

China Views Nine-Eleven

China Views Nine-Eleven:
Essays in Transnational American Studies

Edited by

Priscilla Roberts, Mei Renyi, and Yan Xunhua

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P U B L I S H I N G

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PREFACE

JULIA CHANG BLOCH

On September 11, 2001, I was at my Peking University apartment in Beijing. Students called hysterically for me to turn on the television, and I watched in horror the now iconic images of two planes crashing into the twin towers of the World Trade Center. As reports streamed in that the Pentagon had also been hit, I found it unnerving that the jammed phone lines would not connect me to my husband in Washington, DC. I was, however, comforted by the outpouring of sympathy and warmth toward America and Americans on campus, a feeling that remains with me today.

Five years after 9/11 the US-China Education Trust began planning our annual American Studies Network conference in collaboration with the American Studies Center at Beijing Foreign Studies University (ASC) and the Institute of American Studies of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (IAS). We decided to assess the ramifications of the attacks on the US social, political, economic and cultural landscape and on its foreign policy. The conference, *The United States After 9/11: Changes and Continuities*, came to fruition in October, 2007, jointly co-sponsored by USCET, the ASC, and IAS.

Ten years on, the American news media have been full of reflections and analyses of the meaning of 9/11, but ultimately each person attaches an individual meaning to that day when almost all Americans remember exactly where they were. Upon reflection, 9/11 validates my founding of the US-China Education Trust, an organization to which I have dedicated more than a decade of my life. Promoting US-China relations through education and exchange, USCET's mission, is an antidote to the frightening possibility that another 9/11 might ever happen again. Promoting mutual understanding between peoples is essential not only to a stable US-China relationship, but also to seeking peace. And achieving peace is harder than waging war and requires effort and creativity.

As we commemorate the tenth anniversary of 9/11, this offers an ideal opportunity to make a selection of the essays originating from the 2007 conference available to a wider audience around the world. As president of the US-China Education Trust, I am particularly pleased that this publication

will bring Chinese writings and viewpoints on this horrific event to the broader intellectual debate on 9/11, as tangible illustration of the growing range and depth of scholarship produced by Chinese American Studies experts, including members of the American Studies Network.

As the 9/11 conference continued the tradition of providing opportunities for dialogue and discussion among respected and emerging US-China scholars from China and abroad, it helped to strengthen the foundation for communication and collaboration within and beyond China in understanding the United States. It is USCET's hope that the American Studies Network will serve as a vehicle to break down barriers of misunderstanding and build mutual trust between the Chinese and American peoples. The hope is well grounded. Since the 2007 9/11 conference, the American Studies Network, which from its 22 charter members in 2004 had already increased to 28 member institutions, has expanded its membership to embrace almost 50 Chinese universities and think tanks, and it is still growing.

Without the sterling efforts and support of top administrators and academics at both the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and Beijing Foreign Studies University (BFSU), the conference which produced this book would not have taken place. At BFSU Hao Ping, then president (now China's Vice Minister of Education), and Vice President Jin Li both provided indispensable financial and administrative support. We were particularly indebted to Professor Sun Youzhong, Dean of the School of English and International Studies at BFSU, who went out of his way to do all he could to ensure the conference's success. Sincere thanks are also due to Professor Huang Ping, director of the IAS, and Professor Zhang Liping, then a senior fellow in that institute, who both labored long and hard to make the conference happen, encouraging and funding the participation of many of their institute's researchers. BFSU hosted the conference sessions, a demanding task of organization. Heartfelt gratitude is due to Professor Mei Renyi, head of the ASC, together with many of his center's faculty members, PhD and MA students, and undergraduates, who with outstanding enthusiasm and dedication handled all the conference logistics, ensuring not merely that the conference ran smoothly but that it was a pleasure to attend. In USCET, particular credit for assisting with this event is due to Hoang Anh Lam. My thanks go to all of them.

INTRODUCTION

CHINA VIEWS NINE-ELEVEN: ESSAYS IN TRANSNATIONAL AMERICAN STUDIES

PRISCILLA ROBERTS

As the tenth anniversary of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, approached, a vast array of commemorative activities and events took place, while an outpouring of articles, essays, and books marked the occasion. The destruction of both towers of New York's landmark World Trade Center by hijacked airliners loomed particularly large in the American and global psyche, implicitly symbolizing the other connected events of that day, including an attack by a third airliner on the Pentagon building in Washington, and the seizure of a fourth aircraft, whose passengers overcame their captors and crashed the plane, losing their own lives in the process. A decade later, Americans and others looked back, remembering the near 3,000 victims of those air strikes and seeking to assess the fall-out of every kind, over both the short and long term.¹ A spectacular Tribute in Light illuminated the New York night sky, reaching up four miles, while museum and art exhibits, drama, dance, and musical performances, quilts, radio and television shows, movies, books, and multimedia electronic creations all remembered or meditated in some way upon the attacks and their consequences. On the tenth anniversary itself, President Barack Obama—who just one day before had visited Arlington National Cemetery, burial place of many American military personnel who had died in combat in Afghanistan and Iraq—together with numerous other dignitaries, as well as families of the victims of 9/11, attended

¹ See, for example, “Artists Rise to an Occasion for Reflection,” and “9/11 in the Arts: An Anniversary Guide,” *New York Times*, August 26, 2011; “A Matter of Life and Death: University Exhibit About Buildings Looks Toward 9/11,” *Town Topics, Princeton, N.J.*, August 24, 2011.

emotional, well choreographed ceremonies at all three locations hit by the hijacked airliners, occasions commemorating the dead and looking to the future.²

