

## Hu Shih, Jiang Menglin, and the Rise of Wilsonianism in China at the End of WWI<sup>\*</sup>

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### Abstract

Past scholarship has attributed the rise of pro-Wilsonianism in China to the Committee on Public Information (CPI), a wartime propaganda organization led by George Creel (1876-1953) and his Shanghai office. This article shifts the focus to the optimistic pro-Wilsonian views held by American-trained Chinese intellectuals in New York. It foregrounds the neglected role of transnational individuals in this transmission of ideas and knowledge across the Pacific, and argues that American-trained Chinese intellectuals such as Hu Shih 胡適 (1891-1962) and Jiang Menglin 蔣夢麟 (1886-1964) and their interpretations of American political ideals for a Chinese audience ultimately contributed to the

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enthusiasm for and eventual disillusionment with the “Wilsonian Moment” in China. The Chinese Exclusion Act, however, enforced legislative measures that restricted Chinese immigration and reinforced racial exclusion policies in the United States. Meanwhile, the American-trained Chinese intellectuals who embraced Wilsonian politics remained curiously silent towards the racist aspects of Wilsonian democracy, and their vision towards the Wilsonian postwar international order later introduced to China continued to contribute to the expectations for Woodrow Wilson by the end of WWI. When it became clear that Woodrow Wilson had a limited intention of extending anti-colonial promises to non-white audiences, the Chinese intellectuals’ faith in Wilsonian principles was shattered.

**Keywords:** Woodrow Wilson, American-trained Chinese intellectuals, Chinese Exclusion Act, “Wilsonian Moment”

## 1. Introduction

Near the end of WWI, China responded to American President Woodrow Wilson's (1856-1924) postwar rhetoric of "self-determination" with unprecedented hope. The American ambassador to China at the time, Paul Samuel Reinsch (1869-1923), keenly observed: "Probably nowhere else in the world had expectations of America's leadership at Paris been raised so high as in China." Wilson's declarations of postwar international order held immense impact in China and his utterances reached the most remote regions of the country.<sup>1</sup> The Chinese keenly expected the postwar international order under the American leadership primarily due to their aspirations for the postwar international order promised by Wilson, reflecting what historian Erez Manela has encapsulated as the global "Wilsonian Moment." Manela portrays the unprecedented global "Wilsonian Moment" as the period when the American promise for postwar order attracted anticolonial aspirations in Egypt, Korea, China, India, and French Indochina between spring and winter of 1918-1919. Though such imagination hardly reflected Woodrow Wilson's intentions when he used the term "self-determination," which tragically led to the disillusionment after the Paris Peace Conference, it directly led to the simultaneous eruption of anticolonial upheavals that occurred in the spring of 1919 when colonial leaders launched their claims of the right of self-determination.<sup>2</sup>

Before the end of WWI, the "Wilsonian Moment" just started to come into shape in China. Wilson's wartime speeches, translated into Chinese, became widely circulated pamphlets. Aside from that, optimistic pro-American sentiments were visible everywhere and impressed foreign observers in China. Eugene Barnett (1888-1970), an American missionary who commenced his career in China as a secretary of the YMCA in Hangzhou, vividly recounted

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1 Paul S. Reinsch, *An American Diplomat in China* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1922), 364.

2 Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

his experiences. Barnett's observations offer a unique window for us to comprehend the widespread pro-Wilsonian sentiments shared by both ordinary individuals and casual observers of the Chinese situation in 1919:

It is marvelous to see the almost reverential regard in which President Wilson is held in China at the present time. A volume of his speeches printed in English and Chinese by the Commercial Press has been the year's "best seller." The first question asked one by a stranger casually met is one's name and the second question is as to one's country. When one replies nowadays that his "humble country is America," it is almost invariably the signal for a panegyric on "Wilson-statesman," humanitarian, the outstanding figure in the world today. In schoolboy's speeches and in sermons alike Wilson is quoted as though he was a modern Confucius. It is wonderful how Wilson's principles and his courageous advocacy of them have caught the imagination of the Chinese people. As a consequence, America's stock which has always been fairly high in China has gone far above par during the past year or so; and it is a distinct asset in one's work to be an American in China at the present time.<sup>3</sup>

Wilsonian politics gained unexpected popularity in China before WWI, largely because Woodrow Wilson's emphasis on "self-determination" opened up a brand new opportunity for the Chinese to gain equality in a new international order. But where did the tide come from? Existing literature by scholars such as Erez Manela and Hans Schmidt suggests that the pro-Wilsonian discourses were largely shaped by the Committee on Public Information (CPI), a wartime propaganda machine established by George Creel (1876-1953) during WWI, which also had an office in Shanghai.<sup>4</sup>

3 Eugene Barnett Papers, 1905-1970, Series III, Chronological Files, Box 2, Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University in the City of New York.

4 Erez Manela, "Imagining Woodrow Wilson in Asia: Dreams of East-West Harmony and the Revolt against Empire in 1919," *American Historical Review* 111, no. 5 (December 2006): 1327-51; Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment*; Hans Schmidt, "Democracy for China: American Propaganda and the May Fourth Movement," *Diplomatic History* 22, no. 1 (Winter 1998): 1-28.

The present article, on the other hand, traces an alternative origin of pro-Wilsonian sentiments in China, highlighting the role of two prominent Chinese intellectuals, Hu Shih 胡適 (1891-1962) and Jiang Menglin 蔣夢麟 (1886-1964), who had studied in the US at Columbia University and returned to China. Building upon the existing scholarship on Wilsonian politics in China,<sup>5</sup> it analyzes the dissemination of ideas and knowledge brought back to China by the American-trained Chinese liberal intellectuals, suggesting that transnational individuals and non-state actors such as Hu Shih and Jiang Menglin also contributed to the rise of the “Wilsonian Moment” in China. The Chinese Exclusion Act enforced legislative measures that restricted Chinese immigration and reinforced racial exclusion policies in the US. Meanwhile, the American-trained Chinese intellectuals who embraced Wilsonian politics remained curiously silent towards the racist aspects of Wilsonian democracy, and this limited vision was later introduced to China and contributed to the expectations for Woodrow Wilson by the end of WWI.

## 2. Hu Shih’s Support of Wilson during His Studies in the US

Hu Shih, renowned for his promotion of vernacular Chinese and the introduction of John Dewey’s (1859-1952) philosophy to China, was an ardent advocate of Wilsonianism beginning from his student years in the United States. Having received the Boxer Indemnity Scholarship in 1910, Hu attended Cornell University as an undergraduate and pursued graduate studies at Columbia University from 1914 to 1917. Previous historiography has somehow overlooked how Hu Shih’s formative years in the US shaped his intellectual and

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5 Frank Ninkovich, *The Wilsonian Century: U.S. Foreign Policy Since 1900* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999); Lloyd E. Ambrosius, “Woodrow Wilson and *The Birth of a Nation*: American Democracy and International Relations,” *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 18, no. 4 (2007): 689-718; Tien Yi Li, *Woodrow Wilson’s China Policy, 1913-1917* (New York: University of Kansas City Press, 1952), 1-12, 204-5. For related books about the context of the May Fourth Movement and the Paris Peace Conference in the Chinese-speaking world, see Tang Chi-hua 唐啟華, *Bei “feichu bupingdeng tiaoyue” zhebi de Beiyang xiu yue shi, 1912-1928* 被「廢除不平等條約」遮蔽的北洋修約史 (1912-1928) (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2010); Deng

political outlook.<sup>6</sup> Though he knew almost nothing about the American political system (political parties, presidential elections, electoral system, etc.) when he first arrived in 1910, Hu later became keenly interested in the American political system after living in the US for many years.

