁵ Cohen (2010), p.259

¹⁸⁶ Mandelbaum (1996), p.29

Agreement (NAFTA), the completion of the Uruguay Round of trade talks, and a host of bilateral trade agreements.¹⁸⁷

Economic engagement for the promotion of liberal economic policies, including an intense effort to lower trade barriers, was a key feature of the administration's foreign policy, and they played a large part in decisions to grant normal trading status to China, provide economic assistance to Russia, and offer diplomatic recognition to Vietnam.¹⁸⁸

Despite initial fears that China policy would be dictated by men determined to punish Beijing for its human rights transgressions, images of Tiananmen Square were already fading from political (though not public) memory, and with them wide opposition to economic engagement with China – though determined pockets of anti-China sentiment survived, and do so today. Calm voices in the White House prevailed, and both economic and domestic political advisers reminded Clinton of his campaign pledge to revive the economy. Precipitating a trade war with China, they warned, would seriously harm his stated agenda, China and also the United States. There were now “enormous opportunities to make money in China” and “American businessmen did not intend to be left behind”. When Clinton rejected MFN renewal with conditions, he was effectively giving away America's final weapon in changing Chinese behaviour. Therefore, with the acquiescence of the president, the Commerce Department, the NEC and NSC staffers sympathetic to commercial interests, shouldered aside the State Department on China related issues. “Perceiving little if any threat” to US security, those charged with determining China policy “stressed the importance of trade and investment, the value of good relations with China for the American economy.”¹⁸⁹

In mentioning China, though, one should point out that domestic politics – specifically, fear of congressional opposition – initially made Clinton reject China's entry into the WTO in April 1999, before later reconsidering and accepting the offer in November of the same year. Domestic forces would again

¹⁸⁷ Walt (2000), p.74

¹⁸⁸ Mandelbaum (1996), p.29

¹⁸⁹ Cohen (2010), pp.251-253

hurt Clinton's economic hopes when, in December 1999, at the ill-fated WTO summit in Seattle, the President sought to appease a variety of domestic lobbies by calling for stronger labour standards and the possibility of trade restrictions, a position that clearly departed from the president's commitment to trade liberalisation.¹⁹⁰

Many of Clinton's foreign policy decisions, other than economic ones, were the result of domestic political calculations. This was especially true following the Republican landslide victory in the 1994 midterm elections, in which "a Congress whose disdain for foreign affairs was almost gleeful" was elected.¹⁹¹ The fear of domestic political backlash was a key factor in the "ignominious" withdrawal from Somalia and the refusal to commit ground troops in Kosovo or any military forces whatsoever in Rwanda. In the case of Haiti, the harsh economic sanctions introduced were "partly to assuage prominent African-American critics" of US policy, and troops were finally sent in when sanctions contributed to an unpopular and massive influx of refugees into Florida.¹⁹²

Domestic distractions would hurt Clinton's ability to focus properly on foreign policy, when the Lewinski scandal dominated American political news, debate and discourse. Foreign policy was effectively neglected. In some instances, this was beneficial, as anti-China sentiment diminished as the Republican-controlled Congress focused all its attention on presidential indiscretions. After the scandal abated, however, business as normal resumed.

Clinton came to office at a time of diminished interest in foreign affairs, which increased the relative weight of domestic interest groups when it came to informing foreign policy. Without the presence of a strong, single focus for national security and foreign affairs, the voices of these groups – particularly labour and industry lobbies – were easier to hear, and more difficult to ignore. As we have seen, it is not just in economic foreign policy that Clinton was influenced by domestic forces. Clinton had to deal with an increasingly isolationist (though, in truth, anti-Clinton) Republican Congress. By focussing

¹⁹⁰ Walt (2000), pp.74-75

¹⁹¹ Walt (2000), p.65

¹⁹² Haass (2000), pp.139-140

on the domestic political landscape, Richard Haass writes, Clinton “gave the American people the foreign policy that polls suggested they wanted”, rather than leading them “toward the foreign policy they needed”.¹⁹³ That said, this was hardly unusual from a historical viewpoint, as promoting domestic interests (particularly commercial) has a long tradition in US foreign policy.¹⁹⁴

The problems presented to the Clinton administration in Somalia, Haiti and Bosnia, were all variations on a theme: “How could a great power exert itself as a force for good in the world?” At the end of Clinton’s presidency, there was no consensus in America of its purpose in the world, or how it should be pursued. In the strictest sense, none of these areas posed a direct threat to American security. The conservative response to the question of how to approach foreign policy was simple and traditional, if cold: a narrow definition of US national interests, and “leave [other] countries to their fate.”¹⁹⁵ In 2000, the incoming administration of George W. Bush, with its emphasis on a more national-interests-focussed foreign policy, gave all indications that this would be the case going forward.

GEORGE W. BUSH (2001-2009)

George W. Bush ran for the presidency in the wake of President Clinton’s assertive multilateralism and penchant for intervention, promising a “humble” foreign policy. Initially, this appeared to rely on a return to traditional management of great power relations and pursuit of the national interest, as outlined by National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice, in an article for *Foreign Affairs*: “American foreign policy in a Republican administration should refocus the United States on the national interest in pursuit of key priorities,” which included ensuring “America’s military can deter war, project power, and fight... if deterrence fails”, “to promote economic growth and political openness”, “renew strong and intimate relations with allies who share American values”,

¹⁹³ Haass (2000), p.140

¹⁹⁴ Mandelbaum (1996), p.26

¹⁹⁵ Harris (2006), p.125

“to focus U.S. energies on comprehensive relationships with the big powers, particularly Russia and China, that can and will mould the character of the international political system”, and “deal decisively with the threat of rogue regimes and hostile powers”.¹⁹⁶ These goals would largely direct the administration’s policies during the first eight months of his first term.

George W. Bush’s choice of top advisers and appointees implied continuity with the realism that had characterised his father’s foreign policy. It was a seasoned team with far more experience and seniority than Bush himself. Initially, the foreign policy team focussed on George H.W. Bush’s unfinished business: great-power relationships, missile defence, and military transformation.¹⁹⁷

Dubbed the “Vulcans”, the foreign policy team initially believed the collapse of the Soviet Union had ushered in a “strategic pause”, which could last several decades. Therefore, much as Rice had suggested they would, the Vulcans’ perception of international politics as great-power struggle led them to focus on China. This perception went back to the presidential campaign of 2000, when Bush would often mention China in his few foreign policy speeches. Bush would speak of China as a “strategic competitor”, thereby distancing himself from Clinton’s policy of engaging Beijing. Bush also described a preference for transforming the US military to exploit technological advantages to discourage China’s PLA from “accelerating an arms race it could not hope to win.”¹⁹⁸ Bush and his team criticised the outgoing administration for “appeasing” China and “indulging” a corrupt Russia, and would mock Clinton for his “inconsistency and wishful thinking” toward China.¹⁹⁹ During the campaign, Bush took a leaf out of Clinton’s own playbook, and referred to “the butchers of Beijing”,²⁰⁰ much as Clinton had when running against George H.W. Bush. During his presidency, however, President Bush was more measured in his approach to China, even if not in his rhetoric. A large part of this was due to the administration’s

¹⁹⁶ Rice (Jan/Feb 2000), pp.2-3

¹⁹⁷ Brzezinski (2007), p.138

¹⁹⁸ Donnelly (Dec. 29th 2008), pp.33-34

¹⁹⁹ Daalder & Lindsay (2005), p.38

²⁰⁰ Bush, GW (Nov. 19th 1999)

preoccupation with China, and China's provision of support for certain anti-terrorism initiatives.

There were two basic beliefs that formed the core of President Bush's foreign policy at the start of his administration: The first was that the best way to ensure America's security in an ever-dangerous world was to shed the constraints imposed by allies and international institutions. The second belief was America, unbound by entanglements, should use its strength to change the global status quo. In other words, the philosophy behind Bush's foreign policy "turned John Quincy Adams on his head" and argued that America should "aggressively go abroad in search of monsters to destroy." This was the logic behind the Iraq War, and it animated the administration's efforts to deal with other rogue states such as North Korea and Iran.²⁰¹

As previously mentioned, US-China relations played a significant role in Bush's pre-9/11 foreign policy agenda, and they unfolded in a "somewhat rocky fashion". This was certainly the case after a US EP-3 spy-plane collided with a Chinese fighter in April 2001, damaging the US aircraft but killing the Chinese pilot. The American crew was briefly detained while the two governments attempted to defuse the situation.²⁰² Neither President Bush nor Rice was able to fashion a decisive policy. Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld "agitated for a muscular response", but in the end Bush turned to Secretary of State Colin Powell to provide a diplomatic solution,²⁰³ which resulted in the release of the US crew, and a "one-sided apology" to China.²⁰⁴ While conservatives were not happy at the outcome, the crisis was rationally contained and tension quickly abated.

The events of September 11, 2001 were the first attacks on American soil not just by foreign terrorists, but by *any* foreign power since Pearl Harbour.²⁰⁵ The 9/11 attacks have been attributed with 'changing everything' for US foreign

²⁰¹ Daalder & Lindsay (2005), pp.12-13

²⁰² Brzezinski (2007), p.169

²⁰³ Donnelly (Dec. 29th 2008), p.34

²⁰⁴ Brzezinski (2007), p.169

²⁰⁵ Kaplan, F. (2008), p.122-123

policy.²⁰⁶ It's debateable whether this is true in the grand scheme of US foreign policy, but it certainly changed everything for the Bush administration. After the invasion of Iraq, the top-level "obsession" with Iraq would overshadow every other foreign policy issue America faced for the next three years.²⁰⁷ The consequences of this obsession have not been trivial, nor have they necessarily been wholly negative. The foreign policies that aroused the greatest opposition were mostly those of Bush's first term (the invasion of Iraq, the embrace of unilateral action). In Bush's second term, many of the unpopular policies were "modified, abandoned, or reversed."²⁰⁸ There were a number of areas where Bush pursued relatively successful policies, and other areas the administration could simply not avoid. Specifically, and as an outgrowth of his administration's focus on weapons of mass destruction, Bush found himself having to deal increasingly with issues of nuclear proliferation. In Bush's second term, his foreign policy acknowledged that the US, powerful yet not omnipotent, still needs to work closely with other nations if it is to solve key foreign policy challenges.²⁰⁹

One of Bush's most controversial foreign policy successes involved the US-India nuclear deal, ratified by the Senate on October 2nd 2008. The deal was intended to improve ties and bilateral relations, which had been strained by India's nuclear program.²¹⁰ The deal exempted India from the Non-Proliferation Treaty's restrictions, permits it to keep and produce nuclear weapons, and also commits the US to provide India with a source from which to buy sensitive nuclear technology. In other words, "India has now been granted all the privileges of a recognised nuclear-weapons state but with none of the responsibilities."²¹¹

The decision to forge such an agreement, Brzezinski suggests, had to be "especially troubling" for China, which had maintained a posture of minimum strategic deterrence with regards to India. Any significant increase in India's

²⁰⁶ Donnelly (Dec. 29th 2008), p.33

²⁰⁷ Brzezinski (2007), p.143

²⁰⁸ Zakaria (Aug.18th/25th 2008), p.20

²⁰⁹ Daalder & Lindsay (Jan/Feb 2007), p.5

²¹⁰ Zakaria (Aug.18th/25th 2008), p.22

²¹¹ Ciricione (Dec. 2008), p.31

nuclear arsenal could only increase pressure on Beijing to “abandon its strategic self-restraint.” Also, in making this deal, Beijing’s inclination to do America’s bidding with regard to North Korea and Iran was no doubt reduced.²¹² The India deal, therefore, posed an unnecessary threat to stable great power relations in the region.

After the rocky start to US-China relations, Bush – like his father and Clinton before him – was unable to solve the puzzle of China’s rise.²¹³ The administration’s combination of engagement and hedging is essentially a continuation of Clinton’s policy. During his campaign, George W. Bush proclaimed that, if he was president,

“China will know that America’s values are always part of America’s agenda. Our advocacy of human freedom is not a formality of diplomacy, it is a fundamental commitment of our country.”²¹⁴

However, as with Clinton before him, Bush’s rhetoric and approach to China softened, clearly moving towards the established consensus on China as perhaps not a ‘strategic partner’, but certainly a ‘business partner’. As in the past, US-China relations would be based on stable commercial ties, allowed to self-regulate while the administration was distracted by more immediate concerns in the Middle East (just as it had during the World Wars and America was distracted by events in Europe).

On North Korea, Bush initially used South Korean President Kim Dae Jung’s visit to “publicly quash” the assumption that he would seek to finalise the deals partly negotiated under Clinton. Given administration rhetoric post-9/11, Bush effectively closed the door, at least for the time being, to further discussions with Pyongyang over its nuclear program.²¹⁵ The Agreed Framework negotiated by the Clinton administration was formally cancelled on October 20th 2002.²¹⁶

²¹² Brzezinski (2007), p.172

²¹³ Donnelly (Dec. 29th 2008), p.36

²¹⁴ Bush, GW (Nov. 19th 1999)

²¹⁵ Daalder & Lindsay (2005), pp.65-66

²¹⁶ Kaplan, F. (2008), p.63

As time passed, and America became entangled by the situation in Iraq, the Bush administration took a different, multilateral approach to North Korea. With neither China nor Russia prepared to support a severe international ostracism of North Korea, it became clear to the administration that only a regional, multilateral effort could encourage North Korean self-restraint or stand any chance of achieving an acceptable outcome. In 2004, Bush helped commence the Six-Party Talks, which involved the US, China, Japan, Russia, South Korea and North Korea. These talks were a clear acknowledgment that East Asian security required some form of international architecture.²¹⁷ Through these talks, the United States was able to secure a commitment from North Korea to abandon its nuclear weapons program. In October 2006, when North Korea broke its agreement and conducted a nuclear test, the UN Security Council passed a Chapter VII resolution. China put economic pressure on the rogue state to bring it back to the negotiating table. In February 2007, North Korea agreed to halt plutonium production at its Yongbyon site, later dismantling the key facilities. In June 2008, in its clearest gesture of compliance with its agreements, North Korea blew up its cooling tower at Yongbyon.²¹⁸

In the wider Asian region, administration policy has not always been successful or inspired, and there have been some “significant wobbles”, but this is the part of the world where Bush’s foreign policy record is probably strongest.²¹⁹ Jay Nordlinger points out that, “it’s hard for any president to say that he and America have good relations with Japan, South Korea, and China at the same time – but [George W. Bush] can say that.”²²⁰

In Asia, the Bush administration has:

“successfully strengthened U.S.-Japan ties without causing a crisis with China; it has stepped up cooperation on a number of fronts with both India and Pakistan; it has continued to support the emergence of democracy in Indonesia, the country with the world’s largest

²¹⁷ Brzezinski (2007), p.166

²¹⁸ White House & Thiessen (2009), p.30

²¹⁹ Mead (Oct. 22nd 2007), p.30

²²⁰ Nordlinger (Dec. 29th 2008), p.22

Muslim population; and it has prevented Taiwan from derailing our increasingly smooth relationship with Beijing.”²²¹

The new strategies employed by the administration called for “regime change, pre-emption, and victory.”²²² This over-emphasis of neoconservative ideology alienated allies and left America’s reputation in the world diminished. Both Russia and China, on issues like North Korea, Iran, the Middle East, and Central Asia, found that their interests had become more compatible. Both regimes viewed America’s militant promotion of democracy with considerable distaste, and saw in it an obvious threat to regional political stability.²²³

The administration’s obsession with the Middle East allowed rivals and competitors to advance and progress without fear of American reprimand or interference. Oil producers in the Persian Gulf region and also Africa, may increasingly gravitate toward China in the search for more reliable, less judgemental customers. In Africa, Sudan in particular has begun to do so. Unlike George W. Bush’s America, “China emphasises political stability over democracy and can be a reliable source of reassurance.”²²⁴

CONCLUSION

Economics plays a key role in helping one understand America’s policies towards China and the world at large. From the Opium Wars until the onset of World War II, and again after the end of the Cold War, the protection of American business interests was usually the main concern. However, until the end of World War II, the United States did not feel in a position strong enough to fully protect these interests through force or otherwise. This explains American complicity in the Western Powers Conference in China, and also its unwillingness to involve itself in China’s internal struggles. Equally, the long-lasting policy of non-entanglement held stubborn hold of American policymakers for much of this time.

²²¹ Mead (Oct. 22nd 2007), p.30

²²² Kaplan, F. (2008), p.4

²²³ Brzezinski (2007), p.170

²²⁴ Brzezinski (2007), p.156

With the onset of the Cold War, American foreign policy saw a number of revolutions. Not only did the ideological policy of containment – attached, as always, to the realist notion of protecting America’s national interests – become almost the *raison d’être* of US foreign policy, but relations with China entered an aberrant period. Ideological opposition towards China’s communist government became a key feature of US-China relations. No longer was China a ‘secondary theatre’ to wider (i.e. European/Western) global concerns. This would have a lasting impact on US-China relations, as despite economic reality resuming its importance following normalisation, US policymakers and Congressional representatives would be, and remain, unable to separate ideological opposition to China from general relations. In some respects, this is a result of the media’s focus on negative events from China’s history in its reporting (see Chapters Four and Five).

One clear trend in US-China relations is the role of China as a pawn in the power politics of the West. First, this was in terms of economic standing, as the relatively young United States attempted to make a name for itself and expand its commercial empire into Asia, coming up against resistance from entrenched, more powerful European interests. During the Cold War, China again became a pawn in a wider *realpolitik* struggle, as part of the US-USSR conflict and struggle for influence.

“Since the end of World War II, statesmen had been grappling with the tensions and trade-offs between American interests and ideals.”²²⁵ Over the course of three presidential administrations, American foreign policy has swung between privileging interests and ideals. It has yet to find a happy medium between the two. Given that George H.W. Bush’s preference for realism led to condemnation for its selfish outlook, and Bill Clinton’s overly cautious engagement and intervention in the world, it should not have been surprising that, when neither doctrine presented adequate responses to the terrorist attacks of September 11th 2001, George W. Bush would go in search of a new one with which to confront the growing challenges of the world. By merging – or at least, claiming to merge – America’s interests and ideals, Bush brought the

²²⁵ Kaplan, F. (2008), p.113-114

United States one step closer to realising a sustainable grand strategy for the post-Cold War world.

Without the ideological Cold War struggle, one might have expected a return to a wholly traditional foreign policy. This has not been the case. Emerging as the most powerful nation appears to have implanted a penchant for indulging American power. George H.W. Bush, for the most part, was able to keep these urges in check – thanks, perhaps, to his experiences during his formative military and government years. In the end, however, he supported a humanitarian campaign in Somalia. Equally, one should reiterate that the US remains heavily reliant on the rest of the world – in terms of trade, markets, and also sources of raw materials – so a policy of isolation is out of the question.

Clinton and George W. Bush, on the other hand, appear to have struggled with a return to a purely traditional foreign policy, which would have favoured the national interest at the expense of more liberal indulgences. Whether humanitarian intervention or a sweeping democratising crusade, both presidents succumbed to the idea of America as the indispensable nation, no longer content to be a shining beacon acting as an example. Instead, they wished to instruct others.

Perhaps peculiarly, however, policy towards China has maintained a consistency – as always, with caveats for crises or unexpected events – that is encouraging and also helpful. Commerce and great power politics remain key determinants of the relationship. If you look at all the instances when realism, or the protection of commercial opportunities, was not central to foreign policy – Vietnam, Somalia, the second Iraq war – each time, the policy has resulted in shambles. Without the guiding principles of national interest, policy is rudderless and prone to failure. This might explain why policy has a tendency to revert to normalcy, as with China.

CHAPTER IV

THE MEDIA, FOREIGN POLICY, & CHINA

Having outlined the broad history of American foreign policy, it is time to narrow our focus to the policymaking process, with particular regard to one country: China. As has been argued in the preceding chapters, US foreign policy is made through a variety of actors exerting a measure of influence over state officials and constituencies. Realist theory argues that foreign policy is the realm of elites and government only, and that the populace has no business in it. Pluralism, as argued in Chapter 2, argues that multiple inputs influence foreign policy, and that realism is too narrow a theory to fully explain US China-policy on its own.

In this chapter, I shall look in more detail at the influence of domestic media on foreign policy and China-policy in the United States. This chapter examines the ambiguous-yet-integral role media plays in foreign policy formulation, reinforcing a more complex impression of China that requires more than just a simple realist or liberal approach. It will also show how publications exhibit both security concerns and economic hopes, with little-if-no concern for conflicting conclusions.

The end of the Cold War and the Tiananmen Square incident in June 1989 fundamentally changed the nature of the US-China relationship. China was no longer needed or seen as a strategic balance to the Soviet Union, thereby leading to a policy vacuum. The images of tanks rolling into Tiananmen Square to put down peaceful, pro-democracy student protest also created, on the part of the American public, an enduring, negative impression of the Communist regime in Beijing. Indeed, the footage and images captured in June 1989 are so

memorable, that they are still used repeatedly in most, if not all, documentaries, articles and reports about China. It also significantly raised the profile of China in the media: “China received just 64 minutes of airtime the year before (1988), while in 1989, the year of Tiananmen, news on China totalled 881 minutes.”¹ This display of government force directed at a civilian population was at odds with the media’s largely positive portrayals of China during the Cold War leading up to and after Nixon’s visit in 1972 and détente.

Since the early 1970s, and especially after the end of the Cold War, the foreign policy-making process has evolved from a relatively closed system dominated by the president and his advisers into one that is much more open, frequently contentious, and pluralistic. The president remains the most powerful actor (the buck, as Truman believed, still stops at the President’s desk), but he must now contend with a more active Congress, while overseeing a complex executive bureaucracy, and respond to pressures and ideas generated by the mainstream press (including 24-hour news channels and certain political internet sites), a multitude of think tanks, the business-corporate establishment, and also public opinion. In this respect, the increase in the number of non-governmental actors influencing the policy-making process has meant foreign policy increasingly has come to resemble domestic policy, which remains an open, multi-actor process dominated by interest groups and frequently swayed by the media.² In this context, the media plays an important role in framing public opinion and so directing governmental attention to a wide range of issues, frequently through a domestic lens. This is not a new phenomenon. Already in the 1970s, Henry Kissinger lamented how difficult it was becoming to conduct diplomacy in an era of fragmenting democracy and open media.

In cases where relations between two nations are primarily strategic in character, realist theory assumes the primacy of diplomatic actors in the policy-making process. However, because strategic concerns form only a part of the complex relations between China and the United States, a realist approach to

¹ Lampton (2001), p.265

² Dietrich (Jun.1999), p.280

the bilateral relationship is not entirely appropriate. The construction of US-China relations is increasingly focussed on what are now frequently called 'intermestic' issues – i.e. those issues with both an international and domestic impact. These include China's status as a trading partner, China's exports quality control, intellectual property rights, human rights, religious freedom, environmental concerns, and also (for the conservative wing of American politics) values issues in China such as abortion. These issues are "very different from the kinds of issues that predominate in a national interest/realpolitik relationship, and thus call into being a very different institutional and political set of actors and relationships."³ The increased importance of intermestic issues is not unique to US-China relations, however: Since the end of the Cold War, the foreign policy-making process has undergone some considerable changes, decentralising and devolving into a series of diverse and often unconnected issues. This has resulted in what has been described as a "schizophrenic"⁴ policy towards China, as its main focus has a tendency to switch and change depending on a number of factors, including public opinion, media attention, and special interests.

In this chapter, we will start by looking first at the role of the media in the policy-making process for US foreign policy as a whole.

The mainstream media is the most likely influence in the gradual development of an individual's foreign policy preferences and knowledge. This is because the media – specifically newspapers and to a greater extent television – are the primary conduit between the public and policymakers. Also, the media are the principal means by which the majority of the public will receive their information about foreign affairs, an issue for which personal experience is unlikely to dictate their preferences or decisions.⁵ Therefore, the media necessarily plays a significant role in determining the public's attention to and knowledge of foreign affairs.⁶

³ Teles (1998), p.40

⁴ Teles (1998), p.65

⁵ Soroka (Winter 2003), p.28, 43

⁶ Soroka (Winter 2003), p.42

Following the general discussion, we look more closely at how the United States mainstream media portrays foreign policy towards China, and how the media (and those who operate in its boundaries) can affect the organisation and conduct of China policy. As we shall see, the media portrays American policy towards China in terms of threat-versus-advantage, or engagement-versus-containment cycles. This is typical of the US's majority foreign policy tradition of pragmatism, but also notes a minority tradition of liberalism and idealism. As the media acts as an intermediary between both government and public institutions, and between pragmatism and idealism, it is essential to understand its function in determining the threat-advantage cycle on China.

EXISTING RESEARCH ON THE MEDIA AND FOREIGN POLICY

The complex relationship between the media and the foreign policy-making process can be categorized in four ways. They are: "watchdog journalism", when the media evaluate and criticise government policy; the "CNN Effect" (discussed at greater length, below), when the media are considered to drive policy; the "manufacturing consent" theory and the "news management" function, initially promoted by Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky, when the media fully support and serve government policy.⁷ Finally, there is also the "mutual exploitation" model, which suggests "policymaking cannot be done without the media, nor can the media cover international affairs without government cooperation", meaning that they work together "sometimes for mutual benefit, sometimes for mutual injury, often both at the same time."⁸

Whichever approach is used, research into the effect of the media appears to reach contradictory conclusions.⁹ In a brief survey conducted by George C. Edwards III and B. Dan Wood of Texas A&M University, they found that some researchers have come to the conclusion either that the US media's agenda appears to "have direct, sometimes strong, influence upon the policy agenda of

⁷ Gilboa (Fall 2003), p.97

⁸ O'Heffernan (1993), p.189

⁹ Edwards & Wood (Jun.1999)

elite decision makers”;¹⁰ that the media “has an especially important role in agenda setting”, influencing the president’s foreign and domestic agendas;¹¹ that examples of media importance and influence are “fairly rare” with little independent effect on a government’s agenda;¹² or that, while some papers on the subject identify the media as the least important of influences on decision making, it is more likely that “for the White House staffs, the media is not a source of new ideas; it is at best a bridge to the political environment.”¹³ In other words, the general consensus as to the media’s place in the foreign policy-making process is that it takes the role of a ‘framer’ or ‘shaper’ of stories and policies, rather than a maker of foreign policy.¹⁴ However, even though academic research takes this position, there is, as we shall see, some evidence to suggest that how the media might portray a specific foreign policy choice is sometimes taken into account by officials when formulating policy.

Much of the research mentioned above concerns the broadcast media in the United States but, as will be discussed below, the preferred format of the broadcast media is not conducive to long-lasting intellectual debate or even lasting impressions. Therefore, much of the analysis in the second half of this chapter will look at the print media, which has the luxury of space and time to outline a cogent argument or position in full, without the constraints of incessant advertising breaks or such a pronounced need for sensation and sound bites.

While the goal of journalists in the United States may be to tell objectively a story of importance to large numbers of people, independent of government influences and concerns, the US mass media nevertheless provides a forum in which domestic politics and power contenders “wage their battles” for influence and control of specific issues. Through “selective, distorted leaks” and “scripted, contrived events”, the US media have become the vehicle by which “policy agendas are formed and articulated, coalitions are built, and power struggles

¹⁰ Rogers & Dearing (1994), p.91 – cited in Edwards & Wood (Jun.1999), p.328

¹¹ Edwards & Wood (Jun.1999), p.342

¹² Kingdon (1995), pp.58-9 – cited in Edwards & Wood (Jun.1999), p.328

¹³ Light (1991), p.86 – cited in Edwards & Wood (Jun.1999), p.328

¹⁴ See, for example: Lowi, Ginsberg & Schepsle (2008), p.421

are waged.”¹⁵ This is true for all actors in US foreign policy: Congressmen use the media to raise their profiles and also to raise awareness of pet issues and projects; Interest groups use it to enhance the visibility of their messages and issues; Academics and specialists can use the media to boost their income but also to sometimes promote new books they have authored or to help the agendas of their employers (think tanks, foundations, businesses or consultancies).

The primary requirement of round-the-clock media (particularly the television outlets, talk radio, the networks, but also print publications), which has large blocks of time and space to fill, is to provide the “constant stream of catchy notions and fresh faces” needed to attract the public’s attention, build ratings, increase their market share, and attract and accumulate ever-more advertising dollars. In combination, these factors “produce a distorted public discourse in which the nature and implications of important policy decisions are obscured.”¹⁶ Because of this, interest in the issues and policy run a distant second.

One of the most important factors in determining the public’s knowledge of foreign affairs is, of course, how much news media they are exposed to and consume. For those who don’t pay attention to foreign news, the way the media portrays any given issue is obviously immaterial. For those who do regularly consume news, however, the American public’s familiarity with political issues is closely related to the amount and type of attention these affairs receive in the media. The way the media portrays an issue can also have a strong influence on whether or not the public views it as important. By covering an issue consistently and frequently, the media increases the importance of these issues and also helps to shape the public’s assessment of it and political figures’ responses and actions.¹⁷ If an issue is not covered by the news, then it stands to reason that its importance in the public’s eyes will be minimal. Therefore, it can be suggested that the media plays a role in agenda-setting, “determining what issues get focused on and which do not... there would be many other issues that

¹⁵ Lampton (2001), p.275

¹⁶ Halper & Clarke (2006), p.2,9

¹⁷ Edwards & Wood (Jun.1999), pp.328-9

would get much less policy attention if it were not for major media coverage.”¹⁸ As Bruce Jentleson put it, “If a tree falls in the woods and television didn’t cover it, did it really fall?”¹⁹

The mass media “serve to mobilise support for the special interests that dominate the state and private activity, and that their choices, emphases, and omissions can often be understood best, and sometimes with striking clarity and insight, by analysing them in such terms.”²⁰ The media works within a “guided market system”, with “guidance provided by the government, the leaders of the corporate community, the top media owners and executives, and the assorted individuals and groups who are assigned and allowed to take constructive initiatives.”²¹ This, as we shall see in the second part of this chapter, can certainly be seen with regards to the *Wall Street Journal*’s reporting on China.

However, this is not always the case, as even after considerable media coverage, some international issues still receive minimal policy attention. Most recently, for example, we have the genocide in Darfur, Sudan; but it is also evident in the George H.W. Bush administration’s lack of interest in Yugoslavia, and also President Clinton’s inaction over the 1994 Rwandan genocide. It is possible that the media’s attention is simply attracted by sensational images or a requirement for human-interest-stories, while not presenting or even calling for government action. Also, the slow speed with which events develop can afford policymakers the opportunity to pre-empt media attention and pressure by outlining reasons for inaction. Equally, there are some important foreign policy issues that, despite their importance, don’t receive much media coverage and therefore don’t get on the agenda – to continue Jentleson’s analogy, “whole ‘forests’ may fall down with no television cameras in sight.”²²

¹⁸ Jentleson (2007), p.50

¹⁹ Jentleson (2007), p.50

²⁰ Herman & Chomsky (1994), p.xi

²¹ Herman & Chomsky (1994), p.xii

²² Jentleson (2007), p.50

THE “CNN EFFECT” & ELITE RESPONSES/PERSPECTIVES

This leads us on to the phenomenon referred to as ‘The CNN Effect’. According to Strobel, this is the “nexus of media power and foreign policy, where television’s instantly transmitted images fire public opinion, demanding instant responses from government officials, shaping and reshaping foreign policy at the whim of electrons.”²³ The reporting of the Tiananmen Square massacre by the Western media in June 1989 is considered to be the birth of this new phenomenon in policy-making, resulting in a dramatic increase in live television reporting of international crises and events.²⁴

James F. Hoge, the editor of *Foreign Affairs*, wrote in 1994 that the new “capabilities of modern media to be immediate, sensational and pervasive are unsettling the conduct of foreign affairs.” In addition, in the “shapeless aftermath” of the post-Cold War world, lacking the superpower rivalry that worked as a focal point for foreign policy consensus, “the impact of media’s immediacy is magnified”.²⁵ Others, however, believe “the focus on news management and the CNN effect, like most binaries, has obscured the widely varied subtleties around and between these poles of analysis,” diverting attention away from several effects of domestic and international actors and factors.²⁶

There has been a considerable amount of research done into the validity of the CNN Effect; whether or not it exists or, if it does, just how influential it really is. As with the influence of media as a whole, there is little consensus. Warren Strobel, writing in *American Journalism Review*, argues that “the closer one looks at those incidents that supposedly prove the CNN Effect, where dramatic and/or real-time images appear to have forced policy makers into making sudden changes, the more the Effect shrinks.”²⁷ While this may very well be the case, virtually all of the officials Strobel interviewed for his article

²³ Strobel (May 1996)

²⁴ Hoge (Jul/Aug.1994), p.136

²⁵ Hoge (Jul/Aug.1994), p.136

²⁶ Gilboa (Fall 2003), p.98

²⁷ Strobel (May 1996)

agreed that, if nothing else, CNN has “radically altered the way U.S. foreign policy is conducted.”²⁸

This effect has best been explained by Nicholas Burns, a former Secretary of State’s spokesperson serving under Warren Christopher. Burns explained that the spokesperson must increasingly take into account not only the politics of any given situation, but also the media environment: “I have since learned that understanding what makes the journalists seated in front of me tick is just as important as being able to defend our position on the ABM treaty.”²⁹ Burns continued, saying “Of all the various media... television is the one that has the greatest daily effect on how we can tell the story of U.S. foreign policy”, largely because television is “the medium that most Americans now use for their daily news and understanding of what their government is up to around the world.”³⁰

Addressing the myth that television news, particularly CNN, dictates what is on the foreign policy agenda, Warren Strobel points to how the US intervention in Somalia is used as an example to ‘prove this’. After all, there was equal suffering in southern Sudan in 1992, “but the administration was forced to pay attention to Somalia because the TV cameras were there.” A former assistant secretary of state for African affairs told Strobel, “It started with government manipulating the press... and then changed to press manipulating the government.”³¹

George F. Kennan wrote that there could be no question that the reason for US intervention in Somalia lies primarily with the exposure it received in the American media, particularly television. In his diary, excerpted in the New York Times on September 30, 1993, he warned that if U.S. policy, “particularly policy involving the uses of our armed forces abroad, is to be controlled by popular emotional impulses, and particularly ones provoked by the commercial television industry... then there is no place... for what have traditionally been

²⁸ Strobel (May 1996) & Sharkey (Dec.1993)

²⁹ Burns (Sep.1996), p.11

³⁰ Burns (Sep.1996), p.13

³¹ Strobel (May 1996)

regarded as the responsible deliberative organs of our government.”³² Kennan’s words sparked a short back-and-forth in the media about their influence on the policy process. CBS newsman Dan Rather, for example, wrote a response to the New York Times, arguing that “to give television credit for so powerful an influence is to flatter us who toil there – but it’s wrong.” Some reporters “may wish for the power to direct public opinion and to guide American policy – but they don’t have it.”³³ According to Marvin Kalb, this is because “Image in and of itself does not drive policy”, rather “Image heightens existing factors” already taken into consideration by policy-makers.³⁴

When looking at the world today, however, we are forced to rethink this – after all, there are plenty of journalists writing and reporting on the situation in Tibet, Darfur and so forth, yet US intervention is noticeably absent. This is most likely the result of reasons beyond media control and/or influence, such as the importance of China in geopolitics, and also business.³⁵ Equally, as already mentioned, the images of the brutal killing of people in Rwanda did not move governments to intervene militarily, even though there was supposedly more news coverage of Rwanda than Somalia (until US troops were sent to Somalia).³⁶

In the case of Yugoslavia, unlike Somalia, the press did not exert sufficient influence over the Bush administration’s decision-making. Warren Zimmermann, the last U.S. ambassador to Yugoslavia, told Strobel that “It wouldn’t have mattered if television was going 24 hours around the clock with Serb atrocities”. The president wasn’t going to get involved in the civil war:

“Through all the time that we were there... we had largely made a decision we were not going to get militarily involved. And nothing, including those stories, pushed us into it... this was a policy that wasn’t going to get changed no matter what the press said.”³⁷

³² Kennan (Sep.30th 1993)

³³ Rather (Oct.14th 1993)

³⁴ Quoted in: Sharkey (Dec.1993)

³⁵ These will be discussed in greater depth in the following two chapters.

³⁶ Strobel (May 1996)

³⁷ Quoted in: Strobel (May 1996)

While “image-provoked bursts of public compassion or anger can induce government paralysis or overreaction”, it is important to remember that media images usually have a short shelf-life. Whatever immediate impact such images may have, a well-explained policy position can offset the passions invoked. Hoge has suggested that Presidents George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton experienced policy failures because of a lack of clearly defined interests. In these situations, without the guidance of a solid government position or policy, the press can (and frequently does) raise humanitarianism above more concrete national interests as a justification for intervention and action.³⁸

From another perspective, however, the ability of the media to promote humanitarianism as a governing principle is seen positively: Broadcast images of strife and suffering abroad, displayed on CNN and other networks, can also help foreign policy officials explain the need for U.S. intervention, in an example of the mutual exploitation model. Quoting Richard Boucher, then State Department spokesman for Secretary James Baker, the press “makes the case of the need to be involved sometimes more than we can.”³⁹

THE RISE OF “SOFT NEWS”

In recent years, there has been a rise in the number of ‘soft news’ media outlets operating in America. Matthew Baum (author of *Soft News Goes to War*) characterises ‘soft news’ as media channels, outlets and programs more interested in sensation and human interest than hard news. Since the 1990s, there has been a “dramatic expansion in the number and diversity of entertainment-oriented, quasi-news media outlets”,⁴⁰ and as their numbers have grown, so too has their popularity – audiences for soft news programs are often larger than for hard news channels.

³⁸ Hoge (Jul/Aug.1994), p.138,142

³⁹ Strobel (May 1996)

⁴⁰ Baum (2003), p.18

Whether skewed by bias, submerged in humour, or otherwise delivered, the popularity of soft news media has had an important effect on foreign policy reporting:

“By altering the cost-benefit calculus for typical individuals, the rise of the soft news media has, without necessarily increasing the public’s overall appetite for political news, nonetheless increased the likelihood that typical individuals will attend to *select* high-profile issues, primarily those possessing characteristics – such as violence, heroism, scandal, a readily-identified villain, and the like – amenable to framing as dramatic human interest stories.”⁴¹

Baum argues that, by making political and foreign policy news stories more entertaining, and by including such content in soft news settings, these programs have the “perhaps unintended” benefit of actually helping a larger portion of the general public to understand foreign policy, by increasing uninterested viewers’ exposure to ‘hard’ news stories.⁴²

“By transforming mundane political coverage into entertainment, the soft news media have successfully employed piggybacking and cheap framing strategies in order to capture a substantial segment, or niche, of the television audience.”⁴³

As some Americans only become aware of foreign policy issues when these issues appear on soft news programs, this is both beneficial (because they notice the issue in the first place) and potentially harmful (there is no way of controlling the quality of the information they receive). When foreign policy issues cross over into soft news, Baum dubs them “water-cooler events”, and they will likely be discussed afterwards at length by people who might not always do so. The rise of this “new class of entertainment-oriented, quasi-news and information programs” has had the unintended consequence of increasing the likelihood that foreign policy crises will become water-cooler events.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Baum (2003), p.8

⁴² Baum (2003), p.95

⁴³ Baum (2003), p.52

⁴⁴ Baum (2003), pp.5-6

The impact of soft news should not be overestimated, however. The popularity of these 'soft' news channels and programs "demonstrates only that such programs have *potential* to influence public opinion regarding foreign policy, not that they actually do so."⁴⁵ Also, on the apparent association between levels of soft news consumption and acceptance of isolationist policies and positions, or suspicions of multilateral and proactive US foreign policies "does not affect all Americans equally... the strongest effects of soft news consumption appear mostly limited to the less educated and politically attentive segments of the population, who are also the primary consumers of soft news programs."⁴⁶ This conforms with Neuman, Just, and Crigler's findings, that television "can break the attention barrier for issues of low salience", while "Newspapers and magazines are better sources for new information when the audience is already motivated to pay attention."⁴⁷ (This is the reason for separate analyses of broadcast and print portrayals of China in the second part of this chapter.)

The rise of soft news programs has also had an impact on the practices of hard news media in America. "Hungry for sensation", news programs feed off "simplified ideas, expressed without nuance or qualification and often pitted against other simplifications in a 'point-counterpoint' format."⁴⁸ The reputation and standing of broadcast news has therefore been tarnished amongst content-based news outlets due to the decrease in the coverage of 'hard news' (e.g. politics and foreign affairs), the increase in 'soft' news pieces (i.e. human interest stories) and utilisation of social networking sites as sources of content. Burns made the following observation in 1996:

"In my view, television networks, CNN excluded, are by far the least serious of all media. The proud American networks, which educated my generation through the space launches, race riots, wars and scandals of the turbulent 1960s and 70s, now restrict themselves to a

⁴⁵ Baum (2003), p.63

⁴⁶ Baum (2003), p.257

⁴⁷ Neuman, Just, Crigler (1992), p.114 – cited in: Baum (2003), p.7

⁴⁸ Halper & Clarke (2006), p.9

sorry minimum of foreign affairs coverage, reflecting current prevailing public attitudes.”⁴⁹

Centrist, neutral, or ‘objective’ news has been “radically challenged”, Matthew Baum has argued, by what is often called “opinion journalism” – the focus on ‘celebrity’ opinion-makers and commentators who draw large audiences. Opinion journalism “operates more on the fringes than in the middle, more with emotion and innuendo than with facts or investigation” – the most popular examples of biased television news sources are Fox (conservative) and MSNBC (liberal).⁵⁰

This view, an increasingly widespread opinion, is due to the ever-shrinking length of the average sound-bite for US broadcasts, compared with the almost four-times longer BBC standard, and CNN’s tendency to air entire interviews.⁵¹ However, in today’s media environment, there can be little doubt that CNN’s standards have also slipped, thereby diminishing its impact on policy-making (domestic and foreign) – a result of their increased acceptance of Twitter and Facebook as legitimate sources of quotes, comments and even news. In a way, this is a modern development and evolution of popular-if-worthless ‘vox populi’ quotations in the news media. While some might argue that they can offer credible commentary, when you consider the Twitter feeds or Facebook profiles of politicians, CNN is not actually referring to these. The new tendency is to refer to obscure viewers and ‘Tweeters’, and has led satirical news outlets, such as *The Daily Show* and *The Onion*, to frequently ridicule both CNN and other broadcasters for referring to, or relying on, these sources.⁵²

The increase in importance and acceptance of soft news media is also demonstrated by the greater attention paid to presidential politics in these media. Prior to 2000, presidential politics was not much covered in the soft news media. However, because candidates came to recognise the wider (and, most importantly, younger) audience they could connect with through soft media, and because of their newfound willingness to appear on these programs

⁴⁹ Burns (Sep.1996), p.14

⁵⁰ Hayden (2010), p.50

⁵¹ Burns (Sep.1996), p.14

⁵² See www.thedailyshow.com and www.theonion.com

(in interviews, or even ‘skits’ on *Saturday Night Live*), presidential politics has become a frequent topic. Shows like *The Daily Show* and *The Colbert Report* will devote entire weeks to presidential, congressional and senatorial campaigns.⁵³ *The Daily Show* in particular, has had great success bringing candidates onto its show since 2000, and President Obama has been particularly accommodating of interview requests from a number of soft news programs (both in office and before while campaigning). It is becoming increasingly apparent that soft media are influential actors in the media-politics arena (by either helping to ‘get out the vote’ or, more likely, mobilising a party’s ‘base’) – and this has only become more apparent since Baum’s book was published. However, as with print media and the opinion journalism of MSNBC and Fox, soft news programs are not apolitical, and frequently push either liberal or conservative positions in interviews and segments.

Given the narrowing of content, whereby someone with a conservative bias knows exactly where to look for conservative news and reporting (e.g., Fox News on television, or *National Review* and *The Weekly Standard* in print), one must wonder just how influential the media really can be.⁵⁴ By clearly displaying or exhibiting an ideological bias, your audience is unlikely to share a different set of ideals or opinions; you will effectively be preaching to the converted. “Too many Americans are consuming one-sided, opinionated vitriol rather than actual news.”⁵⁵ In Baum’s words:

“the shady art of fulmination has influenced television news profoundly and even affected print journalism to the point that news sometimes seems to have been trumped by views.”⁵⁶

The changing nature of news content is also noticeable in how guest experts comport themselves and articulate their expertise on air. Academics are frequently called upon to contribute to the media – either in the form of a guest pundit on a

⁵³ Baum (2003), pp.272-278

⁵⁴ That being said, the importance any specific news outlet might have could be heightened and/or diminished dependent on the political party in power. For example, if a Republican-proposed policy were criticised by Fox News, this would likely impact the passage of a bill or implementation of a strategy more than criticism from, for example, MSNBC. One should also take into consideration, however, that the GOP is quite beholden to the influence Fox has over its viewers, so it is not clear whether or not ‘liberal’ news media would have as much impact during a Democratic administration.

⁵⁵ Hutton (2007), p.312

⁵⁶ Hayden (2010), p.50

news programme, or by contributing op-ed pieces in the print media. Although these appearances and articles can help to add understanding and credibility to an issue, they are not universally welcomed. For example, in 1993, the *New York Times*' Walter Goodman wrote of "a thriving television tradition of know-it-alls expatiating at the summons of the evening news on why a catastrophe they never predicted could now easily be foreseen," of which the "most accomplished of the breed are the foreign-policy pontificators."⁵⁷ These television experts, sometimes referred to as 'talking heads', are often brought in by television studios to help add gravitas, credibility and a scholarly face to a particular position or agenda the programme is trying to get across to its audience. As already discussed above, the formats available to these guests is not conducive to proper intellectual discourse. A few appearances on a popular news show can help enhance the reputation of the scholar in question. With university research increasingly going down a more theoretical road, a good performance on a new programme, according to Goodman, "may bring a book contract, a lecture tour, an invitation to be a senior something-or-other at a think tank, a partnership in a consulting operation, an invitation to contribute to op-ed pages." Goodman's rather cynical contention is that "The new line for academic careerists: perform or perish."⁵⁸ According to Halper and Clarke, "We have nearly reached the point where experts devote more time to packaging their ideas in a media-friendly way than to the rigor or implications of their analysis."⁵⁹ They are particularly critical that "distinguished former Secretaries of State Madeleine Albright and Lawrence Eagleburger should lend dignity and credibility to confrontational talk shows", because their "truncated, rapid-fire format effectively excludes expertise from the debate."⁶⁰

This also applies beyond television news. Matt Frei (2008) has written about how scholars at think tanks construct theories and proposals without fully thinking them through.⁶¹ When they prove false, these scholars can simply switch their attention to their next big idea. Equally, both Baker and Powell

⁵⁷ Goodman (Apr.29th 1993)

⁵⁸ Goodman (Apr.29th 1993)

⁵⁹ Halper & Clarke (2006), p.12

⁶⁰ Halper & Clarke (2006), p.12

⁶¹ Frei (2008), pp.201-222

have written about the importance of media in making considerations about foreign policy and how decisions/policies might “play” in the media.

The level of respect afforded to news broadcasts is mixed. While there are clearly many experts and scholars who take advantage of invitations to appear on these news shows, Will Hutton points out that, “Opinion has become more important than fact, so that many facts that do not fit the *a priori* thesis are simply not broadcast.”⁶² The guest experts, in these instances, peddle a “mix of unexceptional observations and pop formulations”,⁶³ because when learned and experienced specialists and officials do take part in a news show on television, they “quickly learn that sound bites and repartee, not analysis, are the keys to being invited back.”⁶⁴ The importance of sound-bites is also responsible for the rise of non-expert pundits, who have no specific expertise for being called on to comment. An example of this type of ‘expert’ is conservative mega-selling author and commentator Ann Coulter, whose statements are frequently hyperbolic – simultaneously offensive to the political left, and performing a disservice to the right. It is becoming increasingly clear that ideological purity and political theatre are now considered more important than actual expertise.

In 1966, Senator William Fulbright observed in Senate Hearings on Government and the Media, that even the most prominent newspapers (e.g. *New York Times* and *Washington Post*), on foreign policy issues, “have become almost agents or adjuncts of the government, that they do not contest or even raise questions about government policy.”⁶⁵ While the Watergate scandal in June 1972 heightened the media’s distrust of government, and led to a mini-boom in investigative reporting, the current journalism climate is much changed. The mass media in America has been drawn into a “symbiotic relationship” with powerful sources of information through “economic necessity and reciprocity of interest”.⁶⁶ As certain newspapers – specifically, the *Washington Post*, *New York*

⁶² Hutton (2007), p.312

⁶³ Goodman (Apr.29th 1993)

⁶⁴ Halper & Clarke (2006), p.10

⁶⁵ Cited in: Sinha (2003), p.20

⁶⁶ Herman & Chomsky (1994), p.18-19

Times, and *Wall Street Journal* – are far more widely read among policymakers and political elites, the closeness of this relationship is heightened, giving the papers a level of influence greater than their circulation might suggest. The media, therefore, could be argued to write or broadcast for the political elite, and the political elite in return could be seen to be performing for the media. One can infer from this an in-built reinforcement of views and policy preferences.

In American society, media interests “are peculiar corporate creatures without wholly altruistic aims.”⁶⁷ Therefore, given the US media’s corporate nature, there have been increased “market-driven efforts by television broadcasters (and, to a lesser extent, other media outlets) to make certain types of news appealing to viewers who are uninterested in politics.”⁶⁸ The media cannot afford to keep reporters and camera crews stationed in every area where a news story may break. Therefore, through a lack of resources available to the struggling industry, the media must rely on fewer sources (usually official, governmental and corporate sources of information) to meet their daily news demands and strict news schedules, and this is especially true for foreign affairs stories.⁶⁹ “Economics dictates that they concentrate their resources where significant news often occurs, where important rumours and leaks abound, and where regular press conferences are held”; for example, the White House, the State and Defence Departments, city halls, police departments, and with access to Washington’s ever-growing population of lobbyists. Business corporations are also considered important, valuable sources of news and stories. All of these sources are considered valuable because they are also believed to be reliable, recognisable and credible.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Hayden (2010), p.xiv

⁶⁸ Baum (2003), p.8

⁶⁹ Sinha (2003), p.20; Herman & Chomsky (1994), p.18-19

⁷⁰ Herman & Chomsky (1994), p.18-19

THE US MEDIA & CHINA

THE MEDIA AND CHINA SINCE TIANANMEN

“To a great extent, the stage for current U.S. policy difficulties was set by the 1989 Tiananmen Square crackdown, from which China has never been rehabilitated in the eyes of most Americans.”⁷¹

The collapse of the Soviet Union, and the resultant disappearance of China’s strategic importance as a counterweight to Soviet power, may have resulted in an eventual reassessment of U.S. China policy over the course of the 1990s or, at the latest, the 2000s. But any potential trajectory for the US-China relationship was ultimately diverted as the government crackdown in Tiananmen Square ultimately ruptured the American policy consensus on China, and suggested to many in the United States that the emerging political liberalisation assumed to be accompanying China’s program of economic reform had come to an abrupt, violent end.⁷² Of course, we know now that China’s economic liberalisation has not ended, rather it has continued at an impressive, oft-double-digit growth rate – even following the economic crisis, China continues to grow, even if at a reduced rate. Beijing does, however, show few signs of loosening its grip on China’s political environment, and certainly there has been no move to open up and liberalise Chinese politics.

The June 1989 Tiananmen Square Massacre and the May 1999 violent anti-American demonstrations across China (in the wake of the accidental bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade) are just two instances that have made or reinforced the American public’s more negative views of China, deeming it a “serious threat”.⁷³ This is perhaps the result of media depictions of the violence, and no doubt the political spin put on it by those China-critics who would usually be excluded from punditry on China when the relationship is more or less stable and amicable.

⁷¹ Dumbaugh (2001), p.113

⁷² Dumbaugh (2001), p.113

⁷³ Lampton (2001), p.258 – Lampton uses these two examples, coupled with the data that in 1999, 60% of Americans polled believed China to be a “serious threat”, while in 1980, only 18% were of this opinion.

