

Perceiving Different Chinas: Paradigm Change in the “Personalized Journalism” of Elite U.S. Journalists, 1976–1989

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This article investigates how elite U.S. correspondents recast their journalistic paradigm in response to the momentous collapse of the Cultural Revolution in 1976, which dealt a fatal blow to the validity of much of their previous writings. Elements of the constructed “virtuous socialist China” in the 1970s came to be discredited in the 1980s and were replaced by celebratory discourse on China’s adoption of market economy. The romantic imaginings about China’s “new socialist way” stood in sharp contrast to Western-cum-universal values of freedom, democracy, and individualism, as well as American lifestyles, capital, and know-how. The reporting hinged on how journalists employed the “enduring values” of America as paradigms to make sense of China’s conditions and U.S.–China relations. The “radical” journalistic paradigm of the 1970s was repudiated by the collapse of the Cultural Revolution, whereas the “liberal” paradigm of the 1980s was shattered by the Tiananmen crackdown.

Keywords: America’s China reporting, journalistic paradigm, enduring values, international news, personalized journalism

Journalists establish themselves as an interpretive community through continual negotiations of norms and boundaries, particularly in connection to “critical events” (Zelizer, 1993). They resort to journalistic paradigms to do their jobs. A paradigm consists of a shared normative understanding of what counts as the “reality” and, furthermore, what are acceptable ways of making sense of it. As Kuhn (1970) argued, particular cognitive frames consciously or subconsciously regulate the routine production of understandings as knowledge. Through such an epistemological function that regulates the manufacturing of social reality, paradigms ensure their continued self-reproduction (Berger & Luckmann, 1991). Park

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(1940) defined two forms of knowledge: News was regarded as more intuitive "acquaintance with," whereas academic research represented "knowledge of," or a more abstract, systematic, and theoretical form of understanding. The concept of paradigm governs the conduct of news practices and academic pursuits.

U.S. journalists pride themselves on adhering to the norms of professionalism and fact-based objectivity. But such norms must be predicated on an unarticulated commitment to the established order (Schlesinger, 1979). Journalists' professional practices are embedded in what Gans (1979) called the "enduring values" of the U.S. society: ethnocentrism, altruistic democracy, responsible capitalism, small-town pastoralism, individualism, and moderation. These enduring values constitute and are constituted by broad social consensus; they become part of common sense to be taken for granted, and hence prevail to undergird the major prisms of U.S. journalists. Compared with domestic reporting, however, there is greater room for "American perspectives" to be injected into foreign reporting. As Gans claimed, U.S. journalists hew more closely to the State Department line on foreign news than to the White House line on domestic news. Said (1981) argued that the Orientalist discourses produced by U.S. media tend to reduce complex and contradictory foreign realities to simple and unvarying us-against-them dimensions.

Herman and Chomsky (1988) showed that the U.S. media treat human rights abuse of allies more leniently than abuse committed by enemy states. Wasburn (2002) showed that during the Cold War, international conflicts (such as the Iran-Iraq war) were largely framed in terms of the global U.S.-Soviet struggle. During the sovereignty transfer of Hong Kong to China in 1997, the U.S. media presented Washington as a guardian angel to protect the former British colony's freedom from Beijing's abuse; this claim was made on ideological grounds in the absence of any legitimate legal or territorial claim (Lee, Chan, Pan, & So, 2002; Lee, Pan, Chan, & So, 2002). Likewise, the significance of the Tiananmen crackdown and the fall of the Berlin Wall was interpreted in light of the United States' ideological interests in the post-Cold War "new world order" (Li & Lee, 2013). In a liberal democracy, however, it goes without saying that the media do not have a hand-in-glove relationship with the U.S. State Department. Their relationship can be contentious at times (Hallin, 1986). Although sharing the broad ideological visions, the media may take a more absolute moral standard against, for example, China's human rights abuse, whereas the U.S. government has to deal with a multifaceted relationship with China (Lee, 2002).

Chan and Lee (1991) argued, "Journalistic paradigms have an inertia, tending to continue in the same direction and resist change unless they are acted upon by significant external or internal forces" (p. 24). Fundamental paradigm shifts rarely occur. The first instinct of the journalistic community may attempt to "repair" and reassert (rather than abandon) the paradigm (W. L. Bennett, Gressett, & Haltom, 1985). It may attribute culpability to deviant individuals or extra journalistic factors to protect the underlying paradigm from questioning or attack (Berkowitz, 2000; Hindman, 2005; McCoy, 2001; Reese, 1990). It may limit the scope of discrepancies between new "facts" and their presumptions, explain away the troubling facts, and introduce new and ad hoc criteria to save journalistic paradigms (Lee, Chan, et al., 2002).

When the weight of troubling facts, deviant phenomena, or anomalies becomes overwhelming, threats to the structural integrity of the "pattern" can no longer be contained, and the redrawing of

acceptable boundary in journalistic norms would be required (Carlson, 2014; Lee, Chan et al., 2002). Landmark events and aftershocks may repudiate the accustomed "way of seeing" and demand a total rethinking or revamping of their news prisms. The collapse of the Cultural Revolution (1976) and the Tiananmen crackdown (1989) were two such landmark events.