When one reviews the torrent of commentary of every kind produced in the past ten years, it soon becomes clear that—even though, according to the Library of Congress catalogue, well over 2,000 books related in some way to the events of 9/11 have already appeared, not to mention tens of thousands of articles, movies, television and radio reports and programs, polls, oral histories, and other material—it is still far too soon to expect any definitive verdict on the attacks and their outcome. As Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai famously said, when asked for his verdict on the French Revolution, it is too early to tell. In almost every aspect, 9/11—its causes, its meaning, the appropriate response, and its outcome—remains controversial and hotly contested, with no consensus even within the United States, let alone beyond, on the significance of the events of September 11, 2001. A cynic might even inquire whether, horrific though it was, too much has been made of this particular tragedy. Including the 19 hijackers, 2,996 people died during the attacks that day, numbers dwarfed by the 100,000 civilian deaths during the recent war in Iraq, and even by the several thousand civilians killed in the conflict in Afghanistan. The past decade also saw over 230,000 perish in December 2004, victims of the Indian Ocean tsunami; 69,197 dead and 18,222 missing in the May 2008 Sichuan earthquake; and 15,780 dead and 4,122 missing in the March 2011 earthquake in Japan.³ By the standards of international catastrophes, US losses on September 11, 2001 might even be considered modest.

The operations on September 11, 2001 were, nonetheless, the worst single successful terrorist attack that any country has ever experienced, dwarfing the dozens, scores, or even hundreds of deaths that suicide bombers have managed to inflict on other occasions. Another casualty was the historic American sense of invulnerability. With the exception of the December 1941 Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in Hawaii, since the American Civil War of the 1860s the only combat fighting to take place on American soil consisted of decidedly one-sided small-scale frontier battles between the US military and the surviving native American tribes. The United States has almost always carried the battle to other countries. Even

² Eric Pfanner, “The day that never ended,” *International Herald Tribune*, September 10-11, 2011; “At site of terror, U.S. pays tribute,” *International Herald Tribune*, September 12, 2011; “Prayers at Ground Zero as the world remembers,” *South China Morning Post*, September 12, 2011.

³ These figures were taken from relevant Wikipedia articles.

during the Cold War, however disquieting the constant lurking fear of a nuclear attack, the Soviet threat was many thousands of miles away. No matter how hazardous certain urban areas in the United States might be, most average Americans were unaccustomed to facing genuine threats from hostile external powers or groups that exposed them to physical danger. 9/11 shattered such complacency. The spectacular and symbolic targeting of the World Trade Towers in New York, a capitalist icon, and the Pentagon, the country's defense headquarters—with the fourth, aborted air strike apparently intended to hit the US Congress building in Washington, the political heart of America—demonstrated the ineffectiveness of security measures in the world's richest and militarily most powerful nation. Compounding the sense of helplessness, in a still mysterious episode, within months the American mails delivered deadly anthrax spores to assorted politically prominent individuals, killing a number of people who came into contact with them. Almost simultaneously, two snipers terrorized Washington, DC, virtually closing down the nation's capital and murdering several children and adults before they were apprehended. If Americans felt beleaguered, they had some excuse for this. Even worse, perhaps, was the anxiety over what outrage—nuclear terrorism, for example, or chemical warfare—might strike them next. Everyday life suddenly seemed remarkably fragile.

The 9/11 strikes also ended a decade and more of triumphalism for the United States. The collapse of the Soviet Union, the ending of the Cold War in Europe, and the apparent spread of capitalist, free-market norms around the world, left the United States by far the strongest power in the world in terms of both economic dominance and military might. The young diplomat Francis Fukuyama, then deputy director of the US State Department's Policy Planning Staff, even echoed the authors of *1066 and All That*, who closed their spoof historical overview, first published in the British magazine *Punch*, by suggesting that after World War I "America was thus clearly Top Nation and history came to a [stop]."⁴ Fukuyama boldly suggested that the ending of the Cold War on Western terms genuinely represented "the end of history." The entire world had, he argued, accepted the principles of liberal capitalist democracy, with the United States taking the lead in promulgating these on a global scale.⁵ With no serious competitor in sight, in 1998 the United States, then still led by President Bill Clinton, declared a strategic objective of maintaining American global military predominance for the indefinite future.

⁴ Sellar and Yeatman, *1066 and All That*, 115.

⁵ Fukuyama, "The End of History," and *The End of History and the Last Man*.

The succeeding Bush administration, especially such figures as Donald Rumsfeld, the hawkish secretary of defense, shared this goal. Such hubris would be challenged not just by 9/11 itself, but by the subsequent wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. In both countries, quick and easy ostensible victories over the existing holders of power—the Taliban and Al Qaeda in Afghanistan, Saddam Hussein and his supporters in Iraq—were followed by lengthy and complicated insurgencies, while the United States faced great difficulties as it tried to establish strong and competent successor governments that would enjoy popular support yet be reasonably pro-American. The United States discovered that it was easier to intervene in a country than to leave, proving the truth of homespun warnings by Colin Powell, the cautious secretary of state, against assuming such responsibilities in the first place. George W. Bush eventually managed to reach a settlement under which all US forces were supposed to be withdrawn from Iraq by the end of 2011, an outcome that seemed likely to be largely achieved by the deadline, although it appeared possible that a small US contingent would remain in Iraq to train that country's own military and security personnel.⁶ Meanwhile, the influence Shiite Iran enjoyed in neighboring Iraq expanded, even as the United States attained little success in preventing Iran moving ever closer to its objective of producing nuclear weapons.

