

the subject by historians of modern China. The paucity at least until recently of adequate sources provides the most obvious explanation for this indifference. But perhaps even more important is the fall of foreign relations from historical grace—from the position of prominence and respect it once enjoyed. As historians embraced a “China-centered” approach, they became increasingly absorbed in intellectual, social, economic, and local history. They looked back with a critical eye on the earlier historical literature with its strong emphasis on China’s external relations, and they saw scant reason for interest in more recent treatments of CCP foreign policy produced in the main by political scientists.¹¹

As a result, an emergent CCP foreign-policy history, like other aspects of China’s foreign relations, stands somewhat apart from

today’s governing historical concerns. Why should specialists in early twentieth-century anarchism, urban women, or rural society care about the party’s dealings with the outside world? Even specialists in party history drawn from a new generation of American historians are inclined to set foreign relations beyond their purview or banish it at best to the margins of their concerns.

But arguably to set foreign relations somewhere on edge of Chinese history is to impoverish both. Politics and the state do matter, a point that social and cultural historians in a variety of fields have come to accept.¹² And foreign policy, the regulation of relations with the outside world, may be one of the most powerful and consequential aspects of the state’s activity. Understanding the decisions, institutions, and culture associated with that activity can be of signal

importance in filling out such diverse topics as the role of ideas, life in the city, or changes in the countryside. Party historians in particular run the risk of losing track of the global dimensions of the revolutionary and state-building enterprise and thereby forfeiting a chance to move toward a fully rounded understanding of the CCP. At the same time, CCP foreign relations needs the methodological leavening and interpretive breadth afforded by the history of China as it is now practiced. Foreign relations also needs the well honed language tools that historians of China could bring to mining the documentary ore now so abundantly in view.

While there is no reason to mourn the passing of the age of foreign-relations hegemony in the study of the Chinese past, the effect has been to leave the stewardship of China’s foreign relations to political scien-

CCP FOREIGN RELATIONS: A GUIDE TO THE LITERATURE

by Michael H. Hunt

This article offers a general overview of the literature on the origins and evolution of the Chinese Communist Party’s (CCP)’s external relations. This opportunity to share with interested readers my understanding of that literature also permits me to acknowledge the scholarly contributions of others who made my synthesis in *The Genesis of Chinese Communist Foreign Policy* possible.

Background and General Treatments

Anyone in search of major themes in Chinese foreign relations or a ready overview should start with Jonathan Spence’s elegant *The Search for Modern China* (New York: Norton, 1990), and *The Cambridge History of China*, general editors Denis Twitchett and John K. Fairbank (Cambridge University Press, 1978-). *The Cambridge History* provides good coverage not only of the period treated in this study—the nineteenth and twentieth centuries—but also earlier times. Both Spence and *The Cambridge History* volumes offer help on the

tists with their own understandably distinct agenda and style. The consequence of their dominance is a literature tending in two directions, each bearing features that are worrisome because of the effect they may have in slowing and skewing the use of new materials on the CCP.¹³

One tendency, marked but by no means dominant, is a preoccupation with theoretical abstractions. What may most strike historians is how this theory-building enterprise tends to thrive under conditions that are euphemistically described by those who attempt it as “data poor” (if imagination rich). We can all call to mind efforts to construct and test high-flying theoretical formulations that get off the ground only after the perilous potholes along the evidentiary runway are carefully smoothed over. Once airborne, those formulations stay aloft only so long as no dangerous mountains of data intrude in the flight path. The virtuosity of the performance can be impressive, but it usually comes at the price of obscuring the fascinating complexity of political life with sometimes mind-numbing abstractions.¹⁴

The second, perhaps more pronounced tendency among political scientists is to approach Chinese policy with a stronger commitment to description and a more developed historical sensibility. Political scientists working along these lines bring to their work an awareness of the way that skimpy documentation hobbles their interpretive effort. This group also follows an old-fashioned faith in the importance of individual leaders’ values, style, and personality—especially Mao’s.¹⁵ But the paucity of good documentation long locked CCP decisionmaking in a black box and forced these China-watchers to find modes of analysis that would help them make sense of limited evidence and communicate their findings promptly and clearly to the broad policy community. Determined to make some sense of what was going on inside the black box, these analysts developed a variety of tools to penetrate its mysteries. However, the problematic nature of some of those tools is becoming apparent as the new CCP sources open up that box for the first time and permit comparison of past interpretations with the newer, more richly documented understanding.