President George H.W. Bush's press secretary, Marlin Fitzwater, identified the media's impact following Tiananmen when he said, while the US government was the first to respond to the events in China, "it was based almost entirely on what we were seeing on television. We were getting reporting cables from Beijing, but they did not have the sting, the demand for a government response that the television pictures had."⁷⁴

The television images of students peacefully demanding free expression, of the now-famous, lone protester facing down a row of tanks, followed by reports of violent repression through the night and after the television cameras were expelled from the area, "drastically altered U.S. opinion starting at the top" of government and on down to those in the public who sat riveted to CNN.⁷⁵ The lasting impact of these images has meant that, ever since they aired, US media has devoted considerable attention to Beijing's policies and practices that are easily portrayed in a negative light and shown to be against the principles and values that the United States espouses and hopes to represent. "Such coverage was viewed by an American public that held ambivalent views about the Chinese authorities and seemed prepared to consider negative issues raised by U.S. media."⁷⁶ The general public's lack of understanding of China has left the media with a lower burden of proof, which results in a shallow understanding of China. This is most notably exemplified by the evolution of rhetoric and policy towards China. As mentioned in the previous chapter, both Presidents Clinton and George W. Bush entered office with a negative impression of China. However, despite the media's negative bias, they both mellowed as they became more informed of the actual situation, and a realisation of the mutually beneficial aspects of the US-China relationship allowed for a realist dominance once more. So it can be seen that the first President Bush still sent his National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft to China, despite considerable opposition in the media, President Clinton still moderated his tone (dropping his references to the "butchers of Beijing"), and President George W. Bush also eventually

⁷⁴ Quoted in: Hoge (Jul/Aug.1994), p.140

⁷⁵ Hoge (Jul/Aug.1994), p.140

⁷⁶ Myers, Oksenberg & Shambaugh (2001), p.91

moved back towards the engagement position when China offered its support in the War on Terror.

James Mann identifies an additional contrasting trend in media coverage of China, which leans not only negative, but also towards the cliché in an attempt to “exoticise China, making it seem strange, distant, and difficult to comprehend”. This characterisation harbours the subtext that “China is fundamentally different from the rest of the world, that a visitor to China should suspend his or her ordinary judgements, [and] that the reactions that would be evoked elsewhere in the world have no place in China.”⁷⁷ This theory can help explain many positive stories about China, as reporters (or the new organisations to which they belong) might hope to portray China’s actions in a positive light for a variety of economic and/or political reasons.

According to David Lampton, American motivations with respect to China have always been a strong combination of “economic enticement” and “spiritual and economic salvation”. What he means by this is simply that “Americans tend to rationalise economic intercourse with China with improvement (as they see it) of the spiritual and political lives of the Chinese people.”⁷⁸ While this may very well be the case, and it is relatively easy to see this approach taken by a number of academics, special interests and many in the media, the image and portrayal of China can rise and fall depending on circumstances and events.

In a short survey of US newspaper coverage of China, Liss found that it was clearly much more negative than positive, and the same can be said for television reports. As a result, assuming the reader (or viewer) does not have a particularly deep understanding or interest in wider international relations or US-China relations, “we can see that they will probably imagine China as a land of political repression, crime, and Soviet-style mistreatment of its citizens.” The government in Beijing, meanwhile, when it is not “imprisoning its own citizens, [it] is exhorting its populace and training its military for the eventual goal of

⁷⁷ Mann (2007), p.85

⁷⁸ Lampton (2001), p.257

extending its geopolitical influence throughout Asia, taking the US on head-to-head in the process.”⁷⁹

As I shall show below, this portrayal of China as a potential aggressor is certainly the impression presented by the *Weekly Standard*, which is far more aggressively and unambiguously critical of China than the major papers and other news weeklies. The major papers (the *Washington Post*, *New York Times*, and the *Wall Street Journal*) appear, from my own research, more likely to present neutral news stories – though frequently containing allusions or references to darker, less acceptable events or practices in China’s recent past – while negativity is far more common in their commentary and op-ed pages. Given the ideologically wide array of commentators these papers are able to draw from, it is difficult to identify a specific publication-position on China. The news weeklies and other non-dailies, on the other hand, frequently provide an ideological bias in their news stories as well as opinion pieces. These publications draw from the same pool of issues to report and discuss less savoury aspects of China’s rise and domestic environment, including: environmental degradation, human rights, economic “cheating”, China’s military build-up and lack of transparency. It is also common to find China specifically referred to as “Communist China” or “Red China”, in a clear attempt to paint the PRC as the world’s “socialist other” and a potential foe, indicating a potential desire to classify China in terminology reminiscent of the Cold War – i.e. ‘democratic vs, authoritarian’, ‘capitalist vs. communist’, and so forth.

From my own research, there is considerable evidence that the US media as a whole perpetuates two conflicting images of China, one negative and one positive. The first is of a benign and constructive nation, while the other is of a malevolent and threatening potential enemy.⁸⁰ It is true that some publications – usually those with an overt ideological bias – portray China as just one or the other, with the majority leaning towards a more negative portrayal. This may very well be the result of US media journalists not having a deep understanding

⁷⁹ Liss (May 2003), p.317

⁸⁰ Lampton (2001), p.257

of China, and retaining a certain level of Cold War-esque thinking, not to mention a media format that favours brevity over substance.

Radha Sinha lays much of the blame for the lack of objectivity of reporting on China at the feet of conservative journalists, who he describes as having “disproportionate influence”. While it is difficult to actually measure any given media faction’s influence,⁸¹ Sinha does qualify his observation: “One of the manifestations of this trend is the glowing reporting on economic achievements of post-reform China (the period after 1978) because the changes seem to conform to American views of a market-economy; pre-reform China almost always receives bleak appraisal.”⁸² This does not, however, match observations by other scholars and also my own research into US media portrayals of China. It is true that the *Wall Street Journal* – as a business paper – focuses most on the business and trade aspects of the US-China relationship, often praising China’s economic reformation, but most other print magazines and newspapers (particularly in opinion-pieces or editorials), hold largely critical views of China. Their criticisms focus on human rights, currency, repression, and so forth. The conservative *Weekly Standard*, for example, rarely (if ever) has a good word to say about China, and openly revels in their opposition to the PRC’s regime, trade and domestic policies.⁸³

The dual-view of China is comprised of a number of elements and influences. The American public’s positive image of China is influenced by such things as “Marco Polo, China’s ancient greatness, civilisation, art, hoary wisdom”,⁸⁴ and modern images of its considerable economic progress and development. Hollywood’s frequent depiction of China’s history as romantic and civilised, not to mention China’s own movie industry’s exports, have helped to foster this impression.⁸⁵ The negative image of China is far more widespread, and perhaps more ingrained – possibly a result of the preference for sensational pieces discussed earlier in this chapter. Writing in 1972, Isaacs presented the

⁸¹ It is accepted that *The Weekly Standard* and *National Review* will most likely wield greater influence during Republican administrations, for the simple reason that many of their journalists are often employed by GOP administrations.

⁸² Sinha (2003), p.22

⁸³ Observation made from a search of all print editions from September 18th 1995 to December 28th 2009.

⁸⁴ Isaacs (1972), p.63

⁸⁵ Rosendorf (Spring 2009), p.84-90

following list of negative images: “cruelty, barbarism, inhumanity; a faceless, impenetrable, overwhelming mass, irresistible if once loosed... the devious and difficult heathen, the killers of girl infants... the torturers of a thousand cuts... the nerveless indifference to pain, death, or to human disaster, the whole set of lurid, strange, and fearful images clustered around the notion of the awakening giant”,⁸⁶ and many if not all of these impressions remain today. Today, there are a number of other negative stories and angles popular with the media; these include outsourcing jobs, China’s actions and policies in and towards Tibet, China’s disregard for intellectual property rights, dangerous manufactures, and ever-growing human rights infractions. Taiwan and its formal status is another issue that can come front-and-centre in the media’s discussion of China, but usually only when a crisis (for example, in 1996) or an important event (such as an election) takes place.

BROADCAST MEDIA

American broadcast media is largely event-driven and subject to sensation, and tends to be the medium that creates and presents the most enduring and potent images of China. As we have seen above, the media has become increasingly controlled and dependent on short sound bites, which has led David Lampton to comment: “This accounts for a constant refrain among both the Chinese and China experts that news coverage of the PRC tends to be superficial, simplistic, and to ignore many central subjects.” Lampton argued that this results in difficulty in finding good coverage of a “trend story (such as the gradual transformation of China)” because of the “event-driven medium, and in a medium in which the length of the average sound bite has dropped from about twenty seconds to seven or eight seconds in the last twenty years.”⁸⁷ It is for this reason that the print media, less reliant on short sound-bites, offers a broader understanding and portrait of China’s contemporary modernisation.

⁸⁶ Isaacs (1972), pp.63-64

⁸⁷ Lampton (2001), p.264

The US mass media do not simply report facts, but also play a role in defending the core values of their constituents, as they see them. As such, it is not immune to the pressures that affect other branches in the policy-making process. The influence of these lobbyists and interest groups can often be seen in the nature of reporting on China. For example, NBC's lead expert commentator during the 2008 Beijing Olympics was Joshua Cooper Ramo. Ramo's coverage of the games, and of the Chinese government, was "relentlessly upbeat" according to Silverstein, who also insinuated that the positive reporting was due to Ramo's other job as the managing director of Kissinger Associates, which has "extremely close ties to the Chinese leadership and whose business involves opening doors for Western companies seeking to do business in China",⁸⁸ and therefore cannot be seen to be critical for fear of jeopardizing the group's future business.⁸⁹ Undisclosed conflicts of interest such as this are not uncommon: News Corp outlets have been ordered, on occasion, to downplay any story that might paint China in a poor light, in the hopes of not jeopardizing Murdoch's plans for expanding into the Chinese market.

The media provide fora in which politicians and opinion leaders compete for popular attention and political support. "The media are therefore not simply observers of the U.S.-China relationship; they are active players in it."⁹⁰ Quite often, this can manifest itself through the media becoming the story, focusing on China's media and internet censorship (or censorship of services like Google), and the lack of free-speech when reporting in or on China.

According to a study published in 1998 jointly by the National Committee on U.S.-China Relations, the Kennedy School of Government, and American University, media pieces and programmes on China in general had received small viewing figures from those who said they followed the stories "very closely". Examples given are Clinton's visit to China in 1998 (14%), the 1996 Taiwan Straits tensions (19%). While some might consider these to be

⁸⁸ Silverstein (Dec. 2nd 2008)

⁸⁹ It's also worth noting that NBC's parent-company at that time was General Electric, which also has huge investments in China. It's possible GE would want a "Halo Effect" from the coverage, which might have influenced the choice of someone like Ramo.

⁹⁰ Lampton (2001), p.263

newsworthy and important stories, audiences were limited. “The one exception was in 1989, when nearly half of the American public closely followed the events in Tiananmen Square.”⁹¹ The impact of the Tiananmen images (as already discussed) on American passions and opinions endures today, and is well illustrated in the following example: April 8th 2008, on CNN’s Situation Room, Wolf Blitzer explained that the pro-China lobby argues that China is a different country to the one of decades ago, when (among other things) Tiananmen was fresh in people’s mind. Jack Cafferty, another of CNN’s extremely popular and influential hosts, responded that the government in Beijing isn’t that much different, but it is the bilateral relationship that has changed. Illustrating the enduring negative impression of China, he explained his position thus, touching upon many of the negative contemporary issues:

“We’re in hock to the Chinese up to our eyeballs... They’re holding hundreds of billions of dollars of our paper. We are also running hundreds of billions of dollars worth of trade deficits with them, as we continue to import their junk with the lead paint on them [*sic*] and the poisoned pet food, and export jobs to places where you can pay workers a dollar a month to turn out the stuff we’re buying from Wal-Mart.... [But] I think they’re basically the same bunch of goons and thugs they’ve been for the last fifty years.”⁹²

Compared to his CNN colleagues, Cafferty holds a particularly negative opinion of China, which he conveys forcefully to his viewers, as well as the millions of readers of his website and books. Like many in the media, the issues he awards the most importance are economics and human rights. Cafferty appears to have the impression that China is a particularly malign actor in the realm of economics. China’s purchase of huge amounts of US debt, he believes, bestows “enormous leverage”⁹³ over political and economic policy towards China. Flavia Colgan (an MSNBC Political Analyst) agrees, describing the bilateral relationship as “we have a gun to our head by a country called China

⁹¹ Cited in: Lampton (2001), p.265

⁹² Cafferty (2009), p.59 – This statement caused an absolute storm for CNN, who came under fire not only from the Chinese Foreign Ministry (verbally and by making CNN visa applications difficult), but also from Chinese Americans.

⁹³ Cafferty (2009), pp.61-62

[sic]”.⁹⁴ That the US has allowed this state of affairs to evolve to America’s detriment is unfortunate as, “China’s global ascendancy aside, the flow of defective or deadly products shipped here has been steady.”⁹⁵ The discovery of defective and dangerous Chinese-made products in America caused a considerable amount of backlash and increased negativity against China: MSNBC warned consumers about “poisoned” and “tainted” baby formula made in China, adding Chinese-made milk to a “long list” of banned or dangerous Chinese products.⁹⁶ Lou Dobbs, on his recently-cancelled CNN show, *Lou Dobbs Tonight*, devoted a significant amount of time to a “fight against the export of American jobs.” Dobbs’s claim is that “four or five hundred thousand jobs a year are lost to outsourcing and relocation of production” and the host likes to name the “guilty” corporations and state governments who send these jobs abroad.⁹⁷ This is also clear in his book, *Exporting America* (2004). The export of jobs is an issue the media likes to run with because of its human interest angle, and, because of this, politicians need to address these concerns. Thus the media act as story and agenda framers in the debate.

Within the media, any issue can remain on its radar through the self-regenerating nature of news reporting, and this is certainly the case with human rights in China. Contrary to the claims of China apologists in the United States, unfavourable press attention to China is not primarily the result of groups ‘picking on’ the country. China’s human rights abuses – whether it’s Tibet, Falun Gong, Xianjiang, or religious and political repression – get coverage, even when they are less severe than abuses in other countries, because “the PRC is a globally significant state in a way that Nigeria or Burma is not.”⁹⁸ However, despite this, the current economic crisis has meant that economic relations between the two countries dominate any coverage of China, relegating most other issues outside the public eye, with only a couple of exceptions.⁹⁹

⁹⁴ “Scarborough Country” Transcript for February 22nd 2005 (February 23rd 2005, <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/7017513>)

⁹⁵ Cafferty (2009), p.67

⁹⁶ MSNBC *Hardball* (Sep.12th 2008)

⁹⁷ Hutton (2007), p.286

⁹⁸ Teles (1998), pp.54-55

⁹⁹ This impression is from a lengthy search through the online video archives of CNN, MSNBC, and Fox News – conducted June 25th-July 3rd 2009.

China's conduct on the global stage at large is frequently criticised on US TV forums. Beijing's relations with the Sudanese government, for example, plays into the frame that China is a selfish, cold nation with a disregard for general human rights. In a segment about Darfur and the UN's inaction, Ed Royce explains that Security Council efforts are being thwarted principally by China because it is not only the main customer for Sudan's oil, it is also a major supplier of weapons to the Sudanese government; when Chris Matthews asks whether or not this is because China just doesn't care, Royce explains that it is because "They haven't felt enough pressure yet" from the global community.¹⁰⁰ The impression that China 'doesn't care' about issues like these is not strictly speaking true. The media often asks questions like these, without understanding that China's foreign policy is based considerably on national interest calculations, which can sometimes result in a cold impression in the West (not unlike the global impression of George H.W. Bush's policy towards Yugoslavia).

Although academics and TV pundits frequently hold negative impressions of China, they can sometimes provide a moderating influence on hosts who frame their questions in highly critical ways. For example, in the case of China's relations with North Korea, Norah O'Donnell, an MSNBC host, criticised China for providing so much aid and support to the regime in Pyongyang, but failing to use that leverage effectively. The guests on the show provided the wider political context of the relationship (concerns over stability, mainly).¹⁰¹ This is important as, because of the influence some news presenters enjoy over their audiences, an 'expert' who offers a more moderated opinion can potentially help moderate both public and official perceptions of China.

PRINT MEDIA

The difficulty experienced by the broadcast media in dealing with China, limited by the stringent space- and time constraints, is not shared by the print media.

¹⁰⁰ MSNBC *Hardball* (Feb. 18th 2005); Cafferty (2009), p.59

¹⁰¹ MSNBC *Hardball* (Jul. 6th 2008)

When it comes to reporting on China, there are a number of recurring themes in the US print media. While there are, without doubt, articles that adhere to a given China agenda, there are many articles (a considerable majority) that would fall into a category of ‘straight reporting’, in which journalists merely report the facts or events as they happen, without an evident bias one way or another. There are those journalists and articles that take a more negative tone, which might focus on potential (or sometimes ‘inevitable’) conflict between the United States and China,¹⁰² or between the PRC and Taiwan; China’s human rights abuses and the PRC’s repressive political system; China’s internal instability, unrest and potential breakdown within Chinese social order;¹⁰³ backwardness and corruption within the political system.¹⁰⁴ One *National Review* editorial, for example, outlined a general shopping-list of grievances about China:

“Whether developing ballistic missiles, threatening Taiwan with truculent language, shrugging at North Korea’s nuclear ambitions, or permitting the piracy of intellectual property, China’s rulers do little to inspire confidence”¹⁰⁵

On the opposite side of the spectrum, there are the slightly-less-common positive tone articles about China, which look at the promise and potential of the Chinese market, China’s impressive and sustained economic growth and reform of its outdated command economy, cultural change, and, more recently, diplomatic cooperation in the Global War on Terrorism.¹⁰⁶ Since President Obama took office, the theme of climate cooperation and also Chinese currency manipulation have risen in prominence and frequency. Commentary on the former has been mostly positive, and Thomas Friedman has been particularly vocal in his disappointment with the US lagging behind China on green energy production and investment, dedicating a number of his *New York Times*

¹⁰² Most notably, Bernstein & Munro (1998)

¹⁰³ Shirk (2008) is the best long-form book on this.

¹⁰⁴ During the early 2000s, Minxin Pei wrote extensively on Chinese government corruption in *Foreign Policy* and other journals

¹⁰⁵ *National Review* (Jul.18th 2005), p.10

¹⁰⁶ Liss (2003), p.300

columns to the issue.¹⁰⁷ The issue of China's monetary policy, on the other hand, has continued to be quite negative in the press.¹⁰⁸

In those areas where China's actions and interests are perceived to be more in concert with America's – the economic promise of China's growing internal market, any reform of China's government and economy, increased diplomatic cooperation, and cultural exchanges¹⁰⁹ – coverage is usually more balanced. Recently, especially in the run up to the Olympic Games in 2008, media coverage of China also looked at the potential benefits the Games might bring to China (including some follow-up after the event). Most recently of all, the print media has discussed China's role in the aftermath of the 2008-9 economic crisis, sometimes quite favourably.

One thing is clear, however: any cursory survey of the American print media's China coverage will show a deep-rooted, though not overwhelming, bias towards negative news coverage.¹¹⁰ This is true across the political ideological spectrum. For example, the liberal newsweekly *The Nation* tends to focus on China's negative impact on the environment and the US job market; the conservative *Weekly Standard*, on the other hand, tends to look unfavourably on China's role in the global energy market and is also highly suspicious of China's defence policies and military build-up.¹¹¹ "The school of thought that perceives China as a threat to the US holds considerable sway over America's major newspapers" and a number of major news-weeklies. "In balance to this, though, are those who believe that China should be engaged, not contained."¹¹²

ISSUE AREAS IN US MEDIA REPORTING ON CHINA

There is no shortage of articles outlining the negative impact of China's rise, especially in the economic and human rights spheres. To get a wider

¹⁰⁷ See, for example: Friedman (Apr.27th 2010), (May 4th 2010), (Sep.18th 2010) & (Sep.25th 2010)

¹⁰⁸ See, for example: Lotke (Nov.13th 2009), Schneider (Mar.26th 2010), Gerard (Sep.16th 2010), Samuelson (Sep.27th 2010)

¹⁰⁹ Liss (2003), p.310

¹¹⁰ Liss (2003), p.301

¹¹¹ See, for example: Cropsey (Jan.26th 2009), pp.26-28

¹¹² Liss (2003), p.314

understanding of the nature of China coverage in the print media, I shall now look at the specific, key issues and illustrate how they are portrayed and reported. These issues can broadly be collected into the following four categories: economics, human rights, military, and environmental. There is frequent overlap between the categories. For example, despite official claims that economic liberalization and development in China will ultimately lead to political liberalization, some describing this as an “iron law” of international relations,¹¹³ “Beijing remains as brutal as ever”. Therefore, “the arguments made over the years by advocates for constructive engagement have proved largely fallacious”.¹¹⁴ China is guilty of such abuses as “extrajudicial killings, torture and coerced confessions of prisoners, and the use of forced labour, including prison labour,” and has offered “unflagging support” to some of the most tyrannical regimes abroad.¹¹⁵

ECONOMIC RELATIONS

Economics receives a considerable amount of attention from the print media, from all sides of the political spectrum. Depending on their stance on other issues (e.g. human rights), a publication will look at the US-Chinese economic relationship through different prisms. For example, publications of all stripes have been critical of what *TIME* magazine identified as the “almost puppy-like devotion to the Middle Kingdom voiced by Western CEOs”.¹¹⁶ The *Weekly Standard*, in particular, has berated the US business (specifically Republican) establishment for “subordinating both strategic concerns and American principles to business interests,”¹¹⁷ while *The Nation* argues that the China market is so attractive to business that human rights violations are simply ignored, and no official is comfortable addressing them in public.¹¹⁸

¹¹³ Rice (*National Review*, 1999)

¹¹⁴ Silverstein (Aug.2008), p.50

¹¹⁵ Silverstein (Aug.2008), p.50

¹¹⁶ Fox (Jun.8th 2009)

¹¹⁷ Kristol (Mar.10th 1997), p.17

¹¹⁸ Kwong (May 1st 2006), p.5; Pocha (Jun.4th 2007), p.27

The *Weekly Standard* frequently publishes articles about the subordination of principles (once pointing out how a Pizza Hut now stands on the former site of the Democracy Wall), arguing that “For America as an *idea*, business as usual with a totalitarian state is always too expensive.”¹¹⁹ The *Weekly Standard* is not blind to the benefits of economic relations with China, but it doesn’t pass up many opportunities to shine a light on the darker side of trade with China: “It gets to use the hard currency it derives from [trade with the US] to... ahem, sustain the sadistic regime it imposes on its citizens, modernise its gigantic army, and expand its malign influence throughout Asia.” With pernicious business-oriented special interests “whispering in his ear” on US-China policy, a president is unlikely to do anything but maintain his silence.¹²⁰

The Nation, a liberal magazine ideologically distinct from the *Weekly Standard*, is equally critical of China trade, which it focuses on above all other US-China issues. However its writers approach the issue from a different (not to mention simplistic) direction; specifically, the impact of outsourcing and its harmful effects on US wages,¹²¹ China’s repression of trade unions,¹²² and its manipulation of the Yuan.¹²³ Like the *Weekly Standard*, *The Nation* is critical of the influence of the business community, accusing the government of being “more aligned with Wal-Mart” than with US manufacturers.¹²⁴ This position is shared by journalists writing for *The American Prospect*, a liberal monthly publication which includes articles denouncing “the alliance of slave-labour factories in China and U.S. retailers like Wal Mart” that is dragging down US wages.¹²⁵ Writers at the *Nation* are careful to warn against extreme legislative reactions to the imbalances in the bilateral relationship, as, even though the “economy is held hostage by Himalayas of external debt, much of it in the hands

¹¹⁹ Tell (Dec.23rd 1996), p.10

¹²⁰ Tell (Dec.23rd 1996), p.9; see also Kuttner (Jan/Feb.2008), p.22

¹²¹ Moberg (Jan.10th/17th 2005), p.4; Schwenninger (Jan.12th/19th 2009), p.31 – This argument ignores the core reasons *why* American corporations invest in China, specifically the increase in American demand for cheaper consumer products.

¹²² Moberg (Jan.10th/17th 2005), p.5; see also Pocha (Jun.4th 2007), pp.26-27

¹²³ This is a popular issue with almost all US publications. See, for example: Kuttner (Jan/Feb.2008), p.22

¹²⁴ Moberg (Jan.10th/17th 2005), p.5

¹²⁵ Kuttner (Dec.2006), p.3

of a strategic rival, China”,¹²⁶ such knee-jerk impulses do “nothing to address our underlying industrial weakness or the American penchant for living beyond our means,”¹²⁷ and therefore some of the blame remains at home. However, that China’s dollar holdings are an issue is clear when you consider that it is consistently mentioned in *every* article mentioning China between 2005 and 2008, and prominently so during the presidential election of 2008.¹²⁸ Interestingly, but in a sign of ideological honesty, articles covering the value of the yuan and the decline of the manufacturing sector in the US are on the whole balanced, refusing to join other “China-bashers”. *The Nation*’s editorial board has also been critical of standard liberal tropes, distancing themselves from ‘liberal’ attack ads that ridicule corporate tax cuts “for creating jobs and businesses – in China.”¹²⁹ Instead, they have argued that “Manufacturing jobs have been in steady decline... for decades in the United States, as in other advanced countries. Using fewer people to produce more goods is what economic growth is all about.”¹³⁰ Still, for liberal publications like *The Nation*, outsourcing is still an important, negative issue. Even President Obama’s stimulus plan has been criticized, because it “might restart factories in China while leaving US unemployment painfully high.”¹³¹

When it comes to China, the *Wall Street Journal*, has a specific place within the general print media. When Rupert Murdoch purchased the *Journal*, it was believed that the paper’s coverage of China would become subordinated to News Corp.’s other interests in China. Some journalists argue that this has not really come about,¹³² but this might be more the result of the *Journal*’s main function as a business paper, which means it will tend to focus on the business potential of the China market and what its reforms and modernization mean for foreign corporations conducting business in China.¹³³ As a whole, articles discussing China have been neutral or attempted to put a positive spin on any

¹²⁶ Schell (Mar. 21st 2005), p.8

¹²⁷ Henwood (May 16th 2005), p.8

¹²⁸ Survey of all *Nation* print editions, January 3rd 2005-December 29th 2008. For a specific example: Nichols (Apr. 21st 2008), pp.6-8

¹²⁹ Moore (May 17th 2004), p.20

¹³⁰ *National Review* (Sep. 29th 2003), p.10

¹³¹ Greider (Feb. 2nd 2009), p.6

¹³² Sherman (May 11th 2009), p.12

¹³³ Liss (2003), pp.300-301

potentially-negative issues. According to one *Fortune* article, the “overt patriotism” exhibited by Murdoch’s various American properties doesn’t stop News Corp from “pandering to China’s repressive regime to get his programming into that vast market”, going so far as to block publication through HarperCollins of former Governor of Hong Kong, Christopher Patten’s book that was critical of China, and dropping BBC’s World Service for reporting stories that were critical of China and its government. Murdoch has also been accused of pandering to the Chinese by referring to the Dalai Lama as “a very political old monk shuffling around in Gucci shoes.”¹³⁴ It would be possible to use the *Journal* as support for Radha Sinha’s thesis that corporate-ownership dictates the opinions and reporting standards of the media outlets they own.¹³⁵ The *Journal*’s overtly pro-China position has not leaked into all of the *Journal*’s coverage, as it does consistently describe China’s economic policies as “mercantilist”, and has described China’s calls for a new global currency as “disingenuous”.¹³⁶

THE HUMAN RIGHTS AGENDA

CNN’s coverage of the Tiananmen Square incident didn’t just usher in a new media environment characterized by round-the-clock news; the images of tanks bearing down on peaceful protesters also sparked intense scrutiny and criticism of China’s human rights policies. David Tell, writing in the *Weekly Standard*, summed up a general media impression thus: “China remains a horrible place, as every CIA and Amnesty International report makes clear.”¹³⁷

China’s reputation as a human rights abuser has been especially difficult to shake in the wake of criticism from the print media. Again, as with economics and trade, the conservative and liberal publications both find fault, but in different aspects. Conservative papers and magazines focus on a broad spectrum: the repression and frequent incarceration of members of the Falun

¹³⁴ Gunther (Feb.17th 2003)

¹³⁵ Sinha (2003)

¹³⁶ Volcker (Mar.26th 2009)

¹³⁷ Tell (Dec.23rd 1996), p.9

Gong sect as a general attack on all religions (China is, of course, still officially atheist), as well as noting the occasional “oppression” of Chinese Christians;¹³⁸ conservative commentators also view China’s one-child policy as state-sponsored abortion.

China’s abortion policies receive a great deal of criticism from the right.¹³⁹ What is interesting is the use of China’s abortion record to try to influence the domestic US debate on the same issue. Despite the very different situations in China and America, this is done by disingenuously referring to any legislation opposed to *The Weekly Standard’s* position as similar to “China’s murderous family planning policies” for which there is “irrefutable evidence of infanticide, forced abortions, and starvation of children in orphanages”.¹⁴⁰ David Frum, a popular Republican commentator also argued that “American abortion law must rank somewhere near China’s as the most permissive on earth.”¹⁴¹ China’s record on abortion is frequently used to make the nation appear inhumane, cold and brutal, the opposite of what America is. Jonah Goldberg, a popular and respected conservative commentator, has drawn a particularly dark portrayal: In China, Goldberg explains, girls “are being exterminated simply because they are girls, not because women can’t ‘afford’ a child or because it would interfere with their careers.” The writer argues that this is simply because the Chinese “don’t think girls are worthy of life, or at least not as worthy as boys.”¹⁴²

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton’s proposal to reduce the importance of human rights in the US-China dialogue on her 2009 visit to China received a large amount of criticism in the press. In “The Administration Kowtows”, Ethan Gutman vilified the fact that Clinton announced that while Tibet, human rights, and Taiwan would “be on the agenda”, “We pretty much know what they are going to say”, which Gutman took to suggest that these issues will receive a token nod at best, without much effort to make progress. Gutman goes on to point out the downside of this weary approach:

¹³⁸ See, for example: Steorts (Jan.31st 2005), pp.26-28; Buckley (Dec.31st 2005), p.54

¹³⁹ See, for example: Steyn (Oct.24th 2005), p.72

¹⁴⁰ Carroll (Jun.24th 1996), p.22

¹⁴¹ Frum (Dec.4th 1995), p.9

¹⁴² Goldberg (Jan.30th 2006), p.8

“Even if Clinton was tired of Chinese human rights (in the old-fashioned definition, where people are tortured to death and so on), the act of unilaterally agreeing to ignore an actual source of tension between our two societies represents a notable change in U.S. policy. The repercussions will extend far into Taiwan, China, and America.”¹⁴³

According to conservative writers, the Obama administration’s position on China is too cold, lacking a focus on the ideals that make America. Matthew Rees, especially, takes objection to the diminished importance of human rights: “Human rights in China. Democracy in China. These are things the Obama administration wants nothing to do with. Are the Chinese people on their own?”¹⁴⁴

The liberal press in America finds much to be critical of China, though it does not get involved in many of the traditional ‘values’ issues popular with the political right. For the left, China’s lack of progress on social rights, such as access to an unrestricted internet, a fair justice system, the fact that workers’ unions are illegal in China, and China’s heavy-handed repression of activists and their lawyers are key issues.¹⁴⁵ As with magazines such as *The Weekly Standard*, the liberal press also uses China-related issues to colour their debate on domestic issues.

For example, a popular issue is China’s regulation of the internet. *The Nation* negatively reports on Beijing’s policies of removing or blocking online content that challenges the Communist Party’s authority. The authors of these articles, however, are equally (if not more) critical of U.S. companies – e.g., Google, Yahoo!, Microsoft and Cisco – who help China in their efforts to censor the internet or persecute ‘netizens’ who distribute or post material that breaks

¹⁴³ Gutman (Mar. 16th 2009), p.12

¹⁴⁴ Gutman (Mar. 16th 2009), p.12

¹⁴⁵ Wines (May 27th 2009) – in this article, the author details how Chinese authorities have threatened to delay or deny applications for the renewal of legal licenses for lawyers who represent activists, families affected by the 2009 Sichuan earthquake, Tibetans, and members of the Falun Gong sect (who are officially considered as members of a “dangerous religious cult”).

China's restrictions; "We shouldn't allow US firms to act in ways that contradict fundamental American values."¹⁴⁶

The 2008 Beijing Olympics provided a great opportunity to write about China's progress and modernization. While it did result in many positive reports on China's modern cities and industrial prowess, the Olympics were also seen as an excuse to report on China's failure to improve on its human rights record (a condition for receiving the right to host the Olympics),¹⁴⁷ and its policies towards Tibet and Sudan. The Sudan issue in particular excites the wrath of left-wing publications. Fatin Abbas, writing in *The American Prospect*, argues that China's involvement in and policies toward the Sudan are exacerbating and prolonging the situation on the ground: "Part of Khartoum's defiance reflects its favoured status with China, which imports almost half of Sudan's oil production"¹⁴⁸ Articles critical of China's role as financier of the genocidal regime in Khartoum grew in the lead-up to the Beijing Olympics, and in response to then-President Bush's decision to attend the opening ceremonies, a *New York Times* editorial called for Bush to speak out against China's human rights record, and to urge China to cease their weapons shipments to Sudan.¹⁴⁹ Nicholas Kristof, a popular columnist at the *Times*, wrote that China is doing itself no favours on the world stage by "abetting genocide in Darfur and in effect undermining the U.N. military deployment there". Kristof also explains that "in exchange for access to Sudanese oil, Beijing is financing, diplomatically protecting and supplying the arms for the first genocide of the 21st century", while the "basic reality is that China continues to side with Sudan" even after a string of deliberate attacks on UN forces.¹⁵⁰ This, however, is consistent with China's history of pursuing its national interest in foreign policy. Because the coverage of the Olympics was so varied in tone and content, it is difficult to assess how any single or selection of articles may or may not have influenced any government policies at the time. That being said, the opening spectacle of the Beijing Olympics was attended by President George W. Bush,

¹⁴⁶ MacKinnon (Mar.27th 2006), p.8; see also Rosenberg (Sep.18th 2005)

¹⁴⁷ NYT Editorial (Jul.22nd 2008); see also NYT Editorial (Mar.18th 2008)

¹⁴⁸ Goldberg (Dec.2006)

¹⁴⁹ NYT Editorial (Jul.22nd 2008); see also, Kristof (Aug.21st 2008)

¹⁵⁰ Kristof (Jan.24th 2008)

and American government rhetoric and press releases were positive or neutral in tone.

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

China's industrial expansion and modernisation, and what this means at a macro level for climate change, is not as widely reported as one might think, and when these issues do appear, reporting tends to be mostly balanced, with any 'blame' being shared by China and the industrialised nations who consume too much. There are, however, still a number of magazines and newspapers who report on environmental degradation caused by China's lax regulatory system, the impact of chemicals washing unchecked into rivers and seas,¹⁵¹ and the quality of the air in China's cities (especially in the lead-up to the 2008 Olympics, when there was considerable concern from athletes that they would do serious damage to their health by competing in such a polluted environment).¹⁵²

Much is made in the US press about the considerable growth in carbon emissions from China's continued and growing reliance on coal-fired power stations. Paul Krugman, Nobel Prize-winner and columnist for the *New York Times*, has expressed concern that the rate of omissions is only destined to grow as China announces plans to continue its reliance on coal as its primary energy source, and will increase coal production by a further 30 percent by 2015. This decision alone, Krugman reports, will "swamp any emission reductions elsewhere,"¹⁵³ which has naturally led to considerable concern among industrialised nations trying to push through universal emissions regulations.

The likely surge in carbon emissions from coal-sector growth in China will only add to the effect of Chinese pollution felt around the world and critical

¹⁵¹ Liu (Aug.10th 2007); Plumer (Jul.9th 2008), p.14 – According to the latter, 80% of the East China Sea is now "toxic, due to sewage dumps from the mainland," which has had a dramatic impact on fish populations.

¹⁵² See, for example: Rhoads & Kang (Jul.21st 2009); Michaelis (Oct.25th 2007)

¹⁵³ Krugman (May 14th 2009) – The NYT editorial board is equally concerned about China's environmental record, though it acknowledges that some of the fault lies with Western companies who have exported their most polluting industries to China to benefit from the low-wages and low-environmental protections (Sep.24th 2007).

reporting in the US media. Bradford Plumer, reporting for *The New Republic*, has written about how “China’s pollution problems aren’t just taking a devastating toll on China,” but affecting other nations, too.¹⁵⁴

Another common angle for environmental stories is the impact of environmental degradation on China’s growing economy, and also the inability of the government in Beijing to enforce regulations. According to both Bradford Plumer, and Andrew Moravcsik (writing for *Newsweek*), the Chinese government is acutely aware of environmental damage and what this means for the Chinese economy,¹⁵⁵ and have been keen to gain any advantage from investment in green technologies – be it actually energy production, or the creation of jobs for its ever-growing workforce.¹⁵⁶

Overall, while pointing out the shortcomings of China’s contradictory policies of attempting to reduce pollution while, at the same time, increasing production of coal-fired energy plants, the US media pays more attention to the progress China *is* making – be it the considerable success the government had in reducing the pollution haze over Beijing in time for the Olympics (while also largely ignoring the unsustainable lengths the Chinese government went to in order to achieve this), or praising China’s increased investment in alternative energy sources (including wind-farms and solar energy),¹⁵⁷ putting it way ahead of the United States’ own efforts at curbing emissions and environmental degradation. In this respect, environmental reporting on China can often be more positive than reporting on other issues.

CHINA’S INTERNATIONAL AMBITIONS AND ROLE

Reporting on the security relationship between the United States and China is an area prone to political bias and not a little hyperbole. The tendency among reporters appears to be to toe the line of the political party that reflects the editorial ideology of the publication. Reporting by conservative/Republican

¹⁵⁴ Plumer (Jul.9th 2008), p.14; see also Hertsgaard (Mar.16th 2009), pp.11-16

¹⁵⁵ Plumer (Jul.9th 2008), p.14; Moravcsik (Oct.28th 2007); Foroohar (May 24th 2010)

¹⁵⁶ See, for example: Victor (Dec.5th 2009); Liu (Oct.11th 2008)

¹⁵⁷ Parenti (May 4th 2009), pp.20-21

publications, therefore, is greatly influenced by the “China threat” theories, while overtly liberal publications feature far fewer articles on military and security issues, unless topical (for example, due to a confrontation between China and the US) or while discussing the historical context of the US-China relationship.¹⁵⁸ A common theme in the conservative press is that China has pursued a policy since “the early 1990s, aimed at achieving unchallenged Chinese domination over all of East Asia”.¹⁵⁹

It could be argued that Charles Krauthammer’s 1995 *TIME* article, “Why We Must Contain China” has had a lasting effect on the press’s view of China, and by extension also government officials. The article identified China as a “ruthless dictatorship”, arguing that “Containing China is not enough... undermining its aggressively dictatorial regime” is also necessary, by supporting dissidents and keeping pressure on human rights issues.¹⁶⁰ Echoes of these sentiments can be found throughout the US print media. This, along with a generally negative opinion of “the ominous rise of China”,¹⁶¹ has largely framed subsequent US-China security-related stories in the US print media.

The *National Review*, in particular, features many articles about China’s growing military power and what this might mean for the US. Despite the general unease about China’s growing strength emanating from the pens of *National Review* contributors, the editors retain a sense of realism that calls for restraint over important issues. For example, on the issue of Taiwan’s status (a popular topic among conservative journalists), one editorial stated that it is “deplorable” that Taiwan must fear Beijing’s reaction whenever it proclaims its nationhood, but, at the same time, because “We are at war, and cannot be too fastidious in our dealings”, the government must be more discerning in the fights it picks.¹⁶² Despite this editorial sense of restraint, however, other writers for the magazine believe differently. Given the influence of the *National Review* among Republican officials and powerbrokers (its founder, William F. Buckley, Jr., was a stalwart of the conservative movement when it first emerged as a

¹⁵⁸ See, for example: Kuttner (Jan/Feb.2008), pp.22-23

¹⁵⁹ Munro (Apr.19th 2004), p.22

¹⁶⁰ Krauthammer (Jul.31st 1995)

¹⁶¹ *National Review* (Jun.5th 2006), p.12

¹⁶² *National Review* (Dec.31st 2003), p.8

force in politics), it is significant when a columnist, such as Richard Lowry, proclaims that “We want to check China”,¹⁶³ and recommends strengthening Japan’s position in Asia and its defence forces to “counterbalance China”.¹⁶⁴

The Taiwan issue features prominently in many, but not all, publications – however, this is usually limited to times when particular crises or important events take place (such as Taiwanese democratic elections). The *New York Times*’ Drew Thompson and Nikolas Gvosdev draw readers’ attention to what can only be described as China’s unreasonable and bellicose policies toward Taiwan: along with a growing arms build-up along the coast facing Taiwan, China’s new anti-secession law “explicitly gives [Beijing] the authority to ‘employ non-peaceful means and other necessary measures’ should Taiwan unilaterally declare its independence.”¹⁶⁵

The portrayal of China as a potential enemy or rival of the United States is usually presented in great-power, or traditional terms: the relative levels of influence and hard power, *realpolitik*. The argument seems to be that increased defence spending and military hardware will deter China from mounting a viable challenge to America’s position as the world’s only superpower. However, there are a growing number of reporters who are writing about China’s newfound expertise in ‘cyber-warfare’ and ‘cyber-spying’. The *Wall Street Journal* has published a number of articles that suggest China is pursuing a number of possible methods of asymmetric warfare. Bret Stephens has outlined, in grim prose, scenarios in which “thousands of people die” as the result of attacks on America’s technological infrastructure, through the Chinese doctrine of “*shashoujian*” (or “assassin’s mace”), which is an outgrowth of their study of the Gulf Wars and the realisation of how heavily dependent the US military is on technology.¹⁶⁶ The image created by articles like these is one of a China that is targeting the United States specifically through anti-satellite weapons and weapons that can threaten American aircraft carrier groups.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶³ Lowry (Jul.4th 2005), p.29

¹⁶⁴ Lowry (Jul.4th 2005), Cover

¹⁶⁵ Thompson & Gvosdev (Nov.8th 2009)

¹⁶⁶ Stephens (Apr.14th 2009)

¹⁶⁷ Kristof (Aug.21st 2008)

In recent years, members of the US press have encouraged closer economic ties with China and an enlarged US military in an attempt to make “Chinese aggression prohibitively expensive”.¹⁶⁸ The focus on stories that appeal to realist conceptions of international affairs can have the effect of influencing policymakers, as they potentially increase the acceptance of realist threat-vs.-opportunity calculations. This is especially true when these articles are published in ‘opinion-maker’ daily newspapers like the *Washington Post*, *New York Times* and *Wall Street Journal*, or in ideologically-biased newsmagazines.

It is not just the Chinese government’s actions and policies abroad that receive a wary or negative appraisal in the press. Nicholas Kristof has written about “China’s prickly nationalism”, which, when coupled with the fact that China still approaches the world through the prism of “*guochi*, or national humiliation”, can sometimes lead to a sense of cockiness and hostility when confronted with foreigners.¹⁶⁹ *TIME* magazine’s Simon Elegant has written about how this prickly nationalism makes China appear prone to nationalistic anger that can lead to violence, such as that which emerged during the difficult Olympic torch relay in France, which was beset by pro-Tibet protestors: “The ferocity with which [Chinese] protestors turn on anybody who disagrees with them reminds some older Chinese of the dark days of Mao Zedong’s Cultural Revolution, which convulsed China from 1966-76.” The author believes the anger to be the result of “years of indoctrination in a highly nationalistic – some would say xenophobic – credo that imagines a hostile and perfidious world determined to undermine China.”¹⁷⁰

CONCLUSION

This chapter has examined different facets of media as well as the media’s treatment of key issues that make up the US-China debate, and their influence on policy-makers. It was my belief, coming at this research, that the media can help to steer the discussion and frame the debate with their coverage of China-

¹⁶⁸ *National Review* (Jul.18th 2005), p.10

¹⁶⁹ Kristof (Aug.21st 2008)

¹⁷⁰ Elegant (Apr.24th 2008)

related issues, and this chapter supports that view. That said, it remains hard to quantify the actual level of influence on policy itself that the media exerts.

There are two conclusions that can be drawn regarding the media's role in US foreign policy-making. First, the media acts as an intermediary between the American public and the federal government. In this role, the media offers issue-framing in which government officials can advance their stated agendas with regards to China and China policy, as well as platforms from which they can push policy proposals and attempt to sway public opinion to their position.

Secondly, in terms of the trends and traditions of American foreign policy, the media help reinforce the beliefs at the core of America's historical and contemporary grand strategy. Regardless of the political biases of a publication or television news program (stated or otherwise), the American preference for economic expansion is clearly accepted and even promoted by many media outlets. In terms of threat-versus-advantage, the level of threat presented by China is recognised, but is not as widespread as the economic advantage the country's rapid modernisation offers to the globalised American economy. The apparent negativity of American media's portrayal of China – ranging from admonishing China for its poor environmental record (while frequently ignoring America's own questionable record), to seeing threat in China's rise – is articulated most commonly within the framework of traditional power politics and zero-sum terminology, where China's gain is America's loss.

The liberal-moralist media approaches China critically – even those concentrating on the economic-advantages of the relationship often espouse moral outrage at some of China's domestic and foreign policies. The liberal values that American politicians profess to hold so dear are frequently tested by revelations of Chinese internal practices (such as forced abortions and sterilisations, or religious and ethnic repression) and external policies as well (such as currency manipulation, and sabre-rattling and encroachments into America's sphere of influence).

Most importantly, while media may not influence actual policy, it can create a tone for policy debate. In this respect, it can influence the conduct of

policy-making. A president or other official who ignores angry media opposition to a specific policy will likely come to political harm; whereas a politician who is able to articulate a policy position within a framework provided by the media can reap considerable benefits.

The relative influence of printed articles on the policymaking actors is highly dependent on both the circulation of the publication it is in, and also more importantly *who* reads the publication. It is likely that newspapers such as the *Washington Post* and *New York Times*, with relatively small (and shrinking) circulations, reach more of the American political elite than does, for example, *The Nation*. Given the tendency to present unbiased, or at least neutral, articles in these newspapers, it is unlikely they serve as particularly strong sources of policy prescriptions. Broadcast outlets, with much wider audiences, have the potential to influence the electorate and officialdom more widely. However, as has been discussed in this chapter, the format stories are presented in is a considerable limiter on how much information a presenter can provide, leaving segments prone to hyperbole or shallow depictions of any issue. Given the complexity of the US-China relationship, this will mean a very limited understanding of the politics involved.

There are times when the media will act as a valuable resource to government officials – specifically, during times of crisis, when the presence of reporters can sometimes provide on-site information quicker than official agencies. However, as time goes on and governmental attention turns to the event, the information-gathering resources available to the White House, State Department and Congress, dwarf the efforts of the media and therefore supersede it as a source of information. At this point, the media become less important, and the roles reverse, as the government turns the media into a tool for mobilising public opinion to achieve their goals, and Executive attention turns to prominent newspaper and broadcast editors who have the ability to shift or influence public perceptions.¹⁷¹ In the next chapter, I shall look at the role of special interest groups and lobbies on the policy-making process, and how they have a greater impact on the direction of policy.

¹⁷¹ As also suggested by Parmer (Apr.1995), p.94

CHAPTER IV.II

MEDIA CASE STUDY: TIANANMEN SQUARE

“To a great extent, the stage for current U.S. policy difficulties was set by the 1989 Tiananmen Square crackdown, from which China has never been rehabilitated in the eyes of most Americans.”¹

The above quotation, from 2001, remains relevant today. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the Chinese government’s crackdown on student and citizen protesters in Beijing would be a turning point in the conduct of US-China relations, particularly in the eyes of the American media. This chapter addresses the role of the media as a social institution working within the pluralised American foreign policy system. By addressing the media’s portrayal of Tiananmen as a case study, we are able to better understand the role the media plays as part of the pluralist American foreign policy-making system. In addition, it highlights the need for a balanced approach that includes the conventional concern for executive-level decision-making and an appreciation of the role and influence of the media. The reporting on Tiananmen Square has left an indelible mark on the American debate on China, and has embedded the media’s portrayal of China into the decision-making process. As will be shown, although the media has not usurped the centrality of the Executive Branch in policy-making, it has, however, acquired a central role in framing the discussion and setting the agenda.

This chapter examines the presentation of the Tiananmen Square crackdown of June 1989 in a selection of key American printed media, from across the political ideological spectrum. *New York Times* and *Washington Post* are the two cornerstone political newspapers in America, with the widest

¹ Dumbaugh (2001), p.113

political readership. The evidence and reporting for this chapter are predominantly drawn from these two newspapers, *USA Today* and some reporting by other news publications including: *The Nation* (despite its smaller circulation, it is a platform from which liberal news personalities and politicians often present their views); *The New Republic*; *National Review*, *Weekly Standard*, and *The Washington Times* (influential conservative publications, which print features and editorials by Republican officials, former officials, and advisors).²

The Tiananmen crackdown came in the wake of 15 years of increasingly positive media impressions of China. Following the Nixon administration's opening to Mao and the People's Republic, the American media had rallied to the idea of China as an ally, and that America's alliance with China was in the US's interest – the positive image of “China's ancient greatness, civilisation, art, hoary wisdom”,³ was coupled with China's new position as a Cold War ally. Negative impressions persisted, but there's no doubt Nixon's opening to Mao was a turning point in America's understanding and opinion of China. Indeed, reporting on China often had a positive spin. June 1989, however, would change that, seriously shattering the positive (or at least neutral) impression many Americans had come to hold of China.

It is clear that few things will draw the attention of the Western, and particularly American, media more than stories that tap into Western liberal ideals of democracy, equality, freedom of expression, and freedom of the press. All of these ideals were raised by the events in and around Tiananmen Square, and also in its legacy. There are four distinct ‘periods’ of reporting related to the Tiananmen Square crackdown – Build Up, the Crackdown, Aftermath, and Legacy – and these will inform the structure of the chapter going forward.

² Sources for this chapter were drawn from print archives of *The Nation*, *The National Review*, *The New Republic*, and *The Weekly Standard*. In addition, a LexisNexis search provided a wealth of articles about and referring to the Tiananmen Square Crackdown (1000 in total), of which articles from the following publications were utilised: *Washington Post* (156), *New York Times* (246), *The Washington Times* (59), and *USA Today* (48)

³ Isaacs (1972), p.63

BUILD UP TO CRACKDOWN (MAY & JUNE 1ST-3RD 1989)

Student protesters had begun shortly after the April 15th death of the popular former Communist Party leader, Hu Yaobang. The movement gained momentum during a hunger strike by 3,000 students, which began in May 1989. “More than a million Beijing residents took to the streets to support the hunger strikers in their demands for a more democratic government, and demonstrations were reported all over China.”⁴ The protesters had a broad agenda – democracy was only one of the items, and possibly not the most important to the students. Far more immediate was the students’ concern over corruption and income inequality (Hu Yaobang was popular, because he was believed to be honest and non-corrupt). The student protests also started in advance of a state visit by Mikhail Gorbachev. By the middle of May, approximately half a million Chinese university students, teachers, reporters and their supporters were rallied in the heart of Beijing, as the wave of peaceful student demonstrations swelled.⁵ The immediate causes of public dissatisfaction were “relate[d] not only to vague yearnings for democracy but, more importantly, to profound economic frustrations and disgust over social inequities and corruption.”⁶

The international press corps in China for Gorbachev’s visit were enamoured of the student movement, seeing in it the seeds of China potentially moving towards Western-style democracy and values. Michael Dobbs, writing in May for the Washington Post with unintended premonition, compared what he saw in Beijing to what he had seen in Soviet Georgia, a month earlier:

“The most striking parallels are with the demonstration in Tbilisi... that was brutally broken up by Soviet troops in the early morning hours of April 9. What ended as a blood bath began as a peaceful hunger strike by hundreds of young Georgians camped outside

⁴ Kristoff (Jun.3rd 1989)

⁵ Southerland (May 17th 1989), p.A1

⁶ Kristoff (Jun.4th 1989)

government buildings surrounded by thousands of sympathetic onlookers.”⁷

It is possible that American journalists over-optimistically saw the blossoming of a liberalising China, one that would fulfill its promise as they saw it. In an article written before the incident (but dated after), Hendrik Hertzberg predicted the success of the democracy movement:

“Now it seems equally inevitable that it will end in some sort of victory – at a minimum, the fall of Prime Minister Li Peng, who, by declaring martial law and calling out the army just as the students were about to end their hunger strikes, galvanized the opposition anew, split the ruling elites, and delegitimized himself beyond repair.”⁸

Hertzberg was not wrong about the factional splits among the Chinese leadership, but unfortunately his positive prediction would ultimately prove very wrong. Hertzberg continued, arguing that what was being witnessed in China was part of the inevitable march of democracy across the globe.

“The tide rolling out of China should sweep away what remains of the notion that ordinary people in poor countries with limited democratic traditions do not care about civil liberties. This idea has proved false almost everywhere it has been tested. The laboratories include societies as diverse as India, South Korea, Spain, Portugal, and, in recent months, Panama, the Soviet Union, and now China.”⁹

As Beijing made moves to forcefully bring an end to the protests, Western journalists’ optimism about the potential end results of the movement was shattered, and likely planted the seed for what has been, to this day, a continued distrust and wariness about China. This perhaps explains why Western journalists are so zealous in keeping the memory alive.