Context of Paradigm Change in China Reporting

This article is part of a larger research program to historically understand the dynamics of cross-cultural news-making in relation to the United States and China. The literature (Cohen, 2010; Isaacs, 1958; Lee, 1990b) shows that historically Americans and U.S. media have cyclically swung from highly positive portraits of China to ones that are relentlessly negative. Sutter (2013) argued that the media and journalists played a significant role in creating and maintaining mutual suspicion and misperception of the U.S. and Chinese official, elite, and public opinion.

Farmer (1990) maintains that U.S. media coverage of China hinges not only on what is happening in China, but also on what is happening in the United States and, furthermore, what is happening in U.S.-China relations. This has several implications. First, the U.S. media have seen China as "the other," defining it variously as an ideological foe, a strategic competitor, or a strategic partner. Media narratives about China are the outcome of U.S. journalists' attempts to interpret China's conditions that also address U.S. concerns, interests, and self-images. Second, when the bilateral ties are in turmoil, major reports filed from China may provoke further news stories produced in Washington, debating over how the United States should deal with China. Third, U.S. media may highlight and follow the cues from what the power structures define as major geopolitical and ideological agendas confronting U.S.-China relations.

This article tracks the change of journalistic frames by leading U.S. correspondents in their portrayal of China during a specific period that is enclosed by two defining events: the end of the Cultural Revolution (1976) and the outbreak of the Tiananmen crackdown on a prodemocracy movement (1989). This 13-year interval saw one "radical" set of paradigmatic assumptions about China replaced by an opposite "liberal" set in ways that provide an interesting chapter in the sociology of news. In fact, negating the first radical paradigm provoked the second liberal paradigm as an antithesis to rise. In both cases, U.S. journalists have openly asked, "How could we have got it so wrong?" We argue that a major impetus in both instances was related to how U.S. journalists invoked the enduring values (Gans, 1979) or "myth structures" (A. Bennett, 1990) of American journalism to report about China. If in the 1970s they doubted the applicability of U.S. values to China, in the 1980s, they employed U.S.-cum-universal values, albeit in truncated form, to understand China.

As Madsen (1995) observed, a few journalists did attempt to convey harsh truths about the conditions of the Cultural Revolution, but they could not counter the mainstream tide of uncritical enthusiasm. Most U.S. journalists were barred from entry into China; only a few "friendly" ones were favored to make short-term and guided trips. As the United States was mired in the morass of the Vietnam War, social unrest, and radical antiestablishment milieus, many journalists morally questioned the rhetoric of liberal democracy, which is embedded in the enduring values, as inadequate or hypocritical

(Song, 2012). John K. Fairbank (1983), dean of China studies, perhaps typified a theme of liberal expectancy by acknowledging that given its unique history, values, and conditions, China should be entitled to the benefit of the doubt in its pursuit of a new way, free from the burden of imposed foreign standards or expectations. Journalists refrained from criticizing China. If they should find anything objectionable, as Schell (1977) admitted, they would in the first instance question their own presuppositions and plead that China deserves more time. They even saw China as the national "other," and held up its revolutionary virtues of sacrifice, self-reliance, devotion to the masses, and youth rebellion as a viable alternative model (Harding, 1982; Lee, 1990b).

This paradigmatic grounding crumbled. As horror stories of persecution, struggles, and starvation began to flood out, how could "egalitarian democracy" (in the eyes of U.S. journalists) square with "Fascist dictatorship" (in the eyes of the post-Mao regime)? The United States gradually restored social order and reaffirmed itself after two decades of turbulence, and China had lost its appeal as a mirror for criticizing the United States. To salvage their professional credibility, many of the earlier China enthusiasts (to name but a few: Schell, Bernstein, and Chinoy) admittedly returned to embrace America's enduring values of liberal democracy. They tried to perceive the post-Mao China from the lenses of the U.S.-cum-universal values (Song, 2012). Deng Xiaoping's ambitious economic reform agendas curiously resonated with Reagan economics. His rhetoric and practice, when stacked against Mao's, seemed to coincide consciously or unconsciously—at least until 1989—with the U.S. myth structure of political and economic reform (A. Bennett, 1990). A new myth emerged to characterize China's economic growth as a harbinger of political democracy in the long run (Mann, 2001).

Furthermore, Washington forged a strategic alliance with Beijing to fight their common enemy: the Soviet Union. With the U.S.-China strategic alliance coming to the fore, China's abuse of human rights receded into the background of U.S. media accounts. In the 1980s, U.S. journalists had a more lenient standard for judging China and a harsher standard for treating the Soviet Union (Harding, 1992). This myth was again to be shattered by the Tiananmen crackdown in 1989, calling forth another round of self-criticism. As Womack (1990) remarked, the "liberal" journalists were once again knocked back to the fundamentalist belief that Communist China, despite its economic development, would never change its authoritarian character.

Research Method

As China expert Michel Oksenberg (1994) noted, elite U.S. journalists are more often remembered for writing books than doing the drudgery of daily reporting. Since China's opening to the world, Western journalists, especially Americans, having completed tours of duty, published reflections, memoirs, or autobiographical accounts of their China experience (Chiang, 1986). Why is it that journalistic memoirs about China were able to find greater receptivity in the U.S. publishing market than those written about almost any other countries (say, from New Delhi or even Tokyo)? Because, as Pan (2012) observed, "the fantasy about China's transition in our [U.S.] image proves more attractive and lasting than most" (p. 64). The continuing American fascination, albeit with mixed sentiments, with China gives rise to the importance of analyzing these books seriously.