In his memoir, Hu Shih detailed how he was impressed by the support for Wilson among many of his professors when he was still an undergraduate at Cornell University. Influenced by Samuel P. Orth (1873-1922), a professor at Cornell who taught Hu a class on American political science in 1912, Hu gradually obtained familiarity with the American political system. Professor Orth, a reformist lawyer from Cleveland who had played an important leadership role in reform movements both in the city and throughout Ohio, was recruited from the Ohio State Bar Association to teach American government and political parties at Cornell. That unique background partly explains why Professor Orth taught Hu Shih and his classmates with a fresh approach. He asked the students in class to subscribe to major New York newspapers, follow each closely during the American presidential election in 1912, and write reports and summaries. Hu very much enjoyed this class, deeming Orth as one of the best professors he had ever encountered in his life.<sup>7</sup>

By learning from Professor Orth as well active extracurricular explorations of American political life through newspaper reading and attending political rallies in the Ithaca area, Hu Shih gradually became familiar with the American political system. In 1912, Hu started wearing a Bull Moose button on campus to demonstrate his support for the Progressive Party and Theodore Roosevelt, but later he became increasingly interested in the political agendas of Woodrow

Ye 鄧野, *Bali hehui yu Beijing zhengfu de neiwai boyi: 1919 nian Zhongguo de waijiao zhengzhi yu zhengpai liyi* 巴黎和會與北京政府的內外博弈：1919 年中國的外交爭執與政派利益 (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2010).

6 Jerome B. Grieder, *Hu Shih and the Chinese Renaissance: Liberalism in the Chinese Revolution, 1917-1937* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970), 39-71.

7 Hu Shih, “The Reminiscences of Dr. Hu Shih,” interviewed, compiled and edited by Te-kong Tong, Chinese Oral History Project (1958), Columbia Center for Oral History, Columbia University, 38. For the Chinese translation, see Hu Shih 胡適, *Hu Shi koushu zizhuan* 胡適口述自傳, trans. Te-kong Tong 唐德剛 (Beijing: Huawen chubanshe, 1992), 34-40.

Wilson. Hu Shih took deep pride in his active political engagement in the US as an international student and saw it as preparation for future intellectual involvement in Chinese political life.<sup>8</sup>

Meanwhile, the political attitudes of the Cornell intellectual community started to generate an impact on Hu Shih, who was then actively exploring and forming his intellectual and political attitudes. Hu vividly recalled the debates and political enthusiasm he had witnessed in his student years at Cornell:

Another unforgettable event that year was a debate between my philosophy professor, J. E. Creighton, who represented the Democratic Party, and Cornell Law School's Dean Alfred Hayes, who represented the Progressive Party. Seeing professors directly engage in national political affairs left a profound impression on me. I can say that these events sparked my interest in politics and continued to influence my life for years to come. Shortly after the election, I had an errand that took me to see Professor Frank Thilly, a professor of ethics. While we were talking, Professor Creighton suddenly walked in. Right in front of me, the two men clasped hands excitedly and exclaimed, "Wilson won! Wilson won!" Their enthusiasm moved me to tears. Both professors had supported Wilson. They had both taught at Princeton and knew Wilson personally from his time as the university's president. They took a deep interest in his presidency.

In 1914, Hu Shih seized the opportunity to hear Woodrow Wilson speak in person during an international student conference, of which he was a delegate, held in Ithaca. The event was organized by the Association of Cosmopolitan Clubs and the International Federation of Students of Europe. After the gathering in Ithaca, the conference moved to Washington, where Hu and other delegates were personally received by President Wilson and Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan (1860-1925).<sup>9</sup>

8 Hu Shih 胡適, "Wu duiyu zhengzhi shehui shiye zhi xingqu" 吾對於政治社會事業之興趣, September 9, 1917, in *Hu Shi riji quanbian* 胡適日記全編, ed. Cao Boyan 曹伯言 (Hefei: Anhui jiaoyu chubanshe, 2001), 2:507.

9 Hu, *Hu Shi koushu zizhuan*, 38.

Hu Shih also collected newspaper reports and carefully compared the speeches by Woodrow Wilson and Theodore Roosevelt (1858-1919) in 1914. After studying Wilson's political tenets, he concluded that Wilson was not only a great politician but also a great man full of humanitarian idealism.<sup>10</sup> In citing Wilson's speeches, Hu did not hesitate in expressing how impressed he was when learning about the moral humanitarianism in Wilson's speeches. In his diaries during his years as a student in the US, Hu noted that Woodrow Wilson was not only a great politician, but also an idealistic intellectual. He was not unaware of Wilson's idealism in his diplomatic approaches, but he believed that his diplomacy was epoch-making and full of humanitarianism that would be acknowledged by future historians.<sup>11</sup> Throughout these diaries, quotes of Wilson's speeches (as Hu Shih noted, "they could be read and read over again as mottoes") and comments and reflections about the figure can be found.

By the time Hu moved to Columbia and studied under the guidance of renowned American philosopher John Dewey, he had already deemed Woodrow Wilson the most ideal candidate for American presidency. He happily found out that many American intellectuals such as Charles William Eliot (1834-1926) and his then advisor Dewey all supported Wilson. During this time, we see his admiration for Wilson in his diaries, with his speeches, including "Peace Without Victory" and Wilson's proposal for the League of Nations being preserved.<sup>12</sup> He also recorded Wilson's speech in 1915 in response to the German attack of the British steamship *Lusitania*, thereby expressing his admiration of Wilson's humanitarian declaration in the midst of all the active public discussions.<sup>13</sup>

10 Hu, "Wei'erxun yu Luosifu shuo zhi dazhi" 威爾遜與羅斯福演說之大旨, July 12, 1914, in *Hu Shi riji quanbian*, 1:374.

11 Hu, "Wei'erxun yu Luosifu shuo zhi dazhi," 404-5.

12 Hu, "Wei'erxun zai caniyuan zhi yanshuoci" 威爾遜在參議院之演說詞, January 22, 1917, in *Hu Shi riji quanbian*, 2:528-30.

13 Hu, "Wei'erxun yanshuoci" 威爾遜演說詞, May 12, 1915, in *Hu Shi riji quanbian*, 2:139-51. Hu Shih writes: 「此威爾遜氏最近演說詞 ..... 威氏當此洶洶之際，獨能為此極端的人道主義之宣言，其氣象真不凡。」

Meanwhile, Hu Shih became upset when he witnessed the widespread American public support for Charles E. Hughes (1862-1948), the Republican candidate for the presidential election, who would narrowly lose to Woodrow Wilson. Hu even drafted a letter to the editors of *The New York Evening Post*, speaking in favor of Woodrow Wilson and writing against criticisms for Wilson previously published by renowned editorial writer Simeon Strunsky (1879-1948):