In June 2010 Afghanistan became the longest war in US history, a dubious honor previously accorded to Vietnam. Although President Barack W. Obama, on taking office in January 2009, sought to facilitate American withdrawal from Iraq in order to concentrate upon Afghanistan, a conflict the Bush administration neglected for several years in its eagerness to invade Iraq, a decade after 9/11 it was still unclear whether Obama's efforts to stabilize the situation in Afghanistan to a point where US forces felt secure in leaving the country would succeed. Taliban and Al Qaeda forces remained strong in substantial portions of Afghanistan.⁷ Influential political commentators, notably the British historian and politician Rory Stewart, repeatedly suggested that the United States had over-committed itself to Afghanistan, and that growing American involvement there was in fact counter-productive, making Afghanistan more rather than less unstable. Since Al Qaeda was unlikely to regain its former influence there, and the United States could in any case respond

⁶ "U.S. considers plan to keep small force in Iraq," *International Herald Tribune*, September 8, 2011; "Reality of U.S. pullout hits home in Iraq," *International Herald Tribune*, September 12, 2011.

⁷ Jill Abramson, "Mission unfinished," *International Herald Tribune*, September 10-11, 2011.

forcefully should this seem likely, Stewart argued that the United States should simply withdraw.⁸ US politicians found such advice unpalatable. Yet the American public was increasingly frustrated with the continuing casualties inflicted on US troops—not to mention civilian deaths among private security forces, journalists, aid workers, and other foreigners in Iraq and Afghanistan—in two conflicts originally expected to be brief and easily winnable ‘splendid little wars.’ Both wars also revealed major shortcomings within the US military, in terms of inadequate numbers of personnel and substandard equipment, flaws that belied Rumsfeld’s early hubristic braggadocio on his country’s ability to overawe all military competitors.

On May 2, 2011 a team of US Navy SEALs mounted a raid on the Pakistani city of Abbottabad, where for several years Osama bin Laden and various family members and supporters had been living in a secluded, heavily guarded compound, close to a Pakistani military installation. American military personnel killed bin Laden, whose body was buried secretly at sea. American pilotless drone missile planes also proved increasingly successful in targeting and eliminating other Al Qaeda leaders based in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Yet removing the original instigator of the 9/11 attacks and his top lieutenants did not necessarily guarantee US security against future strikes. Many in Pakistan sympathized with Al Qaeda and deeply resented the operation against bin Laden that American military personnel had undertaken in great secrecy on their country’s soil, without seeking permission from or even consulting the government. While American officials grimly suspected that high-level members of the Pakistani security forces had known for years of bin Laden’s presence in their country and even facilitated this, May 2nd became a date of humiliation that resonated bitterly in Pakistani political lore. Pakistanis also complained bitterly of the deaths their own country and Afghanistan had suffered in the War on Terror. They condemned American nation-building efforts in both states as wasteful and poorly conceived ventures that had primarily boosted military spending rather than developing long-term infrastructure, thereby stoking corruption and enriching well-positioned Afghan and Pakistani elites while bringing few lasting economic or political benefits.⁹

The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, themselves part of the broader ‘War on Terror’ that Bush proclaimed immediately after September 11, 2001,

⁸ Rory Stewart, “The momentum of war,” *International Herald Tribune*, September 10-11, 2011; also Stewart, “Afghanistan: What Could Work.”

⁹ Ahmed Rashid, “Ten years of rising resentments,” *International Herald Tribune*, September 10-11, 2011.

also contributed to what developed in 2008 into a major international economic crisis, one that still dominated the headlines in the third year of Obama's presidency. While precise estimates vary, on the tenth anniversary of the 2001 attacks, one newspaper calculated that, in return for the \$500,000 that Al Qaeda had spent in mounting the four hijackings, the United States had subsequently expended \$3.3 trillion in response, a return of \$7 million for every dollar Al Qaeda had invested. This included direct physical damage, the economic impact of 9/11, the costs of homeland security and financing two wars, plus anticipated future funding for these wars and for veterans' care. Bin Laden subsequently gloated over the success of his objective of "bleeding America to the point of bankruptcy." Other factors were undoubtedly at play here. George W. Bush, who inherited a balanced government budget from Bill Clinton, came into office in 2001 already determined to cut taxes and eager to mount a war against Iraq. After 9/11, he immediately pledged to spend all the money needed to fight the War on Terror, creating a vast homeland security apparatus as well as embarking on two wars whose costs spiraled out of control. In 2003 the Bush administration, optimistically assuming that the campaign in Afghanistan was fundamentally over, disputed estimates by the Congressional Budget Office that mounting a second war in Iraq would cost \$100 to \$200 billion, insisting on a lower figure of \$50 to \$60 billion. Both calculations were massively too low: by 2011 the war in Iraq had cost \$872 billion, with estimates of future war costs there standing at \$55 billion, while the bill for the conflict in Afghanistan had reached \$468 billion, with a further \$223 billion of spending on that country anticipated over the next five years. Ignoring the unexpectedly heavy expenditures demanded in response to 9/11, Bush nonetheless cut taxes; predictably, American government deficits soared. While the private sector absorbed part of the costs of 9/11, especially in areas such as the added inconveniences of air travel and insurance pay-outs for 9/11 related damage, at least one-fifth of the current American national debt was probably due to 9/11.¹⁰

In an era of economic abundance, the price might have been acceptable. This meant, however, that when a global economic crisis developed in summer 2008, the United States enjoyed far less flexibility and latitude in devising tactics to meet these new problems than might otherwise have been the case. Economic stimulus plans were less easy to fund when the United States government was already running enormous budget deficits and trapped in two wars from which it could not easily