⁷ Dobbs (May 15th 1989), p.A25

⁸ Hertzberg (Jun.12th 1989)

⁹ Hertzberg (Jun.12th 1989)

As mentioned above, the attention of the American media can often be captured by stories that appeal to American values of freedom of expression and freedom of the press. There is certainly a sense one gets from reading May 1989 features that much of the Western media's interest in the demonstrations sprang from professional kinship with Chinese reporters who had started to join the students' movement. As the protests coincided with a visit from Gorbachev, there were, according to Dobbs, an estimated 1,500 journalists there to cover the summit.¹⁰ Many were convinced that this veritable army of international reporters, "helped restrain hard-liners in the government who wanted to use the police to restore order", as they saw the Chinese leadership facing the same situation that confronted Filipino President Ferdinand Marcos in 1986, and the Shah of Iran in 1979, "when their armies fragmented rather than beat and shoot demonstrators in living color before international audiences."¹¹ Many of the protesters were convinced the authorities would move on the protests after the journalists disappeared.¹² In an article titled "Blanket TV Coverage Gives Chinese Demonstrators a Security Blanket", Jim Hoagland of the *Washington Post*, argued that the communications network set up to cover Gorbachev was "more important as protective covering for the students than was the presence of the Soviet leader itself." The US media's reporting on the protestors highlighted its belief in the Western ideals of freedom and power of the press, which would sadly prove lacking in China.¹³

"The government doesn't dare to use force against the students, because they know that if they did, workers and citizens would take to the streets in protest against it," one unnamed reporter for the Chinese *Guangming Daily* told a *Washington Post* reporter. A key demand of the students' had been freedom of the press, and this has "stirred much sympathy among the capital's journalists, hundreds of whom have taken part in the protest rally despite their publications' affiliation with the party."¹⁴ Many reporters and editors from the

¹⁰ Dobbs (May 15th 1989), p.A25

¹¹ Hoagland (May 18th 1989), p.A35

¹² Dobbs (May 15th 1989), p.A25

¹³ Hoagland (May 18th 1989), p.A35

¹⁴ Southerland (May 17th 1989), p.A1

People's Daily (the “mouthpiece” of the CCP)¹⁵ had also joined protestors, “loudly” demanding democracy, freedom of the press and expression, and the lifting of press censorship.¹⁶ The journalists demonstrating “represented all the leading Chinese newspapers and news agencies”, who were protesting the ‘muzzling’ of the press following the imposition of martial law and two weeks of favourable coverage of the students’ movement in the Chinese press. Before martial law was imposed, Dobbs reports, Chinese news media had been reflecting Zhao Ziyang’s sympathetic attitude towards the students.¹⁷

As this chapter will illustrate, below, one of the characteristics of American media coverage of Tiananmen Square and China would become early dissatisfaction of American official responses. Even before events escalated to violence, some reporters were disappointed with American official response: “Many of our democratic statesmen, instead of being touched by the Chinese people's ardent plea for democracy, seem mostly worried at the idea that a billion people might be cast adrift, free from the rigid safety of their totalitarian fetters.”¹⁸

The demonstrations and leadership gridlock “underscored the fragile and volatile nature of the situation in Beijing”, even though the turmoil seemed to be subsiding.¹⁹ The party leadership in China were believed to be “especially concerned” about the potential for dissent to grow outside the student movement, particularly among factory workers. The fear, rooted in historical precedent, was that worker participation in the protests “could bring on broad social disruption.”²⁰ The peaceful demonstrations were starkly different from previous popular movements that had shaken China – for example, the 1960s Red Guards movement, the 1979 Democracy Wall demonstrations, and scattered student protests in 1987.²¹

¹⁵ Dobbs (May 22nd 1989), p.A18

¹⁶ Southerland (May 17th 1989), p.A1; Dobbs (May 22nd 1989), p.A18

¹⁷ Dobbs (May 22nd 1989), p.A18

¹⁸ Leys (Jun.19th 1989)

¹⁹ Kristoff (Jun.3rd 1989)

²⁰ Southerland (May 17th 1989), p.A1

²¹ Hoagland (May 18th 1989), p.A35

In the final days of May, the numbers of demonstrators had dwindled, as popular support for the movement started to lose steam, “in large part because of fears of a government crackdown.” Almost twice as many troops (200,000) as demonstrators were deployed around Beijing, suggesting the government was considering action, and PLA troops were reportedly scrutinising visas at Beijing’s train station, in attempts to prevent the numbers at Tiananmen Square from swelling further.²² In the pre-dawn hours, along Changan Avenue, the main east-west thoroughfare near Tiananmen, between 500 and 1,000 local residents confronted and prevented troops from passing. Nicholas Kristoff, in the *New York Times*, took a more sensationalist approach, reporting that “citizens flung themselves in front of army trucks and tanks, stopping and often reversing the long convoys.”²³ The citizen roadblocks appeared to work, as the troops did not appear to be authorised to use force, and “once they got near it, they showed little willingness to try to break through the crowds.”²⁴

The soldiers, reported Kristoff, appeared “distinctly unenthusiastic about their mission.” Most seemed to be from distant regions, and seemed surprised when their movements were blocked by local residents. One said they had not been told why they were sent to the Tiananmen area.”²⁵ An army engineer angrily told Kristoff that, “Our government is too harsh to the students... The People’s Liberation Army belongs to the people, and it is time for every Chinese to speak out.”²⁶

The demonstrations, therefore, provoked a political crisis, with splits forming not only within the military and government, but between them. After the party leader, Zhao Ziyang, with the support of other like-minded officials, urged a conciliatory approach, it precipitated a power struggle that resulted in the dismissal of Zhao,²⁷ who would live the rest of his life under effective house arrest.

²² Southerland (May 30th 1989), p.A9

²³ Kristoff (Jun.4th 1989)

²⁴ Southerland (Jun.3rd 1989), p.A1; Kristoff (Jun.3rd 1989)

²⁵ Kristoff (Jun.3rd 1989); Dobbs (May 22nd 1989), p.A18

²⁶ Kristoff (Jun.4th 1989)

²⁷ Kristoff (Jun.3rd 1989)

On June 3rd, there was an accident, in which a speeding police van veered out of control and crashed into a group of four cyclists, killing two people at the scene and seriously injuring the others. The perception in the first days of June 1989, was that in one night the Government had killed four bicyclists and tried to use military force to seize the students in Tiananmen Square. A construction worker told Kristoff that a “massive demonstration” would be staged in response to the accident. “We’ll probably go on strike, too. We can’t let the troops attack the patriotic student movement.”²⁸ The Chinese leadership, as it turned out, wouldn’t allow them the opportunity.

THE CRACKDOWN & IMMEDIATE AFTERMATH (JUNE 3RD-6TH 1989)

“Bloody Sunday in Tiananmen Square will be remembered by Chinese at home and abroad as one of the darkest days in China’s history, one which is likely to blacken the names of several Chinese leaders for decades to come.”²⁹

Some reports filed on June 4th and 5th were amongst the most graphic articles ever written about China up until that point. Some reporters showed a measure of journalistic restraint when describing the military crackdown, while others filed disturbing accounts of brutality. After an article that had attempted to find a balanced view of who or what was at fault for causing the demonstrations in the first place, Nicholas Kristoff’s article in the wake of the crackdown was more stark:

“Tens of thousands of Chinese troops retook the center of the capital early this morning from pro-democracy protesters, killing scores of students and workers and wounding hundreds more as they fired submachine guns at crowds of people who tried to resist – sometimes firing in the air and sometimes firing directly at crowds of men and women who refused to move out of the way.”³⁰

²⁸ Kristoff (Jun. 3rd 1989)

²⁹ Southerland (Jun. 4th 1989), p.A1

³⁰ Kristoff (Jun. 4th 1989, b.)

Daniel Southerland of the *Washington Post* filed an even more graphic and powerful account of the “bloody massacre” and “carnage”:

“25-ton tanks of the People’s Liberation Army were the main weapons of terror. Converging from east and west, they lined the northern side of the square, flattened the statue students had erected to honor democracy, and then ripped into the students’ tent city encampment... Tanks pursued student victims with machine guns, ran over some and smashed others like insects against walls... Behind the tanks came soldiers and riot police, who beat students with truncheons and fired on them with automatic weapons... One tank crushed several students against the wall of the concert hall... Anyone holding a banner became a target... A soldier shot a worker who was helping the students by using his three-wheeled pedicab as a makeshift ambulance. Soldiers shot a man driving an ambulance loaded with the bodies of students.”³¹

Los Angeles Times reporters filed many grim features. Of the crackdown itself, Mann and Holley wrote:

“At times, the firing was indiscriminate. At about 5:30 a.m. today, for example, a military convoy of about 100 vehicles – including tanks, armoured personnel carriers, trucks and jeeps – swept past the Beijing Hotel toward Tiananmen Square, firing at bystanders. After they reached the square, at about 5:45 a.m., heavy automatic rifle fire could be heard from the area, which had already been subjected to several other lengthy volleys earlier in the morning... Every hour or so through this morning, troops fired volleys of gunfire in an apparent attempt to intimidate the crowds.”³²

The day after the main crackdown, the American media still in China reported a tense and fearful atmosphere, characterised by “continued bloodshed”, conducted with “cold-blooded... randomness”, making the shootings “seem to be acts of pure terror.”³³ Beijing citizens remained nervous, the city

³¹ Southerland (Jun.4th 1989), p.A1

³² Mann & Holley (Jun.4th 1989)

³³ Mann & Williams (Jun.5th 1989)

still under martial law. "When tanks passed, the crowds fell back, aware the troops in control would not hesitate to crush them."³⁴ During periodic skirmishes near Tiananmen Square, Chinese troops continued to fire on unarmed residents. According to hospital and witness reports, "scores more" people were killed.³⁵

The remaining protesters battling against their oppressors were framed in an almost dystopian setting, as additional tanks and armoured personnel carriers were sent to Tiananmen, "Beijing residents lying in ambush hurled half a dozen firebombs at them near the intersection of Changan Avenue and Dongdan Street." There was "sporadic firing during the night around Beijing", where citizens had set up crude little barricades, but to no avail. "As the death toll mounted, individual citizens continued to display extraordinary physical bravery in acts of defiance."³⁶ Nevertheless, Beijing hospitals became "so full of casualties that they scarcely had time for those who were not severely wounded," their floors "covered with blood",³⁷ mirroring the "blood stained... pavement stones."³⁸

George Will, a conservative commentator, evoked an image of China as Orwellian dictatorship, a country with "a boot in [its] face – forever", arguing that Orwell's "nightmare is the totalitarians' dream, the terrifying promise of permanence." The world "marvelled at the bravery, politeness and good will of the protesters". But the foreign audiences did not appreciate the protestors' challenge to the totalitarian regime. "The regime understood,"³⁹ and reacted as totalitarian states do: with violence. This violence "ended a period of remarkable restraint by both sides, and seemed certain to arouse new bitterness and antagonism among both ordinary people and Communist Party officials"⁴⁰

³⁴ Kirk (Jun.5th 1989), p.A1

³⁵ Mann & Williams (Jun.5th 1989)

³⁶ Mann & Williams (Jun.5th 1989)

³⁷ Mann & Holley (Jun.4th 1989)

³⁸ Mann & Williams (Jun.5th 1989)

³⁹ Will (Jun.6th 1989), p.A23

⁴⁰ Kristoff (Jun.4th 1989, b.)

OFFICIAL GOVERNMENT STATEMENTS: “THE CYNICAL LIES OF BEIJING’S TOTTERING DICTATORS”⁴¹

The official government statements issued before and after the crackdown became a topic of discussion in the US press, as it offered a starkly different (or, at least, selective) account of the events. According to George Will, what made Tiananmen Square “terrifying to the totalitarians” was the fact that the protest movement had “no leaders” and was comprised of “just unscripted spirits.”⁴² Will was quite correct, as in China most (if not all) changes in regime and reform have come on the backs of popular revolt – the same, in fact, is true of the CCP itself.

For China, the Tiananmen crackdown, “was a fundamental turning point.” The Communist Party leadership, as reported by some in the US media, made the decision that “no matter how high the costs to its image at home or abroad”, it had to use overwhelming force against the demonstrators who posed a powerful challenge to their power and legitimacy.⁴³ Nicholas Kristoff tried to put the CCP leadership’s decision into context: “the party [had] suffered a prolonged erosion of its moral authority – and its ability to intimidate”, and the people’s feelings for the CCP have evolved from “awe and love” alongside fear into little more than “disdain or even contempt”. Kristoff points out that, while dissidents and student demonstrators had received most of the attention from the foreign press, “among ordinary Chinese the practice of ignoring or defying the party ha[d] become nearly universal.”⁴⁴

Kristoff’s article, which looked into the roots of the protests, has a strange sense about it, perhaps as an attempt to offer journalistic objectivity. He criticised protestors who were disappointed in China’s economic situation and also belittled the concerns over rampant corruption in the CCP. The author put some of the blame on “the pessimism of smart young Chinese, their obvious lack of appreciation for the regime that in the last decade has so palpably increased

⁴¹ *TNR* Editors (May 6th 1991), p.7

⁴² Will (Jun.6th 1989), p.A23

⁴³ Mann & Holley (Jun.4th 1989)

⁴⁴ Kristoff (Jun.4th 1989)

their opportunities and material comforts”, and perceptions in China that the country was suffering from an economic crisis. China’s annual inflation rate at the time had passed 25% per year, and there had been previously unfamiliar problems such as “bank runs and cash shortages”. Kristoff then addressed corruption: “Bribes and abuse of power are no longer peripheral to the economy; they are the fuel that makes it run”. But, writes Kristoff, “all countries have graft and economic problems”, as if the *degree* of corruption was the same everywhere, and ignoring China’s long history of endemic corruption. A sense of economic frustration had arisen in China due to inflation and corruption, and it allowed people to “convince themselves that they are becoming worse and worse off financially”, despite growth rates of 11% per year.⁴⁵

Kristoff reported on the CCP’s official news programs, which were quick to provide their own accounts of the events, stating that “the People’s Liberation Army had crushed a ‘counter-revolutionary rebellion’ in the capital”, claiming “more than 1,000 police and troops had been injured and some killed”, alongside ‘some’ civilian casualties.⁴⁶ China’s “hard-line” leaders, “oblivious to world reaction” and also the images and reports filed by the foreign media, declared on camera that there were “no civilian casualties, only soldiers ‘murdered’ by counterrevolutionaries.”⁴⁷

From another official news broadcast the night before the crackdown:

“A handful of ruffians are wantonly making rumors to instigate the masses to openly insult, denounce, beat and kidnap soldiers in the People’s Liberation Army, to seize arms, surround and block Zhongnanhai, attack the Great Hall of the People, and attempt to gather together various forces. More serious riots can occur at any time.”⁴⁸

The Beijing Martial Law Headquarters claimed that “thugs in a frenzy” had attacked PLA troops, “seizing weapons, erecting barricades, beating soldiers

⁴⁵ Kristoff (Jun.4th 1989)

⁴⁶ Kristoff (Jun.4th 1989, b.)

⁴⁷ Cheng (Aug.4th 1989)

⁴⁸ Quoted in: Kristoff (Jun.4th 1989, b.)

and officers in an attempt to overthrow the government”.⁴⁹ Official Chinese reports described these ‘thugs’ and their hostile actions:

“Students and workers tried to resist the crackdown, and destroyed at least 16 trucks and 2 armored personnel carriers. Scores of students and workers ran alongside the personnel carriers, hurling concrete blocks and wooden staves into the treads until they ground to a halt. They then threw firebombs at one until it caught fire, and set the other alight after first covering it with blankets soaked in gasoline.”⁵⁰

These reports were starkly different to the image of “soldiers with automatic weapons, tanks, and armored vehicles attack[ing] unarmed civilians” that was a frequent image presented in the American press, alongside “bloody ground, prostrate bodies, wild-eyed young soldiers firing in all directions”.⁵¹

What the Chinese students and their worker allies had wanted was accountability. The economic opening-up of Chinese society brought with it inequality and corruption. The protesters were demanding “not an end to the market experiment but a rudimentary political counterweight to its abuses”. It would have been easy to satisfy them with respectful attention and a loosening of press controls.⁵² A “sympathetic attitude toward these mild and legitimate demands” from the government might have averted the “subsequent bloodbath”, but the government adopted a no-compromise approach.⁵³ As Hertzberg explained, instead of diplomacy and leadership, “the gerontocracy chose darkness and death.”⁵⁴

Journalists from the *Los Angeles Times* continued to report on the aftermath of the crackdown, and painted a picture of growing tension among the army units deployed in Beijing – even reporting witness statements of army personnel engaging in fire fights with each other. The authors proposed –

⁴⁹ Mann & Williams (Jun.5th 1989)

⁵⁰ Quoted in: Kristoff (Jun.4th 1989, b.)

⁵¹ Cheng (Aug.4th 1989)

⁵² Hertzberg (Jun.26th 1989)

⁵³ Cheng (Aug.4th 1989)

⁵⁴ Hertzberg (Jun.26th 1989)

without evidence, unfortunately, but not unsurprisingly – that they were rival factions loyal to the hard-line and more liberal factions within the ruling CCP. “Troops and armored vehicles were reported moving toward Beijing from the east. They were described as opposed to the forces that killed hundreds of citizens over the weekend.”⁵⁵

This was the first time in its history that the CCP used the PLA to carry out its policy of repression. While Mao had “killed millions during his numerous political campaigns”, he always used the masses and police to achieve his goals (during the Cultural Revolution, Mao’s agenda was carried out by the Red Guards and Revolutionaries).⁵⁶ The crackdown appeared “unnecessarily vicious”⁵⁷ to foreign observers, many of whom highlighted the “overpowering... contrast” between the peaceful demonstration and “carnage”⁵⁸ wrought by the Chinese government. Sending in the military was “a bloody ending” to the long-running face-off between the Chinese regime and the pro-democracy demonstrators. It was “a battle that the leadership found it could not win without use of lethal force”,⁵⁹ and “exploded once and for all the fiction that was summarized in the very name ‘People’s Republic’ of China”⁶⁰

THE MEDIA, THE TIANANMEN AFTERMATH, & THE GEORGE H.W. BUSH ADMINISTRATION

In the months after the Tiananmen crackdown, the Chinese leadership “worked hard to project an air of normality”, by imposing “silence on its own people by intimidation”, and putting a stop to “meaningful foreign television coverage”; tactics that had some success. “The world’s attention span is never very long, and people’s concerns have drifted away from China.”⁶¹

“the brutality that we saw on our screens in June has not stopped.

The shooting of peaceful demonstrators for democracy has been

⁵⁵ Holley, Williams & Mann (Jun.6th 1989)

⁵⁶ Cheng (Aug.4th 1989)

⁵⁷ Cheng (Aug.4th 1989)

⁵⁸ Kirk (Jun.5th 1989), p.A1

⁵⁹ Mann & Holley (Jun.4th 1989)

⁶⁰ Leys (Jun.19th 1989)

⁶¹ Lewis (Sep.28th 1989)

succeeded by the systematic arrest, beating and torture of those who have expressed doubts about the perfect wisdom of the Chinese Communist Party and its leaders.”⁶²

In an article about the CCP’s attempts to whitewash the events of Tiananmen, David Sanger described Beijing as a “city seemingly trapped in a fearful silence”, forced to swallow the Party’s propaganda and twisted version of events that took place during the “counterrevolutionary rebellion”.⁶³ In another article, Southerland explains that, “despite the apparent calm here, Beijing remains a bitter city”, respect for the regime at an all-time low. Chinese authorities have declared that “everything has returned to normal in Beijing”, but justified the continuance of martial law because they must continue to “guard against ‘bad elements’”.⁶⁴

The government expanded its oppression into the coastal provinces, revoking the token democratic reforms that had been made there, removing leaders and attacking private enterprises and even shutting them down.⁶⁵ China has seen an “intense campaign” to dispel Western assertions that “a thousand civilians were killed”, and that over 10,000 were arrested in the months afterwards.⁶⁶ A State Department human rights report stated that abuses in China were not only rampant, but got worse after Tiananmen,⁶⁷ in particular, continued arrests and persecution of large numbers of dissidents.⁶⁸ Although China described the protests as a “rebellion, quashed by a heroic but restrained army that took few lives”,⁶⁹ in fact, the country became a “harsh and sullen place” ruled by an “aging, discredited leadership... actively repressing precisely those elements of the population on which it counts most to modernize the country.” Deng Xiaoping remained “unapologetic about the sequence in which his fearful and insecure regime saw in the demonstrators a mortal threat to its

⁶² Lewis (Sep.28th 1989)

⁶³ Sanger (Sep.9th 1989)

⁶⁴ Southerland (Sep.11th 1989), p.A23

⁶⁵ Lewis (Sep.28th 1989)

⁶⁶ Sanger (Sep.9th 1989)

⁶⁷ Reported in: Pear (Feb.4th 1990)

⁶⁸ See, for example: WuDunn (Dec.23rd 1990), p.4/2 WuDunn (Jan.6th 1991), p.1/3

⁶⁹ Sanger (Sep.9th 1989)

survival and sent in the tanks.”⁷⁰ Almost a year later, “the bitter old men” were still showing their fear.⁷¹

Some reporters put the Tiananmen crackdown into a historical context, further damning the CCP with its past record. Anthony Lewis, for example, characterised “the shattering of hopes” as “no new phenomenon for the People’s Republic”, describing a government that has frequently “presided over turmoil and repression”. Lewis offers Mao Zedong’s “lunatic” Great Leap Forward, which set the China back for years, and cost more than 25 million lives. In another example, Lewis explains that the Cultural Revolution, which followed the Great Leap Forward, “wasted” a generation. Deng Xiaoping had seemed to offer rational politics and economic reform, rather than the “Maoist cult of personality”. Instead, by “opting decisively for the totalitarian model”, Deng “destroyed the lingering legitimacy of the system.”⁷²

Bette Bao Lord (wife of Winston Lord, Ambassador to China at the time of the crackdown) wrote that, because of Tiananmen, the Chinese “no longer... entrust their futures to idols with feet of clay and blood on their hands.”⁷³ Writing two years after the event, she painted a grim picture of how dissenters from 1989 have been treated:

“I am thinking of that young man who defied a convoy of tanks. What has become of him? Like all too many of the brave and hopeful and young, has he been executed? Secretly tried and arbitrarily sentenced? Sent off to a labor camp or internal exile? Released from incarceration but without a means to live? Or is he still detained without charge in a crowded cell?”⁷⁴

⁷⁰ *WaPo* Opinion Editorial (Oct.9th 1989), p.A20

⁷¹ *USA Today* Debate (Jun.4th 1990), p.A10

⁷² Lewis (Sep.28th 1989)

⁷³ Lord (Jun.4th 1991), p.A10

⁷⁴ Lord (Jun.4th 1991), p.A10

MEDIA CRITICISM OF THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION'S RESPONSE TO TIANANMEN

The George H.W. Bush administration's focus on pursuing a realist foreign policy, dealing with nation-states as they were (rather than making any attempts to reform them), came under considerable criticism in the American press. Despite the ability of the press to sway members of the Legislative Branch of government, President Bush exerted considerable control over actual policy. In the wake of Tiananmen Square, "there are few places where the administration's approach makes less moral, strategic, or practical sense than China."⁷⁵ In particular, disappointment and anger at President Bush's measured and careful response to the crackdown – and how out-of-step it is with American public opinion – quickly came to define much American reporting on China for the next few years.⁷⁶ In a printed debate in *USA Today*, readers were informed that,

"The images won't fade quickly from our minds... The blood and brutality in Tiananmen Square. Brave students demonstrating for democratic reforms ruthlessly crushed by Chinese authorities... But President Bush apparently has put those unsettling images aside."⁷⁷

Even more damning, the paper argues that the Bush administration has not only brushed aside the events in and around Tiananmen Square, the president has "bowed to the wishes of Chinese leaders" by vetoing the Chinese Student Visa Bill, by entertaining new sales of satellite communications technology to China, and by sending Scowcroft and Eagleburger to China in order to "chat with those who ordered the protesters crushed."⁷⁸ Writing in 1991, *The New Republic* editors looked back on Bush's record, and characterised his China policy as "morally noxious and politically unwise", because he "deferred unerringly to the Chinese dictatorship". In addition, after the massacre, the president "both lied to the American public about his activities"

⁷⁵ *TNR* Editors (May 6th 1991), p.7

⁷⁶ See, for example: Rasky (Jun.5th 1990), p.A9

⁷⁷ *USA Today* Debate (Dec.14th 1989), p.A12

⁷⁸ *USA Today* Debate (Dec.14th 1989), p.A12

and privately reassured the “Chinese Stalinists of unruffled relations”, or as Brent Scowcroft put it to the Chinese directly, “Friends forever.”⁷⁹

The administration was accused of “muster[ing] only the weakest of responses”,⁸⁰ and being “strikingly reluctant to criticize the Chinese Government”, silent on Beijing’s campaign of dissident arrests, and the president was accused of having a double-standard (the arrest and torture of Soviet dissidents, one journalist argued, would have elicited a much more forceful response).⁸¹ The administration’s justification for its policies is that “America needs a stable China”, a position unaccepted by many in the press, because “this China, the China savaged by elderly tyrants, is not going to be stable.”⁸²

The president’s reluctance to criticise China was not shared by all of the administration’s officials, and many in the American press offered opposing administration opinions whenever possible. State Department spokeswoman Margaret Tutwiler, in particular, was often quoted during the Tiananmen aftermath, criticising the Chinese leadership and appealing to US values. In one statement widely disseminated through the press:

“The whole world has seen what happened in Tiananmen Square. Large numbers of peaceful protesters were killed by army units... We condemn the use of live fire against unarmed citizens, which is what happened in Tiananmen Square. The demonstrators were seeking basic human rights such as freedom of association, of the press and of expression... Labeling such people as ‘counter-revolutionaries’ and ‘hooligans’ will do nothing to alter the reality of what happened in Tiananmen Square.”⁸³

⁷⁹ *TNR* Editors (May 6th 1991), p.7

⁸⁰ *TNR* Editors (Jul.9th 2008), p.1

⁸¹ Lewis (Sep.28th 1989) – For more on Bush’s reluctance to criticise the Chinese leadership, see also (among others): Oberdorfer (Jun.13th 1989), p.A20

⁸² Lewis (Sep.28th 1989)

⁸³ Tutwiler, quoted in: Oberdorfer (Jun.13th 1989), p.A20

A.M Rosenthal was particularly hostile to the Bush administration's policy approach towards China, referring to "fawning toasts" and "promises abandoned". In one particular article for the *New York Times*, he excoriated the president for 'brow-beating' Republican senators into voting to prevent an override of the President's veto of a Congressional bill guaranteeing Chinese students the right to remain in the US. Rosenthal characterised the Bush policy as "dumping the democracy movement in China to go along with the Communist Government that gave us Tiananmen Square"; a policy that "certainly made the butchers of Beijing happier". The journalist explained the realist calculations involved in Bush's policy, writing that the Chinese now "owe him", and should offer up a couple of political favours.⁸⁴

The Tiananmen crackdown "left most Americans repelled by the regime's brutality and wondering whether a solid basis remained for the relationship the United States has been building with China for two decades." The Bush administration, however, was slow to perceive this sentiment, and has been following an "unwise and unfeeling China policy".⁸⁵ One anonymous official said that the "prevailing view" in the Bush White House was that the American media presented only a "selective, unrepresentative portrait" of events in China in June 1989. The secret trip to Beijing by Brent Scowcroft and Lawrence Eagleburger to apologize for being "slightly critical" of the Tiananmen crackdown, "less than six months after the massacre" was "the wrong response at the wrong time".⁸⁶ Jim Hoagland would later characterise the trip as "obsequious secret diplomacy".⁸⁷

Only under pressure did it offer some "catch-up gestures", suspending certain military ties and withdrawing diplomatic contacts – all, of course, while trying to minimize the damage to the important geopolitical and diplomatic interests shared by the two countries.⁸⁸ These gestures notwithstanding, "the pro-Beijing crowd in the U.S. coos with pleasure when the Chinese Communists

⁸⁴ Rosenthal (Feb.1st 1990)

⁸⁵ Hoagland (Dec.12th 1989), p.A25

⁸⁶ Mitchell (Jun.4th 1991), p.A23

⁸⁷ Hoagland (Jan.20th 2005), p.A25

⁸⁸ *WaPo* Opinion Editorial (Oct.9th 1989), p.A20

disdainfully toss Washington a morsel – like ‘lifting’ martial law imposed at the time of Tiananmen”, but because of Bush’s policies, “more Chinese will go to the horror camps, more will die”,⁸⁹ and democracy will take longer to arrive in China. “Blood is not flowing in Beijing these days, but the people who spoke out for freedom there remain in distress.”⁹⁰

A year after the “bitter old men who run China crushed the ‘Statue of Liberty’ in a night of bloody terror, along with countless flesh-and-blood students who dared seek freedom for their nation”, the Bush administration continued to be criticised in the US press. “Astoundingly,” wrote one commentator, “the government of the nation whose ideals inspired the Chinese dream... remains woefully silent”. In the same article, President Bush’s desire to avoid alienating China is characterised as “no way to achieve democracy”, rather “a dodge”: “the facts are clear. China’s leaders massacred their own citizens. They crushed freedom. They rejected human rights.”⁹¹ The implication, of course, is that Bush is out of step with the American people and the nation’s (even the world’s) ideals.

Therefore, the impression of a “sorry” administration record on China policy quickly emerges from even a cursory review of the articles published in the wake of June 1989. In the eyes of the American press, the Bush administration had shown itself “ready to pay in major diplomatic and economic coin” for Chinese political support “for which Washington should not have paid at all” – for example, China’s accommodation of American policy in Iraq.⁹²

Chinese dissident representatives were also interviewed for comment on the Bush administration’s China policy: “We feel like we’ve been abandoned... This sends a very wrong message to the Chinese government that their suppression of human rights can go on unimpeded.”⁹³

⁸⁹ Rosenthal (Feb.1st 1990)

⁹⁰ WaPo Opinion Editorial (Feb.6th 1991), p.A16

⁹¹ *USA Today* Debate (Jun.4th 1990), p.A10

⁹² WaPo Opinion Editorial (Feb.6th 1991), p.A16

⁹³ Isikoff (May 28th 1991), p.A5

One policy area that allowed for press criticism of the Bush administration's handling of China after Tiananmen was that of China's Most Favoured Nation trade status.⁹⁴ American legislators took to the media to make their case against renewal of China's MFN trade status and other elements of the Bush administration's China policy. In particular, Congressional Democrats announced that the US should not reward China with MFN until it improved its "atrocious" human rights record.⁹⁵ Senator George Mitchell (D-Maine) aired a long list of criticisms of China through the *Washington Post's* opinion pages:

"If American ideals are not violated by the massacre in Tiananmen Square, by the imprisonment and execution of persons for peaceful dissident, by forced political indoctrination of students and the arbitrary refusal of emigration rights, then how are those ideals defined?... By no reasonable standard does the Chinese government's treatment of its own people or the people of Tibet reflect even the most minimal respect for basic human rights."⁹⁶

Mitchell also highlighted China's tendency to not honour its weapons proliferation commitments, and especially its unfair trade practices, painting a picture of an irresponsible stakeholder on the international stage – one the Bush administration was not calling to task: "The Chinese government has paid no price whatever for its brutal massacre of peaceful dissidents in Tiananmen Square. It has paid no price for its continued disregard of world arms control efforts. It has paid no price for its repression in Tibet."⁹⁷

President Bush's "unwillingness to criticize China" has been blamed for crystallizing the MFN debates into what would become an annual fight in Congress. According to Congressman Lee Hamilton (D-Indiana), "The president has made this a much more difficult issue because of his unwillingness to

⁹⁴ China's MFN will be revisited in the next chapter, but with a focus on the role of special interests during the Clinton administration

⁹⁵ Isikoff (May 28th 1991), p.A5

⁹⁶ Mitchell (Jun.4th 1991), p.A23

⁹⁷ Mitchell (Jun.4th 1991), p.A23 – Tibet began to feature prominently in reporting on China's human rights record at this time, and continues to do so today.

criticize China... It's built a lot of steam in Congress... [which] seems to be moving toward conditions that are impossible to achieve."⁹⁸

"Tiananmen Square... is now a metaphor for repression."⁹⁹ The Bush administration's policy of engagement and avoiding alienation made it appear to be on the side of the repressors.

Reports from the American media criticizing Beijing's long-term handling of the Tiananmen protestors, and also China's "political-legal system" added further cause for dissatisfaction with the Bush administration. In an Op-Ed for the *Washington Post*, the author criticized Beijing labeling the incident as "counter-revolutionary rebellion", which is "Chinaspeak for the exercise of basic rights of speech and assembly" – in other words, a way to attack the ideals that America holds so dear. Nonetheless, the editorial recognized that the Chinese regime had been releasing more dissidents than normal in 1990-1 ("using the general preoccupation with Iraq to dispose of the cases"), as if "some combination of leniency and toughness... the authorities hope to close the books on Tiananmen Square." But, the editorial states, "It can't be done." The government reaction to the protest movement was "savage" and "grievous".¹⁰⁰

During the immediate years afterwards, many anti-Communist and anti-Soviet movements – for example, in Germany¹⁰¹ – would be compared with the situation that lead to and resulted from the events in Tiananmen Square. Of particular interest to many US journalists was the stark contrast between what happened in China and the rest of the communist world. For example, Southerland wrote that, by the first anniversary of the massacre, while "other communist countries... witnessed extraordinary political reforms", China had not gone the same way as the crumbling Soviet empire. Instead, "with seeming ease, through arrests and detentions, political indoctrination sessions and endless investigations of suspected dissidents", the regime in Beijing managed to silence the calls for democratic change. Despite Beijing's "carefully

⁹⁸ Greene (Jun.4th 1991), p.A8

⁹⁹ *WaPo* Opinion Editorial (Oct.9th 1989), p.A20

¹⁰⁰ *WaPo* Opinion Editorial (Feb.6th 1991), p.A16

¹⁰¹ Sonenshine (Oct.2nd 1990), p.A19

constructed façade of strength and party unity”, one year after the protests, and despite apparent “extreme nervousness” on the part of China’s leaders, nothing had been done to solve the issues that sparked the protest in the first place.¹⁰²

The continued repression of free and foreign press in China remained on the American media’s agenda. Directives for “additional security”¹⁰³ resulted in “increased censorship of the domestic and foreign media”, including severe restrictions on satellite broadcasting from the country. In addition, multiple reports were published of Chinese police and security personnel ‘roughing up’ and unlawfully detaining foreign reporters and their companions.¹⁰⁴

Few moderate Chinese commentators were interviewed in the years immediately following the massacre, and reporters often featured negative remarks from Chinese dissidents and US government officials: One Chinese student referred to the Chinese leadership as “Wild and savage autocrats [who] have inherited power in China for thousands of years of our history.”¹⁰⁵

Many sub-national politicians were less restrained in their criticism of China. For example, New York Mayor Edward I. Koch told Chinese Consul General Weng Fupei that, “speaking on behalf of most Americans, and certainly most New Yorkers... what your Government has done in violating the human rights of its own citizens is shocking and unacceptable and must be changed.”¹⁰⁶ Despite the wide-reaching criticism, Beijing has refused to reconsider its verdict of characterising the 1989 demonstrations as a ‘counter-revolutionary’ movement that “had to be crushed for the sake of China’s stability and development”.¹⁰⁷ Beijing has “not been impressed” by President Bush’s concessions and measured approach to China policy. The American media has been even less impressed with Beijing’s position: “They haven’t apologised. They called the USA’s expressions of outrage criminal interference” in their

¹⁰² Southerland (Jun.2nd 1990), p.A1

¹⁰³ Sun (Jun.4th 1991), p.A15

¹⁰⁴ For example: Southerland (Jun.4th 1990), p.A1; Sun (Jun.4th 1991), p.A23; *USA Today* (Jun.5th 1992), p.A4

¹⁰⁵ Southerland (Jun.4th 1990), p.A1

¹⁰⁶ Quoted in: Dunlap (Oct.29th 1989)

¹⁰⁷ Eckholm & Chen (Jun.1st 1999)

internal matters, “and they continued their reign of terror against the demonstrators.”¹⁰⁸ Not only demonstrators, but also relatives of the victims of the 1989 crackdown: “Working with exiled dissidents against the interests of the Communist Party is often declared a major crime.”¹⁰⁹

Despite Beijing’s continued control over dissidents, the CCP continues to experience its own problems. Factional conflict within the CCP remained in the media spotlight, painting a picture of a regime struggling internally, that could potentially destroy itself: “Once [Deng Xiaoping] dies, there’s no way that they can maintain stability”, wrote Southerland. A “semblance of stability” has been imposed, but “disillusionment with the party leadership has grown rather than diminished”, with opposition to Premier Li Peng’s “repressive policies” quietly voiced by a growing number of Chinese officials. Tensions within the police and the armed forces also came to light, as some officers “display reluctance to deal sternly with student activists”, and younger members exhibit more liberal preferences.¹¹⁰

By the end of George H.W. Bush’s presidency, American press coverage of China retained a strong negative bias. China’s leadership, in particular, are alternatively characterised as “hard-line Chinese who think they can get away with murder”,¹¹¹ “wicked men who ordered the tanks in”,¹¹² “unrepentant” tyrants,¹¹³ and “bitter old men”.¹¹⁴ Focus was also turned ever-more on China’s human rights record in general, and not just Tiananmen Square. Jack Healey, Amnesty International’s US executive director at the time:

“Are there any changes in human rights conditions? A big, big, big ‘no’... When you think that China represents one-fifth of the world’s population, you realize the volume of pain is immense. It really shakes the soul.”¹¹⁵

¹⁰⁸ *USA Today* Debate (Dec.14th 1989), p.A12

¹⁰⁹ Eckholm & Chen (Jun.1st 1999)

¹¹⁰ Southerland (Jun.2nd 1990), p.A1

¹¹¹ *USA Today* Debate (Dec.14th 1989), p.A12

¹¹² Rosenthal (Feb.1st 1990)

¹¹³ *WaPo* Opinion Editorial (Feb.6th 1991), p.A16

¹¹⁴ *USA Today* Debate (Jun.4th 1990), p.A10

¹¹⁵ Greene (Jun.4th 1991), p.A8

LEGACY & ANNIVERSARIES (CLINTON & BEYOND)

After the MFN debate was closed, there was a noticeable reduction in the frequency with which reporting on China mentioned Tiananmen Square, as more pressing international and domestic news grew in salience. Anniversaries, however, presented good opportunities for renewed attention on the events of 1989. The themes that arose from Tiananmen Square – particularly China’s human rights record – remain at the centre of the American printed media’s portrayal of China. In recent years, this has focused on Beijing’s various other crackdowns; from the persecution of the Falun Gong religious sect, to Beijing’s policy of “cultural genocide” in Xinjiang and Tibet.¹¹⁶

The anniversaries of the 1989 crackdown see at least one article from the main newspapers (only the ‘big’ anniversaries receive much attention in the main magazines, if at all). These articles reiterate the events of June 1989, often highlighting the brutality of the massacre, the Chinese government’s continued resistance to reviewing its policy at the time, and also the continued persecution and difficulties of dissidents and family members of those who lost their lives in 1989. It is not uncommon for articles to detail new arrests carried out by Chinese law enforcement, “as it does every year”,¹¹⁷ of relatives and dissidents.

As the fifth anniversary of Tiananmen grew near, the Chinese leadership remained nervous, and “hundreds of police as well as office workers were mobilized to prevent even the smallest protest in Beijing’s Tiananmen Square or the sensitive university district.”¹¹⁸ In addition, midnight raids on homes were conducted to apprehend actual and potential dissidents.¹¹⁹ “Anything that hints of organised opposition is swiftly crushed”, and “bigger, more severe crackdowns than before” are taking place.¹²⁰ For years, Mainland Chinese faced

¹¹⁶ Smith (Jun.4th 2009), p.A17

¹¹⁷ Pan (Jun.4th 2004), p.A1

¹¹⁸ Sun (Jun.5th 1994), p.A32

¹¹⁹ Sun (Jun.5th 1994), p.A32

¹²⁰ Mufson (Jun.4th 1995), p.A1

the “possibility of arrest for public gestures of mourning or for criticizing the government’s use of force” in 1989.¹²¹

A decade after the massacre, Tiananmen continued to plague the US-China relationship, one that “can never be as smooth” as Beijing wants it to be as long as CNN’s “searing images of tracer bullets in the night and tanks in the streets”¹²² persist in public consciousness, along with Beijing “slaughtering hundreds of its own citizens... crushing everything in its path”.¹²³ These images are “etched on the American psyche”, and “the stigma of Tiananmen” remains.¹²⁴ Also, by 1999, more information had become available, creating an even-more damning picture of what had happened. For example, Wiseman reported that, while many of the demonstrators were indeed students, most of those killed were actually “workers and ordinary people” who had attempted to stop the “military onslaught”: “It was the ordinary citizens of Beijing who paid the price in blood overwhelmingly that night.”¹²⁵

On the twentieth anniversary of the tragedy, dissent remained quickly crushed, and the American press reported on Beijing’s continued repression and paranoia. Hundreds of extra security officers (“uniformed and plain-clothes”) were deployed around Beijing; access to online message boards and social-networking sites, including Twitter, was blocked by Chinese censors to stop dissidents from organizing protests: Chinese officials have learned the lesson of Tiananmen, to quash dissent as early as possible. As Minxin Pei described the lesson, “you have to be very tough at the beginning, to nip things in the bud. It is much better to have overkill than underkill.”¹²⁶

An editor of *The Nation* reminded readers of how the “June 4 massacre turned Beijing streets into urban killing fields”. Jeffrey Wasserstrom, outlined many of the themes that have come to characterise reporting on China and Tiananmen: Beijing’s refusal to admit what actually happened (the CCP “insists

¹²¹ Cox (Jun.4th 1997), p.A4

¹²² Manning (Jul.20/27th 1998), pp.14-15

¹²³ Wiseman (Jun.3rd 1999), p.A10

¹²⁴ Manning (Jul.20/27th 1998), pp.14-15

¹²⁵ Wiseman (Jun.3rd 1999), p.A10

¹²⁶ Pei, quoted in: Fallows (Sep.2011), p.58. See also: MacLeod (Jun.4th 2009), p.A1

there were no peaceful protests and no ‘massacre’, just ‘counter-revolutionary riots’... pacified by soldiers who showed great restraint”); the tight control of information (“tries to keep young Chinese ignorant of what happened”); the distance China has come since 1989, and how China’s society and economy have “changed enormously”. Wasserstrom bemoans the decline in interest in Tiananmen, and states that “China specialists need to resist the temptation to put 1989 behind us”, as Chinese leaders have encouraged.¹²⁷ The *National Review*, in its weekly round-up, recalled Claudia Rosett’s *Wall Street Journal* article, quoting “If China’s democratic uprising has achieved nothing else, it has at least flushed into view the naked shape of China’s Communist Party.” The article finishes in agreement, stating that the events of Tiananmen are still indicative of the CCP’s character, calling on readers and America to “Remember.”¹²⁸ As a response to the CCP’s refusal to provide a proper accounting of June 1989, a website, “MassacreMap”, has been created, solely aimed at marking the events of the Tiananmen Massacre run by Ellen Bork (sometimes contributor to *The Weekly Standard* and Fox News), Tian Jian, and Philip Chalk.¹²⁹

The press appears, therefore, to be a principle proponent of keeping the memory of the 1989 crackdown alive in American discourse, as the moment when the Chinese leadership “snuffed democracy’s flame”,¹³⁰ when Tiananmen Square “became a killing field, when the communist leadership sent tanks to crush a pro-democracy demonstration.” The “Big Brother moves” and “strong-arm tactics” may have worked so far, but even CCP journals suggest leaders in Beijing are “losing political control as people gain more economic freedom”..¹³¹ While comparisons with George Orwell’s *1984* were popular and obvious, Beijing’s tactics – particularly when it came to propaganda before and after the crackdown – had also been compared to the tactics of the Nazis and Hitler’s

¹²⁷ Wasserstrom (Jun.15th 2009), p.4

¹²⁸ Rosett, quoted in: *National Review* (Jun.22nd 2009), p.10 – Rosett’s *WSJ* article appears to be a particular favourite among conservative publications, referenced in *National Review*, *The Weekly Standard*, and also *Washington Times*

¹²⁹ <http://www.massacremap.com/>

¹³⁰ *USA Today* (Jun.5th 2007), p.A10

¹³¹ *USA Today* (Jun.7th 2004), p.A20

propagandist Goebbels, specifically his dictum “if you repeat a lie a thousand times, then it becomes a truth”.¹³²

The press continues to be muzzled in China, and as a result remains a focus in American reporting on the anniversaries of Tiananmen and other articles about China’s human rights policies. For example, a couple of days before the fifth anniversary, there was “an official Chinese order telling Beijing hotels to switch off CNN news broadcasts during the anniversary”. Mike Jendrzejczyk of Human Rights Watch Asia and frequent critic of China, commenting on the CCP-enforced blackout of CNN: “Obviously the Chinese are paranoid... that news from outside the country would stimulate domestic protests.”¹³³ On the tenth anniversary, the authorities “pulled the plug” on the network once again, ordering hotels, apartments, and offices to stop receiving CNN until the day after the anniversary. The reason was because CNN had been broadcasting pieces about the protests and the military response. The NGO Reporters Without Borders also reported that the CCP had suspended several publications and halted issuance of new press credentials and licences.¹³⁴ For the twentieth anniversary, Tiananmen Square was ‘swarmed’ with police and foreign TV reports (from CNN and BBC World, for example) recalling the crackdown were blacked out.¹³⁵

Suppression of information has extended beyond the press, however. Chinese dissidents have adopted new technologies like the Internet and text-messaging, but the regime has “also proved adept at using these media to discourage protests, disseminat[ing] its own interpretations of events” and mobilising its own supporters.¹³⁶ The media crackdown over the twentieth anniversary was even more wide-reaching:

“Twitter and other Internet services that people could have used to coordinate gatherings were blocked, as were news Web sites such as CNN and the BBC. Foreign newspapers and magazines that had been

¹³² Kristoff (Jun.5th 1992), p.A2

¹³³ Jendrzejczyk, quoted in: Greene (Jun.3rd 1994), p.A1

¹³⁴ Wiseman & Bezlova (Jun.4th 1999), p.A11

¹³⁵ MacLeod (Jun.5th 2009), p.A6

¹³⁶ Wasserstrom (Jun.15th 2009), p.6

covering commemorative protests in Hong Kong were delivered with pages ripped out. Writers, activists and even mothers of victims were put under surveillance or house arrest.”¹³⁷

In advance of the Beijing Olympics in 2008, some attempts were made to juxtapose the stark truths of 1989 with contemporary China. *The New Republic* argued that human rights in China had actually got worse in the run-up to the Games.¹³⁸ Mike Lopresti, writing for *USA Today*, recounts Jeff Widener’s recollections of June 1989, how events moved so quickly from optimism and community (“at one point the soldiers were singing with the protesters on the square”). The lone man standing before a tank, the iconic photo taken by Widener, was “the face of then in China, when the tanks rolled in, leaving Tiananmen Square filled with blood, ghosts and the unanswered fate of a man who’s famous yet anonymous.” This bleak image is in stark contrast with the Beijing and Tiananmen Square of 2008, which is a place of “thousands of tourists” and Chinese interested in the upcoming Olympics and tourists’ opinion of China, and “surveillance cameras on every light post and... filled with flowers and visitors.”¹³⁹

AMERICAN MEDIA, CHINA’S ECONOMY & CHINESE ‘APATHY’

A frequent element of Tiananmen reporting by the US media is the fact that the Chinese government “has labored to put the June 4, 1989, massacre behind it, suppressing public discussion of the event while highlighting the rapid economic growth China has achieved in the years since.” Philip P. Pan has pointed out that the memory of Tiananmen “continues to mar China’s reputation abroad” and remains a “powerful symbol” at home for those dissatisfied with the Communist Party’s monopoly on power.¹⁴⁰ Despite this, however, interest in and knowledge of the crackdown in China has diminished – drastically among younger Chinese. Just three years after the crackdown, long-

¹³⁷ Cha & Ng (Jun.5th 2009), p.A6

¹³⁸ *TNR* Editors (Jul.9th 2008, p.1)

¹³⁹ Lopresti (Aug.7th 2008), p.C9

¹⁴⁰ Pan (Jun.4th 2004), p.A1

time China reporter for *The New York Times* Kristoff wrote of the already-fading memories of the event:

“The shift in public mood confounds widespread predictions at the time that the Communists would not be able to rewrite history this time, that a prolonged bitterness and antagonism would immensely complicate party rule in China. In fact, Communist hard-liners came the closest to calling it right: that the rage would dissipate and that some people would even change their views.”¹⁴¹

In more recent years, much US press attention has also been distracted from China’s human rights record, focussing more on the “astounding” economic growth and China’s newfound prosperity.¹⁴² This has had some impact on the place of Tiananmen Square in the media’s China framework. In some cases, it is used to illustrate how far China has come. For example, Hoagland wrote:

“Beijing has become an urban Godzilla since then: Concave, convex and cantilevered skyscrapers march erratically across the ridges of an unending, perpetually smog-filled skyline. These canyons of steel and glass corporate fortresses visually testify that money and material ambition have totally eclipsed the demands for democracy – and honesty in government – that filled the streets in one of the 20th century’s great moments of peaceful public protest.”¹⁴³

In other cases, American reporters write articles that bemoan the seeming disappearance of Tiananmen from the consciousness of the Chinese people, highlighting the Chinese government’s success in censoring information and keeping the Chinese people, particularly younger generations, “virtually oblivious to the real story of Tiananmen.” A Chinese professor supported this impression, when he told Calum MacLeod that the CCP has been “very successful at controlling information”.¹⁴⁴ Beyond this ignorance of the details of

¹⁴¹ Kristoff (Jun.5th 1992), p.A4

¹⁴² *USA Today* (Jun.5th 2007), p.A10; Karabell (Sep.17th 2009)

¹⁴³ Hoagland (Jun.10th 2007), p.B7

¹⁴⁴ MacLeod (Jun.4th 2009), p.A1

the crackdown, “the masses seem either apathetic or tranquilized by the fruits of economic growth; the restive intellectuals seem cowed by repression”¹⁴⁵

To refer again to Kristoff’s article from 1992, it is clear that the steady decline in interest in Tiananmen started very soon, and was in no small part the result of the Chinese government’s own policies. “One reason why the outrage over the killings has subsided is simply repression: many Chinese believe that talking about the Tiananmen crackdown will accomplish nothing and will simply risk punishment,” in its way validating the CCP’s justification for the brutal suppression of the demonstrations in order to preserve its own legitimacy. “Another reason is the Government’s skilful propaganda.”¹⁴⁶ Textbooks in China do not mention Tiananmen; teachers don’t teach it; and the state media “go out of their way to ignore it”; mainland online chat rooms are quickly scrubbed of references to the killings; Chinese internet search engines block Tiananmen articles; and censors are quick to delete the number ‘64’, which is code for referring to the events of June 4.¹⁴⁷ Discussion, therefore, is “banned to the point that many young people know nothing of what happened.”¹⁴⁸

Government suppression has only got more successful and easier as distance and economic success has diluted the salience of some, though not all, of the issues the student movement had been protesting. “Ignorance of 1989 is contributing to the perception of a freer society among the youngest – and most volatile – elements of the population. They have known nothing but prosperity and take it for granted.”¹⁴⁹

The political ferment of the 1980s, therefore, gave way to an “obsessive popular concern with money” and spreading free markets, which has not run its course. The CCP’s one-party power monopoly is based ever more on providing annual economic growth rates that bring a “highly visible flow of consumer

¹⁴⁵ Lane (Nov. 24th 1997), p.45

¹⁴⁶ Kristoff (Jun. 5th 1992), p.A4

¹⁴⁷ Chang (Jun. 8th 2009), p.13

¹⁴⁸ Cha & Ng (Jun. 5th 2009), p.A6

¹⁴⁹ Chang (Jun. 8th 2009), p.13

goods and other material benefits to the country's urban population.”¹⁵⁰ For China's growing middle class, getting rich has become a “ubiquitous preoccupation.” The job for the government, therefore, is to sustain the economic boom.¹⁵¹

China's economic development is not only distracting the Chinese public. According to many China critics in the American press, diminished interest and attention being paid to China's past is partly in the name of business opportunities. For example, long-time China critic Jim Hoagland characterised the European Union's consideration of lifting the arms embargo on China, in place since 1989, as “Europe... set to prove the wrong guys right about the world's willingness to put aside outrage over human rights atrocities when business beckons.”¹⁵²

Beijing has informed the international community that the crackdown was “necessary to ensure social stability”, a “precondition for the market-driven changes that have since transformed China into the world's third-largest economy.”¹⁵³ When this argument is met with [disbelief], Chinese officials ask, “What right does the U.S. government have to... flagrantly interfere in China's internal affairs?”¹⁵⁴

Part of the media's continued interest in 1989, beyond the sensational, newsworthy nature of a government-sanctioned massacre, also stems from their total failure to predict what it would mean for China in either the short or long term, and also China's continued refusal to reform in line with Western values and ideals:

“It is humbling to realize how often post-Tiananmen events have defied our predictions. More than a few observers assumed two decades ago that the Chinese Communist Party would soon go the way of its counterpart in Poland, where Solidarity won a major

¹⁵⁰ Hoagland (Jun.10th 2007), p.B7

¹⁵¹ Manning (Jul.20/27th 1998), p.15

¹⁵² Hoagland (Jan.20th 2005), p.A25

¹⁵³ Cha & Ng (Jun.5th 2009), p.A6

¹⁵⁴ Kagan (Apr.23rd 2008), p.43

election on the very day of the massacre. Later, some of us were sure that to survive, the party would either pull back from engaging with the world or reverse the verdict on 1989.”¹⁵⁵

As America and the West waited for China to resume its “inevitable course” toward liberal democratic modernity, “the Chinese Communist Party leadership set about shoring up its dominance in the nation.” Despite frequent and repeated predictions in the West of “an imminent political opening”, the trend in China has been “toward consolidation of the Chinese autocracy rather than reform... the Chinese leadership ha[s] no intention of reforming itself out of power.” Western observers hoped that to keep China on a path of economic growth and to manage the myriad internal problems that growth brings, China would be forced to reform itself. This, too, now seems unlikely. Most economists now believe China’s remarkable growth could be sustainable for some time to come, without the need for political or social reform.