The reading of public pronouncements, long a mainstay of China-watchers, is rendered particularly tricky by all the ways

those pronouncements can deceive. Usually couched in explicit and correct ideological terms, they may not reflect the more direct, less jargon-ridden inner-party discussions and directives. They are, moreover, sometimes intended to manipulate foreigners, and thus are couched in terms that the party thinks will be effective on its target audience, not in terms that are revealing of inner-party calculations. Finally, they may be directed at an audience altogether different from the one the contemporary foreign reader may have assumed was the target.¹⁶

American observers’ misreading of the CCP’s propaganda line from mid-1945 to mid-1946 offers a good example of these interpretive difficulties. Inner-party documents now capture Mao Zedong as a backstage operator, carefully orchestrating an attempt to manipulate Washington into an engagement in Chinese politics beneficial to the CCP. He was not intent, as most students of the period have naturally concluded on the basis of the public record, on dismissing American contacts or rejecting American involvement.¹⁷

An even more complicated example of the perils of reading public signals is Zhou Enlai’s interview on 3 October 1950 with the Indian ambassador. Often cited retrospectively as one of a string of crystal-clear warnings issued by Beijing following the outbreak of the Korean War, Zhou’s own language in the formal Chinese record is in fact strikingly muffled and vague and does not accurately convey the depth of Mao’s commitment to intervention at that moment. Zhou was apparently aware that he might be misconstrued and worked with his translator to get his point across. But U.S. China-watchers in Hong Kong had difficulty extracting a clear message from that October interview, and the puzzle still remains for historians today looking back. While we may puzzle over whether Zhou’s lack of clarity was inadvertent or by design, the point remains that this critical public pronouncement is still hard to interpret.¹⁸

An emphasis on factions, the relatively stable groups united by some sort of overarching interest or ideology,¹⁹ is another of the questionable short-cuts employed by China-watchers struggling to make sense of Beijing politics. The reduction of complicated political choices to stark factional alternatives reflected the analysts’ need for clarity and the absence of restraints that rich

documentation might impose. At first based largely on circumstantial evidence, the factional interpretation enjoyed a major boost during the Cultural Revolution when material on elite conflict became public. As a result, a variety of factional cleavages have gained prominence in the writing of China-watchers, and soon found their way back into the work on party history produced by political scientists. Perhaps the best known of the factional interpretations has arrayed “Maoists” against Moscow-oriented “internationalists.”²⁰

The new materials have raised two sets of doubts about the factional model. On the one hand, they offer little to support even a

steadily better as fresh publications appear and archives open on Taiwan and within the PRC. The new CCP material helps round out an already rich documentary base and makes all the more urgent an integrated treatment of China's external relations. Drawing on this range of sources, historians can begin to offer in-depth treatment of all the kinds of topics associated with a well developed foreign-relations literature—from important personalities to the relation of policy to the “public.” It should also convey a more complex sense of policy with features—economic opportunism, political flexibility, cultural ambivalence, strategic opportunism, and policy confusion—long associated with the better studied policies of other countries. To bring these themes into better focus specialists will want to place the CCP's historical experience in a comparative framework and look for insight on the CCP that might emerge from juxtaposition with other foreign-relations histories.²²

This broad agenda, good as far as it goes, neglects a fundamental and necessarily unsettling interpretive collision about to play out within the CCP foreign-relations field. Its resolution bears directly on the kind of agenda the field will follow. As historians turn to CCP foreign relations, they will bring with them an anthropological concern with culture and a post-modern sensitivity to language, both currently strong preoccupations within their discipline.²³ Those interpretive proclivities are distinctly at odds with at least three fundamental features of the established literature and discourse defined by political science. Finding ways to make fresh, thoughtful use of the new historical evidence is here as perhaps in general inextricably tied to a critical examination of older, well worn, and often narrow channels of interpretation.

One point of conflict arises from the long-established tendency to cast policy in terms of antinomies that in effect impose an interpretive strait-jacket. The literature is peppered with reference to policies that are supposed to fit in one of several either/or categories. Policies were either “idealistic” or “realistic.” They were either “ideologically driven” or responsive to “situational factors.” They were shaped either by the “international system” or by “domestic determinants.” These alternatives confront scholars with an interpretive dilemma that they often resolve by impaling themselves

on one or the other of its horns.

Of all the dualisms, none is more pervasive and troubling than the idea of the “international system” and its conceptual twin, “domestic determinants.” A moment of critical reflection reminds us that the make-up of the international system is not self-evident, and those who champion its power to shape national policy differ widely on what the system is and how it works. Claims for the primacy of “domestic determinants” suffer from an equally serious problem: “domestic” is understood so narrowly and “determinants” is taken so literally that the phrase is almost drained of its significance.