¹⁰ Amanda Cox, "A 9/11 tally: \$3.3 trillion," and David E. Sanger, "Grim Decade's Huge Cost," *International Herald Tribune*, September 10-11, 2011; also Thomas L. Friedman, "The whole truth," *International Herald Tribune*, September 8, 2011.

withdraw. The original causes of the economic meltdown that began in summer 2008 were probably more closely related to housing and stock market bubbles, unrealistic credit policies, and flawed financial instruments than to 9/11 and its aftermath, but the economic effects of 9/11 almost certainly helped to intensify the financial crisis. To many, it seemed that in economic terms Bush's policies had been almost criminally irresponsible. Sobering data released just after the tenth anniversary of 9/11 revealed that the number of Americans—46.2 million, 15.1 percent of the population—living below the poverty line was the highest in the fifty-two years such statistics had been kept. Not since 1993 had a greater percentage of Americans lived in poverty. Meanwhile, median incomes had fallen to the level of 1996. Adjusting for inflation, for the first time since the Great Depression, the median American family income was lower than thirteen years earlier. Economists expected the situation to deteriorate further in the year to come.¹¹ As Americans became increasingly preoccupied with whether they could hold on to their houses and jobs and survive the economic downturn, interest in international affairs dropped precipitously.¹² While Americans jubilantly and publicly celebrated the death of bin Laden in May 2011, the fact that he could no longer threaten the United States perhaps even helped to shift attention further away from 9/11. Symptomatically, American school textbooks produced in 2010 contained much less detail on the 9/11 attacks and their consequences than did those published only a few years earlier.¹³

However successful he may prove in extricating the United States from Afghanistan and targeting yet more terrorists, for Barack Obama the next presidential election is likely to revolve first of all on how well he tackles the persistent economic recession. Short of another major terrorist strike against the United States, foreign policy is now likely to be judged first of all in its relation to economic issues. Yet 9/11 and especially its aftermath has also heightened and perhaps even produced a sense that the era of American global hegemony is over for good. Ten years later, many ruefully believed that the United States had over-reacted to 9/11, and that the Bush administration had exaggerated the extent of the threat that terrorism, however destructive the successful attacks in 2001 had been, genuinely posed to the United States. Retrospectively, in terms of rhetoric

¹¹ Sabrina Tavernise, "Poverty rate in U.S. hits highest mark on record," *International Herald Tribune*, September 15, 2011.

¹² Bruce Stokes, "Signs of US turning its back on the world," *South China Morning Post*, September 16, 2011.

¹³ Tamar Lewin, "A changing narrative," *International Herald Tribune*, September 10-11, 2011.

and action alike, at almost every level—including money spent, military operations, and the repressive measures imposed not just on terrorist suspects but on the general public—the American response seemed disproportionate and overblown, at times a panicky, near-hysterical whiplash recoil from shock and horror. “The attacks,” a journalist wrote, “inflicted on the American psyche a kind of collective post-traumatic stress disorder, producing at a societal level the hypervigilance that soldiers returning from Iraq and Afghanistan know too well.”¹⁴

Americans, accustomed to excess and hyperbole, faced the brutally disquieting suspicion that doing and spending less might well have accomplished more. One commentator, lamenting the carefree insouciance with which Bush launched a costly war against Iraq, diverting resources that could have been used more profitably elsewhere, went so far as to state that 9/11 “did not signal the arrival of a new world, but it has accelerated the end of the American Century.”¹⁵ Another journalist shared his sentiments, proclaiming: “The early 21st century has been a period of gathering American doubt. The American Century is behind us; this one still seeks its epithet among the emergent powers.” He considered this “power shift...inevitable but accelerated by 9/11 and by chance.”¹⁶ Yale University historian Paul Kennedy, seeking to assess how 9/11 changed the United States, believed that “the largest effect of 9/11 upon America is that it became distracted. Distracted in two very important ways. In the first place, it was distracted from many other things going on in the world. Secondly, it’s been distracted from the erosion of its financial strength and international competitiveness.”¹⁷ Another commentator highlighted the sense that, for the United States, the ten years following 9/11 had been a “lost decade,” when American preoccupation with the “global war on terror” allowed other nations, China, India, and Brazil, for example, to make economic and even—at least in China’s case—strategic gains at US expense.¹⁸ It seems unlikely that this damage can be reversed in the foreseeable future.

¹⁴ Scott Shane, “The fear that outstripped the threat,” *International Herald Tribune*, September 10-11, 2011.

¹⁵ Dominique Moisi, “An infamy in history,” *International Herald Tribune*, September 8, 2011.

¹⁶ Roger Cohen, “Imagining 9/11,” *International Herald Tribune*, September 9, 2011.

¹⁷ Paul Kennedy, “An America adrift,” *International Herald Tribune*, September 7, 2011.

¹⁸ Rupert Cornwell, “The Lost Decade,” *The Independent on Sunday*, September 11, 2011.

9/11 was not merely a domestic tragedy for the United States, affecting almost every aspect of daily life in that country, but an event of which the ramifications were felt in every corner of the globe. It had a huge impact upon American foreign policies, in terms of reordering US priorities, and also upon the country's relations with the rest of the world. Of nowhere, perhaps, was this more true than China. The Bush administration came to power with many of its members still seeking a new long-term opponent or threat to replace the Cold War's Soviet Russia. In 1993 Samuel P. Huntington, in his well-known essay "The Clash of Civilizations," later expanded into a book, had already suggested that in future international politics and rivalries would revolve around competition between radically different and mutually antagonistic cultural blocs, including the Western Judeo-Christian grouping, the Asian Confucian alignment, and the Muslim bloc of the Middle East and parts of Asia and Africa.¹⁹ Some in the Bush administration, notably the neo-conservatives of the Project for the New American Century, anticipated that the next American rival, the desirable target and international enemy against whom American power should be mustered, would be Iraq, with the largely Muslim Middle East providing the focus of US policy.