“Keen observers of the Chinese political system see a sufficient combination of competence and ruthlessness on the part of the Chinese leadership to handle problems as they arise, and a population prepared to accept autocratic government so long as economic growth continues.”¹⁵⁶

CONCLUSIONS & THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION

Overall, the key themes and impression that have emerged and been maintained throughout coverage of Tiananmen Square and China as a whole, is that of a government that will brutally crush dissent, one with an illiberal and unchangeable approach to human rights, and one that will go to considerable lengths to restrict honest information about its past from reaching the younger generations. Despite America’s faults in reality, these critical images of China run counter to its own perceived ideals, and as a result it cannot but have an

¹⁵⁵ Wasserstrom (Jun.15th 2009), p.6

¹⁵⁶ Kagan (Apr.23rd 2008), p.41

impact on the American public and government officials' impressions of the People's Republic (which, in itself, is considered an oxymoronic name).

Tiananmen cast an unwelcome shadow over the new Obama administration very early on when it appointed Charles 'Chas' Freeman as Chairman of the National Intelligence Council. The reaction highlighted the importance of the 1989 crackdown in the formulation of American perceptions of China. Gabriel Schoenfeld, writing for the *Wall Street Journal*, claimed that Freeman "unabashedly sides with the Chinese government" on Tiananmen, "a remarkable position for an appointee of an administration that has pledged to advance the cause of human rights".¹⁵⁷ Michael Goldfarb, of *The Weekly Standard*, offered the full text of Freeman's surprising 2006 opinion of the Tiananmen crackdown. In it, Freeman claims the CCP's account of events is "very plausible", that the "truly unforgivable mistake of the Chinese authorities was the failure to intervene on a timely basis to nip the demonstrations in the bud". Freeman described the Chinese response to the "mob scene" as a "monument to overly cautious behaviour" and "ill-conceived restraint" on the part of Zhao Ziyang. He went further, explaining that protestors who take over central areas of cities, like Tiananmen Square, "should expect to be displaced with despatch from the ground they occupy." Freeman finished his statement saying he hopes – as does the "majority in China" – that the Chinese leadership will never "repeat the mistakes of Zhao Ziyang's dilatory tactics of appeasement in dealing with domestic protesters in China."¹⁵⁸ Freeman's appointment, his opinions on Tiananmen, and also Secretary Hillary Clinton's comments about further delinking human rights concerns from the US-China dialogue ("the debate with China over human rights, Taiwan and Tibet cannot be allowed to interfere with attempts to reach consensus on other broader issues"), were harshly criticised by the US press. To Goldfarb, it suggested that "the Obama administration will be giving the Chinese a free hand to deal with dissent however they see fit."¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁷ Schoenfeld (Feb.25th 2009)

¹⁵⁸ Freeman (May 26th 2006), quoted in: Goldfarb (Feb.24th 2009)

¹⁵⁹ Goldfarb (Feb.24th 2009)

It's worth taking a look at a recent article by James Fallows for *The Atlantic*, which looks at the state of dissent in China today. The Arab Spring protests and revolutions in 2011 presented a new opportunity to reminisce about Tiananmen Square. Just after the demonstrations in Tunisia and Egypt erupted, China saw its own series of "Jasmine" protests. Beijing has learned from the experience of Tiananmen, not to mention the international reaction, and methods have been "subtler... and more insidious". As a result of these Jasmine protests, China has seen "the most serious and widespread wave of repression since the Tiananmen Square crackdowns." Fallows, a long-time China reporter for *The Atlantic*, was also careful to qualify that "worst since Tiananmen Square" does not mean "as bad as Tiananmen Square." The government has taken pains to ensure that there have been no coordinated nationwide protests, and PLA troops have not been employed as the major force in containing dissent, as they were in 1989. In 2011, enforcement has been left mainly to regular police, the "much-feared" 'urban management' patrols, large reserve armies of plainclothesmen, and "many other less visible parts of the state's internal-security apparatus", which Fallows writes "now has a larger budget than China's regular military." However, Fallows also addresses a couple of the possible causes for the reduction in interest in China's human rights record and Tiananmen. Firstly, life in China can be "simultaneously so wide-open and so tightly controlled". Secondly, reporting on Chinese oppression of human rights activists and their lawyers (illegal detention and "enforced disappearances") can become "tedious", suggesting an element of subject-fatigue as no noticeable improvement is reported. Fallows attributes much of Beijing's actions possibly down to "reflex and paranoia".¹⁶⁰

Writing in 1998, Dana Milbank described President Clinton's trip to China as unique, serving the purpose of not only promoting the administration's China policy to America, but also put Clinton "in the peculiar role of cheerleader for the new China". At this point in US-China history, "China [had] been demonised by both the right and left as a hostile and aggressive power, oppressor of its own people, and the United States' next great enemy." This was, in part, an

¹⁶⁰ Fallows (Sep.2011), pp.52-56

element of Clinton's engagement policy but also his focus on economics and trade – China was certainly by this point becoming an ever-more important trading partner. One National Security Council staffer described Clinton's trip as a "vast education experience" for the American press.¹⁶¹ As the next two chapters will show, while the human rights debate continues in the press, it has been subordinated by economic and occasional strategic interests. Perhaps the American media learned from Clinton's lesson.

Critics of China's human rights policies were galvanised by the events of 1989, and have frequently referred to the Tiananmen massacre when making their case before Congress and the American people (through the media). There can be little doubt that the reporting of Tiananmen Square has had a lasting impression on American impressions of China, and as a result has influenced the conduct and rhetoric of US-China policy. Tiananmen Square has become useful shorthand for all of China's human rights failings.

In a scathing 2008 editorial, the editors of *The New Republic* excoriated the simple pattern adhered to by recent presidents and presidential candidates: that of talking tough on China during the campaign, but mellowing upon entering the White House (none more so than Bill Clinton). The predictable pattern, the editorial argues, gives the Chinese government no cause to reform their human rights policies. The editorial is a good example of certain sectors of the American press maintaining the standard of pushing for reform in China. Without doing so, editorials argue, it signals to the Chinese people that America's "ultimate solidarity lies... with their odious government". The clear disappointment in the American media has been the tendency to relegate human rights and exposure of China's repressive policies to the backburner, to abandon "the billion, long-suffering men and women of the world's largest dictatorship".¹⁶²

Many of the articles referred to in this chapter (especially those published in the five years after the event) were accompanied by photos from June 3rd and

¹⁶¹ Milbank (Jul.6th 1998), p.16

¹⁶² *TNR* Editors (Jul.8th 2008), pp.1-2

4th 1989 – bloodied protesters,¹⁶³ Chinese police or military forces attacking and apprehending students, visiting US officials accosted by Chinese police (for example, Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi),¹⁶⁴ and other powerful images. While images of tanks and bloody streets may have dimmed somewhat, the repression of free speech, press and society remain key characteristics of Americans' perception of China. As a result, it is perhaps unsurprising that officials frame their rhetoric and pronouncements accordingly, to fit within the media-created frame. As we will see, and have seen, this does not necessarily translate into negative or prescriptive policy towards China – certainly, the negativity of China reporting had only a minimal impact on the George H.W. Bush administration's policy preferences and decisions. Congress certainly appeared more affected by the negativity, but largely because Representatives and Senators felt the shock, disappointment and revulsion that reporters had. From the graphic reports mentioned and quoted earlier in this chapter, this should not come as a surprise. This tells us that, while the American foreign policy system is highly pluralised, the Executive Branch retains and wields considerable power over eventual policy, able to tamp down on popular passions when necessary. That said, however, the media has the ability to steer the discussion, forcing government officials to address or justify their actions – acting as watchdogs, if you will. The Tiananmen Square crackdown was such a break from the improving image of China that successive administrations and the media had been cultivating since Nixon's opening in 1972, that it irrevocably damaged China's image in the eyes of the American public.

¹⁶³ For example: Sun (Jun.3rd 1995), p.A17; Wiseman (Jun.3rd 1999), p.A10

¹⁶⁴ Sun (Sep.5th 1991), p.23

CHAPTER V

SPECIAL INTERESTS & FOREIGN POLICY

In the post-Cold War world, security concerns and the unifying opposition to Soviet expansion no longer drives American foreign policy. Now economic interest, democratisation abroad, and concerns about human rights have greater prominence. As the foreign policy focus dissipated, various pressure groups and other institutions with particular interests in a broad range of foreign policy issues acquired enhanced (though still limited) influence on policymaking. As the foreign policy-making process in the United States has become more pluralistic, therefore, so too has the need for a more flexible approach to policy-making.¹

The political space occupied by special interests and corporations is contentious. As with the media, opinions are varied and contradictory when it comes to how influential special interests are. The main question that needs to be asked is whether or not US politics can be viewed as a competition between different interest groups. Unfortunately for the purposes of this chapter, a lot of the literature leans towards conspiracies and reflects a highly anti-corporate bias, making it difficult to ascertain the true extent of influence and input of special interests, lobbies, and corporations in the foreign policy-making process.

Lobbies come from a wide range of sectors – from business to defence, human rights and labour groups to pro-Free Trade groups, local state interests to foreign governments – and therefore pursue separate and often competing agendas. A not-infrequent argument to be found in the literature is that corporations effectively run or own the United States government, having

¹ Sutter (1998), pp.10-11

bought their way into the corridors of power with considerable campaign contributions.² It is certainly true that corporate- and special interests' donations to political campaigns remain significant, but the extent to which these contributions translate into foreign policy influence is difficult to ascertain.

C. Wright Mills, author of *The Power Elite* (1956), has characterised the American political landscape as being ruled by “an intricate set of overlapping cliques” that occupy the upper strata of the economic, military, and political institutions in the United States.³ John Judis has suggested that there is clear evidence that “Elites, interest groups, and political parties have moved the country, and made history, through their influence over what government does.” However, he continues, the degree of influence they enjoy over government and the political process has depended on what Americans believe the role of government to be at any given time.⁴

The widespread acceptance of corporate government control is well illustrated by Robert Reich, in his book *Supercapitalism*. As outlined by Reich, public opinion surveys about the role of special interests and government have shown a growth in distrust of government intentions: in 1964, only 36% of Americans felt “public officials don’t care much what people like me think”, but by 2000, that sentiment was shared by more than 60% of respondents. In 1964, almost two-thirds of Americans believed the government was run for the benefit of all Americans, and only 29% believed it was “run by a few big interests looking out only for themselves”. By 2000, the ratio was practically reversed, with 35% believing government was run for the general benefit of all, and more than 60% arguing that the US government was run by a select few big interests.⁵

David C. Korten, has explained how “it is not a matter of a small elite group meeting in secret to craft a master plan for taking over the world.” Instead, the truth is that the intersection between business and government works much

² Certainly, since the 2008 Economic Crisis, many writers have begun writing, convincingly, that this may well be the case – see Taibbi (2010)

³ Mills (1956/2000), p.7-9

⁴ Judis (2000), p.26

⁵ Reich (2008), p.5

“like any networking or shared culture building process out of which alliances among individuals and groups emerge and evolve.” However, due to the highly interlinked and interrelated world of business and government, outward appearances can lend themselves to accusations of conspiracy: “There is no conspiracy, though in practical terms, the consequences are much if they were.”⁶

What makes China an important nation to study with regards to US lobbies with interests/stakes in foreign policy, is that it excites all sides of the policy debates. In some ways, this might explain the occasional lack of (rhetorical) coherence. US-China policy is an all-encompassing policy area, with representatives of most corporate and industrial sectors, ideological, religious, and foreign national interests all taking part in the debate in Washington. Stephen Teles has identified three general types of interest groups operating in the US-China policy-making sphere: those with interests that are “primarily strategic or military... primarily economics and trade... [and] those with human rights concerns”.⁷ This chapter will look at the way in which special interests and lobbies work in the American political system, both historically and contemporarily; it will identify the different types of special interest operating in the United States; before focusing on special interests in US-China foreign policy, and drawing conclusions with regards to the trends and traditions of US foreign policy.

SPECIAL INTERESTS – WHAT THEY ARE & HOW THEY OPERATE

When discussing special interests, it is important to first identify what they are. For the purposes of this chapter, special interests are identified as: business lobbies, such as the US Chamber of Commerce, hoping to influence foreign economic policies; ethnic lobbies, such as AIPAC and the less-cohesive China Lobby, with goals of improving their position within the United States and for their home-country; and think tanks and ideological groups, such as the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) and the American Enterprise Institute (AEI), hoping

⁶ Korten (1996), p.133

⁷ Teles (1998), p.46

to disseminate their policies and ideologies (be they political, moral or religious), and bring government policy into alignment with their own views.

Before focusing on foreign policy, it is important to understand how special interests fit into American politics as a whole. Throughout American political history, John Judis writes, “interest groups and lobbies have exerted an enormous influence over American politics.” Judis argues that “[e]very piece of tax and regulatory legislation, every government expenditure, and every government initiative in international trade bears their imprint,” offering the 1947 Taft-Hartley Act as one drafted by lobbyists.⁸ As mentioned in Chapter Two, at the birth of the United States, these lobbies and special interests were referred to as ‘factions’ by James Madison and Alexander Hamilton.

Pluralist writers like E.E. Schattschneider argue that much political conflict finds its origins in that existing between special interest lobbies. There’s plenty of evidence to support the claim that lobbying groups have considerable impact on domestic politics. For example, the Business Groups vs. Consumer Protection Agency in 1977, and the AFL-CIO’s success in making even Republicans, historically opposed to this idea, vote for a minimum wage hike in 1996. There is, conversely, little – if any – evidence of this being the case in foreign policy. This does not mean pluralists are wrong *per se*, as they could still argue that most political conflicts *begin* between interest groups, before government officials work on formulating policies that support their own agendas. Through public relations and campaign finance, special interests also attempt to exert influence over the electoral arena, by framing issues in ways that benefit their causes. However, the extent to which they can manipulate political discourse is limited, as Schattschneider acknowledges, because the electoral arena is a realm of politics distinct from actual governance, and what works during a political campaign may not necessarily result in policy action.⁹ In other words, lobbyist success is subject to factors that are beyond their control.

⁸ Judis (2000), p.11

⁹ Schattschneider, in Judis (2000), pp.12-13

Due to the open nature of Congress, and the fact that members frequently put their opinions and views on the record, it is easier for interest groups to target them as potentially amenable contacts to push their positions and cause(s). On the other hand, "Organised interest groups generally have a harder time trying to influence the executive branch". This is because, once decisions are made at the cabinet level, the more closed nature of bureaucracy in the executive branch makes officials less sensitive to pressures from extra-governmental groups.¹⁰ Furthermore, an open Congress with Constitutional control over trade policy, and elected officials' electoral needs, means the opportunities for lobbying are near-limitless for business interests.¹¹ While the "direct quid pro quo is never easy to establish" between business and politicians, "politicians hoping to continue receiving... business largesse have to safeguard the interests of their benefactors during their tenure of office."¹² This symbiotic relationship is understandably difficult to change. The lack of any progress on campaign finance reform, and the continued influence of business interests, according to Greg Palast, means that "the financial poisoning of our body politic continues".¹³

The character of the American electorate can also have an impact. The United States has a poor record of voter turnout and "Americans are not very political beyond their local sphere." Due to this perceived political apathy, Lawrence Davidson has argued that the United States is "a democracy of competing interest groups or lobbies", or to use his terminology, a "factocracy".¹⁴ If most Americans are disinterested in foreign affairs, and if foreign policy has no necessary connection to popular concerns or preferences, then the question becomes, "whose concerns and preferences does foreign policy reflect?"¹⁵

In realist theory, because a nation's population is eternally fickle, public influence on foreign policy would "permit the emotional to govern the

¹⁰ Sutter (1998), p.20

¹¹ Garten (May/Jun.1997), p.69

¹² Sinha (2003), p.16

¹³ Palast (2004), p.5

¹⁴ Davidson (2009), p.3 – in this case, "factocracy" is derived from the word "faction".

¹⁵ Davidson (2009), p.1

rational”.¹⁶ If a population is largely disinterested in foreign affairs, then one would assume that political elites remain the dominant actors in foreign policy, as many realists assert. At this point, a pluralist would accept the neoliberal view that executive and legislative officials with foreign policy authority bargain with domestic interest groups who can use “members’ votes, campaign contributions, threatened or actual capital flight, labour strikes, and other tools” to influence elite decision-making.¹⁷

Davidson finds the notion that political elites would be more likely to approach policy decisions rationally rather than emotionally “highly dubious”, arguing that they must (like ‘civilians’) be affected by their own groupthink and environments. It might therefore be argued that, due to the openness of the American political system, special interests and lobbies take the place of ‘citizens’ as domestic actors in foreign policy, as the general population effectively abdicates its influence of policy formulation to whatever lobby or interest group does care about foreign affairs.¹⁸ Whether or not these actors play a part in policy is not in doubt; what remains unclear is the extent they are able to influence US foreign policy-making and traditions.

The First Amendment of the US Constitution (guaranteeing freedom of speech and expression), arguably opened the door for lobbying of the US government. The Amendment holds that Congress is prohibited from making any law that abridges “the right of the people... to petition the government for a redress of grievances.”¹⁹ While a literal reading of the amendment does not directly refer to lobbying factions, by stretching the terminology, it is possible to see how lobbying could be justified as citizens seeking redress of grievances. There are certainly issues with this reading of the Constitution. If, as mentioned above, citizens have abdicated their involvement in foreign policy (and politics as a whole), then lobbying groups should not be considered ‘citizens voicing their grievances’. When it comes to foreign governments’ lobbying operations in the US, this rationalization is even more tenuous.

¹⁶ Davidson (2009), pp.14-15

¹⁷ Jacobs & Page (Feb.2005), p.107

¹⁸ Davidson (2009), p.21

¹⁹ Cited in: Davidson (2009), p.29

As the US government itself began to intervene extensively in economic affairs – regulating currency, tackling monopolies, encouraging conservation, policing food and meat products, and levying taxes on income and profits – businesses and other affected groups organized lobbies to protect their interests.²⁰ In other words, “if there is government intervention in the corporate economy, so is there corporate intervention in the governmental process.” With interlocking military, political and economic structures, this level of intervention (in both directions) has the potential to increase.²¹

While citizen involvement in political activity outside Washington has mostly atrophied (the increase in grassroots activism during the 2008 presidential election is starting to look like a temporary uptick in participation), activity on or around Washington’s K Street has spread and is expanding. According to the Center for Responsive Politics, the number of registered lobbyists working in Washington, D.C., has grown by 39% between 1998 and 2008 (from 10,641 to 14,808 registered lobbyists), with a considerable, temporary increase in 2007 (15,131). In 2008, lobbyists spent \$3.3billion lobbying government agencies – or \$222,853 for each registered lobbyist.

Some might be tempted to see this increase in lobbying activity as a positive development, because it might suggest that there is greater public involvement in politics. However, given the nature of these groups (who increasingly represent corporate and some foreign interests), the truth is frequently the opposite: “Far from deepening citizen involvement in politics, the proliferation of these Washington organizations discourages it by making politics the exclusive province of paid hacks and single-issue fanatics.” Judis argues that political parties and politicians have become more “subordinate to political consultants, media experts, pollsters, and public relations flacks, none of whom are accountable to voters”, meaning the system has become captured by large contributors who “hold the balance of power in elections and popular referenda.”²² Campaign contributions, and the vast sums corporations and special interests are able to ‘bundle’ for favoured politicians, are frequently

²⁰ Judis (2000), p.10

²¹ Mills (1956/2000), p.8

²² Judis (2000), p.x

looked upon as a cause of the weakening control government officials hold over politics, and the growing influence of corporations and special interest groups, as they feel beholden to their financial backers: with elections increasingly expensive, partly because of the cost of television advertising, “candidates have found it increasingly difficult to defy their funders.”²³ The perception, therefore, is that you need substantial financial resources in order to have any influence within the Washington Beltway.

According to Davidson, who takes an overall dim view of how easily politicians are ‘bought’ by campaign contributors, this difficulty in bucking the desires of their financial backers means “when factional interests prevail, most politicians will be politically incapable of resisting influential lobby group demands” as they attempt to protect their revenue stream. Correspondingly, they become incapable of acting in a rational way, or in a way that resists interests “adverse to the rights of other citizens, or to the permanent and aggregated interests of the community”.²⁴

In much the same way as the media, interest groups have a role in framing issues. They hope to package issues in a way that “attracts media and executive branch attention, places the issue on the agenda, and puts the administration and foreign governments on the defensive.” In other words, they “react to opportunities created by changing international and domestic political circumstances.”²⁵ In order to frame the debate, lobbyists and interest groups will frequently rely on the media to get their message across to the general public and, if direct access isn’t available for pushing their agenda, to government employees.

Using the media can help amplify special interests’ messages, as “favourable media coverage can build broad support and increase the amount of funds and other resources available to the interest groups.” However, broad media coverage is not always the most effective way to achieve a stated goal. When dealing with particularly sensitive topics, some interest groups would rather avoid the media spotlight, because their goals “could reflect badly in the

²³ Judis (2000), p.9

²⁴ Davidson (2009), p.73

²⁵ Cited in: Dietrich (Jun.1999), p.283

public eye on their efforts to seek particular actions in American foreign policy.”²⁶ Therefore, according to Robert Sutter, lobbies are less likely to be influential on “highly visible issues that engage widespread, contrary public passions or media coverage and on issues in which there are strong, competing ideological, partisan or constituency pressures.” In other words, for issues that “neither undergo active public or media scrutiny nor conflict with legislators’ or other policymakers’ convictions, partisan leanings, or constituency needs”, special interest influence is more likely.²⁷ In the case of foreign policy, a lobby’s effectiveness is aided by the “normal indifference the public shows toward events abroad.”²⁸ Where there is media attention to an issue, “a successful faction or lobby... will present its demands in terms that complement the prevailing thought collective.”²⁹

That being said, when studying the impact of interest groups and non-governmental actors, Dietrich cautions against some common assumptions: “although activity and access both are necessary for interest group influence, neither alone is sufficient for, nor should either be equated with, actual influence.”³⁰ Therefore, given the increase in their numbers and their greater rate of activity, it is possible to argue that they have increased policy influence, but it is difficult to state definitively that they do. The amount of coverage given to the situation in Darfur, for example, is a useful exemplar of this fact: A lot of media attention has been paid to the region and the ongoing genocide (particularly in soft news media – a result of celebrity activism on the issue), however little has happened with regards to governmental policy to help ease or end the conflict.

In order to be a successful lobby, an interest group must have “excellent organization both in the nation’s capital and at the grassroots level, a steady source of revenue, and leadership that is thoroughly versed in the ins and outs of lobbying Congress, the executive branch, and the political parties.” In conjunction with these attributes, for the exceptionally successful lobbies, a

²⁶ Sutter (1998), p.19

²⁷ Sutter (1998), p.18

²⁸ Davidson (2009), p.26

²⁹ Davidson (2009), pp.70-1

³⁰ Dietrich (Jun.1999), p.280

group must have a staying power that can last for decades and even generations. Davidson says that “Such unique lobbies can truly subvert any notion of national interest so as to make it conform to their parochial interests.”³¹ These lobbies’ successes and longevity are often the sources for various conspiracy theories about outside influence in government policy (for example, AIPAC, the Farm Lobby, and defence industry lobbies).

It should be pointed out that special interests, particularly think tanks, can affect or influence the policy-making process in other ways. For example, some can assist Congress in policy oversight, by “monitoring executive behaviour” to ensure it conforms to congressional goals and is “responding properly to international events.” Additionally, interest groups help by producing policy analysis and reports that are important to their constituents, and also time-consuming, which can help save the government money and time.³²

FOREIGN NATIONAL LOBBIES

There are three ‘lobbies’ established specifically for foreign relations (beyond business lobbies). The first is the Cuba Lobby. Highly visible and firmly established in states such as Florida, but narrowly focussed, the members of this lobby are able to wield a good deal of influence over issues related to Cuba, and are little interested in any other foreign policy issue.

The second prominent (some would say ‘infamous’) foreign policy lobby is the Israel Lobby. Stephen Walt and John Mearsheimer published an article and book about the influence the Israel Lobby wields over American foreign policy, bestowing upon it a level of influence that is altogether higher than most others will accept.³³ In reference to AIPAC’s methods and hyper-activity, Davidson concedes that there is “nothing illegal” about any of it; rather, this is just the way the American political system works. However, when an influential organization “most often takes its cue from a foreign state rather than from the democratically debated and decided desires of a community of American

³¹ Davidson (2009), p.75

³² Cited in: Dietrich (Jun.1999), p.283

³³ See Walt & Mearsheimer (2007)

citizens it claims to represent, then the right-to-petition argument becomes highly questionable.”³⁴ A less strident branch of the lobby has recently increased in prestige and visibility, advocating a more balanced approach to Israel-related foreign policy issues. Going by the informal name ‘J Street’, the lobby has become known as a moderating force on AIPAC.

Another accepted large lobby is the China Lobby. There are, however, a number of differences between this ‘lobby’ and other ethnic-interest groups. In many ways, the China lobby is not a ‘super-lobby’, as it is made up of too many unconnected factions, with varied motivations. The term ‘China Lobby’ is, instead, a shorthand name for a collection of lobbies concentrating on China-related issues. It has rarely been able to come together cohesively to force an issue, or exert much influence (depending on the faction within the lobby that one is considering). This ‘lobby’ will be looked at in much greater detail in the second half of this chapter.

WHO ARE THEY & HOW DID WE/THEY GET HERE?

The relationship between ‘big business’ or corporate interests and US foreign policy is one fraught with controversy and misunderstandings. This section will provide a timeline for the development of US political lobbying culture.

As mentioned in Chapter Three, throughout American history, commercial interests have played a central role in foreign policy, reflecting an “obsession” with open markets for American business. There are even numerous instances from American history when it appears as if foreign policy has been made or executed by individual corporations; or the government has acted on behalf of corporations. One famous example is US policies in Latin America, which at one time was seen to be synonymous with United Fruit’s corporate interests in the region. More recently, Detroit’s ‘Big Three’ auto companies pushed the first Clinton administration to “the brink of a trade war with Japan”³⁵ when Japan’s automakers (specifically, Toyota) surpassed the quality and reliability of American brands. In today’s economic environment, the tensions have clearly

³⁴ Davidson (2009), p.123

³⁵ Garten (May/Jun.1997), p.68

shifted focus towards China. Complaints revolving around the valuation of China's *renminbi*, China's considerable US debt holdings, and other mercantilist practices have risen to prominence during President George W. Bush's administration, and persist in the Obama administration.

Some neoliberal analysts of international relations and foreign policy identify business corporations and associations as exerting particularly strong influence on American foreign policy. This is because of their wide-reaching effects on the economy and their capacity to direct or influence voters to punish either a single politician or even a political party that has proposed or supported a measure opposed to their own agenda.³⁶ While this has a sinister air to it – and there's little doubt that, under certain conditions and at certain times, corporations have managed to affect policy decisions – the relationship between business and government has frequently been beneficial to the US. While this may not be the case today, in the past government has helped stimulate industry and business for the good of the nation (for example, FDR's New Deal).

The first interest groups formed in the United States were focused on industry and business interests. They included the American Bankers' Association (1877), the American Federation of Labor (1886), the National Association of Manufacturers (1894), the U.S. Chamber of Commerce (1912), and the American Farm Bureau (1920).³⁷ The 1920s saw the number of organized interests expand, and again during World War II and the New Deal years. By 1949, according to a U.S. Department of Commerce estimate, there were approximately "4,000 trade, professional, civic and other [national] associations" operating in the United States.³⁸ In the 1980s, the lobbying community attained its still-common collective name of 'K Street', from the fact that many lobbying firms concentrated their offices in this area of Washington, D.C. As the number of lobbies increased, their relative power as a whole increased also:

³⁶ Jacobs & Page (Feb.2005), p.108

³⁷ Judis (2000), p.10

³⁸ Cited in: Judis (2000), p.10

“The development of K Street... was spurred initially by the success of progressives, populists, and business leaders in weakening the political parties. Interest groups filled the vacuum left by the declining power of the political parties.”³⁹

In order to offset potential risks, American companies often have to turn to the government for help – as they did during much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in China. That help can sometimes come from the Department of Commerce, which can act as an “unofficial global lobby group for American businesses abroad.” Companies also use industry groups like the Chamber of Commerce and various trade associations to pressure Congress and the White House to pass legislation or enact regulations that could create favourable conditions for their global commercial interests.⁴⁰

“The hallmark of involvement with big emerging markets is that American business depends upon Washington’s help to liberalise trade, protect intellectual property, remove regulatory barriers, and encourage continued economic reform.”⁴¹

Therefore, corporations need government help “to win major contracts in the many countries whose governments award the deals and where French, German, or Japanese firms are getting help from their governments.”⁴² This has long been the case with regards to China (as outlined in Chapter 3), and remains the case because the government in Beijing still plays a large role in China’s business sector, which means there remains a perception that governmental intervention is needed to help pave the way for American corporations hoping to locate part of their operations (predominantly manufacturing) in mainland China. This, however, is only part of the whole story: as we shall see later, the work and efforts of a select few American corporations actually helped lay the groundwork for China’s opening and development.

Foreign policy reportage is subject to manipulation by government and organizations that take an interest in global affairs, and have the ability to influence the media in one direction or another. In terms of special interest

³⁹ Judis (2000), p.11

⁴⁰ Karabell (2009), p.104

⁴¹ Garten (May/Jun.1997), p.71

⁴² Garten (May/Jun.1997), p.71

influence over the media, this is mainly through corporate ownership of media outlets. Big business' influence on the American political process has been considerably strengthened as a result of corporate takeovers of media corporations, and also by an increase in cross-ownership of large media conglomerates. Today's global media landscape is dominated by just a handful of multinational corporations: Time Warner, Disney, Bertelsmann, Viacom, News Corporation, TCI, Sony, and Comcast.⁴³ For this reason, Edward S. Herman argues that journalists and reporters are not the controlling media elite. Rather, it is the owners of these media-owning corporations that are the guiding voices.⁴⁴ Rupert Murdoch, CEO and Chairman of News Corp., for example, enjoys considerable influence over the news outlets he controls and the content they provide (as mentioned in Chapter 5).

CORPORATE & OTHER INTEREST GROUP INFLUENCE IN US FOREIGN POLICY

The groups or lobbies in ascendancy can make all the difference in what kind of goals government can achieve during any particular period. For example, business lobbies "virtually reign[ed] supreme" in the 1920s and 1980s, when the political party in power (the Republican Party, in both instances) helped create an environment more amenable to their wishes.⁴⁵

The overlap between business and government is nothing new, and it would be wrong to assume it was a Republican or Bush-era creation (even though the Bush administration did raise it to a level not seen since the Harding-Coolidge era). The employment of business figures in key government positions has been common practice, with "Corporate leaders, lawyers, and investment bankers... able to move in and out of the highest levels of government"⁴⁶ since the Founding of the nation.

Reaching back into American history, for example, Condé Ragnet was President John Quincy Adams's *charge d'affaires* in Brazil at the same time as being president of the Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce. In the Jackson

⁴³ Sinha (2003), p.19

⁴⁴ Herman (Summer 1993), pp.26-27

⁴⁵ Judis (2000), pp.13-14

⁴⁶ Garten (May/Jun.1997), p.69

administration, Charles Biddle was the government's agent in Central America, and also a business agent for Atlantic & Pacific Transportation Corporation (exploring the possibility of an isthmus canal in the same region Jackson had assigned him).⁴⁷ Other names from American history include Elihu Root, Joseph P. Kennedy, Dean Acheson, and Robert McNamara. Robert Rubin and Hank Paulson are two more recent examples of Wall Street figures making the move to high-level government service (Secretary of the Treasury, and both formerly of Goldman Sachs), while former Vice-President Dick Cheney was CEO of Halliburton before joining the Bush administration. The aim of this section is to illustrate the evolution of corporate-government ties; to show how the role of corporate figures in government has increased in importance and significance as the nation progressed and grew in global influence and power.

Walter Russell Mead has written that, because foreign policy and domestic policy have been inextricably interlinked throughout American history, it means that "special interests have always been at play in foreign affairs."⁴⁸ Lobbying was frequently important to get things done at the beginning of the Republic; and some policies, put in place as a result of considerable lobbying, were far from negative. Indeed, the U.S. Navy was the result of intense lobbying on the part of Massachusetts merchants, who wanted the US government to provide protections for their vessels.⁴⁹

An early example of corporate and special interest involvement in foreign policy is the mid-nineteenth century case of Hawaii, which has a good climate for sugar cultivation. Following quick on the heels of this realisation, businessmen and missionaries "teamed up to take over Hawaii in the name of God, civilisation, and profit." Davidson identifies the annexation of Hawaii as a "tale of two lobbies": the first comprised American sugar-growers of Hawaii, led by Sanford Dole; the second lobby was made up of Louisiana and Georgia sugar growers, who wanted to protect their market position and maintain high tariffs on imported sugar. Sugar interests would again become involved in Cuba and

⁴⁷ Davidson (2009), p.32

⁴⁸ Mead, *Special Providence*, p.26 – cited in: Davidson (2009), p.29

⁴⁹ Davidson (2009), p.32

the Philippines, as well as groups representing the tobacco, mining and the carrying trades.⁵⁰

One particularly important 'lobby', operating in the final decade of the Nineteenth Century and the turn of the Twentieth Century, was comprised of a power-house of political and corporate elites, which pushed a 'large policy' that "reflected America's alleged destiny to be a great imperial power". This lobby's agenda could be identified as the beginning of the American penchant for 'grand strategies'. The lobby included J.P. Morgan and associates, future presidents William McKinley and Theodore Roosevelt, Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, John Olney (Secretary of State 1895-7, also a J.P. Morgan associate), and John Hay (Secretary of State 1898).⁵¹ Other organisations that emerged at this time include the National Civic Federation (1900) and the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM), which was founded in 1895 and would wield considerable influence on a number of domestic and foreign policy issues (it was even said that NAM was "known for keeping Senators on retainer", so close were its ties to government).⁵² Like the elites who founded and served in them, these groups "aspired to be above class, party, and interest. They saw their role as conciliatory, as bringing classes and interests together rather than siding with one against the other."⁵³

The Spanish-American War (April-August 1898) enhanced a US strategy of "intervention and subversion" in Central and South America. This policy was "intimately tied to the needs of specific American businesses that... successfully lobbied the U.S. government for direct assistance when needed... [and] also integrated key American politicians and policymakers into their entrepreneurial structure." The most famous example of this, and the central player in a number of conspiracy theories concerning corporate dominance in US foreign policy, is the United Fruit Company, which had a propensity for taking over local economies, governments, and militaries who got in their way. Effectively, Davidson states, "U.S. foreign policy in Central America had long ago been privatised by the economically oriented special interests" that represented

⁵⁰ Davidson (2009), pp.37-48

⁵¹ Davidson (2009), p.41

⁵² Judis (2000), p.38

⁵³ Judis (2000), p.19

businesses such as United Fruit and their subsidiary, Chiquita Brands. These companies and their “parochial interests... had come to define the U.S. national interest in this part of the world.”⁵⁴ There is, however, a problem with this statement. Davidson does not provide any ‘evidence’ to support the claim that United Fruit was controlling or unduly influencing US foreign policy. Indeed, Davidson actually points to Congressional hearings during which Chiquita Brands admitted to funding, by *itself*, Colombian right-wing-paramilitary groups as evidence, even though it is clear that they were acting in their own interest, irrespective of the US government’s South American policies.

American business emerged from the Second World War stronger than ever. Many, if not all, Americans “recognised that the efforts of the nation’s industry – highlighted by the rapid conversion of the auto industry to war production – had been instrumental in the allied victory.” This popular support led corporations to expand their operations in Washington, gravitating towards K Street.⁵⁵

In the 1940s and 1950s, “the politics of the Truman and Eisenhower years was characterised by the preponderance of powerful interest groups and of elites.” Judis explains domestic politics during these decades using the “umpire theory” (James Landis) or “referee theory” (Earl Latham) of government, which states that “government act[s] not as a guarantor of democratic pluralism but merely as an arbitrator among interest groups.” Foreign policy, however, remained the purview of political elites. Officials and policymakers such as Dean Acheson, Paul Nitze, George Marshall, and others who helped shape post-World War II foreign policy did not see themselves responding to pressure from interest groups. Instead, these leaders set the policy agenda, promoted specific policies, and then tried to convince major interest groups and the public of their wisdom. In other words, interest groups were tools the government could periodically use to motivate and mobilise support, in much the same way as the

⁵⁴ Davidson (2009), pp.48-51 – A similar situation would later arise during the second Iraq War, when contracting firm KBR (a subsidiary of Halliburton, for which then-Vice President Dick Cheney served as CEO) had a near-monopoly on supplying the American war effort in Iraq. (See: Taibbi, Sep.6th 2007)

⁵⁵ Judis (2000), p.64

media, and government officials believed they defined the national interest for both the American public and also interest groups.⁵⁶

In the decades following World War II, many businessmen and -women steered clear of politics. For those that did participate, organisations like the Chamber of Commerce were the preferred forums. This changed in the 1970s, when “many of these corporate leaders and bankers abandoned their commitment to disinterested public service and to a politics that transcended class.”⁵⁷ This change could be attributed to a single proposed law, which surfaced in 1971. The Burke-Hartke Bill “thoroughly alarmed business leaders”. A product of the AFL-CIO, the bill was commissioned because certain interests wanted a law that would restrict the operations of multinational corporations. The law did this by removing the tax breaks for companies that invested abroad – which entitled them to pay taxes on only repatriated profits; the President was also given the authority to restrict the export of capital if it was seen to be contrary to the national interest or threaten American jobs; quotas were to be put on imported goods that would compete with US-made products. In response, businesses poured money into the Emergency Committee for American Trade (ECAT), which was established in 1967 to protect and defend the interests of multinationals.⁵⁸

Considerable Democratic victories in the 1974 mid-term elections (a gain of 49 seats in the House) set the stage for a “final conflict that would help define American politics and democracy” for the rest of the century. With a two-to-one majority in the House of Representatives, a thirteen-seat majority in the Senate, and Jimmy Carter in the White House, business and conservative interests were faced with a solidly liberal government. The political field, according to Judis, became split in two. On one side (the left) was “what remained of the old liberal movement, led now by an increasingly desperate AFL-CIO.” Opposing this liberal faction were “the lobbies, think tanks, and policy groups created by business and their conservative allies in the early 1970s. The battleground was

⁵⁶ Judis (2000), pp.60-73

⁵⁷ Judis (2000), p.109

⁵⁸ Judis (2000), pp.114-115

the U.S. Congress.”⁵⁹ While Carter’s administration represented a rare opportunity for liberal interests to potentially usurp corporate interests’ influence, this was not to be the case.

The debt crisis of 1982 provided an opportunity to address the threat of prospective newly industrialised countries (NICs), and in response, the “full political resources of corporate America were mobilised to regain corporate control of the political agenda and the court system.” Domestic reforms intended to improve the global competitiveness of the United States by getting government “off the back” of business were especially high on the agenda.⁶⁰ This is a common trope in corporate political interests. In the 2008 Presidential election, Republican candidate for Vice-President, Sarah Palin, would frequently speak of the need to get government ‘out of the way’ of business, because corporations know how to do it better than government (a position that wilfully ignores the huge bailouts needed in 2008 following the wake of the financial crisis).

With Ronald Reagan’s landslide victories in 1980 and 1984, the scales tipped further in favour of the business lobbies and affiliated think tanks. One of President Reagan’s first acts was to create a business advisory group that included forty CEOs and chairmen from many Fortune 500 corporations and leading banks, this led many business leaders to lend their support to Reagan, believing they would get much of what they wanted from his administration. This use of business leaders would be repeated by the George W. Bush administration’s energy advisory board, run by Vice President Dick Cheney and comprised of representatives from energy industry leaders. In the 1980s, Washington, D.C., and New York abounded with ‘foundations’, ‘institutes’, ‘centres’, ‘committees’, and ‘councils’. Many of these organisations were the intellectual arms of business lobbies or political factions. The Washington establishment no longer behaved, or functioned, as elites should: “They were interested, rather than disinterested participants; what they said often meshed subtly or crassly with the interests of business clients or political patrons.”⁶¹

⁵⁹ Judis (2000), p.137

⁶⁰ Korten (1996), p.64

⁶¹ Judis (2000), pp.150-156

President Reagan had presented himself during the 1980 and 1984 elections as the worthy successor of Andrew Jackson and the ‘coonskin populists’, but by the time he left the White House, “the public had become wise to this ruse”. As a result of lobbying and banking scandals, most Americans realised that “what the Reagan revolution really promised was not self-rule, but rule by K Street special interests”.⁶²

The latter half of the 20th Century saw the creation and proliferation of ideologically-based lobbies that “demonstrated equal, if not greater, power” over the foreign policy process as business interests.⁶³ These lobbies represented very diverse interests, and just as the ‘business lobby’ is not always as cohesive as one might be led to believe from the literature documenting it, those lobbies built on ideological foundations are equally broad. For example, the aforementioned ‘China Lobby’ is a catch-all term for a diverse selection of interests, including human rights lobbies, religious organisations, defence lobbies, student groups, and also trade and business groups. The diversity of these lobbies, in some ways, can help explain why government still retains a lot of control over foreign policy, and why special interests do not have a clearer or more obvious impact on foreign policy – one could argue that the proliferation of competing agendas means they effectively cancel each other out.

The defence industry has maintained consistent influence over the political process and governmental appropriations. With the onset of the Cold War, and despite President Eisenhower’s warnings against a powerful military-industrial complex, Congressmen, Senators and Presidents have frequently appeared subservient to the political benefits that come with defence appropriations. A notorious example would be Senator Henry ‘Scoop’ Jackson, the “hawkish Democrat in thrall to the Boeing Company”, the large aerospace contractor based in Washington, his home state. The alliance between threat-inflating ideologues and the needs of a military-industrial-complex that requires an enemy in order to secure ever larger contracts was a constant feature of the Cold War Years, and remains a feature of American politics today. Robert Scheer, a critic of the politics of military appropriations, has said that the

⁶² Judis (2000), p.218

⁶³ Davidson (2009), p.53

“gyrations of lobbyists and politicians eliciting billions” for weapons systems in the name of fighting the enemy of the day, is really “a lap dance designed to hide the fact that all you are getting out of it is the opportunity to fork over ever larger amounts of your money.”⁶⁴ The real purpose of bloated military budgets has become profits and jobs,⁶⁵ as well as electoral politics, almost more than about national defence.

Newt Gingrich and the Republican Party would attempt the same business-oriented approach to government in the 1990s. The key to the Republican strategy was building powerful lobbying coalitions that would help enact the Republicans’ (and K Street’s) agenda, and “Gingrich invited business lobbies to help him eliminate any government regulations that got in their way.”⁶⁶ After winning control of Congress in November 1994, conservative Republicans faced the task of developing policies that would address the national interest. Instead, they “fell back upon representing their most vocal constituents and interest groups”. Their economic policies reflected the interests of the wealthy and their K Street lobbyists; social policy conformed to the wishes and goals of the religious right; and foreign policy was the “narrow isolationism of the small town provincial that had dominated the party earlier in the century, but had largely disappeared during the Cold War.”⁶⁷ Using this simplistic formulation, one can see how the influence of interest groups and electoral political considerations created problems for the Republican Party. Their economic and foreign policies were somewhat inconsistent: economics today is about globalisation and moving beyond US borders, which conflicted with the isolationist wing of the party.

With the Cold War over, Jeffrey E. Garten argued that commercial considerations would play an ever greater role in American foreign policy, from the second Clinton administration into the next century. “Much of our foreign policy could look more like it did during the nineteenth century and up until Pearl Harbor, when, for the most part, commercial goals were paramount.”⁶⁸

⁶⁴ Scheer (2009), pp.xiv-xix

⁶⁵ Scheer (2009), p.8

⁶⁶ Judis (2000), pp.218-219

⁶⁷ Judis (2000), p.234

⁶⁸ Garten (May/Jun.1997), p.72

Garten, writing in 1997, had no way of predicting the events of 2001, but for the most part he appeared correct.

To place the blame of corporate influence solely on the Republican Party would be inaccurate. President Clinton pursued an economic strategy bound to please corporate interests – from his strong belief in the benefits of free trade and his support of trade deals such as NAFTA, Clinton was furthering the interests of many leading American businesses and manufacturers. David Korten has argued that Clinton's position on free trade was little more than a sop to contributors, pursued because Clinton was "lacking other viable ideas". Therefore, because he was "anxious to please" corporate interests, he "embraced economic globalisation as both his jobs program and his foreign policy."⁶⁹

The George W. Bush administration, like the Reagan administration, was another boon for corporate interests and, to a lesser extent, ideological interests. Greg Palast argues that the administration promoted the corporate-government revolving door to another level. According to former Texas Agriculture Commissioner Jim Hightower, "They've eliminated the middleman. The corporations don't have to lobby the government anymore. They *are* the government", as former executives were appointed to head those government institutions that regulated their previous employers.⁷⁰

As mentioned above, the defence industry has maintained a keen hold on some politicians ever since the end of World War II. The politics of defence budgets in the United States has taken on a much broader definition and purpose in recent decades. No longer is it solely created for the benefit of the Pentagon and the US armed forces. Electoral politics now play a large role in defence appropriations. For example, the letter President Bush presented to Congress requesting \$20 billion in emergency defence allocation in the wake of 9/11, Robert Scheer writes,

"managed to fulfil the twin purposes of the national security budget – such a misnomer – by both rewarding his financial supporters in the

⁶⁹ Korten (1996), p.88

⁷⁰ Palast (2004), pp.2,86

defence industry and politically exploiting the concerns of a frightened nation.”⁷¹

George W. Bush’s transformation in the wake of 9/11 – from an internationally unambitious president primarily focused on domestic issues to a hawkish Commander in Chief – represented “an end to the menace of fiscal restraint and an enormous windfall of new money from the government in Washington.”⁷² Naturally, this new money needed to be allocated accordingly, for which the big defence corporations employ armies of lobbyists.

THINK TANKS

Public policy research and analysis organisations, more commonly known as ‘think tanks’, play an important role in the American foreign policy-making process. According to Richard Haass, the current president of the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), they “fill a critical void between the academic world... and the realm of government.” They do this in a number of ways: Think tanks can, through their usually extensive roster of experts and academics, propose original options and ideas to help administrations (and opponents) generate policies to further their political goals – be it domestic or foreign policy; their rosters can also provide a ready pool of experts from which an administration can fill government posts; and they also help an administration with mediation and attempts to find solutions to pressing issues;⁷³ they also provide forums for experts and policymakers (including members of the press, universities, embassies, foreign policy bureaucracy, and business and financial communities) to meet and conduct detailed study and discussion on pressing matters of foreign policy and the national interest.⁷⁴

Many are not aware of the role think tanks play in policy formulation, as they conduct much of their work below the radar of the media spotlight, attracting less attention than other influences on US foreign policy – such as exposure-hungry members of Congress, rival government departments who

⁷¹ Scheer (2009), p.7

⁷² Scheer (2009), p.3

⁷³ Haass (Nov.2002), p.5

⁷⁴ Parmar (2004), p.215

jockey for more influence and wider purviews, and also the interest groups and lobbies who frequently use the media to disseminate their messages. However, it must be noted that think tank scholars frequently utilise the media (be it television or op-ed pages in newspapers and newsweeklies) to help present their case and influence policy-makers.

There are over 1,200 think tanks operating in the United States today, and these organizations have been a force in American politics for nearly 100 years. Unavoidable in the arena of American politics, think tanks frequently “add a bias provided by their founders and funders” to their policy papers.⁷⁵ It is clear that certain think tanks cater to the conservative spectrum of American politics (for example, the Heritage Foundation and the AEI), while others follow a more liberal ideology (for example, the Centre for American Progress – described as the “granddaddy of the new [liberal] vanguard”),⁷⁶ and some take no official position on foreign policy issues (such as the Council on Foreign Relations). An example of a particularly influential conservative think tank is the Cato Institute, which, funded partly by brokerage firms, financed polls that claimed to show – through leading questions – that the public favoured Social Security privatization, a favourite issue among conservatives.

The level of influence enjoyed by think tanks is largely dependent on their connections with leaders in the White House, the State, Defence and Treasury Departments, and also Congress and the Senate. As with the business community, there is a ‘revolving door’ for policy experts. Think tanks can also offer a place for former government officials to share their insights from government service in an institutional setting, and remain engaged in the foreign policy-making process.⁷⁷ This creates an atmosphere where academics and policy intellectuals who “brought a spirit of scientific objectivity and disinterest to political deliberations” will lend their names and expertise to institutions “dedicated to promoting the narrowest interests of business

⁷⁵ Nye (Apr.13th 2009)

⁷⁶ Eggen (Jun.4th 2009)

⁷⁷ Haass (Nov.2002), p.7

contributors.”⁷⁸ Think tanks can, therefore, often be identified as key voices heard by policy-makers.

With shared conceptions of the national interest, a think tank with strong connections to a given administration – for example, the Project for a New American Century and the George W. Bush administration (until it disbanded in 2006),⁷⁹ and also the Centre for American Progress and the Obama administration⁸⁰ – a think tank’s policy prescriptions can be considered influential only in that they are, to use Parmar’s phrase, “pushing against an open door”, as there was no question of having to overcome a resistant officialdom. Therefore, when a think tank’s or other special interest group’s behaviour or attempts at intervention appear to alter the direction of Executive policy, it is most likely the case that the prescriptions offered by the lobby or think tank adhered closely to the position already held by Executive officials.⁸¹ The Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) has “long been recognised as one of the most influential of modern American institutions”, and was explicitly set up as a tool meant to aid the US government in conceptualising the national interest and foreign policy. For some scholars and commentators, the relationship between the CFR and the federal government has been “a troubling one”, because the CFR is an exclusive, private group, it is funded by donations from large corporations and foundations, it is highly secretive about its operations, and its members are frequently “ensconced in the centres of state power”.⁸²

During the George W. Bush years, many left-leaning groups had little chance of exerting influence or promoting action on their issues. Part of the reason for their ineffectiveness stemmed from Newt Gingrich and Tom DeLay’s skill at convincing lobbying firms that the Republican majority in both the House and Senate, following their electoral victories in 1994, was here to stay. It

⁷⁸ Judis (2000), p.xii

⁷⁹ PNAC, which was founded by William Kristol and Robert Kagan, has since been replaced by the Foreign Policy Initiative, also founded by Kristol and Kagan in 2009.