The impulse to distinguish domestic and international influences may not be particularly useful in understanding the foreign policy of any country, and in the case of China draws a distinction that party leaders from Chen Duxiu to Deng Xiaoping would have found baffling, even wrong-headed. The growing availability of documentation makes it possible to argue what common sense already suggests—that discussions of Chinese policy need to transcend this and the other stark categories that narrow and impoverish our discourse.

Some scholars (including political scientists) have already begun to escape these stark alternatives.²⁴

Chinese History and the Cold War: A Guide to the Literature in English and Chinese. By J. R. H. Ho. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987. Pp. 314. \$24.95.

Postwar American Historiography of China," *positions*

York: Oxford University Press, 1985), are notable efforts at moving Soviet history beyond a thin, simple, and strongly judgmental "totalitarian" model associated with the Cold War. An elaborated, well-grounded alternative appears to await the completion of a new generation of historical research.

30. Paul A. Cohen, "The Post-Mao Reforms in Historical Perspective," *Journal of Asian Studies* 47 (August 1988), 518-40, highlights the dangers of a heavy reliance on an abstract Leninist party model to the neglect of long-term historical patterns.

31. For an effort at teasing out an informal foreign-policy ideology that might be applicable to China, see my own *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987) and my follow-up essay, "Ideology," in "A Roundtable: Explaining the History of American Foreign Relations," *Journal of American History* 77 (June 1990), 108-115. Clifford Geertz's "Ideology as a Cultural System," in *Ideology and Discontent*, ed. David E. Apter (London: Free Press, 1964), 47-76, is a classic still worth reading.

32. George Lakoff, *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things: What Categories Reveal about the Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 92-93.

33. For an extended argument for the importance of internal categories and outlooks to the understanding of Chinese values, see Thomas A. Metzger, *Escape from Predicament: Neo-Confucianism and China's Evolving Political Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977). Andrew J. Nathan makes a contrary case in favor of what he calls "evaluative universalism," those externally based judgments that not only are legitimate but also can stimulate better understanding. Nathan, "The Place of Values in Cross-Cultural Studies: The Example of Democracy and China," in *Ideas Across Cultures: Essays on Chinese Thought in Honor of Benjamin Schwartz*, ed. Paul A. Cohen and Merle Goldman (Cambridge: Harvard University Council on East Asian Studies, 1990), 293-314. For instructive exercises in paying serious attention to language in the Chinese context, see Michael Schoenhals, *Doing Things with Words in Chinese Politics* (Berkeley: University of California Institute of East Asian Studies, 1992), and Frank Dikötter, *The Discourse of Race in Modern China* (London: Hurst, 1992).

34. The approach is thoughtfully discussed in James Farr, "Understanding Conceptual Change Politically," in *Political Innovation and Conceptual Change*, ed. Terrence Ball et al. (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 24-49, and is applied in Daniel T. Rodgers, *Contested Truths: Keywords in American Politics Since Independence* (New York: Basic Books, 1987); and in Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976).

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have had their major writings published. The Mao collection (discussed below) is the best

known, but it is not as extensive as the one >> BDC -0.nts5.c-Up_LEMC /e

Trotskyists in Soviet Russia," trans. John
Sexton, *Issues and Studies*

Victory: The Communist Revolution in Manchuria, 1945-1948 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), also joined the issue by looking at revolutionary mobilization in a strategically pivotal and internationally sensitive region. It elaborates themes anticipated in his "A New Look at American Mediation in the Chinese Civil War: The Marshall Mission and Manchuria," *Diplomatic History* 3 (Fall 1979), 349-75, and his essay, "Soviet-American Rivalry in Manchuria and the Cold War," in *Dimensions of Chinese Foreign Policy*, ed. Chün-tu Hsüeh (New York: Praeger, 1977), 10-43.

Other early accounts grappling with CCP foreign policy ideology include Okabe Tatsumi, "The Cold War and China," in *The Origins of the Cold War in Asia*, ed. Yonosuke Nagai and Akira Iriye (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), 224-51; and Warren I. Cohen, "The Development of Chinese Communist Policy toward the United States," *Orbis* 11 (Spring and Summer 1967), 219-37 and 551-69.