Sir: As an absolutely disinterested student of American politics, I cannot refrain from writing you that in tonight's Post-Impressions. I find the most satisfactory argument in favor of President Wilson's reelection that has ever appeared during the whole campaign. [...] Having had the unusual privilege of witnessing two presidential campaigns during my student years in this country, I feel warranted to believe that the unexpected success of the Progressive Party in 1912 seems to indicate that Mr. Simeon Strunsky and those who hold the same views may yet be saved from "going cynical." <sup>14</sup>

### 3. The Election of 1916: Wilson's Narrow Victory

Well-versed in the American political system and acquainted with Woodrow Wilson's politics by the election year of 1916, Hu Shih considered Wilson "one of the best American presidents since the founding of the American Republic" and sincerely hoped that Wilson would be reelected. Hu's diaries from his student years even contain a photograph taken by his American friend Bess East, who probably keenly noted a resemblance between Hu's expression in the photo and the optimistic gestures of Woodrow Wilson, jokingly calling his big smile the "Wilsonian Smile." Hu accepted the quip and carefully preserved the photo taken by East, which captured his moment of happiness in

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14 Hu, "Xi'wang Weierxun lianren" 希望威爾遜連任, November 9, 1917, in *Hu Shi riji quanbian*, 2:505-6, 534. Simeon Strunsky was an Russian-born Jewish American editorial writer for *The New York Times* for over two decades and an active columnist for the *New York Evening Post*.

front of the camera.<sup>15</sup>



“威爾遜”之笑

**Figure 1. Hu Shih’s “Wilsonian Smile” captured by friend Bess East, 1916.**

In his oral reminiscences, Hu Shih later recalled in detail how they had marched to see the election results in November 1916. On the evening of Election Day, Hu, accompanied by a small group of his fellow Chinese students from Columbia, went to Times Square to watch the election results, with a sincere desire that Woodrow Wilson would win by a narrow margin. They faced initial disappointment while making their way downtown upon discovering that *New York World*, a typically pro-Wilson newspaper, had published an extra issue in support of Charles E. Hughes. When Hu and his friends proceeded to Times Square, to their further dismay, they saw red and white lights on the Times Building Tower, which indicated that Wilson had already lost the election.

These Chinese students, hoping Wilson would still win the election, then stood in the crowd and waited till midnight. But they did not obtain any positive message that evening. “We were again disappointed,” recalled Hu Shih, “but we wouldn’t give up until about midnight, when *The New York Evening Post* [...] came out in the midnight issue.” To their consternation, the newspaper also

15 Hu, “Wei’erxun zhi xiao” 威爾遜之笑, July 5, 1916, in *Hu Shi riji quanbian*, 2:411.

predicted that Wilson would lose the election. “We were all disheartened,” if not devastated, recalled Hu.

They tried to ride subway back home but it was too crowded for them to get on. They then had to spend an hour or so walking all the way on Broadway back to Columbia University (from West 42nd Street to West 116th Street) in the late evening. Despite his likely mental and physical exhaustion, Hu Shih was still expecting the election result. The following morning when he woke up from his dormitory bed at Furnald Hall, Hu rushed outdoors to search for the newspapers regarding any news about whether Woodrow Wilson had been reelected. He was at first quite unhappy to find out that almost all the papers he checked seemed to declare Hughes as the newly elected president. However, he quickly noticed that *The New York Times* was completely sold out for some unknown reason. Curious, Hu then, without having breakfast, walked six blocks in search of the latest issue. Finally, at a newsstand corner, he discovered, with greatest joy, that Woodrow Wilson had ultimately won the election, by a narrow margin. He returned to campus for breakfast.

Hu Shih shared all these stories of support for Wilson back in his student years in great detail with historian Te-kong Tong 唐德剛 (T. C. Tang, 1920-2009), who compiled Hu’s oral memoirs at Columbia in 1958.<sup>16</sup> Aside from rallying to support Wilson, Hu and several friends continued to openly announce their support for Wilson immediately after the election. At this time, *The Chinese Students’ Monthly* became the platform for heated debates among Chinese students in the United States regarding the US presidential election. After Wilson’s victory, in November, D. K. F. Yap, a Chinese student in the US who was possibly studying at Swarthmore college in Pennsylvania and a member of the Chinese Students’ Alliance, wrote to the editor with deep concerns for the prospects of Sino-American relations following Hughes’s defeat. He argued that the Republican Party had a long history of fostering a friendship with China. In support of that argument he cited the Open Door Policy and the remission of the Boxer Indemnities as evidence. “The Chinese people will indeed mourn the defeat of Mr. Hughes,” wrote Yap, who also

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16 Hu, *Hu Shi koushu zizhuan*, 38-39.

claimed that intellectual China stood solidly behind Hughes and suggested that such a result would negatively impact Sino-American relations in the following four years.<sup>17</sup>

But Yap's opinion was soon challenged by other Chinese students in the US who held dissenting views, including Hu Shih and his peers at Columbia University. They together drafted a strong "dissenting opinion" and published it in the following issue of *The Chinese Students' Monthly*. They criticized Yap for speaking on behalf of all Chinese intellectuals, since not all students supported the Republican Party. In an internal survey conducted by the Columbia Chinese Students' Club before the election, for instance, amongst the Chinese students, Wilson had received 19 votes compared to Hughes who received only 9 votes. They questioned why Yap had the right "in posing as representative of 'intellectual China' and of 'the Chinese people'." They also noted that "the letter of Mr. Yap is at least discourteous to the Wilson Administration, as his letter implies that the present administration has not been friendly to China."

Moreover, the open letter further failed to acknowledge the diversity of opinions among Chinese intellectuals and completely ignored the pro-Wilsonian stances by Hu Shih and his friends. Unlike Yap, Hu and the others emphasized that their support for Wilson included confidence in Wilson's policies regarding China.<sup>18</sup> This "debate" thus shows this diversity within learned Chinese circles, not to mention further indicating Hu Shih and his friends' (those who signed the letter included M. Tsow, P. Ling, T. H. Cheng, Wen Tsing Tao, A. H. Chang, Fo Sung, Philip Wei Chen, Irving T. Hu, J. F. Li, H. L. Huang and Tson Fah Hwang) impassioned support for Woodrow Wilson at Columbia.

While Hu Shih was obviously excited to see Wilson reelected in 1916, he also constantly felt confronted when encountering Americans who did

17 D. K. F. Yap, "China and the American Republican Party," *The Chinese Students' Monthly*, November 1916, 125-26.

18 Members of the Columbia Chinese Students' Club (by Suh Hu [Hu Shih], M. Tsow, P. Ling, T. H. Cheng, Wen Tsing Tao, A. H. Chang, Fo Sung, Philip Wei Chen, Irving T. Hu, J. F. Li, H. L. Huang, Tson Fah Hwang, and others.), "Dissenting Opinions," Letter to the Editor, *The Chinese Students' Monthly*, December 9, 1916, 181-82.