Others, particularly the so-called 'Team Blue,' a group of congressional aides, journalists, think tank personnel, and some junior- to mid-level officials within the Pentagon, many of whom had strong ties to Taiwan, preferred to view China as the foremost potential candidate for this role. They highlighted the economic and strategic threats that China presented to the United States, its harsh human rights record, its repressive policies toward Tibet and Xinjiang, and its readiness to supply weaponry to countries at odds with the United States, such as Pakistan, North Korea, Iran, and Iraq. The first months of Bush's administration were indeed difficult ones for Sino-American relations, especially after an American spy plane collided with a Chinese fighter jet off the coast of China, an encounter that resulted in the fighter pilot's death and the forced landing of the American aircraft on Hainan Island. A tense confrontation ensued, with the new American ambassador virtually besieged and imprisoned in his Beijing embassy by a screaming mob of student protesters. With a newly elected Democratic People's Party president in Taiwan, committed to the island's independence, many anticipated China's relationship with the United States would continue to deteriorate.

¹⁹ Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations" 22-49; Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*; also Huntington, ed., *The Clash of Civilizations?*

After 9/11, however, China swiftly moved to the back burner of American foreign policy concerns. While the advocates of war against Iraq still had sufficient clout and influence with the president to move it up the agenda as soon as the war with Afghanistan was over, this was not true of China.²⁰ Not all Chinese were necessarily sympathetic to the United States after 9/11. Nationalist resentment of the United States soared during the 1990s. Younger Chinese often deeply resented what they perceived as American condescension and bullying of China. In online chat rooms, many Chinese students suggested that the United States had deserved the September 11 attacks and that these represented the justified fruit of global American arrogance. That month, irate American officials abruptly sent home one group of Chinese journalists hosted by the International Institute of Education. Visiting the State Department on September 11, some of them very undiplomatically cheered and applauded as they watched television footage showing the Twin Towers disintegrating.²¹

The Chinese government displayed considerably more *savoir-faire*, sending condolences to the Bush administration, and offering its cooperation in moves against terrorism. Facing its own problems with Muslim insurgents in Xinjiang, China was willing to assist the United States in apprehending terrorist suspects, help the Americans appreciated. A recent newspaper report based on newly available Libyan documents detailed how in 2006 the Hong Kong government, working closely with American CIA and British intelligence operatives, arranged the rendition to Libya of a suspected Libyan terrorist and alleged Al Qaeda trainee then living in China. With or without the knowledge of the mainland Chinese authorities, he and his family were lured to Hong Kong, arrested, and sent on to Libya, where he was allegedly tortured.²² Although China subsequently opposed the American and British war against Iraq, fearing that this intervention in another nation's affairs set undesirable precedents that might be used against itself, it cannily refrained from exercising its UN Security Council veto to prevent this, thereby leaving the Bush administration in its debt. Chinese school and college textbooks nonetheless stress that the United States began the war in Iraq "without

²⁰ Lind, "A World Without 9/11: No President Obama, more China trouble, same debt crisis," *Washington Post*, September 10, 2011.

²¹ Mann, *Rise of the Vulcans*, 297-298.

²² Greg Torode, Lana Lam, and John Carney, "HK Link in Suspect's Rendition to Libya," Greg Torode, "H.K. Still Active as Spy Hub of the East," and Lana Lam, "Assurances sought on suspect's rights, fax shows," *South China Morning Post*, September 11, 2011; Greg Torode and Teddy Ng, "HK 'acted on its own' in Libyan rendition case," *South China Morning Post*, September 18, 2011.

permission from the United Nations,” and conclude that American unilateralism means it will be a long time before “a multipolar world” comes into being.²³ The war itself proved something of a bonus to China. Already embroiled in two difficult conflicts and suffering from military overstretch, the United States could not contemplate a further international confrontation over Taiwan. The Bush administration, by then grown decidedly disillusioned with and distrustful of the erratic President Chen Shui-bian of Taiwan, therefore put pressure on him to moderate his rhetoric and reach some kind of informal *modus vivendi* with China.

China, meanwhile, concentrated on its own economic development, which took off dramatically during this decade. This did not, however, mean that China abandoned all interest in the outside world. With government encouragement, Chinese businessmen invested heavily in Southeast Asia, Latin America, Central Asia, and Africa, winning access to massive agricultural, timber, food, and mineral resources around the world. By 2010 competitors complained that Chinese firms were buying up the production of entire mines across Latin America. Growing international political influence in these regions went hand in hand with economic investment, often at the expense of US or European interests. China ran a massive and what seemed—until 2009, when some temporary but substantial contraction occurred, a trend possibly resumed in fall 2011—ever growing trade surplus with the United States, supplying American consumers with inexpensive clothes, shoes, electronic goods, toys, furniture, and a wide range of other products.²⁴ Many of the profits were invested in US Treasury bonds, which helped to keep the interest rate on American government borrowing low, but also gave China a major financial stake in the United States, while leaving the US economy uncomfortably dependent on continued Chinese purchases of these securities.

