

The Shift Toward Imperialist Mentality and America's China Policy: A Study Centered on The Open Door Policy

Zhekai Zhu^{1*}, Ang Zuo², Zhaorui Wang³

¹ College of Humanities, Shanghai Normal University, Shanghai, 200234, China

² Department of History, New York University, New York, NY, 10012, U.S.

³ Shanghai YK Pao School, Shanghai, 201620, China,

*Corresponding author email: kevinzhu2003@163.com

Acknowledgement: Zhekai Zhu, Ang Zuo, Zhaorui Wang contributed equally to this work and should be considered co-first authors.

Abstract:

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, American foreign policy underwent a major shift toward expansionism and imperialism. This transformation was not only a natural result of the increase in American power, but also largely influenced by the mentality of national identity, American exceptionalism, cultural superiority, etc. The American images of China, influenced by this shift, had also undergone significant changes. China in the 19th century was seen as a byword for barbarism, but in the early 20th century, Americans began to talk about China's awakening. A variety of changes in mentality and expansionist policies had turned the national imagination of Americans to imperialism, which was the driving force behind the change in China's image. The change in China's image had in turn affected U.S. policy toward China. However, on the other hand, the tradition of Orientalism had led American to regard China as a passive and static entity. China as a nation and Chinese laborers led the United States to view China as a "double other" rather than a free subject of thought or action. This ideology promoted the formation of the consensus of Open Door Policy and Chinese Exclusion.

Keywords: Open-door policy, American images of China, expansionism, John Milton Hay, Theodore Roosevelt

1. Introduction

The United States plays a vital role in today's international affairs. This active engagement can be traced back to the late 19th and early 20th century. It was an era of business and political expansion, progressive reform of international policy, and modification of nationalism in the United States. Until the end of the nineteenth century, American foreign policy essentially followed the doctrine laid down by George Washington: "The great rule of conduct for us in regard to foreign nations is—in extending our commercial relations—to have with them as little political connection as possible."¹ From then on, America experienced a long period of transformation, marked by moderate but significant shifts in foreign policy and the rise of nationalism. During this time, the United States began to emerge as a global power, expanding its influence across the Western Hemisphere while isolating itself from the European forces. US public voices urged for war

1 Raico, Ralph 1995. American Foreign Policy: The Turning Point, 1898-1919. Independent Institute

against nations seen as undemocratic in early stages, but in lateral periods, the focus returned onto domestic affairs because of the Great depression.

China had always been of great importance to America. It was the main target of American missionary work, but because of prejudice and geographical separation, it was regarded as a byword for barbarism and backwardness, and became an "other" to shape the image of the United States itself. The shift in American foreign policy mentioned above paralleled a notable transformation in how China was perceived. China began to be seen as waking up and making drastic changes toward American democracy. This change of image was rooted in the expansionism of the time, but also related to nationalism, the founding ideals of the United States, and some social trends of thought at the time. The complicated feelings about China had led Americans to make a lot of subjective processing of the events that happened in China, making the bubble of imagination increasingly bigger. In essence, it is an imperialist ideological tendency that drove the change in Chi-

na's image, and this change affected the foreign policy of the United States in turn.

Regarding to the policies, there are two pivotal events as the hinge of the imperial genealogy of the US empire at the turn of the 20th century. The first one is the creation of the "Open Door Policy," first enunciated in specific terms by Secretary of State John Hay at the end of the nineteenth century in regard to imperial rivalries in China, poised the way Americans have approached the world ever since². The second one is the China exclusion movement within the US territory, chronicled by the enactment, revision and perpetuation of the notorious Chinese Exclusion Act since 1882, which embodied an important state of the construction of the US territorial borders and domestic practices that combined bureaucratic control and the populist incitement. Given the lucid temporal concurrence and the same target, these two events actually intersected and entangled with each other in the consensus: while the US opened the door to the Chinese market, they closed the door for Chinese immigration. This entanglement and intersection of "Open Door" and "Close the Door" summarized the construction of the US empire at the turn of the century in the resonance between imperial expansionism and domestic control. This resonance of the "external" and "internal" affairs in the imperial schema was ideologically depicted by Orientalism, the ideological discourse originally theorized by Edward W. Said, adopted by the US political and commercial elites, which oscillates between the fantasy of the "Chinese Market" and the dread of "Yellow Peril." While maintaining the consensus of "opening the door" for exploiting the Chinese market and "closing the door" by promoting the exclusion of Chinese laborers, there were inner tensions and distinctions among various interest groups, including American merchants, labor leaders and policymakers, which influenced both US foreign policy and domestic practices. By virtue of the gaps they created, the Chinese elites actively participated in the contestation through their petitions, resistance and conformity. The partaking of Chinese elites, while contributing to the entanglement of US imperial expansion and governance towards and over China and Chinese subjects by providing a transnational, transpacific view, also, in general, strengthened the ideology of the Orientalism which was the token of US imperialism at that period.

1.1 Foreign policies US adopt during the studied period

According to common ideas in the field of International Relations, there are 4 types of foreign policy in the US.

2 William Appleman Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy*. Foreword by Lloyd Gardner, 2009,(New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc, 2009), xii.

First is Neo-Isolationists, which believe that the United States should focus on domestic affairs while avoiding all conflicts happening in the rest of the world. Second is selective engagement, which would usually avoid all conflicts yet may do so for certain interests of US. Third is cooperative security, actively seeks to get involved in the world's affairs, and sometimes works with other countries to counter threats. Last but not least, there is the notion of primacy, which seeks to put the United States ahead of all other countries and places it first on all issues.³

During the late 19th century and the early 20th century, American thoughts regarding foreign policies should be classified as selective engagement. Under this ideal, the US uses multiple approaches of foreign policies, including interventionist policy to establish control in other nations, acquiring Alaska through diplomatic means, and staying with the isolationist Monroe doctrine when dealing with European affairs. Interventionist and expansionist policies began to show sign of becoming predominant in the studied period. In *An Outline of American History*, Francis wrote:" The last decades of the 19th century were a period of imperial expansion for the United States, as it extended its influence, and at times its domain, over widely scattered areas in the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans and into Central America. The United States took a different course than its European rivals, however, because of its own history of struggle against European empires and its unique democratic development."⁴ This shows that in the late nineteenth century, US foreign policy reached a tipping point towards expansionist, nationalistic and interventionist doctrine. This is marked by a string of military adventures: the Spanish War, the Philippines, and then WWI and WWII. Together, they represented a deep break with American political traditions.

Probably one of the most important event representing this change was the Spanish-American War, which was fought in 1898. Francis here claim that the war was fueled by three principal sources: popular hostility to autocratic Spanish rule; American sympathy with demands for independence; and a new spirit of national assertiveness in the United States, stimulated in part by a 'jingoistic' or nationalistic and sensationalist press.⁵ In 1895, discontent in Cuba with the Spanish government turned into a war of independence. Although the American public is inclined to support the insurgents in their quest for independence, which is culturally significant, the president has decided

3 "US Foreign Policy Search," Search.credoreference.com

4 Whitney, Francis, *An Outline of American History* (Washington, D.C: United States Information Agency, 1994). Chapter 7

5 Ibid

not to intervene. But in 1898, when the US battleship Maine was wrecked in Cuba with over 250 deaths, there was a wave of outrage and national pride, fueled by news reports. But after fruitless attempts to maintain the peace, the U.S. announced an armed intervention in just a couple of months.

The war with Spain was quick and decisive. In the four-month-long campaign, there was no major American defeat, but the United States had inflicted heavy casualties on Spanish forces, destroying up to 4 cruisers in one battle. Spain soon sued for peace, and in the treaty signed on December 10, 1898, transferred Cuba to the United States for temporary occupation preliminary to the island's independence. In addition, Spain ceded Puerto Rico and Guam in lieu of war indemnity, and the Philippines for payment of \$20 million.⁶

When the Spanish-American War was won, America gave in to the lure of expansionist nationalism. In other words, a lot of Americans have chosen the United States to be their next global leader. Many Americans thought that America's increasing power had to be utilized as a force to advance civilisation worldwide. This nationalist thought "legitimized the American war against Mexico, Spain, and colonizing the Philippines and expanding to the west".⁷ In this period, United States found itself in a familiar position as Spain when it suppressed Filipino nationalists who sought independence and sought for the eviction of all colonists on their land. The United States has fallen into a mode of occasional interference by other countries in Latin America. From 1900-1920, the U. S. interfered with 6 Western Hemispheric countries, establishing protectorates in Haiti and Dominica, and deployed U.S. Marines in Nicaragua. In 1867 the The United States put pressure on France in 1867..... to pull back its forces..... in favor of Mexican Emperor Maximilian. But a half-century later, in an effort to affect the Mexican Revolution, the United States dispatched some 11,000 troops to the north in an effort to catch the elusive insurgents.

America also utilizes diplomacy to cater for domestic nationalism and the need to expansion. This partly is caused by the fact that according to records, "the U.S. State Department had barely sixty employees and no ambassadors representing American interests abroad in 1865. Only two dozen American foreign ministers were located in key countries, who often gained their positions not through diplomatic skills or expertise in foreign affairs but through bribes".⁸ Further limiting the Americans for foreign im-

6 Ibid

7 Haoyang Tian, "Review of American Nationalism and the Historical Development". 979

8 "U.S. History II: 1877 to Present.", Florida State College

pact was the fact that US lacks a strong military—specifically a navy needed for strong international presence. Because of this, American foreign policy in European affairs were still mainly passive, isolationist.

But in spite of broad isolationism and its utter failure to hold its own in the world, the United States has made sporadic progress in its diplomatic efforts to accommodate national nationalism and enlargement. The United States' first exploration outside its traditional boundaries was when it bought Alaska from Russia in 1867 under the leadership of Secretary of State William Seward. Most Americans reacted with indifference or indignation, and the significance of Alaska was largely downplayed in the context of "Seward's Ice Box", a common nickname referring to Alaska at the time. But 30 years later, when gold was discovered on Alaska's Klondike River, thousands of Americans headed north, and many of them settled in Alaska permanently.⁹ Though Seward didn't stay on his position long enough to see his envision of a powerful, expanding America coming true, only a few of his successor could improve on his policy, and none could approach his vision of American empire. Deeply influenced by John Quincy Adams, his vision of an empire dominated American policy for the next century—or longer. Imperial manifest destiny, world empires inexorably moving westward, Asia and the Pacific as America's destiny. Wright pointed out that Seward's ambitiousness and achievements was "breathtaking"¹⁰: He intended to annex Canada, Mexico, and Central America; he purchased Alaska partly as "a foothold for commercial and naval operations accessible from the Pacific States"; he intended to keep the Caribbean islands in order to secure a passage through the Pacific Ocean, while at the same time keeping Europe out of Europe's interference with the United States; he laid the groundwork for America's acceptance of Hawaii and the Midway Islands; he negotiated a treaty with China in 1868 that gave Chinese laborers almost unrestricted entry into the country so that they could supply cheap labor to build transcontinental railroads and the like, advocated high tariffs to protect small industries and attract foreign labors. As Wright claimed, "Seward is sort of the patron saint of modern American imperialism."¹¹

US attempt for its interests didn't end there. Hamilton at Jacksonville

9 Francis Whitney, *An Outline of American History* (Washington, D.C: United States Information Agency, 1994). Chapter 7

10 Wright, Christopher, "Walter LaFeber's Classic 'The New Empire: An Interpretation of American Expansion, 1860-1898'", 2020

11 Ibid

Fish, who was Secretary of State between 1869 and 1877, asked for \$2 billion in Britain's reparations or rights to Canada in a series of demands known as the Alabama claims. He also proposed to annex the Dominican Republic, a United States colony, and to build a Colombia Channel that would link the Pacific with the Atlantic Ocean. While none of those talks yielded the expected outcome, it was clear that Fish intended to establish a United States Empire that would not cause unnecessary conflicts after the Civil War. He continued the expansion that Seward had built up, into the Pacific, and particularly in Latin America. With regard to the latter, the United States accordingly "launched a four-pronged attack bearing all the characteristics of the new empire: attempted control of certain Caribbean islands, important for their strategic locations and raw materials; investment, notably in the new southwestern frontier of Mexico and Central America, by American capitalists; trade expansion...; and American control of an Isthmian canal. By 1904 the attack launched during the previous half century had won the field."¹²

Following Fish came the presidency of Theodore Roosevelt, the 26th American president. Upon becoming president in 1901, Roosevelt was determined to succeed in what his predecessors had failed. In accordance with Alfred Thayer Mahan's recommendation in *The Influence of Seapower upon History*, he wanted to build a Channel through Central America, mainly because of the military necessity of rapidly shifting ships from sea to sea. The most strategic point for the building was on the Panama Isthmus, which would have the shortest length and therefore minimum work needed. Panama was part of the nation of Colombia at the time. When Roosevelt was in negotiations with the Colombian government, he occasionally threatened to remove the project and construct it via Nicaragua, unless Colombia approved a deal which would allow the United States to rent the territory over Panama in return for US \$10 million plus an extra \$250,000 per year. Though the government agreed about a canal, the matter was not yet resolved. The Colombian people are furious that their government have handed over their territory to the United States and saw the payment as far too low. The Colombian Senate, under the pressure of popular opposition, refused to ratify the agreement and told Roosevelt that there was no canal. When Roosevelt saw that politics was not working, he opted for the "big stick." He said the United States will stand by Panama's people should they decide to rebel and declare their independence from Colombia. In November 1903, he even dispatched U.S. warships to the Colombian coast as the Panama Revolution unfolded. This effectively blocked

Colombian troops from entering into the region to crush the Panamanian uprising. In just one week, Roosevelt acknowledged the new nation of Panama and gave them the same conditions he had given Colombia. After the revolution, Panama would be an American protectorate until 1939. After Panamanian assured themselves that victory was theirs, construction on the canal began in May 1904 with the help from American. The canal opened in 1914 and it permanently changed world trade and military defense patterns.

Still, U. S. foreign policy in Europe remained largely passive and isolated. That policy has its roots in American founding, because ever since George Washington took office, the United States has pursued an isolationist and neutral approach to other countries' domestic matters. Early American politicians put forward the idea that, save in cases such as free-trade, self-defense, or humanitarian emergencies, the US would refrain from making a lasting association with others that would not benefit US interests, but would divert attention away from what was really supposed to be a matter of concern. The public's support for this policy is very strong, which can be easily seen when World War I broke out in July 1914, the United States actively maintained a stance of neutrality. President Woodrow Wilson urged the entire U. S. to stay out of the war, even though the RMS Lusitania was sunk by German U-boats, sparking public outrage in the United States. The United States preferred not to participate in the war, and Wilson won his second presidency in 1916 by running on a non-interventionist platform. What's especially significant about this is that during the election, the phrase, "he kept us out of war" became a popular slogan used by Wilson's supporters.¹³ This reveals that although American nationalism and expansionism was gradually strengthening because of the increase in US national strength, isolationism still takes a predominant position in public opinion.