To recall when major U.S. media outlets opened Beijing bureaus in 1979, the widely read foursome from the first-wave resident correspondents—*TIME*, Bernstein's *From the Center of the Earth*; from *The New York Times*, Butterfield's *China, Alive in the Bitter Sea*; from *The Washington Post* and *Los Angeles Times*, Jay and Linda Matthews's *One Billion*—offered the depiction of a "subdued, often bitter, somewhat stagnant" China (Woodruff, 1990, p. xvii). In the early 1980s, U.S. journalists (e.g., Mathews and Mathews, Bernstein, and Butterfield) filed reports from Deng's newly opened China and parlayed their assignment into books. Later, fewer journalists wrote books. Not until after 1989 did many of them begin to write books again in their attempts to make sense of the Tiananmen tragedy (Song & Lee, 2015). This cycle of publishing signifies the "double shocks"—the end of Cultural Revolution (1976) and the Tiananmen crackdown (1989)—calling for U.S. journalists to rethink their news frames.

Here, we analyze the contrasting narratives that represent the tension between the experience of resident U.S. journalists in witnessing the course of events in the 1980s and the perspectives of those looking back at what had gone wrong in the 1970s. The corpus for analysis therefore includes all 16 books (see Table 1) that straddled the decades of the 1970s and 1980s, to be supplemented in our interpretation by other published articles and interviews. These authors were prominent U.S. journalists: Many were from *The New York Times* (including Butterfield, Bernstein, Gargan, and Kristof); some of them (such as Schell, Butterfield, Gargan, Bernstein, and Chinoy) had solid academic training in China studies, and other generalists (such as Mann and Woodruff) were dispatched to China for the first time. Taken together, this body of writing offers a valuable window on how America's leading China correspondents critically examined their assumptions, observations, feelings, and adventures at critical junctures of historical transition.

Table 1. Books and Memoirs About China Reportage by U.S. Journalists.

Author	Year published	Title	Affiliation
Bernstein, R.	1982	<i>From the Center of the Earth: The Search for the Truth About China</i>	<i>The New York Times</i> ; <i>TIME</i> magazine
Browning, G.	1989	<i>If Everybody Bought One Shoe: American Capitalism in Communist China</i>	<i>Chicago Sun-Times</i> ; <i>The Washington Post</i> ; <i>National Journal</i> ; <i>United Press International</i>
Butterfield, F.	1982	<i>China, Alive in the Bitter Sea</i>	<i>The New York Times</i>
Chinoy, M.	1999	<i>China Live</i>	CNN
Gargan, E. A.	1991	<i>China's Fate: A People's Turbulent Struggle With Reform and Repression, 1980–1990</i>	<i>The New York Times</i>
Kristof, N. D., & WuDunn, S.	1994	<i>China Wakes: The Struggle for the Soul of a Rising Power</i>	<i>The New York Times</i>

Liu, K. (Ed.)	2012	<i>My First Trip to China: Scholars, Diplomats, and Journalists Reflect on Their First Encounters With China</i>	Freelancers and correspondents from foreign media
Mann, J.	1989	<i>Beijing Jeep: The Short, Unhappy Romance of American Business in China</i>	<i>The Washington Post</i> ; <i>The Baltimore Sun</i> ; <i>The Philadelphia Inquirer</i> ; <i>New Haven Journal-Courier</i>
Mathews, J., & Mathews, L.	1983	<i>One Billion: A China Chronicle</i>	Jay, <i>The Washington Post</i> ; Linda, <i>Los Angeles Times</i>
Black, G., & Munro, R.	1993	<i>Black Hands of Beijing: Lives of Defiance in China's Democracy Movement</i>	Black, foreign affairs columnist for the <i>Los Angeles Times</i> ; Munro: China specialist for Human Rights Watch
Pomfret, J.	2006	<i>Chinese Lessons: Five Classmates and the Story of the New China</i>	<i>The Washington Post</i>
Schell, O.	1977	<i>In the People's Republic: An American's First-Hand View of Living and Working in China</i>	<i>The New Yorker</i>
	1980	"Watch Out for the Foreign Guests!": <i>China Encounters the West</i>	<i>The New Yorker</i>
	1984	<i>To Get Rich Is Glorious: China in the Eighties</i>	<i>The New Yorker</i>
	1989	<i>Discos and Democracy: China in the Throes of Reform</i>	<i>New Yorker</i>
Woodruff, J.	1990	<i>China in Search of Its Future: Reform vs. Repression, 1982-1989</i>	<i>The Baltimore Sun</i>

The "personalized journalism" of books and memoirs permits a more purposive and open effort than routine daily reports to explicate life experiences and assign a meaning to them (Reese & Lewis, 2009). Scholarly analyses identified them as a genre rich in repeated patterns and shared structuring themes that present prevalent cultural myths (Kitch, 2002; Song, 2012). In this sense, the benefit of hindsight and the more flexible format may enable the writers to offer more engaging, more reflective,

and less restrained perspectives. As a caveat, however, memoirs and books represent a looking-glass mirror of personalized journalism that inevitably relies on recall and post facto reassessment of journalists' positions. There are added risks of invoking selective memory and seeping in self-justification in such post hoc writing. Furthermore, these texts often paint too broad a canvas of journalists' changing mindset and assumptions "after the fact," rather than provide a thick account of their "at the moment" worldviews and the process leading to paradigm change. For this reason, it should be noted that we opted to contrast the before-after differences in big themes, fundamental assumptions, and conceptual categories. Explaining the intricate process of that change in detail would call for different types of methods and evidence.