A growing body of scholarship helps situate CCP external relations in the broader context of base building, revolutionary warfare, peasant mobilization, and united front policy in the 1930s and 1940s. Key items include Odoric Y. K. Wou, *Mobilizing the Masses: Building Revolution in Henan* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994); Gregor Benton, *Mountain Fires: The Red Army's Three-Year War in South China, 1934-1938* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992); Kui-Kwong Shum, *The Chinese Communists' Road to Power: The Anti-Japanese National United Front, 1935-1945* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1988); Levine, *Anvil of Victory* (cited above); Chen Yung-fa, *Making Revolution: The Communist Movement in Eastern and Central China, 1937-1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986); and Suzanne Pepper, *Civil War in China: The Political Struggle, 1945-1949* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978). Some of the issues raised by this literature are discussed in Kathleen J. Hartford and Steven M. Goldstein, "Perspectives on the Chinese Communist Revolution," in *Single Sparks: China's Rural Revolutions*, ed. Goldstein and Hartford (Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1989), 3-33.

PRC historians have led the way in filling out the picture of CCP policy from the late 1930s down to 1949. The most ambi-

tious account to date is Niu Jun's *Cong Yanan zouxiang shijie: Zhongguo gongchandang duiwai guanxi de qi yuan* [Moving from Yanan toward the world: the origins of Chinese Communist foreign relations] (Fuzhou: Fujian renmin, 1992). Niu locates the origins of the CCP's independent foreign policy in the Yanan years, and perhaps better than any other account—in English or Chinese—provides the supporting evidence. He builds here on his earlier work on the CCP's handling of the Hurley and Marshall missions, *Cong He'erli dao Maxie'er: Meiguo tiaochu guogong maodun shimo* [From Hurley to Marshall: a full account of the U.S. mediation of the contradictions between the Nationalists and the Communists] (Fuzhou: Fujian renmin, 1988).

Chinese specialists have published extensively in Chinese journals on various key aspects of CCP policy in this period. A portion of that work has appeared in translation. See especially Zhang Baijia, "Chinese Policies toward the United States, 1937-1945," and He Di, "The Evolution of the Chinese Communist Party's Policy toward the United States, 1944-1949," in *Sino-Si4A06.1 Tw to Marsh50.00Syn2rd Ine<</B 5[(*)

Revolutionary—Mao Zedong in 1919-1921,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 42 (No-

Harvard Council on East Asian Studies, 1989), 78-81; and Cheek, "The 'Genius' Mao: A Treasure Trove of 23 Newly Available Volumes of Post-1949 Mao Zedong Texts," *Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs* 19-20 (January-July 1988), 337-44.

To make the post-1949 Mao materials available in English, Michael Y. M. Kau and John K. Leung launched a translation series in 1986. Two volumes of their *The Writings of Mao Zedong, 1949-1976* (Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1986-) have appeared to date covering the period down to December 1957. Their formidable task has been complicated by the continuing flow of new materials out of China. Translated fragments are available elsewhere—in a variety of publications by U.S. Joint Publications Research Service (better known as JPRS); in Stuart Schram, *Chairman Mao Talks to the People: Talks and Letters, 1956-1971* (New York: Pantheon, 1975); and in MacFarquhar et al., *The Secret Speeches* (cited above).

Zhou Enlai

Zhou deserves special attention as Mao's chief lieutenant in foreign affairs. For the moment the place to start is the archivally based biography, Zhonggong zhongyang wenxian yanjiushi (under the direction of Jin Chongji), *Zhou Enlai zhuan, 1898-1949* [Biography of Zhou Enlai, 1898-1949] (Beijing: Renmin and Zhongyang wenxian, 1989). This biography should be used in conjunction with Zhonggong zhongyang wenxian yanjiushi, comp., *Zhou Enlai nianpu, 1898-1949* [A chronicle of Zhou Enlai's life, 1898-1949] (Beijing: Zhongyang wenxian and Renmin, 1989). Zhou's early years abroad are richly documented in Huai En, comp., *Zhou zongli qingshaonian shidai shiwenshuxinji* [A collection of writings from Premier Zhou's youth] (2 vols., Chengdu: Sichuan renmin, 1979-80); and Zhongguo geming bowuguan, comp. *Zhou Enlai tongzhi lüOu wenji xubian* [A supplement to the collected works from the time of comrade Zhou Enlai's residence in Europe] (Beijing: Wenwu, 1982). These materials largely supercede the treatment in Kai-yu Hsu, *Chou En-lai: China's Grey Eminence* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1968), and time of com-

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Mao Zedong, 3 volumes).¹¹ Published in December 1993, the 100th anniversary of Mao's birth, it offers a quite detailed day-to-day account of Mao's activities up to 1949. It releases many previously unknown important documents, going beyond the coverage of other Mao collections. For example, it publishes for the first time Mao Zedong's

supply lines. Therefore, when the American troops started a counteroffensive on 25