not support Wilson for all sorts of reasons that he could not agree with. In his memoir, for instance, he recalled a luncheon for the international peace movement, where he met with David Starr Jordan (1851-1931), the founding president of Stanford University. Jordan did not support Wilson, and the reason he shared with Hu Shih was that he had seen Wilson sending flowers to the wife of a faculty member at Princeton. Hu was embarrassed by such a “personal reason” for not supporting Woodrow Wilson. He then commented that such a reason expressed in public was indeed not dissimilar to the reason a charwoman shared for not supporting Woodrow Wilson. When he focused on writing his dissertation, Hu Shih moved out of his Columbia dormitory to a new residence at 92 Haven Avenue. There, together with his roommate, Hu hired a charwoman for housekeeping duties. Before the 1916 election, Hu Shih once inquired with his “humble Irish charwoman” whether she would vote for Woodrow Wilson, if she had the chance. She replied that she did not like Wilson because he had remarried one year after his wife’s passing, a reason that Hu could not accept.<sup>19</sup>

#### 4. Translations of Wilsonianism by Jiang Menglin

Woodrow Wilson, constantly hailed as the “moral leader of Democracy” and “the pacifier,” maintained a quite progressive public image when reelected as president in 1916. He was not only a statesman but also, being a professor and later the president of Princeton University, a real scholar.<sup>20</sup> His famous “Fourteen Points” speech envisioned a world order built on self-determination, peace, and equality, and resonated both at home and abroad. The vision was particularly extolled by intellectuals of the colonial world who deemed Wilson a beacon of hope for dismantling old-world tyrannies and establishing a new international system. Within the Democratic Party, Wilson was also regarded as a leader who was raising “one responsible American voice” and who was

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19 Hu, *Hu Shi koushu zizhuan*, 39-40.

20 “Official Report of the Proceedings of the Democratic National Convention, Held in Saint Louis, Missouri, June 14, 15 and 16th,” Electing the President: Proceedings of the Democratic National Conventions, 1832-1988, Library of Congress, Washington, DC, Archives Unbound, Gale Cengage.

making history. Wilson's promise of a new international order was one that would never be broken. Wilson's League of Nations was portrayed as a bold effort to transcend traditional diplomacy, allowing America to act as a champion for oppressed nations and a consul for the weak. "Others may break faith; the Senate of the US may break faith, the Republican Party may break faith, but neither President Wilson nor the Democratic Party will break faith."<sup>21</sup> The Democratic Party's alignment with Wilson's ideals further bolstered this perception. At conventions, the Democrats recognized China as a progressive and new republic awaiting to be recognized by the international world and by the United States:

China, the sleeping giant of the Orient, has risen from a slumber of two thousand years and today is a republic waiting for recognition. And while the outside world has been marching at double quick in the direction of more complete freedom, our nation has kept step, and on no other part of God's footstool has popular government grown more rapidly than here.<sup>22</sup>

This again speaks to Wilson's long-lasting appeal to the reform-minded Chinese intellectuals such as Hu Shih who were seeking modernity, self-determination, and a new global order. Hu hoped that Wilson's postwar designs would specifically grant China self-determination. "I sincerely believe with President Wilson that every people have the right to determine its own form of government," wrote Hu, "China has her right to her own development exactly as any other nation-state in the world."<sup>23</sup> While Hu supported Wilson in the

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21 "Official Report of the Proceedings of the Democratic National Convention, Held in San Francisco, California, June 28, 29, 30, July 1, 2, 3, 5, and 6, 1920," Library of Congress, Washington, DC, Archives Unbound, Gale Cengage.

22 "Official Report of the Proceedings of the Democratic National Convention, Held in Baltimore, Maryland, June 25, 26, 27, 28, and 29 and July 1 and 2, 1912," Electing the President: Proceedings of the Democratic National Conventions, 1832-1988, Library of Congress, Washington, DC, Archives Unbound, Gale Cengage.

23 Hu Shih, "Communications to American Editors on Japanese Demands," *The Chinese Students' Monthly*, March 1, 1915.

crowd at Times Square and hoped that Wilson would speak on China's behalf, Americans in China were closely observing the political situation. As early as 1915 they had been aware of the long-term interests (moral, commercial, political, etc.) in China and the necessities of preserving the Open Door Policy under Japanese threat. China was strategically important due to its geographical and commercial significance in the American Pacific trade. The geographical adjacency of San Francisco, Hawaii, and the Philippines with China all reminded the Americans that their strategic friendship with China would "add immensely to the moral, financial and political influence of the United States during the twentieth century" in the long run.<sup>24</sup>

Jiang's translations of Woodrow Wilson's wartime speeches provide another case for us to delve into how American-trained Chinese intellectuals introduced Wilsonian politics and the specific texts of his "Fourteen Points" to a Chinese audience. Unlike Hu Shih, who received a Boxer Indemnity Scholarship, Jiang went to the United States in 1908 as a self-funded student. He pursued studies in education, history, and philosophy at Berkeley before undertaking a PhD program at Columbia University (working closely with John Dewey and Paul Monroe [1869-1947]) and then returned to China in 1917.<sup>25</sup>

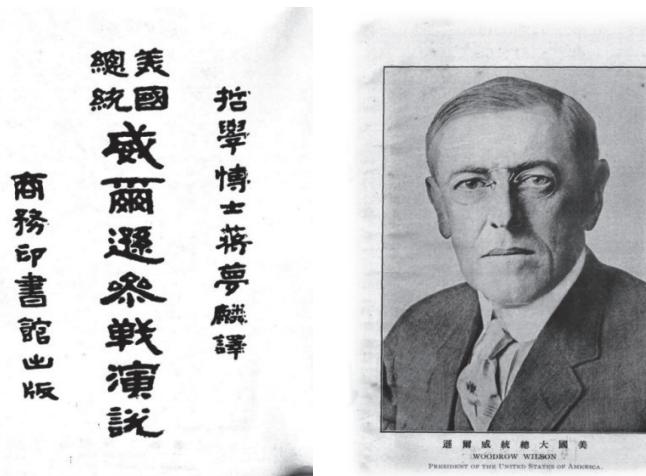
Similar to Hu Shih, Jiang Menglin supported Wilsonian politics during his years as a student in the United States. Moreover, after his return to China, Jiang became renowned for his Chinese translations of Wilson's wartime speeches, which significantly contributed to disseminating Wilsonian ideals in China.

Jiang's translation became immensely popular once it was released, running through multiple editions and soon became a bestseller. Its widespread circulation and popularity underscored the influential reach of the wartime propaganda machine and the resonance of Wilson's messages within the

24 Central File: Decimal File 793.94/316-433, Political Relations of States; Bi-lateral Treaties, China and Japan, April-June 1915, Political Relations Between China, the U.S. and Other Countries, 1910-1929, National Archives, Washington, DC, Archives Unbound, Gale Cengage.

25 Jiang Menglin 蔣夢麟, *Zhongguo jiaoyu yuanli zhi yanjiu* 中國教育原理之研究 (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1924), iii-v.