According to *Forbes* magazine, by April 2011 China—not including Hong Kong—had 115 billionaires, almost double the 64 of one year earlier, and more than any other country in the world except the United States, home to 413 billionaires.²⁵ A few months later another survey, the Hurun Rich List, gave the number of Chinese billionaires as 271, up from

²³ Lewin, “A Changing Narrative.”

²⁴ “As pattern shifts, China surplus falls,” *International Herald Tribune*, September 27-18, 2011.

²⁵ Russell Flannery, “It’s China’s Year on the Forbes Billionaire List,” *Forbes* online (March 10, 2011), <http://www.forbes.com/sites/russellflannery/2011/03/10/its-chinas-year-on-the-2011-forbes-billionaires-list/>, accessed September 11, 2011.

189 the previous year.²⁶ Whichever figure was correct, China's cohort of super-rich was undoubtedly increasing dramatically. Despite the West's sustained economic difficulties, the international art market was flourishing, due in part to extensive purchases by newly rich Chinese buyers.²⁷ During the summer months, European universities were swamped by Chinese teenagers attending summer school programs, while groups of Chinese tourists trooped through the cities and scenic sites of Europe and the United States, and designer shops hired salespersons who were fluent in Putonghua. In April 2011, the International Monetary Fund predicted that by 2016 China would overtake the United States as the world's largest economy.²⁸ Speaking as the tenth anniversary of 9/11 approached, one German think tank executive observed: "What's clear, 10 years after Sept. 11, is that there are no winners. Both Al Qaeda and the United States are tired combatants and both Europe and the United States are in deep crisis. Maybe the winner is China."²⁹ By 2011 the level of international respect China commanded made even its leaders nervous, as did continuing tensions with the United States over trade and economic issues and human rights, and international political and strategic competition between the two. This reportedly led Chinese officials to prefer a 'G-3' world based on a triangular relationship between the United States, China, and Europe, rather than a bipolar international system with only two major players, China and the United States.³⁰

While Chinese leaders had since the early 1970s regarded their relationship with the United States as more significant than any other, US officials now likewise described their relationship with China as the "most important bar none," a distinction once reserved for Japan. An entire cohort of think tanks, academics, political commentators, and journalists devoted themselves to the growth industry of predicting and managing the future course of Sino-American relations.³¹ These were by no means

²⁶ Cary Huang, "Rapid Rise of Chinese Billionaires," *South China Morning Post*, September 8, 2011.

²⁷ Robin Pogrebin, "Art market welcomes rise of Chinese collectors," *International Herald Tribune*, September 8, 2011.

²⁸ David Gardner, "The Age of America Ends in 2016: IMF Predicts the Year China's Economy will Surpass U.S.," *Mail online* (April 26, 2011), <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1380486/The-Age-America-ends-2016-IMF-predicts-year-Chinas-economy-surpass-US.html>, accessed September 11, 2011.

²⁹ "The day that never ended," *International Herald Tribune*, September 9, 2011.

³⁰ Parag Khanna and Mark Leonard, "Why China wants a G-3 world," *International Herald Tribune*, September 8, 2011.

³¹ For just a few examples, see Friedberg, *A Contest for Supremacy*; Brown et al.,

entirely smooth, on either the military or economic front. As the Chinese navy expanded, a process that is continuing, clashes and military competition between US and Chinese forces in the Pacific became more frequent. In protest against continuing US arms sales to Taiwan, in 2010 China temporarily cut off military-to-military contacts with the United States.³² Western officials urged China to take a greater role in international organizations and the world economy, while persistently pressuring China to allow its currency to rise against the dollar and to import more American-made goods, thereby reducing the US trade deficit with China. In return, Chinese officials suggested that Americans should save more and display greater fiscal discipline.

It was perhaps symbolic that two days before the tenth anniversary of 9/11, US Vice President Joseph R. Biden, who had just returned from a visit to China, published an article affirming just how essential it was to maintain good Sino-American relations and close cooperation between the two countries. Denying that the United States was a power in decline, Biden pointed out that the US Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was still twice that of China, and American per capita GDP eleven times China's. He also affirmed that the US government would never default on its debt obligations, 70 percent of which were held by Americans and only 8 percent by Chinese. Biden argued that China's rising economic might would ultimately benefit the United States, as Chinese consumers would provide a market for American exports. He also asserted that militarily the United States was determined to maintain "a strong presence" in the Pacific region. Declaring that the United States sought to assist and work with China in making its rise smooth and peaceful, Biden urged Chinese officials to engage in military and strategic exchanges and dialogue with the United States, upwardly revalue their currency, the renminbi, and improve their human rights practices.³³ Biden's article encapsulated the present official American line toward China, as American leaders sought

eds., *The Rise of China*; Buttsworth, *The Dragon Wakes*; Jacques, *When China Rules the World*; Li Minqi, *The Rise of China and the Demise of the Capitalist World Economy*; Bergsten et al., eds., *China's Rise*; Schmitt, ed., *The Rise of China*; Walter and Howie, *Red Capitalism*; Fishman, *China, Inc.*; Womack, ed., *China's Rise in Historical Perspective*; Kynge, *China Shakes the World*; Yoshihara and Holmes, *Red Star Over the Pacific*. The list could be extended almost indefinitely.

³² Austin Ramzy, "Troubled Waters," *Time*, August 22, 2011; see also Yoshihara and Holmes, *Red Star Over the Pacific*.

³³ Joseph R. Biden, Jr., "China's rise isn't America's demise," *International Herald Tribune*, September 9, 2011.

to attest to their own country's continuing viability, while seeking to persuade China to follow policies congenial to the United States.