⁸⁰ Eggen (Jun.4th 2009) – CAP was founded in 2003 by long-time Democratic adviser and former Clinton chief of staff John D. Podesta, who in 2009 estimated that approximately forty of CAP’s employees had been hired by the Obama White House

⁸¹ Parmar (Apr.1995), p.90

⁸² Parmar (Apr.1995), p.73

was under this misperception that an unofficial policy emerged – Republicans (i.e. the Majority) would only deal with Republican-affiliated lobbyists, or firms who employed Republican-affiliated lobbyists, effectively shutting Democratic and left-leaning advocacy groups out of the process, until the House and Senate changed hands and they found a more amenable audience in the Nancy Pelosi-led Democratic Congress. Now, left-leaning institutes and think tanks find “their ideas and positions... at the centre of the Washington debate.”⁸³

Presidential campaigns offer think tanks the opportunity to help re-shape establishment thinking, especially on foreign policy. Presidential candidates frequently solicit advice from a large range of think tank experts when creating their election platform before testing their policies on the campaign trail. There are a couple of clear examples of presidential candidates – and later, presidents – taking on board think tank-produced ideas and policies. These include President Reagan’s adoption of the prescriptions in the Heritage Foundation’s “Mandate for Change” publication; and President Bill Clinton’s creation of a National Economic Council, following a 1992 joint IIE and Carnegie Endowment proposal;⁸⁴ and the seemingly never-ending proposals published by almost all intellectual organisations on the future of the War in Iraq and the Global War on Terror. With President Obama’s election in November 2008, it is widely accepted that liberal think tanks are experiencing a rise in influence, while conservative think tanks do not enjoy the influence they did during the George W. Bush administration.⁸⁵

From this analysis of lobbies in American politics, we are starting to get a glimpse of how special interests might reinforce the realist and liberal traditions in US foreign policy. Economic and defence interests naturally promote realist policies, while ideological interests promote more liberal policies. This chapter will now turn its attention to look at how lobbies operate with regards to China policy, how China policy may differ from other foreign

⁸³ Eggen (Jun.4th 2009)

⁸⁴ Haass (Nov.2002), p.7

⁸⁵ Eggen (Jun.4th 2009)

policy issues, and how their influence might further reinforce the trends and traditions of US foreign policy.

SPECIAL INTERESTS & CHINA

In the 1990s, the proliferation of issues on the US-China agenda has facilitated the rapid growth of organised lobbies operating in the US-China policy process.⁸⁶ For the five years after the 1989 Tiananmen Square incident, the central China issue in the United States was whether or not to renew China's Most Favoured Nation (MFN) trade status. This will form the basis of a case study later in this chapter, as it is also indicative of the role special interests play in American politics.

Over the course of its relations with China, the United States has "threatened and blustered but in the end taken very little real action"; there are, according to Richard Bernstein and Ross Munro, many reasons for this inaction, but one of the most important is the effectiveness of what he calls the New China Lobby, "a multifaceted, loosely correlated network actively encouraged and manipulated by China mainly by promising or withholding money."⁸⁷ Munro has identified four "special characteristics" to Chinese lobbying and public relations campaigns in the US that, "taken together, make it different from these efforts by other countries." These characteristics include China's changing position on the global stage – frequently looked at unfavourably by 'hawks' in the US government; China's own reactions to American policies and actions, the "ferocity" and the "tone of virulent aggrievement" with which they respond; the large and influential groups of former officials who have come to dominate the debate about China; and also Beijing's use of the "threat of economic warfare" to enlist "one of the broadest business efforts to influence national policy in all of American history."⁸⁸ His grand rhetoric aside, Munro has identified the key extra-governmental elements that help shape US policy toward China.

⁸⁶ Dumbaugh (2001), p.115

⁸⁷ Bernstein & Munro (1998), p.110

⁸⁸ Bernstein & Munro (1998), pp.108-109

There are two broad camps that form around China issues. One faction is comprised of business and trade interests, typically favouring positive relations and increased contact and engagement (for example, the Business Coalition for U.S.-China Trade). For issues relating to China, perhaps more than other foreign policy issues, ideological and 'moral' interests are equally active. Such groups include human rights groups (e.g., Amnesty International), labour unions, and religious groups (e.g., the Moral Majority). Other groups involved in the China policy debate include military procurement lobbies.

Following the Tiananmen Square incident, "America's policy on China was radically and indelibly transformed." In the three years that followed, "a series of policy disputes called into question the assumptions that had been guiding U.S. policy." These disputes brought with them a host of new actors into the decision-making process, and helped establish policy coalitions that remain active today.⁸⁹ For example, human rights, religious, and labour groups remain active opponents of unfettered trade with China because of their 'deplorable' human rights record, frequently proposing sanctions or outright opposition to contacts with China. The coalition of business groups, however, has changed slightly, as some lobbies were created solely with the goal of making MFN permanent. Since that has occurred, and China has joined the WTO, these groups have been dissolved or altered their approach. Equally, groups involved in Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) are very active in China-trade debates. IPR groups are perhaps one of the few groups able to point to concrete success at pushing their agenda, as "computer hardware and software industries have successfully hardened the American attitude toward Chinese piracy of intellectual property rights."⁹⁰

CONGRESS & CHINA

Before going into detail about how these interest groups operate in China-related policy debates, it is worthwhile to outline Congress's role in the debates.

⁸⁹ Dietrich (Jun.1999), p.284

⁹⁰ Lowi, Ginsberg & Schepsle (2008), p.420

As discussed previously, greater access makes congressional members and their staff the most effective targets of lobbying.⁹¹ According to Tao Xie, Congress has been “unusually active” throughout American history in the development of the important US-China relationship. Examples of Congressional action include: 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, 1948 China Aid Act, 1979 Taiwan Relations Act, and the already-mentioned Annual MFN debate and Permanent Normal Trade Relations.⁹²

After 1989, James Mann argues, “Congress’s involvement in China policy was far more pervasive” in nearly every aspect of the relationship, investigating any example of Chinese malfeasance (real or imagined), and always willing to entertain sanctions: “decisions about Chinese students, grain sales, human rights, arms-control policies, business contracts and transfers of technology were not only influenced but, in some cases, initiated by Congress.”⁹³ Therefore, “from the Chinese perspective, Congress’s China policy has almost always been one of antagonism and punitive actions.” Prior to Tiananmen, there was never a problem in renewing MFN, but afterwards “Congress attempted to revoke MFN or to add various conditions to its renewal” every year.⁹⁴

Despite Congress’s activism, there remain some considerable obstacles for it to overcome:

“Congressional committees, bicameralism and presidential veto make it virtually impossible for Congress to legislate on China, despite its intense preferences, and therefore Congress often turns to informal – but no less effective – means to exert influence on China policy, such as framing public opinion and generating situations that result in anticipated reactions by the executive branch or Beijing.”⁹⁵

For the most part, therefore, Congress and other non-Administration sources are excluded from China Policy dialogue and discourse. Given the nature of the American foreign policy-making process, when voices in Congress are heard over the course of Sino-American relations, Xie says, “they usually

⁹¹ Newhouse (May/June 2009), p.74

⁹² Xie (2009), p.1

⁹³ Mann (1999), p.11

⁹⁴ Xie (2009), pp.5-6

⁹⁵ Xie (2009), p.1

come out supporting the actions and decisions taken by the White House.”⁹⁶ This is only half true, as there are factions in Congress and the Senate that are equally vocal about their opposition to US-China policy.

This being said, there is a noticeable decline in anti-China measures coming from Congress. As the number of American small- and medium-sized businesses that source materials and parts from China grows, representatives of districts in which they operate are becoming more positively disposed to China. John Pomfret states that “there is an undeniable evolution... taking place”, and members of Congress and their staff “are now far more likely to water down measures opposed to Beijing.”⁹⁷

INTEREST GROUPS

Over the years since US-China relations were normalised, scholars, media commentators, and other observers have “ascribed various degrees of influence to different lobby or interest groups at different times”.⁹⁸ Few observers would argue that lobbies or organised groups were the sole, or dominant, forces behind China-policy decisions. Instead, their influence at particular times has been dependent on “fluctuating circumstances, including changes in elite and public opinion, international pressures and opportunities”, among other factors. Therefore, “Measuring the influence of individual interest or lobby groups on U.S. China policy remains a subjective exercise.”⁹⁹

Interest groups do not always work together in common purpose. For example, the business community and human rights lobbies have come into conflict frequently during China policy debates. At these times, a standard scenario can be glibly summarised as: “business groups attacking the human rights community as extremists totally lacking in reason, and the human rights community accusing business of cozying up to a brutal Chinese dictatorship.”¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶ Xie (2009), p.7; Chang (1993), p.244

⁹⁷ Pomfret (Jan.9th 2009)

⁹⁸ Sutter (1998), p.2

⁹⁹ Sutter (1998), p.3; see also Lowi, Ginsberg & Schepsle (2008), p.420 – On interest groups: “the heft of the myths of their influence far outweighs the reality. The influence of organised economic interest groups in foreign policy varies enormously from issue to issue and year to year.”

¹⁰⁰ Teles (1998), p.49

This rivalry can partly be explained by media influence. By reporting on human rights issues, the media is able to “force human rights concerns onto the agenda” with the result for the government being that “purely interest-based justifications” for policy become “difficult if not impossible to make.” For business interests and corporations, this has added a new facet to their strategies, as “In order to be successful, business groups now have to fight the human rights groups on their own rhetorical turf.”¹⁰¹ Therefore, it is interesting to note that interest groups, whether or not they exert influence on the government, are able to exert pressure on each other, and are sometimes able to reshape the debate to suit their own agendas.

CHINA, HUMAN RIGHTS & SPECIAL INTERESTS

As with many facets of the US-China relationship, the subject of Chinese human rights abuses has been a salient issue for the public since Tiananmen Square. This “drives journalists to cover the issue, for editors to give it priority, and for human rights groups to be seen speaking up on it.”¹⁰² With the media, any issue can remain on its radar through the self-regenerating nature of news reporting. When an issue like human rights becomes salient through a specific event, “human rights groups get access to the media as a result, they can then get additional attention for their information, which increases public interest, which spurs more press coverage, and so on.”¹⁰³

Mike Jendrzeczyk, late Human Rights Watch-Asia director, said in 1996 that access to policymakers and any level of influence in the policymaking process “is to a large extent conditioned by how visible we are in the press, and to what extent Congress is echoing and picking up our concerns.” An Amnesty International official agreed: “If it is a hot topic, we can sway Congress. There is less pressure when there is no media event.”¹⁰⁴

This means that “disproportionate press attention to China is not the result of groups ‘picking on China’, as her advocates in the United States

¹⁰¹ Teles (1998), p.55

¹⁰² Teles (1998), p.54

¹⁰³ Teles (1998), p.54

¹⁰⁴ Teles (1998), p.58

accuse.” Rather, it is groups exploiting news coverage for their own ends. Also, China’s abuses get coverage, even when they are less severe than in other countries, because China is a “globally significant state”. The success of human rights groups keeping China’s abuses on the agenda is, according to Teles, due to the combination of “the real situation in the PRC, a sympathetic press, the rhetorical skills of the human rights advocates, and the effect of public opinion.”¹⁰⁵

If there exists a “generally hostile public opinion toward China”, then the public environment will give strength and access to human rights groups that they would otherwise lack. “When human rights abuses are in the news, the ability of human rights groups to get a hearing jumps substantially.”¹⁰⁶ However, this is likely just an issue of framing the debate, as there is no guarantee that news coverage of human rights will translate into government action or legislation. Most recently, this can be witnessed in the policy-silence on issues such as Darfur (Khartoum is highly connected to Beijing), issues surrounding persecution of the Falun Gong sect in China, and also the status of Tibet. A persistent, though hard-to-prove, theory is that public opposition to Beijing’s poor human rights record cost George H.W. Bush’s re-election. President Bush “strongly resisted” interest group attempts to push China policy in directions he opposed. “He preserved his China policy but lost the election of 1992, in part because of the way he dealt with the PRC.”¹⁰⁷

In recent years, with the growth of religious-influence in Washington, D.C., the Christian Right has become a vocal advocate for the human rights of Christians persecuted in other parts of the world, “most notably in China”. For example, the Christian Coalition joined other human rights-oriented groups including Amnesty International in lobbying Congress to cut trade with countries that permit attacks against religious believers and groups.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ Teles (1998), pp.54-55

¹⁰⁶ Teles (1998), p.58

¹⁰⁷ Sutter (1998), p.4

¹⁰⁸ Lowi, Ginsberg & Schepsle (2008), p.421

CHINA, BUSINESS & SPECIAL INTERESTS

Zachary Karabell argues that US-China policy over the past 20 years has been “clouded by a messy mix of realism, idealism, and capitalism.”¹⁰⁹ The focus on capitalism, market access and business has, considering Beijing’s strong control over the Chinese economy, given the Chinese government a good deal of influence over American businesses and government. The Chinese are well aware of this influence, and are quite open about their reasons when ‘punishing’ Washington and American corporations. For example, in 1996, China bought \$1.5 billion worth of Airbus airplanes, rather than Boeing products. Prime Minister Li Peng, in the aftermath of the deal, praised European leaders because “they do not attach political strings to cooperation with China, unlike the Americans who arbitrarily resort to the threat of sanctions or the use of sanctions” – despite China’s use of economic sticks and carrots, and the threat of punishment amounting to much the same thing.¹¹⁰ Peng’s statement was an angry reaction to America’s ‘interference’ in the Taiwan Strait, after Clinton dispatched two carrier groups to the area.

A China-Trade lobby has existed for much of America’s history. While today it focuses on trade quotas, market access, intellectual property infringement, and so forth, in the 1840s it pushed for the acquisition of California for the Union – ports in Los Angeles and San Francisco were particularly attractive given that they would considerably shorten travel time to the Orient, and therefore be good for boosting international commerce. Later, in 1853, Commodore Perry’s mission to Japan was ostensibly because the US wished to use Japan as a coaling station for merchant vessels (and was again pushed for by the Oriental trade lobby).¹¹¹

There was little precedent for early business forays into China. However, in the late 1980s and more aggressively in the 1990s, “Western companies started to probe the China market.” With faltering steps, and considerable obstacles along the way, they were able to establish a foothold and, over time,

¹⁰⁹ Karabell (2009), p.71

¹¹⁰ Cited in: Munro (1998), p.109

¹¹¹ Davidson (2009), p.34

began to see results and returns from their efforts and investments.¹¹² Because of the nature of China's economy during these decades, global trade agreements frequently didn't cover what Western companies faced upon their arrival in China. While this resulted in "an exciting, discombobulating, [and] often frustrating" experience, it was also "sometimes highly lucrative" for those corporations willing to take the risk.¹¹³ The lucrative returns have not gone away, which is perhaps the strongest reason for American businesses fighting so hard to keep trade open with China, and free from protectionist or morally-imposed barriers.

China's impressive economic transformation is often seen as an internal development that U.S. and multinational companies have been able to exploit, and which the Communist leadership under Deng Xiaoping and then Jiang Zemin encouraged. This misses the deeper story. "The activities of those U.S. companies and multinationals in China itself were an integral part of China's transformation, and the capital they invested was essential to the changes that took place."¹¹⁴ This is especially true of the first corporations to make inroads into China. Kentucky Fried Chicken, Avon, and especially FedEx were able to make considerable, early progress into China because they altered their business models to suit the local markets. FedEx was also helpful to the Chinese as, in order for their own business to function and flourish, they spent billions of dollars on infrastructure improvements that, in turn, benefited the rest of China's economic modernisation and expansion.¹¹⁵ In the past, to protect its weak textile industry, America had "imposed restrictions on the import of Chinese textiles, denying to the Chinese the sales necessary to buy the building blocks for their industrial infrastructure".¹¹⁶ When US corporations like FedEx offered to help provide and build much of the infrastructure the Chinese needed, it is no wonder the Chinese government was accommodating.

¹¹² Karabell (2009), p.36

¹¹³ Karabell (2009), p.73

¹¹⁴ Karabell (2009), p.108

¹¹⁵ See Karabell (2009) for details on these corporations' experiences in China. Kentucky Fried Chicken, pp.61-75; Avon, pp.77-91; FedEx, pp.97-114

¹¹⁶ Cohen (2010), p.229

Western companies that went to China went for a number of reasons. For many companies, “going global in the second half of the twentieth century was simultaneously fraught with danger and bustling with opportunity.”¹¹⁷ Because companies have been the most obvious beneficiaries of the opening of China’s markets, reaping extraordinary profits in some cases, “it has been easy to portray this emerging system as simply one more example of the way that capitalism and corporations satisfy the interests of the few and fail to enrich the many.”¹¹⁸ However, given the nature of both the global and also the American domestic economy, some corporations went to China “simply out of desperation or last hope, both before the challenge of the New Economy and because of it.” Companies with connections to Hong Kong and Taiwan were also able to expand further into China, as these two countries were starting to explore opportunities on the mainland, also. Other businesses went to China either because they were multinational and expanded into any market they could, or because “they had reached the limits of their business model in the other markets that they were in... [and] they saw few other options”¹¹⁹ for expansion and growth.

While many businessmen and CEOs thought China’s entry into the WTO and closer ties in general were a good idea,¹²⁰ this was not the case for everyone. In the US, any deal that was considered to signal acceptance of Communist China, its autocratic government and questionable record on human rights, as well as its lax enforcement of intellectual property rights and contracts, was frowned upon. It would be seen as immoral, misguided, and not in American interests by many – commentators, special interests and also members of Congress, from both sides of the political spectrum. Those on the left “interpreted the strong support of the business community... as a naked play for more profit at the expense of the American worker and even at the expense of economic security.” Opponents on the right clung to the rigid Cold War

¹¹⁷ Karabell (2009), p.104

¹¹⁸ Karabell (2009), p.9

¹¹⁹ Karabell (2009), p.55

¹²⁰ A good exemplar of the pro-China businessman would be Frank Smith, the CEO of FedEx, who gave testimony in front of Congress urging continued opening of and contact with China – see Karabell (2009)

ideology that “declared any Communist regime anathema and demanded a rejection of China until democracy trumped Communist dictatorship.”¹²¹

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the resultant change in paradigm, a different constituency was drawn into the debate: that of the business community. As American businesses started to trade and invest more in China, they came under an increased amount of criticism and attention. They were “beset by questions about why they were doing business with such a repressive regime, one that had so recently ordered tanks to fire at unarmed citizens.”¹²² In order to confront these charges, businesses have “been forced to come up with an argument that admits the importance of human rights concerns, and deplores Chinese behaviour, but states that commercial links are the best way to change the human rights situation in China.” In other words, the strategy of business groups is to “take the sting out of the human rights groups’ revelations by admitting everything that they accuse China of, but then shifting the debate to what can actually change the behaviour of the regime.”¹²³

The need to protect their investment, as well as a political desire to report economic growth and show that American companies are strong and succeeding in the world economy, allows for close ties between business and the American government. An unnamed Republican source told Dumbaugh that “multinational corporations have too much influence in the China debate.” According to this source, “There has been an unholy alliance between big business, the Clinton administration, and certain Republicans who have adopted the trade-at-any-price approach.”¹²⁴ Despite the fact that President Clinton and Vice-President Gore “genuflected to the need for more worker protections embedded in global trade agreements”, unions and labour groups couldn’t exert enough influence over an Executive that was pro-business. This resulted, perhaps, in the “scant reference to labor rights, workplace conditions, or environmental issues”¹²⁵ in deals made with China and also in NAFTA.

¹²¹ Karabell (2009), p.122

¹²² Mann (2007), p.103

¹²³ Teles (1998), p.55

¹²⁴ Quoted in: Dumbaugh (2001), p.116

¹²⁵ Karabell (2009), p.132

In the US, trade is becoming more politicised and more dominated by one-sided concerns intent on maximising their immediate strategic advantages. Of particular and increasing importance is the issue of outsourcing – namely, the process by which jobs (manufacturing, administrative, and others) are exported to nations with lower labour costs. By supporting certain business interests wishing to label China a menace, and prevent further outsourcing, “American law-makers are doing no more than following United States public opinion.” Will Hutton has pointed to a recent survey, in which 84% of those polled want the US’s top foreign policy objective to be protecting American jobs from overseas competition. It is unsurprising, then, that “in this atmosphere, China’s cheap labour is seen not as a natural advantage from which both sides benefit, but as an unfair excuse to dump goods in the United States.”¹²⁶ That the exporting of jobs is still a big issue, prevalent in the media, just goes to show that some labour groups, with the help of the media, do have a degree of influence: politicians need to address these concerns, even when reports are available that suggest jobs are not being exported to China and elsewhere.

“For their own reasons,” James Mann writes, “the U.S. government and American... corporations have been eager to conduct as much business as possible with China. In order to do this, they have sought to minimise the core issues of repression of dissent and China’s one-party political system”.¹²⁷ Today, issues also include currency manipulation, China’s dollar reserves, and religious persecution. The business community can use the media to reach their goals by employing members of lobbying firms to portray a positive and upbeat image of China (for example, Joshua Cooper Ramo from Kissinger Associates, and Kenneth Lieberthal of Stonebridge International).¹²⁸

¹²⁶ Hutton (2007), p.273

¹²⁷ Mann (2007), p.xii

¹²⁸ Silverstein (Dec.2nd 2008)

SHORT BUSINESS CASE STUDIES**General Motors¹²⁹**

General Motors is an American company that fights against restrictions on US-China trade, because China's growing auto-market might help save GM's struggling US operations. While it is possibly "the lowest moment in history" for one of America's iconic industrial companies, China provides GM with a "parallel universe": it is a market where business couldn't be much better for the venerable automaker. While global sales for the auto industry were forecast to fall nearly 9% in 2009, according to market-research firm CSM Worldwide, Chinese auto-sales were expected to *rise* 8%.¹³⁰ General Motors in the United States may be "saddled with gas-guzzling car models nobody wants while it loses customers to rivals," but in China, ten years after the first GM cars rolled off Chinese assembly lines, the company is "neck and neck" with Volkswagen for the lead in market-share.¹³¹

With the new restructuring plans for GM, due to its difficult financial situation, government and bank plans for recovery likely to spark some future controversy, or at least conflict between necessary corporate strategy and political priorities.

Following the April 2009 announcement that the US government would own a 50% stake in the company, and the United Auto Workers union (UAW) a further 40%, GM's board faced a "confounding choice": Should GM shore up its competitiveness by exporting more cars from China to the US and other markets, despite the inevitable loss of more UAW jobs this would entail? While that might make sense as a corporate strategy, the UAW and its supporters argued that "a China-centric manufacturing strategy would defeat the very reason GM is being rescued in the first place: to preserve some of America's shrinking industrial base while propping up the economy."¹³² It is not clear how exactly General Motors would have preserved America's shrinking industrial base, considering their plan stated "employment reductions" as a means for

¹²⁹ This example has been chosen because, while outside of the approximate time-frame selected for the chapter, it provides an ideal demonstration of a common dilemma for US businesses working in China.

¹³⁰ Powell (May 18th 2009), p.41

¹³¹ Powell (May 18th 2009), p.42

¹³² Powell (May 18th 2009), p.42

moving forward,¹³³ and did not address outsourcing policies or concerns regarding China.

Ralph Nader, an opponent of job outsourcing and one-time presidential candidate, lobbied Senator Chris Dodd and Representative Barney Frank (chairmen of the Senate and House committees involved in discussions on the Auto Industry Bailout), voicing the concern of many that General Motors' bailout would not return jobs to the United States:

“... although the company has stated after negative publicity that it will not export from China, there is no evidence that it is abandoning the business model of outsourcing production for the U.S. market, and questions remain about how binding is the recent commitment not to export to the United States from China.”¹³⁴

General Motors was predicted to post a profit in 2010, as it started to pay back some of the \$52 billion US government loan. This increase in revenue was, in part, a result of increased sales in China.

Cisco Systems & Huawei

In 2003, Cisco Systems – an American high-end consumer electronics manufacturer – found itself in competition with up-and-coming Chinese rival, Huawei. Whereas the GM case is one of China benefiting an American corporation, the case of Cisco and Huawei is the opposite: an example of a Chinese upstart threatening an established American brand, and one that has echoes in other US-China cases.

Huawei was able to provide similar products to those produced by Cisco, at a fraction of the price. Part of the reason is the lower wages in China: its thousands of engineers, highly educated and trained, are paid top dollar by Chinese standards; its salespeople also earn high wages by local standards. In both cases, wages are nowhere near that of Western counterparts. “Huawei could, in short, make similar products, sell them for less money, and generate immense profits, which it then plowed back into research and development.” In

¹³³ General Motors Corp. (Dec. 2nd 2008), p.4

¹³⁴ Nader (May 18th 2009)

2001, Huawei's sales were \$250 million but, by 2004, had grown to \$2.5 billion. This impressive growth and success, coupled with Huawei's secretive CEO, the corporation's shadowy connections to China's PLA, and also Huawei's proposed 2003 joint-venture with Cisco's American rival, 3Com Corporation, made Cisco nervous.

In testimony before the US Senate, Ted C. Fishman (author of *China, Inc.*) reported that "Huawei... basically built itself into a multi-billion-dollar company by copying virtually everything in the Cisco catalog, including the catalog."¹³⁵ During the Huawei-3Com joint venture negotiations, Cisco filed suit in the US against Huawei, claiming that its products were not low-priced substitutes, but low-priced copies made from "illegally pirated software and a host of other infringements on Cisco's intellectual property."¹³⁶ Specifically, the suit claimed that Huawei was involved in "systematic and wholesale infringement of Cisco's intellectual property", and that the "extent of [Huawei]'s copying and misappropriation of Cisco's intellectual property is staggering", including source codes, "verbatim" copies of Cisco manuals, and their proprietary user interface design.¹³⁷ The suit Cisco brought was settled out of court. "We do not know the terms of the settlement," says Fishman. "[I]t will be very interesting to know whether part of the terms of that settlement was access to the Chinese market by Cisco, but there was no redress on the piracy itself."¹³⁸

Accusations of intellectual property theft are common in US-China relations. There is clear precedent for this paranoia, of course. In 2003, Shanghai Jiaotong University Professor Chen Jin led a team to develop China's first home-grown semiconductor chip industry (a high priority among China's leadership). It was revealed in 2006 that the chips Hanxin produced were just Motorola chips, on which migrant workers had simply scratched away the name 'Motorola' from a chip and replaced it with 'Hanxin'.¹³⁹ In the case of Cisco and Huawei, Karabell argues that it is probably more accurate to say that Huawei engineers reverse-engineered Cisco's products – they "disassembled them,

¹³⁵ Fishman, quoted in: US Senate Hearing 109-587 (Nov.21 2005), p.49

¹³⁶ Karabell (2009), p.175

¹³⁷ Cisco v. Huawei" (Jan.3rd 2003), pp.1-2

¹³⁸ Fishman, quoted in: US Senate Hearing 109-587 (Nov.21 2005), p.49

¹³⁹ Barboza (May 15th 2006)

studied them, and then figured out a way to create similar products on their own.”¹⁴⁰

The timing of the suit, not to mention the quiet settlement (as Fishman said, believed to have included greater access to the Chinese market), raised questions about Cisco’s true motives. Whether Cisco was, in fact, worried about its intellectual property, or whether the company was more concerned about the prospect of the Huawei-3Com alliance competing with Cisco in the US and Europe, “undercutting its market share with lower-cost products that worked just as well.”¹⁴¹

Huawei did not escape these events unscathed, and it is becoming clear that the corporation has been irreparably damaged by their dispute with Cisco, in the eyes of American politicians. After the joint venture with 3Com collapsed, Huawei, now a global player in telecoms, “went out and bought the Qualcomm patent portfolio”, which gave it access to 30,000 legitimate patents. Fishman characterised deals like the Qualcomm purchase as threatening to US interests: “... these intellectual piracy regimes in a way become like the Mafia buying the liquor store. They can legitimate themselves once they grow to scale. That is quite a threat.”¹⁴²

Two separate incidents are indicative of the national security argument that has come to define American legislator’s concerns about Huawei. First, and related to the Cisco case, was Huawei’s 2007 attempt to buy a minority stake in 3Com, a move that received considerable opposition among American legislators, and an eventual Congressional block to the deal. Championed by Florida Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (and co-sponsored by seven other Representatives), House of Representatives bill (H.R. 730) highlighted the links between Huawei and the People’s Liberation Army, voiced concern over Huawei’s “opaque” corporate structure considered to be “one of the least transparent” companies in China, and suggested that “the merger be blocked

¹⁴⁰ Karabell (2009), p.177

¹⁴¹ Karabell (2009), p.177

¹⁴² Fishman, quoted in: US Senate Hearing 109-587 (Nov.21 2005), p.49

due to national security concerns, the export of sensitive technologies.”¹⁴³ The bill passed.

In 2010, Huawei’s attempts to expand their operations in the United States came under attack – again due to national security concerns. Despite Texas Governor Perry’s attempts to persuade Huawei to expand their operations in his state, the US intelligence community pressed Sprint, a US telecoms company who wanted to build a national 4G network, to not use Huawei components, “fearing the company’s close ties to the People’s Liberation Army would effectively give the Chinese government a listening post in every cell tower of the new wireless network.”¹⁴⁴ The same members of the Senate¹⁴⁵ lobbied President Obama directly, informing the president in a letter that any Huawei contribution to the 4G network project could “undermine U.S. national security”. The Senators pointed also to “China’s well documented focus on developing cyber warfare capabilities”, which would supposedly be advanced by Huawei involvement in the construction of the American 4G network.¹⁴⁶

CASE STUDY: PRESIDENT CLINTON & THE MFN DEBATE

There were two broad camps involved in the Most Favoured Nation debate. Opposed to renewal, or at least favouring conditionality, were human rights groups, labour unions, religious groups, and Chinese student groups. On the other side, favouring the renewal of MFN, were business and farm lobbies (e.g. the Business Coalition for U.S.-China Trade). While these groups “did have an impact on the early stages of the policy process”, broader domestic political goals and international pressures ultimately shaped the policy choices made by the Clinton administration. “Thus, while interest groups’ actions can no longer be ignored by policy analysis, their policy influence remains only minor.”¹⁴⁷

At each stage of the yearly MFN debates, organised interest groups capitalised on widening policy differences to maximise their own influence.

¹⁴³ US House of Representatives H.Res.730 (Oct.10th 2007), pp.5-7

¹⁴⁴ Lake (Aug.18th 2011), p.16

¹⁴⁵ Senators Christopher Bond, Jim Bunning, Richard Burr, Susan Collins, James Inhofe, Jon Kyl, Jeff Sessions and Richard Shelby

¹⁴⁶ Poirier (Aug.24th 2010)

¹⁴⁷ Dietrich (Jun.1999), p.281

With each successive year, as Congressmen searched for ever-more targeted policy prescriptions and rationales, either to thwart or support MFN, the possible alternatives grew, and “the search for appropriate policy approaches... opened the door for NGOs and other interest groups to become more influential in advancing ideas and alternatives.”¹⁴⁸

President Clinton’s first two years in office had seen a considerable push to bring human rights to the forefront of US foreign policy. China, therefore, “was squarely in the sights of the human rights lobby.”¹⁴⁹ It was believed that the Clinton administration would be more amenable to working with special interests, certainly more so than George H.W. Bush’s administration, which had maintained “cool” relations with human rights lobbyists. According to Sutter, presidential “vacillation and uncertainty put the administration in a passive position, responding to a tug-of-war between competing U.S. groups” during Clinton’s time in office.¹⁵⁰ However, despite the pressure exerted on the administration by human rights lobbies, President Clinton made a controversial decision in the spring of 1994 to delink China’s most-favoured-nation (MFN) trade-status from its poor human rights record. The debate and policy process of this decision makes for a good case study of the impact special interests have on US foreign policy.

Under Clinton, human rights lobbyists not only had key allies within the administration, but Clinton’s appointees actively requested information from these groups. John Shattuck, the Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs, had “regular biweekly meetings with interest group officials.” While human rights groups enjoyed direct access to key and high-level government officials, the business lobbies also remained highly active. Three dozen business, agricultural and consumer associations formed the Business Coalition for U.S.-China Trade, and directly lobbied the president (though were unable to meet in person with Clinton), with the help of an active group of

¹⁴⁸ Dumbaugh (2001), pp.114-115

¹⁴⁹ Karabell (2009), p.70

¹⁵⁰ Sutter (1998), p.4

congressional moderates led by Congressman Lee Hamilton (D-IN), who was Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee.¹⁵¹

After Tiananmen, American policy-makers had been “torn between the desire to open China to Western and American business interests on the one hand and to take a strong stand against the autocratic Chinese government on the other.”¹⁵² President Clinton’s initial ambiguity over China policy – needing to balance his campaign promise of making China’s MFN status conditional, and his wish to improve economic and general relations with China – meant interest groups continued major lobbying efforts to influence administration decisions.¹⁵³ Indeed, in 1994, with the termination of China’s MFN status a real possibility for the first time (due to internal splits in the administration and Congress), Dietrich states that the business community, wishing to leave nothing to chance, “organised one of the most extensive lobbying efforts ever made on a foreign policy issue”, spearheaded by the US-China Business Council, the Emergency Committee for American Trade, and a selection of other business and agricultural lobbies.¹⁵⁴

Delinking China’s MFN status from human rights considerations is considered a “watershed” moment in the bilateral relationship, because it “gave the green light” for businesses to go to China, and allowed companies that already had a presence there to accelerate their plans.¹⁵⁵ The rush of American businesses into China, as a result of “uncoupling morality from business”,

“set back the agenda of those who wanted to use economic ties as a carrot to induce the Chinese government to change the nature of the political and legal system in China.”¹⁵⁶

The tactic of using MFN in a carrot-and-stick approach to China was widely popular among many groups who attempted to influence the debate. Mike Jendrzeczyk, representing first Asia Watch and later Amnesty International USA, referred to MFN as a “blunt tool”, yet one to which there was

¹⁵¹ Dietrich (Jun.1999), p.286

¹⁵² Karabell (2009), p.69

¹⁵³ Dietrich (Jun.1999), p.287

¹⁵⁴ Dietrich (Jun.1999), p.290

¹⁵⁵ Karabell (2009), pp.72-73

¹⁵⁶ Karabell (2009), p.73

no “alternative that represents the same kind of power and leverage”.¹⁵⁷ According to Jendrzeczyk, it is “simply impossible” to separate China’s behaviour as a reliable trading partner from its unwillingness to comply with human rights norms: “A government that routinely violates its own laws to crack down on dissidents is equally willing and able to cheat on an IPR agreement, not honour a contract with a foreign investor, or to restrict information from business services or the Internet coming into China from outside the country.”¹⁵⁸

Jendrzeczyk was one of the most vocal opponents to MFN renewal and the Clinton administration’s policy of delinkage. His was a position supported by others, however, including: the National Council on Chinese Affairs;¹⁵⁹ the Puebla Institute (a human rights group), who cautioned the administration to “not be satisfied with cosmetic gestures and isolated promises” from the Chinese government.¹⁶⁰ Religious groups – from those representing the interests of persecuted Christians in China,¹⁶¹ and especially Tibetan groups (International Campaign for Tibet in particular)¹⁶² were equally active and vocal about their preference for using MFN as a ‘stick’ to urge or force improvements in China’s approach to and respect for human rights.

One of the main reasons for this move away from a ‘moral’ approach to the US-China relationship had to do with the changing nature of US-China bilateral trade. In 1990, when the MFN issue first emerged, US-China trade was small and limited to a few specific sectors. By 1994, American imports from China had more than doubled to approximately \$38 billion annually (exports to China had still grown, though not nearly as fast).¹⁶³ Clear prospects of major infrastructure improvements in China (partly a result of investments by US corporations such

¹⁵⁷ Jendrzeczyk, quoted in: Congress #103-85 (Feb.24th 1994), pp.115-118; Amnesty International USA was represented again in: S.Hrg. #105-898 (Jun.10th 1997), pp.29-30

¹⁵⁸ Jendrzeczyk, quoted in: S.Hrg. #104-871 (Jun.6th 1996), p.53

¹⁵⁹ Represented by Haiching Zhao, quoted in: Congress #103-85 (Feb.24th 1994), pp.127-130

¹⁶⁰ Represented by Anne Himmelfarb, quoted in: Congress #103-85 (Feb.24th 1994), pp.219-220

¹⁶¹ The Puebla Institute, in: Congress #103-85 (Feb.24th 1994), pp.219-220; the Revival Christian Church of Hong Kong, in: Congress #103-85 (Feb.24th 1994), pp.195-196; the Family Research Council, in: Congress #105-59 (Jun.17th 1997), pp.114-117 & Congress #106-90 (Jun.17th 1998), pp.144-151; the U.S. Catholic Conference, in: Congress #105-59 (Jun.17th 1997), pp.117-126

¹⁶² Represented by Lodi Gyari, in: Congress #103-85 (Feb.24th 1994), pp.203-208 & S.Hrg. #104-871 (Jun.6th 1996), pp.49-51

¹⁶³ Dietrich (Jun.1999), p.290

as FedEx), made considerable future market growth possible, giving the administration and American businesses a new appreciation of China's future potential. William Warwick told Secretary of State Warren Christopher, "Either we establish a major presence in the Chinese market, or we forget about being a global player."¹⁶⁴ A executive of the McDonnell Douglas Corporation (appearing also as a representative of the Emergency Committee on American Trade), K.R. Williams stated that China is a "market for huge potential for U.S. firms and workers", particularly in airplane industry, and withdrawal of MFN would only hurt American businesses and jobs and benefit foreign competitors who would be able to reap the rewards of China's ever-growing market.¹⁶⁵ The sentiment was also voiced by Robert A. Kapp, representing the US-China Business Council, saying that revoking MFN would be a "catastrophe" that would cut America "off from the very dynamic region that President Clinton has proclaimed to be the key ingredient in our economic survival in the future."¹⁶⁶

The potential for market growth, according to Dietrich, led business interests away from the controversial argument that increased economic ties would lead to greater liberalisation in China. Now, the argument was that maintaining China's MFN status would help the US economy and jobs, thereby appealing more to the US's strategic economic interests rather than ideological interests.¹⁶⁷ The growing support for human-rights-conditionality to MFN, and the resultant threat to growing trade relations (not to mention US investments already made in China's economy), brought new interest groups into the policy debate to counter these idealistic groups. For example, "Business and farm groups argued that sharp tariff increases would hurt importers and consumers, while potential Chinese retaliatory tariffs would hurt exporters."¹⁶⁸ Therefore, MFN renewal received considerable support from such groups as the American

¹⁶⁴ Cited in: Dietrich (Jun.1999), p.291

¹⁶⁵ Williams, quoted in: Congress #103-85 (Feb.24th 1994), pp.163-165 – the Emergency Committee for American Trade would again make its case in Congress #105-59 (Jun.17th 1997), pp.149-157 & Congress #106-90 (Jun.17th 1998), pp.99-116

¹⁶⁶ Kapp, quoted in: Congress #103-85 (Feb.24th 1994), pp.188-191; Congress #105-59 (Jun.17th 1997), pp.168-175 & Congress #106-90 (Jun.17th 1998), pp.185-197. The US-China Business Council would be represented by Donald L. Staheli in Senate hearings, in: S.Hrg. #104-871 (Jun.6th 1996), pp.35-37

¹⁶⁷ Dietrich (Jun.1999), p.291

¹⁶⁸ Dietrich (Jun.1999), p.285

Association of Exporters & Importers,¹⁶⁹ the National Retail Federation,¹⁷⁰ the Toy Manufacturers of America,¹⁷¹ the textiles industry was widely represented,¹⁷² the U.S. Chamber of Commerce,¹⁷³ the American Electronics Association (which submitted a letter signed by 144 business leaders urging renewal),¹⁷⁴ and others. On top of this, the threat of revocation spurred further involvement from several *Fortune 500* companies, and some of the most powerful businessmen in America (for example, Bill Gates).¹⁷⁵ To refer back to the textiles industry, however, this was an industry that was not unified behind the renewal of MFN. Exporters and importers saw MFN renewal favourably, however the American Textile Manufacturers Institute considered MFN a privilege that China had not earned, and that Chinese imports competed unfairly with American-produced products.¹⁷⁶

There is another factor to take into consideration. Ross Munro (a staunch China-critic) has accused China of “turning their burgeoning economic power into a political and diplomatic weapon” during the MFN debate. To help shore up support from the business community, the Chinese “dangled billions of dollars’ worth of trade and investment” opportunities in front of American corporations. Many of these deals were concluded well before the June deadline, and Beijing “made it clear that these deals would collapse if the Clinton administration carried out its threat to suspend MFN”.¹⁷⁷ The lack a “coherent multilateral approach for promoting human rights and the rule of law in China”, allowed lobbying and manipulation from special interests and China itself, as “Beijing play[ed] off one major trading partner against another”, wielding its

¹⁶⁹ Represented by Fermin Cuza, in: Congress #103-85 (Feb.24th 1994), pp.180-181

¹⁷⁰ Represented by Robert Hall, in: Congress #103-85 (Feb.24th 1994), pp.243-244; Congress #105-59 (Jun.17th 1997), pp.184-185

¹⁷¹ Represented by Harry J. Pierce, in: S.Hrg. #104-871 (Jun.6th 1996), pp.37-39

¹⁷² For example: United States Association of Importers of Textiles & Apparel, in Congress #103-85 (Feb.24th 1994), pp.254-255; Fashion Accessories Shippers Association, in Congress #103-85 (Feb.24th 1994), pp.261-263; Leather Apparel Association, in Congress #103-85 (Feb.24th 1994), pp.313-316

¹⁷³ U.S. Chamber of Commerce, in Congress #105-59 (Jun.17th 1997), pp.157-163 & Congress #106-90 (Jun.17th 1998), pp.171-174

¹⁷⁴ American Electronic Association, in: Congress #105-59 (Jun.17th 1997), pp.210-213

¹⁷⁵ Munro (1998), pp.100-101

¹⁷⁶ American Textile Manufacturers Institute, in: Congress #103-85 (Feb.24th 1994), pp.248-250 & Congress #105-59 (Jun.17th 1997), pp.186-190

¹⁷⁷ Munro (1998), pp.100-101

“economic clout” to undercut any moves to sanction China on human rights grounds.¹⁷⁸

While much of the attention during the MFN debate was focussed on the efforts of business groups, other interest groups were actively involved with different concerns. The labour movement got involved for an entirely different set of reasons to the human rights lobby. For example, the AFL-CIO was in favour of revoking China’s MFN status, and its perceived motivations were an “amalgam of legitimate human rights concerns” about the use of forced labour in China, and “trade protectionism.”¹⁷⁹ Richard L. Trumka, Secretary-Treasurer of the AFL-CIO at the time, explained the group’s opposition to MFN: “China’s continued denial of basic worker and human rights”, “non-reciprocal, unfair trading relationship that is harmful to U.S. workers”, and the fact that “there is nothing today that suggests that China is willing to act in accordance with international trading rules of basic democratic principles.” Trumka also decried “the unwillingness of the United States” to address these issues. The AFL-CIO representative laid much of the blame at the feet of US business interests, one of the “major forces” behind the pro-MFN extension debate: “much of the passion in this discussion is a result of corporate decisions to use China as a low-cost production location”, and any action on the part of the US government could jeopardize existing or planned investment, which had been estimated at the time to be as high as \$25 billion. “We have reached the point where the most ardent defenders of Chinese communism are U.S. capitalists.”¹⁸⁰ The labour movement opposed China’s MFN status for much the same reasons that it opposed NAFTA, “in particular its interest in avoiding additional foreign competition.” The focus on prison labour in China, Teles asserts, “while certainly legitimate on human rights grounds, is tailor-made for keeping certain goods out of U.S. markets, and out of competition with U.S. workers.”¹⁸¹

The debate over China’s MFN status is perhaps one of the few in which influence can be ascertained clearly. However, this does come with a caveat:

¹⁷⁸ Jendrzeczyk, quoted in: S.Hrg. #104-871 (Jun.6th 1996), pp.51-53

¹⁷⁹ Teles (1998), pp.61-62

¹⁸⁰ Trumka, quoted in: S.Hrg. #104-871 (Jun.6th 1996), pp.33-35 – the AFL-CIO were represented also in Congress #103-85 (Feb.24th 1994), pp.271-274; Congress #105-59 (Jun.17th 1997), pp.191-194; S.Hrg. #105-989 (Jun.10th 1997), pp.27-29

¹⁸¹ Teles (1998), pp.61-62

lobby influence was balanced by Clinton's own political needs at the time. At the signing of the executive order, a number of special interests' representatives were present, however this "may have been more symbolic than substantive", but it also made clear that interest groups participated in the debate, fulfilling a number of functions. Most importantly, they helped shape the debate: human rights organisations, labour and Chinese student groups were "very successful in highlighting China's abuses", business groups "helped shift attention to the commercial benefits", and many groups provided much-needed information to members of Congress and the administration.¹⁸²

As the debate developed over the years, it is possible to witness the evolution of the debate and the rhetorical framework in which it was conducted. The vast majority of witnesses at Congressional hearings over renewal of China's MFN status, throughout the Clinton administration, condemned and recognised China's poor human rights record, and even the most ardent opponents to renewal recognised that there are business opportunities to be exploited for the benefit of the United States. As the debate drew on, the support for delinking also grew – even human rights groups and dissident groups came to accept that MFN was a separate issue to human rights, and therefore ought to be dealt with separately by the US government.¹⁸³ This reality, therefore, created the following general impression: 'Revoke MFN, and we'll see either no change or a decline in China's human rights, and be weakened economically in vital industries. Renew and/or delink MFN from human rights, and America will benefit economically and there may be improvements in human rights.'¹⁸⁴ Given President Clinton's and his administration's clear economic priorities, it is little wonder MFN was eventually delinked entirely from human rights issues – the prospect for 'crippling' American businesses, and costing American jobs¹⁸⁵ would have been too costly politically.

¹⁸² Dietrich (Jun.1999), p.293

¹⁸³ For example: Professor Ma, a prominent member of the May 4th Movement, resident in the US, in: S.Hrg. #104-871 (Jun.6th 1996), pp.53-55; also, Acton Institute for the Study of Religion & Liberty in: Congress #106-90 (Jun.17th 1997), pp.127-136

¹⁸⁴ See, for example: Congress #103-85 (Feb.24th 1994); Congress #106-90 (Jun.17th 1998); S.Hrg. #104-871 (Jun.6th 1996); S.Hrg. #105-898 (Jun.10th 1997)

¹⁸⁵ Cuza, quoted in: Congress #103-85 (Feb.24th 1994), pp.180-181

Ultimately, Clinton did not decide on the terms of the executive order because of the concerns and needs of special interests. Instead, he chose the terms to “balance the domestic political needs of upholding his campaign pledge and avoiding a clash with his own party in Congress”, and also a wider foreign policy goal of “not having unreachable conditions that would guarantee a clash with China.”¹⁸⁶

ACADEMIA & CHINA

Believed to be objective observers of American politics, academic institutions and think tanks can still be influenced by the agendas of their financial backers, and therefore a ‘special interest’. James Mann considers Washington think tanks as “those peculiar institutions” where ideas are sometimes formulated and then “ignored when they don’t serve the hidden financial or other interests that help determine the work of think tanks.”¹⁸⁷ Halper and Clarke have written that activist and outside funding can influence think tanks to sponsor specific positions on important contemporary issues. While there is plenty of disagreement among members of the American Enterprise Institute (AEI) on ‘conservative’ issues, they nevertheless “proceed largely from a common ideological basis that keeps these disagreements within well-defined bounds.”¹⁸⁸

In the realm of US-China relations, there are clear examples of when think tanks or other institutions have pursued specific policy proposals to please financial supporters. This is an inherent element of the think tank system and culture: a think tank is unlikely to attract funding from a source that is of opposing ideological leanings. For example, the Heritage Foundation and AEI receive financial support from the Korean Foundation and Samsung, who “support an agenda-driven discourse on issues such as Taiwanese

¹⁸⁶ Dietrich (Jun.1999), pp.293-294

¹⁸⁷ Mann (2007), p.x

¹⁸⁸ Halper & Clarke (2006), p.103

independence, North Korean non-proliferation, and Chinese human rights abuses,”¹⁸⁹ all of which come through in Heritage and AEI publications.

The Brookings Institute is perhaps the most ideologically broad think tank in America, with fellows espousing a multitude of conflicting positions: “in the summer of 2005, [its fellows] included supporters of the Iraq War and opponents of it, advocates of a realist engagement with Chinese economic expansion and advocates of a sustained trade embargo on grounds of human rights abuses.”¹⁹⁰ The Brookings Institute is, however, a near-oddity among the growing ranks of think tanks and policy shops, many of which – like lobbies – are formed to push certain agendas.

Despite the influence of money in political research on US-China relations, it is a special case. There appears to be “a strong reluctance to challenge the status quo” on China, and also “a willingness to ignore or explain away China’s continuing repression.” This is because there are growing incentives for prominent Americans to support this status quo; that is, a commitment to open markets and economic engagement with China. James Mann, a vocal critic of academics’ approaches to US-China relations, also found, “not infrequently, a strong sympathy with China’s leaders and their problems, despite the authoritarian nature of the system.”¹⁹¹ Mann refers to this as the “Embattled Elites Equivalence and Commiseration School”,¹⁹² but could also be described as a type of Political Stockholm Syndrome.

Whenever there is an important US-China summit, meeting, or official visit, or a major international event involving China, “one can count on America’s leading China scholars rushing to publish newspaper op-ed pieces explaining the extraordinary difficulties Chinese leaders face.” Whenever the Chinese leadership carries out a new campaign of arresting dissidents or closing down newspapers, the opposite is true, and “the China specialists seem to

¹⁸⁹ Halper & Clarke (2006), p.103

¹⁹⁰ Halper & Clarke (2006), p.103

¹⁹¹ Mann (2007), p.57

¹⁹² Mann (2007), p.58

vanish from public view.”¹⁹³ This could be seen as an example of symbiosis of the various non-governmental influences on US foreign policy.

As mentioned earlier, many former officials who used to provide dispassionate guidance on foreign and domestic policy issues have become lobbyists and consultants for American and foreign businesses: “Former Secretaries of State make provocative public statements defending China while not revealing their own financial stake in the current Chinese government.”¹⁹⁴ James Mann has pointed out that there are “huge and growing financial incentives” for prominent, former-government officials to support the status quo in China.¹⁹⁵

Business organisations continue to depend upon the intellectual prestige of those who are respected in the international relations field, but “there is a sense that they are less influential than they once were.” An unnamed business organisation representative explained to Teles in 1996, that it is good to “get a Scowcroft or an Eagleburger to make a big statement or do some huge op-ed... that’s supposed to affect the process.” The source did admit that there was only limited support or benefit from such a tactic, as it happens quite often.¹⁹⁶

Any perceived decline in influence that former notables may have in the China debate is unlikely to affect one former Secretary of State: Henry Kissinger. Throughout the research for this chapter, Kissinger’s consultancy, Kissinger Associates, is mentioned as being an enormous influence on the US-China debate. This is understandable, given Kissinger’s long-time interest in China, his role in normalisation, and also his general international prestige. Kissinger enjoys “extremely close ties to the Chinese leadership” and much of the business for his consultancy “involves opening doors for Western companies seeking to do business in China.”¹⁹⁷ His consultancy (or “strategic advisory firm”), has been criticised for being too overtly pro-China. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Joshua Cooper Ramo’s coverage of the 2008 Beijing Olympics, was criticised for its uncritical representation of China; according to Silverstein,

¹⁹³ Mann (2007), p.xii

¹⁹⁴ Judis (2000), p.xii

¹⁹⁵ Mann (2007), p.59

¹⁹⁶ Teles (1998), p.56

¹⁹⁷ Silverstein (Dec.2nd 2008)

he “couldn’t find enough wonderful things to say about China”,¹⁹⁸ the implication being that Ramo’s (and therefore Kissinger Associate’s) positive reporting on China is the result of future-business calculations.

James Mann believes those with personal interests in keeping relations with China open and free of conflict have created a “Soothing Scenario”, which “holds that China’s economic development will lead inexorably to an opening of China’s political system.” This is merely one of the possible outcomes for China’s future, but “it is certainly the mainstream view of China in America today.” The purveyors of the Soothing Scenario include: “leading academic experts on China, business executives who are eager to trade and invest in China, and the think tanks and other elite organisations that depend on corporate contributions for their funding.”¹⁹⁹

Many think tanks in America get sizeable donations from business executives and companies who are doing business in China. The donors “seek to foster policies that will protect or augment their financial interests.” Some think tanks, in turn, swayed by these donations, might “issue a flurry of studies and reports supporting trade with China and other policies that favour the American business community.”²⁰⁰ There is, therefore, a “palpable worry in Washington that the US is tangled in a Faustian bargain that may not end well.”²⁰¹

This “deluge of money” has had a considerable impact. Mann argues that the effect has been to “skew American discussions about China toward an upbeat, pro-business viewpoint.” While not every China specialist thinks alike (there are still plenty of dissenters and more cautious scholars), one nevertheless finds “recurrent ideas, themes, and attitudes” evident in much scholarship and think tank output on China. “The underlying tone is one of defensiveness about China’s one-party state and an instinctive reluctance, particularly in public, to criticise or even call attention to repression of

¹⁹⁸ Silverstein (Aug.9th 2008)

¹⁹⁹ Mann (2007), p.2

²⁰⁰ Mann (2007), pp.61-62

²⁰¹ Halper & Clarke (2006), p.243

dissent.”²⁰² Mann criticises the overly-funded pro-business stance predominantly because it obscures or ignores human rights abuses in China. He does not, however, write much on what his opinion of China’s economic impact on the US really is, or whether it’s something that should be of concern.