To track epistemological changes of these journalists, we traced their discursive themes backward and forward to understand historical conjunctures. We adopted what Babbie (1998) suggests in the way of conducting a "qualitative content analysis." The procedure takes four stages: (1) We read all the books several times to form key broad themes, (2) we took copious notes for the emergent themes that tapped the manifest and latent meanings of journalistic narratives, (3) we coded these narratives into relevant thematic categories, and finally (4) we identified the quotes that were most tellingly representative of the themes. The fact that we took all relevant quotes based on the emergent themes before they were coded into conceptual categories was to guard against the bias of selectivity. The quotes were meant to reflect the writers' voice and conditions of the inquiry rather than our preconceived notions. The prima facie validity of our analysis seems assured by the high degree of consistency and similarities across different authors and texts in regard to their revelations and critical assessment of paradigmatic shift.

News paradigm shift entails an offbeat view of the present as a disjointed starting point of a new future. Koselleck (2004) conceptualizes historiography as a discourse and a representational order rather than the repository of "truth." He uses the concepts of "space of experience" and "horizon of expectation" to disentangle the ways in which the past and future are always present "in the present." Likewise, Jóhannesson (2010) refers to "historical conjuncture" as people employ discursive themes as their social strategies. By comparing the discursive themes before and after the intervention of a momentous historical moment or event, we can come to gauge the extent of a paradigm shift.

We focused on the temporal, spatial, and hierarchical dimensions to investigate how China was differently constructed. First, we analyzed how the past was narrated as being crucial for understanding the present and future of China. Second, we examined how journalists demarcated China from the United States in their narratives that were in line with "American myth." This was based on the assumption that marking "self" off from "others" is important in the construction of a community. Third, we delineated the ordering of the United States' enduring values used in their prisms of the social change in China. We sought to identify emergent interpretive patterns and the processes of paradox and appropriation. Journalists use the discourse of fact (space of experience) and prediction (horizon of expectation), sometimes paradoxically, to achieve the norms of objectivity.

Trajectory of Paradigm Shift

American images of China, as McClellan (1971) contended, could be "best understood in terms of making 'their China' fit their biases" (p. xiii). Pan (2012) likewise argued that the dominance of a bifocal lens in China watching has less to do with what China is than with China watchers' own "situatedness in certain Western self-imagination" (p. 43). During the Cultural Revolution, U.S. journalists constructed what would seem today embarrassingly unrealistic images of a "revolutionary and virtuous socialist China," coinciding with the omnipresent Maoist propaganda (Harding, 1982; Song & Lee, 2014). They upheld the revolutionary China as a source of invigoration for the West in "seeking solutions to a democratic malaise" (Hollander, 1981). Exactly when China was mired in relentless waves of purges, bloodshed, and turmoil, U.S. journalists set it up as an extreme exemplar of democratization and egalitarianism (see Harding, 1982; Hollander, 1981).

But U.S. journalists were not alone in having scant understanding of China's Cultural Revolution. The Chinese populace held on to the fantasies of revolutionary fervor for a significant period of time. It may be argued that U.S. journalists did not necessarily fare worse than their European or Japanese peers (Liu, 2012). Even many renowned U.S.-based China scholars, including those of Chinese descent, fell victim to the same charges of one-sided bias and misperception (Harding, 1982). This, however, does not exonerate U.S. journalists from their own epistemological mistakes. They have, in fact, engaged in candid self-criticism.

Interestingly, many correspondents' sympathies toward China in the 1960s and 1970s were admittedly tied to their opposition to U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War and the perceived social injustice that ignited student, gender, and racial protests. CNN reporter Mike Chinoy, a self-declared antiwar activist, felt guilty as an American about the Vietnam War (Chinoy, 1999) and was attracted to China's revolutionary rhetoric of social equality and anti-imperialism. Edward A. Gargan (2003) recalled that his youthful opposition to the Vietnam War initiated his avid interest in China and other parts of Asia where he afterwards built a glittering career as a *New York Times* correspondent. Kristof and WuDunn (2002) of *The New York Times* also criticized that the United States carpet-bombed Vietnam but never formally apologized. As a Vietnam veteran, Jay Mathews (1988) of *The Washington Post* wrote his personal story to express his, his wife's, and his fellow comrades' hatred toward the war. Likewise, Orville Schell immersed himself in antiwar activism and was critical of the United States being a good example of a great power or a great society (Barris, 2013).

