

America's Reaction to China's Boycott of American Products of 1905

—An Analysis on the Image of Japan and China in the U.S., 1905-1908

by

Jing Yu

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Advisor:

Asli Pekso


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Dedication

For my mentor Professor John Fousek, with whom I took the first class at the Department of International Relations at NYU and since then I became more a student of history than one of social science, who taught me to see context and contingency, to be aware of continuity and change and to always be humbled by the profound complexity of human society.

For Professor Marilyn B. Young, whose class I accidentally stumbled into but turned out to be a life-changing one. Her wisdom, her compassion, her genuine care for students and her passion for social justice and peace would forever be with me. I am saddened by her sudden pass-away but feel grateful that we can read and reread the books she left us. She led me know that more than anything, a historian should be, a compassionate human-being, able to see the world through the lens of others.

Finally to my parents, who I will always be grateful for helping me cultivate the lifelong habit of reading and who showed me how to be a person of integrity.

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Preface

Michael Hunt, in *The Making of a Special Relationship: the United States and China to 1914*, writes the following opening statement, “every book has a personal story to tell.”¹ This paper, one inspired primarily by Hunt’s work, though in no way pretends to having achieved the same analytical rigorousness as Hunt, does attempt to tell a personal story. The author, having read Iriye’s *Pacific Estrangement: Japanese and American Expansion, 1897-1911*, was completely mesmerized by its splendid research on the clash between Japanese expansionism and American imperialism. But despite Iriye’s extensive treatment given to China in a chapter titled “role of China” in the book, US-Japan diplomatic relations and intercultural relations are still the center of the subject. The author, as one deeply embedded in the Confucius cultural web, felt not enough justice was done to the role of China, especially not enough attention paid to the China boycott of American products of 1905, one early nationalistic movement no less significant than the May 4th movement of 1919. Motivated to deepen research on the clash/harmony in the US-China relations, the author attempted to put the China boycott of 1905 at the center as well as the starting point for the evolution of China-US diplomatic relations as well as intercultural relations.

In light of the present political debates on U.S.’s pivot to Asia, Japan’s deepening security cooperation with the U.S. and threats brought by the rise of China, this paper considers it important to revisit the past in order to understand the malleability and transience of images. Chinese who are regarded as rude and uncivilized at the present used to be held in admiration for their hard-working spirit; Japanese who used to be held in menacing resentment are now deemed the “most polite”. As Hunt shrewdly observed on Americans’ conception of peoples in East Asia, “an observer developing the image in a favorable

¹ Michael H. Hunt, *The Making of a Special Relationship: the U.S. and China to 1914* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), preface.

direction might hold them up as a people of promise, on the verge of shaking off a stagnant cultural tradition...on the other hand, the image could evolve in a way that made Orientals into a disturbing even dangerous bundle of contradictions—subhuman yet cunning, unfeeling yet boiling inwardly with rage, cowardly and decadent yet capable of great conquests.”² Images of Japanese and Chinese are always in flux, despite the endurance of some prejudices and stereotypes, they are subject to change in the context of global power shifts.

Bruce Cumings, explaining his rationale for the book *Dominion from Sea to Sea: Pacific Ascendancy and American Power* wrote, “this is the book I wanted to read but couldn't find, so I wrote it myself.”³ The author could not claim that this is the exact essay the field needs, but certainly this is an attempt to draw greater attention to historical analysis on the US-Japan-China trilateral relations. It is an attempt to relieve the author's ignorance on the subject, as well as a desperate call to the current American society, one that the author held in such great admiration, to come to see the present China-U.S. trade-war mongering in the bigger context of deepening Chinese-American engagement. Engagement on a people-to-people level should not be hindered by political controversies instigated by a few politicians.

² Michael H. Hunt, *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987): 22.

³ Bruce Cummings, *Dominion from Sea to Sea: Pacific Ascendancy and American Power* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009): xvii.

Abstract

Americans' reaction to China's boycott of American products in 1905 defied the logic. Not only did most Americans not denounce the boycott, they rushed to praise it as a reflection of the "moral awakening of China". As of 1907, Taft proclaimed proudly that an enlightened China would recognize America as its real friend. Why American people, despite the tremendous blow the boycott inflicted on their trade revenues, came to defend an anti-American boycott?

This paper, relying on primary sources of major American newspapers at the time, in conjunction with government publications and secondary sources, argues that Americans' response in 1905 had close connection with the transformation of China's and Japan's image in the U.S. between 1905-1908. Two key themes in late 19th to early 20th century—market expansion and American benevolence led to the construction of the image of Japan as a competitor and China as a benevolent protégée. The image of Japan as a competitor led Americans to suspect Japan as behind the boycott, thus they cleared Chinese from any moral responsibility for the boycott and instead applauded for the burst-out of Chinese nationalistic sentiment.

This paper argues that analysis on the interplay between images/ideas and events/policy is crucial in order to understand Americans' seemingly paradoxical behavior in defending the anti-American boycott in 1905. Shifts in global power, including Japan's victory over Russia in 1904, and America's increased expansion in Asia since late 19th century interacted with America's self-conception as an anti-imperial power, producing the conviction in an inevitable US-China harmony and an unavoidable US-Japan conflict.

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Introduction

In May 1905 when the Shanghai Chamber of Commerce passed a resolution urging all Chinese in Shanghai not to buy American products in protest against the China Exclusion Movement in the U.S., the *North China Herald* called it “a unanimity of purpose most unique and never yet heard of in the history of this ancient Empire.”⁴ Roosevelt said in a speech in October, “we cannot expect China to do justice unless we do China justice.”⁵ The boycott, lasting for a year, substantially undermined American export to China in 1905-1906, with the flour trade completely paralyzed. It was reported that as of July 1905, no sales have been made and all orders for September shipments have been cancelled.⁶ In light of the destruction American business interests suffered, it was curious that many Americans came to the defense of the boycott, calling it “the awakening of China”. From mid-1906, major American newspapers all came to frame the boycott not as an agitation against America’s exclusion, but as against “the general looting of the country by foreign powers.”⁷

Americans coming to the defense of the China boycott seems to defy the logic. As Hunt explains in *The Making of a Special Relationship: the United States and China to 1914*, Sino-American relationship was special in the sense that “Americans held on to the reassuring myth of a golden age of friendship engendered by altruistic American aid and rewarded by ample Chinese gratitude.”⁸ The bigger question embedded in the conviction in the inevitable harmony between China and the U.S. is, given that a “morally awakened” China would demand sovereignty and equality, why did Americans come to believe that

⁴ *North China Herald*, “China Exclusion Movement”, June 2, 1905, <https://newspaperarchive.com/north-china-herald-jun-02-1905-p-29/?tag=ancient+empire&rtserp=tags/ancient-empire?ndt=ex&pd=2&pm=6&py=1905/>.

⁵ Theodore Roosevelt, *The Works of Theodore Roosevelt*, 16 Vols. (New York: New York, P.F. Collier & son 1909) 16: 498-500.

⁶ *The Bemidji daily pioneer*, “The flour trade paralyzed,” 28 Aug. 1905, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn86063381/1905-08-28/ed-1/seq-1/>>.

⁷ *Evening Star* (Washington, D.C.), “China Waking Up,” 12 March 1906, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83045462/1906-03-12/ed-1/seq-1/>>

⁸ Hunt, *The Making of a Special Relationship*, 299.

China would accept “guardianship” from the U.S. even if assuming the guidance U.S. offered was in most cases benevolent? Specifically to the Chinese boycott, why did Americans, despite suffering from damage in trade, still applauded for Chinese nationalism?

This paper argues in order to understand this puzzle, one needs to examine the interplay between image and reality. A reflection of American public opinion towards China needs to be situated in the longer historical arc of America’s increasing trade and missionary activities in Asia and its interaction with regional actors, Japan in particular. China’s boycott broke out in the midst of dramatic shift in global power balance. Japan, since the Meiji Reform, started its road to economic expansionism. From mid-19th century to early 20th century, Japan expanded into the Liaotung peninsula, annexing the Ryukus and the Kuris with its eye set on Manchuria. Russia, on the other hand, since 1895 had moved down from the Amur River and over China territory with the aim of controlling Manchuria.⁹ It responded aggressively to the Boxer Rebellion, signaling its resolve to dominate the Manchurian market. Yet Japan’s stunning victory in the Russo-Japanese War reversed the position of Japan and Russia in global power competition. After Japan invaded the Mukden, obtaining control in Korea, in Southern Manchuria, the Russian lease, and of the railroad rights, U.S. came to suspect that Japan would become the biggest threat to the Manchurian trade, a crucial market for the welfare of American textile industry.¹⁰

This paper argues that the tremendous rise in Japan’s military and economic power in the bigger context of U.S.’s self-assumed burden of civilizing the Chinese led to the conviction of inevitable China-US harmony. The image of China as a benign protégé of the U.S. was constructed in relation to the image of Japan as a competitor and America as an anti-imperialist power. When the boycott broke out in China, the image of an ambitious

⁹ Paul Varg, *The Making of A Myth: the U.S. and China, 1879-1912* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1968), 63.

¹⁰ Varg, *The Making of A Myth*, 64.

Japan bent on closing off the China market motivated many Americans to suspect Japan as behind the boycott and thus blame was put on Japan for the trade loss. Later when Japan denied its involvement, Americans reasoned that the boycott represented the moral awakening of China, one realized by China's embrace of American trade, knowledge and civilization. Thus Americans had an obligation to continue "civilizing" the Chinese so that China can finally stop foreign encroachment on its market and territory. There arose the assumed alignment of interest between a morally awakened China and a patron U.S. protecting China's sovereignty and independence.

"Image" here refers to stereotypes, perceptions, attitudes, opinions, propaganda creations, and policy orientation, in a word, the "pictures in our minds".¹¹ This paper attempts to promote the intercultural approach historian Akira Iriye proposes, "international relations are at bottom intercultural relations...provincialism, or cosmopolitanism would appear to be a more pervasive force, and existential conditions such as one's race, age and occupation would be as crucial determinants of one's attitude as considerations of power politics or national interests."¹² In order to understand how the relations between two states rise and fall, one needs to understand how peoples' hostility/amity towards each other ebbs and wanes. Foreign relations and peoples' perception towards each others are two sides of the same coin.

