

# Anti-U.S. Sentiments in China, 1989-96: Sources, Development, and Impact

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*Since the Tiananmen Incident in 1989, anti-U.S. sentiments have risen in China. By mid-1996, resentment of the United States had reached an unprecedented high among the Chinese people for several reasons, including official propaganda advocated by conservative Chinese leaders, and increased confidence due to China's booming economy. The anti-China wing of Congress, Washington's political pressure on Beijing, and the anti-China tendencies of the U.S. mainstream mass media also contributed to anti-U.S. feelings. Although Chinese resentment of Americans is perhaps unavoidable, it will gradually decrease in the future if Beijing reduces its anti-U.S. propaganda and Washington pays attention to Chinese complaints and has the courage to abandon any hegemonic imperatives.*

**Keywords:** anti-U.S. sentiments; propaganda; conservatives; anti-Beijing

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After the Tiananmen Incident in 1989, there was a rising anti-West sentiment, particularly anti-American sentiment in China. By mid-1996, this sentiment had reached an unprecedented high, which prompts the following questions: Why and how has anti-U.S. public sentiment increased in China during the 1990s? How widely was anti-U.S. sentiment accepted by the Chinese public? This paper will analyze how the Chinese leaders

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have fostered anti-American sentiments and fanned them through official media; how the U.S. Congress, government, and media have contributed to this anti-American feeling; and study its impact on the Sino-U.S. relationship.

### Origins of Anti-U.S. Sentiments, July 1989-1991

After the Tiananmen Incident, China's leaders needed to stabilize and hold the country together during its rapid and turbulent transformation from a planned economy to a market economy. Following revolutionary experiences from the past, they tried using patriotism to mobilize national unity, win public support, and consolidate their power. In addition, a rapid decay of Marxist ideological beliefs, a general loss of public confidence in communism, and the global collapse of communism also forced the Beijing government to rely on the most potent force in China—patriotism—to fill the ideological vacuum.

The Beijing authorities promoted public patriotism by launching several campaigns in 1989. First, they initiated an ideological campaign against "counterrevolutionary rebellion," claiming that some "black hands" had almost succeeded in overthrowing socialism and destroying the gains made by economic reforms during the student movement in 1989. The official media blamed the West for siding with the protesters during the crisis, and condemned them for imposing sanctions on China and isolating China after it had suppressed the student movement. Chinese leaders claimed that the June 4 incident proved that Western countries were trying to overthrow the Chinese government by force or through "peaceful evolution." In the meantime, under the slogan of "renewing China," Beijing was pursuing a *guoqing jiaoyu* (state of the nation education) campaign focusing on China's humiliating past. Chinese Communist Party (CCP) General Secretary Jiang Zemin launched this campaign, which was aimed at workers and the students.<sup>1</sup> Its purpose was to build a politically, eco-

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<sup>1</sup>See Jiang Zemin's speeches in Zhonggong zhongyang zhengce yanjiushi, ed., *Zai xinde*

nomically, and culturally unified nation at a time when Western influences were regarded as eroding the nation-state foundation. To bolster this effort, the CCP mobilized its vast propaganda machine, recalling China's humiliation by Western countries over the last century and a half.

In 1990, the Chinese government promoted anti-West patriotism through two commemorations: the 1919 May Fourth Movement and the 150th anniversary of the Opium War.<sup>2</sup> On May 3, 1990 in Beijing, Jiang Zemin spoke to 3,000 students, stressing that the Opium War was the beginning of China's humiliation by Western countries, and claiming that hostile forces in Western countries were continuing to subvert socialist China through "peaceful evolution." The *People's Daily* repeated the line on "peaceful evolution," stating that "we have to open our country to the world, but we cannot advocate total Westernization and must resist pressure from the West."<sup>3</sup> The semiofficial journal *Banyue tan* (Semimonthly Review), in a lecture series on patriotism, emphasized China's ability to withstand any threat from the West, condemning the Western countries who imposed sanctions against China after June 4.<sup>4</sup> The *Liberation Army Daily* asserted that "since the Opium War, the West had never stopped its aggression against China. After the People's Republic of China was established, it first imposed economic embargoes on China, and then isolated and contained the new socialist country in order to overthrow this government in its cradle."<sup>5</sup> The official media also stressed arousing a "consciousness of

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*lishi tiaojianxia jicheng he fayang aiguo zhuyi chuantong: Shiyijie sanzong quanhui yilai youguan zhongyao wenxian zhaibian* (Continue to promote the traditions of patriotism in the new historical era: Extracts from important documents since the Third Plenum of the Eleventh Central Committee) (Beijing: Hongqi chubanshe, 1990).

<sup>2</sup>See Li Ruihuan, "Some Questions with Regard to Promoting Our Outstanding National Culture," *People's Daily*, January 10, 1990. Li, the most influential ideological commissar in the CCP since the Tiananmen Incident, launched the campaign of promoting national culture in order to enhance patriotic education among Chinese civilians.

<sup>3</sup>Editorial, "Hold Much Higher the Great Flag of Patriotism: In Commemoration of the 150th Anniversary of the Opium War," *People's Daily*, June 3, 1990, 1.

<sup>4</sup>See "Independence: A Base for a Strong and Rich China," *Banyue tan* (Beijing), May 15, 1990, no. 9:19-21.