Chinese audience. Wilson's wartime speeches portrayed the United States as a land of liberty, fighting alongside a "concert of free people" to secure self-determination for oppressed peoples worldwide.<sup>26</sup>



**Figure 2. Jiang Menglin's translation of Woodrow Wilson, *Wartime Speeches of President Wilson*, 1918.**

*Millard's Review* even observed that Jiang's translation was so remarkable that "little of the eloquence of President Wilson's utterances has been lost in the Chinese version."<sup>27</sup> In reality, however, Jiang's translation was not literal. He actually embellished the straightforward expressions of Woodrow Wilson when translating them into Chinese. The pamphlet commenced with a noble portrait of Wilson, and Jiang's introduction of Wilson further crafted a righteous and altruistic image of the presidential figure tailored for a Chinese audience by emphasizing that "Wilson's speeches, aimed at eternal peace and the public rights of mankind, epitomize the most righteous and forthright intentions of the United States." Jiang even composed a classical Chinese poem specially dedicated to President Wilson, in which he not only lauded Wilson's acknowledgment of the new Republican government but also took liberties to

26 Eric Foner, *Give Me Liberty! An American History* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2007), 2:479.

27 *Millard's Review* 6, November 23, 1918, 466.

incorporate rhetoric aligning with traditional Chinese ideals and attributed these sentiments to Wilson's speeches.

Impressive to today's observers, Jiang Menglin navigated cultural resources to interpret Woodrow Wilson's wartime messages, drawing creative parallels between Wilson's call for the League of Nations and the fulfillment of *datong* 大同, the highest Confucian ideal in ancient China—a concept akin to "utopia" envisioned by Thomas More (1478-1535).<sup>28</sup> For Jiang, the postwar international order promised by Wilson thus resonated with the highest Confucian ideal of *datong*, and he was among the numerous Chinese intellectuals of that era who consciously drew parallels between the American post-WWI leadership and its spirit.<sup>29</sup> Regardless of these parallels, Jiang's translation played a significant role in conveying an anti-colonial message to China and led to its popularity in the Chinese-speaking world.

## 5. Embracing Americanism in the Age of Exclusion

During their student years in the US, many Chinese intellectuals embraced Woodrow Wilson's advocacy of self-determination and introduced Wilsonian internationalism to a Chinese audience after their return to China. This indicates that even though wartime propaganda mattered, transnational individuals, in this

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28 Woodrow Wilson 伍德羅·威爾遜, *Meiguo zongtong Wei'erxun canzhan yanshuo* 美國總統威爾遜參戰演說, trans. Jiang Menglin 蔣夢麟 (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1918).

29 Chih Meng's interpretation of *datong*: "Mankind needs to follow the Great Way to realize the Great Commonwealth. *Li Chi, the Classics of Rites*, one of the Five Classics, defined the goal for Confucius twenty-five hundred years ago: When the Great Way prevails, the world belongs to all mankind. People chose for their leaders the wise and the able, and world order is based on fidelity and harmony. They care for their own parents and children, and see to it that all old people enjoy their old age, all the able bodied are properly employed, and the young develop their talents. Provisions are made for widows and widowers and orphans, and homes are found for single men and women. Surplus wealth is not hoarded for personal gain, and manpower is not exploited for personal advantage. Consequently, theft and robbery do not arise, and gates need not be closed. This is Ta Tung, the Great Harmony." Chih Meng, *Chinese American Understanding: A Sixty-Year Search* (New York: China Institute in America, 1981), 242-44.

case the Chinese intellectuals who studied in the US and then returned to serve China, also played an active role in shaping Chinese impressions on the postwar international order promised by Woodrow Wilson. However, the prevalence of pro-Wilsonian sentiments in China near the end of WWI stands as an unusual historical moment, especially when we consider the broader context of Sino-American relations in the first half of twentieth century.

Compared to the widespread interest in the American promise, the US government, however, did not direct an equally welcoming message to the Chinese people. The notorious Chinese Exclusion Act, enacted by the US Congress in 1882, prohibited the entry of Chinese laborers into the United States. As a result of the enforcement of the Act which barred all Chinese laborers from crossing the US border, the Chinese students who came to the United States as an “exempt class” had to carefully distance themselves from the working-class Chinese immigrants and also, if possible, prove themselves as being “different” from the “undesirable” immigrants. Following with the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882, the Scott Act of 1888 and the Geary Act of 1892 were passed, both enforcing legislative measures that restricted Chinese immigration and thereby reinforcing racial exclusion policies in the US. Each act built upon its predecessor, showed increasing American hostility toward Chinese immigrants and laborers, and strengthened the exclusionary policies towards Chinese laborers. Together, they marked a significant escalation in anti-Chinese policies by embedding racial exclusion into the legal and bureaucratic structures of US immigration law that had deliberately excluded the Chinese beginning in the 1880s.

Embracing the American “melting pot,” Jiang Menglin, on the other hand, observed New York City with curiosity without considering the legacy of the Chinese Exclusion Act or the racism embodied in the exclusion towards his fellow countrymen, even describing New York City’s cosmopolitan population as being composed of all walks of people as “an archetypal American melting pot.” Impressed with the modern skyscrapers, subway, and dazzling lights of Times Square and on Fifth Avenue, which Jiang called “the concentrated form” of Americanism, he ignored the blatant racism and other negative aspects of

American life to which an ordinary Chinese would be subjected. Meanwhile, he became so enamored of life in New York City that he claimed in his memoir that “there was little racial friction” and that “in New York anyone can do anything he likes if he knows how to stay inside the law, and one is permitted to go his own way if he observes a certain degree of public decency.”<sup>30</sup>

This, to today’s observers, is a highly selective reading of Americanism especially when we consider how prevalent and blatant anti-Chinese racism was during the period of the Chinese Exclusion Act. But in another aspect, Jiang Menglin’s pro-Americanism was comprehensible if we try to understand his vision towards a progressive China. In his personal memoirs, Jiang described his fellow countrymen in Chinatown as “loyal sons and daughters of China.” For Jiang, the American Chinatown resembled “the old China” that embraced traditional Chinese teachings and resisted the American influence and the influence of modernity. They wore long queues, practiced foot-binding, and resisted a modern and progressive education, thereby being culturally different to Jiang when compared to other parts of Manhattan in New York City and his intellectual community of Columbia University. Jiang recalled his experience in San Francisco Chinatown when he was at Berkeley, which he recognized as being closer to Cantonese culture:

There were grocery stores selling salt fish, eels, edible snakes, bean sauce, sharks’ fins, birds’ nests, dried abalones, and other Cantonese stuff brought to America from Canton or Hong Kong. Once I went to one of the groceries and tried to buy something. Failing to make the man understand my poor Cantonese dialect, I wrote on paper what I wanted. An old woman standing by saw my writing and being ignorant of the fact that China has only one written language for the whole country, despite her many dialects was surprised and asked, if this Chinese cannot speak Chinese (meaning Cantonese), how can he write it? A group of curious people gathered around me. One who could speak enough mandarin to make me understand asked,

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30 Jiang Menglin 蔣夢麟, *Xi chao* 西潮 (Beijing: Waiyu jiaoxue yu yanjiu chubanshe, 2012), 87-89.

“Have you ever been in the provincial capital of Canton?” “No,” I replied. “Then where did you do your shopping?” “Shanghai,” I laughed, and went away with a bottle of bean sauce and a package under my arm.<sup>31</sup>

Historian Xu Guoqi 徐國琦 notes in his *China and the Great War* that the returned students who had received a modern education in the United States were active in parliamentary politics, rose on a new set of values combined with internationalism, nationalism and modernity, as well as were more accustomed to urban culture and life in modern cities.<sup>32</sup> Cosmopolitan urban centers such as Shanghai shaped the way Hu Shih and Jiang Menglin understood modern China prior to their entry into the US, which contrasted with the experiences of working-class Chinese laborers who typically set off from the harbors of Guangzhou and Hong Kong. In the era of the Chinese Exclusion Act, the Chinese students in the US naturally portrayed themselves as different from the Chinese laborers in the US, symbolizing a new China.