After the Cultural Revolution, Butterfield (1982) cast doubt on the credibility of "the official version" of China versus the other "hidden" China. His Canadian assistant Jan Wong (1996) suddenly found that "every single person . . . made an abrupt ideological switch" (p. 185). Chinoy (1999) felt "the last of (his) youthful idealism about China disappearing" (p. 87) and his "attitude about Communist China was growing increasingly skeptical" (p. 90). Mirsky (2002) resented having "humbly helped to insert the rings (of China) in our own noses" (p. 6). Looking back on the era of Cultural Revolution, Goodstadt (2012) lamented that "news was more an export commodity to be managed and packaged rather than professionally reported" (p. 174). Bernstein (2010) confessed that as a pro-China observer in early 1970s,

he became a lifelong anticommunist and devotee of liberal democracy. What influence would this experience exert on their news paradigm?

Having abandoned the Maoist revolutionary paradigm, many U.S. journalists came to sympathize with Deng's rhetoric and agendas, especially when such slogans as "seeking truth from facts" and "taking experience as the sole criterion of the truth" smacked of the spirit of American pragmatism. U.S. journalists had improved and yet still restricted access to sources of information, data, and ordinary people (Mirsky, 2002). But they did not travel enough outside Beijing and wrote too many of the same stories—down to the same people and the same anecdotes. Throughout the 1980s, they wrote extensively about the stories that illustrated the themes of "reform and opening up to the outside world," ranging from young people wearing Levi jeans and going to discos, a "getting rich family" in the countryside, to student marches in the street, and dissidents (Mann, 2001; Schell, 1980, 1984, 1989). In fact, the American public was more interested in China's various dealings with the United States rather than complex internal political developments or geopolitics (Brayne, 1992; Mann, 2001). Both U.S. journalists and public were shocked by the televised scenes of bloodshed brought back from Tiananmen Square on June 4, 1989, which remains as a taboo topic in China.

Dispelling the Maoist Myths

Moving from the Maoist era to post-Mao period, what was being reappraised and disproved in journalistic accounts was less China itself than the imaginings or chimeras that U.S. journalists had carried with them to China (Harding, 1992). Close readings of our texts reveals the themes that discredited the Maoist "egalitarian myth," "populist myth," and "dedicated myth."

Unlearning the "Egalitarian" Myth

Maoist society was found to have been plagued by "privileges" and "ranks," despite the appearance of relatively equal (and meager) pay. More important were the "hidden privileges" of social standing and political rights within an internal hierarchy: subsidized housing, food rations, access to health care, and ability to travel (Butterfield, 1982, p. 88). Beyond the monetary terms, they exchanged *guanxi* as a form of currency. Jay and Linda Mathews (1983) found that Chinese in the 1980s were less committed to Mao than to "one another—billions of small relationships becoming one great whole" (p. 5).

Through their daily contacts with local people, the U.S. press corps came to realize that the Chinese themselves saw enormous inequality in social and economic status. Despite the Maoist propaganda that women were "holding up their half of the sky," Woodruff (1990, p. 116) learned that they were given fewer work points than men for a day in the fields. He documented privilege-seekers and *guanxi* manipulators, especially among the offspring of Communist cadres who grew up knowing that "having been born Red made them special" (p. 130). Financial journalist Browning (1989) noted that a bona fide written commitment by a lower-level Chinese manager could be vetoed without explanation. He observed that, compared with Americans, Chinese preferred to avoid going to the court, and the Chinese court might turn its back on those lawyers who were considered to be too zealous. After all, the realization

of Mao's personality cult, the "pervasive odor of orthodoxy" and uniformity made Bernstein (1982) abandon his romantic imaginings about China.

Unlearning the "Populist" Myth

The second myth to unlearn was that the Communist Party had destroyed feudal tradition and revolutionized Chinese society into a participatory mobilization (Butterfield, 1982). Maoist attempts to eradicate the bureaucracy through mass mobilization were hailed as "democracy" based on mass participation. China hands such as Schell, Chinoy, and Butterfield were not only impressed by its intermittent chaos and violence, but also attracted by its appearance of enormous popularity and "grass-rootedness." However, after longer periods of residence in China, this populist myth gave way to their awareness of factional politics and bureaucratic struggles. Policy options, state matters, and social welfare became rhetorical codes manipulated to further political career. China's leading investigative journalist Liu Binyan was expelled from the Party for publishing many explosive pieces that exposed Communist bureaucratic wrongdoings. Woodruff (1990) was aghast at reading news reports about Liu's plight.

Kenneson described Communist cadres as being afraid to take problems to a higher level and yet also "terrified of making a wrong decision" (1982, p. 16). Woodruff lamented that the power of old ways lived on, and thus "truth" and "justice" were still "political concepts" (1990, p. 264) and issues were decided more by power relationships and struggles. U.S. journalists invariably found the Chinese bureaucracy—likened to "unwieldy medieval assault tower" (Kenneson, 1982, p. 15)—inflexible, inefficient, and corrupt. Cadres lost touch with the masses. Butterfield (1982) wrote that the control apparatus, with its police, the *danwei* [unit] organization, the street committees, and political study remained intact and placed tight restrictions on the dissemination of information, personal mobility, and political protest.