<sup>5</sup>Zhang Zongxian, "Promoting Patriotic Spirit, Strongly Believing in Socialism: Commemorate the 150th Anniversary of the Opium War," *Jiefangjun bao* (Liberation Army Daily), June 5, 1990, 3.

suffering" and claimed that calls for democracy and human rights would bring disunity and disorder, which would in turn result in opening the door to foreign invasion and further humiliation. Under the influence of such propaganda, some Chinese people began to take the view that China, once the world's greatest civilization, had fallen from grace and suffered from poverty, Western domination, and numerous civil wars since the Opium War, and that it was finally taking its rightful place on earth after being denied for many years.<sup>6</sup>

Since Deng Xiaoping initiated economic reforms in 1978, China has been making good economic progress, but economic reforms have also brought Western systems, ideas, and values which have created problems such as crime, corruption, uncertainty, and a gap between the rich and poor in Chinese society. To many Chinese, these problems, in addition to decentralization of power and formation of interest groups, threatened China's national revival. It was thus suggested that some Western values and ideas were not suitable for China, and that the Chinese needed to develop their own national identity in economic reforms.

The post-1989 transformation in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union also had a negative impact on the Chinese, as Western values and systems did not have much positive difference on the post-communist countries. The official national networks extensively broadcast scenes of chaos in East European countries in order to convince Chinese citizens that a strong central government was important for stability. Some Chinese came to realize that if the 1989 student movement had resulted in political revolution, the nation could have fallen into civil wars and chaos, as had happened in the former Eastern Bloc.

As a result, disenchantment with Western countries grew in China after 1989. One of the indications of this was a newly popular Mao Zedong cult. Although Mao had posthumously absorbed part of the blame for the

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<sup>6</sup>For details of public patriotic sentiments in China, see James Watson, "The Renegotiation of Chinese Cultural Identity in the Post-Mao Era," in *Popular Protest and Political Culture in Modern China*, ed. Jeffrey Wasserstrom and Elizabeth Perry (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1992), 67-84; and Edward Friedman, "Reconstructing China's National Identity: Southern Alternative to Mao-Era Anti-Imperialist Nationalism," *Journal of Asian Studies* 53, no. 1 (February 1994): 67-91.

deaths of millions of Chinese during his rule, a cult in his honor began to appear in 1990. Many Chinese families put Mao's portraits on the walls of their homes as they had during Mao's rule, many taxi drivers placed Mao's portraits in their cars, and Mao's books and badges resurfaced. There were a number of reasons for the Mao cult, including admiration for his emphasis on national pride and identity, which had been lost since Deng's economic reforms began; for his keeping the two superpowers (the United States and the Soviet Union) at bay; and resisting the pressures of Western countries. Indeed, the Mao cult has partly reflected anti-West sentiments among the Chinese.<sup>7</sup>

Another indication of a growing anti-West sentiment was Yuan Hongbing's book *Huangyuan feng* (Winds over the plain). In the book, Yuan claimed that the Chinese race would survive in the modern world, and condemned all individual attempts to achieve freedom by fleeing China as a betrayal of the Chinese race. In addressing Western ideas and values, he criticized those who had tried to find solutions to Chinese problems from the West. The Chinese needed national renewal, and to Yuan, the first step toward this was neo-totalitarianism.<sup>8</sup> His book went on to become popular with many college students in 1990.<sup>9</sup>

Anti-West feelings gradually focused on the United States due to two events in 1991. At the beginning of 1991, the United States began the Gulf War against Iraq, which had a great impact on the Chinese leadership. During the war, He Xin, a close adviser to Premier Li Peng, emerged as a major spokesman of the anti-American faction among the Chinese leaders. He claimed that the Gulf War underlined the rise of American power and the decline of Soviet power, and that the United States was attempting to establish a "new world order" and an Asia-Pacific empire backed by high-tech weapons. He further claimed that the United States planned to isolate,

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<sup>7</sup>There were several reasons for the Mao cult, and anti-West sentiment was only one of them. For more on the Mao cult, see Geremie Barmé, *Shades of Mao: The Posthumous Cult of the Great Leader* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1996).

<sup>8</sup>For more details, see Yuan Hongbing, *Huangyuan feng* (Winds over the plain) (Beijing: Xiandai chubanshe, 1990).

<sup>9</sup>Luo Wen, "Walker, Cruel Wolf, and Barbarian: What Is the Book, *Winds over the Plain*?" *Zhongguo tushu pinglun* (China Book Review), 1991, no.3:8. See also Chen Ping, "A Bad and Selfish Spirit: On the 'Theme of Beauty' in *Winds over the Plain*," *ibid.*, 11-12.

blockade, and disintegrate China through "peaceful evolution" because China was an obstacle to its goal of world domination. This sharply anti-American analysis was circulated among the Chinese officials, and in February 1991, government, diplomatic, academic, and media officers were asked to study He's internal document "China and the Gulf War."<sup>10</sup>

He's theory was appreciated by CCP conservatives such as Li Peng and Bo Yibo, vice-chairman of the CCP's Central Advisory Commission, the latter of whom also accused the United States of planning "world domination" and using "peaceful evolution" tactics to overthrow the Chinese government when he spoke to the Shanxi delegates of the National People's Congress (NPC). Conservative military leaders agreed with He's analysis and openly lobbied for a more aggressive defense policy to resist American expansion; some CCP leaders even advocated establishing a new pact with Russia against U.S. imperialism.<sup>11</sup> After the outbreak of the Gulf War, anti-United States and pro-Russia sentiments were also prevalent in northeast China. In the city of Changchun in Jilin Province, those interviewed by a Hong Kong newspaper stated the view that the U.S. global hegemonism was resurfacing, and that China and Russia should establish an alliance against it.<sup>12</sup>