There is a potentially nefarious impact of outside influence on think tanks and academics. If academics feel pressured to conform to certain principles, or to water-down discussion about China, then their work is compromised – especially if they believe their positions at these institutions to be at stake. According to *The Weekly Standard*, Ross Munro was fired from his post as Director of the Asia program at the Foreign Policy Research Institute (FPRI), after his book *The Coming Conflict With China* (referenced in this chapter) was published. According to the article, this was “because FPRI was pressured by what [Munro’s] book calls ‘the New China Lobby’.” The article goes on to suggest that former Secretary of State Alexander Haig (identified in the book as being a member of this new lobby) “hated the book... And the next thing anyone knows, Munro is suddenly fired.”²⁰³ While it is not possible to confirm the allegations made against Haig, if it were true, this would set a dangerous precedent for future China scholarship at outside-funded institutions.

In 1998, Teles described experts as “the dog that has not bitten in the China debate so far,” as a result of a lack of consensus on China. While most China experts agree that it is in America’s interest to integrate China into an international rule-based economic and political system, which should exert pressure on the regime to give the rule of law and conformance with international standards higher priority, “there is not yet consensus-level agreement that a primarily economic, conflict-averse relationship is the way to get there.” This lack of consensus means there is no disciplining force for public and policy-maker opinion:

“Without such a discipline, of the kind that only experts can provide, and presidential leadership can cement, policy toward China is likely

²⁰² Mann (2007), p.64

²⁰³ TWS Scrapbook, “The Empire Strikes Back” (Mar.31st 1997), p.5

to sway with the relative power of interest groups, shifts in public opinion, and the salience of various domestic public policy issues.”²⁰⁴

While Mann and others identify an overtly positive or neutral position toward China among academics, there is a significant group who actively seek to promote the opposite position. Specifically, ‘neoconservative’ academics have been particularly negative about China and its relationship with the US. According to Robert Scheer, “the neocons so desperately need the Chinese Communists” in order to justify their imperialistic goals and closeness to the US defence industry. The neoconservative portrayal of the Chinese is as

“the Chicoms of old, the ‘yellow horde’ as once described in racist terms, that threatens us with wile and ingenuity, given to sneaky spying ways, the masters of the most enormously expensive and destructive gadgets in the arsenal of the devil.”²⁰⁵

The perceived Chinese threat was a neocon preoccupation before 9/11. Scheer argues that, “In their eagerness to build an empire based on an immense U.S. military, they require a formidable nation-state enemy. China is the best candidate to fill that vacancy.”²⁰⁶ While neoconservatives have received a critical blow to their reputation and influence in Washington, in the aftermath of the Bush administration and the perceived debacle in Iraq, some of their ideas and goals remain. China is still a popular ‘threat’ offered by Congressmen, Pentagon officials, and others who wish to generate support for increased defence-spending or specific funding for expensive new weapons systems.

CHINA’S LOBBYING

While many major foreign governments continue to work predominantly through their embassies in Washington, “nearly one hundred countries rely on lobbyists to protect and promote their interests.”²⁰⁷ One of the most significant developments in recent years has been the growth in China’s efforts at lobbying the US Congress.

²⁰⁴ Teles (1998), p.67

²⁰⁵ Scheer (2009), p.188

²⁰⁶ Scheer (2009), p.188

²⁰⁷ Newhouse (May/June 2009), p.73

“For years, the lobby that promoted Taiwanese interests, known simply as the China lobby, was the superpower of lobbies representing foreign causes in the United States.” After Madame Chiang-kai Shek addressed a joint session of Congress in February 1943, until the 1970s, “no U.S. president challenged the so-called China lobby, which opposed all contacts with mainland China.” Newhouse argues that China chose not to emulate Taiwan’s lobbying efforts because of a strong Westphalian/realist belief that “players on the world scene should not interfere in one another’s internal affairs”, and the concept struck Beijing as “morally tainted”. Instead of lobbying, they focused their attention on cultivating close relationships with important figures in US politics – such as former Secretaries of State Kissinger and Brzezinski,²⁰⁸ and lobbying by proxy (through business interests). After China’s ascension to the WTO, however, some business groups started to lose their enthusiasm to lobby for a growing competitor.

Two instances changed Beijing’s position on lobbying. First, the severe reactions from all sectors in the US following the crackdown in Tiananmen Square, and again in 1995 when the Clinton administration granted Taiwanese President Lee Teng-hui a visa. China’s considerable purchases of US Treasury Bonds, and that the US is a major destination for Chinese exports, were two further incentives to increase lobbying efforts.²⁰⁹ John Pomfret notes that China’s lobbying efforts have become “increasingly sophisticated” recently, and have resulted in an effective “congressional about-face” in tone.²¹⁰

Beijing has sought the services of a number of respected lobbying firms in Washington. For example, to help deal with textile tariffs and quotas when they were high on the political agenda, Hogan & Hartson (“one of Washington’s largest law firms”) and McDermott Will & Emery were retained by Beijing to lobby on China’s behalf. Patton Boggs was later hired as well, and reportedly had meetings with 13 of the 18 members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.²¹¹

²⁰⁸ Newhouse (May/June 2009), p.90

²⁰⁹ Newhouse (May/June 2009), pp.90-91

²¹⁰ Pomfret (Jan.9th 2009)

²¹¹ Newhouse (May/June 2009), p.91

Another relatively early foray into lobbying was when China attempted to buy Unocal in June 2005, through the 71% government-owned CNOOC and with the help of respected lobbying firm Akin Gump. They were confronted with a much stronger and larger lobbying effort on behalf of Chevron. “Lobbyists working for Chevron wrapped their argument in nationalism, portraying CNOOC as a predatory arm of China’s leadership looking to acquire a high-value U.S. asset”,²¹² and were ultimately able to stop the sale.

China’s efforts have not just focused on the spectre of economic or political repercussion for those who criticise China. Zhou Wenzhong, China’s ambassador to the US, personally met about 100 Congressmen and Senators in their own districts during his four years in the capital, a charm offensive that has reaped a good deal of success. Now, troublesome politicians are charmed, rather than denounced on the front pages of the *People’s Daily*. Senators Chuck Schumer (D-NY) and Lindsay Graham (R-SC), for example, were invited to visit China after proposing a bill that would slap a severe 27.5% tariff on Chinese goods unless the *yuan* was revalued, and upon their return they moderated their approach, having clearly been charmed by officials in Beijing.²¹³

CONCLUSION

There is no doubt that lobbying efforts in Washington have expanded considerably over the last decade. The world and Washington are “abuzz with thousands of nongovernmental organizations”. Considering this cacophony of voices shouting to be heard on any given issue, it is difficult for any one voice to dominate the debate. Therefore, the dominant framework in policy-making remains the nation-state, “defined by its borders, its bureaucracies, its armies, central banks, and individual currencies.”²¹⁴

Despite frequent left-wing conspiracy-laden theories to the contrary, and hundreds of volumes that supposedly support them, “The big secret of Washington is that there *is* no single elite able to plot world domination from the dusty reading rooms of the city’s luncheon clubs.” Halper and Clarke

²¹² Newhouse (May/June 2009), p.91

²¹³ Pomfret (Jan.9th 2009)

²¹⁴ Karabell (2009), p.134

reported one government official describing the policy-making process as an almost futile cry for attention: “You wake up in the morning, spend your whole day fighting to be heard, go to bed and start all over the next day.”²¹⁵

Lawrence Davidson has argued that, because fundamental campaign finance reform is not on the horizon, interest group politics will continue to define how American political business is conducted. As a result, the only available option is to reinforce the lobbying culture:

“For those... disappointed with the consequences of this system, the only present answer is to organise new interest groups to challenge those groups you dislike. For, in the American system of politics, *qui tacet consentire videtur*, ‘the one who is silent is seen to consent’.”²¹⁶

When it comes to US-China policy, given the importance of the relationship and its predominantly economic nature, “it is difficult to tell whether the groups themselves have contributed to the policy divergences over China in the past decade or have merely exploited already existing differences.”²¹⁷ The United States relies on a free and open market system, which the work of lobbyists can help to promote, thereby benefiting and conforming to the national interest. The role of foreign national interests is also important and cannot be discounted, because they are able to tap into specific, existing biases of government officials – either by promoting good relations as a source of trade and opportunity, or by creating alliances against shared enemies and/or threats. However, given the difficulty in measuring influence, the findings of this chapter would suggest that lobbies, think tanks and other non-governmental interests are, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, are “pushing against an open door”,²¹⁸ and therefore able to find receptive audiences.

The “already existing differences” in American foreign policy dialogues are, effectively, manifestations of US foreign policy traditions. Just as certain media outlets focus on threat, advantage, or values, so too do special interests in American politics. In the case of China, we can see how the bilateral relationship

²¹⁵ Halper & Clarke (2006), p.134

²¹⁶ Davidson (2009), p.148

²¹⁷ Dumbaugh (2001), p.114

²¹⁸ Parmar (1995), p.90

is used to justify both realist and liberal foreign policy prescriptions. Economic and business interests promote specific and usually narrow policies that suit America's traditional mercantile realism (some, like the US Business Council, do promote more general interests). Equally, as the only credible, potential large-scale threat to US security, defence industry lobbies and Congressional 'hawks' are able to push their own agendas as well, appealing to the more nationalist realist tradition. Perceived as a continued, unapologetic abuser of human rights, China offers a target for lobbies that push liberal-moralist prescriptions and allows them to paint China as inimical to America's traditional values.

CHAPTER VI

THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH & CHINA POLICY

There remains one important question: can the relevant agencies in the U.S. federal government plan, coordinate, and execute grand strategy with sufficient competence to secure the nation and defend its vital interests? This thesis has already looked at the media and special interests and how they try to exert influence on the foreign policy-making process. They have their own concepts, inputs, processes and outputs towards their understanding and portrayal of, and approach to, China. However, these sectors of the foreign policy-making system do not 'do' grand strategy as outlined in the first chapter of this thesis. The only sector of foreign policy actors that can do this is the (collective) Executive Branch.

In the United States, the significant influences on the foreign policy-making process are "continually shifting, rendering consistent tracking of the process more difficult and increasing uncertainty about how and why decisions are actually made."¹ Just as Congressmen and Senators must contend with the political realities of Washington, the Executive Branch operatives are also subject to many of the same considerations, not to mention having to deal with members of Congress who try to impose their views on overall government policy. This is nothing new. Some may argue that the rise of K Street and the diversification of foreign policy actors have necessitated that a keen eye be kept on domestic politics. The truth, however, is that to fully understand American foreign policy, one must recognise that the "daily requirements for political

¹ Suettinger (2003), p.8

survival and the priority of domestic agendas” have always “been central foreign policy drivers” in Washington.²

Due to the pluralist nature of American politics, it is important to understand the people involved in policy-making, as their prejudices and beliefs can help ascertain how or why they make certain decisions:

“Foreign policy and national security decisions are multiple-value choices and are rarely reached on the basis of a single, overriding view of any single problem that excludes all other considerations. Domestic political considerations and personal interests are an inescapable part of the decision-making process, especially at the White House level.”³

Therefore, one can acquire a “predictive handle” from knowing something of an official’s professional background.⁴ Perceptions of foreign policy issues, for all participants, are also “heavily shaded by their particular concerns,” and where individuals sit in the process can determine the “stakes that they see involved and hence the stand they take.”⁵ For example, what is for one participant primarily a budget concern could be an issue of foreign relations or congressional relations to another. Departments and organisations have different compositions and responsibilities.⁶ Officials at the OMB are likely to view most issues (from defence procurement to foreign aid) as predominantly budgeting concerns; while the State Department will view these issues in more amorphous terms such as global communication and influence, and diplomatic perception. As the biggest spender of all, Pentagon officials will naturally perceive their yearly budget as extremely important, as they face procurement decisions, not to mention logistical costs and budgets for ongoing conflicts. In addition to these groups, White House staffers, presidential and congressional advisers have their own sets of interests; specifically, domestic politics and electoral concerns. White House advisers, “particularly those without any regular and routine responsibility for national security matters, often come to

² Lampton (2001), p.280

³ Halperin, Clapp & Kanter (2006), p.62

⁴ Viotti (2010), p.17

⁵ Halperin, Clapp & Kanter (2006), pp.15-16

⁶ Halperin, Clapp & Kanter (2006), p.26

see foreign policy issues largely in terms of domestic politics and the possibilities of their own involvement.”⁷

Emerging from the Cold War, the US public had many things on their minds, but foreign policy was a lesser concern, unless there was some perceived linkage between a domestic and an international issue,⁸ or when American values or interests appeared threatened. This allows politicians to make connections between domestic and international affairs, which in turn can inflate their public importance. Regarding China, “political cycles have enormous impact”,⁹ as domestic issues (normative, security, and economic) often rise to the fore.

COLLECTIVE EXECUTIVE: WHITE HOUSE, AGENCIES & FOREIGN POLICY

As with domestic politics, foreign policy authority in the United States is divided among a number of institutions. How well they interact has a considerable impact on policy-making and policy-execution. Constitutionally, the President is Commander-in-Chief, but, without congressional support or acquiescence, he would find it hard to sustain protracted military or diplomatic engagements abroad. The Executive Branch implements trade law, but the Congress sets tariff levels. While the President negotiates treaties, the Senate must ratify them before they can take effect. The Executive Branch is charged with implementing policy, but the legislative branch has the responsibility to investigate implementation in a diverse range of areas – from alleged, illegal Chinese campaign contributions (1996), or sensitive technology transfers to China (1998-9). Finally, and perhaps most importantly, there are few Executive foreign policy principals who can escape the necessity of Senate confirmation – the key exceptions to this are the President’s White House staff – including the National Security Adviser.¹⁰ This latter point is important, as

⁷ Halperin, Clapp & Kanter (2006), p.96

⁸ Lampton (2001), p.300

⁹ Lampton (2001), p.309

¹⁰ Lampton (2001), p.289

“the modern trend, especially since the United States emerged from World War II as a global power, has been to expand the White House staff and institutions like the National Security Council (NSC) precisely to enable more centralised control, or at least better centralised coordination, over an expanding policy community.”¹¹

This expanding foreign policy community includes the departments of State, Defense, Treasury, Justice and (since 2001) Homeland Security, as well as the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), National Security Agency (NSA), the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA), the Military, and, growing in importance, trade and foreign aid departments. Presidential efforts to strengthen control over this expanding foreign policy community will only stimulate countertrends, including powerful “centrifugal forces” in Congress, the media, and other areas of the Executive Branch itself.¹² Law and custom dictate that the Cabinet officers involved in foreign policy will almost always include the Secretaries of State, Defence and Treasury, the National Security Adviser, and also various White House economic advisers and sometimes the US Trade Representatives. On military concerns (budget and deployment), the Joint Chiefs of Staff are consulted. The Director of National Intelligence is consulted when information about foreign governments or groups, particularly hostile ones, is important.¹³

Each new administration brings an influx of new staffers and appointees, and new members of any department will come up against career officials who are set in their ways and often overly protective of their ‘turf’. Interdepartmental friction can depend on which department houses the strongest personalities, or has the closest ties to the president. A recurring problem, therefore, has been the balance “between coherence and discipline in presidential policy on the one hand, and bureaucratic collegiality on the other”¹⁴

¹¹ Rodman (2009), p.4

¹² Rodman (2009), p.4

¹³ Halperin, Clapp & Kanter (2006), pp.16-17

¹⁴ Rodman (2009), p.12

Within the US government, there is a strong “socialisation process”, in which individuals who enter service with doubts about, or ignorance of, particular aspects of a set of shared bureaucratic images will “frequently find themselves quickly coming to support them.”¹⁵ In addition, both career and ‘political’ professionals in a department “often develop more of a loyalty to their cabinet secretary... than to a president who is a more remote figure across town.” To a remarkable degree, a president can come to be viewed by the professionals as “an interloper in policies that their departments are immersed in on a daily basis,”¹⁶ which can result in increased resistance to new presidential initiatives.

The socialisation process and strong departmental attachments can have a long-term impact on both career officials and political appointees. For example, Warren Christopher, who served as Deputy Secretary of State and Secretary of State (under Carter and Clinton, respectively), developed a strong respect for Foreign Service Officials; while Dick Cheney, who served as George H.W. Bush’s Secretary of Defence, would exhibit a strong bias for Department of Defence preferences and agendas. For the main, this is because career officials, including those who rise to the top of their organisations, “often develop their position largely by calculating the national interest in terms of the organisational interests of the career service to which they belong.” Halperin explains that even “in-and-outers” – political appointees or short-term officials – are also sometimes “captured” by the organisations that bring them into government, influencing their future positions to varying degrees.¹⁷ The downside to this socialisation is that “even seasoned veterans of the Washington scene usually know only the trade secrets of life in the branch in which they serve.” It does not appear common for an official to have served in multiple departments, which means “Mutual ignorance of one another’s world is often embarrassingly obvious when an executive branch witness testifies before Congress.”¹⁸

¹⁵ Halperin, Clapp & Kanter (2006), p.13

¹⁶ Rodman (2009), p.9

¹⁷ Halperin, Clapp & Kanter (2006), p.61

¹⁸ Peters (1993), p.vii

Some policy elites do circulate, displacing others “not just from one presidential administration to another, but also within a given presidency.” The impact this can have on US foreign policy was most evident in George W. Bush’s administration, after the ‘neo-cons’ were rotated out, and replaced by more realist advisors and officials. Robert Gates’ move to the Defence Department, Stephen Hadley’s appointment as National Security Adviser, and Condoleezza Rice’s move to the State Department all affected foreign relations, which had the knock-on effect of moderating Bush’s foreign policy, and making him more open to engagement and diplomacy.

Halperin, Clapp and Kanter explain the basic function of State and the Foreign Service as:

“as reporting on the activities of foreign governments that have relevance to the United States, general representation of American interests abroad, and negotiation of specific issues when directed by the government.”¹⁹

The State Department is organised in a way that suits it to the leadership role in national security – it has a bureau of political-military affairs, and also a bureau devoted to economic and business issues, which provide it with broad expertise.²⁰ However, even as long ago as the 1940s, President Harry Truman “often found himself railing at the indiscipline of the State Department,”²¹ a frustration shared by his presidential successors.

Despite efforts to lessen its elitist self-image, and expand its officers involvement beyond diplomacy and reporting into more direct operations, as Halperin explains, Foreign Service officers still “view their enterprise as an elite organisation composed of generalists”, which means they frequently “resist the introduction into the department of novel functions and of experts who might be needed to perform those functions.”²² Equally, career diplomats in State and abroad will “tend to be more patient and have a higher tolerance for ambiguity than others, muddling on as need be through the most complex of

¹⁹ Halperin, Clapp & Kanter (2006), p.35

²⁰ Rodman (2009), p.20

²¹ Rodman (2009), p.22

²² Halperin, Clapp & Kanter (2006), p.35

circumstances.” They may also be more resistant to major policy changes, shifts, and initiatives that substantially alter the status quo (such as Nixon’s opening up to China)²³ meaning that “established modalities usually hold sway” and, as with most political issues, “changes in foreign policy tend to be incremental, not sweeping”.²⁴ It is difficult for the status quo to be moved by presidents, and even less by those in positions of lesser authority,²⁵ but not impossible – presidents and officials in whom they entrust the most power can, when conditions are right and given enough political will, have a considerable impact on foreign policy. New administrations can bring changes, but continuity is the norm. New thinking can, occasionally, result in substantial policy change: Richard Nixon dramatically departed from the norm by starting the normalisation process with China, and altered the long-standing and politically popular ties with Taiwan. Nixon’s success is an anomaly, however, and it is far more common that major departures in foreign policy will only occur when “external shocks force rethinking and policymakers coalesce on a new course of action”,²⁶ such as the collapse of the Soviet Union.

This tendency towards institutional inertia and the status quo has resulted in a gradual erosion in the State Department’s leadership position as other departments have strengthened their own international roles. Despite making provisions for the expanding importance of economics in foreign affairs, and improved links with the military establishment, other departments have been “less and less willing to submit to State’s direction” on foreign policy.²⁷ The State Department is now routinely ignored in the development and articulation of foreign policy, as well as in the conduct of private and public diplomacy, and transfer of foreign assistance.²⁸ For example, with their trade-promotion missions, the Commerce and Agriculture Departments have often opposed State Department initiatives²⁹ that would impose sanctions on trade partners.

²³ Viotti (2010), p.36

²⁴ Viotti (2010), p.41

²⁵ Viotti (2010), p.41

²⁶ Viotti (2010), p.176

²⁷ Rodman (2009), p.20

²⁸ Hook (Jan.2003), p.23

²⁹ Jentleson (2007), p.39

Between 1960 and 1998, the State Department grew from five ‘regional’ or ‘geographical’ bureaus and ten ‘functional’ bureaus (for example, the Bureau of International Organization Affairs and the Bureau of Economic Affairs, and so forth) to nineteen functional bureaus and one extra geographic bureau. This expansion came with a corresponding increase in personnel: in 1960, there were fifteen assistant secretaries and eighteen deputy assistant secretaries, but by 1998 these numbers had exploded to 25 assistant secretaries and 78 deputy assistant secretaries.³⁰ This increase in functional bureaus and staffers, in addition to diminishing the relative power of geographical bureaus,³¹ has led to a proliferation of “complex competing interests at the working level.”³² For example, in the early 1990s, the State Department’s Bureau of Human Rights and East Asia-Pacific Bureau disagreed over linking China’s MFN renewal to human rights progress.³³ The trends of enlargement and specialisation seen in the evolution of the State Department have been “broadly replicated” in other cabinet-level agencies with stakes in China-policy, including the Departments of Treasury and Defence, and also in the intelligence community.³⁴ According to David Lampton, the result of this widespread “organisational constipation and growth” has been “that power flowed toward the White House”,³⁵ with its more streamlined decision-making process, involving fewer actors with input in decisions.

Over the post-war decades, there have been strong Secretaries of State – including Dean Acheson, John Foster Dulles, and Henry Kissinger – who were able to reassert some State dominance over America’s international relations. Unfortunately for the department, “this seems mainly to have been a function of personalities at the top – of the intellectual and physical energy of the cabinet secretary and the support of the president for this arrangement.” At other times,

³⁰ Lampton (2001), p.291

³¹ Lampton (2001), pp.291-292

³² Halperin, Clapp & Kanter (2006), p.37

³³ Jentleson (2007), p.39

³⁴ Lampton (2001), p.292

³⁵ Lampton (2001), p.292

State officials have been outperformed by the NSC staff, civilian appointees at the Pentagon, or other cabinet departments.³⁶

Defence policy is different to foreign policy, and the structure of the US government and policy-making apparatus means “there is no way for the President to bypass the Department of Defense on military operations”, and no way for an alternative mechanism to be created for determining defence budgets and programs.³⁷ Each military service will naturally support foreign policies that “justify maintaining the forces that it believes are necessary to maintain the essence of the service” and will “favour strategies that presume that precisely those forces will be used in the event of hostilities.” The military will usually also support proposals that increase the chances of new equipment procurement.³⁸ That being said, the military’s attitude toward overseas commitments and use of force is usually opposition (which “is surprising to observers who expect a bellicose approach”), and have generally “been opposed to or neutral on post-war American interventions.”³⁹

The foreign policy role of the president and his staff in the White House is profound. While the United States is believed to “have a government of laws and institutions rather than individuals”, in reality “who occupies the nation’s highest office can have profound repercussions.”⁴⁰ It is in the global arena that the power of the presidency manifests in its “purest form”. During the Cold War, when the threat of mutually-assured nuclear destruction concentrated the minds of foreign policy actors, the president’s latitude for independent action was limited. However, in the post-Cold War world, it is much greater.⁴¹

The president’s role in, and influence on, American foreign policy-making is “qualitatively different from those of any other participant.” With any important foreign policy issue, the president will likely be the principal decision-maker determining the *general* direction of actions.⁴² For this reason,

³⁶ Rodman (2009), pp.20-21

³⁷ Rodman (2009), p.61

³⁸ Halperin, Clapp & Kanter (2006), p.58

³⁹ Halperin, Clapp & Kanter (2006), p.59

⁴⁰ Greenstein (2009), p.2

⁴¹ Greenstein (2009), pp.3-4; See also Peterson (1994), p.217

⁴² Halperin, Clapp & Kanter (2006), p.16

many participants in foreign policy-making will look to the president for their cues. Where career members of the government bureaucracy will look to the traditions of their organisations to draw clues of the national interest, “others, particularly in-and-outers at high levels, detect clues in their conception of presidential interests.”⁴³ The president, therefore, serves as “the surrogate for the national interest.” The president’s perception and judgement of what is in the national interest (assuming he is able to articulate these interests) will be paramount. A strong president with a clear sense of direction and leadership can profoundly influence the shared perceptions of the bureaucrats, Congress, and the public.⁴⁴ The president enjoys “extraordinary authority” in foreign policy, where in domestic policy “members of the legislative branch are more prone to guard their prerogatives from executive encroachments.”⁴⁵

There are, however, exigent factors that potentially impede a president’s decision-making, and sway the perceptions of other foreign policy actors. At times, public and congressional opposition to a president’s policy goals will become entrenched as a result of a particular media or legal event from which the president cannot easily disconnect his policy. Examples of this include George H.W. Bush’s need to respond to Tiananmen Square; Clinton’s impeachment; and the WMD revelations during George W. Bush’s administration. These exigent factors may be of secondary concern for presidents and their close associates, who frequently decide on what policies to favour “largely in relation to... maintaining power and getting re-elected.”⁴⁶

Unlike in Congress, where 435 Congressmen and a hundred Senators clamour for attention and agenda-setting rights, “in the White House... only one man’s vote is decisive.”⁴⁷ That being said, the president is not just a single actor with multiple agents who merely follow his directions: the president is the focus of a “complex web” of advisers, with “common and conflicting goals”, in which a multitude of decisions are made on the whole range of domestic and foreign policy issues. A president must “select a team that possesses a diverse

⁴³ Halperin, Clapp & Kanter (2006), p.62

⁴⁴ Halperin, Clapp & Kanter (2006), p.16

⁴⁵ Viotti (2010), p.209; see also Rodman (2009), p.4

⁴⁶ Halperin, Clapp & Kanter (2006), p.62

⁴⁷ Sorensen, quoted in: Glad (2010), p.16

range of skills... to suit his tastes, strengths and weaknesses, and sense of priorities.”⁴⁸ In some administrations, this will result in a strong foreign policy team to either supplement a president who is engaged in foreign policy (e.g., George H.W. Bush), or to support a president with little interest or engagement in foreign policy (e.g., Clinton and Reagan).

Advisors to inexperienced presidents, however, “may actually put their own goals ahead of the president,” effectively usurping presidential prerogative.⁴⁹ Advisors can exert a measure of control by helping to shape the policy options the president receives, screening the information that crosses his desk, advising him on appropriate courses of action, and implementing his policies with “greater or lesser vigour”.⁵⁰ Some advisors have actively prevented information from reaching the Oval Office, such as happened in the Eisenhower and Nixon Administrations, when Sherman Adams and H.R. Halderman (respectively), to varying degrees, controlled access zealously. In the Carter administration, which for three years had no chief of staff, Zbigniew Brzezinski controlled access to the president on matters of concern to him,⁵¹ and frequently shut out opposing perspectives and proposals (especially with regards to China policy).

The National Security Council (NSC) has become one of the most powerful foreign policy institutions in the American system – David Rothkopf has referred to it as the committee “Running the World”.⁵² The NSC is chaired by the president (or an appropriate surrogate), and the vice-president, the Secretaries of State and Defence and other key senior cabinet members are members. The Council was created through the National Security Act of 1947, to

“advise the President with respect to the integration of domestic, foreign, and military policies relating to the national security so as to enable the military services and other departments and agencies of

⁴⁸ Lampton (2001), p.317

⁴⁹ Glad (2010), p.16

⁵⁰ Glad (2010), p.16

⁵¹ Glad (2010), p.10

⁵² Rothkopf (2006)

the government to cooperate more effectively in matters involving the national security.”⁵³

The creation of the NSC “effectively produce[d] two foreign ministries”, but with the White House-based Council’s easier access to the president bestowing on it greater influence in strategic and crisis decision making.⁵⁴ The 1947 Act bestowed upon the NSC a broad range of responsibilities, many of which conflict with those of the State and (to a lesser extent) Defence Departments. It is the NSC’s responsibility to “develop strategies to enable the United States Government to respond to transnational threats”, “monitor implementation of such strategies”, and also to act as an umbrella organisation for intergovernmental policy cohesion by “assist[ing] in the resolution of operational and policy differences among Federal departments”.⁵⁵ This complicated the tasks of the Secretary of State, who was forced to contend not only with foreign governments but also with rival power centres in the Executive Branch.⁵⁶ President Eisenhower would further institutionalise the NSC system, by creating the post of special assistant to the president for national security affairs,⁵⁷ which became one of the most powerful, if contentious, positions in the foreign policy bureaucracy. Under President Kennedy, the NSC became, according to McGeorge Bundy, “essentially a presidential instrument”, and it was during Kennedy’s time that the concept of the NSC as presidential staff was born.⁵⁸

No organisational chart can truly show how an administration works in practice. In the American system, “intangibles reign” – global events, presidential character, Congressional mood, and public opinion can all affect governance.⁵⁹ However, presidents in turn “come to rely most on individuals whose judgement (and loyalty) they have most confidence in.”⁶⁰ This was particularly evident in the relationships between Nixon and Kissinger, and

⁵³ National Security Act (2007), p.7

⁵⁴ Hook (Jan.2003), p.24

⁵⁵ National Security Act (2007), p.10

⁵⁶ Hook (Jan.2003), p.24

⁵⁷ Rodman (2009), p.28

⁵⁸ Bundy, quoted in: Rodman (2009), p.30

⁵⁹ Rodman (2009), p.xii

⁶⁰ Rodman (2009), p.xii

Carter and Brzezinski – two professional relationships that provided a high level of policy coherence and success, at the expense of intergovernmental harmony.

A president's involvement in the policy process can "shape the dominant interaction pattern that develops" within the Executive Branch. A decisive president can form a focal point for policy-making and, if he becomes involved, "mitigate the negative effects of infighting". An indecisive president involved in the process, however, could exacerbate infighting, as advisers compete for influence. A president's indecisiveness, and the increased input, can, therefore, lead to policy incoherence.⁶¹ The result is an "inescapable necessity for presidents to be personally and systematically engaged" in policy-making, lest advisors run amok, and "feuds between cabinet agencies fester or bureaucracies remain unresponsive to presidential preferences."⁶² As different government departments approach foreign policy in their own way, and often through the lens of different theoretical frameworks, it becomes the president's responsibility to identify the best option, often having to forge a pluralist strategy that serves overall American interests.

COLLECTIVE EXECUTIVE & MEDIA/LOBBY RELATIONS

The relationship between the Executive Branch and the media and special interests is a complex one. Chapters Five and Six described the media's and special interests' methodologies and apparent institutional biases with regards to foreign policy and China. This section will look at how the collective Executive Branch approaches the media and lobbies.

While the media controls much of the communications process among and between government players, themselves, and the public, government officials "do a better job of using journalists for their purposes than vice versa." This is because, in the "overwhelming number of cases", it is the administration that

⁶¹ Garrison (Apr.2007), p.108

⁶² Rodman (2009), p.xii

decides to release a story, and “does so with its own spin.”⁶³ The government’s advantage is borne from the nature of contemporary media and journalism practices. Leslie Gelb, who has worked on both sides of the fence, puts much of the Executive’s advantage down to journalists’ general lack of knowledge, when covering foreign, security and economic issues: journalists “are not, as a group, overburdened with background and knowledge in these subjects.” This is partly because they are not kept on “a beat” long enough to learn the history behind and intricacies of the policies they are covering. As a result, reporting on these issues can focus more on the “motives, personalities, and politics” involved. The media adds to the overall government-advantage by “building their daily coverage around daily executive branch briefings” at the White House and Departments of State and Defense. “Their reporting thus depends on what the government chooses to tell them in these deliberately uninformative briefings.” This unfortunate lack of knowledge is part of the reason that exaggerated fears of China – among other issues – receive such good coverage (beyond the sensation value of crying “China Threat”), as political journalists fail to locate given issues within the proper framework, often swallowing whole either government talking points or parroting the shrill explanations of television ‘experts’, who are more interested in ratings and sensation than genuine discussion of issues and policy. Gelb places some of the blame at the feet of presidents, however: “In a media world of spinning, the White House is spinner in chief”, as a president will rarely step in to dispel irrational fears or exaggerations. It is only when policies appear to be going wrong, Gelb argues, that the media “really begin to exercise political power”,⁶⁴ as news of policy and Executive errors fuels coverage of policies.

With regards to lobbies, their predominant power lies in their passion for their issues. However, this passion is a double-edged sword. At times, lobbies can bring public attention to issues that are unimportant to a president. In the case of Cuba, for example, Washington frequently allows the Cuban-American lobby to frame the debate – it is easier for government officials, and Cuba is ultimately not that important. Therefore, the Executive branch uses a lobby’s

⁶³ Gelb (2010), p.144

⁶⁴ Gelb (2010), pp.145-147

passion and fervour to dictate an issue it has little interest in. American corporations and business leaders have effective lobbies to protect their interests with and in China. “But if China starts to lob missiles at Taiwan or to confront Japan over oil in the East China Sea, those potent lobbies will immediately retreat.”⁶⁵ Ultimately, however, presidents generally give lobbies “a wide berth”, but watch closely as the power of lobbies “wax and wane”. When lobby power is strong, “presidents fear them” because “Fighting them is too costly – unless the White House feels that a vital national interest is at stake. When that happens, presidents do fight and win, and the lobbies lose.”⁶⁶ Presidents can also blunt opposition from lobbies by inviting them to join in the policy-making process (or, at least, giving them a perception of contribution),⁶⁷ as Clinton did when negotiating both NAFTA and Chinese MFN.

Suettinger disagrees with characterisations of the media and special interests as particularly influential; and argues instead that (as shown in the previous chapter) they provide specific, “effective and important inputs” to the foreign policy process, by defining or framing issues for public discussion, and also providing factual information to Congress and the Executive, “but they exert only minor influence in the actual deliberation and decision process for important policy matters.”⁶⁸ Bureaucratic interests, on the other hand, have far more influence and impact, which is why an understanding of these interests is important in a study of (China) policy-making. “Pundits, editorialists, and ‘news analysts’ figure in the policy process, although not definitively,” Suettinger writes. They are “often strongly partisan” and “they can affect the political atmospherics on Capitol Hill by bringing focused opinion to bear on specific issues”. In addition, Suettinger argues that television is not as important to policy-formulation as print media, as “Policymakers usually get their information from written sources, which are more thorough than television news programs.”⁶⁹ Regardless of political affiliation, “most journalistic opinion makers are negative about China and critical of any administration that engages

⁶⁵ Gelb (2010), pp.149-150

⁶⁶ Gelb (2010), p.150

⁶⁷ Gelb (2010), p.158

⁶⁸ Suettinger (2003), p.427

⁶⁹ Suettinger (2003), p.428

with it”, principally due to China’s approach to human rights, religious freedom, or non-proliferation.

THE EXECUTIVE, GRAND STRATEGY & CHINA

Pre-1989, the US-China relationship was founded on a more-or-less shared set of realist perceptions about the threat posed by the Soviet Union, and the belief that the US and China needed to balance Russia. The strategic underpinnings that resulted from Nixon’s 1972 visit to China and the subsequent Shanghai Communiqué survived until 1989, when American perceptions of China “radically changed”. After the fall of the Soviet Union, justifying a close cooperative relationship with a regime widely abhorred in the US became ever-more difficult – in addition, as the Cold War security rationale disappeared, “all the other problems and disagreements in the relationship became far more apparent and difficult to manage” and ignore.⁷⁰

The massacres of unarmed students and civilians around Tiananmen Square in June 1989 “obliterated the good will that had been built up over the previous two decades”. Under George H.W. Bush, reconstruction seemed possible, but when Bill Clinton was elected, the relationship “swung back and forth between confrontation and accommodation” as Clinton tried to fulfil political obligations to both human rights and business constituencies.⁷¹ Years after the event, Tiananmen continues to inform ongoing issues in the bilateral relationship – economic sanctions, frequent criticism of China’s human rights abuses that trace back to 1989, and also regular commemoration of the protests.⁷²

The period from 1989 to 2008 has seen a constant series of “disputes, wrangling, and tension” over the three key issues that have dominated US-China relations since 1989: human rights, economics (especially trade reciprocity), and security (including espionage, weapons proliferation, and Taiwan).

⁷⁰ Suettinger (2003), pp.4-5

⁷¹ Tyler (1999), p.16

⁷² Suettinger (2003), p.85

Occasionally, these disputes have been interspersed with brief periods of relative amity and optimism, but also instances of high tension or outright antagonism. “There was no real norm, no status quo, but a constant effort was made to move the relationship into some other status, to ‘normalize’ it”, despite a lack of consensus as to what ‘normal’ relations might look like.⁷³ Since 2001, the relationship has been mostly stable, as the early years of the Global War on Terror distracted the US from many problems in the US-China relationship. Once the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan started to drag, other news and economic stories rose to the fore again (this is normal in the US-China relationship, as shown in the history chapters, when events in other areas of the world overshadow or take precedence over US-China relations):

“China’s strategic importance was less acknowledged, mercantilist trade policies less forgivable, repression of human rights and democracy less acceptable, proliferation of nuclear materials and missiles... less tolerable.”⁷⁴

The US-China relationship has reached into “virtually every arena of government interaction”, including diplomacy, science, the environment, medicine, international finance, agriculture, and military affairs. With every department and agency involved in Sino-US relations, “different interests and constituencies can easily be magnified by competing policy preferences related to China.”⁷⁵

Despite considerable political and economic changes in both countries (not to mention the considerable changes in the post-Cold War geopolitical arena), in neither America nor China has there been a “commensurate change in the way U.S.-China relations are considered or in how the other country is viewed by their respective governments.”⁷⁶ It is for this reason that, before security and economic relations are considered, the impact of Tiananmen and other normative relations and issues must first be discussed.

⁷³ Suettinger (2003), p.415

⁷⁴ Suettinger (2003), p.87

⁷⁵ Suettinger (2003), p.426

⁷⁶ Suettinger (2003), pp.416-417

US-CHINA NORMATIVE RELATIONS

In general, and since 1989 in particular, Congress has been the main driving force behind domestic support for a human rights-led, liberal agenda in foreign policy, and particularly China relations. It has been the responsibility of the presidents to restrain these urgings from having a damaging impact on overall relations.

President Carter embraced the traditional ideal that the US has a special, moral mission to perform in the world.⁷⁷ In his pre-presidential biography, Carter wrote:

“A nation’s domestic and foreign policies should be derived from the same standards of ethics, honesty and morality which are characteristic of the individual citizens of the nation. The people of this country are inherently unselfish, open, honest, decent, competent, and compassionate. Our government should be the same, in all its actions and attitudes.”⁷⁸

Unfortunately, Carter failed to appreciate the connection between power and ability in international relations, and by attributing negative motives to the opposition of political adversaries, Carter failed to appreciate that these adversaries also have interests, and “successful diplomacy must be based on an appreciation of the relative power of the contenders and an accommodation of competing interests in terms of that power balance.”⁷⁹ Despite having a Secretary of State, Cyrus Vance, who was dedicated to Carter’s “more idealistic goals”,⁸⁰ human rights did not dictate Carter administration China policy. Continuing Cold War realities meant security considerations still dominated the relationship – indeed, Vance believed a focus on normalising relations with China could undermine or derail the president’s arms control agenda, and argued for an “even-handed approach” that emphasised improved relations with *both* China and the USSR.⁸¹ Unfortunately, Vance “found his way blocked

⁷⁷ Glad (2010), p.1

⁷⁸ Carter (1996), p.123

⁷⁹ Glad (2010), p.1

⁸⁰ Glad (2010), p.1

⁸¹ Garrison (Apr.2007), p.112

by a national security adviser who employed multiple tactics to move Carter in an anti-Soviet direction.”⁸² During Carter’s administration, Zbigniew Brzezinski broadened the US-China relationship to include economics, but Carter’s real legacy would be an increased (but still not considerable) focus on human rights in US foreign policy, and China policy in particular.

President Ronald Reagan’s “bold meeting” with Russian dissidents during a visit to Moscow in 1988, gave rise to an “unspoken expectation” in the US that more attention would be paid to human rights and promotion of democracy in China and the USSR. Reagan’s symbolic gesture would in part be responsible for (then-ambassador to Beijing, and a strong supporter of human rights and democracy issues) Winston Lord’s approval for the addition of a Chinese dissident’s name on the guest list for a February 28th 1989 gala event on George H.W. Bush’s visit to China.⁸³

GEORGE H.W. BUSH, CHINA, TIANANMEN SQUARE & ITS LEGACY

George H.W. Bush’s experience in Beijing gave him a strong affinity for China policy, and in office he worked to strengthen the Sino-American relationship as a counterweight to the Soviet Union (what was, by now, the ‘traditional’ policy on China), and encourage China’s economic growth and political progress. According to Secretary of State James Baker, with a “committed friend of China” now in the Oval Office, there was an expectation that the relationship would “attain a new level of maturity and stability.”⁸⁴ Instead, the Tiananmen Square incident and its aftermath “shattered the bipartisan consensus”⁸⁵ so carefully constructed over the course of five administrations, and “challenged the realisation of the president’s goals,”⁸⁶ becoming a consistent obstacle to implementing his policy preferences. Tiananmen’s legacy would last well beyond Bush’s presidency, and can be seen in almost every area of US-China relations.

⁸² Glad (2010), p.1

⁸³ Suettinger (2003), pp.24-25

⁸⁴ Baker (1995), p.101

⁸⁵ Baker (1995), p.98

⁸⁶ Garrison (Apr.2007), p.115

None of the top policymakers at the time had a clear idea of what was happening in China in early 1989. “Neither State Department cables, nor intelligence reporting, nor the increasing volume of U.S. media reporting on China” had provided a clear idea of the socio-political changes or the leadership struggles ongoing in China.⁸⁷ It’s important to remember that Tiananmen took place before the CNN Effect described in chapter five had properly come into being.

Washington simply lacked the ability to impose its will on China in the wake of the Tiananmen crackdown. Bush contended that there was little any president could actively have done for the protestors, no matter how great American sympathy for their plight may have been: “The American military was simply not capable of coming to the aid of China’s democratic movement, and economic or political sanctions were far too slow, if effective at all, to aid in the defence of out-gunned activists.”⁸⁸

According to Richard Madsen, “Tiananmen... troubled Americans far out of proportion to its direct cost in human life and suffering... because it contradicted widely cherished American understandings about the meanings of their democratic values.”⁸⁹ Beyond the public’s changing attitude toward China, more lasting damage to US-China relations was “probably done in the perceptions of that small percentage of Americans for who foreign affairs are of consistent interest and importance.” For this group, the “television imagery and gruesome stories of what happened after June 4th reinforced what had already been growing concerns about the nature and behaviour of China’s government” with regard to economic and political reform, and especially Beijing’s failure to improve the human rights of its citizens. Tiananmen also acted as a unifying event for American politics, creating some bipartisan agreement on China policy – even if the anti-China sentiment was born of different concerns (conservatives retained their long-standing anti-communism, opposed China’s anti-religious policies, and also authoritarian birth control policies).⁹⁰ The breadth of anti-

⁸⁷ Suettinger (2003), p.63

⁸⁸ Engel (Jan.2010), p.36

⁸⁹ Madsen, quoted in: Suettinger (2003), p.85

⁹⁰ Suettinger (2003), p.87

China sentiment was widespread throughout Congress and the Senate, which created a difficult working environment for a mostly realist president.

The domestic outcry that followed the massacre, Baker wrote, “forced a tricky juggling act upon our new administration”, which was “challenged to defend a policy encompassing geostrategic, commercial, and human rights interests that in large measure conflicted.”⁹¹ The president and his advisors recognised the “imperative” that America “remain engaged internationally”, but that even as the last superpower the US could neither prevent, nor solve all the traumas in the world. Therefore, the US had to be selective and Bush believed foreign policy should be based on “both the requirements of our national interest and our principles and values.”⁹²

The importance of human rights in US foreign policy, explicitly prominent since Carter’s administration, had continued to grow, and Bush was determined to engage the Chinese on the issue. By US standards, the Chinese performance on human rights had been “quite dismal”. Baker saw this firsthand as Treasury Secretary. The Treasury Department was involved in “enforcing restrictions against the importation of goods manufactured in Chinese slave labour camps,”⁹³ and so Baker was able to draw on his experience when constructing a response to Tiananmen Square. By pressing the Chinese on human rights, the administration was sure they could convince China’s aging leadership that, “while they were moving from a Soviet-style economy, they should also recognise that political change must keep pace with the aspirations of the Chinese people.” It was clear that China needed American help to sustain their economic growth, and “We were prepared to use this leverage to encourage greater progress toward political reform,” Baker says.⁹⁴

To minimise the impact the negative political environment would have on China policy, the Bush administration relied on a measure of secrecy – just as Kissinger had done during Nixon’s administration, when the domestic political environment was not conducive to negotiations with Communists. In 1989, it

⁹¹ Baker (1995), p.98

⁹² Baker (1995), p.103

⁹³ Baker (1995), p.100

⁹⁴ Baker (1995), p.101

was not negotiations with ‘communists’, but ‘butchers’ that were considered politically radioactive. In order to avoid the plurality of clamouring and angry voices in America, Bush sent National Security Advisor Scowcroft on a secret trip to China. The purpose of the trip was to signal that Bush was “committed to preserving the important strategic relationship” between America and China, but that he shared the “shock and outrage” of the American public over the events in Tiananmen. “Bush wanted the Chinese to know that he had taken the actions he had after Tiananmen because domestic pressure required it and he had to fend off harsher sanctions from Congress.”⁹⁵ The president’s job, in the wake of Tiananmen, effectively became balancing the realist and liberal traditions of US foreign policy, as he fought to protect a still-important strategic relationship while also condemning actions inimical to US values – being who he was, however, Bush felt the realist reason was more important, and therefore did what he had to do to protect what he saw as the national interest.

James Baker also met with Chinese officials, in September 1989, and had to be careful when discussing previous agreements – a still-secret agreement permitting China to launch three US-manufactured commercial satellites on Chinese rockets from 1991: “We intend to stand by our agreement,” Baker told his Chinese counterparts, “but this is a very sensitive issue in the US, and if it became publicized I fear Congress would require us to prohibit it or refuse to go ahead. Therefore, we need to be very careful about timing.”⁹⁶

In the wake of Tiananmen, Congress became energised and focussed on China-related issues, and the most vocal source of anti-China legislation and rhetoric. Therefore, the struggle between a Democratic Congress angered by human rights abuses in China and a Republican president determined to subordinate human rights issues to his perception of American strategic interests would define the debate over China policy until the final months of the Bush presidency, and continues today.⁹⁷

⁹⁵ Suettinger (2003), pp.79-80

⁹⁶ Baker (1995), p.112

⁹⁷ Cohen (2010), p.243

Nancy Pelosi, a junior congresswoman from California at the time (Speaker of the House from 2006-10), led the charge against Bush's pro-China policy position, and his 'deafness' to the supposed will of the electorate:

"Many members of Congress and China experts have called repeatedly on the president to send a clear and principled message of outrage to the leaders in Beijing. He has missed every opportunity to do so. He missed an opportunity by vetoing the bill to protect Chinese students; he missed an opportunity by intervening personally on the veto override; he missed another opportunity by authorising Scowcroft visits and the resumption of U.S. support for World Bank lending. And now, the president has renewed most favoured nation status to China, missing yet another opportunity to send an unequivocal message of U.S. condemnation to the Chinese regime who ordered the massacre in Tiananmen Square and the ensuing repression."⁹⁸

Baker would give testimony before the House Foreign Relations Committee on June 22nd, in order to blunt the impression that Bush's interest in China equated to a coddling or misperception of the events in Tiananmen Square. Baker urged Congress to "join with the President in a unified policy instead of insisting upon its own short-sighted approach."⁹⁹ Four days later, Baker would present his case again to the New York Asia Society:

"The hasty dismantling of a constructive U.S.-Chinese relationship, built up so carefully over two decades, would serve neither our interests nor those of the Chinese people... Above all, it would not help those aspirations for democracy that were so obvious in the millions who marched to support the students in Tiananmen Square."¹⁰⁰

In a letter to Deng Xiaoping, Bush "implored Deng to understand that American public opinion demanded he take punitive actions and asked him to

⁹⁸ Pelosi, quoted in: Lampton (2001), p.305

⁹⁹ Baker (1995), p.108

¹⁰⁰ Baker (1995), p.108

show ‘clemency’ toward the students.”¹⁰¹ Unfortunately, Beijing was deaf to the president’s pleas, and this intransigence and resistance to his requests and entreaties for moderation and concessions (symbolic at minimum) frustrated Bush, and led him to develop a tougher stance towards China.¹⁰² (There are also possible domestic political reasons for his change in attitude – as discussed further in the Taiwan section, below.)

Many members of Congress “instinctively distrusted realpolitik justifications” for American policy, and “subscribed to a more ‘idealist’ perspective” that was “more closely wedded to the American experience” guided by the American values of freedom, democracy and human rights.¹⁰³ Scowcroft identified Tiananmen as the tipping point that ended White House-Congress comity on China policy.¹⁰⁴ In the wake of Tiananmen, therefore, Congress’s liberal-moralist stance was clearly at odds with the administration’s realist-pragmatic position; it fell to President Bush to craft a pluralist middle course for mutual benefit – ensuring strategic interests were preserved while also attempting to give attention to the liberal strain that runs through America’s character. On June 6th, the president defended his preliminary steps as consistent with “both our long-term interests and recognition of a complex internal situation in China.”¹⁰⁵ The battle between an administration that wanted to maintain the US-China relationship and a Congress intent on punishing Beijing lasted into the 1992 election cycle, and accusations of “coddling” dictators and “butchers” likely are part of the reason Bush lost the election.

When Bill Clinton entered the White House, he evinced “no interest in conducting high-level dialogue with the Chinese leadership”, and the new administration was more interested in “putting pressure on China over human

¹⁰¹ Suettinger (2003), p.79

¹⁰² Sutter (2010), p.105

¹⁰³ Suettinger (2003), p.94

¹⁰⁴ Suettinger (2003), p.95

¹⁰⁵ Suettinger (2003), p.67

rights, weapons proliferation, and trade barriers.”¹⁰⁶ In contrast to his predecessor, Clinton moved China policy “as far away from himself as he could”, believing there were “no political gains to be made in this policy area”. Late in his second term, Clinton’s attention “turned to his legacy” and China became more important. Clinton’s administration was staffed with, effectively, two camps – one favouring an economic-focussed foreign policy, and one that wanted the priority to be placed on improving human rights in China.

Initially, Clinton was more interested in pursuing a domestic-oriented economic policy, so the responsibility for formulating and executing China policy fell to others. One would expect the secretary of state to take the lead role, but Warren Christopher “spent little time personally focussed on China and never developed close ties to the president”, thereby diminishing any influence the State Department could wield on China-related issues.¹⁰⁷ This, to some extent, explains why the Secretary of State was not able to put his stamp on China policy, particularly with regards to human rights. Despite Christopher’s clear opposition to delinking human rights from China’s trade privileges, Clinton still made him announce official policy at a speech to the Asia Society in New York, on May 27th 1994, in which he

“emphasised that our effort to use economic pressure to improve human rights had not proven effective and was at an end. While we would continue to press for human rights improvement in China, we would no longer use an economic club to force change.”¹⁰⁸

Like many Americans, Christopher was opposed to demoting the importance of human rights during Clinton’s presidency:

“The Chinese ‘internal affairs’ rubric is squarely at odds with the U.N.’s Declaration of Human Rights, which binds all of its members. That each country has a different culture and different economic circumstances absolves none of them from the obligation to comply with the Declaration. Torture, arbitrary detention, and sham trials cannot be justified by incantations of sovereign rights. Whether a

¹⁰⁶ Tyler (1999), p.29

¹⁰⁷ Garrison (2005), p.135

¹⁰⁸ Christopher (2001), p.242

government respects the fundamental rights of its citizens will always have a significant influence on whether our bilateral relations reach the highest levels.”¹⁰⁹

With a disinterested president and a secretary of state unprepared to exert control, China policy was effectively assigned to Assistant Secretary of State Winston Lord. Lord, who had broken with the Bush administration over its conciliatory approach to China in the wake of Tiananmen, had spent his time out of government “active in promoting punitive approaches” to China. In his confirmation hearings in March 1993, he told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that “We will seek cooperation with China on a range of issues. But Americans cannot forget Tiananmen Square.” Lord also identified America’s policy challenge “to reconcile our need to deal with this important nation with our imperative to promote international values.”¹¹⁰ Lord, working with National Security Advisor Anthony Lake’s and Secretary of State Warren Christopher’s approval, seems to have enjoyed considerable control over China policy. That being said, by pushing policy away from the Oval Office, Clinton signalled its low priority, and it soon became clear to others that Lord’s “rank and influence were insufficient to command the compliance” of the thirty officials of equivalent or higher rank in the State Department, “much less the many other cabinet-level officers and their deputies outside the department.”¹¹¹

Anthony Lake “believed in a foreign policy based on power *and* morality”, and considered himself a “pragmatic neo-Wilsonian, not naive about the world but conscious of the moral requirements of leadership”. Lake believed it was the task of governments and leaders to “do all they could to subdue evil, knowing that it could never be completely destroyed.”¹¹² In George Bush’s equation (an adaptation of Kissinger’s), the massacres at Tiananmen were “an unfortunate tragedy that could not be allowed to interfere with the larger balance of power”.

