

*Chinese Perceptions of the U.S.: An Exploration of China's Foreign Policy Motivations.* By BIWU ZHANG. Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2012. xvi, 266 pp. \$70.00 (cloth).

doi:10.1017/S0021911812001441

This is a workmanlike analysis of certain Chinese perceptions of the United States, based on an exhaustive examination of articles published in the 1990s in six leading Chinese academic journals. The author is Deputy Director of the Asia-Pacific Institute at the School of International Relations, Xiamen University. This book is the published version of his Ohio State University doctoral dissertation. One major chapter, on Chinese perceptions of American power, appeared first in *Asian Survey* in 2005.

The book proceeds in a sensibly structured way. Zhang opens with the central questions: "Is China a status quo or a revisionist country, and what is China's motivation vis à vis the United States?" (p. 13). He then reviews the foundational social science literature, defines the "perceivers" (i.e., those who have the "perceptions" he will analyze), delineates his sources, explains his choice of subject matter for each of the remaining chapters of the book, and sets to work. Those chapters discuss Chinese perceptions of threat from the United States, of "opportunity from the United States," of American power, of the American economy, and of American politics. The conclusion attempts to wrap the several segments of the analysis into a definition of Chinese "motivations," "dominant images," and the like.

Zhang orients his research findings to the work of David Shambaugh and Michael Pillsbury, who in the 1980s conducted similar reviews of voluminous written sources.

The result is a solid exercise in content analysis drawn from a wide body of material. Most of the endnotes accompanying each chapter are bibliographical, often consisting of lengthy lists of articles. The longest such footnote this reviewer noticed ran nearly three pages (ch. 7, note 35, pp. 179–82). If the reader simply accepts the conceptual and terminological schemata, often presented in tables, by which Zhang classifies the content of his materials and organizes his own conclusions, the end product has a certain neatness to it.

But inevitably there are problems.

First, the book, appearing in 2012, fails to bridge the chronological gap between the decade in which his sources were published and the present-day appearance of his own book for a 2012 readership. By and large, Zhang's conclusions assert that Chinese perceptions in the 1990s are less gloomy, less prickly, and less negative about the United States than Chinese perceptions of the United States had been in the 1980s. But a reader in 2012 needs to know either about what Chinese perceptions *were* "then," or what they *are* "now." It would have been easy to meet this challenge, mainly through deft use of verb tenses, but the author has not done so.

We would have benefited also from some analysis of the intellectual and political background against which the numerous authors cited in this book were

presenting their ideas. The 1990s were a decade of huge change; they began in the bitter aftermath of June 4 (virtually unmentioned in the book) and continued through the reigniting of “Reform and Opening” after Deng Xiaoping’s “Journey to the South” in 1992. Then came the two mid-decade Taiwan crises, the economic takeoff that culminated at the end of the decade with the U.S.-China agreement on terms of China’s WTO accession in 1999 (and the formal accession in 2001), the American political convulsion over alleged Chinese theft of “crown jewel” nuclear secrets, and other traumas of the late 1990s.

By now, despite widening and deepening mutual familiarity, the problem for Americans and Chinese alike of understanding each other’s perceptions—and words—has, at times, become more rather than less difficult. In a recent private correspondence, an American researcher addressed the problem succinctly:

If you talk to senior PRC US experts in person versus reading what they write in print, one could be forgiven for thinking that the written products were put together by different people. As one expert has explained to me, the “requests for comment” often come with “suggested guidelines” or phrases that the higher-up would like associated with these scholars—sometimes these are included even if the scholar has returned a draft that did not use them. . . . China is often a place of smoke and mirrors—one frequently doesn’t know an interlocutor’s true views nor does one know who commissioned a given piece or why.

Still, taken on its own terms, this is a useful study, and it ends on a largely positive note. In his final pages, the author stresses the opportunities for mutual benefit that China and the United States will face if they can manage to cooperate with one another. That is a reasonable aspiration, but one that will demand continued, even deeper efforts on both sides.

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*China on the Sea: How the Maritime World Shaped Modern China.* By ZHENG YANGWEN. Leiden: Brill, 2012. viii, 362 pp. \$176.00 (cloth).  
doi:10.1017/S0021911812001453

This book draws on archival documents, published histories, and visual materials to argue that Qing China (1644–1912) was a strongly consumerist society, and that much of what it consumed arrived by sea, often on foreign ships. Zheng Yangwen’s interest in the huge role of foreign goods in early modern Chinese consumption grows out of her earlier book on opium, which drew attention to the late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century fashion for