Another event also contributed to anti-American sentiment among the Chinese leaders. On August 19, 1991, a hard-line coup against Mikhail Gorbachev failed, signaling the total collapse of the Communist Party in the Soviet Union and the death of the Soviet Union itself. Chinese conservatives suspected that the U.S. government had added fuel to the flames in Moscow, and that it would step up implementation of its "peaceful evolution" scheme against the last communist giant, China. The CCP Central Committee Propaganda Department and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

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<sup>10</sup>Willy Wo-Lap Lam, "Impact of War on Sino-U.S. Relations Viewed," *South China Morning Post* (Hong Kong), February 27, 1991, 15; "He Xin Claims Gulf War Turning Point for U.S.," *Hong Kong Standard*, March 15, 1991; Shih Yen, "He Xin's Paper to CCP Leadership with Regard to U.S. Attempt to Turn China into Chaos and to Overthrow China," *Bai-xing* (Hong Kong), no. 244 (July 16, 1991): 3-4.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*; see also Chris Yeung, "Bo Yibo Accuses U.S. of World Domination," *South China Morning Post*, April 4, 1991, 11.

<sup>12</sup>"Many Chinese in Changchun Advocate Establishing a China-Russia Alliance Against U.S. Hegemonism," *Ming Pao* (Hong Kong), December 3, 1991, 7.

therefore completed a ten-point secret document, "Propaganda and Education Arrangements with Regard to the Current Major Principles and Attitudes Toward the United States," claiming that the United States planned to overthrow the Chinese government, and that China had to resist pro-U.S. sentiments within and outside the CCP.<sup>13</sup>

Thus, both the Gulf War and the failure of the Russian coup aroused mistrust and anti-American sentiment among Chinese leaders. A wave of criticism targeting the United States began in April 1991. On April 24, the *People's Daily*, in a rare frontal attack, openly regarded the United States as the major foreign hostile force against China. This was the first time the U.S. government had been labeled as an enemy by a major official newspaper in China. Official media attacked American sponsorship of "peaceful evolution," played up contradictions within U.S. society and serious domestic problems, and claimed the United States interfered in China's domestic affairs under the slogans of human rights, democracy, and liberty.<sup>14</sup> To counter this, the CCP strengthened nationalism among the public. For example, the Beijing government installed a taller flag pole at Tiananmen Square in 1991, and the daily flag raising ceremony became a polished, goose-stepping affair. An anti-U.S. book entitled *Yibi xuelinlinde renquan zhai* (The blood of human rights debt) also became a bestseller in several of China's cities. General He Ming, author of this book and a political commissar of the 19th Army of the Chinese People's Volunteers during the Korean War, took part in negotiations with the U.S. government on repatriating POWs, and through showing the criminal activities of the U.S. army, tried to remind the people of the evil history of U.S. aggression against China.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup>Lin Pai-niao, "The CCP's New Policy Toward the United States," *Zhengming* (Hong Kong), no. 170 (December 1, 1991): 17-19.

<sup>14</sup>See "The 'New World Order' Proposed by the United States," *Liaowang* (Outlook Weekly) (Beijing), April 8, 1991, no. 14:26; Lu Fan-chih, "Violation of Others' Sovereignty: U.S. Human Rights Diplomacy," *Wen Wei Po* (Hong Kong), May 19, 1991, 7; "Argument and Grounds of Argument," *Banyue tan*, July 10, 1991, no. 13:20-23; "Rodney King Incident: U.S. Human Rights Problems," *People's Daily*, October 14, 1991, 2; and Fu Xuezhe, "Human Rights Without Boundaries?" *ibid.*, November 8, 1991, 2.

<sup>15</sup>Li Ping, "Blood Evidence: China Condemns the United States of Playing Human Rights Card," *Ming Pao*, August 5, 1991, 7.



Despite this anti-American propaganda, these sentiments were apparently not widely accepted by most Chinese people. A Western diplomat commented at the time: "I think anti-American feeling is very low right now and is certainly not a feature of my contacts with government officials."<sup>16</sup> When the U.S. government imposed sanctions against China, Chinese people also urged Beijing to ease tensions with Washington and have the sanctions lifted, as they wished to continue economic and cultural relations with the American people. Others asked the U.S. government to continue to grant China most-favored-nation (MFN) trading status so that the development of U.S.-China trade ties would continue to benefit the Chinese people.<sup>17</sup> As further evidence, many Chinese students still attempted to go to the United States, and peasants and workers in south China were paying as much as US\$10,000 to illegally emigrate.<sup>18</sup> In the case of the Gulf War, many Chinese supported the use of U.S. military forces to punish Iraq, and some even sent money to support the U.S. government or wrote letters to the U.S. Embassy praising the United States for "fighting against the devil" and for "protecting democracy, freedom, and human rights from the dictators of the world."<sup>19</sup> Despite these shows of support, however, anti-American sentiments among the Chinese people increased between 1992 and 1993 due to several factors.

### **The Rise of Anti-American Sentiments, 1992-93**

At the beginning of 1992, the CCP issued an internal document which claimed the United States had become more arrogant after its triumph in the Gulf War and the collapse of the Soviet empire, and had a plan to destroy

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<sup>16</sup>Geoffrey Crothall, "Anti-U.S. Sentiments Not Widely Accepted," *South China Morning Post*, October 30, 1991, 10.

<sup>17</sup>See *New York Times*, March 1, 1990, A13; *ibid.*, May 13, 1990, A16; *ibid.*, May 15, 1991, A10; and *Washington Post*, May 29, 1991, A21, A23.

<sup>18</sup>See *New York Times*, September 12, 1990, A12; *ibid.*, January 3, 1991, B1, B2; *ibid.*, May 15, 1991, A10.