Perhaps the most typical example of policies guided by isolationism is the Monroe doctrine, presented in US president James Monroe's 1823 annual message to Congress. This speech claimed that "[European powers] should consider any attempt on their part to extend their system to any portion of this hemisphere as dangerous to [US] peace and safety. With the existing colonies or dependencies of any European power [US] have not interfered and shall not interfere, but with the Governments who have declared their independence and maintained it ... [US] could not view any interposition for the purpose of oppressing them, or controlling in any other manner their

¹² Ibid

¹³ "Isolationism and U.S. Foreign Policy after World War I," Norwich University

destiny, by any European power in any other light than as the manifestation of an unfriendly disposition toward the United States”¹⁴. The Monroe Doctrine was invoked in 1865 when the U. S. used diplomacy and military means to assist Mexican President Benito Juárez in his attempt to overthrow Emperor Maximilian, who was installed as king by France. The Monroe Doctrine was intended to deal with Europe, North America, and Spain’s previous colonial possessions in the Western Hemisphere as well as with other European monarchs. Fears that France and Russia might help Spain at reconquest of those territories, and Spain giving Cuba to England did exist. The North American Pacific Coast had been invaded by Russia’s colonies in the southern part of San Francisco (which was Mexican territory at the time), drawing attention from President Monroe and Secretary of State John Quincy Adams.

In this context, Monroe presented a report to Congress outlining his vision for the United States as a regional authority and an arbitrator. His unilateral statement was intended to impose a new set of regulations on Europe’s Western Hemisphere forces. Monroe’s 1823 speech had sent messages for various European powers. For Russia, Monroe proclaimed: “the American continents, by the free and independent condition which they have assumed and maintain, are henceforth not to be considered as subjects for future colonization by any European powers . . .”¹⁵ To the Spanish and French, Monroe proclaimed “we could not view any interposition for the purpose of oppressing them [the Spanish Americans], or controlling in any other manner their destiny, by any European power in any other light than as the manifestation of an unfriendly disposition toward the United States.”¹⁶ For European powers in general, he cautioned: “It is impossible that the allied powers should extend their political system to any portion of either continent without endangering our peace and happiness; nor can anyone believe that our southern brethren, if left to themselves, would adopt it of their own accord. It is equally impossible, therefore, that we should behold such interposition in any form with indifference.”¹⁷

After the Monroe Doctrine was promulgated, President Theodore Roosevelt put forward a related doctrine in a 1904 address. On the basis of American Exceptionalism, it argues that the U. S. has the power to interfere in Latin American states for the sake of peace and protection of U. S. interests. But it also denies other European countries’ rights to do so. Roosevelt felt that, given the nation’s re-

cent military achievements, there was no need to resort to military power to accomplish its objectives. Commonly called “Big Stick Diplomacy”, this policy emphasized the need for U. S. influence in the Western Hemisphere through military force and diplomatic efforts. It reflected Roosevelt’s belief in proactive foreign policy and the assertion of American hegemony in the region.

President Theodore Roosevelt’s diplomacy was centered on Central America, and he started building the Panama Canal. He has modernised the U.S. Army and enlarged the Marine Corps. He dispatched the Great White Fleet around the globe to show America’s navy strength. His vision of “making the world safe for democracy” and his advocacy for the League of Nations marked a significant departure from traditional U.S. isolationism. Despite the U.S. Senate’s rejection of U. S. membership, Wilson’s ideas influenced later U.S. foreign policy and collective security.

Since 1919, however, America has been avoiding active interference in foreign affairs. Americans were reeling from the emotional and economic cost of America’s involvement in the war, and they were starting to think that it had been wrong to take part in the war effort to intervene in other countries. In 1918, Wilson put forward 14 proposals that would contribute to an end to the war and lay down a foundation for co-operation, covering maritime liberty, free trade, evacuating the occupied lands, freeing the non-Turkish population from the Ottoman Empire, and creating a universal union of national states that would provide all countries with territorial integrity and political autonomy – thus paving the way for what would be the League of Nations.

1.2 Cause of Changes in Foreign Policies

The Transformation of American Nationalism during the late 19th and early 20th centuries occurred under the influence of the nationalist trend in US. Following the Civil War, America faced the monumental task of rebuilding a fractured nation and defining a unified national identity. Nationalism in post-Civil War America was shaped by a desire to heal divisions, assert American exceptionalism, and promote unity among the states. The Reconstruction era policies aimed at this so that the former Confederate states would be integrated back into the Union while ensuring civil rights for freed slaves laid the groundwork for a renewed sense of national purpose. With the transition of authority within the global regime, the United States has become more and more powerful, with enormous global benefits at the cost of other countries. There was some dynamism: strong domestic industrial development encouraged overseas expansion, which in turn generated external interests that needed to be safeguarded by containment,

14 James Monroe, Seventh Annual Message, 1823

15 Ibid

16 Ibid

17 Ibid

appeasement, or removal of the threat. So, on the other hand, the coin of enlargement is defense or restraint, and thus war and interference. The very anarchic nature of the international system, as academics have demonstrated, has given rise to uncertainty among the major powers and forced intervention.

Some national beliefs rooted in the history of the US contribute to the changes in foreign policy. The first time the term “Manifest Destiny” ever appeared was in democrat leader and journalist John L. O’Sullivan’s articles. He used it in support of the expansionary policies, like annexation of Texas, and in justification of claims to the Oregon territory in 1845. In an article entitled “Annexation” in *United States Magazine and Democratic Review*, O’Sullivan argues that the American conquest of Texas was necessary, as it was “manifest destiny to overspread the continent allotted by Providence”.¹⁸ The obvious chauvinism of American aggression in its foreign policy is perfectly suited to his concept. The Americans think it’s their responsibility to propagate and protect America’s free and democratic values, based on their earlier faith in Manifest Destiny. In America, there’s a deep-rooted conviction that their people are special, in part due to the new way in which the country was founded, and to their unique relation to God, which invites them for missions no other countries had ever be given in the world. More generally, the doctrine of “manifest destiny,” first used to justify America’s continental expansion, was now revived to assert that the United States is destined to extend its influence and power, and that it had a right and duty to spread civilization in the Western Hemisphere and the Caribbean, as well as across the Pacific.

American exceptionalism is a key factor leading to the idea of Manifest Destiny. As defined earlier, it deals with a kind of “responsibility”, or “destiny” reserved for and only for the Americans to defend and promote the universal ideals.¹⁹ This is reflected in Abraham Lincoln’s speech to congress, claiming that America is, ‘the last best hope of Earth’. Americans view themselves as bold, at times reckless, innovators in turning the abstract and lofty Enlightenment goal of a fully free society in to reality. American exceptionalism was developed on the basis of President Monroe’s speech in 1823. He declared that the existing nations on the American continents must be independent and would not be colonized by any European powers. Any violations of this idea will be considered a threat to American national security. By that, he laid the rules of American exceptionalism that America have

18 Alkuwari. “What Is the Significance of Manifest Destiny for Understanding US Foreign Policy?”. 6.

19 Ibid

the right to colonize other states to civilize them, but in the meantime, they could not allow these nations to be colonized by nations other than the US. Monroe’s idea assisted US colonization of North American states. Under such beliefs, US began its first attempts to obtain oversea colonies. For instance, the Spanish-American War can be considered a war fueled by a sense of national pride and a desire to expand American influence. In American’s eyes, their political institutions, systems and ideals coupled with American achievements attributed to be related with them, have firmly convinced the Americans that their system can be and ought to be universal. Under such ideals, the American public pushed its government’s policy from completely isolationist to the more expansionary, interventionist type.

The United States’s remarkable rise in the international order and the intense competition between the imperialist nations to expand their influence across the globe, especially Asian and African countries, made America feel a genuine sense of urgency. This forces the US to engage in the Great Power Enlargement Play that culminated in the War of 1898. The United States was concerned that they would be excluded from the international contest for land, thereby depriving other imperialist countries of access to the markets essential to American economy. The United States, as Secretary of State James G. Blaine has pointed out, is more concerned with “commercial annexation” than territorial annexation. At the end of the 19th century, such commerce appeared to be under threat, and there was a pressing need for America to take bold action in international affairs lest its economy fail, and thus its social and political problems at home.

But there is another point Frederick B. noted, which is that there is an additional aspect of the international competition, which is the importance of the symbolism of great-power status.²⁰ Americans are proud and boastful about their new position, and they are eager to be recognized internationally for their first-class achievements. Americans expected their nation to be thought great around the world, and they longed for a place among the highest status of civilizations. According to Paterson, “That is one reason why they strutted at world’s fairs when their industrial machinery won scores of blue ribbons.”²¹ Inaction in a volatile international setting may appear to be an admission of inferiority. In that regard,

20 Pike, Federick. “The United States and Latin America: Myths and Stereotypes of Civilization and Nature”. 158-159

21 Paterson, Thomas G. “United States Intervention in Cuba, 1898: Interpretations of the Spanish-American-Cuban-Filipino War”.344.

Senator Henry Cabot Lodge said it bluntly: “The great nations are rapidly absorbing for their future expansion and their present defense all the waste areas of the earth. It is a moment which makes for civilization and the advancement of the race. As one of the great nations of the world, United States must not fall out of the line of march.”²² Against this background, the Spanish and American War of 1898 should be seen in a wide international perspective that demonstrates the intentional and calculated drive of the United States towards strength and size.

During this period, specific leader’s decision contributed to this major change of foreign policy. President McKinley brought about a period in which America’s imperial power was strengthened by force and by economic pressure. Theodore Roosevelt, who succeeded him, set out a new way of diplomacy in his address on September 2nd, 1901 at the Minnesota State Fair based on a famous proverb, “speak softly, and carry a big stick, and you will go far”. At the heart of his foreign policy was a clear threat. Roosevelt believed that considering the country’s recent military successes, a show of willing to use force without actually using any force would give America what it wants. This is obviously an important element in America’s shift to interventionism.

Moreover, the economy is speeding up the transition from isolationism to interventionism. As the Civil War began, the United States kept on developing its own land and opening up new markets. For instance, in 1867, the United States almost doubled its holdings by buying Alaska from Russia. In this time, the United States’ economic growth was accelerated by the development of new means of communication and transport, which brought about an enormous increase in industrial and urban development across the country. The combined effect of highly productive forces and the Industrial Revolution led to an increase in output that far exceeded what was available to the United States, leading to an economic crisis. Following two devastating economic recessions, U.S. foreign policy leaders realized that their focus should be on finding foreign markets to absorb excess goods. This pushed America to actively search for oversea economy colonies using either political or military means.²³

Historical events also influence the change of US policies in the early 20th century, but doing so in an opposite way of what America success and boost in power has brought in the late 19th century. This is largely due to recession of American national strength after WWI. This is mainly because of the decline in US power in the aftermath of

WWI. In the 1930’s, the Great Depression’s effects on America, coupled with the remembrance of World War I’s devastating losses, drove United States’ public attitudes and policies towards isolationism. Isolationists advocated no involvement in Europe and Asia, and no interference in international politics. Furthermore, increasing popular suspicions of wartime profiteering had influence public opinion in the direction of neutrality. Many Americans believed it was a lie to involve themselves in another country’s business would protect their own interest, and they decided that they would never allow themselves to be fooled by the banks and businesses once more. Indeed, the fact that the world economy is in recession, and the apparent need to focus more on national issues, has only reinforced the notion that the United States must pull away from the disturbing developments in Europe. During the interwar period, the U.S. Government has consistently opted for noninterference rather than interventionism as a more effective way of dealing with international issues. In the immediate aftermath of World War I, Congress rejected U.S. membership in the League of Nations out of concerns that it would draw the United States further into European conflicts, though it is the collective security clause of League of Nations that ultimately ruled out any possibility of U.S. participation.²⁴ This viewpoint is supported by multiple scholars. In his work, Ian Tyrrell notes that factors including European unrest and economic recession “compromised the American version of internationalism of the 1920s and drove the United States into the shell of isolation.”²⁵ George C. Herring similarly finds the term isolationism fitting for that era. As Americans turned “sharply inward under the burden of the Great Depression,” he argues, their “passionate 1930s quest to insulate the nation from foreign entanglements and war fully merits the label isolationist.”²⁶

Despite the United States’s efforts to evade maritime politics and military disputes, it has been constantly expanding its economy, maintaining its relative prestige, and has been active in defending Latin America’s benefits. The leaders of the isolationist movement drew upon history to strengthen their position. President George Washington, in his Farewell Address, laid down the principle of nonparticipation in Europe’s military and political affairs. Throughout most of the 19th century, the enlargement of the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans allowed the United States

24 “American Isolationism in the 1930s,” U.S. Department of State

25 Ian Tyrrell, “Transnational Nation: United States History in Global Perspective Since 1789”, 173–174;

26 George C. Herring, “From Colony to Superpower: U.S. Foreign Relations Since 1776” 486-502.

22 Ibid

23 “1866–1898: The Continued Expansion of United States Interests,” U.S. Department of State

to have a safe and secure environment, but to a large extent separate from Europe's conflicts. During World War I, President Woodrow Wilson chose to abandon that policy of isolation. He made a case for U.S. intervention in the conflict for maintaining a peaceful world order which fits with US interests. But the United States' experience in that war helped strengthen the case for isolationists and shift the tide in America towards isolation. They argued that U.S. interests protected in that conflict is too small compared to U.S. losses.

1.3 Effects of The Changes in Foreign Policy

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, US foreign policy underwent significant transformations that profoundly shaped its domestic landscape. Expansionist policies, driven by notions of Manifest Destiny and economic interests, propelled the United States into international prominence through territorial acquisitions such as Hawaii, the Philippines, and Puerto Rico. This expansionism not only bolstered American influence abroad but also ignited debates over imperialism and its implications for democracy at home. Moreover, interventions in Latin America and Asia, often under the banner of protecting economic interests or promoting stability, led to increased military engagements and diplomatic entanglements. These foreign entanglements catalyzed shifts in domestic politics, fostering nationalist sentiments and influencing public perceptions of America's role in the world. Ultimately, the evolving US foreign policy of this era exerted profound effects on the nation's identity, economy, and global standing, shaping its trajectory into the 20th century and beyond.

At the end of the 19th century, the United States was heavily influenced by expansionism. As a result, the United States has been able to extend its borders west at an astonishing rate, resulting in conflict, state development, and continuous cultural communication in the changing continent. This resulted in the acquisition of large areas, including Texas, Oregon, and California, by treaties, negotiations, and military conquests. Expansion has also helped U. S. companies to create new opportunities for their economy and for U. S. companies to rise in the world. expansion has radically altered the United States' status in the world. In the late 19th century, the United States adhered to George Washington's advice to avoid "entangling alliances" while pursuing foreign relations based upon trade. By 1900, the United States had become a recognized world power, with considerable business, political, and military interests and territorial holdings throughout the Pacific region. Maritime expansion led to the proclamation of an Open-Door policy for China in 1899–1900 and set the stage for much greater involvement in local and regional politics and trade during the early 20th century²⁷.

The United States of America was then experiencing rapid industrialization, and it required a fresh marketplace for sales of commodities and for obtaining raw materials for further development. Thus, the actions of establishing oversea colonies and acquiring the vast markets they contained would provide US industry the basis of growth. It also prevented the economic crisis, mentioned above, from endangering US economic growth.