Pomfret (2006) likened work units to military units that "would not let their employees go" (p. 120). Even if Premier Zhao Ziyang had called for Chinese factories to be run by "professional managers" rather than Party secretaries, Mann (1989) reported that the Party organizations remained in force within factories. Interviewing American executives in U.S.–China joint ventures, Browning (1989) pointed out that China was still scarred by the Cultural Revolution, and that many reform agendas were frustrated by entrapped bureaucracies, decadent bureaucrats, the shambles of legal system, and an undeveloped infrastructure. Even this bureaucratic control extended to the university, including the student organization that was "configured along Leninist line" with such Maoist structures as a "politburo" and "Central Committee" (Pomfret, 2006, p. 153). Woodruff (1990) wrote that Mao made all culture and media answerable to the propaganda department of the Party in the 1940s; "cultural suffocation" remained in the 1980s and the media must serve "the communist party's political ends of the moment" (p. 82). Gargan (1991) chronicled the wave-like building of the democracy movement that started in 1986 and cast his eyes on the dark underside: the curious mixture of energized productive activity and social malaise, the repression against ethno and religious rioting in Tibet, and the loss of cultural heritage alongside the profound alienation from the Party. To him, China was not exhilarated by change but wrecked by conflicts.

Unlearning the "Dedicated" Myth

The third Maoist myth to dislodge was the belief that Mao had created a "new socialist man" (Mann, 2001). In the 1980s, many journalists began to depict the undisciplined, inefficient workforce in Chinese factories. Browning (1989) reported frustrating cases of U.S.-China joint ventures: workers so undisciplined and so used to being taken care of that they figure they need not work. WuDunn said that state enterprises were "notoriously inefficient" because workers thought, "You pretend to pay me, and I'll pretend to work" (Kristof & WuDunn, 1994, p. 345). Mann (1989) was skeptical enough to note that having workers in the factories kept them off the streets. To make places for displaced workers, factories were invariably "overstaffed." Mathews and Mathews began their "system" book section with an epigram: "The Nationalists had lots of taxes; the Communist Party has lots of meetings" (1983, p. 151).

Very few managers in Chinese factories knew anything other than the "Soviet-style system and its Maoist adaptations" (Woodruff, 1990, p. 69). The spectral Maoist forces gave the factory director little or no leeway to take the initiative or "to turn idle machinery into an additional shift" (Woodruff, 1990, p. 66). Against the entrepreneurial spirit among overseas Chinese, Woodruff (1990) reported that people inside China were still subjected to a centrally planned economic system. Butterfield (1982, p. 281) said that avoiding responsibility had been raised to "a national art form" in China. Gargan (1991) even characterized personal encounters among Chinese as distrust, secrecy, and hostile evasiveness.

Reviving the Discourse of Capitalist Development

Journalistic accounts focused on economic boom with examples of the free market at work (Mann, 2001; Mirsky, 2002). In a new wave of the gee-whiz stories about an increasingly "open" and "modern" China, U.S. journalists saw the whole reform program as a restoration of marketization that presumably would lead to the development of a capitalist mechanism eventually approximating the U.S. system and values. Frequently appearing in their reports were such terms as "private entrepreneurship," "personal wealth and freedom," and "free flow of Western capital and know-how." The prism presupposes a binary, hierarchical placement of the Western "self" over and above the Chinese "other." In this temporal hierarchy, the Western self was placed at the apex of linear modernity or the "end of history" (Fukuyama, 1992), thus holding up a mirror and road map for a late-comer like China to follow. The U.S.-China interplay hence became a one-way street of U.S. impact and Chinese response.

Private Entrepreneurship

In echoing Deng's marketization projects, U.S. journalists frequently used such buzzwords as "private," "business," "commerce," "entrepreneurs," and "industry" in their narratives. These stories, as Lee (1990a) observed,

often involve asserting a generalized claim about a whole country's words, deeds, and trends on the basis of a handful of data: scraps of an official proclamation, limited eyewitness reports, anecdotes that put a face of the ordinary people on the story, interviews with dissidents. (p. 23)

Thus, Mann (1989) offered an example of farmers raising pigs and chickens for profit to depict people who were thought capable of working outside the state plan. Woodruff (1990) used an owner of a modest dress factory and "short-sleeved" impresarios in popular music shows to typify entrepreneurial pioneers who found opportunities in "shadowy and uncharted spaces between the old system and the new" (p. 85). They would "knit together a national economy to replace Mao's deeply compartmentalized system" (p. 28). Gargan (1991) noted, however, that embracing such capitalist elements as property and entrepreneurship could clash with the socialist orthodoxy.

Chinoy (1999) noted "an explosion of private businesses" (p. 154) offering services from barbershops and shoe and bike repair to restaurants and privately run bars. City dwellers regained "the commonplace convenience of being able to buy a breakfast bun from a street vendor on the way to work, or to find a shoe repairman in the neighborhood" (Woodruff, 1990, p. 14). Ironically, this new class of entrepreneurs who "brighten[ed] China's previously colorless streets" was made up of former prisoners, small-time crooks, and people with bad political backgrounds (Pomfret, 2006, p. 119). On a more macro scale, Woodruff (1990) chronicled how Guangdong Province used "private commerce," "foreign business methods," and "a generally freer atmosphere" to "bring life to the musty urban economy" (p. 11). Experiments with capitalist-style economic reforms in special economic zones, in Pomfret's (2006) eyes, would "unlock the pent-up moneymaking talents of one of the world's most entrepreneurial peoples" (p. 7).