<sup>19</sup>See "Chinese Fascinated by Gulf War, Strongly Back U.S.," *Los Angeles Times*, February 19, 1991, A1, A16, A17.



socialist China. The document also stated that in addition to using "peaceful evolution" tactics, the Bush administration had renewed its containment policy in order to blockade, isolate, and destroy China. The document noted that President George Bush's recent visits to Singapore, South Korea, and Japan were a part of this policy, which was also used against the Soviet Union during the Cold War.<sup>20</sup>

For China's leaders, the existence of a U.S. containment policy toward China was confirmed by U.S. military aircraft sales to Taiwan. In September 1992, Washington disregarded repeated warnings from Beijing and sold 150 sophisticated and highly functional F-16 fighters to Taiwan. This event caused much anger among high-level CCP leaders, leading to a quick response, as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs immediately completed a five-point proposal and submitted it to the State Council for instructions. The proposal advised China to immediately lodge a serious protest with the U.S. government against its violation of the Chinese-U.S. joint communiqué, and recall the Chinese ambassador to Washington for an indefinite time. On September 8, the CCP Central Committee Propaganda Department drew up a circular for dissemination and study, entitled "To Seriously Study Hegemonism and Power Politics."<sup>21</sup> Thereafter, the official media took advantage of the U.S. fighter sales to condemn the U.S. government of playing the "Taiwan card," hurting China's feelings, interfering in China's internal affairs, and creating an openly hostile relationship between Beijing and Washington.<sup>22</sup>

In 1993, the official media began to attack the Clinton administration. In January, the official journal *Renmin luntan* (People's Forum) stated that President Bill Clinton and his advisers had developed seven strategies against China such as containment, playing the Taiwan card, promoting the Tibet independence movement, internationalizing the Hong Kong issue,

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<sup>20</sup>"Party Warns of Renewed U.S. 'Containment Policy'," *Kyodo* (Tokyo), January 8, 1992.

<sup>21</sup>Cheng Chenchun, "An Anti-American Wind Is Being Fanned by the Conservatives," *Zhengming*, no. 180 (October 1, 1992): 13-14.

<sup>22</sup>See "Examining America's Antagonistic China Policy," *Ta Kung Pao* (Hong Kong), October 7, 1992; and Wu Jin, "On the China Threat Theory," *People's Daily*, October 10, 1992.

etc.<sup>23</sup> With the increasing influence of the conservatives, high-ranking military officers took a firm stand against U.S. hegemonism. During both the CCP's Fourteenth Congress in 1992 and the NPC session in 1993, high-ranking military officers wrote a letter to the CCP Central Committee Politburo and the chairman of the NPC Standing Committee, stating that China had to oppose U.S. power politics and strike back at U.S. intervention and subversion against China. In May and June 1993, the Central Military Commission's Liu Huaqing, Chang Zhen, Chi Haotian, and others delivered anti-U.S. speeches to the armed services, military academies, and military scientific research units while making inspections, attacking Washington's containment policy.<sup>24</sup> In 1993, a new book, *Zhongguo ruhe daying xiayichang zhanzheng* (How China will win the next war), which regarded the United States as a major enemy in the future, was published and circulated among high-ranking military officers.<sup>25</sup>

As Chinese civilian and military officials escalated anti-American sentiments, another event added to the latter's rise among the Chinese people. Believing that holding the 2000 Olympic Games would be a golden opportunity for unifying Chinese society, Beijing began an Olympic bid campaign in 1993 with the support of Deng Xiaoping. It was hoped that the Olympics would also boost China's economy and world standing just as the 1988 Games did for South Korea and the 1964 Olympics did for Japan. The official media called on the rest of the world to give China a chance, proclaiming that Chinese everywhere wanted Beijing to host the Games.<sup>26</sup>

However, on July 26, 1993, the U.S. House of Representatives adopted a resolution against China's bid because congressmen did not want the Chinese government to have "a huge propaganda victory when it routinely

<sup>23</sup>Gu Dexin, "Clinton's Seven Strategies of Conspiracy Toward China," *Renmin luntan* (People's Forum), no. 6 (January 15, 1993): 40-41.

<sup>24</sup>Chen Shaopin, "China Will Never Surrender to Hegemonism," *Jing bao* (Mirror Monthly) (Hong Kong), July 5, 1993, no. 7:42.

<sup>25</sup>See *Zhongguo shibao* (China Times) (Taipei), January 16, 1997, 4.

<sup>26</sup>See "State Leader to Lobby for Olympic Bid," *South China Morning Post*, August 2, 1993, 1; "Olympic Bid Official on Beijing's Rudness," *ibid.*, August 6, 1993, 9. See also Editorial, "American Politicians Do Not Have a Right to Intervene in Olympic Games," *Wen Wei Po*, August 9, 1993, 2.

tortures [and] severely restricts freedom of assembly and expression," in the words of U.S. Senator Bill Bradley (D-N.J.).<sup>27</sup> No doubt, this resolution had an impact on the members of the International Olympic Committee (IOC). On September 23, Sydney edged Beijing by two votes (forty-five to forty-three), ending the most politicized race to host an Olympics ever. The IOC's decision to deny Beijing the 2000 Olympics was an added humiliation to the Chinese government, and although Chinese officials expressed "respect" for the decision and urged people to "display the demeanor of a great and proud country," they commented that "international prejudice, misgivings, and hostility against China have not been completely eliminated." The official media attributed the defeat to the United States, with the Hong Kong *Ta Kung Pao* claiming that "U.S. congressmen went so far as to pass a resolution adding political colors to the Olympic Games in order to block China's bid to host the Games .. [they] should understand that today's China is no longer controlled by hegemonists and colonialists."<sup>28</sup>