When World War I erupted in Europe in 1914 at the beginning of the 20th century, President Woodrow Wilson announced that the United States would remain neutral. This continued the government's 19th century policy of isolationism – keeping out of other nations' business. But the Zimmerman Telegram was published in the US a month later, and its provocative message angered the United States. President Wilson called for a meeting of the Cabinet to negotiate a transition from an army neutral policy to a military one. It was unanimous: all members recommended war. It was America's first major intervention in Europe. In his War Aims and Peace Terms Address to the United States Congress on Jan. 8, 1918, Wilson laid out fourteen principles as a model for global peace that would be applied in the post-WWI peace talks. The League of Nations, the first effort to create an international, inter-governmental institution dedicated to collective security, was founded on the basis of the Fourteen Points. This shifts US policy towards a cooperative security policy that aims to get involved in worldwide issues, to set up NATO, to be a permanent UNSC member, and to confront the Soviet Union in the Cold War.

Yet the of impact was not so clear at the time when such changes occur. Questions about the consequences of World War I worry Warren Harding, who began his term as President between 1921 and 1923. According to an account, at the time, "the wartime boom had collapsed. Diplomats and politicians were arguing over peace treaties and the question of America's entry into the League of Nations. Overseas there were wars and revolutions; at home there were strikes, riots and a growing fear of radicals and terrorists. Disillusionment was in the air".²⁸ Harding appealed to Americans by promising "a Return to Normalcy" after the hard and casualty-littered war years. He also pledged to keep America out of the League and out of world affairs. This marks an isolationist foreign

27 "United States Maritime Expansion across the Pacific during the 19th Century," U.S. Department of State

28 "Presidential Election of 1920 | From War to Normalcy: An Introduction to the Nation's Forum Collection | Articles and Essays | American Leaders Speak: Recordings from World War I | Digital Collections | Library of Congress," Library of Congress

policy stance that appealed to war-weary citizens. Upon taking office, Harding hardened his stance on the League of Nations, deciding the US would not join even a scaled-down version of the League. This would ultimately influence the world's diplomatic relations following WWI.

2. The transition of Americans images of China

The American images of China underwent a significant shift around 1905, coinciding with a shift in American foreign policy towards expansion. China's image evolved from that of a disregarded barbarian to that of a protected from a paternalistic view. This transformation was influenced not only by changes within China itself, but also by shifts in Americans' self-identity, mission, and vision. The changes in America's perception had two main impacts on the portrayal of China: firstly, it brought about different perspectives due to changes in American self-identity; secondly, it led to the reinterpretation of events in China as symbols by American politicians and media, shaping a new understanding of China. During this period, the depiction of China as the "other" was increasingly used for comparison purposes, reflecting shifts in public and leadership attitudes following America's rise as a global power. This change was related to the shift of the United States' foreign intervention, consequently impacting its China policy.

2.1 Direct Cognitive Pathways and the Origins of Biases

The American image of China is shaped by both subjective imagination and objective sources derived from direct interactions. Our focus initially lies on examining these objective sources which predominantly stem from two key groups: missionaries and Chinese workers residing in America. The former have direct contact with the reality of China, while the latter themselves come from China. They are the primary conduits for Americans to engage directly with authentic experiences related to China. It's important to note that objective and subjective elements often intertwine closely without a distinct hierarchy; thus interactions with missionaries, missionaries' personal perceptions alongside the understanding of Chinese workers inherently encompass subjective influences. While literature, mass media, and other mediums also significantly impact American perceptions about China, these channels lack firsthand experiences or direct engagements with China hence fall beyond our scope of discussion.

2.1.1 Missionaries and hostility from China

At the turn of the century, although tourism had become a popular leisure activity in the United States, Americans'

travel destinations were primarily limited to Europe. Few Americans had experienced China firsthand, and those who had were mostly missionaries. An American scholar pointed out that "American missionary activities in China not only significantly influenced American policy toward China, but their writings, correspondence, and speeches also served as the sole appropriate or accurate source for shaping American perceptions of China, Japan, Korea, and other regions. Throughout most of the 19th century, Americans gained insight into Asia through missionary work."²⁹ John King Fairbank also contended that Protestant missionaries played a pivotal role in Sino-Western relations during the 19th century.³⁰

Their influence on public perception of China was significant through their literary works and news coverage. Eminent American missionaries such as Samuel Wells Williams, Justus Doolittle, Arthur Henderson Smith, and William Alexander Parsons Martin authored influential works at different junctures, which garnered widespread readership in the United States. When seeking insights into China or formulating policies towards it, Americans tended to reference books written by compatriots sharing similar cultural backgrounds. These publications thus became seminal texts molding Americans' images of China. For instance, Arthur Henderson Smith's *Chinese Characteristics* was regarded as the Bible for foreigners visiting China,³¹ in 1895, US Secretary of State O'Neal drew inspiration from it when crafting foreign policy strategies.³² While taking a brief rest upon their return, the missionaries convened numerous testimonial meetings to advocate for their cause and secure additional funding for their mission. In doing so, they endeavored to enhance understanding of the regions in which they worked. At that time, China represented the largest and most distinctive potential mission field for the United States due to a variety of factors. Professor Harold R. Isaacs comprehensive study of Americans revealed that "Returning missionaries emerged frequently, sharing accounts of their endeavors. Ministers and Sunday school teachers who consistently

29 Danette Taylor, *Americans in Eastern Asia: a critical study of nineteenth-century American policy toward China, Japan, and Korea*. Translated by Yao Zengguang, The Commercial Press, 1959, 474.

30 Suzanne Wilson Barnett and John King Fairbank ed, *Christianity in China: Early Protestant Missionary Writings*, Harvard University Press, 1985, 2.

31 Grayling, A. C, and Whitfield, Susan. *China: A Literary Companion*, London: John Murray. 1994, 48

32 Michael H. Hunt, *The making of a special relationship: the United States and China*, Translated by Xiang Liyong and Lin Yongjun, Fudan University Press, 1993, 175.

inspired their congregations to support the cause.” Among the 137 Protestant and 13 Catholic individuals surveyed by Professor Isaacs, 123 of whom promptly mentioned direct interactions with missionaries when asked about their earliest connections with Asia, while 78 of whom recalled experiences related to China. Their initial perceptions of China were shaped through exposure to “missionary committees seem at home, missionary literature displayed in living rooms, and missionary activities at religious institutions.”³³ Thus, knowledge of China was widely disseminated from contact with missionaries to every American citizen’s awareness. Furthermore, many missionaries also served as advisors and aides to American diplomats in China, several of them even assumed roles as special advisors on China-related matters for US presidents, thereby exerting significant influence on US policy towards China. For instance, renowned figures such as Arthur Smith and William Martin had both been called by US presidents for counsels and strategies for formulating and implementing policies upon China.

The factors that influence missionaries’ perceptions of China are largely subjective, as we shall see later, but they also stem in part from objective conditions. Before the Boxer Rebellion officially ended, which is the beginning of the period under study in this paper, missionary life in China was not a pleasant one. Chinese people’s confidence in their own traditional culture and religion made them instinctively reject foreign missionaries, so missionary work did not go smoothly in China, which also made the missionaries feel frustrated in China. In addition, from the perspective of ordinary Chinese people, the missionaries who came from another side of the ocean to China were essentially the same as the ethnic minorities in China’s border areas, so the contempt for minority traditions also applied to missionaries at this time. As a result, missionaries at this time tended to portray the Chinese as conservative, stubborn, proud, and disdainful to foreigners.

The emergence of the Boxer Movement pushed the antagonism between China and foreigners to the peak and the Boxers attributed the widespread drought to the presence of missionaries. According to the missionaries of the Meihua Bible Society in Tianjin, in February 1900, such posters were posted all over North China, which said: “Because Christianity has no respect for God and does not know how to abide by ethics, it has angered Heaven, thus there are no longer rains. Heaven sent eight million God soldiers to the earth to drive away foreigners, so that

it can rain.”³⁴ Rumors also circulated about missionaries using witchcraft to stop the rain, causing the drought. As C.W. Price, an American missionary in Shanxi Province wrote, “The clouds were often blown away by a strong wind, and the rumors arose (believed by all) that we went upstairs and fanned them away.” As for the missionaries in Taiyuan, the rumor has changed slightly, saying that they fanned the cloud naked.”³⁵ As a result, the slogan of killing foreigners appeared in the Boxers, and there were some cases in this regard. Therefore, it is impossible that the unsafe, unrespected environment and antagonistic sentiments of the Chinese people during this period did not have a negative influence on the subconscious of American missionaries, reducing their tolerance for Chinese culture and further affecting the shaping of China’s image.

2.1.2 American Chinese laborer and a single class

The second type of direct contact with China came from American Chinese laborers. Between 1854 and 1882, approximately 300,000 Chinese workers migrated to the United States, most of them initially for the purpose of building the Western Railroad. Those who stayed for a long time established the first Chinese communities in the United States. The opportunity for Americans to have direct contact with them had become the second largest source of impressions about China.³⁶ Afterward, as the labor market being saturated, the Chinese were seen as bringing unfair competition by settling for lower wages.³⁷ The economic crisis happened in 1873 elevated this local issue into a national concern, and rising unemployment led to riots and hostility toward the Chinese, which in part led to the Continuation Treaty between China and the United States, or the Treaty of Angell in 1880 and the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882.

Americans often use the image of Chinese laborers as a proxy for the image of China, but in fact, there exists a notable distinction between these two. The majority of Chinese laborers hailed from impoverished backgrounds

34 P.A. Cohen, Paul A., *History in Three Keys: The Boxer as Event, Experience, and Myth*, Translated by Du Jidong, Jiangsu People’s Publishing House, 2000, 70.

35 P.A. Cohen, Paul A., *History in Three Keys: The Boxer as Event, Experience, and Myth*, Translated by Du Jidong, Jiangsu People’s Publishing House, 2000, 124.

36 Harold R. Isaacs, *Scratches on our minds American images of China*, Translated by Yu Dianli and Lu Riyu, Zhonghua Book Company, 2006, 118.

37 Moore, A. Gregory, *Defining and defending the open door policy: Theodore Roosevelt and China, 1901-1909*, Translated by Zhao Jiayu, Jiangsu People’s Publishing House, 2021, 39.

33 Harold R. Isaacs, *Scratches on our minds American images of China*, Translated by Yu Dianli and Lu Riyu, Zhonghua Book Company, 2006, 118.

within China's Pearl River Delta region where they struggled for survival. Foreign invasions accelerated the disintegration of traditional agriculture and handicraft industries in the Pearl River Delta, and the unemployed farmers, craftsmen, and merchants, who faced various forms of corvee labor imposed by the Qing government to alleviate the financial crisis, traveled to the United States out of a desire for basic living conditions. Some of them were even kidnapped and smuggled into the United States. These people were mostly poorly educated and were despised and oppressed even in China. They were called "guest of the Golden Mountain" by native Chinese and "Chinaman" by Americans, both of which reflected prejudice and hostility. Therefore, they were a group of people marginalized and otherized by people on both sides of the ocean. They also lived in poor conditions in the United States, clustered in the slums of the city which were called "Chinatown", far from the American standards of civilization. In addition, the Chinese Exclusion Act only prohibited Chinese laborers from entering the United States, and required a certificate issued by the Chinese government for other classes of Chinese.³⁸ However, due to the interpretation of the provisions of the Angell Treaty in which the US government unilaterally "regulates, restricts or delays" immigration, the exempted groups were only "teachers, students, and businessmen", many of the better-off Chinese classes in China were also difficult to freely enter the United States. For example, Zhou Ziqi, secretary of the Legation in the United States, was detained in the border and almost arrested.³⁹ As a result, the direct exposure of Americans to China at that time was very limited and did not represent the whole picture of China.

Moreover, American Chinese workers were ostracized because they were difficult to assimilate culturally as well. The United States was similar to China as its national identity is largely based on an identity with its culture.

38 Zhang He, "From Encouragement to Exclusion: the adjustment of American immigration policy to China in the 19th century", China Foreign Affairs University, no.2, (2012), https://kns.cnki.net/kcms2/article/abstract?v=sAMp-nZqXjwTDnmSwv72xI2bSLv7VDeL8VPzTmgmbPvU2Xf6szlQPpGrmlq-h9zNGCpEfBnNjHoF-coPaYqCt8B5x4mdLODw_BMXNnGXdQ9Debzg0EHo8X7aS_C01zXCqD2-uzZ30uNdbVsXKD07CEk8xcbVVogW_PSIwkI91dFiPQPf2rnFEiRmh43N8QAC&uniplatform=NZKPT&language=CHS

39 Moore, A. Gregory, *Defining and defending the open door policy: Theodore Roosevelt and China, 1901-1909*, Translated by Zhao Jiayu, Jiangsu People's Publishing House, 2021, 159.

For example, in *Progress and Poverty*, Henry George criticized the British philosopher Herbert Spencer's idea of civilization that based on racial superiority. In his philosophy, biological race is not the key factor, whether one can accept American culture is more important. However, the Chinese happened to be the most difficult group to be assimilated compared to other races due to their pride of their own culture. "The environment in China continues to affect them and they look forward to returning to their homeland one day," says George.⁴⁰ This reluctance to assimilate was a blow to America's cultural superiority and was seen as a threat to American civilization, which partly explains why Chinese immigrants were the first of all ethnic groups to be legally excluded.

2.2 The Duality of Civilization and Barbarism Before 1905 and the Contributing Factors of That Era

For a long time, the image of China in the United States was barbaric and backward. It was used merely to highlight the opposite characteristics of civilization and progress, which defined the United States and were central to the self-image of Americans. In this perspective, China was merely an "other" with no voice itself. This viewpoint is quite similar to Edward Wadie Said's Orientalism. Furthermore, the formation of this dualistic view was also closely related to the theories of civilizational conflict, social Darwinism, and non-interventionist foreign policy tradition.

2.2.1 The "barbaric" image of China and the "civilized" national identity of America

Americans' systematic knowledge of China began in the time of Marco Polo, when adventurers and Christians used a novel tone to introduce a single, numerous, unified, and powerful China into the United States. After scholars like Voltaire admired the Chinese regime during the Enlightenment, it was not until the late 18th century, after the British Magarny Mission visited China, that an image with economic stagnation, military weakness, a large but superstitious population, and arrogant and arrogant officials was introduced to the United States.⁴¹ Since then, the

40 Henry George. *Poverty and Progress: An Inquiry into the Cause of Industrial Depressions and of In crease of Want with Increase of Wealth*. New York: Doubleday, Pacey & Company, 1916.

41 Li Xiaokun, "A study on the cognitive strategies of American missionaries' images of China (1830-1911) : a cross-cultural perspective", Wuhan University, no.3, (2015), https://kns.cnki.net/kcms2/article/abstract?v=sAMp-nZqXjwPNGiVMRZxGJShmBGmYnh66xNhnSdlKRbjFy_HFgRRUcw3yKCCcYKqwmz_

image of the Chinese people as autocratic and xenophobic at the government level, depraved and greedy in terms of moral, barbaric and stagnant in terms of culture, superstitious and inferior in terms of belief was gradually established, and this negative impression lasted until the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century.