Personal Wealth and Westernized Lifestyles

As proof of the improving living conditions, U.S. journalists took note of refrigerators, electric rice cookers, televisions, and other consumer goods in new department stores. Woodruff's (1990) Chinese friends pointed to cars as "one of the more visible indexes" (p. 25) of the new economic life that might expand personal mobility and freedom. As "a welcome end to a degree of regimentation" (p. 119), he cited the example of rural women who could work in a family plot and raise and sell chickens while tending their children. Gargan (1991) recounted how people took advantage of the liberalized economic environment to enrich themselves and energize productive activity. He cited a village in Guangdong to reflect the burgeoning of rural industries.

It was "mind-boggling" for Chinoy (1999) to see "the speed with which the austerity and cultural deprivation of the Mao era was giving way to popular fashions long condemned by party ideologues" (p. 155). He added that there was widespread public fascination with all things Western in their lifestyle. Woodruff (1990, pp. 83-84) noted that the economics of reform provided some pop singers with opportunities to amass personal wealth; for example, one of his acquaintances had saved enough money to go to Australia to study English for a year. Schell (1989) pointed to evidence of what he called "limo-ization of Beijing": bikinis and bodybuilding, luxury golf courses, hotels, and shooting galleries; the disco-dancing craze of China's youth, elderly, and even cadres; the development of the advertising industry; Kentucky Fried Chicken across the street from the Mao Zedong Memorial Hall. Gargan (1991) lamented that Beijing's old architecture was replaced by gray concrete block apartments to the point of

"extinguishing" its soul. He regretted the loss of politeness, the ingrained rudeness, and the lost art of Chinese cooking.

Personal Freedom of Expression

Even though the 1980s marked an intermittent cycle of ideological relaxation and retightening, elements of the market economy allowed the Chinese people "a measure of personal freedom unthinkable during the Mao years" (Chinoy, 1999, p. 154). Bernstein (1982) observed that religions of all kinds were thriving. In the more relaxed winter of 1984–85, the national conference of writers stressed "the freedom of expression technically guaranteed by the national constitution" (Woodruff, 1990, p. 94). Woodruff marveled at it as a "major breakthrough against the party overlords" (p. 94). Facets of both high and pop culture, from the symphony to nude figure sketches, came alive. Filmmakers explored new themes permitted by the Party's increasing willingness to "countenance entertainment for its own sake" (Woodruff, 1990, p. 95).

Mirsky (2002) looked back on the years 1985–89 as a relatively open period when people in Beijing spoke openly to reporters. Mathews and Mathews (1983) found similar openness in the official press. So did *The Washington Post's* Weisskopf recall that the press was able to reflect the contest of ideas on the top level of the Communist Party (Chu, 1984). Woodruff (1990) found that his Chinese friends in Beijing usually began their conversations with "complaints about the latest round of increases in the price of lean pork" and Deng's incentives were "creating both improvements and new sources of dissatisfaction in people's daily lives" (p. 26). Woodruff believed that the dissatisfactions had much to do with "China's belated entry into the world" (p. 26) after decades of isolation. The discontent may extend beyond the economy and well into the political attitudes.

Such freedom of expression had ups and downs, and met with a major setback in 1989. Covering at the height of the Tiananmen student protests, Pomfret (2006) could not conceal a sense of anxiety: "This is the most amazing thing I have ever seen in my life. . . . And what do they want? Just a change at a better life" (p. 153). Similarly, Chinoy (1999, p. 12) recalled his own history as an idealistic student radical in the 1960s drawn to Mao's China. Now, referring to the Tiananmen protesters in 1989, he found that his youthful political enthusiasm reckoned with the "people power" of Chinese who dared to rise and challenge the dictators. A. Bennett (1990) attributed U.S. journalists' romantic sympathy for Chinese protesters to their own mythical beliefs in progress and order, affection for the underdog, and the memory of Woodstock.

Free Flow of Western Capital and Know-How

U.S. journalists were amazed at the speed and scope of China's becoming a major partner and market for American business. The Western business people were dreaming about a market of one billion people—"if everyone bought one shoe" (Browning, 1989). "At no other time in the twentieth century have the institutions of Western capitalism sought to do business with and inside a Communist state to the extent that they did in China during the 1980s," claimed Mann (1989, p. 22). Chinoy (1999, pp. 155–156) watched the "naive enthusiasm" of "wide-eyed" American business people who were hunting for business,

signing contracts, and starting operations in China. They invested in restaurants, management schools, even railroads, and a modest degree of carefully controlled shareholding in some state factories. Woodruff (1990, p. 11) observed that Hong Kong and overseas Cantonese investments were rapidly changing lives in Guangzhou, the capital of Guangdong Province, which was at the forefront of reform experimentation and foreign involvement. Browning (1989) listed an entirely new body of laws that was being developed to cover property, taxes, businesses, and joint ventures.

Meanwhile, many U.S. journalists wrote positively about the diffusion of Western know-how to the management of Chinese factories and companies. Mann (1989) cited two examples: The first was a U.S. manager from Perkin-Elmer who put Chinese staff on an incentive system; the second case involved disciplinary actions taken against an employee in a joint venture whose father happened to be a high-ranking security official. In both cases, the quintessentially American capitalist way prevailed. Mann concluded, "The Americans felt they had scored one small victory over the Chinese system of *guanxi*, in which those with personal connections got special treatment" (pp. 254–255).