If American leaders now devote enormous attention to China, the United States looms extremely large in China's consciousness, far more so than any individual European nation. The tenth anniversary of September 11, 2011, has provided the impetus for publishing a selection of essays originating from a conference held in China in the autumn of 2007, an occasion where scholars sought to assess the political, economic, and cultural impact of 9/11 upon the United States both domestically and internationally. Since the reopening of relations between China and the United States in the 1970s, and even more since Deng Xiaoping launched his modernization policies, Chinese scholars, academics, and students have scrutinized the United States and sought to learn more about the country. Their reasons for doing so range from the need of government officials at every level, whether central, provincial, or municipal, and in a wide range of areas—diplomatic, economic, cultural, and military—for accurate information and understanding of the United States, to the fascination that American culture and society holds for so many Chinese, even those who detest many US policies. Some Chinese also find studying the United States—and sometimes other foreign countries—a lens through which to approach subjects that are still problematic in their own country, such as women's rights or economic inequality.³⁴ Later in this volume, the Beijing academic Teng Jimeng speaks of the lessons he feels the American Sixties carry for China as it develops. The past three decades, therefore, have seen the rapid growth of American Studies in China, together with an ongoing debate as to precisely what American Studies as a discipline should mean in China, and just how much it should follow or diverge from patterns adopted elsewhere, both within and outside the United States.³⁵

Among the major forces driving American Studies in China since the beginning of this century has been the US-China Education Trust, founded

³⁴ See Shambaugh, *Beautiful Imperialist*; Wang, *Limited Adversaries*; Shen, *Redefining Nationalism in Modern China*; McGiffert, ed., *Chinese Images of the United States*; Roberts, "Introduction," in *American Studies with Chinese Characteristics*, 1-32, also available at *Journal of Transnational American Studies* 3:1 (2011), 1-36, <http://escholarship.org/uc/item/0ng0v7gc>, accessed September 12, 2011; and Roberts, "American Studies in China," in Sichuan University American Studies Research Center, *America in the Age of Globalization*, 355-363.

³⁵ See esp. the essays in Part I of Roberts, ed., *Bridging the Sino-American Divide*; and the various reports in Priscilla Roberts, ed., *American Studies in China: A 30 Years Retrospective* (2011), US-China Education Trust Website, <http://www.uscet.net/template/page.cfm?id=211>, accessed September 12, 2011.

in 1998 by Julia Chang Bloch, the first Asian American ambassador ever appointed in the United States, and the American Studies Network of Chinese academic institutions the organization established shortly afterwards. The American Studies Network holds annual conferences at which scholars drawn from the various different streams of the discipline, politics, history, international relations, economics, literature, culture, and social studies, come together to bring their varied expertise to bear on a single theme.³⁶ In 2007 over sixty such scholars gathered in Beijing to focus upon the United States since September 11, 2001. Joining them were several American Studies specialists from outside China, most of them individuals who already had substantial academic links to China, including some visiting China under the Fulbright program. In 2009 a selection of these essays were published in Chinese in Beijing.³⁷ The tenth anniversary of September 11, 2001, seemed an ideal opportunity to make these available to a wider audience, and to incorporate Chinese scholarship and viewpoints into the broader intellectual debate on 9/11.

The essays included here range across the spectrum of American Studies, approaching 9/11 from the perspectives of political science, international relations, history, literature, culture, and film studies. They address a wide range of issues, including anti-Americanism, soft power, international diplomacy, US and Chinese strategic policies, neo-conservatism, the US electoral system, congressional-presidential relations, immigration, the media, the commemoration of 9/11, and its impact upon novels, films, and popular music. Sixteen of the authors are Chinese, one from Taiwan and the others from mainland China, with the remaining six drawn from the United States, Britain, Germany, and Australia. Many of the Chinese authors have spent lengthy periods conducting research and in several cases earning degrees at a variety of American institutions, examples of the growing number of Chinese scholars who return to their own country to teach after undergoing training overseas. Many of these essays also illustrate the huge boost that the Internet has given to Chinese academics, and indeed to international scholarship as a whole, with a wide range of sources, including leading print newspapers, magazines, and journals, polls, and government

³⁶ Volumes resulting from several of these conferences have already been published in English or Chinese. See Roberts, ed., *Bridging the Sino-American Divide*; Mei Renyi and Fu Meirong, eds., *Changes and Continuities: The United States After 9-11*; and Sichuan University American Studies Research Center, *America in the Age of Globalization*.

³⁷ Mei Renyi and Fu Meirong, eds., *Changes and Continuities: The United States After 9-11*.

publications readily accessible to serious researchers. Whereas thirty years ago the finer points of the American political system, notably the relationship between Congress and the presidency, often baffled Chinese researchers, by now, as several of these essays reveal, most are extremely familiar with the complexities of the separation of powers and the US Constitution. Conspicuously absent is the Marxist interpretive ideological framework that would once have been *de rigueur* for mainland Chinese scholars writing about the United States. Empiricism, it seems, is now largely dominant in Chinese American Studies.