The defeat was a serious blow to ordinary Chinese pride and ambitions, as well. One disappointed Beijing native complained that "some foreigners still think we have pigtailed and women have bound feet. They really don't understand us."<sup>29</sup> A businessman and consultant who had been a leader in the 1989 student demonstrations added, "If China had won the bid, my company would be able to operate in a more relaxed surrounding. There would be more business opportunities with the influx of foreign investment."<sup>30</sup> Lu Zhifang, a Beijing lawyer, summed up the experience to the *Far Eastern Economic Review* by stating, "It really hurt China's feelings."<sup>31</sup>

The eventual failure of the Chinese bid was seen as being orchestrated by U.S. bullies who not only intended to shatter the Chinese dream to hold

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<sup>27</sup>Editorial, *Boston Herald*, September 25, 1993, 2.

<sup>28</sup>"We Hope for the Future in Spite of Our Loss," *Ta Kung Pao*, September 24, 1993, 2.

<sup>29</sup>See *The Tampa Tribune* (Tampa, Florida), September 29, 1993, 5.

<sup>30</sup>Sheila Teft, "Rejected and Dejected, China Tries to Rebound," *Christian Science Monitor*, September 27, 1993, 4.

<sup>31</sup>Nayan Chanda and Kari Huus, "The New Nationalism," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, November 9, 1995, 21-26.

the games but also contain China. One Beijing resident told the *Wall Street Journal* that "the United States always likes to see itself as the older brother, but it should get its own affairs in order before meddling in other's business." Hang Shiliang, deputy director-general of the Center for International Studies, complained to a U.S. journalist, "We don't do anything to harm U.S.-China relations, but now the United States puts so much pressure on China—first human rights, then the economy."<sup>32</sup> Anti-U.S. sentiments among the Chinese civilians were surging in Beijing in October, with the Chinese image of America deteriorating. Security was increased in Beijing in case protest broke out; indeed, before the IOC's announcement, the U.S. Embassy notified the Chinese Foreign Ministry that it needed official protection for U.S. institutions in Beijing because many in Beijing had indicated that if Beijing failed in its 2000 Olympic bid, they would blame America first.<sup>33</sup>

Another indication of anti-American sentiments was in artistic works such as the popular autobiography *Manhadun de Zhongguo nüren* (Chinese women in Manhattan), which intrigued many Chinese audiences. Describing the life of a Chinese woman who moved to New York City and made a quick fortune, the book concluded that America had a society in which dishonesty was the only way to make money, with those not making money branded as losers. This book became extremely popular and sold about 200,000 copies in 1993.

Further artistic example was the TV series, *Beijingren zai Niuyue* (A Beijing native in New York), which attracted a record viewing audience and became the most popular television series in China in 1993. This series focused on a Chinese man who was forced to surrender all his Chinese values to succeed in the United States. In their reactions to the show, some Chinese viewers emphasized the conflicts between the Chinese and American cultures,<sup>34</sup> while others noted that the series vilified

<sup>32</sup>Kathy Chen, "Emboldened by Strong Economy, China Speaks Out and Commands Respect," *Wall Street Journal*, December 20, 1993, A8.

<sup>33</sup>"Beijing: Ready for Olympic Vote," *Ming Pao*, September 24, 1993, A2.

<sup>34</sup>Yu Wentao, "TV Series Tells About 'A Beijing Native in New York'," *China Daily*, October 13, 1993.

American society by showing the audience that there were no ground rules and no morality in the United States, where the strong ate the weak and money dominated everything. It is this depiction of America which eventually transforms the series' protagonist into a ruffian.<sup>35</sup>

When the series was being produced in 1992, Jiang Wen commented that the Chinese had begun to abandon their prejudices, but Americans still discriminated against the Chinese.<sup>36</sup> Although the series was not directly produced by Chinese officials, it won strong official support because it helped shift public attention from domestic problems, and condemned American values, society, and ideology.

### **The Height of Anti-American Sentiments, 1994-96**

By 1995, many Chinese had developed a negative image of American power and society. In April of that year, about 1,000 people in Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou were asked the question: Do you think there is a region or a country which might become a military menace to your country? Seventy-two percent of respondents gave "the United States" as an answer, followed by 28 percent for "Japan."<sup>37</sup> Another survey conducted by the Chinese Youth Research Center in six provinces and municipalities showed that most young people believed the United States to be unfriendly to China, with the proportion of college students believing that Americans were unfriendly to China higher than that of ordinary workers.<sup>38</sup>

The popularity of a new book also testified to the strong anti-U.S. sentiments among Chinese civilians. In May 1996, five young Chinese

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<sup>35</sup>Xu Jilin, "Values Implied by a Misreading: Further View of 'A Beijing Native in New York'," *Wen Wei Po*, November 13, 1993.

<sup>36</sup>See Jiang Wen and Luo Xueying, "The World Through Jiang Wen's Eyes," *Wenhui dianying shibao* (Wenhui Film Times), September 21, 1992, 5; Yen Ren, "The Social Impact of 'A Beijing Native in New York'," *Beijing zhi chun* (The Beijing Spring), no. 14 (July 1994): 39-44.

<sup>37</sup>See *Index to International Public Opinion, 1995-1996* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1997), 599-600.