In order to understand how the image of Japan and China are shaped in the context of global and domestic events, this paper will synthesize primary and secondary sources in analyzing the transformation of the image of Japan and China from 1905 and 1908. Most of the primary sources are obtained from the Library of Congress' online database of American historical newspaper "Chronicling America: historical America newspaper." The materials on which this paper bases include national newspaper like *New York Herald*, regional

¹¹ Harold R. Isaacs, "Some Concluding Remarks: The Turning Mirrors," in *Mutual Images: Essays in American-Japanese Relations*, ed. Akira Iriye (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975), 258.

¹² Akira Iriye, "Japan as a Competitor," in *Mutual Images: Essays in American-Japanese Relations*, ed. Akira Iriye (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975), 23.

newspapers like *The San Francisco Call*, *The Salt Lake Tribune* and *Des Moines Register and Leader* from D.C. as well as government documents, publications of organizations and the expressions of prominent missionaries and politicians. The diversity of primary sources and secondary materials represents this paper's attempt to understand the full spectrum of America's public opinion on Japan and China.

This paper is organized into three sections. It begins with an overview of the literature pertinent to the research topic, categorized into two groups—global and national history on immigration and expansion and the study on images. Chapter 2 lays out the greater thematic issues at the turn of the 20th century, a combination of neomercantilism and “informal” imperialism, which formed the backdrop against which the image of Japan and China as well as the self-conception of the U.S. came into being. Chapter 3 traces the evolution of global events and domestic situation shaping the image of Japan and China throughout 1905-1908. It divides the analysis into four central themes, Russo-Japanese War and the China Boycott, Rumors of Japan behind the Boycott, Inevitable U.S.-China Harmony and US-Japan War Scares. In chapter 4, this paper positions 1905-1908 in the longer historic context of the late 19th- early 20th century and examines how the major themes of the years shed light on the discussion of 1905-1908. It argues that understanding the interplay between image and policy is essential in approaching America's defense of the 1905 China boycott.

Literature Review

The philosopher of history Collingwood wrote, “the historian, investigating any event in the past, makes a distinction between what may be called the outside and the inside of an event.”¹³ Historical works pertinent to this paper can be broadly categorized as

¹³ Mark T. Gilderhus, *History and Historians: A Historiographical Introduction* (New Jersey: Person Prentice Hall, 2007), 79.

event/policy and idea/image. In this section, this paper examines the historiography on American expansionism and immigration at the turn of the 20th century and the conceptual discussion on the role of images in American foreign policy. This section will compare and contrast various arguments and approaches, explain how the literature interacts with each other and how this paper draws upon the existing research findings. It will proceed to explain how this paper fits into the established body of literature by identifying the gap in the literature and explain how this paper remedies the gap.

National and International History on Immigration and Expansion

The first group of literature, which lays out the broader context in which this paper resides in, is the study on national and international history of immigration and expansion during the era of Asian Exclusion Movement. Whereas the nation-oriented literature covering the era mostly examines how the exclusion movement is a result and reflection of personal prejudice fomented by labor unions and politicians, those of an international perspective lay out the global context that gives rise to nativism in the U.S.

Within the group of national history of immigration are two key scholarly works, Daniel Roger's *The politics of prejudice: the Anti-Japanese Movement in California and the Struggle for Japanese Exclusion* (1960) and Carey McWilliam's *Prejudice: Japanese-Americans: Symbol of Racial Intolerance* (1944). Both works analyzed the domestic political context of exclusion, with the former explaining how middle-class American progressives, labor leaders and other presumably liberal groups exploited peoples' racial prejudice in the context of national elections, the latter analyzing how the West Coast coalesced with the South on the basis of racial prejudice against colored people and spread the sentiment on a national level. To put it simply, this domestic-oriented group of literature highlighted the economic and political factors of exclusion.

The second group of literature in this category is the international history on immigration and imperialism, which situated the tide of Asian immigration from mid-19th century to early 20th century in the context of rising immigration and America's global expansion. Two books on American nativism inform this paper's discussion on the breakout of Asian Exclusion Movement. John Higham's *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism 1860-1925* (1956), with a primary focus on East European immigrants, traced the roots of American nativism to the persistent cultural emphasis on non-Catholic, non-Jewish and non-radicalism in American ideological tradition. Erika Lee's *At America's Gates: Chinese Immigration during the Exclusion Era, 1882-1943* (2003), on the other hand, rejected the Eurocentric-emphasis of Higham who put China Exclusion Movement at the margin of analysis on nativism, and argued that the movement recast the U.S. into a "gatekeeping nation", setting up a system of immigration control that immigrants from all over the globe were subjected to.

The national and international history on U.S. expansion and immigration lay out the historical backgrounds of this paper, the "outside of an event" that set the stage for the major discussion of this paper. This section will next examine the conceptual debate surrounding the role of image/idea in U.S. diplomatic history.

The Study of Image

Writings on diplomatic history used to have a national-interest focus, on how state interacts with each other in order to maximize its national interests, without probing into how that interest is constructed. Recent years witness the rise of a cultural approach to international relations which explores the ideological and intellectual underpinnings of a nation's behavior toward other nations.

There are two methodological approaches within this school of thought. The first is through ethnographic study, primarily through interviews with people across various segments of the population to have a grasp of public opinion. Harold Isaacs's *Scratches on Our Minds* (1958) is a prime example of this methodological approach. Through interviewing two hundred people from various professions and age groups, he attempted to explore how American people come to the image of China.

Whereas the first methodological approach is concerned with highlighting the complexity of public opinion, mostly through reflecting how people of diverse backgrounds and interests came to conceptualize images differently, the second type of literature in this school of thought explored how image is constructed, propagated on a national scale through analyzing how a nation is "represented" in newspaper, novels, postcard comics, and propaganda films. In essence, the second school highlighted the process of representation. A few books within this approach shed lights on this paper. Iriye's piece "Japan as a competitor, 1895-1917" in his edited anthology *Mutual Images: Essays in American-Japanese Relations* (1975) provided the astute observation on how the image of Japan as a competitor at the turn of the 20th century contributed to American-Japanese war scares at the time and Japanese Exclusion Movement. Iriye's *Pacific Estrangement: Japanese and American Expansion, 1897-1911* (1972) which relied on Japanese and English archival resources deconstructed the above process of image-construction, explaining how the image of Japan as a competitor stemmed from Meiji Japan's economic expansionist policy. By juxtaposing the immigration dispute and war mobilization in the U.S. with the realities of Japanese society, it highlighted how the image of Japan as a competitor was conceived and exaggerated by Americans. By providing a transnational approach, Iriye was able to highlight the gap between reality and images.

On the other hand, a few works traced the evolution of China's image in the U.S. in the broader context of the deepening US-China relations. Varg's *The Making of A Myth: The United States and China: 1897-1912* (1968) dealt with the symbolism of China in the U.S. It took issue with several myths on China, including the myth that the U.S. was committed to a strong policy of protecting the Chinese from predator nations and that Chinese market can singlehandedly solve depression at home. It explained how the myth of the China market and paternalistic rhetoric of China policy sustained America's expansion in Asia. Making a similar argument that the idea of Chinese looking to the U.S. as a mentor and guide was a myth, Hunt's *The Making of a Special Relationship: the US and China to 1914* (1983) explained how the Open Door ideology formed the basis of the special relationship—the ideology that only by reform modeled on the U.S. could China stave off imperialism. Though these literatures centered on different historic time periods or local actors, they all pointed to the interaction between policy and perception, the gap between reality and myth.

America's Self-conception as an Anti-Imperial Power

What lies beneath the gap between reality and image is America's self-conception, illustrated by the discussion on ideology in American foreign policy. A large body of literature centers on this issue. William Appleman Williams's foundational *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* (1959), though often being accused of being economic deterministic, in fact shrewdly illustrated how economic expansionism became a national ideology. Recent works attempt to provide a broader framework than economic expansionism in approaching the role of ideology in diplomatic history. Hunt's *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy* (1987) argued a powerful American foreign policy ideology was composed of three mutually reinforcing elements including "an active quest for national greatness linked to the promotion of liberty abroad, the classification of other nations and peoples in a racial hierarchy, and a

suspicion of revolution.” Jacobson’s brilliant synthesis *Barbarian Virtues: The United States Encounters Foreign Peoples at Home and Abroad, 1876-1917* (2001) set Hunt’s analysis in the historical context of 1876-1917. Highlighting how immigration and expansion were two sides of the same coin, it pointed to how racial and gendered hierarchies intersected with class conflict to create distorted images of foreigners, both at home and abroad. These racialized conceptions of foreigners were substantiated and legitimized by scientific theories about racial inferiority, stimulating further expansion abroad and exclusion at home.

While Hunt situates ideology of U.S. foreign policy in long historic arc, a few other works focus specifically on twentieth century American imperialism. Gareth Stedman Jones’s essay “The Specificity of U.S. Imperialism” provides the best analysis on the central features of 20th century American imperialism—its non-territorial character, and its possession of a formally anti-imperialist ideology.¹⁴ He argues the anti-imperialist nature of U.S. imperialism stemmed first from the self-image of the U.S. as the first ex-colony, and secondly the creation and constant reproduction of a theory of aggression, either European imperial powers’ aggression, or Communist aggression.¹⁵ Thus actions taken by the U.S. were always believed to be “defensive”.

The image of U.S.’s self-conception as an anti-imperialist power was also rooted in its practical need of territorial expansion. Mary Ann Heiss argues that America’s pursuit of anti-imperialism aligned perfectly with its need for early access to land for the survival of the agrarian republic and later on market access for the survival of capitalism. There was, Heiss pointed out, an inconsistency in the application of the anti-imperialism principle. In regions more important to U.S.’s interests like Latin America, U.S. railed against imperialism; in regions of lesser importance as Africa, U.S. remained silent to European imperialism.¹⁶

¹⁴ Gareth Stedman Jones, “The Specificity of U.S. Imperialism,” *New Left Review*, Issue60 (March-April 1970), 63.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Heiss, “The Evolution of the Imperial Idea and U.S. National Identity”, 528.