First of all, China's geographical location itself was able to become an important basis for American imagination. According to the Chinese Repository, an American who visited China wrote, "When I went overseas, I encountered so many things that were contrary to my earlier correct ideas. I totally agree with a friend's observation that the Chinese are in many ways the opposite of us, in addition to the way in geography."⁴² There was also a fashionable view at the time, an extension of Hegel's view, that the civilization of the Earth developed from east to west, from the most authoritarian form of China, to Europe, and finally came to the most liberal and democratic form of the United States. The antagonism between China and the United States extends from geographical position to culture. The linking of the idea between the progressive-barbaric binary and the idea of West-East geography has been around since the age of Enlightenment, but the US-China antagonism is the extreme of geographical distance. At that time, Americans regarded freedom, democracy in politics, courage and progress in behavior as an important part of their self-identity, so China on the other side of the world was naturally regarded as its opposite.

Missionaries played the most crucial role in shaping this image, their influence on Americans has been mentioned above. A comparative perspective is evident in their descriptions of China. They judge China on the basis of their own ideology and view China as the moral, political, social opposite of the United States. The famous American missionary Samuel Wells Williams said in *The Middle Kingdom* that, "The evils of the Chinese officials and people are unimaginable to the polite, just, pure, and sincere people of Christian society."⁴³ Sidney Gulick, a missionary in Japan, explained China from the perspective of social power: "The East represents a civilization that does not recognize the value and rights of the individual, and it represents political absolutism. It emphasizes the rights of the superior and the responsibilities of the inferior. It

EXq9z1mnIFJt6QsuUn4so6ooZZ-Q1vGxr6q829H8kjV13
hjIdak8YIIsefx6RYRTc0kfJS56UIYSOWqTWI5PA5HjpC
15ei_BHhbGw7SG_5eUy9bu6oFcshvbp0aa295wzkjLrA=
&uniplatform=NZKPT&language=CHS

42 Illustrations of Men and Things in China, Chinese Repository vol. 10 no. 2(Feb. 1841) p. 107.

43 S. Wells Williams, *The Middle Kingdom*, New York: John Wiley 1849, 419-420.

believed that men were inherently superior to women and mass education or representative government had no place in this text. It exalts warlike prowess as the highest virtue. In other words, the collective is supreme, and the individual has no value whatsoever in Eastern civilization".⁴⁴ Although this passage did not mention the United States, it was filled with references to the values that American cherished. What China lacked in characteristics was exactly what the United States was proud to possess. This orientalist mode of thinking was a common American mode of thinking.

And, for missionaries, doing so not only aligned with their national identity but also imbued their cause with a sense of purpose, becoming part of their self-narrative. It was because this heathen nation was so depraved, while Christian nations were so strong, that the need to spread the gospel arose. For example, the sermon delivered by Reverend Leman Coleman at the Bishop Bigelow ordination ceremony reinforced this sense of personal mission. He said, "You will witness what is the most ancient and deeply rooted idolatry, you will hear the most terrifying uproar, you will attack the Princess of Darkness in the most impregnable fortress, and you will face all of this in the midst of a hostile European encampment, with only one old soldier (referring to Robert Morrison) can help you."⁴⁵

Moreover, Chinese workers in the United States were also portrayed as the opposition of American identity. Some scholars believed that in the late 19th century, the concept of civilization shared by all regions and all classes in the United States became the basis for shaping China's image as a hegemonic concept.⁴⁶ To be specific, first of all, it was due to the difference in work ethics between the two nations. The concept of work ethics came from Max Weber, which mainly refers to the attitude towards work, the value orientation, and the meaning given to work. It seems that the work ethics of "Christian civilization" and "Confucian civilization" have a lot in common on the surface, such as diligence, thrift and so on. But in essence, for Christian civilization, hard work is only the means,

44 Arthur H. Smith, *China and America Today*, Edinburgh and London: Oliphant Anderson & Ferrier 1907, 15-16.

45 Quoted from Michael C. Lazich, *Millennial Call: The Biography of Elijah Coleman Bridgman, the First American Protestant Missionary to China*, Translated by Yin Wenwei, Guangxi University Press, 2008, 50

46 Liu Yiyong, "The concept of 'civilization' and the wave of Chinese exclusion in the United States in the late 19th century", *Journal of Anhui Normal University (Humanities and Social Sciences Edition)*46, no.6 (2018). DOI: 10.14182/j.cnki.j.anu.2018.06.012.

the realization of the good life is the goal. For example, the Republican Party once promoted the ideology of “free labor”, not only promoting the quality of hard work, but more importantly, having these qualities could improve the standard of life and improve social status. So they tended to see slavery as the antithesis of the American work ethic. However, in the eyes of many anti-Chinese activists, Chinese laborers’ harsh working conditions, low wages and consumption were seen as similar to slaves. California’s 1879 constitution states that “the Asian coolie is a form of enslavement of mankind, and shall be permanently prohibited in this state.” In the campaigns of American labor organizations, the exclusion of Chinese laborers was often a topic alongside the eight-hour day working system and the establishment of a federal Bureau of Labor Statistics. The work ethic of Chinese laborers was also seen as diametrically opposed to that of the United States, and their low consumption was seen as a form of servility, opposed to their own work ethic. The North American Review once wrote, “These characteristics of the Chinese are what we most despise: their pitiful small size, their poverty and miserable way of life, their servility and indefatigable industry, their indifference to high quality and expensive enjoyment--these are indispensable to our civilization.”⁴⁷ From these words, we can also interpret that the Chinese laborers were not only seen as slaves, but also a threat to the cultural purity of the United States as a white Christian nation. The behaviors caused by their different cultures make them far more efficient than Americans in work, but they are not respected and understood by Americans. On the contrary, they set off the superiority of the United States in its own work ethic and lifestyle.

2.2.2 The contributing factors of the duality of civilization and barbarism in that era

The image of a foreign country sometimes reflects the self-image. The descriptions of corruption and backwardness of China by Americans at this time were closely related to their own concepts of “civilization” and their national identity of recognizing free and democratic countries. And this duality of civilization and barbarism was based on factors such as the theory of civilizational conflict, social Darwinism, and the tradition of non-interference in international affairs, deeply rooted in the specific circumstances of the era.

As early as the founding of the United States, the image of China in America was almost exactly the opposite of what it was in 20th century. At that time, the independence of the United States was not yet secure, and Europe, as the main enemy of American independence, was the main

47 M. J. Dee. *Chinese Immigration*, The North American Review, 1878 (5-6) : 524.

counterpart or “other” in shaping the United States’ identity. In the process of pursuing freedom and rationality, the United States urgently needed an ideal utopian state as a model to inspire its citizens to pursue their dreams and have the courage to build a new country. The distant and vague image of China was just what was needed. The image of China that European enlightenment thinkers and missionaries shaped at the time was one of freedom, reason, and virtue. Americans inherited this view and projected their goal of nation-building onto China. Benjamin Franklin saw China as a country that practiced enlightened despotism, ruled by officials who were well-versed in Confucian classics. There was a flourishing of art and philosophy, and both rulers and common people valued virtue. Furthermore, China’s agricultural achievements, which was depicted as a country full of free farmers, were also seen as a model for the United States.⁴⁸ It is not difficult to see that the China portrayed by Franklin was exactly the ideal America in his heart.

But at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, great changes had taken place in the ideological concept of the United States. The threat to national independence had been removed, and the quest for enlightened despotism had disappeared. The Western frontier, which continued to expand until it was fully developed, shaped the national character and moral aspirations of the United States, turning it toward republicanism and the pursuit of freedom. The United States was not only an agricultural country any more, the rapid development of industrialization had brought modernity to this country. With the national power increased, America grew from a small country struggling to survive among many European countries to a member of the great power, and hoped to become a leader who could represent Western, even world civilization.

As mentioned earlier, the self-image projected onto Eastern countries during this period was mainly focused on freedom and democracy, or more broadly, the concept of “civilization”. The image of China presented by missionaries and the image of China brought by Chinese laborers combined to form a complete and internally consistent “other” in the minds of Americans. Inside the nation, Chinese threatened the social and political order of the United States, and in the distant East, the existence of Chinese posed a threat to the entire Western civilization. In the imagination of Americans, the confrontation between Eastern and Western civilizations was also a constant theme. This fear and vigilance towards the East stemmed

48 William B. Willcox ed, *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin* vol. 24 New Haven: Yale University Press 1984, 15.

from some older ideas -- the idea of civilizational conflict and social Darwinism. In the historical memory of the entire Western world, the confrontation between civilization and barbarism and the threat from the East had always been a significant theme. The Persians, Muslims, Mongols, and other ethnic groups had all threatened the survival of Western civilization at one time or another. In the eyes of some Americans, Chinese laborers were another form of invasion by Eastern civilization. Samuel Gompers, the leader of the American Federation of Labor, wrote in a memorandum to Congress that "The civilization of Europe is constantly attacked and threatened by barbaric peoples from Asia. The Chinese immigration was essentially an Asian barbarian invasion, fortunately, we have successfully repelled Asian barbarian invasions of European civilization on multiple occasions... Protecting European civilization from contamination is our duty with no doubt."⁴⁹ This image was often invoked by U.S. presidents, senior senators, and labor leaders, but not always by the general public. This didn't mean that American citizens did not have this idea. In fact, as a cultural subconscious, the image of the East as an invader had had a significant impact on how Americans view China, both among politicians and the general public.

In order to defend the invasion of Eastern civilization against the West, and have an advantage in the competition between Western civilizations, encouraging military spirit has also become a part of the Western concept. In addition, Spencer's theory of social evolution was prevalent throughout the world at the time. The combination of the two also provides a reasonable explanation for the superiority of Western civilization over China. Mahan's idea is a typical case of this combination. Although a weak China was not likely to pose a military threat to the Western world at that time, he always believed that the large numbers and extremely low living standards of these barbarians could still pose a substantial threat to the West. He also believed, it was the war that shaped the dominant position of "European civilization." Theodore Roosevelt, on the other hand, had a strong linear evolutionary view of civilization. He sometimes considered arbitration as the "pursuit of peace at any costs", and argued that such an approach would harm Western civilization. Therefore, he believed that the virtue of the United States needed to be guaranteed by a military spirit and a martial spirit.⁵⁰ These

49 Samuel Gompers, *Some reasons for Chinese Exclusion, Meat vs. Rice, American manhood against Asiatic coolieism, which shall survive?*, Washington: Government Printing Office, 1902

50 Liu Yiyong, "The consciousness of 'civilization identity; and arbitration view of American expansionists

ideas see China as a byword for weakness and blame China's weakness on itself, justifying discrimination against China.

Furthermore, the duality of civilization and barbarism between the United States and China is also linked to the longstanding foreign policy of non-intervention in international affairs. In contrast to the early years of U.S. foreign policy, there existed an inherent inclination within American political culture towards involvement in other nations' affairs. As a nation born out of revolution, the founding fathers generally espoused the belief that the nation-building ideas of America were universally applicable across the globe. Their objective was not only to establish the world's first democratic republic but also to serve as a global model from which all nations could eventually draw inspiration for their own forms of governance. This sentiment is reflected in Paine's *Common Sense* that "We have the power to rebuild the world," showcasing their confidence and ambition. The enthusiasm of Americans for the French Revolution and the fact that revolutionaries from America went to France to support the revolution also reflected the important position of interventionism in American ideology. Additionally, the Puritan nature of American culture and American exceptionalism also give the United States a sense of mission to export ideology at the religious level.⁵¹ Moreover, being the sole republic amidst authoritarian countries at that time meant that America's national security was not well-served by its international environment. Hence, there was impetus for promoting freedom as well. This interventionist worldview tends to perceive underdeveloped countries' political, social, and cultural situations as dynamic and closely monitors any potential shifts towards "civilization," driven by their ability to intervene promptly to make changes

in the early 20th century", *World history*, no3 (2015), https://kns.cnki.net/kcms2/article/abstract?v=sAMp-nZqXjxwRHX7GaCDqeh8npWHKWOfXeEONDahUIW8GDHVoEtAIw6vQ-m6tfO6vKyk0GqX3IEvRPQkGx5HN5UpXLm8BITvOtIHM5D04PXduuNUyc-x-BIU7q905EnBcTPSxabKfBc834w6DGaXAg8dEHdj7v_yhttWycHQ4Ak0hls7iFPp3Q==&uniplatform=NZKPT&language=CHS.

51 Wang Lixin, "The foreign intervention in the history of American diplomacy", *American studies*, no.2 (2005), 90-115, https://kns.cnki.net/kcms2/article/abstract?v=sAMp-nZqXjxwRHX7GaCDqeh8npWHKWOfXeEONDahUIW8GDHVoEtAIw6vQ-m6tfO6vKyk0GqX3IEvRPQkGx5HN5UpXLm8BITvOtIHM5D04PXduuNUyc-x-BIU7q905EnBcTPSxabKfBc834w6DGaXAg8dEHdj7v_yhttWycHQ4Ak0hls7iFPp3Q==&uniplatform=NZKPT&language=CHS

in these countries.

However, at the beginning of its founding, the United States faced a complex international situation and threats to its national security. In Jefferson's opinion, Europe represented the "nations of eternal war", and it was the wars among European countries that dragged the United States into the danger of war. Under these circumstances, America's founding fathers had to ask the United States to recuse itself from international affairs. This retreat from international affairs also makes America's view of China become stable and obtuse. The output of the nation-building ideas of America was suppressed during this period, and there was no way to interfere with the situation in China. Therefore, since China could not appear as a "student" who readily accepted the transformation of the United States, it could only be imagined as a pedantic, stubborn and backward image. During this period, Americans could only appear as a critic in international affairs, their dissatisfaction with the internal affairs of other countries was reflected in diplomatic condemnation at best, but they could not act to change it. For instance, the parliament of America passed resolutions morally condemning Russia and Austria-Hungary for their persecution of Jews, and Britain for its oppression of the Irish. This critic's perspective tends to look at other countries in binary terms at distant, like a drama, rather than constantly watching and scrutinizing their movements. In this way, the image of China as barbaric and backward had been fixed.

2.3 Protector mentality and imperial imagination after 1905

With its increasing power, during early 20th century United States adopted an expansionist approach. At the same time, the image of China has also undergone positive changes, becoming the image of a protected and gifted one. Missionaries attributed this shift primarily to ongoing revolutions in China. However, their portrayal greatly exaggerated these transformations. In addition to the changing circumstances in China, the more important reason comes from the change in the national imagination of the United States itself. The interventionism and imperialism led them towards envisioning themselves as a 'democratic teacher', seeking a mighty country to become its 'student' urgently. The large-scale missionary and open door policy to China just let them have a parent-like feelings and a giver mentality to China, so that China naturally became the "student" they placed high hopes on.

2.3.1 American expansionism and the change of China's image

After the rapid industrialization of the United States during the Gilded Age, the country emerged as a signif-

icant force in global at the turn of the century. This shift was exemplified by notable occurrences such as the Spanish-American War, acquisition of its first colony in the Philippines, establishment of open door policy, and mediation of the Russo-Japanese War. The open door policy became a fundamental aspect of America's new foreign strategy and marked its initial involvement in China's affairs. Expansionist tendencies were prominently evident during Theodore Roosevelt's presidency. Roosevelt's vision for global order was characterized by adherence to the ideology of "civilization," which examined every international issues within a framework of civilizational progress or decline. This approach was notably articulated in his 1904 message to Congress known as the "Roosevelt's corollary," which served to legitimize this ideology. Although the policies Roosevelt pursued usually solely aimed at advancing U.S. political and economic interests with a realist perspective, and his invocation of "civilization" was usually an excuse providing justification for these decisions and furthered American interests, it ultimately propelling the nation towards expansion anyway.