¹⁰⁹ Christopher (2001), p.240

¹¹⁰ Suettinger (2003), p.161

¹¹¹ Lampton (2001), p.291

¹¹² Tyler (1999), pp.28-29

For Lake, China's leaders were "discredited by their slaughter of unarmed civilians at Tiananmen."¹¹³

Clinton's personal approach to politics may be one clear instance when keen presidential involvement did not result in clear progress and results. Like George H.W. Bush, Clinton recognised that personal relationships between world leaders and diplomats could help overall bilateral relations. When dealing with Jiang Zemin, Clinton's preference for personalising politics was hindered at almost every turn by the "stiff formality" that dictated negotiations with Chinese delegations and officials.¹¹⁴ In one example, Taylor Branch describes Clinton's memory of a "tough private talk" with Jiang during a summit in Seattle, a "long, fruitless encounter". Clinton and Jiang sat across from each other accompanied only by their interpreters:

"Jiang read a speech to him about the glorious history of China and the folly of attempts to influence her internal affairs. It went on so long that Clinton said he finally felt obliged to interrupt. Speaking in direct sentences, with all the charm he could muster, he invited the Chinese leader to get down to business. He told Jiang that he didn't want to change China's political institutions. Nor did he object to prisons. In fact, America had lots of people in prison, and Clinton wanted to put away even more. But he did care about basic human rights, and, even if he didn't, he had a Congress that did. To improve relations, Jiang needed only to do a few things already permissible within Chinese standards and law. Clinton named four, including an effective ban on exported goods made by prison labour. When he finished, however, Jiang simply resumed his speech."¹¹⁵

Clinton's China policy suffered from his poor relations with Congress. Sandy Berger had proclaimed, at the start of the administration, that in Clinton's view the US-China relationship was "going to be an arm's-length relationship at best".¹¹⁶ This changed during the second term, ironically under the guidance of Berger, when China's Most Favoured Nation status came under attack and

¹¹³ Tyler (1999), p.29

¹¹⁴ Branch (2009), pp.87-88, 255, 356

¹¹⁵ Branch (2009), pp.87-88

¹¹⁶ Berger, quoted in: Rodman (2009), p.211

Clinton had to balance his human rights and economic priorities, as well as face growing concerns of China's rise as a strategic competitor in Asia. Clinton's problems with Congress began in the wake of the 1994 Republican congressional victories. Both houses of Congress shifted leadership from Democratic to Republican, "bringing persons who were far more sceptical of China into the chairmanships of key congressional committees", and a more hostile majority that seemed intent on limiting Clinton's space for political movement.¹¹⁷ Garrison has reported that, while many right-wing Republicans in Congress "genuinely hated China", they also "really hated Clinton", and were intent on using China issues (as well as Clinton's personal issues) to "beat him up" and hold his China strategy hostage.¹¹⁸

On the main China issues of his administration, "domestic political pressures pulled Clinton in different directions until... international reality imposed itself." Clinton and his advisers came to realise that MFN-status was "not going to be the weapon that would transform China's Communist system,"¹¹⁹ and to link MFN with human rights progress was therefore a self-defeating, politically-motivated dead end. Therefore, when it came to renewal, Clinton pragmatically chose economics over human rights, fulfilling his promise to put economics at the centre of his foreign policy.¹²⁰

Therefore, facing a hostile Congress, Clinton "worked carefully to signal multiple win-win themes that included strategic, economic, and progress themes that could appeal to a diverse audience,"¹²¹ bridging the divide between the executive and legislature. By defining China policy success through congressional approval, however, "Clinton transferred tremendous initiative from the executive branch to Congress and threw China policy into an arena dominated by domestic, often parochial, political concerns."¹²²

By 1997, the US and China had effectively "agreed to disagree" on human rights issues in order to resume a more stable working relationship. To China,

¹¹⁷ Lampton (2001), p.302

¹¹⁸ Garrison (2005), p.149

¹¹⁹ Rodman (2009), p.213

¹²⁰ Garrison (Apr.2007), p.117

¹²¹ Garrison (Apr.2007), p.117

¹²² Lampton (2001), p.320

this meant preventing American actions that might embolden Taiwan to declare independence and retaining access to US markets and technology. In return, Beijing offered limited access to their market, intermittent but important assistance in coping with a volatile North Korea, and the occasional release of a political prisoner. In other words, the US-China relationship became a delicate balance of capitalism, realism, and idealism.

US-CHINA SECURITY RELATIONS

China's place in Cold War American foreign policy was firmly within the realm of security. With the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, however, "the strategic basis for the U.S.-China relationship – tattered though it was – disappeared entirely,"¹²³ and the ability of the US president to deploy Cold War imperatives to override pluralistic, foreign policy-oriented domestic interests declined.¹²⁴ Contemporary security issues in the US-China relationship are broad and far-reaching. From the American perspective, there is growing concern about China's military build-up, and the potential threat they may pose to US interests in the Asia-Pacific and also Taiwan; Beijing's support for 'rogue' states, including Iran, Sudan, Myanmar, Cuba, Zimbabwe, and Venezuela; China's part in WMD proliferation, particularly weapons sales to Pakistan and Iran; increasing Chinese trade, investment, and aid (especially military) to resource-rich and poorly governed African states that undermines Western sanctions and other measures designed to apply pressure for reform; and accusations of Chinese espionage in the US, most sensationally as revealed by the Cox Report in 1999.¹²⁵

From President Truman until President Johnson, China was perceived as part of the Red/Communist bloc, and therefore a natural 'enemy' of America. Following Nixon's visit to Shanghai, which fundamentally changed the status quo, each presidential administration until the end of the Cold War saw China as a potential counterweight to Soviet Union influence.

¹²³ Suettinger (2003), p.415

¹²⁴ Sutter (2010), p.96

¹²⁵ Sutter (2010), pp.6, 130

The State Department was “used to a world in which presidents set broad lines of policy and leave it to the State department to implement”. Richard Nixon arrived in office having immersed himself in foreign policy, and wanted to not only initiate broad policy but to control its execution, to ensure it was consistent with his strategic worldview.¹²⁶ Under Nixon, Henry Kissinger succeeded in shifting the terms of the China-debate away from a “discussion of bilateral problems emphasised by the State Department to one emphasising the opportunities of a triangular focus in light of Sino-Soviet problems.” In order to achieve this, Kissinger authored various foreign policy reports –previously the responsibility of the State Department – that emphasised themes of the opportunities China could represent within a larger strategy for Asia.¹²⁷ Excluding Secretary Rogers from meaningful negotiations in Beijing kept the White House in “firm control” of the debate over the Shanghai Communiqué. The ‘one-China’ policy language was “kept ambiguous” regarding the US-Taiwan relationship, at least in part, “to undercut potential domestic opposition.”¹²⁸ Secrecy and obfuscation are politically unpopular, but there can be little doubt that Nixon’s focus and Kissinger’s tactics produced clear success.

The normalisation process was completed under President Carter, who was “no expert” on China. Carter’s indecisiveness “proved to be a great handicap” and “left him... more vulnerable to the manipulation of his advisors [Cyrus Vance and, especially, Zbigniew Brzezinski].”¹²⁹ Vance was determined to build a US-Soviet relationship that promoted arms control. Brzezinski, with his Polish heritage, was “hostile toward the Soviets and looked for any opportunity to thwart them”, which he saw in enhanced US-China relations.¹³⁰ Carter’s lack of confidence and expertise allowed Brzezinski to gain control of the China policy agenda by playing to the president’s fears about the Soviet threat. By cultivating administration allies, such as Defense Secretary Brown, and members of Congress who shared his concerns over the Soviets, he was further able to solidify his central role in the foreign policy-making hierarchy.

¹²⁶ Rodman (2010), pp.37-38

¹²⁷ Garrison (Apr.2007), p.111

¹²⁸ Garrison (Apr.2007), p.112

¹²⁹ Garrison (Apr.2007), p.113

¹³⁰ Christopher (2001), p.88

By supporting a broader relationship with China to include expanded trade (thereby 'pluralising' the relationship), Brzezinski built a broad coalition supporting normalisation that increasingly isolated Vance's position (which rested almost solely on strategic considerations), and also those in government who were more focussed on improving US-Soviet relations.¹³¹ A "hard-line Cold Warrior at heart", Brzezinski used his superior access to Carter and his ability to "frame issues, control agendas, and find allies" to move Carter in the policy direction the national security adviser preferred.¹³²

George H.W. Bush's orientation toward China, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, was predominantly strategic in origin, and "based on... mutual concern about the military intentions and capabilities of the Soviet Union," an approach shared by his National Security Adviser, Brent Scowcroft. Bush also believed improved US-China relations, especially growing economic interaction, was important for the development of a more open and democratic Chinese system. Bush's "hardheaded and pragmatic" secretary of state, James Baker, "did not share his boss's fondness for China" – Baker saw China issues as "political liabilities, even before Tiananmen and far more so afterward", and knowing that China policy would be managed by the White House, Baker "kept aloof" from most China issues.¹³³

In his approach to China, President George H.W. Bush was "strongly motivated" by strategic considerations. Bush favoured a realist foreign policy, and "subordinated ethical, humanitarian, and ideological considerations to a concept of the national interest." However, in the wake of Tiananmen, he quickly realised that it was "impossible... to have... normalised relations"¹³⁴ in this atmosphere. He had to accept that Congress would not accept a purely-realist China policy Bush had to shift his policy position to what amounted to a more pluralist strategy.

Cooperation remained a factor in US-China relations, however. Pre-Tiananmen, as part of Bush's realist strategy, the Chinese had joined the US in

¹³¹ Garrison (Apr.2007), p.113

¹³² Glad (2010), p.1

¹³³ Suettinger (2003), pp.63-64

¹³⁴ Suettinger (2003), p.93

arming anti-Soviet guerrillas in Afghanistan, and allowed joint surveillance monitoring of Soviet programs from Chinese soil.¹³⁵ In addition, Saddam's invasion of Kuwait on August 2nd 1990 also offered opportunity for limited cooperation. Sanctions were agreed on (trade and arms embargo), but China was resistant to the resolution authorizing force, which frustrated Bush – especially when Beijing started referring to the US as one of the “two belligerent parties”. With the onset of tensions in the Gulf, issues in US-China relations were subordinated to more pressing concerns (not unlike the relationship's historical experience). While human rights activists continued to complain about China's trials for Tiananmen prisoners, and US Trade Representatives insisted on more open market access and a more level playing field, little progress was made.¹³⁶

Under Clinton, US-China security can be easily identified as centring on Taiwan (which will be discussed at length, below) and the bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade in May 1999. To understand the progress of events, it's useful to know a bit more about the Clinton administration's foreign policy principles.

After a short, largely unimpressive tenure, Les Aspin was succeeded by William Perry as Secretary of Defence, in February 1994. Despite his expertise in defence and arms control, Perry would not play a pivotal role in administration policy discussions.¹³⁷ Perry represented an agenda of engagement with China, with the hopes of reinstating military-to-military relations that had been suspended after Tiananmen. It was Perry's belief (shared by a number of other Pentagon officials) that close relations with China were paramount to solving mutual interests; specifically, North Korea. Warren Cohen, the former Republican senator who succeeded Perry in 1997, was equally cautious of interference and “would only reinforce” the Pentagon's

¹³⁵ Suettinger (2003), p.41

¹³⁶ Suettinger (2003), pp.111-117

¹³⁷ Rodman (2009), pp.207-208

position.¹³⁸ Cohen chose to remain largely uninvolved in China policy-making, further solidifying Berger's importance in the process.¹³⁹

Anthony Lake, Clinton's first National Security Adviser, admitted to being an "emotional" policy-maker, and often struggled with his inability to formulate strong enough policies that would gain Clinton's attention. Lake initially rejected engaging China in 1993 as "politically unacceptable", and had apparently yet to move beyond the 'Butchers of Beijing' characterisation of the Chinese leadership.¹⁴⁰ Lake's successor, his former deputy Sandy Berger, became a "pivotal figure" in Clinton's foreign policy system. Berger's increased effectiveness as NSA was due in part to his close friendship with Clinton, with whom he enjoyed an excellent working relationship (they met while working on McGovern's 1972 campaign). After his appointment to head of the NSC in 1997, Berger prioritized China policy, drew foreign policy control into the White House, reduced interdepartmental infighting, and kept the administration on message.¹⁴¹ Berger never took it upon himself to become the new Kissinger or Brzezinski, but there is little doubt that by replacing Lake, he reasserted the prominence of the NSC in the presidential foreign policy decision-making system.

The accidental bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade, despite being described by Robert Sutter as "the most important incident in U.S.-China relations after the Tiananmen crackdown",¹⁴² "barely registered" in America. The event continues to be viewed as 'barbaric' in China (an article in the *People's Daily* from May 7th 1999 describes NATO, "headed by the US, brazenly us[ing] missiles to attack China's embassy in Belgrade").¹⁴³ However, in the US, images of the angry demonstrations in China that followed made it into the US news, but the story quickly faded after a couple of days.¹⁴⁴ The lack of attention was partly due to Clinton's continuing problems resulting from the Lewinsky

¹³⁸ Rodman (2009), pp.207-208

¹³⁹ Garrison (2005), p.149

¹⁴⁰ Garrison (Apr.2007), p.117; Garrison (2005), p.137

¹⁴¹ Garrison (2005), p.149

¹⁴² Sutter (2010), p.109

¹⁴³ *People's Daily Online* (May 9th 2009 - <http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/90776/6654193.html> – accessed January 31st 2011)

¹⁴⁴ Karabell (2009), p.47

Scandal (and the zeal with which the Republicans pursued it), but also because it occurred shortly after the Cox Committee's infamous report in May, which "unequivocally declared" that China "had been stealing U.S. nuclear technology throughout the 1990s", which would allow Chins to "develop a sophisticated nuclear arsenal more rapidly than had been anticipated."¹⁴⁵ With tensions, tempers and passions high, the American and Chinese administrations looked again to secret and private discussions, away from the media spotlight. Clinton "decided to pursue a lower-profile path and work privately with allies in Congress, of which there were many but who had to tread carefully lest they be seen as apologists for China or complicit in the scandals engulfing the White House."¹⁴⁶

A coherent China policy "proved elusive" amidst contentious American domestic debate during the 1990s. The debate was not stilled until the 9/11 terrorist attacks, which muffled continued American concerns over China "amid an overwhelming American concern to deal with the immediate, serious, and broad consequences of the global war on terrorism."¹⁴⁷

Before 9/11, however, George W Bush took a harder line towards China, more in line with congressional, media and other American critics.¹⁴⁸ denying that China was a 'partner', and instead labelling it a 'competitor'. Echoing Cold War rhetoric and fears, Bush argued that China was collecting and developing technology aimed at weakening the US, it was an 'intelligence threat', "an enemy of religious freedom and a sponsor of forced abortion,"¹⁴⁹ and also a weapons' dealer to some regimes considered truly reprehensible by the American press, public and elites (e.g., Khartoum). Following 9/11, "there [was] considerable speculation that U.S.-China relations took a fundamental turn for the better... in that joint opposition to terrorism became the new strategic underpinning" for

¹⁴⁵ Karabell (2009), p.124

¹⁴⁶ Karabell (2009), p.126

¹⁴⁷ Sutter (2010), p.97

¹⁴⁸ Sutter (2010), p.5

¹⁴⁹ Suettinger (2003), pp.417-418

Sino-US relations.¹⁵⁰ That being said, there remained a stark difference in how the term ‘terrorist’ was utilised: where the US targeted groups like Al Qaeda, China took aim at Uighurs in Xinjiang, and also took a tougher approach to dissidents from Tibet and the Falun Gong sect.

Like Clinton before him, and in contrast with his father, George W. Bush was not particularly engaged or interested in foreign policy. As a result of his inattention, and despite a hierarchically organised decision-making system, “the lack of White House coordination and presidential involvement left competing policy definitions to flourish and two policy channels to emerge.” Bush himself began his presidency with a hard-line definition of China as a potential threat and strategic competitor. This opinion mellowed after the April 2001 EP-3 Spy Plane crisis, when a US surveillance plane collided with a Chinese fighter. Despite the President’s success in navigating this incident, “an internal battle between two competing strains of thought... vied for dominance” of China and East Asia policy.¹⁵¹ Identifying which faction was ascendant at any given time can help explain the administration’s foreign policy decisions. The two competing definitions of foreign policy are frequently characterised as the ‘realist’ and ‘neoconservative’, even though the latter is often incorrectly attributed to all unpopular decisions and actors in the Bush administration.

Condoleezza Rice, Bush’s first National Security Adviser, enjoyed a close relationship with the President. Having coordinated Soviet policy in George H.W. Bush’s NSC, she had been “groomed as a protégé” of Brent Scowcroft.¹⁵² During George W. Bush’s presidential campaign Rice had been a key foreign policy adviser, and authored a *Foreign Affairs* article that stressed the need to re-focus US foreign policy on great power diplomacy with Russia and China,¹⁵³ echoing the realist sentiments of Bush Senior and Scowcroft. Unfortunately, however, “she proved to be unwilling or unable to broker the differences between the hard-line and pragmatic factions” at work in the administration.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁰ Suettinger (2003), p.417

¹⁵¹ Garrison (Apr.2007), p.118

¹⁵² Mann (2004), p.8

¹⁵³ Rice (2000)

¹⁵⁴ Garrison (Apr.2007), p.119

Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld, who had been one of the more liberal and dovish members of the Nixon administration, became one of the most hawkish officials after moving to the Defence Department under Ford and again under George W. Bush.¹⁵⁵ Under Bush, Rumsfeld quickly became embroiled in the EP-3 crisis, when he refused to apologise to the Chinese. A blunt rhetorical approach to China would be a lasting characteristic of Rumsfeld's relations with the Chinese. Before 9/11 and the invasion of Iraq, Rumsfeld went on record accusing China of helping Iraq develop weapons systems, and often voiced support for Taiwan. As the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq extended and the situation on the ground worsened, Rumsfeld adopted an "increasingly pragmatic" approach to China, despite inflammatory comments concerning China's military modernisation on the eve of his 2005 visit to the country.¹⁵⁶

The Office of the Vice President (OVP), under the tight control of Dick Cheney, became a 'lightning-rod' for criticism and bureaucratic strife. Insiders complained frequently of the operating procedures of the OVP, how "they make a decision, and they make it in secret", often in ways counter to other bureaucratic entities, and then "foist it on the government", creating confusion and resentment,¹⁵⁷ much as Kissinger's and Brzezinski's secretive control over decision-making did in the 1970s.

Cheney's OVP would be a key component in Bush's initial China policy. Many OVP staffers were, according to Robert Dreyfuss, "obsessed with what they saw as a looming, long-term threat from China." This was, for I. Lewis "Scooter" Libby, Dean McGrath (chief of staff), and Jonathan Burks (Cheney's special assistant), an outgrowth from their involvement in Christopher Cox's "wild-eyed" investigation of alleged Chinese spying in the US. For many in the Bush administration, especially among these Cheney aides, but also some Defence Department officials such as Paul Wolfowitz and Douglas Feith, China

¹⁵⁵ Mann (2004), p.81

¹⁵⁶ Wang (2009), p.40

¹⁵⁷ Dreyfuss (May 2006), p.34

offered a solution to “enemy deprivation syndrome”, which the Pentagon could use to justify procurement requests in future budgets.¹⁵⁸

According to Scott McClellan, a former Bush spokesman, when it came to foreign policy, “lurking behind it all remained the magic man, Vice President Cheney”.¹⁵⁹ On China-policy, North Korea, the war in Iraq, pressure for Iranian regime change, and issues of detentions, torture, and spying by the NSA, “the muscle” of the OVP office “prevailed” in formulating policy and strategy.¹⁶⁰ According to Dean McGrath, the permanent bureaucracy was often “not on board, especially on... issues where you’re trying to change things,” which meant the OVP saw itself as an institution doing battle with a resistant bureaucracy. Aaron Friedberg, China specialist and former OVP director of policy planning, agrees that the foreign policy bureaucracy was an obstacle to the administration and Cheney’s agenda, supporting Halperin’s thesis of an inflexible foreign policy establishment resistant to change: “It’s not an active resistance. It’s a passive scepticism about the whole direction of policy.”¹⁶¹

Cheney and Rumsfeld “prioritised building missile defence to secure American security unilaterally” and (like Reagan) argued that US interests in East Asia did not depend on improving relations with a “hostile” China, but on developing the relationships with major Asian democratic partners.¹⁶² Among Cheney’s aides were the “anti-China, geopolitical Asia hands” Stephen Yates and Samantha Ravich, through whom “the fulcrum of Cheney’s foreign policy... can be traced” – which linked energy, China, Iraq, Israel, and oil in the Middle East.¹⁶³ For key Cheney advisers, US-Middle East policy was tied to China, through its appetite for oil, which makes it a strategic competitor in the Persian Gulf region. Thus, “they regard the control of the Gulf as a zero-sum game.”¹⁶⁴

In contrast to the hard line espoused by Cheney, Wolfowitz, and Rumsfeld, Bush’s first Secretary of State, Colin Powell, espoused a pragmatic position, and

¹⁵⁸ Dreyfuss (May 2006), p.35

¹⁵⁹ McClellan (2008), p.247

¹⁶⁰ Dreyfuss (May 2006), p.32

¹⁶¹ McGrath, Friedberg, cited in: Dreyfuss (May 2006), p.34

¹⁶² Garrison (Apr.2007), p.119

¹⁶³ Dreyfuss (May 2006), pp.33-35

¹⁶⁴ Dreyfuss (May 2006), p.35

“recognised that the U.S. shared interests with China and emphasised that a multilateral approach to foreign policy provided the best means to secure U.S. interests.” The early EP-3 incident and the 9/11 attacks shaped a “fragile convergence” around Powell’s pragmatic position; the emphasis was that “a positively engaged China was conducive to both stability and security in East Asia.” This left room for different bureaucratic factions to manoeuvre for dominance, which meant the State Department “could influence the overall tone but not necessarily how many aspects of the China policy were implemented.”¹⁶⁵ As secretary, Powell preferred to defer to the career foreign service officers, a fact that, along with his frequently independent views, caused other foreign policy actors to “consider him something less than a complete team player.”¹⁶⁶

The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as the broader War on Terror would dominate the focus of the Bush administration, which has led some to suggest East Asia was ‘forgotten’ during Bush’s presidency. This has partly been reinforced by the literature published on Bush foreign policy, which almost exclusively focuses on the Middle East, to the exclusion of China and other key strategic and economic issues. Debate had taken on a “sharply partisan cast” during the latter half of Clinton’s administration, with Republicans “moving away from the views of Henry Kissinger and George H.W. Bush toward a darker view of China”, largely to differentiate themselves from Clinton, who had adopted the ‘engagement’ approach similar to that of his predecessors. Suettinger believes that, “while this debate moderated as the U.S. fight against terrorism dominated the nation’s attention, its return is likely at some point,”¹⁶⁷ and one cannot “discern a sense of permanence about the change.” Nevertheless, post-9/11, “there has been an important improvement in the tone and content of the official relationship”, which was reflected in the three summit meetings between Presidents George W Bush and Jiang Zemin within one year of Bush’s re-election.¹⁶⁸ In addition, American preoccupation with the war on terrorism made it more difficult for interest groups and other activists

¹⁶⁵ Garrison (Apr.2007), p.119

¹⁶⁶ McClellan (2008), p.243

¹⁶⁷ Suettinger (2003), p.419

¹⁶⁸ Suettinger (2003), p.440

to gain public or private attention in Congress and elsewhere that they “seemed to need in order to pressure for changes in U.S. policies toward China.”¹⁶⁹

The “realities and complexities” of US-China relations “soon limit[ed] the influence that any one ideology or personality” could exert over the relationship,¹⁷⁰ which may explain the personnel changes of 2005. Thanks to “a misguided war and a bungled occupation” and a “string of foreign policy failures that... alienated U.S. allies and triggered a wave of anti-American feeling around the globe,” the numbers and influence of Cheney aides espousing more militaristic and ideological strategies – as opposed to the pragmatism of Rice and Hadley –declined.¹⁷¹

In March 2005, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice visited India to negotiate a nuclear deal, which would be ratified in March 2006. The deal “cast aside forty years of hostility and suspicion between the two countries”, and ended almost a decade of tension over India’s nuclear weapons tests in 1998. The deal agreed to commence collaboration over civil nuclear energy and to “sweep aside” decades of nuclear-proliferation agreements: “India was being made a very special case, in a manner designed to help boost both its economic strength and its military capacity. And that exception was being made for a very special reason: the rise of China.”¹⁷² The discussions had begun during Clinton’s administration, but Bush’s predecessor had not been willing to take the final step,¹⁷³ perhaps as a perceived weakness in the wake of White House scandals, and a Republican Congress unwilling to hand him a foreign policy victory. India was seen as the only country in the region able to balance China, so, where Nixon had used China to balance the Soviet Union, Bush would use India to balance China. Neither America nor India said explicitly that China is the reason for the US-India nuclear deal, but “there cannot really be any other explanation for India’s exceptional treatment,” writes Bill Emmott.¹⁷⁴

¹⁶⁹ Sutter (2010), p.127

¹⁷⁰ Wang (2009), p.30

¹⁷¹ Dreyfuss (May 2006), p.32

¹⁷² Emmott (2009), p.2

¹⁷³ Emmott (2009), p.3

¹⁷⁴ Emmott (2009), pp.3-4

With the brief, minor setback caused by the EP-3 collision, therefore, after 1999, the US-China relationship “assumed a low profile” in both America and China. Even when China officially joined the WTO in December 2001, it was “at most a two-day story, quickly relegated to the business pages and pushed aside for more pressing concerns such as the rumblings about Afghanistan and the whereabouts of Osama bin Laden.”¹⁷⁵

TAIWAN

On issues relating to Taiwan, the norm internalised by American policymakers and by members of both Republican and Democratic policy elites has been “to use leverage on Beijing officials not to threaten the security of (much less invade) Taiwan while, at the same time, keeping Taipei officials from unduly provoking their counterparts in Beijing.”¹⁷⁶

Nixon and Kissinger’s efforts to re-open normal relations with China fundamentally changed the place of Taiwan in US foreign policy. In order to secure an agreement on US-China relations, Kissinger had to pledge to follow a One China policy, which stated that Taiwan was part of China, governed by Beijing. This process was completed under Carter and his National Security Adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski (who utilised many of the same tactics and diplomatic strategies as Kissinger).

The original China Lobby prevented Washington from having high-level contact with mainland China from 1949 until Henry Kissinger’s secret trip to Beijing in July 1971. At that point, “Nixon and Kissinger concluded that they could manoeuvre China into their diplomacy as a counterweight to the Soviet Union”, and that ties with China were of “supreme importance to that goal”. To obviate opposition, Kissinger met with the Chinese secretly until the administration was ready to present a *fait accompli*, the establishment of contacts and relations with the mainland. With that one stroke, Nixon halved the power of the China Lobby. All the lobby could do from then on was to help

¹⁷⁵ Karabell (2009), p.133

¹⁷⁶ Viotti (2010), p.34

make it impossible for Washington to abandon Taiwan to China, “something no president would have done anyway.”¹⁷⁷

President Reagan’s policy and approach to Taiwan would be indicative of future policy. The immediate China issue facing Reagan’s administration was arms sale to Taiwan, the inclusion of advanced fighter aircraft in the deal, and how the deal would influence negotiations for a new communiqué of understanding with China. For conservative Taiwan supporters in the administration – such as Allen, Secretary of Defence Caspar Weinberger, and several members of the White House staff – the sale was seen as a way to highlight America’s continued commitment to the safety of Taiwan in the wake of normalisation with China, and also to signal that Taiwan remained more important than China to American strategic interests in East Asia. On the other hand, Secretary Haig led a group at State who “worked to formulate a policy that acknowledged China’s central importance in American strategic foreign policy goals vis-a-vis the Soviets.”¹⁷⁸

To shape the new administration’s East Asian policy agenda, Haig had to overcome Reagan’s “pre-existing negative beliefs about China”, formed over the course of his long, anti-communist career, and to convince the president that positive gains from closer ties to China did not mean betraying Taiwan.¹⁷⁹ Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs Richard V. Allen (there was “no stronger supporter of Taiwan” within Reagan’s camp), also helped position the president closer to the centre on China to avoid undermining the Nixon-initiated bipartisan consensus. To convince the president, Haig resorted to coupling domestic politics with strategic considerations. Art Hummel, Reagan’s first Ambassador to Beijing, recalls that Haig’s argument was that “we Republicans cannot have, in our first year in office, a foreign policy disaster like a rupture with the PRC. This would hurt us domestically.”¹⁸⁰ Unfortunately, Reagan’s tendency towards policy incoherence (be it from a genuine lack of a position, or domestic political calculations) meant

¹⁷⁷ Gelb (2010), pp.149-150

¹⁷⁸ Garrison (Apr.2007), p.114

¹⁷⁹ Garrison (Apr.2007), p.114

¹⁸⁰ Hummel, quoted in: Garrison (Apr.2007), p.114 - See also, Haig (1984), p.214

he often muddled his position on China, and made many “incendiary” remarks that resulted in frequent Chinese “paroxysms of denunciation” – such as transforming the unofficial American Institute in Taiwan into an official US-government-run operation.¹⁸¹ After Carter broke relations with Taiwan in 1979, Reagan “dumped Carter’s act on the bonfire of conservative rage over the sellout of American friends and allies.” Reagan, who still sympathised with leaders in Taipei, believed “American leaders, especially Democratic... had neglected or abandoned... the traditional alliances on which American security was based,”¹⁸² and it was therefore Republicans’ responsibility to show support for traditional US allies. Tyler characterised Reagan’s approach to China as one based on emotional and ideological argument, rather on intellectual argument.¹⁸³ As we saw regarding Congressional policymaking in the wake of Tiananmen, this is wholly American/traditional.

Haig wanted to militarise the US-China relationship, or “strategic association” as it became known (to enter into an “alliance” with a communist state was considered unwise domestic politics), in the hope that advanced weapons technology sold to the Chinese would be deployed along the 4,150 mile Sino-Soviet border.¹⁸⁴ Haig, like Kissinger, “believed that America’s strategic interests lay on the mainland”, but his attempts to bring the president around were hampered by Reagan’s tendency to confuse “sentimentalism with national interest”, not to mention the Taiwan lobby, which had learned how to “push his buttons.”¹⁸⁵

The negotiations over arms-sales to Taiwan were also “hampered by Reagan’s inability to avoid gratuitous insults to Chinese sensibilities.”¹⁸⁶ The Reagan administration very quickly undermined the efforts of Presidents Nixon, Ford, and Carter to create a ‘strategic alignment’ with China at America’s side. Because of Reagan’s indelicate, “unprogrammed” remarks and rhetoric, China chose instead to reposition itself equidistant from the USA and USSR, and

¹⁸¹ Tyler (2000), pp.290-291

¹⁸² Tyler (2000), p.290

¹⁸³ Tyler (2000), pp.290-291,294

¹⁸⁴ Tyler (2000), p.296

¹⁸⁵ Tyler (2000), p.297

¹⁸⁶ Cohen (2010), p.227

“scurrilous attacks on the United States began to appear again in the Chinese press.” After the August 7th 1982 new Joint Communiqué, which dealt with the US’s insistence on continued arms sales to Taiwan, Reagan made a number of unilateral moves that ‘reinterpreted’ the agreement. He “secretly” filed a memorandum with the NSC stating that he understood the communiqué’s promise to not increase sales, but that it was valid *only* if the balance of power across the Taiwan Straits did not change – this argument would again be deployed by George H.W. Bush (see below). If the situation changed, the president believed he had the authority to increase weapons-sales to Taiwan to further aide its self-defence. Reagan had “no intention of abandoning Taiwan”.¹⁸⁷

Events or issues related to Taiwan have become the “most likely to create tensions” in Sino-American relations. This is partly a result of the “incongruities of the so-called foundations of the relationship,” the three joint communiqués.¹⁸⁸ Suettinger argues that the key phrases that enabled agreement on the 1972 communiqué are no longer true:

“The United States acknowledges that all Chinese on either side of the Taiwan Strait maintain there is but one China and that Taiwan is a part of China. The U.S. government does not challenge that position. It reaffirms its interests in a peaceful settlement of the Taiwan question by the Chinese themselves.”¹⁸⁹

The Taiwanese, however, have given plenty of evidence that they are still very much intent on being recognised as independent from Mainland China, despite increased economic ties to China. Suettinger’s negative opinion of the communiqués was shared by Assistant Secretary of Defence James Lilley, who argued in 1992 that the first Communiqué was an “anachronism”.¹⁹⁰ Where the communiqués put Taiwan on the back-burner, thereby reducing the possibility of conflict across the Taiwan Straits, the 1979 signing of the Taiwan Relations

¹⁸⁷ Cohen (2010), pp.227-228

¹⁸⁸ Suettinger (2003), p.435

¹⁸⁹ 1972 Joint Communiqué, quoted in: Suettinger (2003), p.435

¹⁹⁰ Cohen (2010), p.250

Act (TRA) inflamed an issue that had effectively been left to run in neutral.¹⁹¹ Under the TRA, the US is obliged to sell defensive weapons to Taiwan, to the chagrin of Beijing. The 1982 Joint Communiqué agreed to a reduction of these sales over time, but in 1992 George H.W. Bush agreed to a considerable, provocative sale of F-16 fighters to Taiwan. The president argued that the sale was in the spirit of the TRA – given China’s recent purchase of Russian-made fighters considerably more advanced than Taiwan’s aging air force, the president argued the sale met US commitments of aiding Taiwan’s self-defence.¹⁹² At home, Bush’s F-16 deal was well-received by manufacturers in Texas, but also seen as a cynical election ploy. The deal came at a difficult point in Sino-American relations, at the time of the MFN debate and a US Trade Representative poised to sanction China on its tariff- and nontariff-barriers to American products. Bush “wavered”, but “domestic political considerations ultimately overcame his doubts” about the impact such a deal would have on the carefully-managed US-China relationship.¹⁹³ Despite Bush’s assurances to the Chinese that the decision was political, Beijing still overreacted: Chinese arms sales to Pakistan resumed, Beijing pledged to provide Iran with a nuclear reactor, and stepped up pressure in Washington on every issue that was important to them – “no arms sale would go uncontested, no visit unprotected, no hint of change in the procedures for U.S.-Taiwan relations unchallenged.” To dampen Chinese retaliation, Bush vetoed the 1992 US-China Act, and signed a market access agreement “long on promise and short on details”.¹⁹⁴

“Congress has taken a very activist approach to preserving Taiwan’s security for a variety of reasons. Taiwan is now a full-fledged ‘values issue’, rather than a national security question, owing to the island’s transformation into a thriving and colorful democracy.”¹⁹⁵

Beijing’s “typically thin-skinned” reaction to Congressional legislation on Taiwan only exacerbates the image of China as a bully, increases tensions and bolsters Congressional and public support for a Taiwan seen to be living under

¹⁹¹ Suettinger (2003), pp.435-436

¹⁹² Cohen (2010), p.250

¹⁹³ Cohen (2010), p.250

¹⁹⁴ Suettinger (2003), p.139

¹⁹⁵ Suettinger (2003), p.437

the oppressive shadow of hundreds of Chinese missiles pointed directly at them.¹⁹⁶

Taiwan was a particular problem during Clinton's administration. That being said, for such a fractured policy-making team, the Taiwan issues offered moments of clear policy coherence regarding China, even if domestic political considerations were key in helping to create interdepartmental unity. The first confrontation over Taiwan was with regards to Lee Teng-hui's request for a visa for Hawaii (which he would be visiting en route to Central America). The Clinton State Department, fearful of provoking China, countered with an offer of a reception in a transit lounge. Lee, naturally, rejected this gesture and instigated "a strikingly successful lobbying effort". Since the end of the Second World War, no country had been more successful at "manipulating the American government" than Taiwan, save Israel. Since the TRA, however, there have been few Taiwanese victories. Both houses of Congress passed nonbinding resolutions insisting that visas be issued to Taiwanese officials – in both this instance (which the administration refused) and when Lee requested a visa to visit his alma mater, Cornell University.¹⁹⁷ All of Clinton's advisers had concurred with the decision to issue Lee a visa in May 1995 for his Cornell speech, disregarding warnings from China specialists at State, on the NSC staff, and also the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Secretary Christopher, Secretary Perry, and Lake joined in recommending to Clinton that the visa be issued, "fearing that Congress would work some mischief to the Taiwan Relations Act if we did not."¹⁹⁸ Tyler reports that in this instance, Clinton had "dominated" the decision-process, as he believed the issue was one of freedom of speech, a value held very dearly by the American people. Clinton also saw issuing the visa himself as a way to retain Executive control of the issue, and avoid a binding resolution from Congress, which would have raised the possibility of a need for a presidential veto – "I don't want my first veto to be in support of... China,"

¹⁹⁶ Suettinger (2003), p.438

¹⁹⁷ Cohen (2010), p.255

¹⁹⁸ Christopher (2001), p.243

Clinton is reported to have remarked, reflecting the “political terror” of having to support a regime he had vilified during his campaign.¹⁹⁹

Taiwan’s lobbyists were successful, but “the key to their success was the fact that Taiwan was now a democracy, assuring it support across the political spectrum”, including the White House.²⁰⁰

“Delight in the political evolution of Taiwan, combined with anger at the ‘Butchers of Beijing’ prompted American political leaders to support Taiwan with full knowledge that their actions were offensive to the People’s Republic.”²⁰¹

The White House’s decision to issue the visa had unfortunate repercussions that same year. Bolstered by what they saw as America condoning Taiwanese Democracy and by extension independence, political discourse during the lead-up to Taiwan’s first free elections was infused with the rhetoric of independence, which Beijing would not abide. In response, the PLA stepped up provocative exercises in and around the Taiwan Straits. Clinton requested that China cease these operations, but instead Beijing reminded Clinton that China now had the power to inflict heavy costs on American forces if events escalated.²⁰² Among Clinton’s senior advisers, “there was no doubt” that the administration was “reaping the harvest of the abrupt decision” regarding Lee’s visa. The issue was not helped by the fact that the Taiwanese leader’s speech had been broadcast around the world, and during his speech he proclaimed the sovereignty of Taiwan.²⁰³ There appeared to be a state of “denial” in the White House following the PLA build-up, as if Clinton and his foreign policy principals did not believe China would go ahead with exercises.²⁰⁴ Clinton dispatched the USS Nimitz through the Straits. In February 1996, the PLA continued its military build-up along the coast of the Straits; and in March 1996, Chinese missiles ‘bracketed’ Taiwan, in a clear message that no part of the island was safe from potential Chinese attack. In response, the Clinton

¹⁹⁹ Tyler (1999), pp.21-25

²⁰⁰ Cohen (2010), p.255

²⁰¹ Cohen (2010), p.255

²⁰² Cohen (2010), p.256

²⁰³ Tyler (1999), p.23

²⁰⁴ Tyler (1999), p.26

administration dispatched two carrier groups to the Straits, and this show of force defused the situation. The Taiwanese elections were held on schedule, and the pro-independence Lee was elected. After Lee's victory, the PLA packed up and the US carrier groups were re-tasked. The Taiwan Crisis of 1995-6 reminded American leaders that China "could easily become a dangerous adversary, that the partnership of the 1970s and 1980s had ended with the Tiananmen massacre, [and] that the efforts by both Bush and Clinton to accommodate China's rising power in the world had not been reciprocated by the Chinese."²⁰⁵

George W. Bush came to office expressing determination that his administration would do "whatever it takes" to defend Taiwan, and also announced that the use of force would be an option should the PLA choose to attack Taiwan. President Bush continued to authorise arms sales to Taiwan, including the largest-to-date in 2001 (of destroyers and diesel submarines, but not including the controversial Aegis destroyers). The Bush administration also reiterated America's acceptance of and adherence to the One-China policy, being careful to curb "potentially destabilising" pro-independence proposals.²⁰⁶

Taiwan policy during the second Bush presidency moved beyond the control of the State Department. The Pentagon's "clear policy position, its size, resources, and central importance to policy implementation" gave it the "ability to circumvent State Department initiatives." The Pentagon's public focus on arms sales to Taiwan, and also on contingency planning, conflicted with the State Department's position, which acknowledged the need for assisting Taiwan, but recommended that "relations with Taiwan should be kept low key so that the U.S. avoided unnecessary and potentially destabilising political confrontations with the PRC."²⁰⁷ The State Department, therefore, preferred to "manage arms sales quietly and limit military relations in order to avoid any confrontation with China." To the benefit of administration pragmatists, 9/11 and the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq helped frame China in a more positive

²⁰⁵ Cohen (2010), pp.256-257

²⁰⁶ Cohen (2010), p.268; Sutter (2010), p.132

²⁰⁷ Garrison (Apr.2007), pp.119-120

light, “more firmly as an ally in the strategic struggle against terrorism”, emphasising mutual interests and potential gains through cooperation.²⁰⁸

On the controversial subject of visas for Taiwanese officials, George W. Bush’s administration allowed President Chen Shui-bian to travel more freely in the US.²⁰⁹ Differences between America and China subsided somewhat after the 2008 election of President Ma Ying-jeou, who has “sharply shifted Taiwan toward a more cooperative stance in relations with China.”²¹⁰ This, in conjunction with the War on Terror’s easing of overall US-China relations, has meant a concurrent easing of tensions over Taiwan (temporary as they may be).

US-CHINA ECONOMIC RELATIONS

Idealism in American foreign policy, particularly in regards to relations with China, has been a mixed affair. Realism retains a considerable hold over American foreign policy and China policy, but it has evolved over time. This is also true of the liberal tradition in US foreign policy, which has found room to breathe in the post-Cold War era, as security concerns give way to a broader field. That being said, the myriad forms realism can take offer some areas of overlap (particularly in economics).

The US-China economic relationship is fraught with little-understood issues like currency revaluation, intellectual property rights, and China’s internal market structure and ‘rules’. The main, contemporary issues in US-China economic relations are as follows: concerns over the “massive” trade deficit (\$256 billion in 2008); Chinese currency policies and practices, despite the July 1st 2005 procedural change, which allowed the currency to revalue slightly, but not enough to calm the clamouring voices in Congress; American dependence on Chinese financing of US government budget deficits, and the weakness this overreliance conveys, despite it helping keep the US economy somewhat balanced; and China’s underperformance in the enforcement of

²⁰⁸ Garrison (Apr.2007), p.119 – See also Chapter Five

²⁰⁹ Sutter (2010), p.132

²¹⁰ Sutter (2010), p.2

intellectual property rights.²¹¹ In addition, the hurdles China puts in place that hinder American and other foreign businesses from setting up properly and independently in China are a cause for tension.²¹² China's non-tariff barriers and practices prevent foreign businesses enjoying the same open markets the Chinese enjoy in the West.

George Schultz, who replaced Haig as Reagan's Secretary of State, did not share his predecessor's estimate of China's strategic importance. Reagan had "unnerved" Chinese leaders by his "evident affection for Taiwan and his reluctance to endorse the Shanghai Communiqué", but Schultz "reined in" the president's rhetoric.²¹³ Under Schultz's guidance, the US-China relationship became "less dramatic, more businesslike." As economic issues became paramount, the president's "commitment to free trade seemed more advantageous to Beijing than the neo-protectionism threatened by the Democrats," and relations entered a calmer period. The ritual condemnations of US interference over Taiwan continued from the Chinese leadership and press, but the growth in trade, and increased social and educational exchanges meant the leadership in Beijing ultimately grew content with Reagan's legacy on US-China relations.²¹⁴

This 'businesslike' relationship continued for much of the post-Cold War era, disturbed only by the handful of crises mentioned already in this chapter. Issues remain, of course, and with the 2008 Economic Crisis, many of these issues have become exacerbated. During the George H.W. Bush and Clinton administrations, the predominant economic concern was the annual negotiation of China's MFN status, which will form a case study below. The George W Bush administration's economic dealings with China were less well-publicised as, like everything else, the War on Terror and conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan dominated political minds of the time. I will discuss in brief the issues with which George W Bush was confronted, after a discussion of MFN.

²¹¹ Sutter (2010), pp.6,131

²¹² Donnelly (Jan.31st 2011), p.9

²¹³ Cohen (2010), p.249

²¹⁴ Cohen (2010), pp.229-230

CHINA'S MOST FAVOURED NATION STATUS

The issue has already been discussed with regards to special interests and the MFN debate, but it bears revisiting in this chapter. The Most Favoured Nation debates in the United States provided an annual period of tension in US-China relations as, every spring, human rights activists, anticommunist ideologues, supporters of Tibet and Taiwan, and other interests unfriendly to Beijing would “air their grievances and condemn China” in Washington and through the media.²¹⁵

In the wake of Tiananmen, and Bush's successful softening of Congressional retaliation, members of Congress turned their attention to the annual debate on China's Most Favoured Nation (MFN) trade status, seeing in it an opportunity to express their abhorrence of Beijing's policies, and also push their human rights agenda. For many members of Congress, China had become the epitome of everything America opposed in international affairs: a “tyrannical” government, oppressing democracy at every turn; intolerant of religion; a “mercantilist trade cheat”; an “uncontrolled proliferator” of weapons of mass destruction; a rising (perhaps only) military threat; a “murderer of unborn children” by forcing abortions and sterilizations on its own citizens. On May 2nd, 1990, H.R.2212 was issued, calling for considerable progress on human rights in order to renew MFN.²¹⁶ This was the beginning of the annual fight between Congress and the White House that would last until Clinton severed the connection between MFN and human rights.

In order to blunt Congressional action on MFN, President George H.W. Bush promised to appeal to US economic interests (by pushing for increased market access for American companies operating in China) and also normative values (by insisting on Taiwan's incorporation into GATT). When it came to human rights, however, he remained vague.²¹⁷ It was through George H.W. Bush's personal involvement (and perhaps his friendly relations with Deng) that US-China relations continued in a relatively stable manner, and were

²¹⁵ Cohen (2010), p.249

²¹⁶ Suettinger (2003), p.119

²¹⁷ Suettinger (2003), p.122

rescued from considerable damage at the hands of a vengeful Congress. If he had wished, Bush could have allowed Congress to take the lead on China policy, and benefitted domestically/politically. However, his realist nature prevented him from allowing inflamed public passions to derail what he saw as an important relationship, essential for ensuring US national interests and security in East Asia. At times, the president would toughen his position – for example, receiving the Dalai Lama, and expressing support for Taiwan’s independent admission to GATT (where previously, it was supposed to be contingent on China joining simultaneously) – which would usually provide him with the domestic support he needed to weaken Congressional attacks on China.²¹⁸ Nonetheless, meaningful progress on normalising debate on China’s MFN remained elusive during Bush’s presidency, and it was not uncommon for Bush officials to operate with agendas “largely dictated by congressional pressure”, as James Baker effectively did in late 1991, when he was sent to China.²¹⁹

It is interesting to note that, while Congress’s anger at Beijing’s crackdown in Tiananmen can be considered justified, the remedies they insisted on were clearly not viable: if all Congressional demands were met, China would have become “one of the most liberal, responsible states in the international community. It was not going to happen.”²²⁰ This either shows an unrealistic appreciation of what could be achieved, or a Congress intent on ruining any chance of China meeting its requirements.

After Tiananmen, American policymakers were torn between their desire to open China to US business interests on the one hand and, on the other, to take a strong stand against the autocratic government in Beijing. The first two years of Clinton’s presidency saw a powerful push toward human rights as a “defining feature” of post-Cold War era American foreign policy. “On that score, China was squarely in the sights of the human rights lobby.”²²¹ (The focus on human rights was first promoted by Carter, but it’s probable that the reason he was unable to promote it more was the tight strictures of Cold War security concerns.) Indeed,

²¹⁸ Cohen (2010), p.248

²¹⁹ Suettinger (2003), p.131

²²⁰ Cohen (2010), p.247

²²¹ Karabell (2009), pp.69-70

one of the first things newly-confirmed Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian affairs Winston Lord did was fly to Beijing and inform Chinese leaders that MFN was going to be conditioned on progress on human rights, and gave every impression that the Clinton team was fully prepared to levy tariffs on important (if not all) Chinese manufacturers.²²² Clinton had pledged during his election campaign to connect renewal of China's MFN status with progress on human rights, market access, and non-proliferation. Nancy Pelosi and George Marshall intended to hold him to these promises, proposing bills similar to those proposed during Bush's presidency.²²³ When congressional Democrats introduced human rights legislation to suspend China's trading privileges – legislation likely influenced by Clinton's campaign rhetoric – the White House “successfully promoted a compromise.” The statement he issued over China's trading privileges softened the human rights language to “overall significant progress”, an ambiguous requirement, compliance with which would be decided by the president; “Once the compromise was embodied in an executive order, the Democrats dropped the bill.”²²⁴

At the start of Clinton's presidency, issues with making China-policy were profound and they produced frustration at all levels of government, especially among the senior levels of the American diplomatic corps in China. According to one senior official, the problem with administration China policy began with the president, and the lack of control in policy making: There was “no capacity to decide anything,” which meant policy was effectively stuck in neutral (including the lack of a new Ambassador). The administration's diffuse and open management style, the lack of a solidifying crisis, and Clinton's continuing inattention to foreign affairs, meant China policy was left rudderless.²²⁵ The Clinton administration's focus on domestic politics further complicated China policy because, when addressed, it “was filtered through the lens of domestic political concerns,” which led one State Department official to characterise the

²²² Tyler (1999), p.30

²²³ Suettinger (2003), pp.162-163

²²⁴ Christopher (2001), p.237

²²⁵ Anonymous Officials, quoted in: Lampton (2001), p.321

government's inability to "sort out domestic needs from foreign needs" as "management by miasma".²²⁶

Three competing China policy definitions emerged during Clinton's first term, each embodying (to various degrees) an element of traditional US foreign policy – one for each key organisation in foreign policy bureaucracy. The State Department favoured human rights linkage; an economic/commercial agenda emphasising trade relations was pursued by the National Economic Council, the Treasury and Commerce Departments; and the Defence Department focussed on security interests. With a State Department and National Security Advisor paying little attention to security aspects of US-China relations, Clinton filled the policy "vacuum" left by these traditional shapers of China-policy with a set of advisers to pursue his economic agenda.²²⁷ To this end, the NEC operated its own China agenda, sending trade delegates to discuss China's entry into the WTO (finalised in 2001). The economic team pushed for MFN delinkage after 1993, when it became clear that not enough progress was being made on the human rights front, and a growing sense that the administration's focus on human rights might be threatening the overall well-being of the bilateral relationship.²²⁸

Trade between the US and China was still less than \$40 billion in 1994, but China was one of the fastest-growing markets for US goods at the time, and "the prospects for more in the future were impossible to ignore." Clinton, therefore, decided that not making trade with China contingent upon China's human rights record was in America's interest. Clinton promised that the US would continue to pressure China to reform, but announced in May that "trade would not be the primary source of that pressure."²²⁹ During the announcement, he repeatedly criticised China's human rights record, claiming that the policy of linkage "had reached the end of [its] usefulness"; but offered no suggestion as to what other methods of pressure would be open to future American administrations, and it

²²⁶ Lampton (2001), pp.320-321

²²⁷ Garrison (Apr.2007), p.117

²²⁸ Garrison (Apr.2007), p.117

²²⁹ Karabell (2009), p.70

is widely accepted that by ending linkage, Clinton gave away the final stick America had to wield against China on this issue.

