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The Garment Industry between Local Configurations
and Global Flows

Nina Hachigian (ed.), *Debating China: The US-China Relationship in Ten Conversations*,

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During the 1970s, diplomatic interactions between the United States and the People's Republic of China (PRC) were largely limited to key strategic issues, most notably counterbalancing the Soviet Union and cross-Straits relations. After the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1979, and increasingly so in the post-Cold War period, the intensification of relations between the U.S. and China has resulted in a rapid broadening of the bilateral diplomatic agenda. U.S.-China relations have expanded from the diplomatic arena to exchanges involving security, trade, tourism, business, culture, education, health, environment, science and technology, etc. In the twenty-first century, the depth and breadth of the bilateral diplomatic agenda encompasses an extremely broad range of bilateral, regional, and global issues that are discussed and negotiated in bilateral, regional, and multilateral settings (the UN, the G-20, the WTO, the East Asia Summit, etc.) Relatedly, the cooperative or competitive dynamics between the U.S. and the PRC vary from one issue area to the other.

Nina Hachigian's book aims to provide a portrait of these competitive and cooperative forces at play in the U.S.-China relationship by means of a dialogue – in the form of exchanges of letters – between Chinese and American scholars and policy experts. In each chapter, two specialists, one Chinese and one American, discuss one of the following nine major issue areas on the U.S.-China diplomatic agenda: economics, human rights, media, global roles, climate and energy, development, military affairs, Taiwan, and regional security. In light of the significant strategic distrust that characterises the most important bilateral relationship of the century, *Debating China* also seeks to offer a venue for enhancing mutual understanding between the two sides.

After the introductory chapter by Kenneth Lieberthal and Wang Jisi, which provides an overview of the main international and domestic factors that are driving the U.S. and China toward conflict, rivalry, or partnership – and in which the two authors stress the deep-seated mistrust between the two countries – the first issue area examined in the book is the economic dimension of the Sino-American relationship. Barry Naughton and Yao Yang critically discuss the two countries' economic models and the main concerns in the field of bilateral trade and investment, ranging from intellectual property rights protection, to rebalancing the American and Chinese growth models, to the recent economic reforms in the PRC. Zhou Qi and Andrew Nathan assess the role of "values" and ideology in U.S. and Chinese foreign policy as well as their diverging conceptions of democracy and human rights as either civil and political rights or economic and social rights. The transformative impact of the media, including Internet and online blogs, on the domestic societies of both countries, and their implications for U.S.-China

relations, are analysed by Wang Shuo and Susan Shirk. The authors converge in their assessment that the media are providing fertile soil for the growth of anti-foreign nationalism in China that could push the country into confrontations with the U.S. and its neighbours, but they disagree on the relative role of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in this process. Yuan Peng and Nina Hachigian explore how both countries see their respective global roles and responsibilities in the contemporary international system. While disagreeing over the likelihood of America's decline and decreased relative power, they candidly discuss the extent to which the U.S. is willing to share power with the PRC, and whether Beijing is willing to take on greater responsibility in managing global issues. Kelly Sims Gallagher and Qi Ye show how environmental issues have also become an area of growing interaction between the world's two largest polluters, with converging interests but differing domestic challenges in tackling pollution and the development of clean energy. The main differences in the Chinese and American approaches to development and foreign aid are highlighted in the chapter by Elizabeth Economy and Zha Daojiong. While the former offers significant criticism regarding China's practices in the field of foreign aid and development policies (including on corporate social responsibility and the role of state-owned enterprises), the latter stresses that China's practices have substantially improved over the years and have evolved in line with, and as a function of, its development path. Christopher Towney and Xu Hui's chapter on the military dimension goes to the heart of the strategic distrust that permeates the Sino-American relationship and trickles down into other issues on the diplomatic agenda. They candidly demonstrate profoundly diverging views and disagreements on key areas such as the two countries' capabilities, intentions, and strategies in the modernisation of their armed forces, on their position on territorial disputes, on the status of Taiwan, etc. The latter topic is analysed in depth by Jian Qingguo and Alan Romberg in the chapter on Taiwan and Tibet. While agreeing that Taiwan might be the most likely trigger for a U.S.-China conflict, their exchange also shows apparently irreconcilable perspectives on each other's intentions vis-à-vis the future status of Taiwan and its role in their respective regional strategic postures. In the last chapter of the volume, Wu Xinbo and Michael Green further exemplify the divergence in the two countries' assessments of their regional security roles and challenges, from the North Korea quandary, to territorial disputes around the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands and in the South China Sea, to the two countries' "hegemonic" ambitions in the region.

The original format of the book offers a fruitful venue for exploring the mutual perceptions and areas of agreement and disagreement among scholars and policy experts from both countries. Overall, the chapters of the volume collectively bring to light the trust gap in the bilateral relationship on a variety of issues, ranging from exchange rate policies, to human rights, to investment and aid, to maritime issues. However, the most significant area of suspicion and concern is, unsurprisingly, in the security realm – what is labelled as "strategic distrust." As stressed in the conclusion by former Deputy Secretary of State James Steinberg, the volume sheds light on the deep uncertainty and mistrust that characterise both countries' perceptions of the other's motives and strategies. Instances of recurrent apprehension include whether the U.S. is intent on containing China, whether China seeks to extrude and/or to challenge the hegemony of the U.S. in the Asia Pacific, the rationale for each country's policy vis-à-vis Taiwan, and the military modernisation of both countries. On the other hand, while acknowledging the limits to collaboration stemming from deep strategic distrust, the volume's contributors all advocate greater cooperation in the bilateral

relationship. Specifically, they put forward a range of policy recommendations and suggest pragmatic steps aimed at reducing areas of friction and expanding areas of cooperation on issues of common concern (from the environment and climate change to proliferation, piracy, and financial stability, etc.). Indeed, none of the American and Chinese contributors believes strategic confrontation between the world's preeminent power and its rising competitor is inevitable. The underlying key thread running throughout the pages of the book is the question of to what extent – and how – strategic distrust can be tamed to facilitate U.S.-China cooperation in bilateral, regional, and global issues, thereby avoiding a military confrontation. It is the balance between these conflicting forces and contradictory logics at play in the U.S.-China relationship – those of strategic distrust versus common interests and cooperation – that might well decide the prospects of great power conflict, or its absence, in the twenty-first century.