With the emergence of Roosevelt's corollary, China's image also changed significantly at a similar time. Many Americans, especially missionaries, began to talk of the "awakening of Chinese." In 1906, Thomas Millard published an article in *New China*, in which he said that he used to be hostile to China, but as he got to know the Chinese people better, he liked and respected them increasingly. He described the Chinese as "hard-working, reliable, law-abiding, humorous, capable and tolerant."⁵² Smith, who had always been biased against the Chinese, also began to see the virtues of the Chinese, such as a strong sense of responsibility, calm and steady, hard work, unparalleled fortitude and eternal optimism, and believed that the Chinese had become capable of handling their own affairs.⁵³

The argument is seemingly justified on the surface. Many events that occurred in China during that period were documented in American articles as indications of China's awakening. This encompassed the reform efforts demonstrated by the Qing government during the new policies of latter stage of Qing Dynasty, as well as the nationalism exhibited in movements against American goods and so on. The majority of Americans expressed positive opinions about these developments in China, leading to a shift in their perceptions of the country. Theodore Roosevelt had previously held a rather pessimistic view of China, but

52 Thomas F. Millard, *The New China*, Scribner's Magazine vol. 39 no. 2(Feb. 1906), 249.

53 Arthur Smith, *China and America Today*, New York, 1907, 106.

in an article titled “The Awakening of the Chinese” published at that time, he highly praised the and new national spirit and the modernization in China across education, transportation, industry, and trade. He believed that China was breaking free from superstition’s constraints.⁵⁴ The well-known missionary William Alexander Parsons Martin, who set a separate chapter in *The Awakening of China* on “Reform in China,” argues that “everything in China -- from religious rituals to the style of shoe buckles -- is changing.” In this chapter, he comprehensively discussed the changes in China’s education, railways, telegraph, post office, laws, bad customs and other aspects, and highly praised the new policies of the late Qing Dynasty and the five ministers’ expedition abroad, believing that only Emperor Ming of Han sent people to the country of India to seek Dharma could be comparable.⁵⁵ But in reality, neither of these events had made much practical change in China. Emperor Ming’s pursuit of the Dharma only came from a dream he had. Although the new policies of the late Qing Dynasty did make great progress in education, economy and other aspects, it did not make substantial breakthroughs in the political level, which Americans concerned the most. Although a parliamentary system of government was established, it was essentially perfunctory. The establishment of the Parliament was explicitly proposed in 1901, and it was not until 1909 that the provincial assemblies were formed successively. In addition, any bill of the national parliamentary had to be approved by the Emperor, and a decree from the emperor could even dissolve the parliament immediately. Local councils must also be approved by the local governor to take effect. The local governor also had the power to inform the Emperor and dismiss the Parliament if it made any remarks that offended the majesty of the court.⁵⁶ Moreover, the members of Parliament were mostly members of the royal family. Compared with the new policies of the late Qing Dynasty, the Hundred Days’ Reform happened in 1898 was even

54 Cohen. W.I., *America’s response to China*, Fudan University Press, 1989, 65.

55 William Alexander Parsons Martin, *The Awakening of China*, World Book Publishing Company, 2010, 152.

56 Wang Lijie, “The failure cause and enlightenment of political reform in the New Deal at the end of Qing Dynasty”, Heilongjiang University, 2017, https://kns.cnki.net/kcms2/article/abstract?v=sAMP-nZqXjxTHS2d96NMBgb2FD3b-Hpxv4mXFQeGzV_vSckP_dQzmvIMJR3W9da7daMd4X511_qOul4SIC9stRfxPjS1aHmSWoEUFOB083B5Vbr4iHmAPMa2-eGV1fmY8o9OKUEd3kfwTydFMtb4KDmKbvWuN894L8o5XIbKhV9Ob2jgXpBzcAyQsgp4MJbSaHLvmb4Fds=&uniplatform=NZKPT&language=CHS

more determined to change at the political level. So it is hard to believe that the transformation of China’s image was entirely because events in China converging with American standards of “civilization.” Another important reason is that the United States has changed its perspective on China after it turned to expansionism.

2.3.2 The combination of imperial imagination and feelings to Chinese

Before discussing this change in perspective, it is necessary to firstly add the substantial change in the circumstances of the missionaries in China at that time. As mentioned above, during the Boxer Rebellion, Chinese xenophobia reached its peak. Many boxers attributed the drought to the presence of foreign missionaries, and rumors spread. Some believed that the presence of foreigners made heaven angry and sent natural disasters as punishment, while others believed that the missionaries used magic to drive away the clouds, resulting in a drought. This hostility to foreigners often escalated into physical attacks, and cases of killing parishioners and missionaries occurred. In such a situation where their own safety is not guaranteed and their dignity is often trampled, it is naturally difficult for foreign missionaries to have a positive impression of China, but to repay hostility with hostility. But then came the Peace Protocol of 1901, which put an unprecedented ban on xenophobia in China. According to the treaty, more than 100 central and local officials were executed or dismissed. It was forever forbidden for the Chinese people to form or join organizations of an anti-imperialist nature, on pain of death. Provincial officials must immediately punish xenophobic incidents that occur within their jurisdiction, or they will be dismissed immediately and never be employed again. In addition, a diplomatic zone under the administration of each country was set up in Beijing, and foreign troops were stationed in several places. Moreover, with decades of experience in dealing with foreign countries, China’s mindset had also changed at this time. Arrogance about their own country was fading, and the voice that wants to treat the West as an equal and learn from it in all its aspects was prevailing. In this case, American missionaries got rid of decades of hardship in insecurity and disrespect, ushering in a golden age of comfortable living in China. Since then, there had been larger revolutions and wars in China, but the missionaries had been spared as much as possible in these upheavals. Except for very few accidents, their life in China had been guaranteed as never before. They were always respected and treated with courtesy on the superior people, they were able to monitor the actions of the Qing government at any time from the diplomatic quarters in Beijing, and they established missionary agencies in every

piece of land in China. During this period, dozens of new missionary groups entered China, by 1925, the number of Protestant eucharists in the various international churches was said to have reached 700,000, with Catholics twice as many.⁵⁷ There is no doubt that in this social environment respected by the Chinese, American missionaries could also look at the characteristics of the Chinese people with a more tolerant attitude, although the standard of civilization had not changed, but at least they could look at this diversified culture with a pleasant attitude of appreciating the exotic scenery.

In addition to the changes in the Chinese environment that allowed missionaries to perceive distinct Chinese characteristics with a more open-minded approach compared to those in the United States, the abandonment of traditional non-interventionist policies and the shift towards expansionism in the United States played a pivotal role. As discussed in the preceding chapter, non-interventionism contributed to shaping a duality of civilization and barbarism. The United States, as a critic, tended to view other countries in terms of dramatic dualities, largely due to its limited involvement in international affairs at that time. However, as American power grew, the revolutionary aspiration of propagating its ideology across the globe, which could be dated back to the nation's inception and had been long-suppressed, had finally been unleashed. Merely setting a democratic example worldwide was no longer sufficient given America's strength and its Christian mission to save humanity. Missionaries had already begun exporting this ideology into China, now it became a nationwide endeavor, turning the United States into an unprecedented missionary force. This is most evident in idealist figures like Woodrow Wilson (albeit beyond this article's scope). Even Theodore Roosevelt—a renowned realist—exhibited elements of this mindset in his actions. He advocated for civilizing “barbaric” countries such as China to establishing peace with them.⁵⁸ He once stated directly that: “We hope... to strengthen cultural control over China.”⁵⁹ In terms of policy toward China, despite winning Nobel Peace Prize for promoting arbitration elsewhere, Roosevelt opposed using arbitration with China and other “barbaric” nations; instead favoring forceful resolution of disputes.⁶⁰ Furthermore, in his doctrine of

57 Harold R. Isaacs, *Scratches on our minds American images of China*, Translated by Yu Dianli and Lu Riyu, Zhonghua Book Company, 2006, 141.

58 Theodore Roosevelt, *National Life and Character*, The Sewanee Review, no.3, 367.

59 Roosevelt to Cortelyou, January 25, 1904, Roosevelt Letters, vol.3, pp.709-10.

60 Liu Yiyong, “The consciousness of ‘civilization

‘international police power’”, he believed that there is a “social contract” binds a nation and their government, and only leaders who protect civil liberties enjoy the legal authority to rule. “Independence is not a gift given, it can only be acquired through the efforts of the members of society. Until then, it is the duty of civilized nations to establish and maintain a stable government there until the local people can govern themselves and maintain it.”⁶¹ While such arguments often provide a pretext for advancing American national interests through violence, the focus on international affairs and the notion of promoting the linear evolution of civilization through force naturally made him welcome any efforts toward liberal democracy from China. the United States wanted to be the savior and ruler of the whole world, “the political Messiah,”⁶² so it naturally needed to find a big country to be saved to satisfy its own imagination.

If having a saved great nation was very important for the construction of America's national identity, China at the time also happened to meet the conditions of being the one to be saved. From the very beginning, China was almost the only field of America's missionary work, and generation after generation of American missionaries' efforts made the United States have a hidden paternalistic sentiment towards China, seeing itself as China's protector. The impression of China from Americans who grew up in the early 20th century was often influenced by missionaries and had a sympathetic nature. They described China as “a poor and oppressed nation,” “a back-

identity; and arbitration view of American expansionists in the early 20th century”, *World history*, no3 (2015), https://kns.cnki.net/kcms2/article/abstract?v=sAMp-nZqXjxwRHX7GaCDqeh8npWHKWOfXeEOndahUIW8GDHVoEtAIw6vQ-m6tfO6vKyk0GqX3IEvRPQkGx5HN5UpXLm8BITvOtIHM5D04PXduuNUyc-x-BIU7q905EnBcTPSxabKfBc834w6DGaXAg8dEHdj7v_yhtWycHQ4Ak0hls7iFPp3Q==&uniplatform=NZKPT&language=CHS.

61 David H. Burton, “Theodore Roosevelt: Confident Imperialist”, *Review of Politics*, Vol. 23, no. 3, 1961, 363-370.

62 Wang Lixin, “With the dragon as a foil: American imagining of China and the construction of America's national identity”, *Social Sciences in China* 29, no.4 (2008), 98-112, https://kns.cnki.net/kcms2/article/abstract?v=sAMp-nZqXjwAdP_ZT9b43Z7QzSAFPK19CNu4emR9X3MXh8VtaCd0dwgofd-6xEHnGNNc6Z4KwGi1CECkrSrC16AHjbmHhMMqWMEDQPvIF6IKIgmVgLw2sc2E4_PfEYp4dU65rSGsYWaDBrZnNw7Rf-icot6FnHfNLzkYrLGlifD7fuvGwWYJ0A==&uniplatform=NZKPT&language=CHS

ward nation in need of our help,” etc. Moreover, although there was no data to support it, it was undoubtedly that the American people provided a considerable amount of funding for China’s missionary work. “One-cent coins, five-cent nickels, ten-cent silver coins, and dollars were carefully folded into envelopes or placed into collection trays and baskets week after week, year after year, and the amount of money accumulated was considerable.”⁶³ That was why China left an important imprint in the impression of Americans at the time. The cost of the funds contributed by the general public not only promoted the paternalistic sentiment but also gave birth to a view that the United States had done China a favor.

Furthermore, the open door policy proposed by the United States has also resulted in this “gifter mind” to China. On one hand, the introduction of the open door policy is rooted in the release of long-suppressed ambitions of the United States to expand overseas and a momentum for westward expansion. On the other hand, it was driven by a desire to access the vast potential of the Chinese market and offload surplus goods resulting from the economic downturn of 1890s. Thus exploring the market in China became imperative for the United States. The following text suggested that, either out of ignorance or arrogance, the open door policy essentially serves as a tool to maximize U.S. interests. However, many Americans view it as beneficial for China as well. General James H. Wilson remarked that “as China’s closest neighbor across sea and being among great powers with no intention to undermine peace and integrity or basic interests of its people, understanding China deeply is essential for US.” A scholar pointed out that “the prominent figures in politics and media during twentieth century fostered an impression that distinguished US from other imperialist powers - portraying US as guardian of China’s independence seeking protection against European and Japanese imperialism.”⁶⁴ It was indeed US that prevented China from being partitioned by European powers while providing financial support, personnel, blessings and intellectual resources for Chinese revolution.

This parental sentiment and patronizing mentality was exaggerated and amplified by politicians and the media. Americans had no doubt that they were helping China, and that this help was appreciated and reciprocated by the Chinese, who were waking up and working hard to change themselves in their direction. This kind of mentality need-

63 Harold R. Isaacs, *Scratches on our minds American images of China*, Translated by Yu Dianli and Lu Riyu, Zhonghua Book Company, 2006, 118.

64 Cohen. W.I., *America’s response to China*, Fudan University Press, 1989, 195.

ed to be supported by a series of facts from China. So the new policy of the late Qing Dynasty, the revolution of 1911 and various nationalist movements were simply regarded as symbols, and were processed through the media to become the appearance that Americans were pleasant to see. As a result, this imaginary bubble was constantly reinforced, and the gap between image and fact was further and further widened until 1949, when this bubble was punctured by an incontrovertible fact.

2.4 Images and Policies

China’s image had subconsciously influenced US policy towards China to some extent, which is the subject of the following discussion. For instance, the latter text suggested that the open door policy treated China as an object without any subjective initiative, which can be related to the parental feelings of the United States towards China. Additionally, the disciplining of China under Theodore Roosevelt could be attributed in part to the condescending mentor and rescuer mentality brought about by the linear evolution of civilization. In dealing with the boycott of American goods, the famous diplomat William W. Rockhill sensed the rise of Chinese nationalism, but he also believed that this spirit needed guidance from the United States. Roosevelt also pointed out the need for a “strong attitude” to the Chinese “where they have clearly done wrong.”⁶⁵ The following article will focus on America’s policy towards China and its essence.

3.

3.1 The Consensus of “Open Door” and “Close the Door”

John Hay, Secretary of the State during McKinley’s administration, built the milestone of the Open Door Policy in his two Open Door notes issued in 1899 and 1900, respectively. Addressed as the US policy towards China, it marks the US program to meddle in the imperial scramble in the Far East as a latecomer. In order to squeeze in the circle of dividing the pie, Hay, in his first notes sent to other imperial regimes such as Britain, Russia, and German, chanted “equal access” to trade, mining and building the railroads in China, considering that these powers had taken their step to directly colonize the land and seize the ports which Hay called the “sphere of interests.”⁶⁶ The second, sent on July 4, 1900, in the midst of the turmoil

65 Moore, A. Gregory, *Defining and defending the open door policy: Theodore Roosevelt and China, 1901-1909*, Translated by Zhao Jiayu, Jiangsu People’s Publishing House, 2021, 172.