Hu Shih, for example, developed an elitist interpretation of the role of the Chinese students in the United States during his studies, viewing themselves as cultural ambassadors who could potentially “make themselves, their country, and their people, their civilization understood by the people in whose midst they have come to stay and study.” He also believed that those studying abroad had the “duty” to represent the best of Chinese culture, a culture that was different from the Chinese culture transmitted to the US through the working-class Chinese immigrants. At Cornell, Hu Shih applauded his fellow Chinese classmates’ for their academic achievements, for fulfilling said duty to represent the best of China, and for proving that the Chinese students were “not intellectually inferior to American classmates.”<sup>33</sup> In contrast, during his student years in the US, Hu hardly spoke against the anti-Chinese racism experienced by his fellow working-class countrymen in the US, a point later critically raised by Te-kong Tong.

31 Jiang, *Xi chao*, 85-86.

32 Xu Guoqi, *China and the Great War: China's Pursuit of a New National Identity and Internationalization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 38-40.

33 [Hu Shih], “Chinese Students at Cornell,” *The Cornell Era* 47, no. 4 (January 1915).

In 1917, Hu Shih graduated from Columbia and returned to serve China. He then became a starring intellectual and led the tide of the New Cultural Movement, but Hu's return also brought back his pro-Wilsonian politics at this critical juncture. His political outlook and support for Woodrow Wilson further influenced a new cohort of Chinese intellectuals, who would later become influential, as Wilson's "Fourteen Points" were deemed a symbol of American democracy. For example, Xu Deheng 許德珩 (1890-1990) recalled that Fu Ssu-nien 傅斯年 (1896-1950), who was one of Hu Shih's students at Peking University and a later important leader of the May Fourth Movement, could recite every word of the speech verbatim.<sup>34</sup> Seeing Woodrow Wilson as the American politician that would hopefully speak on behalf of China on the international stage, Hu Shih himself endorsed the postwar international order designed by Wilson. "You can see that I was one of the early converts to the idea of a League of Enforced Peace," reflected Hu upon his earlier support for Wilson's League of Nations in his later years to Te-tong Kong, "and later a warm advocate of its relative, the League of Nations."<sup>35</sup> Throughout his life, Hu spoke highly of Wilson's design of the League of Nations and viewed it "as the most concrete embodiment of the ideals of international peace yet invented by mankind" and, overall, an embodiment of postwar internationalism.<sup>36</sup>

When Hu Shih reflected upon his student years in the US, he confessed that he was a "beneficiary of this friendship" between China and the US:

I can tell you that it was wonderful. [...] For nearly a century, China and the US were merely friends, separated by the great ocean between them and with no aggressive designs toward each other. [...] This genuine and

34 Xu Deheng 許德珩, "Huiyi wusi yundong" 回憶五四運動, in *Wusi yundong qinli ji* 五四運動親歷記, ed. Zhongguo renmin zhengzhi xieshang huiyi quanguo weiyuanhui wenshi ziliao weiyuanhui 中國人民政治協商會議全國委員會文史資料委員會 (Beijing: Zhongguo wenshi chubanshe, 1999), 17.

35 Hu, "The Reminiscences of Dr. Hu Shih."

36 For his address delivered before the Foreign Policy Association in New York on November 13, 1937, see Hu Shih, "Pamphlet," in *English Writings of Hu Shih*, ed. Chih-P'ing Chou, *National Crisis and Public Diplomacy* (Heidelberg: Springer, 2013), 3: 39-50.

disinterested friendship was fully appreciated and requited by China, which was sending ever year hundreds and even thousands of her select young men and women to American universities and graduate schools in a sincere desire to understand this great nation.<sup>37</sup>

When he mentioned “the genuine and disinterested friendship between China and the US,” which lasted till the global Cold War when Sino-American relations deteriorated, Hu certainly did not consider the anti-Chinese racism an ordinary Chinese citizen in the US was subject to outside the American campus. His description of Sino-American relations and the friendship as “wonderful” demonstrates the pro-American sentiments of “the exempt class” of Chinese students in the US.

## 6. “Tragedy of Disappointment”

All such pro-Wilsonian and pro-American sentiments were later brought back to China by these American-trained elites. Near the end of WWI, CPI staff member Carl Crow (1884-1945) in Shanghai received thousands of letters “represent[ing] almost every class of literate Chinese” and all requesting copies of Jiang’s newly translated pamphlet for Wilson’s wartime speeches. Warlord Feng Yuxiang 馮玉祥 (1882-1948), for example, alone ordered 500 copies to inform the Chinese people of the American message for the new postwar international order. The Commercial Press of Shanghai, in the meanwhile, encouraged Americans in China to purchase copies in bulk numbers and present them to their Chinese friends to further spread the American wartime messages.<sup>38</sup>

Crow vividly recalled the surprising impact of the American propaganda in China, observing:

The Chinese came to conclusion that the peace which promised so much

37 Hu Shih 胡適, “How to Understand a Decade of Rapidly Deteriorated Sino-American Relations,” in *Hu Shi quanji* 胡適全集, ed. Ji Xianlin 季羨林 (Hefei: Anhui jiaoyu chubanshe, 2023), 39:290-98.

38 *Millard's Review* 6, November 23, 1918, 466-76, 542.

to Europe and the rest of the world meant a great deal to them also, that in some way they would be helped out of their difficulties. They felt confident that after all President Wilson had said about self-determination and the rights of weak nations against powerful ones, the least the peace conference could do would be to disavow the Japanese claims in Shantung and restore the territory which Germany had seized just a few years before the Boxer Uprising.<sup>39</sup>

The Wilsonian rhetoric of “self-determination” reverberated across the globe, especially among colonial peoples seeking independence partly because of Wilson’s stress on the “equality of nations,” both large and small, in the new international order he envisioned. This, however, contrasted with the designs of Woodrow Wilson, who hardly had China on top of his mind whenever he talked about “self-determination.” In fact, Wilson was not at all aware that he was addressing Chinese anticolonial aspirations and that the postwar order he was attempting to build up would potentially offer them with resources to secure Chinese territories from Japanese and German hands. According to Creel, who went to Paris in 1919 in person and had the opportunity to speak to Wilson about the situation, Wilson himself was concerned about such propaganda, even being upset about the hope triggered by CPI propaganda all over the world. When Creel told Woodrow Wilson about how they promoted Wilson’s wartime speeches all over the world, he also shared with Wilson that their propaganda work had received “the wholehearted response of the peoples” who trusted and believed in his words and who found Wilson’s ideas liberating. In response, Wilson first stood silently for quite some time and, talking to Creel, predicted “a tragedy of disappointment” that might follow right after the Paris Peace Conference. According to Creel’s memoir, Wilson’s face was “as bleak as the gray stretch of sunless water”:

“It is a great thing that you have done,” he said, “but I am wondering if you have not unconsciously spun a net for me from which there is no escape. It is to America that the whole world turns to-day, not only with its wrongs,

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39 Carl Crow, *I Speak for the Chinese* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1937), 27-28.