<sup>38</sup>Chi Min, "Strong Anti-American Feelings Among Chinese Students," *Ming Pao*, May 17, 1996, A10.

authors who had worked as reporters, lecturers, and/or poets, finished a book, *Zhongguo keyi shuo bu* (China can say no), which quite unexpectedly attracted great attention both in China and abroad. The 50,000 copies of the first edition sold out immediately, becoming an instant bestseller in the Beijing area in the summer of 1996, and drew hundreds of letters of support from all over China.<sup>39</sup> By September, the book had sold some 400,000 copies.<sup>40</sup>

Attacking American cultural and economic imperialism in hyperbole, this book represented the third such book following *Japan Can Say No* by Japanese authors and *Asia Can Say No* by Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad. It denounced U.S. practices against China on issues such as human rights, birth control, MFN status, and Taiwan, and asserted that Washington had no right to act as an international judge telling China what was right or wrong. It concluded that China, being capable of confronting the United States in all spheres of international activities, should be prepared to go to war with America. The book claimed, "The whole country has angrily opposed the United States and an entire generation of Chinese children have had similar genuine feelings."<sup>41</sup>

Strong resentment of America was also seen during the Olympic Games in August 1996, as Americans were blamed for everything from bad manners and poor organization to inspiring anti-Chinese bias among judges in Atlanta. Wang Jisi, director of the Institute of American Studies, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, noted soon afterwards, "The U.S. image in China is deteriorating and will deteriorate further."<sup>42</sup>

There were other reasons why anti-American sentiments swept through China in 1996. First, official propaganda had gained in promi-

<sup>39</sup>"China Saying No," *The Economist*, July 20, 1996.

<sup>40</sup>For opposing views, see Joseph Kahn, "Chinese Writers Increasingly Blast Anti-U.S. Bestseller," *Wall Street Journal*, September 19, 1996, A18.

<sup>41</sup>See Si Cheng, "Chinese Say 'No' to the United States," *Beijing Review*, October 21-27, 1996, 13; Patrick Tyler, "Rebels' New Cause: A Book for Yankee Bashing," *New York Times*, September 4, 1996, A4; Vivien Pik-Kwan Chan, "New Books Encourage Patriotic Stance in Sino-U.S. Relations," *South China Morning Post*, June 25, 1996, 9; and Rone Tempest, "Just Say 'No' to U.S., Young Chinese Urge," *Los Angeles Times*, July 5, 1996, A5.

<sup>42</sup>"Close-Up: The U.S. Has Become the Bad Guy in China," *Seattle Times*, August 12, 1996.

nence. On April 1, 1994, the CCP Central Committee Secretariat held an important conference in Beijing which was attended by the secretaries and propaganda chiefs of the party committees of all ministries, state commissions, provinces, municipalities, and autonomous regions. During the conference, General Zhang Wannian claimed, "When facing blatant interference by the U.S. hegemonists and their open support for the activities of hostile elements . . . we must strengthen our power in order to defeat the challenges of hegemonism and colonialism."<sup>43</sup> In response, the CCP decided to strengthen education in patriotism, and in late 1994, published the "Outline for the Implementation of Education in Patriotism,"<sup>44</sup> which stated that "patriotism has long been the banner for mobilizing and inspiring the Chinese in struggle, and represents a dynamic force."<sup>45</sup>

At the same time, the state-controlled media escalated anti-U.S. rhetoric by changing its tone. Chinese official criticism of the United States was not only directed at specific U.S. policies that threatened China's interests, but also at American culture and people by repeatedly telling the Chinese people that U.S. democracy was based on oppression by a minority, and that its parliamentary system benefitted only the rich.<sup>46</sup> America-bashing was especially widespread during the Taiwan Strait crisis in March 1996, when American warships were sent to deter a feared Chinese attack.

The official media also promoted new books to swing public opinion against the United States. In June 1996, for example, two books were published by the official presses, *Zhongguo weishenme shuo bu* (Why does China say no) and *Zhong-Mei jiaoliang* (A record of confrontations between China and the United States). The latter covered such milestones in the Sino-U.S. relations as the Korean War, U.S. intervention in Taiwan,

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<sup>43</sup>"Military Advocates Tough Policy Against the United States," *Zhengming*, no. 199 (May 1, 1994): 10-12.

<sup>44</sup>See "Outline for the Implementation of Education in Patriotism," *People's Daily*, September 6, 1994, 1.

<sup>45</sup>Ge Wu, "Education in Patriotism," *Beijing Review*, September 26-October 2, 1994, 4.

<sup>46</sup>See, for example, "Differences Between Socialist Democracy and Western Parliamentary Democracy," *People's Daily*, July 11, 1996; "Freedom of Speech and Freedom of Lying," *ibid.*, July 16, 1996, 6; and Da Zhou, "Does America Have a Major Enemy?" *Shijie zhishi* (World Knowledge) (Beijing), March 1, 1996, no. 5:22-23.



the Vietnam War, trade and intellectual property rights disputes, and the Taiwan Strait crisis, and concluded that China had long said "no" to the United States. This book claimed that the Chinese were confident, proud, and patriotic, and had been disappointed, frustrated, and angered by the United States. This book became a bestseller, as 20,000 copies were sold in less than a month.<sup>47</sup>

Apparently, many Chinese people accepted these official anti-American propaganda concepts and gained a negative perspective of American culture, values, political system, and society. The Chinese Youth Research Center survey showed that 50 percent of the respondents believed that the U.S. spiritual life was relatively empty and poor in morals, and that corruption among government officials and police was relatively serious.<sup>48</sup> American movies such as *The Bridges of Madison County* were panned for glorifying "unhealthy capitalist lifestyles," and fast-food restaurants like McDonald's were blamed for undermining children's health.<sup>49</sup>

Second, China's growing economy was another factor. Since 1989, China's economy had been growing at a rate of 10 percent every year, and in 1993, it drew US\$15 billion in foreign investment. Trade between China and the United States had also made remarkable progress: since 1979, bilateral trade had achieved an annual average growth rate of 20 percent from US\$2.5 billion in 1979 to US\$40.8 billion in 1995, accounting for 14.5 percent of China's total imports and exports and 4.3 percent of the United States'. As Wu Yi, minister of foreign trade and economic cooperation, stated, "The United States has been China's third largest trading partner, and the United States has identified China as the most important emerging market offering the greatest potential."<sup>50</sup> Because of this, China became more nationalist at home and more vocal abroad, especially in its

<sup>47</sup>See Si, "Chinese Say 'No' to the United States"; Chan, "New Books Encourage Patriotic Stance in Sino-U.S. Relations," 9.