66 Hay, John 1899. *First Open Door Notes*. Digital History.

of the Boxer Rebellion, Hay did not ask for a response but proclaimed that American policy was to oppose any effort to take advantage of the turmoil to impair China's territorial or political integrity⁶⁷.

Before the doctrine was officially nailed down in the text, there had been a process of "formation" of the ideas lasting for nearly a decade in the 1890s. The most proper term for encapsulating this historical formation process is probably the "Consensus." The outset was marked by the domestic problem of economic depression from 1893 to 1898 with the crisis of the industrial sector, collapse of banks, failures of businesses and enormous unemployment.⁶⁸ The severity of economic failures generated dramatic and extensive social unrest all across the nation, raising in many sections of American society the specter of chaos and revolution⁶⁹. For the relief of this domestic crisis within the United States, an expansionist foreign policy became the primal response to the general crisis. The making and adopting of the expansion was not an easy decision directly made by the White House at the beginning. On the contrary, it mobilized and converged the interests, desires and ideas of all the elites from different sectors, which steered the policymaking of the federal apparatus.

The manufacturers, agrarian reformers, labor leaders, bankers and merchants all contributed to the decision-making of President Cleveland in his second term and President McKinley. The "consensus" made sense in the broad support for expansion resting upon agreement among conservatives and liberals, and Democrats and Republicans, from all sections and groups of the country.⁷⁰ It is basically constituted of two parts of ideas, or ideologies. The first one, held by manufacturers, farmers, merchants, and most other entrepreneurial groups in the economy, viewed expansion as the only way to solve economic problems by having enough markets, shifting the overproduction and increasing employment.⁷¹ The second one, represented by the politicians and intellectuals, actually "ideologized" the economic rationality of the former groups by elevating the industrial and agricultural production of goods and circulation of them in the economy into the preservation of "democracy" and "prosperity" of the whole nation and proposed the expansion as the only

means.⁷² In this ideology, the solution to the domestic problem was deeply tied to imperial expansionism in the rhetoric of democracy and pacifism, whereby both opportunity and difficulty, good and evil, are externalized.⁷³

Driven by the consensus of externalizing the domestic problem, the US expansion during the 1890s consisted of the cluster of war, annexation, and occupation embodied by the Spanish-American War and the annexation of Hawaii. The militant approach the empire took here, seemingly mocking the discourse in the Open Door notes, actually contextualized it. In 1898, President McKinley told a Citizens' Banquet of Chicago that "territorial expansion is not alone and always necessary to national advancement" and the "broadening of the trade."⁷⁴ For the political elites of the US, the acquisition of the new islands was both an acceptable and "lesser evil" way to end the war with Spain in order to "make peace" and secure a base for the economic struggle in China.⁷⁵ The ambivalence of "war to make peace" predicted the hypocrisy of the Open Door Policy, which chanted the respect of sovereignty and national rights of China in order to disguise economic exploitation.

In the constellation of the US expansion fueled by the domestic consensus of political, commercial and intellectual elites, the Open Door policy was the final product that marked the border of the US overseas territorial expansion, as it embodied both the strength and weakness of an empire.⁷⁶ (McCormick 1967, 129) As the initial idea of Hay to write the notes was to request the "equal rights" of the US empire in the "sphere of interest" already acquired by other imperial powers, it was originally a makeshift for a latecomer to join in the partitioning scramble in China. But industrial power and economic supremacy gave the US imperialists confidence that they would defeat their competitors in the pure market logic: "If China was open to trade with all the world... the United States and England need not be afraid of any competitors."⁷⁷ Thus, as the domestic economic depression at the beginning of the 1890s dissolved in the confidence of knocking out the door of the Chinese market, the Open Door policy was a milestone that summarized the formation of consensus

67 Gardner, Foreword of *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy*, xii.

68 Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy*, 29.

69 Ibid.

70 Ibid, 30.

71 Ibid.

72 Ibid, 32.

73 Ibid, 42.

74 Thomas J. McCormick, *China Market: America's Quest for Informal Empire, 1893-1901* (Chicago: Elephant Paperbacks, 1967), 128.

75 Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy*, 47-48.

76 McCormick, *China Market: America's Quest for Informal Empire, 1893-1901*, 129.

77 Ibid.

and its actual practice.

While the US elites from various sections came to a consensus on imperial expansion, they formed a consensus on Chinese exclusion. Originated from the Western states, the anti-Chinese feelings and violence spread from California, Colorado, Nevada and Oregon, where Chinese immigrant workers in mining and agriculture largely settled, to the whole nation as the representatives in Congress became active on labor issues of which foremost was Chinese exclusion during the early 1880s.⁷⁸ In 1882, the first Chinese Exclusion was enacted as a successor to the treaty of 1880. Placing a ten-year ban on the immigration of Chinese laborers⁷⁹, this law signaled the “Chinese Question” formally extended to the federal level from the West Coast. Six years later, the Scott Act and the Abortive Treaty of 1888 provided further restrictions on those who temporarily were eligible to stay in the US by nullifying the identification certificates and declaring that any Chinese laborer who left the U.S. for any reason would not be permitted to return.⁸⁰ In 1892, when the 10-year ban was about to expire, the US Congress enacted the famous Geary Act, which extended the validity period of the restriction law by declaring that “all laws now in force prohibiting and regulating the coming into this country of Chinese persons and persons of Chinese descent are hereby continued in force for a period of ten years from the passage of this act.” Ultimately, in 1902, the Geary Act was extended and made permanent in 1904, which made it the fountain of restricting and persecuting Chinese Immigrants.

By tracing the cluster of Chinese exclusion laws, one can find striking concurrence with the formation of the Open Door Policy. This intersection on time is not a coincidence. Besides the concurrence, the exclusion of the Chinese definitely shares the same traits with the US imperial expansion as another imperialist “consensus” of “closing the door.” Nourished originally by anti-Chinese violence committed by white populists and nativists, the legalization of the Chinese exclusion marked the formation of consensus among different groups: labor leaders, state officials, conservative intellectuals, republicans and dem-

ocrats in the Congress and the White House.⁸¹ Then, along with the US expansionism raging through the Pacific Ocean and reaching China mainland, the “Chinese Question” for the exclusionists had been both a domestic and international problem as well. As Charles Harvey Denby confessed in 1886 in his report to Thomas F. Bayard: “All our evils in China” seem to grow “out of troubles in America.”⁸²

Third, the basic ideas of the consensus were also deeply “ideologized” raising from the solution of “economic problem.” Obvious racialism was the first character of the Chinese Exclusion Movement. Senator Bucker of Missouri remarked on the first law in 1882 that “it consigns to the grave all sublimated sentiment as to the equality of the races of men.” This racialism was originally maneuvered to shift the contradiction in the economic domain. California, the outset place of Chinese exclusion, had been in a state of incessant agitation against land and railway monopolies in which the culprit was attributed to the employment of Chinese laborers.⁸³ Since it was much easier and safer for politicians to fight the Chinese than to make war upon the great monopolies, it became their policy to divert and pacify the discontented white workingmen with energetic anti-Chinese measures.⁸⁴ The anti-Chinese sentiment was indoctrinated in the early 20th century by the leader of the American Federation of Labor, Samuel Gompers, by elevating the wild sentiment into rigid racism in the discussion of “manhood” in the “Meat vs. Rice”⁸⁵ under which was his concern with the wage competition from the “Chinese coolies.” Here, the escalation from racialism to racism in the consensus of closing the door, in general, mirrored the “externalization” of the spectacular preservation of “democracy” and “prosperity” preached in the US expansionist ideology as its “true self.” As the racial group totally otherized and alienated during the years of the Exclusion Act, the Chinese immigrants represented

78 M. Elizabeth Burroughs Roberts Smith Coolidge, *Chinese immigration*, (New York: H. Holt and company, 1909), 168-169.

79 National Archives. 2023. “Chinese Exclusion Act (1882).” Last modified January 17, 2023. <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/chinese-exclusion-act>.

80 Bailey DeSimone, “The Chinese Exclusion Act, Part 2 – The Legacy” (May 16, 2022), <https://blogs.loc.gov/law/2022/05/the-chinese-exclusion-act-part-2-the-legacy/>.

81 Beth Lew-Williams, “The Exclusion Consensus.” In *The Chinese Must Go: Violence, Exclusion, and the Making of the Alien in America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018), 190.

82 Ibid, 170.

83 Coolidge, *Chinese immigration*, 180.

84 Ibid.

85 American Federation of Labor, Herman Gutstadt, Samuel Gompers, and Asiatic Exclusion League. “Meat Vs. Rice: American Manhood Against Asiatic Coolieism, Which Shall Survive?” Published by American Federation of Labor and printed as Senate document 137 (1902), 1

the other illusion for the US elites to solve the “domestic problem” externally in tandem with the fantasy of seeking a “market” in the foreign country. Doremus Scudder put in 1905 that: “All the reforming forces of our civilization center upon those who strike us as most foreign, and as a result they change, not we.”⁸⁶ Here, through the ideological ties between the two events, the real entanglement and intersection between the two made sense.

The ideology of “externalization” embedded in the two events most palpably marked the confluence of the consensus of “Open Door” and “Closing the Door” at the turn of the century. From 1880 to 1900, the two-decade period when, as the former section shows, there were the simultaneous formation processes of opening the door of the Chinese market and closing the door for Chinese immigrants, the two ideas had already tangled with each other. Here, the domestic and international affairs were combined. As early as the mid-1880s, the problem of “Is it possible to close America’s gates while keeping China’s open?” had become the center of both the US national politics and US-Chinese negotiations.⁸⁷ In the stakes centering around the entanglement preceding the writing of Open Door Notes, the doctrines promising equal rights and respect for the sovereignty of China had been proved vacant as the U.S leaders had no longer “assumed Chinese ‘cooperation’ to be a prerequisite for commercial expansion in China.”⁸⁸ Thus, the long-lasting entanglement was necessary for the comprehension of the US empire, which dialectically depicted the panorama of the US empire at that period. Neither the economic supremacy nor the racist legal practices governing its subjects could summarize it alone.

3.2 Orientalism: the Specific Ideology Unpacking the Twofold Ideology

The ideological construction, as one of the important aspects of unpacking this long-lasting entanglement shown above, will be specified here in this section. To emphasize the “ideological character,” it is appropriate to term the tandem of ideologies, both of which intended to externalize the problem and opportunity, the “orientalism.” Here this term originally came from Edward W. Said’s formulation of its “third meaning:” the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient – dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it; in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient.⁸⁹ Subsequently, the ori-

entalism here was definitely shared and adopted by the US political and commercial elites who advocated opening China’s door while closing America’s door, and it, on the one hand, wrapped up all the fantasies of prosperity in the Chinese market and on the other hand, involved the fear of Chinese immigration as the representation of “Yellow Peril.”

The often manipulation of the discourse on “civilization” by the US elites when they dealt with the “Chinese Question” legitimizes the use of “orientalism.” Here, the twofold ideology of externalization, which represented entanglement, can be narrated civility of China that she either had the potential to be civilized or was totally barbaric. The former one, ostensibly recognizing the civility of China, aligned with the fantasies of the Chinese market. This view was exemplified in the tract written by Charle Denby in 1898, Jr, *America’s Opportunity In Asia*. In this article, the civic narrative had its broad function to interest the merchants and exporters in the US, frustrate other imperial powers, such as Japan and Russia, from partitioning the land of China, and hypocritically grant China the independent status as one of the sovereign nations preconditional to enter in the world of civilizations, though only the American commercial and industrial elites were the primary audience. He assumed: “China’s vast population and wide territory make her another factor in the problem. She may be conquered and enslaved for years, but the great vitality, the great individuality, the exclusive cohesiveness of her people, seem to destine her to an ultimately independent national existence.”⁹⁰ This bold prediction of the bright future of China, ironically, was based on the dumping of industrial commodities and monopolization of railroads and mines and would continue to conform to America’s economic expansion as he later put that: “Internal taxation barriers will be broken down, and not only will new markets of great importance be reached, but old ones will become more accessible. The people will become more familiar with foreign products and inventions and will use them more freely.”⁹¹ As China’s only way towards independence was to succumb to the informal control of the US, what Denby promulgated here was actually portraying a beautiful picture of a “civilized,” decent servant who knew well how to flatter for the American elites.

The latter one, purely antithetical to the former one by cursing the uncivilized and barbaric essence of Chinese, represented the paranoid fear of the “Yellow Peril.” Sam-

86 Coolidge, Chinese immigration, 423.

87 Lew-Williams, “The Exclusion Consensus,” 170.

88 Ibid, 191.

89 Edward W, Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage

Books, 1978), 3.

90 Denby, Charles, “America’s Opportunity in Asia,”(The North American Review 166, no. 494,1898), 35.

91 Ibid, 36-37.

uel Gompers, the first president of AFL, was one of the most fanatical supporters of this side. In 1902, at the stake of the near expiration of the Geary Act, he wrote the infamous tract *Some Reasons for Chinese Exclusion: Meat vs. Rice* to lobby Congress to extend the exclusion. In this tract, he fervently used the racist discourse that was embodied in his citation of Rudyard Kipling's saying that Canton was a city "inhabited by yellow devils" and agitated that "the Mongol will begin to march in his own good time."⁹² He also instigated the stereotype of the "Asian Coolie race" menacing the "Christian civilization and society," which strongly mobilized the narrative of "civilization." Enumerating the social habits, moral standards and opium habits of Chinese workers by drawing the documents back to the 1880s in California, he unscrupulously attributed them all to the racial inertia of the Chinese, accusing that "Chinese labor degrades labor just as slave labor did"⁹³ which also conjoined the animosity against the black people. Anti-Chinese agitators like Gompers, in their Orientalism, spawned a Chimera hybridizing prevalent racism, militant populism, and Christian conservatism. By citing a "well-known California physician," he portrayed the ugliness of Chinese barbarity: "That an advancement with an incubus like the Chinese is like the growth of a child with a malignant tumor upon his back. At the time of manhood death comes of the malignity."⁹⁴ Regarding the two faces of orientalism fabricated by the American political and commercial leaders shown above, one would at first see the split of two factions which, standing on each side, would oppose each other. While Charles Denby's main audience was the industrialists and manufacturers, Samuel Gompers delegated the labor organizations of white male skilled labor. Indeed, considering the different interesting and the partitioning of the two sides of Orientalism fitting with the somewhat different appealing, there were inner abrasions exemplified in a nutshell by the dual factionalism. Nevertheless, this inner incongruity in which both factions confined their interest appeal to the federal and congressional level never tampered with the consensus of "open door while closing the door;" instead, it strengthened the consensus in general and actually contributed to the imperial construction of the US empire regarding its expansion and dominance over its subjects.