Gap in the Literature

The study of images, broad-brush as it is, misses two things, one is the process of contestation in the construction of China's image. Iriye, in the introduction of his edited volume *Mutual Images: Essays in American-Japanese Relations* rightly pointed out, "quite often the seemingly contradictory images of Japan, inevitable harmony, partnership and inevitable conflict, may be entertained by the same individual on different occasions".¹⁷ The image of China turning positive after the Russo-Japanese War was presented as a given, not a process of contestation of some deep-rooted stereotypes fighting against the newly-gained amity. While the Russo-Japanese War was attributed primary importance in turning the image of Japan towards negative, China's boycott of American products on the other hand was not attributed equal significance. Studies on the transformation of the image of China between the period of the Russo-Japanese War and WWI lacked the academic rigorousness that the study on Japan's image embodied.

The second gap in the current literature, given that most works treat US-Japan, US-China relations and their images in pairs, is the failure to see the image of China/Japan in relational terms. The belief in Japan turning militant, and in China being awakened among the American public are not isolated ideas; they are conceived in relations with each other. For example, Americans assumed that China and the U.S. had an alignment of interest in preserving China's integrity because of their acceptance of Japan's image as bent on regional domination. It is great that Hunt's *The Making of a Special Relationship* put at the forefront the warming relations between American business community and Chinese republican government as an important factor leading to the warming bilateral relations, but in failing to incorporate another important actor Japan in the discussion, his analysis did not take account of the tumultuous trajectory Sino-American relations went through. In the longer historical

¹⁷ Iriye, "Introduction to *Mutual Images*," 17.

arc of the late 19th century to early 20th century, America believed China was a protégée but there were times of doubt and tension in between.

Hunt, though realizing the importance of “providing a broader framework embracing Japan and Korea as well as China would have been the ideal way to remedy the gap in literature,” decided to stay with “the more modest goal of dealing in depth with both sides of the Sino-American relationship and leave it to other historians to reknit the strands of East Asian international relations.”¹⁸ This paper could not claim to reknit the strands of East Asian international relations, but it attempts to provide at least one more crucial actor—Japan’s involvement in international affairs to explain America’s warming relation with China.

This paper will thus synthesize the methodological approach of cultural history with the global perspective on diplomatic history embodied in Hunt’s and Iriye’s works. This paper attempts to address the crucial question that Iriye posed in the introduction of his *Mutual Images: Essays in American-Japanese Relations*, “is one’s image a function of one’s existential conditions? Or does image have a life and history of their own, quite independent of the image-holders?”¹⁹

Japan and China in American Public Opinion, 1905-1908

From 1905 to 1908, the image of Japan in the U.S deteriorated substantially while the image of China improved almost proportionately. As Hunt elegantly put it, “it seems that by juxtaposing these two Oriental peoples, Americans had found a means of keeping their hopes and anxieties in equilibrium.”²⁰ In June 1905, *Goodwin’s weekly* in Salt Lake City, covering the exclusion against China, wrote “we most much prefer to have the inflow of the motley host from southern Europe vastly reduced, rather than to see the west coast of our country

¹⁸ Hunt, *The Making of a Special Relationship*, 1.

¹⁹ Iriye, “Introduction to *Mutual Images*”, 16.

²⁰ Hunt, *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy*, 77.

again opened to the scourge of the stary-eyed from the Orient.”²¹ One year later, reporting on George Y. Wallace’s trip to Japan and China, it wrote, “the Japanese do not compare with the Chinese; that the Chinese are an honest race, and the Japanese are treacherous and unscrupulous.”²² In one year, the image of Japan and China in the U.S. reversed their position.

The corresponding rise and fall in the image of Japan and China are no coincidence. With Japan’s increase in military power and market reach, Americans see Japan as a competitor keen on taking over the China market. Thus arose the image of China as in dire need of help. But the image of China as the recipient of American benevolence was conceptualized in the context of Chinese boycott of American products spanning through July 1905 to mid-1906. When Theodore Roosevelt’s daughter Alice Roosevelt visited China during that time period, she was even prohibited from stepping outside the U.S. embassy in Canton for fear of her safety. It is perplexing that the image of China turned positive at the height of anti-foreign movement. What happened after the Russo-Japanese War and in the Chinese boycott of American products that pushed the image of Japan and China develop in opposite direction in the U.S.? This paper argues that in order to understand the puzzle of Americans coming to the defense of anti-American boycott, one needs to take into account of the prism through which Americans examined the boycott—the image of China as a consumer and a protégée and Japan as a competitor.

Market Expansion as the Central Theme

Ever since the 1890s, global power competition was featured by neomercantilist concern. Market expansion was believed to be central to nations’ survival. Driven by neomercantilist thinking, the U.S. proclaimed the Open Door Note to China, European

²¹ Goodwin's Weekly, “China and the Exclusion Act,” 17 June 1905, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/2010218519/1905-06-17/ed-1/seq-1/>>.

²² Goodwin's Weekly, “China and the Future,” 09 June 1906, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/2010218519/1906-06-09/ed-1/seq-1/>>.

imperial powers scrambled to carve up the China market and Japan after the Meiji reform was on high gears in developing its manufacturing industry. Japan and China embodied completely different symbols in the U.S.—whereas China was regarded as the biggest potential consumer of American products, Japan the biggest competitor against America in Asian market—two images that stayed in the minds of Americans from the 1890s until the early 1920s.

Since the Meiji reform, Japan's manufacturing capacity increased dramatically. In Asia, Japan became the industrial center with its export to China tripled during 1895-1900.²³ Americans came to believe that for the Japanese, producing manufactured goods was not for home consumption but a strategy to seek commercial dominance. Iriye noted the *Overland Monthly* published in San Francisco harped on the theme of Japanese competition throughout 1896, "manufacturing goods for Japanese consumption is clearly not the strongest incentive in the movement which has astonished and alarmed the industrial nations; Japan has entered upon a commercial war against the great industrial nations of the world with the same energy, earnestness, determination, and foresight, which characterized the war with China."²⁴

Japanese manufactured products would flood the Asian market and threaten the integrity of the Open Door in China had been a long-standing fear among Americans. Stanley Washburn of the *Chicago Daily News*, after traveling with the Japanese army, wrote to George von Lengerke Meyer, ambassador in Russia, "the Japanese laugh in their sleeves about the open door in Manchuria, for when the time comes they can beat us in manufacturing due to cheap labor and therefore get the trade. They are most deceitful and untruthful as well as tricky in business transactions."²⁵ Because Japanese trade was

²³ Walter LaFeber, *The Clash: A History of U.S.-Japan Relations* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997), 68.

²⁴ Akira Iriye, "Japan as a Competitor," 75.

²⁵ George von Lengerke Meyer, "Meyer to Roosevelt", *George von Lengerke Meyer Papers* (Massachusetts: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1905), quoted in Akira Iriye, *Pacific Estrangement: Japanese and American Expansion, 1879-1911* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972), 110.

increasing much faster than American trade, the American Asiatic Association, formed by American business interests started to complain that Japan was discriminating American trade in Manchuria and seeking a monopoly there.²⁶

The fear that market expansion was the strategy for Japanese domination led to anxiety in the U.S. regarding increased Japanese immigration. In 1899 the *San Francisco Chronicle* argued that the Japanese immigration was more serious than Chinese because Japan had attained the status of a great power whereas China had not.²⁷ Japan's attainment of great power status coincided with the rise in the number of Japanese immigrants in the last decade of the 19th century when Chinese immigration stalled due to the exclusion bill. The steady increase in the number of Japanese immigrants from 6000 in 1895 to 35,000 in 1899 raised voices of concern, though not outright cries for exclusion in the U.S. On top of the increase in Japanese immigration to the U.S. was the dramatic increase in the export of Japanese cheap products to the U.S. which led to Henry Adam's proposal that America should build a tariff wall to shut out cheap Asian goods.²⁸ The image of Japanese immigrants invading the U.S. and Japanese products flooding the U.S. market started to build up in these early years.

On the China side, from 1897 to 1912, the concern over economic opportunities in China and security considerations led to the formation of America's China policy—a combination of paternalism and a benign sentimentality, argued Paul A. Varg.²⁹ Diplomatic notes and policy statements reverberated with the benevolence suggested by such phrases as the “Open Door” and “China's independence and territorial and administrative integrity”—

²⁶ Eleanor Tupper and George E. McReynolds, *Japan in American Public Opinion* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1937), 83.

²⁷ Ibid., 76.

²⁸ LaFeber, *The Clash*, 79.

²⁹ Varg, *The Making of A Myth: the U.S. and China*, 1.

the U.S. had accepted China as a ward to be protected from the evils of European and Japanese imperialism.³⁰

The myth of the China market became the dominant theme at the time. Mired in economic depression from 1893 to 1897, American businessmen and East Coast politicians—the main pushers of the Open Door Note came to the conclusion the underexplored China market was the solution to the overproduction problem at home. Representative William Sulzer of New York told Congress in 1898, “let me say to the businessmen of America, look to the land of the setting sun, look to the Pacific! There are teeming millions there who will ere long want to be fed and clothed the same as we are.”³¹ America enjoyed a series of market advances and a burst of investment fervor in China. Cotton goods had become a major export as American mills gained a clear edge over the long dominant British in the markets of North China and Manchuria; American investments valued at 6 million dollars in 1875 grew to 20 million dollars by 1900, thus Americans enjoyed approximately the same share in China relative to other nationals.³² The greatest boost in Americans’ faith in the China market came from the American China Development Company obtaining the concession for the Hankow-Canton railway, a highly prized railway concessions that other European imperial powers craved. Thus came the defining image of China as a potential market. *The New York Commercial* advertiser reported in January 1898, “the Orient is just beginning to be a purchaser in our markets for things which every civilized nation has always bought to its capacity.”³³ *The Buffalo Express* wrote in 1900, “there are 400,000,000 active stomachs in China, and each cries for food three times a day.”³⁴

³⁰ Ibid., 4.

³¹ Congressional Record, 55th Congress, 2nd Session, 1898, XXXI, Part 6, 5906 quoted in Paul Varg, *The Making of a Myth: The United States and China, 1897-1912* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1968), 15.

³² Hunt, *The Making of a Special Relationship: the U.S. and China to 1914*, 149.

³³ Walter LaFeber, *The American Search for Opportunity 1865-1913* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 169.

³⁴ Jonathan Goldstein, Jerry Israel and Hilary Conroy, *America Views China: American Images of China then and Now* (Bethlehem: Lehigh University Press, 1991), 122.