but with its hopes and grievances. The hungry expect us to feed them, the roofless look to us for shelter, the sick of heart and body depend up on us for cure. All of these expectations have in them the quality of terrible urgency. There must be no delay. It has been so always. People will endure their tyrants for years, but they tear their deliverers to pieces if a millennium is not created immediately. Yet you know, and I know, that these ancient wrongs, this present unhappiness, are not to be remedied in a day or with a wave of the hand. What I seem to see- with my heart I hope that I am wrong- is a tragedy of disappointment.”<sup>40</sup>

The tragedy of disillusionment soon became a new reality. After the decision of the Paris Peace Conference, it became clear to all that the postwar peace settlement virtually transferred German rule in Shandong Peninsula to the Japanese hands, and Wilson hardly spoke on China’s behalf.<sup>41</sup> After WWI, Japan took advantage of the situation to seize the previously German-controlled territories in Shandong. The Japanese provocation of Manchuria and presentation of the Twenty-One Demands showed that it intended to place China under territorial control. Wilson also found it hard to effectively check the Japanese aggression, as despite what he had previously conveyed to the world in his “Fourteen Points,” American military unpreparedness and the increasing gravity of disputes with European belligerents over neutral rights kept Wilson from taking action against the Japanese aggression.<sup>42</sup>

The Shandong Peninsula had long been under the occupation of the German Empire. China, having fought for the Allies during WWI and entering the postwar environment with the hope for a new and more just international order, hoped that the Shandong Peninsula would be returned to Chinese hands. Wilson’s postwar responses, however, acquiesced to Japanese demands, greatly disillusioning the Chinese who previously believed in Wilson’s postwar

40 George Creel, *The War, the World and Wilson* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1920), 163.

41 Russell H. Fifield, *Woodrow Wilson and the Far East* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1952).

42 Li, *Woodrow Wilson’s China Policy*, 210-20.

promises and saw him as a messiah. Quickly afterwards, the public opinion in China shifted to a new direction.<sup>43</sup> Chen Duxiu 陳獨秀 (1879-1942), who had once deemed Woodrow Wilson as “No.1 Good Man in the World,” then openly castigated his “hypocrisy.”<sup>44</sup> Li Dazhao 李大釗 (1889-1927) likewise commented that the American president was only preaching to “the deaf ears of the robbers,” and that Wilson was “nothing but a futile doctrinaire” and a “bookish idealist.”<sup>45</sup>

However, as previously discussed, underlying Wilson’s “hypocrisy” is the fact that Wilson deemed self-determination a *white-only* privilege. This reflects the inherent paradox in Wilsonian internationalism and his racist prejudice. Internal reports after the Paris Peace Conference further demonstrate that for American government interests in East Asia, the maintenance of the Open Door Policy in China, rather than Wilson’s principles of “self-determination,” was a prerequisite. As long as American privileges would not be impaired within the area over which Germany had obtained control and that John Hay’s (1838-1905) Open Door principles were unchallenged, which was assured by the German minister of Foreign Affairs to the American ambassador at Berlin, historical problems of colonialism in Shandong were out of the concern of the US government.<sup>46</sup>

Following the crestfallen tone, the students of the May Fourth generation stepped onto the stage. In the afternoon of May 4, 1919, more than three thousand Chinese students from major universities and colleges in Beijing marched on to the streets to protest the Treaty of Versailles. In protest of the

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43 Li Dazhao 李大釗, “Pan-ism zhi shibai yu Democracy zhi shengli” Pan.....ism 之失敗與 Democracy 之勝利, in *Wusi yundong qinli ji* (1999[July 15, 1918]), 150-53.

44 One Eye [Chen Duxiu], “Wilson the Braggadocio,” *The Weekly Review*, no. 8, February 9, 1919. Such a nickname was an imitation of Sun Yat-sun’s nickname “Braggadocio Sun” to satirize his doctrinaire theories without practice.

45 Chang [Li Dazhao], “Secret Diplomacy and the World of Robbers,” *The Weekly Review*, No. 22, May 18, 1919.

46 See Woodrow Wilson Papers: Series 6: Peace Conference Documents, 1898-1921; Subseries F: Chinese Delegation, 1898-1919; 1915-1919, Chinese Delegation, Library of Congress, Washington, DC, <https://www.loc.gov/item/mss4602900734/>.

unfair treatment towards Shandong at the Paris Peace Conference, patriotic students gathered together, endorsing a manifesto that castigated the diplomatic failure of the Versailles Treaty. Due to their shared faith in Wilsonianism, one of the first things the students did in the turmoil of the movement was to seek a formal conversation with the American ambassador. On that day, Luo Jialun 羅家倫 (1897-1969) led a group of student representatives of the demonstration to gather in front of the American embassy in Beijing before marching to “punish the traitors.” Unfortunately, Ambassador Reinsch was not in office on that day. Only after the efforts for a dialogue with the American ambassador were unanswered did the students march to the pro-Japanese bureaucrat Cao Rulin’s 曹汝霖 (1877-1966) residence to set it on fire, catalyzing the subsequent series of student protests, strikes, and boycotts across major cities in China, later known as the May Fourth Movement.<sup>47</sup>

## 7. Conclusion

This paper has traced an alternative origin of pro-Wilsonian sentiments in China, highlighting the role of prominent Chinese intellectuals Hu Shih and Jiang Menglin, who had previously received their education at Columbia University. While Hu Shih endorsed Wilsonian politics and strongly supported Wilson when he was still a student, Jiang Menglin further translated Wilson’s “Fourteen Points” speech into Chinese. Their stories suggest that the knowledge these intellectuals brought back from the United States contributed to the emergence of the so-called “Wilsonian Moment” in China.

The Chinese Exclusion Act enforced legislative measures that restricted Chinese immigration and reinforced racial exclusion policies in the US. Meanwhile, the American-trained Chinese intellectuals who embraced Wilsonian politics remained curiously silent towards the racist aspects of Wilsonian democracy, and their vision towards the Wilsonian postwar international order later introduced to China contributed to the expectations for

47 Reinsch, *An American Diplomat in China*, 358; Yiwan 億萬, “The Shandong Issue (Shandong wenti 山東問題),” *The Weekly Review* (每週評論) 21 (May 11, 1919) : 1.

Woodrow Wilson at the end of WWI. When it became clear that Wilson had a limited intention of extending anti-colonial promises to non-white audiences, the Chinese intellectuals' faith in Wilsonian principles was shattered.