On the side of Oriental fantasy commonly held by the commercial elite, a brief review of the case of the American Asiatic Association is helpful to elaborate on the entanglement. Formally organized in 1898, this organization

was the only interest group concerned exclusively with Far Eastern policy.⁹⁵ It embodied the consensus within the US business community regarding the groundbreaking associationalism which effectively coordinated the activities of all interested parties; also, it showed its techniques in pressuring the government to secure assistance in the promotion of industry, commerce and finance.⁹⁶ As early as 1898, before Hay sent the notes, the members of the organization had eagerly participated in the policymaking process conducted by the Secretary of the State. In *Journal of the American Asiatic Association (JAAA)* recorded the communication between the Secretary and the House of Representatives that "Inasmuch as our commercial relations with China are already most friendly and the existing trade between the United States and China is in the actual process of development, it would seem to be clear that the present is a golden opportunity for enlarging the channels of commercial intercourse with the empire."⁹⁷ The consensus of "Open Door" was confirmed in this place, and the link between the desire to solve the domestic problem of "overproduction," commercial expansion and transpacific territorial expansion in the formation of consensus was further revealed in the Journal's recording of Senator John L. McLaurin's speech on the Association's second annual dinner on January 26, 1900, that the acquisition of Philippines favored the commercial competition since prior to that, the open door policy "was secured to us only by treaty rights," and the truth of trade with China, in the "great race between the nations in century" was "to dispose of their surplus productions."⁹⁸

Considering the Chinese Exclusion Laws, members of the association and their congressional allies did worry about its affect on the open trade with China. To think China would turn the other cheek would be a most dangerous assumption of the future of trade, national fairness and national interest of the US.⁹⁹ In the period from 1902 to 1904, when the debate centered on whether to maintain the old provisions or stiffen the restrictions, the associ-

95 James J. Lorence, "Organized Business and the Myth of the China Market: The American Asiatic Association, 1898-1937," *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 71, no. 4 (1981), 5

96 *Ibid*, 7.

97 American Asiatic Association. *Journal of the American Asiatic Association* (New York: John Ford. v.1, 1898-1901), 2.

98 *Ibid*, 75-76.

99 James J. Lorence, "Organized Business and the Myth of the China Market: The American Asiatic Association, 1898-1937," 36.

92 Asiatic Exclusion League, "Meat vs. Rice," 9.

93 *Ibid*, 15.

94 *Ibid*, 5.

ation contrived to prevent the latter situation from happening by pushing the passing of Senator Bill. 2960 with the Platt Amendment in order to postpone any action on exclusion until 1904.¹⁰⁰ Despite the campaign on laws and bills, the association also directed their resentment at the labor leaders, men like Gompers dwelling on the other side, who were appointed to important positions in the Immigration Bureau during Roosevelt's administration. John Foord, a journalist of the American Associations, complained, attacked the labor-oriented Commissioner of Immigration in San Francisco for his unnecessarily harsh enforcement of existing law and complained the officials in the occupation proved to be "hopelessly irrational" on the question of Chinese Question.¹⁰¹

However, what the members of the Association did for a "liberalized treaty" and "liberal policy" towards Chinese immigration, regarding their interests in the transpacific trade, generally aligned with the maintenance of the "old provisions" rather than repealing the laws. Namely, they, in their consensus of enlarging the open trade, never questioned the necessity of exclusion laws. What they worried about in relation to the exclusion laws and irrational practices conducted by the labor arguments were confined to the treatment of their Chinese partners, the "exempt classes" of Chinese immigrants, including the Chinese merchants, travelers, students, diplomats and so on. For the American commercial elites, these classes of people were vital to the commercial interests and development of future moral and commercial influence in China.¹⁰²

As the Association member Ellison A. Smyth noted: "If any additional restrictions are imposed upon the coming of Chinese to this country, upon their students and their merchants, it may lead to very disastrous results for the Southern manufacturers and cause very fierce competition between the mills in this country for our home trade..."¹⁰³

As a result, for the Association members, the crux of the treaty problem was the need for a precise definition of the term "laborer" which the first Exclusion Law specifically targeted and for the free admission of all Chinese not included in that category, as John Foord once informed Roosevelt.¹⁰⁴ Here, no one dared to or even thought of removing the exclusion law, and the consensus went well.

The concern of the Association members, though more inclined to economic interests, was surely inseparable from the ideological Orientalism, as their allies in Congress,

men like Charle Denby and McLaurin, tended to express the ideology more openly. As a result, their hypocrisy and pretension to "respect" the sovereignty of China and their orientalist narrative of "civilization" mixed with the narcissism of "White Man's Burden" to civilize China by importing American commodities was exposed to be fundamentally racist and condescending and thus came to terms with the claim of Chinese barbarity. Charles Denby Jr., in his statement on the subcommittee on Chinese-Exclusion Bill, Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House, showed his attitude as such. Commenting on the 1905 boycott against America, he optimistically stated that the boycott, in its quick recession, was less efficacious and mocked that "perhaps the Chinese necessities are greater."¹⁰⁵ He debased the agitation of removing the exclusion laws carried on by the "coolies" and students since he observed that the Chinese authorities and merchant classes in China did not care a cent about it.¹⁰⁶ For him, the "new sentiment of the value of Chinese citizenship" and "growing patriotism" weighed nothing¹⁰⁷, a view perfectly self-contradictory in his bold claim that China would earn individuality and independence. This fundamental negligence or even the actual rejection of China's "civility" based on Western norms of diplomacy and international law nullified all the beautiful words and reiterated the Chinese incompetence of being a "modern state," which surely combined the accusation of Chinese "uncivilized characters," the "barbaric" and "heathen" customs.¹⁰⁸ Here, the condescending attitudes in diplomacy, in the preaching of Open Door, had featured racialism and racism. As Thomas F. Bayard once had argued during the 1880s, regarding the response to the Chinese government's petition for indemnity for the domestic anti-Chinese violence, relations between the two countries were not governed by the principle of reciprocity but by the statutes of treaties, and the problem purely depended upon the president's "own benevolence."¹⁰⁹ The paternalistic "benevolence" here summarized the Orientalist ideology possessed by the US commercial elites and their allied politicians and its actual consensus with the other side.

Shifting the focus to the other side, the hardcore Chinese exclusionists represented by labor leaders like Samuel

100 Ibid, 37.

101 Ibid, 49

102 Ibid, 51.

103 Ibid, 35.

104 Ibid, 51

105 United States. Congress. House. Committee on Foreign Affairs. Subcommittee on Chinese-Exclusion Bill. *Chinese Exclusion* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. G.P.O., 1906), 3

106 Ibid.

107 Ibid.

108 Lew-Williams, "The Exclusion Consensus," 172.

109 Ibid, 175.

Gompers basically followed the same track. From the 1890s to 1900s, they, in the Chinese exclusion movement and diplomatic affairs with China, played the role of hysteric defenders of the Geary Act and the main power that enforced the law arbitrarily, which generated abruptions with the commercial and industrial elites. Back in May 1894, in the midst of Panic and the shadow of the Pullman Strike, the agitators in AFL appealed in the Journal of *The American Federationist* against the Gresham-Yang treaty since the treaty violated the Geary Act and Scott Act.¹¹⁰ Playing with the fashionable populist discourse, the agitator criticized the “secrecy” of signing the treaty and contrived to conflate the Chinese immigration with the domestic industrial and economic crisis during which “wisdom, patriotism, statesmanship and humanity forbids the step” of assumed loosening of immigration control to which the new treaty would have led.¹¹¹

The ostensible opposition against the Open Door Policy, another representation of contradiction with the commercial elites, was expressed in April 1899, months before John Hay wrote the first note. In the specific column against Open Door in the journal, the author was annoyed by the claim that to secure the control of foreign markets, it was necessary to eliminate the sharp difference in wages between one competing country and another.¹¹² Still making up the so-called anti-expansionism and anti-imperialism on the face, the column writer claimed in the racial rhetoric that the imperialists, like Tartar behind the white faces of Russian, traded with “breech-clouted five-cents-a-day” semi savages.¹¹³ The opposition to the paternalistic “civilization mission” in “White Man’s Burden narrative here was the blunt racism without any mitigation, which fell in the paranoia that the “imperialists” were complicit with the uncivilized cheap labor regarding the economic interests.

Stepping over the 19th century, after the Open Door policy had been officially nailed down, this blunt racist discourse continued to be mobilized by the AFL supporters, as it was reiterated in the journal that “the civilization of the Caucasian is endangered when coming into close contact with and competition with the Asiatic” arguing for the re-enactment and extension of the Exclusion Act.¹¹⁴ But

at that time, the AFL leaders had teared up the disguise of anti-imperialism and anti-expansionism in their narrative as many of them were promoted to Immigrant officials during the Roosevelt administration. They clamored for “no Chinese immigration where our flag flies” where the Philippines and Hawaii, islands taken by the US in the territorial expansion, were involved.¹¹⁵ Supporting the anti-Chinese immigration provisions by the US authorities in the Philippines and Hawaii, the labor leaders and their allied organizations on the islands had already accepted US imperialism and expansionism without any hesitation. Here, the consensus of opening the door of others while closing the door makes sense in the dynamic change of the US territorial border as the so-called anti-imperialists “favored the overseas expansion of the American economic system and the extension of American authority throughout the world.”¹¹⁶

Samuel Gompers, in his *Meat vs. Rice*, cited Arthur Mc-Athur’s report stating the “difficulties of enforcing the Chinese immigration laws in the Philippines” as a prominent piece of evidence that the labor leaders’ consensus of imperial expansion.¹¹⁷ In regard to the free trade with mainland China, the attitude of Gompers and other leaders of AFL was subtle. Gompers seemed to be negative towards Chinese trade. Presenting the balance of exports and imports in the trade, he got the result that the US had a gross loss of about \$ 544,000,000 in round figures from 1880 to 1901.¹¹⁸ This estimation served to frustrate the Congress and the faction of commercial and industrial elites and propped up the further claim: “Is our civilization, our code of morals, social status to be exposed to their contaminating influence heretofore mentioned, in order to sell a few more barrels of flour or other cereals?”¹¹⁹ However, just in the memorial of a convention held in California on November 21st, 1901 sent to the Congress taken down in the tract, the view was far more moderate than Gompers’ per se. The memorial similarly promulgated the Orientalist ideology that the exclusion was “not alone a race, labor, and political question” but the bulwark against the “free immigration of Chinese,” which “would be for all purposes an invasion by Asiatic barbarians.”¹²⁰ But it also picked up the paternalistic narrative often used by the politicians on the side of commercial elites

110 American Federation of Labor, *American Federationist* (Washington [etc.]: v.1-3, 1894-1897), 50.

111 Ibid, 51.

112 American Federation of Labor, *American Federationist* (Washington [etc.]: v.5-6, 1898-1899), 36.

113 Ibid.

114 American Federation of Labor, *American Federationist* (Washington [etc.]: v.8, 1901), 305.

115 American Federation of Labor, *American Federationist* (Washington [etc.]: v.10, 1903), 93.

116 Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy*, 47.

117 Asiatic Exclusion League, “Meat vs. Rice,” 10-12.

118 Ibid, 23.

119 Ibid.

120 Ibid, 29-30

as well when it put that the welfare of the Chinese was not overlooked.¹²¹ It hypocritically recognized the “industrial destiny” of China just as Denby had said, let those who belonged to the exempted classes come, and praised that the commerce with China since 1880 “has increased more than 50 percent.”¹²² The “civilization mission” was retrieved here as it stated that “let America ideas of progress and enterprise be planted on Chinese soil.”¹²³ (Asiatic Exclusion League 1902, 30) Therefore, it concluded that: “America is at no disadvantage in its commercial dealings with China on account of domestic policy of Chinese exclusion.”¹²⁴ This conclusion marked the ultimate confluence of the split factions and oppositional Orientalist ideologies to a single consensus.

3.3 Role of Chinese Elites and The Conformity to Orientalism

China and the Chinese did have their own actions and voices in reaction to the Open Door and Chinese Exclusion, which have been acknowledged and documented by the US elites themselves. The massive campaign launched in 1905 boycotting American goods stated by Denby on the subcommittee on Chinese Exclusion Bill, as mentioned above, was one example. However, according to Denby’s statement, there seemed to be a divergence among the Chinese in their actions between the authorities, merchant elites, workers and students. While Denby valued the moderate attitudes of the elites, he despised the radical ones from the grassroots level. This inspection represented the US elites’ inspection of the voice of the Chinese, in which only the classes of Chinese elites, in the entanglement of racial and class partitions, were “eligible” to play on the stage.

As shown above, the main abruptions under the imperial consensus between the US commercial elites and labor leaders, especially after the 1900s, centered around the treatment of the “exempted classes,” the Chinese merchants, students and travelers. The exceptional status of these classes of Chinese was not granted based on pure benevolence but confirmed just by the first Exclusion Law in Section 6 and by *The Chinese Merchant’s Case in 1882* that they were not prohibited if they carried the certificates.¹²⁵ As a result, it can be said that the exclusion

legalized their privileged status. The negotiations and signing of treaties in which the Chinese authorities played an active role also contributed to the legal construction of Chinese elites’ privileged status weirdly embedded in the US systemic practices of racial exclusion. In 1888, there was an obsolete treaty made between the Chinese Minister Zheng Zaoru and Thomas F. Bayard affirming the idea of Chinese “self-prohibition,” prohibiting all Chinese from migrating to the United States for the following twenty years, save only for merchants, students, diplomats, and laborers who had immediate family or a thousand dollars in property or debts in the United States.¹²⁶ The Gresham-Yang Treaty in 1894, the one accused by the AFL agitators, also showed a similar trade made by the Chinese government. Here, as the Chinese elites were embedded into the US imperial system in the transpacific immigration and trade by a bizarre “externalized” and “exceptional” status, the Chinese government played in the diplomatic terrain also in the same position embodied the submission to “self-prohibition” in the 1880s and 1890s.

The legal and diplomatic “exceptionality” that empowered the Chinese elites and Chinese authorities at that time cohered with the American ideology of Orientalism specifically possessed by the commercial elites which externalized the Chinese and portrayed their passivity as to be civilized by American commodities and protected by the American laws. As a result, the Chinese elites’ actions overlapped with the ideological presumption of passivity. The coherence led to the alliance of Chinese merchants and bureaucrats and US commercial and industrial elites in the 1900s. As specified above, it was the period when the main contradictions between commercial elites and labor leaders took place but were contextualized by the consensus of US commercial and territorial expansion in which the US strengthened and extended their border control. Paralleling the US politicians who helped to “ideologize” the economic rationality of the US commercial elites, the defenders of the interests of exempted classes were sophisticated in accommodating their commercial allies by both appealing to economic interests and mobilizing the cultural narrative of “civilization.”

Wing Ting-fang, a Chinese diplomat and politician eminent in the US, did his job in this way. He was heartily welcomed by the US commercial elites such that his speeches and writings can be found in relative newspapers and journals such as *JAAA* and *The North American Review* and thus was often targeted by labor agitators from AFL. As early as 1899, at the Annual Meeting of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, he, in his address, had become a partner aligning with the Open

121 Ibid, 30.

122 Ibid.

123 Ibid.

124 Ibid.

125 Emma J. Teng, “Chinese Elites and U.S. Gatekeeping: Racial Discrimination and Class Privilege in Boston’s 1905 King Incident,” (Modern American History 4, no. 1, 2021, 1–24), 5-6.