The development of the China market was intimately connected to America's mission of civilizing the Orientals in Asia. By the end of the 19th century, American missionaries began to marry traditional Christianity with the new doctrine of evolution, arguing that America had been hand-picked by the Lord to lead the Anglo-Saxons in transforming the world.³⁵ The number of American missionaries rose from 513 in 1890 to more than 1000 in 1900 and the number of students enrolled in missionary schools rose to 17,000.³⁶

Starting from the First Opium War, China was on the trajectory of being torn apart by imperial powers. In late 19th century, Russia, Britain, Germany, France and Japan all had secured leases to sectors of China's coastal territory and had developed their spheres of influence. Eager to capture its equal share in the China market, the U.S. pronounced its Open Door Note in 1899 and 1900. The Open Door Constituency—a term coined by Hunt, was composed of American businessmen, missionaries, and diplomats, with a common interest to penetrating China and propagating at home a paternalistic vision of defending and reforming China, believed that “not only must dams be built, but such archaic and inhumane practices as foot-binding, slavery, torture, and massive corruption had to be slapped out.”³⁷ Western trade, western politics and western religion, the three forces of the modern world, would bring about a transformation of Chinese life, creating new wants among the Chinese, which in the end stimulate new markets, argued Arthur Judson Brown in his 1904 book *New Forces in Old China: An Unwelcome but Inevitable Awakening*.³⁸ Thus the interests of American businessmen and missionaries were aligned, with increased trade in China and saving the souls of the Chinese serving for the same goal—America's market expansion.

³⁵ William Appleman Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* (New York: W.W.Norton& Co, 2009), 60.

³⁶ Harlan P. Beach, *A Geography and Atlas of Protestant Missions, II, Statistics and Atlas* (New York: Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions, 1903), 23, quoted in Paul Varg, *The Making of A Myth: the U.S. and China, 1879-1912* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1968), 16.

³⁷ Hunt, *The Making of a Special Relationship*, xi. Varg, *The Making of A Myth*, 123.

³⁸ Varg, *The Making of A Myth*, 119.

The conviction that the China market would save the U.S. from sliding into greater depression also led to calls for softening the exclusion against Chinese. Business interests were the vanguards in the movement. The secretary of the American Asiatic Association, John Ford drew the connection between the American need for trade with China “by far the greatest unexploited market in the world” with the competitive disadvantage under which exclusion put that trade.”³⁹

It is important to note the close association between image of China and Japan and the change in attitude towards Chinese and Japanese immigrants in the U.S. Thanks to mass circulation newspapers and telegraphic communications, global events quickly reached the other side of the earth and influenced local people’s way of thinking which in turn swayed local politics.⁴⁰ The image of Japan as a competitor consolidated the image of Japanese immigrant as invader whereas the image of China as a consumer solidified the image of Chinese immigrants as more worthy of respect.

American Benevolence as the Central Theme

In late 19th century, under the pressure from another essential component of the Open Door constituency—American missionaries, Washington decided to broaden its definition of missionary rights and demonstrated its willingness to defend the exercise of those rights even in the face of undiminished Chinese opposition.⁴¹ American missionaries, having had exploited their privileges in China in claiming property and legal exemption, were the target of a series of attacks. In the summer of 1895, two anti-missionary riots in Sichuan and Fujian provinces broke out, prompting missionaries to demand greater protection from Washington. Missionaries felt injured by the sudden outburst of anti-foreign sentiment. The most

³⁹ Hunt, *The Making of a Special Relationship*, 231.

⁴⁰ Masuda Haijimu, “Rumors of War: Immigration Disputes and the Social Construction of America-Japanese Relations, 1905-1913,” *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 33, No.1.(2009): 4.

⁴¹ Hunt, *The Making of a Special Relationship*, 162.

prominent American missionary W.A.P. Martin claimed, “America is neighbor to China; others may wound or rob, we do neither.”⁴²

The reason why American missionaries were surprised at the anti-foreign movement, which reached its peak in the Boxer Rebellion in 1900 was that for years America’s China policy was featured by a great sense of self-assumed benevolence. Early missionaries’ writings juxtapose the glamor of ancient Chinese civilization with its conservatism and backwardness, describing China and America as “related as two stages in the flow of human history.”⁴³ The American mission was thus, to “engage the decayed and stagnant East so that it could regain its ancient vigor and join the march of humanity.”⁴⁴

Since late 19th century, when U.S. expansion was transformed from territorial expansion to commercial expansion, Americans argued that market expansion was not only a natural development of the life of any industrial nation, but also a civilizing force that carried with it principles of democracy and Christianity, bonds of international understanding and peace.⁴⁵ The belief in Manifest Destiny produced two peculiar thoughts with regards to America’s China policy, one is that a nation that considered itself divinely chosen to remake the world cannot sit idly while others made a play for global influence.⁴⁶ The second is, the particular form of American expansion—market expansion is fundamentally different from European imperialism. Imperialism to them meant British and European style territorial expansion and monopolistic spheres of interest held down by large and threatening military castes, but market expansion was believed to be entirely benign.⁴⁷

⁴² Hunt, *The Making of a Special Relationship*, 164.

⁴³ Akira Iriye, *Across the Pacific: An Inner History of American-East Asian Relations* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1967), 6.

⁴⁴ Iriye, *Across the Pacific*, 5-6.

⁴⁵ Jones, “The Specificity of U.S. Imperialism”, 80.

⁴⁶ Heiss, “The Evolution of the Imperial Idea and U.S. National Identity”, 526,

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 85.

These two lines of thinking are most explicitly revealed through its proclamation of the Open Door Note which entailed two proposals, one, the sphere of influence pattern must be stopped and second, China's integrity must be preserved.⁴⁸ The spokesman for the Open Door at the time, representative of the Associated Chambers of Commerce of England, explained the sentiment of Americans as, "we have a big, honest idea of what should be done with trade and commerce, and we have even better than that, a grand, chivalrous, noble sentiment in regard to what should be done with weaker nations."⁴⁹ The U.S. became the guardian of China's integrity and openness to trade.

Not only was the U.S. a guardian, it was the source of progress for China, reasoned many Americans. The first American minister Burlingame's approach to China affairs embodied this sentiment. A keen proponent of teaching Christianity to Chinese students, he nonetheless called for Chinese funds to serve as schools' endowment while excluding Chinese from oversight of the school's operations.⁵⁰ In 1869, when the Qing government surprisingly invited Burlingame to be China's first representative to manage international affairs, Americans were overjoyed. American newspapers came to the consensus that this represented China's determination to "abandon the former exclusive and isolated policy of the empire, and that there is an earnest purpose to place side by side with the western nations in the way of progress."⁵¹ The Open Door Constituency came to believe decades of training Chinese students in learning English and Christian values finally pay off—a protégée in Asia was born.

America in Asia was a guardian and reformer, not an imperial power, argued the Open Door Constituency and American presidents. As McKinley proclaimed in 1898, the

⁴⁸ Marilyn Blatt Young, *The Rhetoric of empire: American China Policy, 1895-1901* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969), 118.

⁴⁹ Young, *the Rhetoric of Empire*, 117.

⁵⁰ Hunt, *the Making of a Special Relationship*, 172.

⁵¹ *The New York Herald*, "Departure of the Chinese Embassy for England," 09 Sept. 1868, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030313/1868-09-09/ed-1/seq-6/>>.

U.S. would never take over China's territory and it would act in the interest of China. The self-conception as a benevolent anti-imperial power would later on play a key role in affirming the conviction in the inevitable China-America harmony after the China Boycott of 1905.

Russo-Japanese War and the Chinese Boycott

Japan's valorous performance in the Russo-Japanese War in 1904 initially won applause from American newspaper. Japan and America were both interested in curbing Russia's expansionism in China. *The New York Tribune* declared in March 1898, "Slav-Tartar-Cossack rule means tyranny, ignorance, reaction. Japanese rule means freedom, enlightenment, progress."⁵² Japan benefited from the anti-Russian sentiment at the time when for decades Americans had read tales of Tsarist brutality, and Russian anti-Semitism aroused the antagonism among American Jews and Christians.⁵³ Early depiction of Japanese soldiers in the Russo-Japanese War often showed samurai warrior defeating the Russian bear, an underdog winning against odds by virtue of bravery.⁵⁴

Roosevelt's admiration for the Japanese also played a role in fostering American-Japanese friendship. He did not see Japanese and American interests as incompatible. When Japan suddenly struck Russia in 1904 and destroyed much of the tsar's Pacific fleet, Roosevelt was pleased, "the Japs will win out", he told Hay in July 1904, "the Japs have played our game because they have played the game of civilized mankind."⁵⁵ Roosevelt also believed that Japan was the solution to check Russian expansionism. Japan, not the U.S., would ultimately have to "contest with Russia the control of the destiny of Asia."⁵⁶ Serving

⁵² LaFeber, *The American Search for Opportunity 1865-1913*, 138.

⁵³ William L. Neumann, *America Encounters Japan: From Perry to MacArthur* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1963), 122.

⁵⁴ Neumann, *America Encounters Japan*, 123.

⁵⁵ LaFeber, *The American Search for Opportunity*, 203.

⁵⁶ Roosevelt, Theodore. Roosevelt to Hermann Speck von Sternburg, July 12, 1901, Letters III, 117. Quoted in Charles E. Neu, *An Uncertain Friendship: Theodore Roosevelt and Japan, 1906-1909* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), 8.

as a mediator between the Russians and the Japanese, he ceded to Japan the control over Korea and Southern Manchuria. Roosevelt's respect of Japanese later on made him the staunchest opponent against the exclusion movement, but the public opinion in the U.S. turned so heavily against Japan that he was no longer able to rein in anti-Japanese sentiment.