<sup>48</sup>See note 38 above.

<sup>49</sup>Kathy Chen, "Anti-U.S. Sentiment Surges in China, Putting a Future Strain on Relations," *Wall Street Journal*, May 15, 1996, A11.

<sup>50</sup>Wu Yi, "China-U.S. Trade Balance: An Objective Evaluation," *Beijing Review*, June 10-16, 1996, 10-13.

dealings with the United States, as many Chinese believed that the latter needed China.

Third, the anti-China wing of the U.S. Congress contributed to anti-U.S. feelings among Chinese intellectuals. The military suppression of the students at Tiananmen Square in 1989 had a very negative effect on many Americans; a Gallup Poll conducted in July 1989 showed about 87 percent regarded the suppression as totally unjustified.<sup>51</sup> Many Americans were also angered by China's intellectual property piracy, its persecution of political dissidents and Christians, its trade surplus with the United States, etc. The 1994 elections brought several long-term anti-China congressmen onto the foreign relations committees of both the Senate and the House of Representatives: Senator Jesse Helms, who was strongly anticommunist and pro-Taiwan, took charge of the powerful Senate Foreign Relations Committee, while Benjamin Gilman, an old friend of Tibet's exiled leader, the Dalai Lama, was in charge of the House Foreign Affairs Committee. In April 1995, both the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and the House Foreign Affairs Committee unanimously approved a resolution calling on President Clinton to allow ROC President Lee Teng-hui to visit the United States, which was adopted by both the Senate and the House in May. On June 7, both the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee and House Foreign Affairs Committee adopted amendments supporting Taiwan's entry in the United Nations and the World Trade Organization (WTO). These amendments were attached to the Foreign Aid Bill which included several measures on Tibet, notably establishing an office in Lhasa for the purpose of promoting discussion on human rights, declaring Tibet to be an occupied country, and recognizing the Tibetan government led by the Dalai Lama.<sup>52</sup>

In addition, China critics in Congress took a new tack in 1995. Instead of pushing for the revocation of MFN trading status, as they had in past years, they drafted a bill calling on President Clinton to urge the Bei-

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<sup>51</sup>The Gallup Organization, *Gallup Survey on American Attitude Toward China in the Wake of the June 1989 Crackdown: Summary of Findings* (Princeton, N.J.: The Gallup Organization, July 1989), 3-5.

<sup>52</sup>See *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report* and *1995 Congress Quarterly Almanac*, 10-19.

jing government to improve its human rights and trade practices and curtail its military buildup and export of arms. The House passed the bill overwhelmingly in July.<sup>53</sup> Without doubt, these resolutions and amendments created anger among Chinese intellectuals. Wang Jisi complained that the anti-China right-wing congressmen "speak from their own partisan interest or personal beliefs."<sup>54</sup>

Fourth, the U.S. government's recent harder stand against Beijing also stirred tensions. At the beginning of 1995, after studying the rise of Germany in the 1880s and Japan in the 1920s, U.S. military and intelligence officials claimed that China's growing economic and military strength would pose a threat to American interests in the Asia-Pacific region in the future.<sup>55</sup> Curt Campbell, U.S. assistant defense secretary for Asia-Pacific affairs and designer of the U.S. Defense Department's Asian strategy, gave a speech on June 21 claiming the United States had to contain China in order to protect U.S. interests in Asia.<sup>56</sup> During the Sino-U.S. negotiations on intellectual property rights in Beijing in the spring of 1995, U.S. representatives took a harder stand than ever before against China. Many Chinese, however, had a hard time understanding why they could not do things that other powers had had the license to do before, such as test nuclear weapons, sell arms, and recover lost territories, and saw economic sanctions as a new form of gunboat diplomacy.

The incident that epitomized negative views about the United States was ROC President Lee's visit in June 1995. Although it insisted that it still maintained a "one China" policy, Washington did not understand or acknowledge that it was challenging China's most fundamental interests of national sovereignty. Beijing lodged a strong protest against the U.S. government, and Sino-U.S. relations ebbed to their lowest point since 1979, as China's official media interpreted Lee's visit as "a U.S. plot to split China."

<sup>53</sup> See *1995 Congress Quarterly Almanac*, 2-94.

<sup>54</sup> Wang Jisi, "U.S. China Policy: Containment or Engagement?" *Beijing Review*, October 21-27, 1996, 8.

<sup>55</sup> Jim Mann, "U.S. Starting to View China as Potential Enemy," *Los Angeles Times*, April 16, 1995, A1.

<sup>56</sup> Shih Chun-yu, "Containing China Is Necessary, Claims American Officer," *Ta Kung Pao*, June 24, 1995, A3.