126 Lew-Williams, “The Exclusion Consensus,” 183.

Door of China. According to the narrative of defining the “civilization,” Wu cut to the chase in a somewhat different way. Resenting the US elites’ paternalistic tone of “white man’s burden” to civilize China, Wu argued that China had been a civilization in her long history with her traditions and customs embodied by Confucianism, and thus, “it is not necessary to import by wholesale the Western civilization into China.”¹²⁷ The alternative role of “Chinese civilization,” as Wu stated, was the justified proof of being incorporated into the modern world system in the relation between sovereign nations rather than blindly accepting the US cultures. The utopian thought of Wu that civilization did not teach people to ignore the rights of others and was not based on “solely the possession of superior force”¹²⁸ was further described as “mutual helplessness” in his famous article *Mutual Helpness – China and the United States* included in *The North American Review* in 1900. He called for “true reciprocity” between the two countries.¹²⁹ Thus, he resented the exclusion of China as “barbarous nation” from the “normal” relations between modern nations, complaining that China “is singled out for discrimination and made the subject of hostile legislation. Her door is wide open to the people of the United States, but their door is slammed in the face of her people.”¹³⁰ It seemed that Wu had realized the condescending attitudes of the United States, which treated China as “uncivilized” while pretending to show its respectfulness as its exceptional “benevolence.”

However, getting to this point, Wu just made a detour and retreated to his support of the Open Door Policy as he put that “the maintenance of all ‘Open Door’ is exactly in the line of her policy.”¹³¹ Namely, he still welcomed the economic expansion of the US and tended to ignore the fact that China, providing the market, the natural resources, and the population for consumption, catered to the import of US capital and dumping of goods, as he formulated in his article, by no means formed the equalized, reciprocal

“mutual helpness” between the two nations. His utopian idea about the international relations between the countries led to his rigid allegiance to “law and treaty.” Thus, regarding the Chinese Exclusion Act, he claimed that “since the law and treaty forbid the coming of Chinese laborers, I must do all I can to restrict their immigration”¹³² and urged to ameliorate the situation of legal exempted classes, which were vital to US interests.¹³³ That all China wanted “is the enjoyment of the same privileges accorded other nationalities,”¹³⁴ the narrative which would have delegated the position of the whole nation, now ironically found its weird consensus with the exceptional privileges of the exempted classes classified by the exclusion law. The exceptionality of Chinese elites in the exclusion thus intersected with the oriental exoticism of Chinese civilization in which the Chinese laborers, the grassroots population, were actually excluded and subdued.

By ideologically conforming to the consensus of the open door while closing the door, the Chinese elites could protect themselves against the ill-treatment of Immigrant Officials who were close to the populists and labor agitators. The harassment was a severe problem for the Chinese who entered the United States. Ng Poon Chew complained about this in his tract, *The Treatment of the Exempt Classes of Chinese in the United States*. Enumerating a cluster of cases about the harassment of Chinese immigrants from the exempted classes, he bitterly said, “For the practice with the immigration officials is to regard every Chinese applicant for admission as a cheat, a liar, a rogue and a criminal, and they proceed to examine him with the aim in mind of seeing how he may be excluded, rather than of finding out whether he is legally entitled to land.”¹³⁵ The most influential case, which would elicit the boycott in 1905, took place in Boston on June 1, 1905, in which Boston immigration officials detained four Chinese students of the King family. In this case, regarding the abruptions between the two factions of US elites incarnated respectively by the Boston Immigration officials and King’s powerful friends, the situation was modified by the consensus as discussed before. The immigration officials never questioned the necessity of exclusion law, but they tended to “lump all Chinese together as racialized laborers.”¹³⁶ This methodology of identify-

127 Theodore S. Woolsey, E. W. Huffcut, A. Lawrence Lowell, W. Alleyne Ireland, Talcott Williams, Carl Schurz, Worthington Chauncey Ford, et al, “The Foreign Policy of the United States: Political and Commercial” (The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science 13, 1899), 171.

128 Ibid, 174.

129 Ting-Fang, Wu, “Mutual Helpfulness between China and the United States”(The North American Review 171, no. 524, 1–12, 1900), 8.

130 Ibid, 9.

131 “The Foreign Policy of the United States: Political and Commercial,” 173.

132 Ting-Fang, Wu, “Mutual Helpfulness between China and the United States,” 9.

133 Ibid, 10.

134 Ibid, 9.

135 Ng Poon Chew, *The Treatment of the Exempt Classes of Chinese in the United States* (1908), 8.

136 Teng, “Chinese Elites and U.S. Gatekeeping: Racial

ing Chinese immigrants resonated with their Orientalist ideology, fearing the infiltration of crafty yellow perils. As a result, in the King case, they insisted that the Kings might be laborers in disguise, their markers of class status notwithstanding based on their paranoid thought that the mere physical appearance, the “calloused hands” and “muscular legs” can be the evidence of labor status.¹³⁷ The friends of the Kings family who was eminent and wealthy and represented the “high-class Chinese” included the US ministers, diplomats, manufacturers in New England and Boston local elites. They definitely stood on the other side. Here the Kings successfully mobilized their “social capital” entitled to “patrician Orientalism.”¹³⁸ Archetypes of the “high-class” and “cultured” Chinese so admired by elites, the Kings became the perfect poster children for the “Open Door Constituency.”¹³⁹ Thus, the resistance against the “California Populism” here was its pure antithesis, in which the Kings, represented the Chinese elites, actually accommodated themselves to the Orientalist ideology.

4. Conclusion

During the late 19th and early 20th century, American foreign policy experienced a major shift, giving more focus onto affairs in the west hemisphere and in Europe. In this period, the consequences of the Civil War brought America the monumental task of rebuilding a fractured nation and defining a unified national identity. Nationalism in this period was shaped by a desire to heal divisions, assert American exceptionalism, and promote unity among the states. The idea of manifest destiny was turned to explain US interference of foreign affairs and the efforts to establish foreign colonies, which increases US status as an international power, yet bringing troubles how to maintain and control these colonies. The trend of intervention diminished from 1919 to 1930. As mentioned above, these changes were caused by the leader’s decisions, nationalism, international and domestic environment. It shows how the US focus its own power and how it influences fluctuate with time.

Meanwhile, in terms of the imagination and policy towards China, this paper contends that the Duality of Civilization and Barbarism shaped in United States during the 19th century is tightly linked to its national identity and non-interventionist policies of the era. It was this self-identification and diplomatic strategy that positioned the United States as an outsider, framing its view of Chi-

Discrimination and Class Privilege in Boston’s 1905 King Incident,” 8.

137 Ibid, 6

138 Ibid, 11.

139 Ibid.

na through a vision of dualism. However, the major shift in diplomacy and mindset at the turn of the century led Americans to form a new national imagination, which shifted in the direction of imperialism. This kind of imperial imagination made the United States urgently need a big country to become a carrier of its ideology, and the mentality of China’s helper made China an appropriate “student”. As a result, the United States began to think that China was awakening. This mentality is further amplified by the rhetoric of politicians and the media, making the gap between impression and reality ever wider.

On the other hand, in John Hay’s Open Door Policy, China and Chinese people had absolute otherness. As Thomas J. McCormick argued, for all its apparent rationality and realism, the Open Door Policy suffered from one fatal flaw. Either out of ignorance or arrogance, it treated China as a passive and somewhat static entity; not an actor but something to be acted upon.¹⁴⁰ (McCormick 1967, 157) This argument per se merely touches upon the diplomatic aspect of US imperialism, but the false assumption of “passivity” of China it points out just shows what the ideology of Orientalism shared by the US political and commercial elites, as Said said that because of Orientalism the Orient was not a free subject of thought or action.¹⁴¹ This ideology summarized the formation of the consensus of Open Door Policy and Chinese Exclusion in which the US imperial construction was revealed in the entanglement between the domestic problem and external expansion. It then depicted the contestations among the US elites according to its twofold meanings, and such contestations, which just strengthened the consensus of opening the door of China and closing the door for Chinese immigration, were the embodiments of dynamics of US policymaking processes that drove the operations of the imperial structure in its legal and political practices. Finally, the participation of the Chinese elites, based on their legal status framed by the exclusion law at the price of grassroots Chinese laborers in “self-prohibition,” the narratives they made and the actions they took, in general, contributed to the circulation of this ideology. Getting to this point, the “passivity” of the Chinese, portrayed by the US Orientalists, was a necessary fault for the “Chinese Orientalists” since they could idolize it and mobilize it as the aforementioned “social capital” within the territory of the US empire. This dialectical structure, in which the “passivity” was the product of subjective externalization by projecting both the “prosperity” of a nation and the horror of a race to the “other,” shows how the US empire governed its imperial subjects

140 McCormick, *China Market: America’s Quest for Informal Empire, 1893-1901*, 157.

141 Said, *Orientalism*, 3.

and reproduced its own power.

References

- American Asiatic Association. *Journal of the American Asiatic Association*. New York: John Ford. v.1, 1898-1901. <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/hvd.32044050524362>.
- American Federation of Labor. *American Federationist*. Washington [etc.]: v.1-3, 1894-1897. <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015012969104>.
- v. 5-6, 1898-1899. <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/coo.31924071638047>.
- v.8, 1901. <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/uva.x000496082>.
- v.10, 1903. <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/umn.31951001890528p>.
- American Federation of Labor, Herman Gutstadt, Samuel Gompers, and Asiatic Exclusion League. "Meat Vs. Rice: American Manhood Against Asiatic Coolieism, Which Shall Survive?" Published by American Federation of Labor and printed as Senate document 137 (1902); reprinted with intro. and appendices by Asiatic Exclusion League. 1908. <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/hvd.32044070725882>.
- Coolidge, M. Elizabeth Burroughs Roberts Smith. 1909. *Chinese immigration*. New York: H. Holt and company. <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/uc1.32106001217543>.
- Denby, Charles. "America's Opportunity in Asia." *The North American Review* 166, no. 494 (1898): 32-39. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25118938>.
- DeSimone, Bailey. 2022. "The Chinese Exclusion Act, Part 2 – The Legacy." May 16, 2022. <https://blogs.loc.gov/law/2022/05/the-chinese-exclusion-act-part-2-the-legacy/>.
- Hay, John 1899. "First Open Door Notes." *Digital History*. https://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp_textbook.cfm?smtID=3&psid=4068
- J. McCormick, Thomas. 1967. *China Market: America's Quest for Informal Empire, 1893-1901*. Chicago: Elephant Paperbacks.
- Lew-Williams, Beth. 2018. "The Exclusion Consensus." In *The Chinese Must Go: Violence, Exclusion, and the Making of the Alien in America*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. Accessed May 14, 2024. ProQuest Ebook Central.
- Lorence, James J. "Organized Business and the Myth of the China Market: The American Asiatic Association, 1898-1937." *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 71, no. 4 (1981): 1-112. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1006423>.
- Ng, P. Chew. 1908. *The treatment of the exempt classes of Chinese in the United States*. San Francisco: N.C. Ng.
- National Archives. 2023. "Chinese Exclusion Act (1882)." Last modified January 17, 2023. <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/chinese-exclusion-act>
- Said, Edward W. 1978. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books.
- SanFranciscoChinatown. "Geary Act of 1892." Accessed May 11, 2024. <http://www.sanfranciscochinatown.com/history/1892gearyact.html>.
- Teng, Emma J. "Chinese Elites and U.S. Gatekeeping: Racial Discrimination and Class Privilege in Boston's 1905 King Incident." *Modern American History* 4, no. 1 (2021): 1-24. <https://doi.org/10.1017/mah.2021.1>.
- United States. Congress. House. Committee on Foreign Affairs. Subcommittee on Chinese-Exclusion Bill. *Chinese Exclusion*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. G.P.O., 1906. <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/uc1.32106007036822>
- Williams, William Appleman. 1972. *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy*. Foreword by Lloyd Gardner. 2009. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc.
- Woolsey, Theodore S., E. W. Huffcut, A. Lawrence Lowell, W. Alleyne Ireland, Talcott Williams, Carl Schurz, Worthington Chauncey Ford, et al. "The Foreign Policy of the United States: Political and Commercial." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 13 (1899): i-216. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1009375>.
- Wu, Ting-Fang. "Mutual Helpfulness between China and the United States." *The North American Review* 171, no. 524 (1900): 1-12. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25105022>.
- Raico, Ralph. "American Foreign Policy: The Turning Point, 1898-1919: News: The Independent Institute." *Independent Institute*, February 1, 1995. <https://www.independent.org/news/article.asp?id=1345>.
- "US Foreign Policy Search." *Search.credoreference.com*. Accessed July 20, 2024. https://search.credoreference.com/content/entry/oupor/united_states_foreign_policy/0.
- "U.S. History II: 1877 to Present." *Florida State College at Jacksonville*. Accessed July 21, 2024. <https://fscj.pressbooks.pub/modernushistory/>.
- Paterson, Thomas G. "United States Intervention in Cuba, 1898: Interpretations of the Spanish-American-Cuban-Filipino War." *The History Teacher* 29, no. 3 (1996): 341-61. <https://doi.org/10.2307/494551>.
- Alkuwari, Alhala. "What Is the Significance of Manifest Destiny for Understanding US Foreign Policy?," n.d.
- Tian, Haoyang. "Review of American Nationalism and the Historical Development." *Atlantis: Atlantis Press*, 2021.
- "Presidential Election of 1920 | From War to Normalcy: An Introduction to the Nation's Forum Collection | Articles and Essays | American Leaders Speak: Recordings from World War I | Digital Collections | Library of Congress." *Library of Congress*. Accessed July 22, 2024. <https://www.loc.gov/collections/world-war-i-and-1920-election-recordings/articles-and-essays/from-war-to-normalcy/presidential-election-of-1920/>.
- BLOWER, BROOKE L. "From Isolationism to Neutrality: A New Framework for Understanding American Political Culture, 1919-1941." *Diplomatic History* 38, no. 2 (2014): 345-76.

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/26376561>.

Wright, Christopher. "Walter LaFeber's Classic 'The New Empire: An Interpretation of American Expansion, 1860-1898.'" www.academia.edu, n.d.

Whitney, Francis. *An outline of American history*. Washington, D.C: United States Information Agency, 1994.

"American Isolationism in the 1930s." U.S. Department of State. Accessed July 22, 2024. <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1937-1945/american-isolationism>.

"Isolationism and U.S. Foreign Policy after World War I." Norwich University. Accessed July 22, 2024.

<https://online.norwich.edu/online/about/resource-library/isolationism-and-us-foreign-policy-after-world-war-i>.

"1866–1898: The Continued Expansion of United States Interests." U.S. Department of State. Accessed July 22, 2024. <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1866-1898/foreword>.

James Monroe. "Seventh Annual Message, 1823", Speech, Washington D.C., December 2, 1823

George C. Herring, "From Colony to Superpower: U.S. Foreign Relations Since 1776". New York, 2008, 486, 502.

Ian Tyrrell, "Transnational Nation: United States History in Global Perspective Since 1789". Basingstoke, 2007. 173–174.

Wright, Chris. (2020). "Notes on Walter LaFeber's 1963 classic 'The New Empire: An Interpretation of American Expansion, 1860-1898'".

Pike, Federick. "The United States and Latin America: Myths and Stereotypes of Civilization and Nature", 1992, 158-159

"United States Maritime Expansion across the Pacific during the 19th Century." U.S. Department of State. Accessed July 30, 2024. <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1830-1860/pacific-expansion>.