In late 1890s, American public opinion towards Japanese immigrants was generally favorable. Since the passage of the China Exclusion Act in 1882, Japanese satisfied the demand for cheap labor in the agricultural industry in California. Their courtesy, politeness were portrayed in sharp contrast to the barbarism of Chinese immigrants. Even the most vocal critic of Japanese immigrants, the *San Francisco Chronicle* before 1905 remained sympathetic to the Japanese and the San Francisco Education Board's attempt to exclude Japanese students from public schools was unsuccessful at the time.⁵⁷ It was only in 1905 when the Asiatic Exclusion League was organized in San Francisco that the movement wielded political power.⁵⁸

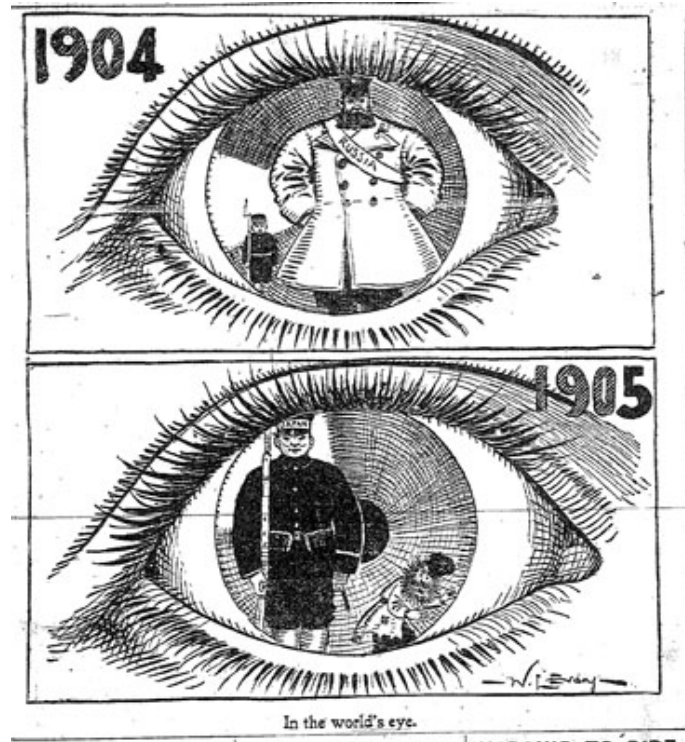
Japan's victory in Russo-Japanese War signified the beginning of the deterioration of Japan's image. On Feb 23, 1905, when the Japanese army had begun to storm Mukden, the *San Francisco Chronicle* launched an anti-Japanese campaign, declaring in front-page headlines, "the Japanese Invasion, the problem of the Hour."⁵⁹ Japan's victory, to the Americans, signified the beginning of a challenge of the "yellow race" against a "white race". A cartoon titled "In the World's Eye" in a local paper in Iowa captured the shift in Japan's and Russia's position in the eyes of the world. In 1904, a giant Russian general stood besides a small Japanese soldier; in 1905, the size of the Japanese soldier grew to the size of the Russian in 1904 while the Russian general shrank to the size of the Japanese in 1904.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Haijimu, "Rumors of War", 9.

⁵⁸ Neumann, *America Encounters Japan*, 124.

⁵⁹ Haijimu, "Rumors of War", 9.

⁶⁰ Des Moines Register and Leader, "In the World's Eye," April 2, 1905, <http://www.indiana.edu/~jia1915/war/eye25.html>.



**Fig. 1 --- Des Moines Register and Leader, “In the World’s Eye,” April 2, 1905,
<http://www.indiana.edu/~jia1915/war/eye25.html>.**

Japan’s victory in the Russo-Japanese War intensified fear on the West Coast over the increasing Japanese immigration. Residents in the West Coast feared that the number of Japanese immigrants would increase even more rapidly as a result of their victory over Russia since Japanese soldiers in particular having learned how to demonstrate their prowess, would not want to go back to peaceful life at home but would emigrate to California, transplanting Japanese ways of life to the West Coast.⁶¹ Several events in the early month of 1905 reflected the trend, the California legislature passing a resolution asking for restrictive laws, the *San Francisco Chronicle*’s launching of the anti-Japanese campaign, and the founding of the Japanese-Korean Exclusion League.⁶² But still in 1905, the anti-Japanese agitation was localized and its participants were mainly working-class labors who blamed Japanese for the loss of job opportunities.

⁶¹ Iriye, *Pacific Estrangement*, 110.

⁶² Neu, *An Uncertain Friendship*, 23.

In 1905, the image of China, on the other hand, rather than experiencing a clear positive-turn, went through several ups and downs in the U.S., declining substantially in the immediate three months after the boycott broke out but grew more positive in late 1905. In June, a boycott of American products broke out in Shanghai in protest against the exclusion in the U.S. and later spread to major coastal cities. It struck the flour industry in the U.S. heavily, leading to calls for trade retaliation against the Chinese among some Americans. “All the U.S. needs to do is to slap a little duty on Chinese goods coming to this country and China will lose: it is mighty easy to buy what we want elsewhere”, run the subheading of the newspaper *Albuquerque Evening Citizen* in New Mexico in July 1905.⁶³ Some American newspaper readers argued that since the U.S. can buy largely the same products from Japan, it should cut its trade relations with China. The call for trade retaliation was so strong that the State Department issued a statement discouraging “any further agitation in the South and elsewhere on the question of the threatened boycott by China of American cotton goods.”⁶⁴

Americans were angry about the boycott because it showed the “ingratitude” of the Chinese, tilted a newspaper article on *Okolona Messenger*, “the Chinese have proved ungrateful to the best friend they had among nations; had it not been the policy and diplomacy of John Hay, their empire would today be dismembered.”⁶⁵ Americans should be credited for having helped China in three aspects, they reasoned, firstly the U.S. released China from the obligation to pay indemnity for the Boxer Rebellion; secondly, the U.S. by introducing the Open Door Note prevented the encroachment of imperial powers on China’s territory; thirdly, the missionaries who were there since the 17th century had actively engaged in saving Chinese souls. Thus, “it is true that she had reasons for feeling aggrieved at the

⁶³ *Albuquerque Evening Citizen*, “If China wants to boycott, U.S. let her come ahead,” 25 July 1905, Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers. Lib. of Congress. <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84020615/1905-07-25/ed-1/seq-1/>.

⁶⁴ *The Lancaster Ledger*, “State Department agitating China’s boycott,” 14 June 1905, Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84026900/1905-06-14/ed-1/seq-1/>>.

⁶⁵ *Okolona Messenger*, “China’s ingratitude,” 09 Aug. 1905, Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn87065462/1905-08-09/ed-1/seq-1/>>.

treatment of certain Chinese students and merchants travelling in America; but she showed a mean and ungrateful spirit to do injury to her best friend at the earliest opportunity.”⁶⁶

The complaint against China's ingratitude reflected the long-term paternalistic attitude Americans had over China. The Open Door Constituency assumed that China and the U.S. had an alignment of interests. Late 19th century witnessed the proliferation of explanatory models which pictured the diversity of humankind as ranging along a hierarchic scale, from the brute savage to the refined white Europeans.⁶⁷ By selling American products and teaching western civilizations, Americans assumed stewardship over the lower peoples in Asia.

In February 1906, Americans had growing weariness for war against China. *The Salt Lake Tribune* after reporting on the fact that 38,000 men of regular army were to be mobilized in Manila for serving in China, quoted a long-time U.S. minister to China in explaining the rationale, “a show of warships should be made to impress upon the government of China that the trouble must not be repeated and will not be tolerated”.⁶⁸ The navy was especially active in the preparation. One armored and three protected cruisers were held in readiness to proceed to the Far East and gunboats of the Helena class would be commissioned without further delay and sent to China for use.⁶⁹

The boycott ignited the antagonism between Chinese and Americans to the extent that it was described as another Boxer Rebellion. Speculation that the Chinese side was preparing for war rose sharply. *The San Francisco Call*, the local San Francisco newspaper notable for its harsh tone against Chinese, reported that Professor Freyer from University of California

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Barbarian virtues: the United States encounters foreign peoples at home and abroad, 1876-1917* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2001), 142.

⁶⁸ *The Salt Lake Tribune*, “U.S. to fortify the Philippines,” 15 Feb. 1906, Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83045396/1906-02-15/ed-1/seq-1/>>.

⁶⁹ *The Bemidji Daily Pioneer*, “Men of the regular army are to be mobilized at Manila for service,” 15 Feb. 1906, Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn86063381/1906-02-15/ed-1/seq-1/>>.

who was intimately acquainted with Chinese officials of high rank “has learned from a Chinese newspaper that the Peking government has placed a large order for small arms and cannon in Germany.” This was taken as conclusive evidence that China was preparing for possible conflict.

But this period of mutual suspicion between the U.S. and China lasted for only three months when a theory rose that Japan was behind the boycott. Americans diverted the national anger from Chinese to the “sly Japanese” who they believed secretly hoped that by launching the boycott it could dominate the China market.

Rumors of Japan behind the Boycott

In late 1905 came the speculation among American public that Japanese launched the boycott in collaboration with the Chinese government. Many Americans reasoned that because Japan knew the U.S. was the greatest rival for the new Chinese market, it was keen on playing the prejudice of the Chinese against the foreigners so that it can reap the most profit from the Chinese market. *Albuquerque Evening Citizen* wrote, “the influence of Japan at the court of Beijing is paramount since the treaty of Portsmouth. Thus the failure of the Chinese government to suppress the anti-American boycott is charged directly to be unfriendliness of Japan.”⁷⁰ An official of the State Department even described the situation as “the Japanese were affecting the body politics of China.”⁷¹ Even a senator on the Senate Committee of Foreign Relations at the time echoed the sentiment, “the Japanese are behind all this and this is part of the argument that I am using to arouse the senate to action. It is

⁷⁰ *Albuquerque Evening Citizen*, “It was Japan that roused Chinese against us,” 16 Feb. 1906, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84020615/1906-02-16/ed-1/seq-1/>>.

⁷¹ *The Evening Statesman*, “War with China is not Improbable,” 09 Feb. 1906, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn88085421/1906-02-09/ed-1/seq-1/>>.

nothing short of a struggle for commercial supremacy, with stealth, cunning and unscrupulousness pitted against us.”⁷²

The noted foreign correspondent Millard listed evidence that he claimed supported “the existence of a systematic and well-developed plan of Japan to control and manipulate” Chinese public opinion, including Chinese newspapers carrying anti-foreign articles were published in China under Japanese charter and thousands of Japanese Buddhist missionaries and businessmen living in China distributed large numbers of anti-foreign posters.⁷³ The suspicion that Japan was behind the boycott drove Americans to conclude that China should be completely absolved from moral responsibility. The desire to preserve the integrity of China would draw U.S. and China into inevitable harmony, reasoned many Americans.