American executives and employees who stayed in China often ended up with frustration in sharp contrast to the neophyte business people. Mann (1989) told the story of the venture to produce the AMC Jeep in China, a project that was initially greeted with enthusiasm but then was plagued by obstacles because of residual influences of the Maoist state-managed economy. Gargan (1991) wrote at length about how American corporations failed to understand the Chinese rules of the game. Browning (1989) illuminated the staggeringly tangled social and political hindrances that stood in the way of China's quest for modernization.

Conclusion

This study has focused on how U.S. journalists recast their journalistic paradigm in the wake of China's Cultural Revolution. Paradigm shift involves a whole-scale change in the root assumptions of shared consensus, so reality can be constructed anew. Elements of the "virtuous socialist China" in the 1970s seemed to have been negated by their binary opposites in the 1980s. The egalitarian myth was found to be a code name of *guanxi* and privilege for Communist cadres, the populist myth was replaced by affirmation of private entrepreneurship and individual drive, and the dedicated myth amounted to rigid control of individual freedom. Marketization and the capitalist way came to be celebrated.

To recap, if the 1970s marked a departure from the United States' enduring values, the 1980s symbolized an unapologetic return to them. Many correspondents, who had doubted the fairness of applying liberal-democratic values to Mao's China in the 1970s, now turned around in the 1980s to endorse Deng's quasicapitalist reform agendas that were interpreted, rather prematurely, as smacking of a positive tendency toward liberal-democratic development. The Maoist model was replaced by Deng's newest effort to "find its way into the *modern world* [emphasis added]" (Woodruff, 1990, p. 284). In other words, if U.S. journalists saw an essential difference in the 1970s between China and the United States in terms of pathways to modernization and national development, they seemed to embrace, at least implicitly, a single universal pathway in the 1980s. By praising Deng for setting China back on the "correct path," they assumed as if the United States were holding up a mirror for China to follow on a linear road

to modernization. The romantic (yet by-now bankrupt) imaginings about China's "new socialist way" and "new socialist men" stood in sharp contrast to Western-cum-universal values of freedom, democracy, market economy, and individualism, as well as American lifestyles, capital, and know-how.

The China of the 1970s was certainly very different from the China of the 1980s. Some may argue that these changes in media frames seem self-explaining because as China changed, the reporting had to change as well. This argument can only go so far if we see journalism as a flat mirror of reality. However, journalism is an important yet imperfect human institution that is bound to do a poor job at "mirroring" the reality. We would argue that news is instead intersubjectively and socially constructed, and journalists cannot perceive reality without making core assumptions (Tuchman, 1978). In this sense, journalism is, at best, a distortion mirror by virtue of journalists' power to enlarge or shrink certain slices of reality. As A. Bennett (1990) argued, U.S. journalists are well-educated, largely good-hearted, and by no means ignorant, but they must rely on certain myth structures—which can be misleading at times—to impose certain clarity on the reality.

The first injunction of news stories is facts. But journalistic paradigms help journalists to decide what is newsworthy out of a glut of occurrences, what facts should be played up or down, and in what contexts these facts should be placed. Such assumptions—when they get consolidated in the form of journalistic paradigms—are collective, cultural, and structurally embedded in broad social consensus, to be taken for granted by members of the journalistic community (Gitlin, 1980; Lee, Chan, et al., 2002; Tuchman, 1978). That is why U.S. journalists as a group, despite their individual differences, produced rather similar narratives about China in the 1970s and, again, in the 1980s. Without situating news-making in value-laden paradigmatic assumptions, it would be difficult to understand why, in the 1980s, there was surprisingly little dissent among U.S. journalists on the desirability of Western lifestyles, capital, and know-how for China. (It should be reminded that today in China, the Maoists and the New Left are still yearning for their "good old days.")

There were profound implications for media depiction of China when U.S. journalists in the 1970s believed that China's "new socialist way" should be given the benefit of the doubt and not evaluated on externally imposed criteria. Likewise, once a revisionist journalistic paradigm was taken, such capitalist markers as jeans, discos, bars, cars, and Kentucky Fried Chicken—not to say pig-raising farmers, entrepreneurial spirit, and American business management style—all came alive to symbolize economic progress and increased individual freedom. The liberal tenet of "modernization theory"—maintaining that China's economic growth would ultimately breed political freedom—reigned supreme in the stream of U.S. journalists' consciousness.

U.S. journalists were so amazed at the dazzling speed and scope of economic growth while focusing on the rapprochement of bilateral ties as well as the U.S.–China alliance against the Soviet Union that they ended up giving insufficient attention to China's human rights abuse in the 1980s. Alas, in 1989, they were suddenly brought back to realize that economic growth did not, as having been so naively expected, promote let alone guarantee democracy, while freedom of expression was very fragile. The Tiananmen crackdown finally woke U.S. journalists in 1989 to the blind spot of their liberal perspectives, as did the collapse of the Cultural Revolution in 1976 to their shaky radical journalistic paradigm.

Journalists are human; they can only do the best job they can. For vibrant and responsible journalism to survive in democracy, their paradigms stand in need of critical reflection from time to time.

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