Prof. Mei Renyi, the doyen of American Studies in China, admired teacher and mentor to scores of younger scholars, opens the volume with a densely researched and tightly argued analysis of what might seem the surprising global upsurge of anti-Americanism in the aftermath of 9/11. Although the United States briefly attracted sympathy from around the world, with even communist Cuba offering condolences and assistance, the actions of the Bush administration, especially its determination to invade Iraq in defiance of much international opinion, soon reversed this trend. Muslims particularly resented what they perceived as the administration's bias in favor of Israel, and most nations disliked American unilateralism in international affairs, as well as its repressive disregard for human rights at home and abroad, as evidenced by its domestic surveillance policies and the tactics of kidnapping, rendition, and torture employed against terrorist suspects. On the more mundane level, other countries often resented aggressive US demands that their citizens and institutions must comply with, for example, highly restrictive and intrusive American financial regulations on foreign transactions that were supposedly designed to prevent money-laundering by terrorists. Heavy-handed employment of American coercive power wrought havoc upon what Joseph S. Nye, Jr., the well-known Harvard political scientist, terms 'soft power,' a nation's ability to win the support of other governments and their peoples due to the excellence and attractive qualities of its institutions, culture, and way of life.³⁸ Around the world, American prestige plummeted.

Aggressively unilateralist tendencies in American policy were, Mei argues, reinforced by the longstanding exceptionalist American heritage of mission, expansionism, and manifest destiny, and the belief that the United

³⁸ The evolution of Nye's thinking on 'soft power,' its role in US foreign policy, and its relationship to the international standing of the United States, can be traced through several books he has published in the past two decades: *Bound to Lead* (1990), *The Paradox of American Power* (2002), *Soft Power* (2004), *The Powers to Lead* (2008), and *The Future of Power* (2011).

States was a uniquely virtuous nation entrusted with a duty of global leadership. He also points to the historic tendency of Americans to construct the world in terms of We and Others, and to perceive and demonize the Other as an enemy and morally inferior being, a heritage that underpinned the attitudes of Bush administration officials toward the rest of the world. All these factors had also characterized US policies during the Cold War, a legacy that greatly affected the mindset of many Bush administration officials. Americans therefore failed to recognize that they were largely unwelcome in Iraq, most of whose people wished them to leave rather than welcoming them as liberators. Mei nonetheless remains optimistic that the American people would ultimately be wise enough to turn against such policies.

In November 2008, the election as president of the more conciliatory Barack Obama seemed to demonstrate that Americans had indeed recognized the value of a modicum of humility. Obama's self-effacing style as well as his ethnic background initially entranced the world, and the American image overseas improved dramatically. Almost three years into Obama's presidency, European views of the United States were still appreciably more favorable than during the Bush years.³⁹ By 2011, however, Obama's failure to win effective control of US domestic politics had eroded his image, as did his inability—despite his coup in dispatching Osama bin Laden—to bring the ongoing conflict in Afghanistan to a speedy end. International resentment of US unilateralism after 9/11 lingered, and was being passed on to a younger generation. In France, China, Brazil, and India, among other countries, high school textbooks were critical of the American response to the attacks, with Indian authors terming this “a kind of cowboy justice that did not much defer to diplomacy.” A 2007 Indian textbook highlighted illegal US renditions of terrorist suspects around the world into secret prisons where they were subjected to torture. A government-sponsored French textbook scheduled for introduction in 2012 argued that the 9/11 attacks marked the end of US world hegemony, inaugurating “a new era in international relations, marked by the definite abandonment of the belief in the capacity for a single State, be it endowed with all of the attributes of power, to ensure the stability of global order in an international environment in profound transformation.”⁴⁰ While a degree of wishful thinking may have informed such narratives, the rejection of US pretensions to international primacy was clear. So, too, was the official intention to ensure that young people in

³⁹ “The day that never ended,” *International Herald Tribune*, September 10-11, 2011.

⁴⁰ Lewin, “A changing narrative.”

these countries were indoctrinated in this outlook, lessons that might well affect their future views of the United States.

Liu Mingzheng addresses the question of anti-Americanism from a slightly different perspective than Mei Renyi, tracing its European roots back to the eighteenth century, well before the very establishment of the United States. Using some of the same poll data as Mei Renyi, he highlights some broad trends, including the global nature of post-9/11 anti-Americanism and the failure of Bush administration initiatives to remedy the defects in the US international image. He also points to rising dislike of Americans—as opposed to their country—among young people around the world during the Bush years. Like Mei Renyi, Liu notes the particular strength of anti-Americanism among Muslim fundamentalists. Besides tracing the roots of American policies to the country's Puritan heritage and exceptionalist beliefs, he also suggests that US consciousness of its status as the 'sole superpower' and its concomitant desire to promote the global spread of what Americans considered to be democracy had much to do with the country's international unpopularity. He characterized the early twenty-first century United States as "virtually an imperial power," however reluctant it might be to admit this, with military bases, satellites, and naval and air power spread all around the world, assets that encouraged a hubristic outlook among American policymakers and the general public. The unilateralism of post-9/11 US foreign policy was also, he argues, responsible for its growing unpopularity. The increasing cultural Americanization of much of the world likewise encouraged anti-Americanism, almost as a reflex response. Unless Americans paid more attention to international opinion and displayed greater multilateralism in international affairs, Liu warned, their contempt for the rest of the world was likely to undermine their ability to deploy 'soft power' to their country's advantage.

Both Liu and Mei refer to well-established traditions of American foreign policy dating back to the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries, a legacy on which, they argue, Bush administration officials drew when responding to 9/11. The distinguished Australian scholar Ian Tyrrell describes in detail the longstanding traditions of imperialism that informed US reactions to the attacks, stressing the long-term continuities in American foreign policy thinking and practice. Like several other authors in this volume, Tyrrell disputes the idea, so often expressed at the time, that the events of September 11, 2001, had 'changed everything.' In reality, Tyrrell argues, during its lengthy period of territorial and cultural expansion in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the United States had a long heritage of fighting small border wars, often using allies and proxy