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Ian Aitken and Michael Ingham,
Hong Kong Documentary Film,
Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press,
2014, 237 pp.

JUDITH PERNIN

Until recently, even the best informed cinephiles and scholars would have been hard pressed to name any Hong Kong documentaries or academic work on the subject. The colonial nature of public audio-visual institutions before the handover in 1997 and Hong Kong cinema's commercial orientation certainly accounted for the low visibility of local productions, dominated as they were by imperatives other than the purely cinematographic. Moreover, Chinese language cinema's transnational dimension and Hong Kong's particular status vis-à-vis the People's Republic of China also made for poor appreciation of its contribution to the history of this form. The works of PRC scholars do consider the contributions of Hong Kong studios dealing with mainland China, but hardly anything is said about truly local productions and even less about those put out by colonial institutions.⁽¹⁾ In any case, most of these documentaries are difficult to come by, having been lost or damaged following the transformations of Hong Kong's audio-visual industry.

Given that documentary cinema is to a large extent linked to politics, its history cannot be written without considering public cinematographic and televisual institutions, nor without referring to the more general context of their place of production. This is precisely what Ian Aitken and Michael Ingham set out to do in this book by focusing on the history of Hong Kong's audio-visual structures, and by featuring film analyses that illustrate the form's diversity.

For instance, in the first chapter, Aitken retraces the origins of *A Page of History*, Lai Man-wai's film made from newsreel footage shot throughout the 1920s and edited together in 1941. The film, in homage to Sun Yat-sen, often appears in mainland publications for its account of the Northern Expedition. It is re-examined here in light of new research on its conditions of production and distribution, relying on two versions of the film preserved in Beijing and Hong Kong and restored early in the last decade. Chapter 2 deals with among others "Picturesque committed films" by local private companies that championed Leftist ideas in the period 1947-69. Analysis of the documentary *Water Comes Over the Hills from the East* (Lo Kwan-hung, 1965) shows how the director adapted a historical water shortage crisis to glorify the Chinese government.

Such a clearly partisan dimension comes through entirely differently in official productions, i.e. colonial ones, considered in the next two sections. Chapter 3 examines the Hong Kong Film Unit (HKFU, 1959-1973) based on studies by Aitken of colonial film and of John Grierson.⁽²⁾ As the progressive leader of the British documentary movement in the 1930-40s, Grierson was also instrumental in setting up or influencing the Commonwealth public documentary institutions, including those in British colonies. But Aitken shows that unlike in Australia, New Zealand, or even India, HKFU productions had the sole objective of promoting Colonial Office "propaganda and education" (p. 76). HKFU's news and educational documentaries were duly screened between advertisements and full-length films in cinema halls or shown by mobile teams in refugee camps. Aitken draws attention to these films' wilful myopia in avoiding any direct reference to China, even during such tragedies as the Great Leap famine (1959-1961), although that very event had led to the massive influx of refugees to Hong Kong. Local social and political problems such as the 1967 riots were also ignored in *Hong Kong Today* news, more proof that, "This can hardly be said to constitute an attempt to use the official film in an interventionist, reform-oriented, 'Griersonian' way" (p. 83). Moreover, as the colonial government had not thought it necessary to endow the territory with substantial cinematographic structures, more prestigious "public relations" documentaries vaunting the Hong Kong success story for the local and overseas markets were actually made in collaboration with foreign companies such as Singapore's Cathay. This was the case with *This is Hong Kong* (Noni Wright, 1961), a film whose fame is assured thanks to its appropriation in *One Way Street on a Turntable* (Anson Mak, 2007) more than due to its own quality.

Chapters 4 and 5 offer an account of the evolution of television documentaries while Hong Kong was transiting from being a colony to a Special Administrative Region of China. Aitken focuses on the way in which politics translate into RTHK's public service productions and the programmes of ATV and TVB chains, whose commercial interests were becoming increasingly indistinguishable from those of China. The complexity of Hong Kong television stations' stances especially around 1989 is brought out through several documentaries such as the outstanding *Spring of Discontent* (TVB), a surprising film in the Direct Cinema style on the democratic movement

1. Fang Fang, *Zhongguo jilupian fazhan shi* (A history of the development of Chinese documentaries), Beijing, Zhongguo xiju chubanshe, 2003, 553 pp.; and Shan Wanli, *Zhongguo jilu dianying shi* (History of Chinese documentary films), Beijing, Zhongguo dianying chubanshe, 2005, 455 pp.
2. Studies carried out with a network of researchers on colonial documentary films: see <http://documentary-film.af.hkbu.edu.hk> (accessed on 3 July 2015) and two articles by Ian Aitken: "The Development of Official Film-Making in Hong Kong," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, Vol. 32, No. 4, 2012, pp. 589-609; and "Television documentary film in Hong Kong: The case of Hong Kong's two terrestrial television broadcasters," *Studies in Documentary Film*, Vol. 9, No. 2, 2015, pp. 95-113.