The accusation that Japanese were behind the boycott stemmed from Americans’ long-term suspicion that Japan was bent on regional domination. In late 1898, Russia was suspected of threatening to violate the Open Door. In late 1898, McKinley suspected that the Open Door would be imperiled by Russians’ attempt to close off ports in Manchuria and Great Britain’s appeasement policy towards Russia in staking out zones in China for railroad monopolies greatly alerted American government.⁷⁴ But with Japan winning over Russia, America was worried that Japan would close off the China Market. The most ardent critic against Japan at the time, Thomas F. Millard wrote, “Japan’s goal is commercial supremacy in the whole East, and this means she must meet competitors in regions where she has not yet secured the advantages of political control. So she is devising ways and means to defeat this competition through methods in violation of the Open Door.”⁷⁵

⁷² *The Ocala Evening Star*, “Another Boxer Uprising,” 13 Feb. 1906, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84027621/1906-02-13/ed-1/seq-1/>>.

⁷³ Jonathan Goldstein, Jerry Israel and Hilary Conroy, *America Views China: American Images of China then and Now* (Bethlehem: Lehigh University Press, 1991), 121.

⁷⁴ LaFeber, *American in Search for Opportunity*, 169.

⁷⁵ Thomas F. Millard, *America and the Far Eastern Question* (New York: Scribner’s 1909), 21. Quoted in Iriye, “Japan as a Competitor”, 87.

The racialized thinking about Japanese as inherently untrustworthy also played a role in Americans' suspicion. LaFeber noted that while Roosevelt pretended to be friendly with Japanese after his mediation in the Russo-Japanese War, he nonetheless wrote privately, "I am not at all sure that the Japanese people draw any distinctions between the Russians and other foreigners, including ourselves...I have no doubt that they believe their own yellow civilization to be better...Japan is an oriental nation, and the individual standard of trustfulness in Japan is low."⁷⁶ The drastic rise in Japan's national power coupled with the racialized image of Japan as an untrustworthy Oriental nation drew many Americans to the conclusion that Japan launched the boycott.

The image of China as in inevitable harmony with the U.S. was intimately connected to the image of an ambitious Japan. As suspicion of and opposition to Japanese continental policy grew after 1905, Americans came to view Chinese-American friendship as part of the developing rivalry between Japan and the US for greater influence in Asia.⁷⁷ Thomas Millard wrote in 1909, "the Chinese are as averse to being ruled by Japanese as by westerners; indeed it may be that brought to a choice between these alternatives Chinese would choose a western master."⁷⁸ Without the image of Japan as bent on expansion and domination, China would not be absolved from blame for the boycott of American products. China was not to be blamed because China was denied of agency. Here was the trilateral relationship in 1906, with China and the U.S. in inevitable harmony and Japan as the predator to the China market and the U.S. continent.

Similarly, racialized thinking about the Chinese also played a role in the construction of the image of an innocent China. Going back to the heavily influential book *Chinese*

⁷⁶ Theodore Roosevelt, *The Letters of Theodore Roosevelt IV* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press), 1079-1080. Quoted in Walter LaFeber, *The Clash: A History of US-Japan Relations* (W.W. Norton & Company: New York, 1997), 84.

⁷⁷ Iriye, "Japan as a Competitor", 88.

⁷⁸ Thomas Franklin Fairfax Millard, *America and the Far Eastern Question: an Examination of Modern Phases of the Far Eastern Question ... Maps and Illustrations* (Moffat, Yard & Co.: New York, 1909), 13.

Characteristics by Arthur H. Smith in the 1870s, the impression of Chinese was that “a Chinese education by no means fits its possessors to grasp a subject in a comprehensive and practical manner; the existence of Chinese is merely that of a frog in a well, to which even the heaven appears only as a strip of darkness.”⁷⁹ Given that the Chinese did not receive proper education, their autonomous thinking inhibited from being freely exercised, their worldview limited to that of their immediate proximity, protesting against the Chinese exclusion on the American soil seemed too much of a requirement of the Chinese’s autonomy. Underlying the conviction that China would find the U.S. its inevitable defender was the belief in China’s inferiority and backwardness. It made no difference to Americans that China was the object of American diplomacy, a pawn to be acted upon, rather than a participant in determining its own fate.⁸⁰

This also speaks to the malleability and contradiction inherent in Americans’ racialized thinking towards the Orientals. Eliza Ruhamah Scidmore, an American writer whose books were responsible for many Americans’ impression towards Japan, wrote in an article titled “the most paradoxical race”, “the missionaries in China, who have to contend the apathy or open hostility and the horrible surroundings of the native population, greatly admire the Japanese and envy their colleagues who live in so beautiful a country, among so clean, courteous, and friendly a people, so eager to learn and so quick to acquire.”⁸¹ Japan used to be regarded as the most eager to learn and now Roosevelt however repudiated it for its “arrogance”. The stereotypes associated with the Orientals were always lurking in the background, and may be invoked in times when there were signs of negative-turn in diplomatic relations.

⁷⁹ Arthur Henderson Smith, *Chinese Characteristics* (Publisher Not Identified, 1890), 136.

⁸⁰ Goldstein, Israel and Conroy, *America Views China: American Images of China then and Now*, 117.

⁸¹ Scidmore, “The Most Paradoxical Race,” 13.

The Awakening of China

With the further progression of Chinese boycott, Americans were forced to come to the reality that the protest was a genuine outburst of emotional frustration of the Chinese. Starting from January 1906, the Japanese government repeatedly refuted allegations that they were behind the boycott. The first secretary of the Japanese Legation at Washington, on the occasion of the annual dinner of the silk association of America, denied charges for “Japan’s trade jealousy of the U.S.”, “the Chinese boycott of American goods should be attributed to Japanese government is too absurd to need any refutation. Why should Japan strive to make a trifling gain at the risk of forfeiting the great sympathy and traditional friendship of this great republic?”⁸²

With key speculations denied, a great number of Americans started to refer to the boycott the “awakening of China”. On Feb 6, *The Paducah Sun* quoted J. K. Stuart who spent thirty years in charge of missionary work, that “it seems to me the Chinese people are in a state of growing unrest. They are beginning to read the papers more and to take more interest in the outside world... I do not believe it is solely hostility towards foreigners. The people are simply dissatisfied and want progress.”⁸³ The most influential man on the subject, missionary A.H. Smith on Feb 20 at a missionary conference delivered an address saying, “the Chinese people are a great people and they have come to self-consciousness...there is going to be a great change in the constitutional government and a great revolution in the east. It is going to be a commercial, industrial, political and it will also be a moral revolution.”⁸⁴

⁸² *The Sun*, “Pledges Japan’s Friendship,” 11 Feb. 1906, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030272/1906-02-11/ed-1/seq-1/>>.

⁸³ *The Paducah Sun*, “Chinese People Simply Restless,” 16 Feb. 1906, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85052116/1906-02-16/ed-1/seq-1/>>.

⁸⁴ *The Daily Morning Journal and Courier*, “Says Relations of U.S. with China Shameful,” 21 Feb. 1906, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn84020358/1906-02-21/ed-1/seq-1/>>.

Since early 1906, the framing of the Chinese boycott began to change from another “boxer rebellion” to “moral awakening of the Chinese”. Interestingly the “moral awakening” was seen as a result of “western ideas” influencing China. On April 7th, the *Hawaiian Star* reported Bishop J.W. Bashford of the Methodist Episcopal church in Shanghai saying, “western ideas are getting a foothold in China...the present movement is a movement of the young men becoming imbued with the idea that China should come out and be a power among the nations.”⁸⁵ Many Americans reasoned that the enlightened sentiment of progress among the Chinese was brought about by western education, the introduction of modern communication, and reform of government bureaucracies, in a word reform modeled on the West.

There was a certain degree of truth in this line of reasoning. The introduction of the press and the telegraph led to the burgeoning of political awareness among Chinese people and were also the medium through which they became aware of the injustice Chinese labors, students and businessmen were subjected to on the shores of the U.S. As early as August 1905, the *North China Herald*, when referring to the widespread activities of political associations and the press in China, noted, “a public opinion is being developed and practice is being gained in the methods of organizing and directing it.”⁸⁶ The rise of public opinion was a crucial factor leading to the emergence of Chinese nationalism, and its effect on the China-US relations was complex. It empowered the Chinese people to demand the overthrow of the corrupted Qing government, but it also prompted them to assert control over their territory and internal affairs—a huge blow to the concessions granted to foreign imperial powers.

⁸⁵ *The Hawaiian Star*, “Unrest in China,” 07 April 1906, Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82015415/1906-04-07/ed-1/seq-1/>>.

⁸⁶ *North China Herald*, Aug 11, 1905. Quoted in Iriye, *Pacific Estrangement*, 115.

China's attempt to regain control of the Canton-Hankow railroad concession from the American-China development company was a key example of the uncertain trajectory that the Chinese "moral awakening" would lead to. The noted foreign correspondent Thomas F. Millard cautioned that China would insist upon retaining "substantial control" of the railroads of China, "it is safe to say that hereafter no important commercial or industrial concession will be willingly granted by the Chinese government in which the government does not reserve the right to take it over under equitable conditions."⁸⁷

Yet at this point, Americans did not let the shadow of Chinese nationalism cloud over their joy over the awakening of China enabled by the guidance of the West. The positive image accorded to China even at the height of the boycott movement reflected the belief there was nothing inherently incompatible between Chinese nationalism and American expansionism. In fact the former was the product of the latter.⁸⁸ The Open Door constituencies, by expanding their missionary activities in China and their commercial engagement with the Chinese, created the environment conducive to the birth of Chinese nationalism.

On the other hand, the antagonism against Japanese immigrants built up steadily over the years. Ever since the great earthquake of April 1906 in San Francisco which destroyed large parts of the city, hostility toward Japanese residents was intensified by their spread into previously white areas of the city and by the rapid increase in Japanese restaurants which served working man.⁸⁹ In October of 1906, the San Francisco Board of Education ordered the segregation of Japanese students, to which Japanese press reacted angrily. Theodore Roosevelt hurriedly rushed to persuade the San Francisco School Board to rescind their action in face of condemnation from Japan, but Roosevelt's efforts did not cool down anti-

⁸⁷ Goldstein, Israel and Conroy, *America Views China*, 119.

⁸⁸ Iriye, *Pacific Estrangement*, 123.

⁸⁹ Neu, *An Uncertain Friendship: Theodore Roosevelt and Japan, 1906-1909*, 25.