Te-kong Tong, who studied at Columbia in the 1940s and conducted interviews with Hu Shih to compile the latter's oral history, has previously criticized this phenomenon. He has commented that despite the racism and anti-Chinese prosecutions being blatant in the US in the era of Chinese exclusion, the Chinese intellectuals of Hu Shih's generation, nevertheless, hardly uttered a word on behalf of their fellow countrymen. Tang wrote:

These Chinese gentlemen and gentle women were deeply attached to the middle-class white Americans, and curiously, they were almost all taciturn towards the suffering of the Chinese laborers during the same period.<sup>48</sup>

Speaking to Hu Shih's embrace of Wilsonianism during his student years and his silence towards racism faced by his fellow countrymen embodied in the Chinese Exclusion Act, Te-kong Tong has criticized that Hu's generation of Chinese students embraced white American elitism partly because they were largely coming from the Chinese gentry class. Immersed in an elitist American society when they were studying in the US, they perceived American civilization as rational, progressive, and superior to outdated Chinese traditions. Tong has insightfully pointed out that their exposure to American society was selective, akin to a voluntary "guided tour" of the United States that only showcased its strengths while ignoring the dark sides of American democracy. This resulted in an intellectual elite that idealized Western modernity without critically engaging with its deeper complexities. In doing so, they failed to recognize the structural inequalities within American society, particularly the exclusion and discrimination faced by Chinese laborers, and thus became unwitting propagators of an incomplete and one-sided vision of America later introduced to the Chinese audience.<sup>49</sup>

48 For Tong's remarks on the limitations of American-trained Chinese intellectuals of that generation, see Hu, *Hu Shi koushu zizhuan*, 47-48, 56.

49 Hu, *Hu Shi koushu zizhuan*, 47-48.

Tong has likewise censured their shared indifference towards the plight of Chinese immigrants who were suffering from discrimination. The silence of the American-trained Chinese intellectuals towards the suffering of the Chinese immigrant laborers, as Tong keenly observes, also illuminates the “uneasy bond” between the two parties.<sup>50</sup> Their silence reveals the deliberate disconnection between the privileged intellectuals and the broader Chinese diaspora, including immigrant Chinese laborers. While Hu Shih and his contemporaries admired the material and cultural achievements of American society, they also neglected to acknowledge racism and xenophobia that marginalized their fellow Chinese immigrant workers in the American Chinatowns and elsewhere. Tong has deemed such an elitist attitude as part of the Confucian tradition, and suggested that despite their Western education, the Chinese scholars remained trapped in an elitist perspective towards society and the people.<sup>51</sup>

Another aspect of the story is that Woodrow Wilson himself also treated the Chinese students in American universities differently from their working-class immigrant counterparts. Despite his support for the exclusionary policies towards the Chinese, Wilson believed in Christianizing China through education and democracy, and thus viewed the Chinese students as markedly different. Wilson’s interactions with the Chinese students during his service as the president of Princeton University further led him to recognize the potential roles that could be played by the American-trained Chinese intellectuals in introducing American values to China. Repeatedly, Woodrow Wilson urged the American immigration authorities not to subject the students (“the exempt class”) to unnecessary examination or treatment of humiliation when they entered the United States. This was warmly welcomed by the progressive-minded, pro-American Chinese intellectuals such as Hu Shih, who hardly lost faith in Woodrow Wilson, even in the worst of times.<sup>52</sup>

50 Weili Ye, *Seeking Modernity in China’s Name: Chinese Students in the United States, 1900-1927* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001).

51 Hu, *Hu Shi koushu zizhuan*, 47-48.

52 Li, *Woodrow Wilson’s China Policy*, 11-12, 204-5.

The enthusiasm for Wilsonian ideals introduced to China from this lineage, nevertheless, quickly waned after the May Fourth Movement, as Chinese intellectuals and the broader public confronted the contradictions of “self-determination” and the stark realities of racial discrimination embedded in Wilsonian internationalism’s moralistic rhetoric. Witnessing how the Chinese intellectuals were dismayed by Wilson’s “betrayal” of Chinese interests at the Paris Peace Conference, out of embarrassment, American ambassador in China Paul S. Reinsch decided to resign. He then sent Woodrow Wilson a resignation letter in 1919 in which he openly stated his frustrations and worries for Sino-American relations in the long run. Unlike Wilson, Reinsch was sympathetic towards the Chinese people and the students in protest. Before he left his office in Beijing, he invited the student representatives of the student protest to the US Embassy for a conversation. Reinsch was long deemed as a friend of China, but after resigning from the post he could no longer legitimately speak on behalf of American policies in China.<sup>53</sup> In his resignation letter, with an impressively pessimistic tone, Reinsch commented on the prospect of American interests in China: “Unless the American people realize this and the Government feels strong enough to take adequate action, the fruits of a hundred and forty years of American work in China will inevitably be lost.”<sup>54</sup>

Although the American work in China was not necessarily “lost,” fervent Wilsonianism, as American observers such as Eugene Barnett observed in 1919, did quickly fade. Only four years later, in 1923, a public opinion survey was conducted during Peking University’s anniversary with a total of 752 respondents. When asked, “Between Russia and the United States, who do you think is China’s real friend?” 59% identified with Russia and the leadership of Lenin, while only 13% considered the United States and Woodrow Wilson as China’s “real friend.”<sup>55</sup> In 1924, both Lenin and Wilson, the two great leaders

53 Tang, *Bei “feichu bupingdeng tiaoyue” zhebi de Beiyang xiu yue shi*, 231-32.

54 Reinsch, *An American Diplomat in China*, 364.

55 Zhu Wuchan 朱悟禪 [Zhu Wushan 朱務善], “Beida ershiwu zhounian jinianri minyi celiang fenxi” 北大二十五周年紀念日民意測量分析, *Xin minguo zazhi* 新民國雜誌 1, no. 5, March 30, 1924, 1-7.

who had championed “national self-determination,” passed away. At a memorial for Lenin organized by the Kuomintang in Guangzhou, Liao Zhongkai 廖仲愷 (1877-1925) emphasized that what China needed was not the empty rhetoric of Wilson’s “Fourteen Points,” which literally brought China no benefits, but the real tenets of Lenin: “Look at Wilson: what influence has his death had on the world?” asked Liao, “Everyone knows that Wilson proposed his Fourteen Points to be universally accepted; however, the outcome of the Versailles Conference was nothing but disappointment.”<sup>56</sup>

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56 Liao Zhongkai 廖仲愷, “Zhuidao Lieming dahui yanshuo” 追悼列寧大會演說, in *Liao Zhongkai ji* 廖仲愷集, ed. Guangdong sheng shehui kexue yuan lishi yanjiusuo 廣東省社會科學院歷史研究所 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2011[1924]), 155-56.

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# 胡適、蔣夢麟與一戰以後威爾遜主義的在華興起

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## 摘 要

以往學界認為中國親威爾遜情緒之興起乃由喬治·克裏爾所領導之公共資訊委員會（CPI）宣傳所致。本文轉而關注留美之中國知識分子在紐約對威爾遜主義之樂觀態度；彼等所介紹之威爾遜戰後國際秩序理想化之願景，最終導致國人對伍德羅·威爾遜於一戰結束時宣導「民族自決」倡議之空前期待。文章論證了像胡適和蔣夢麟這樣的美國訓練的中國知識分子，以及他們帶回中國的美國知識，最終促成了「威爾遜時刻」的興衰，並對二十世紀上半葉的中美關係產生了深遠的影響。排華法案加強了限制華人移民的立法措施，並強化了美國的種族排斥政策。接受過美國教育並擁護威爾遜政治的中國知識分子，對受到排華法案迫害的華工的苦難保持沉默，也未曾批判威爾遜式民主所包含的種族主義因素。相反，他們將威爾遜戰後國際秩序的理想主義視野引入中國，最終在第一次世界大戰結束時引發了對伍德羅·威爾遜宣導的「自決」理念的前所未有的熱望與幻滅。

**關鍵詞：**伍德羅·威爾遜、留美知識分子、排華法案、民族自決

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