Clinton's preference for his economic agenda led many Republicans to feel that the new president put "undue emphasis on commercial considerations to the detriment of national security concerns" and exhibited an "exaggerated faith in the peace-inducing properties of trade and multilateral institutions".²³⁰

After being punished with sanctions for selling missiles to Pakistan, China turned to European suppliers. This resulted in extensive lobbying from US corporations who did not wish to lose out to competitors in the burgeoning, lucrative China market. This in turn led the Clinton administration to issue waivers, a move that was not immune to scandal – for example, waivers were issued to Loral Corp and Hughes Electronics to sell satellite technology to China, both of whom had been contributors to Clinton's campaign. "At best, [Clinton] was putting corporate interests – and the jobs they claimed were at risk – ahead of what analysts believe to be the national interest in minimizing assistance to the PLA." Clinton pointed to the precedent set by every president since Nixon in this respect.²³¹

In 1994, the National Economic Council, the Commerce Department and NSC staffers sympathetic to business interests "shouldered aside" the State Department, with "the acquiescence of the president". These officials perceived little if any threat to US security from China, and stressed the importance of trade and investment to the bilateral relationship and also the American economy. Conceding that the Chinese government was "occasionally brutal", these officials nonetheless pointed to improvements in overall quality of life in China and moderate opening of Chinese society in order to promote a strategy of 'engagement' with China.

To begin with, Clinton found it very difficult to separate moralist and economic foreign policies and his domestic agenda. With this difficulty came the

²³⁰ Immerman (2010), p.220

²³¹ Cohen (2010), p.259

opportunity for a re-evaluation of the US-China relationship, and we see the first tentative steps towards a pluralist foreign policy.²³²

Given the internal advocacy for a strict China policy, not to mention Clinton's campaign promises and attacks on George H.W. Bush's "coddling" of Beijing, the turn-around on human rights was "striking".²³³ Initially, Clinton played a tough hand advocated by the State Department, until Lloyd Bentsen (Treasury), Robert Rubin (NEC), Ronald Brown and Jeffrey Garten (Commerce), and other business advocates in the administration convinced the president that China policy could not be held hostage by a single issue (human rights).²³⁴ When it came to the US-China economic relationship, "The White House was engaged in China policy, more and more meetings were kicked to a higher level, as appropriate with MFN... The economic people were more important and the White House took the lead."²³⁵

When Clinton came into office, China policy became the responsibility of Winston Lord. As stated in the Normative Relations section, above, Lord had split with the Bush administration following the Tiananmen Square massacre, and was "determined to hold Beijing to account for its transgressions at home and abroad."²³⁶ However, Lord's flexibility to operate alone was severely limited by Clinton's economic and policy advisers, who reminded the president about his economic campaign promises. Precipitating a trade war with China would have not only hurt China, but severely limited achievement of Clinton's economic agenda, and thereby his re-election hopes.²³⁷ Clinton's election victory gave the new president the ability to mellow Democratic attacks on China and the MFN debate, by issuing Executive Order 12850 on May 28th 1993. This granted MFN control to the White House (using much the same tactics as Bush). At the announcement, Clinton declared that the "annual battles" over MFN "divided our foreign policy and weakened our approach over China. It is time that a unified American policy recognised both the value of China and the

²³² Cohen (2010), pp.253-254

²³³ Karabell (2009), p.70

²³⁴ Tyler (1999), p.30

²³⁵ Lord, quoted in: Lampton (2001), p.292

²³⁶ Cohen (2010), p.251

²³⁷ Cohen (2010), pp.251-252

values of America.” According to Berger, this had always been the plan, to eventually “have a human rights policy and a trade policy, but not linking one to the other”; and by bringing control into the White House, the “hot-heads” could be excluded from decision-making.²³⁸

To further cement the central role of international economics in Clinton’s foreign policy, the newly-created NEC had “overlapping jurisdiction with the NSC”, which gave Rubin and Treasury Secretary Lloyd Bentsen seats on the NSC, and forced the national security adviser to consider economics when developing security policy.²³⁹ The revitalised commercial frame created a “broad engagement umbrella”, under which competing agendas could flourish. The shift in focus to economics corresponded to a change in authority over China policy, which saw control drawn away from undersecretaries of State, and frequently transferred to the Commerce and Treasury Departments, as well as the NEC as trade gained prominence.²⁴⁰

“By uncoupling morality from business, Clinton accelerated the rush of U.S. businesses into China and set back the agenda of those who wanted to use economic ties as a carrot to induce the Chinese government to change the nature of the political and legal system in China.”²⁴¹

GEORGE W. BUSH, ECONOMIC POLICY & CHINA

Before his run for the presidency, George W Bush appeared to adhere to an engagement strategy, believing in the economic success-breeds-democracy thesis. In 1999, the then-Governor of Texas said, “Economic freedom creates habits of liberty. And habits of liberty create expectations of democracy... Trade freely with China, and time is on our side.”²⁴²

China’s 2001 admittance into the WTO was the culmination of a decade and a half of negotiation, but it did not see an end to tensions in the US-China relationship. Issues pertaining to currency valuation, market access, intellectual

²³⁸ Suettinger (2003), pp.166-167

²³⁹ Garrison (2005), p.135

²⁴⁰ Garrison (Apr.2007), p.118

²⁴¹ Karabell (2009), p.73; Cohen (2010), p.254

²⁴² Bush, quoted in: Rachman (2011), p.134

property rights, textile quotas, and trade deficits all hover over the relationship, threatening to inflame relations in the near future (especially in the wake of the 2008 Economic Crisis).²⁴³

The US China-currency and trade debates have a tendency to heat up in election years. In 2004, these debates were particularly vocal and heated, as Congressional candidates railed against China's currency policy, and organised labour groups protested against China's manufacturing policies as well as corporate outsourcing. In this climate, neither President Bush, nor his opponent, Senator John Kerry, nor elected Representatives could ignore China as an issue. In March 2004, the United States filed its first complaint with the WTO about China's unfair discrimination against American semiconductors (echoing a complaint against Japan in the 1980s, when Japan was seen as the economic bogeyman).

A common belief (or, at the very least, accusation) of US congressmen is that China artificially devalues its currency in order to remain competitive and by extension hurt American producers and consumers, and there are almost yearly debates and investigations conducted on the issue. This narrative ignores America's own complicity in China's currency policy, and the impact American consumption has on China's decision to peg the yuan to the dollar.²⁴⁴ With regards to the election-cyclical nature of the prominence of these issues, Karabell points out:

"If the primary goal of U.S. policy had been to get China to reconsider its policies, public denunciations would have been the last tool selected. In truth, the denunciations of China in the United States were aimed more at a domestic American audience than at China itself."²⁴⁵

Comparisons to US-Japanese relations in the 1980s do not stop at technology. The aborted purchase by CNOOC of the small American oil

²⁴³ Wang (2009), p.103

²⁴⁴ See, for example: Rajan (Mar/Apr.2011), pp.104-116

²⁴⁵ Karabell (2009), pp.215-216

company, Unocal, was sometimes compared to the “hysteria”²⁴⁶ that characterised political discourse regarding Japanese purchases of such American landmarks as the Rockefeller Center in New York City. However, in the CNOOC-Unocal instance (mentioned also in Chapter Six), members of Congress objected to a foreign, “particularly a Chinese” entity owning an American energy interest (despite Unocal actually accounting for a negligible percentage of American energy consumption), and pushed Unocal to accept Chevron’s much reduced price.²⁴⁷

In September 2006, new Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson (who had extensive business connections with China from his time as CEO of Goldman Sachs) established the Strategic and Economic Dialogue (SED), which created a platform to address the economic challenges of the US-China relationship. Secretary Paulson spent an “enormous” amount of political capital in his attempts to bring Washington and Beijing closer together. Through the SED, Paulson was able to maintain a “comprehensive and friendly exchange” with Beijing, focusing on “the twin phantoms of exchange-rate targets and trade imbalances”,²⁴⁸ at a time when the Bush administration was distracted by the Middle East and its campaign against global terrorism. In addition, Paulson managed to discourage most “retaliatory” Congressional action against China’s rising trade surplus with the United States.²⁴⁹ By 2009, despite three meetings and Paulson’s considerable efforts, the SED has produced “generally modest”²⁵⁰ results (frequently reporting, vaguely “subtle but significant” progress on issues),²⁵¹ and “resolutions on key issues... have not been reached.”²⁵² This reveals how “even a powerful and determined cabinet-level official, even one with such vast ties to Chinese officials, can do only so much.”²⁵³ Part of the blame for lack of progress belongs to Congress, which “embarked on a spree of protectionist rhetoric and China bashing”, in return for which “Beijing did little

²⁴⁶ Wang (2009), p.106

²⁴⁷ Wang (2009), p.107; Newhouse (May/June 2009), p.91

²⁴⁸ *Wall Street Journal* (Jul.26th 2009)

²⁴⁹ Garten (Dec.9th 2008)

²⁵⁰ Garten (Dec.9th 2008)

²⁵¹ Wang (2009), p.110

²⁵² Wang (2009), p.107

²⁵³ Garten (Dec.9th 2008)

to further liberalize its markets to foreign trade or address its corruption-ridden banking system.”²⁵⁴

CONCLUSION: TOWARDS A PLURALIST CHINA GRAND STRATEGY

A pluralist grand strategy for China would argue that neither realism nor idealism adequately describes or prescribes the way the US thinks about China, and especially so since the global era emphasizes pluralization: we have to merge realism-idealism; we have to merge institutional interests within the collective executive; we have to merge domestic and overseas interest within US politics; and we have to grasp the complexity of the US-China relationship under globalization.

There are certain issues that highlight the pluralist nature of US politics – both domestic and foreign – and how the US has yet to find a concrete grand strategy, or at least a solidified manner to articulate this strategy. Taiwan, as shown above, is an issue that has wide-reaching attention from the whole US foreign policy system. The United States, for the moment, appears to still be stuck in the false dichotomy of having to choose between containment and engagement, and the media often reinforces the impression that the choice is “either-or”, reflecting an understanding of international relations lacking in nuance. The reality, as we have seen over the past three chapters, is that the American foreign policy process “is far more intricate and involved, more politicised and changeable” than “even the most sophisticated theories of hegemonic behaviour” can encompass.²⁵⁵

In the wake of the Cold War, and the end of the unifying security-based foreign policy, American foreign policy and, as we have seen, China policy especially, has become ever more impacted and complicated by domestic concerns and actors. This holds with Robert Jervis’s prediction that foreign policy will become more like domestic policy, in which “courses of action will be shaped less by a grand design than by the pulling and hauling of various

²⁵⁴ *Wall Street Journal* (Jul.26th 2009)

²⁵⁵ Suettinger (2003), p.420

interests, ideas, and political calculations". Or, in other words, "pluralism with a vengeance."²⁵⁶

Many popular and academic interpretations of US foreign policy (this thesis included) focus on external forces – including economic interests, international pressures, domestic political concerns, and public intellectuals – that can push presidents toward certain decisions over others, and help determine presidential behaviour. All of these forces are important, Dueck argues, but it remains worth remembering that "foreign policy is not made in exactly the same way as domestic policy in the United States."²⁵⁷ Suettinger, Dueck and Paul Peterson have all argued that there is no substitute for presidential leadership.²⁵⁸ In Peterson's words, "international theory clearly implies that the executive is likely to dominate the making of foreign policy," irrespective of "transient factors such as the vagaries of public opinion or the momentary absence of interest group pressure". This dominance is "rooted in the requirements imposed on the nation-state by the potentially anarchic quality of the international system,"²⁵⁹ and the position of the president as the sole foreign policy actor receiving comprehensive information, and capable of moving policy in one direction or another. This is difficult to refute. However, this chapter and the two preceding have shown that US foreign policy is not constructed in a vacuum, the President insulated from domestic political concerns and actors. The foreign policy process certainly retains distinct differences from domestic policy-making, but the truth is that domestic pluralisation is encroaching ever-more on the foreign policy-making process, and in this environment domestic actors cannot be dismissed so readily. Indeed, in many ways, partisan politics are far more important to eventual policy decisions than, for example, vested economic interests, as both political parties approach policy-making with a keen eye on how they will be received domestically, particularly during electoral cycles.²⁶⁰

²⁵⁶ Jervis (Summer 1998), pp.22-36

²⁵⁷ Dueck (2010), p.6

²⁵⁸ Suettinger (2003), p.426; Dueck (2010), p.7,300; Petterson (1994)

²⁵⁹ Peterson (1994), pp.231-232

²⁶⁰ Dueck (2010), p.294

When a president is engaged, a coherent policy process will emerge; with a disengaged president, relations can collapse or become steered by the parochial concerns of domestic constituencies, with their own competing interests, and individuals within administrations who will try to further their own agendas. The level of presidential engagement can have an impact on whether or not the plurality of foreign policy actors is positive or negative – the president acts as a filter for the plurality of inputs. When he's engaged, the influences are still there, but they are controlled by the Executive and the president in particular – this can also happen when an individual takes control (as when Kissinger and Brzezinski took the reins); because there has not been a Kissingerian figure in the post-Cold War world, the onus falls on the president to force direction in policy. Congress has proven too fragmented and the interests of Representatives too parochial to ever replace the long-term perspective of a president, his appointed deputies, or career staff. Even during the post-Cold War years, when Congress has become more activist in foreign policy, the role of the president has remained key in the passage of policy. This explains, in part, why George H.W. Bush was able to stand up to Representative Pelosi and Senator Mitchell in the fights over China's MFN status, and why Bill Clinton was able to decouple human rights from US-China economic relations despite considerable domestic opposition.

Peterson claims that "policy takes precedence over politics", because the international system "severely limits the sensible choices a country can make and shapes the processes by which these decisions are reached."²⁶¹ This is not necessarily clear, either. While it is true that some presidents – Nixon and George H.W. Bush in particular – pursued foreign policies that were grounded in international and long-term considerations, Presidents Clinton, Reagan and George W. Bush could be argued to have implemented and decided upon policies that were influenced more by domestic political concerns (especially true in the case of China). The nature of the international system can also explain the emergence of traditions in US foreign policy: no matter how much a

²⁶¹ Peterson (1994), p.232

president may want to pursue a liberal-moralist foreign policy, economic-realist concerns will exert a powerful pull on national and Executive attention.

Presidents Reagan, Clinton and George W. Bush “only rarely... intervene[d] to shape the course of China policy and to counter the infighting that plagued their administrations.” The inattentiveness of these presidents “contributed to mixed policy signals on China policy,”²⁶² and can explain policy difficulties experienced during these administrations. Contemporary evidence suggests that China issues will develop during a president’s second term, with a shift in focus and rhetoric as trends and traditions reassert themselves when neglected. Clinton and George W. Bush, particularly, experienced considerable change in China policy in their second terms. Why this should be the case is not absolutely clear, but it may involve reduced political pressures (no longer worrying about re-election), plus thought to one’s legacy. What is clear, however, is the importance of a president’s staff to changing the tone or policies of an administration. With Clinton, Berger’s elevation brought China policy both under tighter control and also closer to the fore. In Bush’s second term, the shifting away from neoconservative policies was a result of Condoleezza Rice’s elevation to State and Stephen Hadley’s assumption of the top NSA position.

In the post-Cold War world, we can see economic-realism, supplemented by the domestic political benefits of realpolitik and liberal-moralism, reasserting itself in China policy. By understanding and recognising this tradition in US foreign policy, the China policy of President Obama and his successors, its potential future course, and the enduring status quo of US-China relations becomes clearer (barring any catastrophic or game-changing event). Locating the role of the Executive Branch in the overall foreign policy system, therefore, is much easier than the media and special interests. While these non-governmental sectors can help reinforce the orthodox perceptions of realism and liberalism in US foreign policy, it is the Executive Branch, particularly the President and policy principles, who cement these traditions in practice by forming (sometimes unconsciously) a more pluralist strategy.

²⁶² Garrison (Apr.2007), p.122

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

This thesis has focused on understanding the role and influence of domestic actors on the construction of United States foreign policy. As stated in previous chapters, due to the complexity of US foreign policy, particularly US China policy, both realism and liberalism have been found wanting as theories to encompass and explain American policy toward China. However, the findings of this thesis suggest that a pluralist approach, drawing from both international realism and liberalism, and incorporating and accepting aspects of domestic political theory and pluralism *can* advance the study of American foreign relations and the making of China policy.

The contemporary global environment emphasizes pluralisation of international relations, as economic interdependence, and non-state actors and threats (including environmental threats) suggest that power politics alone can no longer account for state action. In addition, while the premise that nations pursue their own narrow self interests can hardly be refuted, there is evidence that more idealist policies are receiving increased favour. With regard the American foreign policy making experience and process, pluralism is even more essential to acquiring a fuller understanding: a merger of realism and idealism, institutional interests within the collective Executive, and the complex domestic and overseas interests operating within US politics are all essential to explaining US foreign policy. The reality, as has been stated before, is that the American foreign policy process is far more complex, politicised and changeable

than even the most sophisticated of international relations theories can encompass.¹

The importance of foreign policy trends and traditions are also clear. The existing differences in foreign policy dialogues are manifestations of American foreign policy traditions. All foreign policy actors discussed in this thesis focus, to varying degrees, on threat, advantage, and values (this will be expanded upon, below). In order to properly draw conclusions from this research, each research question posed in the introduction will be addressed individually.

1. What are the dominant formative processes that constitute US Foreign Policy in terms of intellectual trends and traditions and the multiple social and constitutional institutions that translate ideas about America's role in the world into a foreign policy posture that is recognisably a 'grand strategy'?

The key trends and traditions that run throughout the history of American foreign policy are clear: it is an uneasy balance between realism and liberal-moralism (or 'idealism'), with the former more dominant than the latter. These traditions inform the construction of US foreign policy by highlighting the importance of protecting the balance of power, promoting economic development and advancement, and also promoting the expansion of American values, while ensuring the survival, expansion and prosperity of the nation's domestic political, economic and social institutions and interests.

Since the nation's Founding, American grand strategy has been informed by the pursuit of economic continuity, specifically through the promotion of open and free international market economics. This tradition has taken on other incarnations, in order to suit other foreign policy imperatives. For example, capitalist expansion was one part of the Cold War 'containment' strategy, used to weaken the appeal of the Soviet economic model, and therefore slow or stop the spread of communism.

¹ Suettinger (2003), p.420

In addition to the realist tradition in American foreign policy has been its liberal-moral strain. This is not as long-lived as realism, as only with increased international prestige and power was the United States comfortable with pursuing liberal foreign policy objectives (although policy had often been cloaked in these terms). Some have argued, as mentioned in this thesis, that liberal rhetoric is merely a cover for more pragmatic realist foreign policies; however, given the popularity of liberal ideals, a case can be made for a genuine liberal tradition. Realism's predominance waxes and wanes depending on other security concerns, but also due to the varied American goals in different regions of the globe.

Economic expansion and advancement as a key driver of American foreign policy has been amply demonstrated in the first historical chapter and also in Chapters Four through Seven, as a result of the advance of globalisation following the end of the Cold War. This focus on economics as national interest adheres well to realist theory, as American officials have long considered economic wellbeing and expansion to be *a* (if not *the*) vital national interest.

The occasionally uncomfortable mix of realism and idealism has seen American foreign policy swing between favouring interests or ideals, depending on the personal biases at work in the Executive Office. It has yet to find a happy medium between the two. At its Founding, America's concerns were predominantly realist in nature: securing the fledgling nation from outside aggressors, implementing an economic foreign policy that would allow it to grow and prosper (for the American 'experiment' to succeed). As the United States developed and grew stronger, it became more secure in espousing a liberal foreign policy (for example, democracy promotion, humanitarian intervention, and the creation of and participation in international organisations). International pressures, not to mention domestic imperatives, have ensured that the realist tradition in American foreign policy has endured.

Ever since the end of World War II, American statesmen have been grappling with the tensions and trade-offs between American commercial and

strategic interests and American ideals,² as they attempt to bridge the divide between realist and idealist traditions that have become ingrained in the American political and public psyche. This explains why there is a need for a pluralist approach to foreign policy. While the Cold War allowed for the easier construction (though not necessarily execution) of Grand Strategy, one that combined the idealist promotion of democracy and a focus on human rights with realist strategic and economic requirements, post-Cold War foreign policy has found itself adrift. Without the ideological Cold War struggle, one might have expected a more balanced, pluralist foreign policy to emerge: the relative reduction in great power politics might have allowed the United States to incorporate more idealist traits and goals into its foreign policy, while continuing to focus on economic expansion and national defence. Presidents Clinton and George W. Bush certainly attempted to imbue American foreign policy with a moralist component, but international realities, domestic opposition, or a lack of presidential focus prevented a proper fusion.

2. What does a case study approach that balances the conventional concern with executive decision-making in foreign policy with analysis of the role of social institutions, like the media and social interest groups, have to tell us about the pluralised nature of the foreign policy process in contemporary America?

The case studies that feature in the two media chapters and Chapter Five indicate that the pluralised nature of the contemporary American foreign policy process is still in flux. Given the increased pluralisation of the process, the sheer number of actors involved makes it ever-more difficult to ascertain whether or not an actor is merely reinforcing traditional conceptions of American national interest, or if they are able to move the national interest – even by a fraction – towards a new grand conceptualisation. Walter McDougall has questioned whether or not the US government and its relevant agencies can formulate and execute grand strategy with “sufficient competence to secure the nation and

² Kaplan, F. (2008), p.113-114

defend its vital interests”.³ It would appear, from the evidence in this thesis, that the federal government *is* equipped to plan, coordinate and execute grand strategy to serve and defend American national interests. What remains unclear is to what extent the government, media, and special interests can affect the various stages of the process; or even if a single Grand Strategy is the optimal foreign policy. The case study approach has allowed for a deconstructed analysis of the foreign policy-making system in the United States.

The dominant realist theory of foreign policy-making argues that government elites dominate the foreign policy-making process, with domestic actors’ roles consigned to domestic policy. Elites, it is argued, have the resources, long-view and unemotional rationalism to make optimal foreign policy. The dominant framework in policy-making, according to realists, remains the nation-state, “defined by its borders, its bureaucracies, its armies, central banks, and individual currencies.”⁴ A state that incorporates domestic-political considerations into the formation of its foreign policy will pursue a “suboptimal foreign policy due to the interaction of the actors represented within the state.”⁵

This assumption, however, runs counter to a core hypothesis of this research, which posits that domestic actors do, indeed, exert a level of influence over a nation’s foreign policy, particularly in the United States. From even a cursory reading of the chapters of this thesis, one can see a level of influence that must be attributed to the media, business leaders, lobbying groups, labour unions and other interest groups, even if it is only by effecting small, incremental change or by framing policy debates – the “big secret of Washington” would appear to be true, that “there *is* no single elite able to plot world domination from the dusty reading rooms of the city’s luncheon clubs.” This pop-cultural reference incorporates the notion of non-governmental actors having a say, however small, in the construction of policy,⁶ which contradicts

³ McDougall (Spring 2010), p.167

⁴ Karabell (2009), p.134

⁵ Fearon (Jun.1998), p.291

⁶ Halper & Clarke (2006), p.134

the Executive-exclusive theories popular with many scholars and commentators.

The plethora of actors involved in the process could be a defining characteristic of the United States, rather than nations as a whole, which would not undermine realism as a generally applicable theory of international relations. It is difficult to see how domestic politics can be pushed aside when discussing or analysing the construction of American foreign policy: there are a lot more domestic actors involved in making American foreign policy than realists accept, and many of these actors are intricately linked with government officials, through the 'revolving door' many senior government employees pass through between corporations or academia/think tanks on the one hand, and government jobs on the other.

Therefore, we have to take a more pluralist approach when analysing the US foreign policy-making system, in order to include relevant domestic actors and give due consideration to their role in the system. It should, however, be stressed that it is not the finding of this thesis that media and special interest lobbies wield *undue* influence over government decision makers – far from it. This thesis finds that ascertaining 'proof' of influence is exceedingly difficult, because "influence is problematic both as a concept and as a phenomenon for measurement", and there is "no adequate social scientific tool" that can be used to objectively measure influence.⁷

As mentioned earlier in the thesis, and in the words of John Dumbrell, foreign policy in America is "the product of ambivalent traditions and forces, and of a policy-making environment characterised by fragmentation",⁸ and there has been a notable pattern in American foreign policy-making of this fragmentation expanding, a result of a broadening of the domestic political audience involved in the process, especially in its early stages.⁹ A case-study approach to the study of domestic actors operating in and around US foreign policy has provided a deeper understanding of the real role of lobbies and the

⁷ Parmar (Apr.1995), p.86

⁸ Dumbrell (1990), p.1

⁹ Suettinger (2003), p.424

media, and how they interact with the Executive branch and government organisations.

As outlined in the previous chapter, different parts of the bureaucracy are tasked with articulating policies in their own area which can impinge on foreign policy. For example, while the State Department is tasked with producing and implementing overall US foreign policy, the Defense Department articulates and executes military and defence policy, which, by definition, must include a foreign element. The legislative branch of the government (the Congress and Senate) is supposed to focus on domestic issues and policy, but frequently attempts to influence foreign policy when it comes to approving funding of initiatives. The role of the president in this framework is to act as an overall arbiter, effectively filtering intelligence and information he receives from the governmental bureaucracy. To quote former British Ambassador to Washington, Sir Nicholas Henderson's famous statement, "When you say the US administration, I am sorry to be pedantic, but there is the Pentagon view, the State Department view, and the White House view."¹⁰ As has been shown in this research, there are also multiple media views, and multiple lobby views, all of which attempt to muscle in on the process. American foreign policy must also contend with the militarised economy (thanks, in part, to Pentagon officials and powerful defence industry lobbyists), and considerable and unaccountable private power (an issue that has only been exacerbated by the 2009 *Citizens United* Supreme Court ruling, which gave corporations the same rights as individuals).

As suggested in Chapters Four and Five, the government is not insulated from domestic forces operating in and around the federal government. Post-1989, the Congress is no longer content (if it ever actually was) to allow the Executive Branch to act alone on foreign policy. In some instances, this has been due to presidential inaction or indifference to foreign policy, which allowed for a more activist Congress. Representatives with strong views on, for example, China's human rights record, could 'muscle in' on the foreign policy-making process, as members attempt to legislate the tactics of foreign policy. Some

¹⁰ Henderson (1984); cited in Dumbrell (1990), p.1

Congressmen have also sought to impose a code of conduct on other nations (usually through sanctions), as well as highlight the liberal-moral tradition in American foreign policy. In addition, Congress's role as appropriator of funds for foreign policies has given certain internationally-minded members more political muscle on foreign policy. Given the more open nature of Congress, and increased Congressional interest in foreign policy, comes the potential for increased influence by the media and special interests, which are far more likely to find success in influencing the actions of Congressmen, driven, as they are, by the need for publicity and campaign donations to feed the perpetual election-machine in which they operate.

Robert Jervis's criticism of the foreign policy-making process (i.e. that it is shaped by the pressures exerted by various domestic interests, ideas, and political calculations than some grand design) appears partly accurate, and, given the (expanding) number of actors operating or attempting to operate in the foreign policy process, does suggest that America is experiencing "pluralism with a vengeance."¹¹ That being said, despite the proliferation of actors, the traditional framework and themes of US foreign policy remain dominant: the media and special interest lobbies exploit the system and this framework to suit their needs, which might explain why the perception has become one of special interest or media-led foreign policy.

Whether or not advisers are influenced by the media reports or special interest lobby papers is extremely difficult to prove. However, it is fairly clear that, while the media may not be able to influence *specific* policies, they can help shape the *biases* people bring with them to government, and hence exert an indirect influence on deliberations. This is certainly evident from the Media Case Study (Chapter 4.2), which shows how the media has been able to reinforce a negative impression of China's government through frequent and consistent reference to the Tiananmen Square incident; highlighting the 'brutality' of the crackdown and the oppressive, Orwellian lengths to which the CCP will go to suppress dissent and any information that could be damaging to their interests. In addition, the often strongly partisan pundits, editorial writers,

¹¹ Jervis (Summer 1998), pp.22-36

and network and print ‘news analysts’ do figure in the policy process, although not definitively. These actors can affect the “political atmospherics”¹² in Washington by bringing focus to bear on specific issues, but beyond that they do appear to lack concrete influence. The media’s role is therefore arguably one restricted to framing and early information provision. Once an issue becomes part of the administration’s agenda, however, governmental intelligence and information sources, not to mention administration agendas and goals, will sideline the media and special interest lobbies. That said, administrations are still forced to address and reference external agendas when framing their own policies. To use the example of Tiananmen once again, we can see how, in a relatively short period of time, media coverage and legislators’ susceptibility to absorbing the media narrative, has indefinitely affected American impressions of China as a dictatorship willing to quash dissent violently. While this has not prevented any administration over the last two decades from exercising foreign policy on the world stage (particularly economic policy), it has certainly caused leaders to perform a fine balancing act to avoid appearing too accommodating of the Chinese government.

Given the stark ideological cleavage between different broadcast and print media outlets, the influence of any given network or publication will wax and wane depending on which party holds power – either in Congress or the White House. Given the connection between think tank scholars, their respective ideological media outlets, and presidential administrations, the same can be said for academics and research institutes. That these same academics write for certain journals or news-publications, while also receiving advisory positions in administrations, allows them to pass themselves off as ‘influential’ in policy-making.

If the media are influential in framing an issue, or creating a tone within which public debate will take place, how then can we characterise the influence of special interest lobbies? One could reasonably assume, from the findings discussed in previous chapters, that special interests can have influence on specifics of policy, if not in overall policy construction. However, ultimately,

¹² Suettinger (2003), p.427

America's traditional values and national interest (or the perception thereof) hold considerable sway. For example, a lobby may be able to convince lawmakers that certain technological goods should be exempt from sanctions or embargoes (such as satellite technology sales to China during the Clinton administration), as part of the *minutiae* of policy. However, such lobbying will likely be most successful when Congressional and/or Executive moods are already amenable to policies in the first place. Presidents cannot stray too far from orthodoxy without being punished by the system (or electorate), and neither can special interest lobbyists. The longest running trend of US foreign policy has been the focus on economics; that current US foreign policy frequently appears made from international economic considerations does not automatically suggest or prove business lobby influence, but does suggest that decision-makers could be more receptive to corporate lobby agendas, if presented in a national interest framework.

It is also clear that business and other lobbies have become well adapted to exploiting governmental and presidential policy decisions in order to suit their own narrow agendas, but again, only in the *minutiae* of policy. There is little evidence beyond conspiracy theories that corporations can control the direction of a foreign, economic, or human rights policy. As with the media, however, special interests and think tanks can, and do, provide essential information from which presidents and their advisors draw when deliberating policy and strategy. While this may suggest undue influence as lobby publications will likely be biased to serve their own agendas, it is also clear that presidents and their advisors are able to locate such information within the framework of overall US national interest and foreign policy.

In the United States, the importance of domestic policies, agendas and actors is therefore relevant to the formation and implementation of foreign policy. David Truman observed that "the outstanding characteristic of American politics" is the "multiplicity of co-ordinate or near co-ordinate points of access to governmental decisions",¹³ which the case-study approach of Part Two of the thesis has shown and supported. That is to say, the number of avenues of

¹³ Truman, quoted in Viotti & Kauppi (1999), p.204

opportunity open to special interests and also the media through which they can attempt to influence or exert pressure on the foreign policy-making system is considerable. One could almost envision an Executive and government under siege by domestic forces. The multiple levels of access available to lobbyists (particularly in Congress) mean media and special interests can attempt to influence the policy process from multiple angles, especially at 'lower' levels if they find their way barred nearer the top, closer to the Oval Office. As explained in Chapter Six, the Executive Branch itself, and in particular Cabinet-level officials, are quite resistant to overtures from lobbyists – not only is access to them extremely difficult, but also their understanding and appreciation of the traditional framework of US foreign policy is much greater, making them more difficult to influence. Therefore, it is not surprising that lobbyists spend the bulk of their efforts attempting to influence members of Congress, who will be required to vote on accepting and funding a president's foreign policy proposal. Increasingly, lobbyists or those connected to special interests will take to the media to get their message out – after all, physically inaccessible government officials still consume at least some news media, which provides the media outlets with a little more influence as they decide what gets published and/or broadcast, and therefore disseminated to the public and government officials. However, just because a story is reported does not guarantee governmental action, as explained and illustrated in the two media chapters. Partly, this is due to the established fact of US politics' pluralist nature also working *against* outside influence: With such a cacophony of voices, often working at cross-purposes, it is no wonder the policy-making process has been described as an almost futile cry for attention.¹⁴

Locating the role of the Executive Branch in the overall foreign policy system is demonstrably easier than the media and special interests. As has been made clear in the previous chapter, the wealth of literature that supports the Executive's centrality to the process is considerable, and certainly difficult to refute – the president is, after all, the actor upon whose shoulders the responsibility for the articulation of foreign policy constitutionally falls. After all

¹⁴ Halper & Clarke (2006), p.134

other considerations are taken into account – economic, political, international, and ideological pressures – the direction of foreign policy becomes very much tied to the choices of the president and his immediate staff.¹⁵ While the non-governmental sectors discussed in this thesis can help reinforce the orthodox perceptions of realism and liberalism in US foreign policy, it is the Executive Branch, particularly the president and policy principles, who cement these traditions in practice by forming policy. Immerman has pointed out that “neither the formulation nor implementation of U.S. foreign policy is democratic”, despite the sheer number of actors attempting to influence its construction. Despite the pluralistic nature of American society and its political system, “only an elite few” actually get a specific ‘vote’ on policy decisions, after filtering the various positions, agendas and viewpoints presented through the Executive’s conception of the national interest.¹⁶ This ‘filtering’ is an important characteristic of the process – as this thesis has shown, these policies are not formed in some political vacuum, and the unrealistic level of expertise and individual control some scholars attribute to a single president or actor in the foreign policy system are evidently untrue. One could say, more accurately, that the foreign policy-making process is not Executive-exclusive, but rather it is *Executive-dominated*.

The lack of conflict between the Executive Branch and a given special interest lobby is likely a result of mutual, largely identical conceptions of the world and of the American national interest.¹⁷ One can argue, therefore, that Parmar’s theory that certain think tanks and special interest groups are “pushing against an open door”, explains any perceived success at shifting or influencing foreign policy debate and direction.

3. Why has China remained such a persistent problem for the US tradition of deploying grand strategy? Is this because China is a difficult case; or because, unlike the Soviet Union or the European Union as evident

¹⁵ Dueck (2010), p.7

¹⁶ Immerman (2010), p.15

¹⁷ Parmar (Apr.1995), p.93

negative or positive cases, China divides rather than unites the pluralist interests and perspectives of US foreign policy pluralism?

At present, and in the recent past, the increase in pluralism inherent in American politics and the foreign policy-making process has presented a considerable obstacle to effective China policy-making. The reason for this is due both to the complexity of the US-China relationship, and also because China issues have proven incredibly divisive – even within media outlets or among lobbies representing the same business sectors, creating a plethora of mixed or muddled messages, and a policy environment in which a well-defined pluralist policy is very difficult to achieve. Nonetheless, and perhaps peculiarly, policy towards China has remained relatively constant – with caveats for crises or unexpected events. As with foreign policy as a whole, commerce and great power politics remain key determinants of the relationship. However, perhaps uniquely among the many important bilateral relationships the United States maintains, America's domestic pluralism often throws up barriers to effective policy-making as actors attempt to hijack the debate. Over the past forty years, the major turning points and determinants of US-China relations have shown that, without “powerful, practical reasons for pragmatic accommodation and cooperation”, deeply-rooted and enduring differences between Washington and Beijing, not to mention the broader American and Chinese societies, will emerge.¹⁸ It is these differences that American media and special interest groups have learned to exploit, in their attempts to alter policy.

The US-China relationship has been used to justify both realist and liberal foreign policy prescriptions. Economic and business interests promote specific and usually narrow policies that suit America's traditional mercantile realism, although some groups, such as the US Business Council, do promote broader economic interests. Among the media, *Forbes* and the *Wall Street Journal*, particularly, help promote the economic relationship. As the only credible, potential large-scale threat to American security, defence industry lobbies, Pentagon spokesmen, and Congressional ‘hawks’ are able to push their own agendas, appealing to the more nationalist realist tradition, and fuelling the

¹⁸ Sutter (2010), p.5

growth of the militarised economy. *The Weekly Standard*, *National Review*, and Fox News provide these defence hawks with a media platform from which to promote their agenda.

Perceived as a continued, unapologetic abuser of human rights, China continues to offer a large target for lobbies that push liberal-moralist prescriptions, which paint China as inimical to America's traditional values. For many American elites, China is seen as un-evolved since the days of the Tiananmen Square Massacre which, as shown in Part Two of the thesis, remains prominent in the American political psyche, as well as a defining moment in Chinese history that continues to inform not only Washington officials, but also non-governmental actors and the public's view of China. *The Nation*, *The New Republic*, *The American Prospect*, *The Weekly Standard*, and *National Review* all frequently print features and commentary that highlight China's human rights record, and, similarly, broadcast outlets feature segments and stories chronicling or mentioning China's record. This human rights record is the most popularly reported aspect of US-China relations, across the political spectrum, which might account for the perceived influence of human rights lobbyists.

Economics plays a particularly key role in helping us understand America's evolving China policy – not just because of the traditional focus on market access and expansion, but also because of the role played by American corporations in the economic development of China, and its subsequent integration into the global capitalist community. From the Opium Wars until today, with only minor interruptions, the protection of American business interests has been a predominant concern for China policy-makers in Washington. During the Cold War until normalisation, China was part of the Communist enemy, after which China became part of the United States' triangulation policy to weaken Soviet influence. In the wake of the Cold War, China is no longer a 'secondary theatre' to wider (i.e. European/Western) global concerns, but in conjunction with the events of Tiananmen Square in 1989, China continues to be viewed negatively by a large proportion of elected officials, government bureaucrats, and also the American media and public. Even though economic reality and considerations resumed their importance

following normalisation, and accelerated in recent years, American policymakers and Congressional representatives remain unable to separate ideological opposition to China from general relations. Indeed, as discussed in Chapter 4.2, some in the media lamented the reassertion of economics as the driving force behind US-China relations, presenting the economic focus as an immoral abandonment of the essence of America.

Given the importance and complexity of the US-China relationship, it is often difficult to ascertain whether special interest groups themselves have contributed to policy divergences over China, or if they have merely exploited already existing differences among policy-makers and officials.¹⁹ This is a particular concern when discussing the role of the media. It is very difficult to state with any degree of certainty to what extent the media or lobbies influence the direction of China policy. This difficulty in measuring the influence of non-governmental actors might explain the readiness with which some scholars and commentators dismiss them as key players. Special interests, like the media, can tap into specific, existing biases of government officials, which is where their 'power' or influence is most strongly felt. This is certainly the case when it comes to China.

The media, in its role as an intermediary between the American public and the federal government, helps to create the political environment and even consensus in which politicians at every level must operate. To deviate too starkly from this consensus can have negative domestic (electoral) repercussions, whereas adhering to (or, at least, paying lip-service to) the media's established framework can pay dividends. Media coverage and reporting can, overall, help steer the discussion and frame the China policy debate. As well as framing, it can create a tone for policy debate, and in this respect, it can have a small influence on the conduct of policy-making. A president or other official who ignores a hostile media will likely come to political harm; whereas a politician who is able to articulate a policy position within a framework provided by the media can reap considerable benefits. In other words, foreign policy is formulated with consideration for domestic

¹⁹ Dumbaugh (2001), p.114

consequences, and political leaders are forced by the system in which they operate to engage in an endless process of apportioning scarce political capital in the most effective and beneficial way between foreign and domestic politics.

As discussed in Chapter Four, the media's portrayal of China as a whole is a mixed one that reflects the difficulties faced by policymakers. The promotion of closer economic ties, due to the obvious benefits (cheaper manufactures, China's continued financing of American government debt, and so forth), is often reported alongside condemnation of China's human rights practices, flagrant intellectual property theft, and China's particularly hard-nosed realist approach to its foreign policy (for example in its relations with various objectionable regimes in resource-rich countries). With a media that is often critical of China, politicians are inclined to either forgo involvement in issues relating to China, or to take a tough stance on human rights or economic abuses committed by the Chinese, thereby reinforcing its negative image. While Congressmen have greater freedom to focus on and sensationalise ethical matters, the President and his foreign policy staff face the more direct and personal responsibility to maintain, protect and advance the national interest, and therefore must remain much more circumspect.

The media help reinforce the beliefs at the core of America's historical and contemporary grand strategy: the American preference for economic expansion is clearly accepted and even promoted by many media outlets. Some critics argue that this is a result of corporate ownership influencing news reporting. However, while this may be the case in some instances (such as the occasional Fox broadcast), it is equally likely a result of ingrained biases inherent in the American political psyche. The level of threat China is believed to present is not as widespread as the economic advantage the country's rapid modernisation offers to the globalised American economy. It is undeniable that certain business interests have been highly involved in pushing for an expansion of the US-China economic relationship (as discussed in Chapter Five), but there is little evidence to suggest that they control the agenda. Rather, as stated earlier, business interests can influence decisions that affect their own, narrow

economic interests, but only within the framework of broader American national interests (economic or otherwise).

It is interesting to note, at this point, that China appears to be handled differently to other nations. Firstly, despite the oft-positive spin given to the US-China economic relationship, the American media's portrayal of China is commonly articulated within the framework of traditional power politics and zero-sum terminology, where China's gain is America's loss, and reporting is frequently informed by the differences between American and Chinese normative values. Secondly, due to China's size and global influence, issues relating to human rights and any other perceived immorality are heightened. This, when coupled with China's economic clout and considerable holdings of US Treasury Bonds, could explain why the media are more likely to portray China in a negative light. Equally, because of this negative reporting, lobbyists that focus on America's liberal traditional values have a platform to push their agendas, thereby requiring Congressional and Executive office policy-makers to address China in these areas. China's international stature and considerable links with the United States only serve to enhance concerns – China, it could be argued, is held to a higher standard commensurate with its international standing. This does not ensure that China remains at the fore of foreign policy debate, however: in the past, we have seen China slip down the rankings of importance when the US government is distracted by more pressing demands in Europe and the Middle East, which leads China to be viewed through the lens of domestic political gain.

It is most often voices in Congress who fervently seek to sanction China on human rights. Usually defined by the dominant party in Congress at the time, these sanctions can lean towards protectionist policies (predominantly a Democratic favourite). Successive administrations have acquiesced to, and compromised with Congressional demands to gain approval for other programs, in part because, "absent an immediate outside danger, domestic politics has become more important to political survival than handling of

foreign policy.”²⁰ These examples do, however, add support to Fearon’s suggestion that foreign policies informed by non-elite opinions might be suboptimal. For Congressional members to ‘stir the pot’ over China – be it over human rights, outsourcing, or the ‘China Threat’ – there is little apparent downside, the potential for some free media exposure, and usually few wider ripple-effects. This is not the case with the president or Secretary of State, whose rhetoric and statements on any given issue, not just China, can have considerable impact.

Incidentally, Chinese officials have shown themselves to be very familiar with how the American system works, and are not averse to employing political ‘junkets’ to soften recalcitrant or critical American legislators, which they have used, most recently, to influence critics of Beijing’s currency valuation policy.

The negativity that is widespread among most journalistic opinion-makers, and their tendency to be critical of any presidential administration that engages with China, is an important consideration – it helps explain why virtually every presidential hopeful in the last four decades has been critical of the previous administration’s China policy. This negativity is principally due to China’s approach to human rights, religious freedom, and non-proliferation – all key components of America’s liberal-moralist strain of foreign policy traditions. While this is likely to affect an administration’s approach to China, and the way in which the president or a cabinet official articulates any given policy, there is another factor that needs to be taken into consideration, specifically, the lesser impact television reporting has on elites in comparison with the print media. Policymakers, Suettinger argues, “usually get their information from written sources, which are more thorough than television news programs,”²¹ which frequently follow formats that do not allow for in-depth policy discussion. The format in which television stories are presented considerably limits how much information and discussion can be provided, which leaves segments prone to hyperbole or shallow depictions of any issue, which can lead to exaggerations of perceived ‘China threats’. Given the complexity of the US-China relationship,

²⁰ Kissinger (2001/2), p.27

²¹ Suettinger (2003), p.428

this will mean a very superficial account of the politics involved, and by extension a reduction in the amount of influence the media can exert on actual policy.²²

Foreign policy idealism, Colin Dueck argues, is “to some extent a special preoccupation of party elites and party activists.” The American public is more accepting of practical successes in foreign policy, rather than “messianic or moralist” goals articulated by elite media, select lobbies, and also various administrations (which does not, however, explain the popularity of criticising China on moral grounds). Because of non-governmental elites’ abilities to shape or to frame foreign policy debates, especially China policy, in order for national interests to be served properly, advocates of pragmatic policies and strategies must expend considerable effort and energy to “get past the filtration effect of the nation’s chattering classes.”²³ This is where the centrality of the Executive Office becomes clear.

Presidential engagement with the foreign policy-making process is fundamentally important to the construction of a coherent policy. A disengaged president will increase the likelihood of relations becoming hijacked by parochial concerns of domestic constituencies, with their own competing interests, and also individuals within administrations who will try to further their own agendas. The level of presidential engagement, therefore, can act as a moderator of domestic pluralism, filtering the domestic inputs and their increased tendency to encroach on the foreign policy-making process. Congress has proven too fragmented, with the interests of Representatives too parochial to ever effectively replace the long-term perspective of a president, his appointed deputies, or the career bureaucratic staff. Even during the post-Cold War years, when Congress has become more activist in foreign policy and China policy in particular, the role of the engaged president remains key. Given this environment, as we have seen, a president will sometimes resort to secret diplomacy in order to circumvent a hostile media environment – this is not without its risks as, should the secrecy become uncovered, a president’s

²² Halper & Clarke (2006)

²³ Dueck (2010), p.306

attempts at keeping, for example, China policy on an even keel can be further complicated (as George H.W. Bush experienced).

While the importance of a president and his staff to changing the tone or policies of an administration is clear, too often do scholars and commentators forget or ignore that presidents cannot and do not make policy in an immaculate vacuum, separate and isolated from domestic political actors or concerns. The American system clearly precludes the Executive Branch from insulating itself from non-governmental actors, and while it is very difficult to properly identify or quantify their influence, it is quite clearly a factor.

When looking at the formulation of foreign policy, one has to recognise that the Executive Branch is, unlike domestic media and lobbies, also impacted by external factors. Not even the United States, supposedly the most powerful country in the world, can act unilaterally with impunity. The options available to a president are often constrained by international realities, as well as domestic considerations. As a result, no matter how much a president, media outlet, or special interest lobby may want to pursue a particular policy (especially liberal-moralist policies), economic-realist considerations will inevitably exert a powerful influence in an increasingly globalised world. This result of *realpolitik* inevitably precludes certain interests from usurping control of US foreign policy to suit, for example, a purely liberalist agenda.

The US-China relationship is characterised by “the sum of its disagreements” and is often “the product of mistakes and misperceptions”. Without mutually agreed-upon goals, the relationship has become “mostly event-driven, subject to sharp swings of attitude or sentiment, depending on the nature and outcome of the driving events.”²⁴ By this reckoning, a pluralist grand strategy has yet to emerge, as the warring factions within American politics are yet to reach an understanding or stable position on China.

Since the end of the Cold War, American China-policy has been characterised by a “messy mix of realism, idealism, and capitalism.” While China’s leaders have abandoned the ideological excesses of Mao, American

²⁴ Suettinger (2003), p.434

politicians have “never resolved the contradictory strains in its China policy”.²⁵ This seriously affects the construction of a workable, pluralist China policy. If the United States hopes to develop such a policy, it will fall to the Executive Branch to take charge, take domestic issues and filter them through a perception of the national interest.

There is every indication that American foreign policy will continue to be composed of pluralistic components and agendas. The necessary formulation of a pluralist strategy will, however, continue to come under critical scrutiny. There is an undoubted attraction for scholars and policy-makers to construct a grand strategy or theory for American foreign policy, to rigidly adhere to one theory or another. In the case of China, however, this is a limited and ultimately flawed approach. As Irwin Steltzer has stated, this creates a “false dichotomy” of having to favour either containment or engagement,²⁶ where in reality US-China relations are a complex web of connections, agreements and disagreements that cannot be encompassed by a single theory or approach. Part of this is simply political – the American public and elected representatives appear unwilling to give China a ‘pass’ on issues pertaining to China’s domestic and international human rights policies and values, many of which are inimical to American sensitivities. This is a concern that does not characterise US-EU relations, but has once again started to influence US-Russia relations, as the latter has become more assertive on the international stage.

The quest for a Grand Strategy itself can actually muddy the waters of American foreign policy, making it harder for officials to move America’s interests forward, if a specific policy does not easily fit into preconceived strategies. A single, unified grand strategy may be the preferred approach to foreign policy of Executive Branch and national security employees, but in this increasingly complex world, not to mention more complex pluralist political system, one may simply be unattainable. Clinton’s ‘case-by-case-ism’ or ‘a la carte’ foreign policy approach, therefore, while derided at the time, may actually be a model that should be considered for the future. We have seen President

²⁵ Karabell (2009), p.71

²⁶ Steltzer (2011), p.

Obama struggle when attempting to formulate a single grand strategy, yet succeed when pursuing single, targeted policies.

The United States has a myriad of complex relationships with most nations in the world, and to argue that a single grand strategy could encompass the nuances of all bilateral relationships is over-optimistic. A pluralist approach, which perhaps identifies a key strategic interest (for example, expansion and maintenance of open and free economics) will have to be altered, modified or expanded depending on which nation is currently on the agenda. That is to say, while the economic imperatives of US foreign policy with regards to China, Europe and Russia are clear, the myriad other issues unique to China, the EU and Russia may not allow for a single, overarching policy or strategy. It is interesting to note that George Kennan, the ‘father’ of Cold War containment strategy and an originator of the preference in US foreign policy for articulating singular grand strategies, argued that the failure to find a single, unifying grand strategy with which to approach an increasingly complicated international system is actually a *good* thing, and he regretted his part in promoting a simplification of strategy into what he described as “bumper-stickers”.²⁷

The Obama administration has given every indication that it is aware of this problem. America’s move toward a more pluralist understanding of foreign policy or grand strategy is in many ways already in evidence: Secretary of State Hillary Clinton recently stated that, when dealing with China, human rights issues will not be taken into account when negotiating economic or security concerns, though at the same time not ignored. This echoes her husband’s administration’s decoupling of the US-China economic relationship from China’s human rights record. President Obama’s team has decided to focus primarily on concrete national interests. More liberal issues will not be ignored, but they will not be allowed to get in the way of America’s more important interests. Whether this is due to a realist calculation of expedience – due to the pressing need to bring the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan to an end, not to mention a wish to deal effectively with the new wave of Middle Eastern revolutions, the need to

²⁷ Kennan, quoted in Chollet & Goldgeier (2008), p.315

kick-start the American economy – or a belief in the futility of pursuing liberal-idealist policies is thus far unclear.

The open nature of the American foreign policy-making process precludes an immaculate, exclusively-elite-constructed foreign policy. Therefore, while extremely difficult to ‘measure’, the role and influence of the elite media and special interest lobbies must be taken into account when analysing governmental policies. The domestic pluralisation has, as this thesis has shown, become a firm and permanent factor in the construction of US foreign policy. If President Obama and his successors are to construct a publicly, politically and practically acceptable coherent foreign policy, a less rigid and more pluralist approach will have to be adopted. They will have to contend with the increased partisanship in both houses of Congress, which has proven a considerable impediment to consensus legislation (particularly on domestic, but also foreign policy); the proliferation of activist domestic special interest lobbies; and a media environment that many have described as ‘toxic’. This is no small task, as the current political arena is one beset by obstacles to sound policy-making:

“Narrowcast media amplify strong voices at the ends of the spectrum and make politicians pay a price for any deviation from dogma. A more open and transparent Congress has meant a Congress more easily pressured by small interest groups and lobbyists. Ironically, during this period, more and more Americans identify as independents. Registered independents are at an all-time high. But that doesn’t matter. The system in Congress reflects not rule by the majority but rule by the minority – fanatical, organized minorities.”²⁸

The construction of a pluralist foreign and China policy will have to take into account the plethora of highly complex issues that are now very much at the heart of American foreign policy, the foreign policy role of domestic actors, and international relations in general. To attempt to do otherwise will result in Congressional gridlock and distraction, reactionary policies, and foreign policy inaction or stasis.

²⁸ Zakaria (Aug.15th 2011), p.15

This thesis has shown how China can often be sidelined as a foreign policy priority – suffering a benign neglect, invariably as a result of conflicts in other regions (historically, usually in Europe, but contemporarily in the Middle East). Given the ‘superfusion’ of the American and Chinese economies; the growing economic, diplomatic and military power and influence of China; and the impact these two nations’ policies can have on the international community, it is more essential than ever for the current and future American administrations to construct a coherent, wide-reaching and pluralist China policy.

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CHAPTER IV.II: MEDIA CASE STUDY: TIANANMEN SQUARE

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