Japanese sentiment and a major riot against Japanese immigrants broke out in San Francisco in 1907.

War Scares against Japan

The collective cheer for the birth of Chinese nationalism reflected some essential feature of Americans' self-conception—its self-identification as anti-imperial power. As *the New York Times* wrote in Oct 1905, “the tendency of the adoption of western methods and ideas in political organization, in industry, and in business will be toward the ultimate breaking up of exclusiveness.”⁹⁰ And when the China market was completely opened and the Chinese minds enlightened, they would come to the recognition that America was their best friend in enabling it to progress, unlike other European imperial powers who claimed to assist China but secretly vied for carving up China. Taft, in a speech delivered in Shanghai in 1907, said “China should devote her energies to the development of her immense resources, to her industrious people and to the enlargement of her trade and to the administrative reform of the Empire as a great national government. Changes of this kind could only increase our trade with her.”⁹¹ Enlightened Chinese peoples would naturally come to the side of the U.S., most of Americans believed.

The impression that a new China was born was emphasized and widely spread by several extremely popular books in the U.S. in 1907, represented by *China and America Today* written by the reputed missionary Arthur H. Smith and *The Awakening of Chia* written by W.A.P. Martin. Both described the achievements of a new China and cautioned Americans that the new China would no longer tolerate foreign intrusion and subjugation.⁹² These two missionaries, who were among the most informed of the situation in China, were

⁹⁰ *New York Times*, “China for the Chinese,” Oct 17, 1905, <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=9A05EED61431E733A25754C1A9669D946497D6CF&legacy=true>.

⁹¹ Taft, H. William. Taft to Roosevelt, Oct 5, 1907, SDA 1797/380-383 quoted in Iriye, *Pacific Estrangement*, 123.

⁹² Varg, *The Making of A Myth*, 113.

the earliest to be aware that the image of China in inevitable harmony with the U.S. was largely overblown.

The positive turn in the image of China affected Americans' stance over immigration issue. There were growing cries among the American public over the injustice of the exclusion against China, but unfortunately pity was reserved exclusively for the "finer classes" of the Chinese. In April, the *Ottumwa tri-weekly* courier quoted a Chinese student saying, "the Chinese admitted the justice of excluding the coolies but that the way the law was now enforced, it was also used to keep out Chinese students and teachers."⁹³ On Aug 17th, the *Omaha Daily Bee* quoted U.S. minister to Colombia who said that, "the boycott is a remonstrance because the scions of noble men, refined and well educated gentlemen are held in the detention quarters by unwise immigration officials at our ports of entry for a period of ten days at a time, and compelled to herd with the lowest classes of their country during that time."⁹⁴

Objection against Chinese Exclusion Act in China as well in the U.S. was based on first, the exclusion led to the unfair treatment of the higher classes of Chinese, teachers, students and businessmen; second, the exclusion imposed too much technical difficulty on immigration officers because they needed to check one by one if the coming immigrant belonged to the exempted class. Even newspapers that decided to incorporate Chinese' narratives in their reporting selected narratives that were largely silent on the issue of exclusion against coolies and focused only on the "better classes". A widely reproduced letter written by a Chinese student to the *New York Times* on how he has been mistreated by the immigration officer published in March 1906 said, "I desire to voice the outrageous treatment

⁹³ *Ottumwa Tri-weekly Courier*, "The Chinese Boycott," 07 April 1906, Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn86061215/1906-04-07/ed-1/seq-1/>>.

⁹⁴ *Omaha Daily Bee*, "Conger will return to China," 18 Aug. 1905, Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn99021999/1905-08-18/ed-1/seq-1/>>.

by your immigration officials to Chinese students, travelers and merchants who happen to come to your most inhospitable shores.”⁹⁵

This should not be a surprise to anyone given that the sympathy towards the Chinese was based on the idea that the Chinese were awakened because of literacy and exposure to western ideas. The Chinese coolies, however, were not affected in any way by the reform going on in China, and they were still coming to our shores to take our jobs, reasoned some Americans. The sympathy was largely attributed to the “finer” Chinese population, “the most refined and intelligent men.” And the sympathy attributed to them was linked to Americans’ belief that China was undergoing moral regeneration.

The boycott movement thus achieved very limited effect and conditions only improved for the “better classes” to whom Americans granted their sympathy. When the boycott broke out in July 1905, President Roosevelt issued instructions to immigration officials, removing some of the most offensive features of the existing practices, such as thorough inspection and detention of Chinese visitors at ports of entry. In mid-1906 only small demonstrations sporadically appeared in the treaty ports; by the end of 1906 the boycott came to an end, and the China exclusion policy continued until 1943.⁹⁶

On the other hand, voluminous literature predicting war against Japan galvanized public support for Japanese exclusion. This time not just the West Coast papers, even the Times, the Tribune, and the Sun in the East Coast published articles which assumed war was impending. This was a significant change from their tone in 1906 when most of the East Coast papers still deplored the anti-Japanese agitation. For example, in 1906 *The Washington Evening Star* said, “American interests in the Far East...are too heavy and important to be

⁹⁵ *The Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, “Kentwell A Student: He Writes on Boycott From Columbia University,” 16 March 1906, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers. Lib. of Congress*.
<<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85047084/1906-03-16/ed-1/seq-1/>>.

⁹⁶ Shih-Shan H. Tsai, “Reaction to Exclusion: The Boycott of 1905 and Chinese Moral Awakening,” *The Historian* 39, no.1 (1976): 95-100. 109.

placed in jeopardy by a wanton insult of the dominant power.”⁹⁷ In February 1907, the same newspaper wrote, “the Japanese race wherever distributed, however numerically strong in any foreign country, will remain a consolidated unit in support of the aspirations of the Japanese race.”⁹⁸ In May 1907, a mob of about 50 residents in San Francisco, attacked a Japanese restaurant and bathhouse, broke windows and chased away the customers.⁹⁹ The mob violence led to angry responses from Japanese newspaper, arguing for war against the U.S. in retaliation for the violence Japanese immigrants endured.

Now even Roosevelt was worried about the prospect of war against Japan. Concerned that “the Japanese are a formidable military power and have unknown possibilities as regards their power and as regards their motives and purposes,” he restarted the expansion of American navy, a project that he called a halt in 1905, but now restarted for fear of the possibility for war against Japan.¹⁰⁰ In October of 1906, Roosevelt asked the Navy about its preparation for a war with Japan; three months later, the Army and the navy began to undertake joint studies on the conduct of a possible war against Japan.¹⁰¹ In June 1907, Roosevelt decided to shift the fleet to the Pacific, which in many American newspapers’ perspectives, became a confirmation that war was under way. The U.S. navy began its war plan against Japan code named “Orange”. Preparedness ought to be stepped up because the Japanese were “very sensitive and very much disposed to attack anybody.”¹⁰²

As Iriye noted, “what made Japanese immigration seem more serious than Chinese immigration was the fear that it might lead to diplomatic crisis and even war between the two

⁹⁷ *Literary Digest*, “Our Misunderstanding with Japan,” November 3, 1906, 621-622. Quoted in Neu, *An Uncertain Friendship: Theodore Roosevelt and Japan, 1906-1909*, 38.

⁹⁸ Evening star, “Clash is inevitable,” 02 Feb. 1907. Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83045462/1907-02-02/ed-1/seq-7/>>

⁹⁹ *London Times*, May 27, 1907. Quoted in Thomas Andrew Bailey, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Japanese-American crises: An account of the international complications arising from the race problem on the Pacific Coast* (Redwood: Stanford University Press, 1934): 194.

¹⁰⁰ Neu, *An Uncertain Friendship*, 312.

¹⁰¹ Neumann, *America Encounters Japan: From Perry to MacArthur*, 127.

¹⁰² Bigelow to Lodge, June 10, 1907, Henry Cabot Lodge Papers (Massachusetts: Massachusetts Historical Society) quoted in Iriye, *Pacific Estrangement*, 164.

countries. The image of Japan as a power implied that should such an eventuality occur the U.S. would be faced with a formidable enemy.”¹⁰³ Americans perceived Japanese as pursuing a two-pronged strategies of expansion, eastward immigration and boost in export. Exclusion against Japanese thus served for a greater cause, stopping the Japanese from invading the U.S. M.H. De Young, the proprietor of the *San Francisco Chronicle*, in Aug 1907 said in an interview, “it is well-known in California that thousands of Japanese soldiers, men and officers of late war, are now in Hawaii. Working on sugar plantation are some 10,000 or 15,000 a nucleus large enough.”¹⁰⁴ As many historians have already documented, the San Francisco’s Board of Education’s decision to segregate Japanese students from the rest in public schools had significant connections to the fear against a rising militant Japan. At the time rumors had it that 2000 Japanese adults were “dominating public schools in San Francisco”.¹⁰⁵ Rumors of war spread in the U.S. and antagonism against the Japanese intensified.

Conclusion

The Importance of Image

In 1907, Captain R.H. Van Deman of the general staff was greatly concerned with the Philippines because he feared Japanese agents were closely in touch with the insurgents, “I think there is good reason to believe that Japanese in the Philippines are engaged...in creating in the minds of the Filipinos an idea that Japan would be glad to see them independent and that she stands ready to establish a protectorate over the islands.”¹⁰⁶ Again Americans suspected that Japan was plotting the local population to challenge American

¹⁰³ Iriye, “Japan as competitor,” 78.

¹⁰⁴ *Rock Island Argus*, “Two Views of It,” 09 Aug. 1907, Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn92053934/1907-08-09/ed-1/seq-8/>>.

¹⁰⁵ Hajimu, “Rumors of War,” 10.

¹⁰⁶ Iriye, *Pacific Estrangement*, 161.

control. The image of Japan as a competitor gradually morphed into one not limited to trade expansion but territorial expansion as well. Japan was believed to crave to capture the Philippines and China so as to bolster its market domination there. In Dec 1906, the *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* reasoned, “Japan has a commerce so great and growing to protect as to furnish a reason other than military ambition for her large increase of naval armament.”¹⁰⁷ Japan’s ambition of commercial expansion and territorial expansion would undoubtedly set it in conflict with Americans, a reason that led to Americans’ suspicion of Japan every time a nationalistic movement surfaced in Asia.