Posters such as "Down with U.S. Imperialism" were found on many university campuses in Beijing, and young students applied to the public security bureau for permission to stage a demonstration at the U.S. Embassy in Beijing.<sup>57</sup>

Finally, the anti-China tendencies of the U.S. mainstream mass media contributed to anti-American sentiments among the Chinese. Almost every editorial and commentary about China in the *New York Times* has criticized the Chinese authorities, opposed the admittance of China into the WTO, accused China of violating trade norms, and blamed China for its poor human rights record. The *Washington Post* has also made allegations about China's violations of arms control and copyrights, its aid in helping Pakistan build a missile plant, Chinese athletes taking banned drugs, etc. During the live broadcast of the Olympics opening ceremony in Atlanta in 1996, NBC correspondent Bob Costas criticized China's human rights record, charged Chinese women swimmers for relying on drugs for good results, and condemned the Chinese government for its military pressure on Taiwan during its military exercises in March 1996.<sup>58</sup> Some newspapers have even advocated the containment of China; in July 1995, for example, *Time* magazine published an article entitled "Why We Must Contain China."<sup>59</sup>

Li Xiguang, a visiting Chinese journalist at the *Washington Post* in 1995, held that the coverage of China in the mainstream U.S. media was built on Cold War theories, American ideology, national interests, and white chauvinism, all of which had segregated the American public from the reality of China.<sup>60</sup> After returning to China, Li and seven other returning scholars from the United States completed a new anti-U.S. book,

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<sup>57</sup>See note 31 above; and Fan Yuan, "Beijing Does Not Want to Cut Off Diplomatic Relations with the United States or Defend Its Territorial Integrity with Force," *Ming Pao*, July 10, 1995, C3.

<sup>58</sup>"China's Media Finally Have a Bit of Praise," *Atlanta Journal* and *Atlanta Constitution*, August 4, 1996, 6.

<sup>59</sup>Charles Krauthammer, "Why We Must Contain China," *Time*, July 31, 1995, 72. See also A. M. Rosenthal, "What Is China Up to?" *New York Times*, August 11, 1995, A29; and "China Looming: The Threat of China's Growth," *The Economist*, August 17, 1996, 13-14.

<sup>60</sup>Li Xiguang, "U.S. Media: Behind the Demonization of China," *Beijing Review*, October 21-27, 1996, 12.

*Yaomofa Zhongguo de beihou* (American media: Behind the demonization of China). This book became a bestseller in Beijing by the end of 1996, after *China Can Say No*. Li stressed that someone had to express the growing anger of Chinese intellectuals over America, and it was the anti-China tendencies of mainstream U.S. media that fanned their anti-U.S. sentiments to write this book.<sup>61</sup>

### The Implications of Anti-U.S. Sentiments

Anti-American sentiments pose a challenge for American policy toward China. Although the Chinese government is not popular with all Chinese, Beijing still represents China. Thus, when Washington places pressure on Beijing, the Chinese see U.S. attitudes as hostile to China rather than to the Chinese government. Indeed, Beijing has attempted to use anti-American feelings among the Chinese people as part of its diplomatic strategy toward the U.S. government. For example, after the publication of *China Can Say No*, Beijing highly recommended the book to the public, and Foreign Minister Qian Qichen informed some foreign reporters that it reflected public resentments against the United States on a range of issues. In this way, Beijing attempted to warn Washington that its pressure on Beijing had backfired by offending Chinese patriotic sensibilities.<sup>62</sup>

Despite fanning the flames of anti-American feelings, Beijing has apparently refrained from launching a major public affairs effort against the United States as it did in the 1950s and 1960s. For instance, the Chinese government has not considered the United States as posing a serious threat to China's security as it did during the "Resist America, Aid Korea" campaign (*Kan-Mei yuan-Chao*), the 1954 and 1958 Taiwan Strait crises, and the American involvement in the Vietnam War. China's leaders are now emphasizing economic expansion, political stability, and international

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<sup>61</sup>"The Rising Nationalism in the Press Circle in China," *Zhongguo shibao*, January 1, 1997, 3.

<sup>62</sup>See note 40 above.

peace. Understanding that China's industrialization depends on the common economic and security interests between the two countries, Beijing is thus seeking cooperation instead of confrontation with Washington. When asked about anti-American sentiments in China by foreign reporters in August 1996, Shen Guofang answered that the Chinese government wished to see a healthy development of Sino-U.S. relations. Indeed, Beijing has openly denied that there had been any anti-American feelings at all, claiming that public resentment of America has only been a kind of patriotic feeling rather than clear anti-U.S. sentiment. In addition, shortly after *China Can Say No* was published, some Chinese intellectuals condemned it, and Beijing eventually prohibited the sale of this book in order not to affect Sino-U.S. relationships.<sup>63</sup> Sino-U.S. relations at the official level have therefore improved since the end of 1996.

Anti-U.S. sentiments in China are perhaps unavoidable because both countries have different ideologies, political and economic systems, cultures, and levels of development, as well as diverging interests. Fear of an emergent China not playing by international rules has prompted the United States, which regards itself as a world leader, to attempt to persuade China to change. Having no intention to do so, China has responded with nationalistic grievances, and is grappling with the very mixed blessings of modernization. The combination of Beijing's ignorance about America and Washington's arrogance toward China will certainly contribute to further anti-American sentiments for a long time. However, the desire for cooperation between these two giants exists, and both have common interests. If Washington pays attention to China's basic complaints and has the courage to shun any hegemonic imperatives, and if Beijing reduces its anti-U.S. propaganda, anti-American sentiments in China will gradually decrease in the future.

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<sup>63</sup>Interview with Professor Chen Rongshen at Zhongshan University, Guangzhou, July 28, 1996.