Images often time speak more of who the image-holders are rather than who the objects are. Not only was Japan keen on avoiding military confrontation with the U.S., China was in no way a solution to U.S.’s domestic problem. Iriye noted that in 1906, American exports to China comprised a mere 2.5 percent of the total U.S. exports; in 1908 it was down to 1.2 percent. Moreover, from 1890s-1910s there were multiple incidents of anti-foreign outbursts in China, the Tientsin Massacre in 1868, the Boxer Rebellion in 1900 and the boycott against American products in 1905. Reacting to the exclusion movement in the U.S, Japanese government signed the Gentleman’s Agreement in 1907 with Roosevelt whereas China launched the boycott. Yet the treatment Chinese immigrants received improved whereas for Japanese it deteriorated. A pure economic analysis cannot explain the national antagonism over Japan and the praise for the rise in Chinese nationalism.

As Miller argues in his *The Unwelcome Immigrant: the American Image of the Chinese, 1785-1882*, “the human mind does not see an object or situation and then define what it has observed. Rather it brings to any situation or object a definition and then sees

¹⁰⁷ *The Pacific Commercial Advertiser*. “Japan’s commercial progress,” 14 Dec. 1906, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress. <<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85047084/1906-12-14/ed-1/seq-4/>>.

what it has already defined.”¹⁰⁸ Images are the prisms through which we examined events. From 1905-1908, the image of America as an anti-imperial power, of Japan as a competitor and China as a consumer and protégée played a crucial role in how the U.S.’s relations with Japan and China developed. As William Appleman Williams persuasively argued, “America’s traditional view of itself holds that, except for a brief and rapidly dispelled aberration at the turn of the century, America has been anti-imperialist throughout its history.”¹⁰⁹ Just as the Open Door Constituency reasoned that the Open Door Note saved China from territorial colonization by imperial European powers, the constituency argued that the moral awakening of China, enabled by China’s adoption of western modernization, empowered China to assert its equal right against imperial powers, though it never conceptualized itself as one of them. The refusal to think of itself as an “empire” led to the conviction of inevitable harmony between the U.S. and China.

Amy Kaplan wrote in the Introduction to her seminal anthology *Cultures of U.S. Imperialism*, “three salient absences exist in American historiography, the absence of culture from the history of U.S. imperialism; the absence of empire from the study of American culture; and the absence of the U.S. from the postcolonial study of imperialism.”¹¹⁰ The absence of empire is deeply rooted in Americans’ self-conception, on the level of public opinion as well as thinking of foreign policy elites. Lying in the gap between reality and what was believed were images, the conceptual underpinnings of which include the beliefs that Japan was bent on regional domination, and China was in need of help for dispelling imperialism. Here one sees the interaction between policy and image—diplomatic policy shape inter-cultural images, seen in how the Open Door Note cultivated a great sense of

¹⁰⁸ Stuart Creighton Miller, *Unwelcome Immigrant: American Image of the Chinese, 1785-1882* (California: University of California Press, 1969), 8.

¹⁰⁹ Williams, *The Tragedy of American Foreign Policy*, 20.

¹¹⁰ Amy Kaplan, Donald E. Pease, *Cultures of United States Imperialism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994), 11.

paternalism towards China, and images contest policy, evident in Roosevelt's inability to quite down anti-Japanese agitation in 1906.

Professor Marilyn Young, in her essay *The Quest for Empire*, argued that the myth of the China market was important because it served for a purpose “domestically—to offset the ‘unpleasantness’ in the Philippines, to reassure a country shaken to its roots by the depression of 1893 and the alleged imminence of Chinese partition, and therefore consciously or unconsciously it was assiduously maintained.”¹¹¹ Indeed, the myth of Japan as a competitor and China as a consumer were consciously maintained because they served to justify the continuous market penetration in China argued forcefully by East Coast business interests in collaboration with foreign policy elites, but they were unconsciously maintained as well because of Americans' self-conception as an anti-imperialist power. Here comes the alignment between image and political necessity. Thus, there was no clear bifurcation between rhetoric and belief—our rhetoric reflects the world seen through the prism of our belief.

But Americans' refusal to come to the conclusion that Chinese or the Philippines organized these movements also reflected how they conceived of the local people. Americans' encounter with immigrants at home and with various natives abroad were not only structured by the prior experience of actual face-to-face economic or social exchanges, but mediated by the broad and potent notions of peoplehood, civilization, progress, and racial hierarchy.¹¹² By the end of the 19th century, anthropological theories and Social Darwinism provided the theoretical foundation of racial hierarchy. Americans' racialized thinking towards the others was manifested in their tendency to depict other peoples in “hordes” rather than as individuals. Jacobson argues this tendency was clearly seen in the narrative of Americans'

¹¹¹ Marilyn B. Young, “The Quest for Empire,” in *American-East Asian Relations: A Survey*, ed. Ernest R. May and James C. Thomas Jr. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972), 136.

¹¹² Jacobson, *Barbarian Virtues*, 99.

travelogues to foreign states, “whether in the marketplace in Egypt or the villages along Congo, immigrant ghettos were populated not by individuals, who might speak for themselves and whose recognizable humanity might make a claim on our sympathies, but by crowds, throngs, masses of unindividuated and unspeakably odd folk whose very numbers overwhelmed the capacity for empathy.”¹¹³ The following picture explains how Americans tended to depict the Chinese and Japanese, tens of Chinese men sleeping on top of each other in a crowded opium den.¹¹⁴ No wonder Americans could not believe that Chinese were able to demand for equal protection.



Figure 2 --- “Why they can live on 40 cents a day, and they can't,” Print, 1878, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2002720432/>.

The Teutonic-germ theory which was influential in the late 19th century argued that the Anglo-Saxons, Germanic tribes who crossed the English Channel, had planned the Teutonicgerm of freedom and civilization in England and thus were distinguished by their

¹¹³ Jacobson, *Barbarian virtues*, 125.

¹¹⁴ “Why they can live on 40 cents a day, and they can't,” Print, 1878, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division Washington, <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2002720432/>.

commitment to freedom and individual rights, whereas the “Mongolians” did not have the innate capacity to understand the value of free political institutions.¹¹⁵ It was inconceivable to many Americans, immersed in the Social Darwinist theory on the hierarchy of peoples at the day that Chinese could launch a peaceful political movement, demanding equal right for Chinese immigrants. Thus came the speculation that Japanese were behind the boycott aided by the Chinese government.

This paper thus wants to highlight the importance of the role images play in the U.S.’s engagement with the globe. As Robert Wolfe brilliantly argued, “the U.S. while seeking to defend real interests...seeks to do so on the basis of a mythological view of the world.”¹¹⁶ There is no dichotomy between myth and interests; government as well as the public confuse and conflate the two all the time. A parallel is seen when in the Cold War, the image of a brutal, ideological Soviet Union bent on global domination supported the justification of an exponential increase in military spending. It also reflected the national security thinking of the U.S. that emerged between 1945 and 1948, as Leffler argued, whose essential ingredients include a strategic sphere of influence within the western hemisphere, domination of the Atlantic and Pacific Ocean, and an extensive system of outlying bases to enlarge the strategic frontier and project American power.¹¹⁷ What is essential is the thinking behind the aggressive image of Japan and benevolent image of China, a neomercantilist calculation tainted by racialized belief.

¹¹⁵ Joseph M. Henning, *Outposts of Civilization: Race, Religion and the Formative Years of American-Japanese Relations* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 13.

¹¹⁶ Robert Wolfe, “American Imperialism and the Peace movement,” *Studies on the Left*, 6.3 (May-June 1966), 28-43. Quoted in Marilyn B. Young, “The Quest for Empire,” in *American-East Asian Relations: A Survey*, ed. Ernest R. May and James C. Thomas Jr. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press), 136.

¹¹⁷ Melvyn P Leffler, “The American Conception of National Security and the Beginnings of the Cold War, 1945-48,” *The American Historical Review* 89, no. 2 (April 1984): 379.

Multinational Perspective on the Study of Images

As Harold Issacs observed shrewdly, “I have been particularly struck by the fact that we tend to hold our images of peoples and cultures in pairs, jostling pairs of coupled pulses, favorable and unfavorable images that appear, disappear and reappear at different times, displacing each other at the call of political circumstances.”¹¹⁸ Since the 17th century, conceptions of Japanese and Chinese were fused with ambiguity, with negative comments juxtaposed with positive ones. *The Chinese Characteristics* compared the Chinese race to “a donkey dragging himself to the utmost limit of his tether and reclines with his head at an angle of 45 degree”, to the extent that “we wonder why he does not break his neck because no occidental donkey would behave in such a way.”¹¹⁹ The derision against Chinese race “in a condition of semi-strangulations” was juxtaposed against the praise that “they submit with exemplary patience, knowing them to be inevitable.”¹²⁰ The jostling pairs of racialized thinking against the Japanese and Chinese were always lurking underneath the image of China and Japan, and thus the pendulum swung back and forth in who should play the role of a competitor/protégée.

Though who plays the role of competitor/protégée is subject to international and domestic events, this paper concludes that it is almost certain that Japan and China cannot both be competitor/protégée. The images of China and Japan have always come in pairs in the cognitive map in the American minds, with one serving as the other’s frame of reference. Because the two East Asian countries were “opened” at about the same time, their different responses to outside stimuli offered a favorite topic of discourse to western men of learning and thus America’s praise of the Japanese often took the form of comparison with the

¹¹⁸ Iriye, *Mutual Images*, 259.

¹¹⁹ Smith, *Chinese Characteristics*, 142.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

Chinese.¹²¹ Without the suspicion that Japan was threatening to take over China, China would not sustain its image of a benevolent protégée after the boycott in 1905. And without America's self-conception as an anti-imperialist power, Americans would not come to the conclusion that a nationalist China would be willing to ask for America's defense. The trilateral relationship on a conceptual level explains the amiable U.S.-China relation on a factual level.

Fast forward to the present, the position of China and Japan switched. China is the great economic competitor and Japan the indispensable ally. Politicians engaged in Sino-American trade war mongering and courted Japan for its determination to revise its pacifist constitution in shouldering more defense burden. A Japan trying to slip away from U.S. influence may not be in the best interest of the U.S.—a lesson taught by the history of a rising nationalist China. One wonders when the position of China and Japan would reverse in the cognitive minds of Americans again.

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¹²¹ Akira Iriye, *Across the Pacific: An Inner History of America and East Asia* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1967), 23.

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